ABSTRACT

LIBYAN WOMEN AND REVOLUTION: A STUDY OF THE CHANGES IN
WOMEN'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ROLES DURING AND
AFTER THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION

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Several uprisings against some long-term dictatorships in the Arab region took place during the year of 2011. The phenomenon, commonly known as the Arab Spring, started in December 2010 in Tunisia, a small North African Arabic country that was going through tough economic times. The domino effect of the Tunisian revolution spread quickly through the region. Almost all Arab countries witnessed political unrest and protests demanding reforms, but in a few of them— Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen—the situation escalated to the level of popular revolution.

The Arab Spring phenomenon opened the door for studies on collective behavior and revisiting social movements literature. However, most of the studies conducted on the Arab uprising events focus, for the most part, on the collective action of the Arab Spring societies as a whole. Moreover, the scholarly work on the early stages of the uprisings focused largely on the military role in the unfolding events and the role played by social media.

In this research study, however, I examine the phenomenon from a different perspective. I focus on the role of a particular agent in the society by analyzing women's political and civic involvement in Libya, one of the Arab Spring countries, during the revolution against the dictatorship regime of Mu'ammar Gaddafi in 2011. Libyan women played a significant role in

initiating the uprising and throughout the events of the revolution. Furthermore, my research highlights the ongoing dynamics and challenges Libyan women to maintain the gains they made through their participation in the revolution. This analysis is placed in the context of the social movement theory literature, as it provides a much-needed study of women's political and civic involvement in contemporary Libya.

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BY

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Khaled El Bego,

whose love, inspiration, and encouragement helped

profoundly to bring this effort to life

and

In loving memory of my father, Ibrahim Hweio,

who taught me that knowledge is the true fortune and

who spent his life encouraging me to pursue the highest degrees of education;

he would have been proud.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is known that the Middle Eastern countries are patriarchal societies in which men have authority over women in all aspects of life. This type of society gives "primacy to fathers, sons, and/or men over mothers, daughters, and/or women" (McLean, 1996, p. 366). Therefore, women in such systems suffer from limitations with regard to their rights and duties and also in terms of their ability to pose initiatives and contribute to nation building because men normally make the decisions in all these matters.

If this is the anticipated role of women in Middle Eastern countries when the political order of the state is secure and stable, what are the possible changes that might occur to this role if the state stability and the security of the society no longer exist due to sudden, dramatic changes such as an uprising a revolution against the existing regime?

The uprising against long-established dictatorships in some Arab countries, dubbed the Arab Spring, was a completely new phenomenon in the region therefore, it will be of value to study the effects and consequences of these remarkable changes on all aspects of life, one of which is gender relations. It is important to emphasize the grassroots nature of the uprisings that took place in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in 2010 and 2011. People from all social classes and of differing intellectual backgrounds participated in those huge events, including women.

The perception of men's leadership role in the society was a factor in the uprising of the Arab countries. Masculinity-based explanations were highlighted when scholars analyzed these events in the Arab world because, as one explained, "[P]ublic discourse versions of masculinity studies and everyday etiologies of racialized Middle Eastern maleness operate as some of the primary public tools for analyzing political change and social conflict in the region" (Amar, 2011, p. 38).

Still, in the changing winds that rocked the region since the beginning of the Arab revolutions and underneath the masculine frock of the Arab Spring, their robust participation gave women a position as main actors in the Arab Spring revolutions and in the events after them. The strong presence of women in the Arab revolutions, ranging from participating in the peaceful protests to volunteering in the field hospitals or arranging emergency aid projects or organizing civil society programs to even performing some dangerous traditional "masculine" roles—such as in the case of Libya when women smuggled weapons and went to the front lines—shifted the understanding of women's traditional role in those societies to another dimension.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

This researcher was concerned with the question of how long this new public role of women will last. Are the changes in political and social roles of women sustainable? Or is it just the spur of the moment that gave women their new position in those societies? How was the public role of women developed during the Libyan revolution? And would women's movements,

which emerged during and after the revolutions, succeed in securing women's rights in the aftermath of the Arab Spring?

These questions will be considered with regard to the Libyan case and within the context of the Libyan revolution, which took place in February 2011 against the dictatorship regime of Mu'ammar Gaddafi. In this research study, I examine the development of women's movements in Libya from before to after the revolution in light of the radical transformations in the structure and function of the Libyan civil and political arenas.

Case Selection

I chose the Libyan case for two main reasons; the first is because the Libyan women, unlike the Egyptian and Tunisian women, did not have experience in active political and civic participation prior to the revolution. The party system in Egypt and Tunisia, together with the active civil society organizations in those countries, gave women bigger margins to work within, whereas Gaddafi's totalitarian regime, which prohibited the party system and criminalized all differing ideologies, had not given the Libyans in general any space to express themselves politically throughout 42 years. Women in particular suffered from social restrictions in addition to the political ones imposed by the regime. The conservative nature of Libyan society applied more limitations on women's participation in the public sphere. Those limitations, along with the political constraints, made women less likely than men to be actively engaged politically and socially.

The second reason for choosing the Libyan case is because the Libyan conflict took by far the most violent path among the Arab uprisings, with its eight-month-long war that ensued

between the revolutionary fighters and the dissident army units on the one side and Gaddafi's militias on the other. The long liberating war added a more masculine nature to the Libyan revolution because men are normally the sector of society who actually fight and get physically engaged in war. Yet women's role in the Libyan revolution was significant from the outset, as women were the first to protest against Gaddafi in the city of Benghazi (the event that is recorded as the first spark of the revolution), and later when women took the initiative after the revolution to build civil society organizations.

<div align="center">Methodology and Data Collection</div>

The lack of available data along with continuing events in Libya five years after the halt of a long-term regime calls for conducting exploratory research. This study involves in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with eight Libyan women who were key activists during the revolution, three of whom held political positions in the transnational government. The interviews are part of a wider research project mapping the changes in women's roles in Libya after the revolution, but here they serve to illustrate the meaning of women's experience during the revolution and how that was given voice by key activists and leaders during and just following the revolution.

The study also draws on other primary and secondary data sources, including archival materials, official statements, legal documents, governmental regulations, public figures' speeches, and women's organizations' documents provided to the researcher by activists. Media coverage of the Libyan revolution is also used in this research study with an eye to women's participation. Also part of a broader research agenda is to document women's experiences during

revolution, as history documented primarily by men has a tendency to erase women and their experience.

The nature of this study makes using interviews and qualitative analysis to get at the meaning of the interviewees' experience the best option for a research method (Harré & Moghaddam, 2012). Furthermore, for projects like the current one, qualitative interviews are the perfect method to understand the changing experience of women in Libya during and after the revolution, as "qualitative interviewing projects are especially good at describing social and political processes, that is, how and why things change" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The researcher used responsive interviewing, a technique based on in-depth semi-structured interviews, in order to ask questions, but primarily to listen to the experiences of the women activists who agreed to be interviewed. In this approach to interviewing, the researcher chooses interviewees "who are knowledgeable about the research problem, [listens] carefully to what they tell [her] and [asks] additional questions about their answers" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interviews I conducted offer a certain kind of scientific rigor—not one of objectivity, representativeness based on large sample sizes, or statistical analysis typical of positivist social science—but that of *meaning* (for a concise explanation see footnote 1 in Farnell & Varela, 2008; see also Fairclough, 2015; Harré & Stearns, 1995; and Pease & Wyman, 1986).

The meaning is important, and only by allowing people to talk and share the meaning of their experience can the researcher provide an opportunity for understanding that meaning. The purpose of this project is to identify how women in Libya perceive themselves through their actions, and what their society is to become as a result of their actions, *through their own words*

(Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré, 2002; Harré & Moghaddam, 2012). This is extremely important. No other method can capture this and a survey or quasi-experiment would actually remove the words that make it possible for the reader to begin to understand what Libyan women believe the meanings of their actions to have been and their current roles to be about (Harré & Moghaddam, 2012). Through their personal experiences and their own engagement, the women interviewed for this study provide first-hand accounts about the actual opportunities and challenges women confront in Libya moving forward for activism in social and political realms. Their words have implications for the women's movement in Libya.

All interviews were recorded; they ranged in length from 90 minutes to two and a half hours, and they were all conducted via Skype or phone. The interviews were all conducted in Arabic, the interviewees' native language. The use of their own language allowed the interviewees a comfortable and unrestrained forum in which to express their opinions and elaborate on their views with regard to women's political and social engagement in Libya. The researcher translated all interviews from Arabic to English. In addition to providing the literal meaning of the interviewees' words, during the translation process the researcher strove to translate the depth of word expressions. In particular, special care was given to key words and expressions.

As Anderson and Jack (1991) pointed out,

[A]n exploration of the language and the meanings women use to articulate their own experience leads to an awareness of the conflicting social forces and institutions affecting women's consciousness. It also reveals how women act either to restructure or preserve their psychological orientations, their relationships, and their social contexts. (p. 18)

Again, looking to women's own words and how they reflect on their experience of the revolution, their roles in it, and what the meaning of their actions were, is the most appropriate way to get at the research questions raised in this dissertation (Harré, 2002; Harré & Moghaddam, 2012).

The main tool of recruitment for this study was personal contacts via email or phone; as noted above, the actual interviews were conducted using Skype and phone. The main criteria in choosing the female interviewees for this research were for them to be engaged in public activities (social, political or both), and the diversity of experience among them. The interviewees' public engagement included women who had participated in the revolution since day one, others who held political positions during the transitional period, founders of women's organizations, women who are members of civil society organizations, and others who work in organizations with political objectives. The interviewee list also included women who worked in the media during the revolution and others with law degrees who were engaged in the process of drafting Libya's new constitution. All those women represent varied perspectives on women's political and social engagement in Libyan society during and after the revolution.

The researcher would like to note that all interviewees except two resided in Libya until recently, when five of them had to flee the country after receiving death threats and/or kidnap attempts against them and/or their family members. However, they all agreed to disclose their real names for this research study despite the dangerous circumstances that forced them to leave. They all signed consent forms in which they gave the researcher permission to reveal their names

and their biographical information, with their full awareness that the data included in this study may be presented at conferences and/or published in print or digital format.

When the researcher asked one of the interviewees if she hesitated in signing the consent form to reveal her name considering the threats she had previously received, the interviewee replied, "You are documenting a crucial time in … Libyan contemporary history … which I and other women were an important part of …. Therefore, our names deserve to be known. The reality is that women were there, and they made history" (See the Appendix for a list of the interviewees and their biographical descriptions).

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ARAB SPRING

Throughout the events of the Arab Spring revolutions against long-lasting dictatorships in the Arab region, women participated in a strong and consistent manner in various areas of public engagement. Women in Egypt, for instance, camped in Tahrir Square in Cairo and led the protests against Mubarak's regime. During the eighteen days of the Egyptian revolution, thousands of women camped in Tahrir Square demanding the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, who had held the position of president for 23 years. Their contribution was exceptional: "in previous protests women had accounted for, at most, 10 per cent, in Tahrir Square that number stood at about 40 … to 50 per cent in the days leading up to Mr. Mubarak's resignation" (Biggs, 2011). Their decision to protest Mubarak's government came with a cost, however, as 26 women were killed during the Egyptian revolution.

In Yemen, women's participation in the revolution gave it a huge momentum. Since the beginning of the uprising in Yemen in February 2011, women did not stop their peaceful protests and sit-ins in public squares. The recognition of the role of women in the Arab Spring reached its peak when Tawakkul Karman, the Yemeni human rights activist and journalist, won the Nobel Peace prize in December 2011. She was awarded the prize, according to the Norwegian Nobel Committee, for her "non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full

participation in peace-building work" (nobelprize org., 2011). Karman did not leave her tent in the heart of Change Square in Sanaa from the beginning of the revolution against the 33-year presidential incumbent, Ali Adbullah Saleh. She described the contribution of Yemeni women in the revolution and the impact of the Arab spring phenomenon on the Yemeni traditions as follows: "I could never imagine this. In Yemen, women are not allowed out of the house after 7 p.m.; now they are sleeping here. This goes beyond the wildest dream I have ever dreamt, I am so proud of our women" (Antelava, 2011).

To understand the changes in Arab women's engagement in public life as a result of the Arab Spring, it is important to know where the place of women was before the Arab Spring and what the main factors were in giving women that role. In recent years, an increasing scholarly interest in the social and cultural life of the Middle East has led to a focus on women's position in the region. Many studies have been conducted on the subject of women—their power, their rights, and their influence (Hees, 1997; Keddie, 2007; Ross, 2008; Tallawy, 1997). However, a large amount of this literature has two major points in common. The first point is it applies a holistic perspective on women's positions and draws general conclusions without taking into account the significant differences in women's situations among the states of the region. The second point is that it brings back women's status in the Arab world to religious factors by linking it directly to Islam.

One study stands out as a perfect example of this trend in gender literature: *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World* (Inglehart & Pippa, 2003). Even though this book does not study women in the Arab states specifically, as it is a quantitative study which

covers 191 cases, it uses culture as a measuring factor for gender equality. The authors' findings

conclude that Arab states in general contain the highest levels of gender inequality, and the

reason for this inequality lies in the Islamic culture. This statement omits two important facts.

First, despite the assumption that the Arab region is one of the world's least successful in terms

of gender equality, there is significant variation among Arab states with regard to women's

status, to the level that social, economic, and political women rights' achievements vary from

one Arabic state to another. Second, by attributing this lag in women rights' realization merely to

the effect of a certain religion, the authors ignore other important cultural aspects such as the

social structure, the historical experiences, and the political environment of each state. For

example, Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia all share the same religion and culture, yet the experience of

women in public life is markedly different from one country to another. It may be true that

women's rights in Arabic countries are not recognized to the same extent as in Western

countries, but it is important to note that those countries vary in their levels of granting and

acknowledging women's rights, especially political rights. Hees (1997) succinctly addresses

variations among Muslim countries:

> Although Muslim countries share a common religion and many cultural traditions, they
> differ substantially in levels of economic development, social indicators, income
> distribution, patterns of production, and cultural practices that affect women's status.
> Thus, although gender goals such as equal access to education or to income-earning
> opportunities may be shared, strategies to reach those goals will differ. For example, in
> some Muslim countries, girls and boys are educated in separate schools, in others;
> children of both sexes attend school together from primary school through university. In
> some Muslim countries women are active in business and industry as professionals, wage
> earners, and microentrepreneurs; in others, women do not work outside the home. (p.
> 148)

Differences among Arab States with regard to women's position in society are associated with many factors; all contribute to the construction of the social fabric in each country. Indeed, many factors contribute to the delay in realizing women's rights in general and women's political rights specifically. One particular factor is the matter of underdevelopment. All Arab States are classified under the grouping of "developing countries," in which many sectors are still weak. One such sector is education. Illiteracy rates in the Arab world, especially among females, are as high as 48% (Noureldeen, 2006), hindering the potential participation of women in public life and political activity. Another important factor is the weak democratic climate in the Arab world; most Arab States are dictatorships or are slowly moving towards democracy, and in both cases respect for human rights in general is a concern and a question. In a dictatorship, all men and women are deprived of their right to freedom of expression and political participation.

Egypt, for example, witnessed the establishment of the first women's movement in the Arab World, which was created by Hoda Sharawy, a well-known feminist who created and headed the first organized women's political movement called the Egyptian Feminist Union, (EFU) in 1923 (Badran, 1991). Sharawy was "the first woman to represent Egypt in international conferences even before Egypt's independence. She led the struggle against veiling in the early 1920s, organized the participation of women in the struggle against the British occupation, and joined the Egyptian revolution of 1919" (Tallawy, 1997). Nowadays, there are three main streams of feminism in Egypt: secular feminism, Muslim feminism, and Islamist feminism; their agendas include a wide range of political and sociocultural issues (Karam, 1997).

Besides Egypt, Tunisia also has a long history of active women's participation, as it was the second Arabic country to grant equal political rights to women in 1956 (Noureldeen, 2006) and the highest Arabic country in women's representation in the Parliament, which jumped from 11.5% in 2002 to 22.8% in 2005. This percentage places Tunisia 27th in the Women in National Parliaments rank (Noureldeen, 2006), ahead of countries like the United States, France, and Britain. Furthermore, in Tunisia, women's movements' activities forced the government to adopt national laws that gave women "greater equality in marriage, and opened the door to major improvements in female education and employment" (Ross, 2008, p. 119).

By all appearances, women in Libya after the 1951 independence were heading along a similar path. They gained the right to vote and the right of political representation by getting women elected to the Parliament in 1964 during the monarchy era. Women in Libya also have a long history of social organizing. The first women's organization dates back to 1955 in Benghazi (Omar, 2011). However, women's rights hit a backlash after Mu'ammar Gaddafi seized power in 1969 and ruled the country for the next 42 years. During Gaddafi's regime, the country suffered from failure and backwardness in all aspects of life, especially with regard to political participation and social engagement: the things that diminish women's presence in public life.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

The interdisciplinary nature of this research requires drawing from different areas in social science literature to provide a comprehensive theoretical background for the topic under study. It is almost impossible to study the effects of rapid social changes in the shifting political and social conditions of a particular group in society without considering the characteristics of the revolutionary setting, the cultural dynamics in the society before and after the revolution, and the specific characteristics of that group.

Therefore, in this section I draw from three major zones of literature. The first is the literature on revolutions, which is concerned with revolutions as major catalysts of social and political change. It also highlights the differences between Western revolutions and Third World revolutions and how the Arab Spring revolutions fit within this broader theoretical picture.

The second set of scholarly works deals specifically with women and revolutions from three different aspects: (a) the role of women during and after revolutions; (b) the effect of revolutions on women's conditions in the short term; and (c) the lasting effects of revolutions on women's social and political positions.

The third zone deals with the relationship between culture on one side and political and social changes on the other. It focuses in particular on the role of political culture in promoting or

hindering major changes in the society, especially when the society is going through transitional periods or facing major political and social changes.

Revolution as a Source of Change

Revolution, by nature, is one of the most attractive topics for social scientists. This goes back to its complexity and the fact that revolutions serve as frameworks for changes in the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of any society. As a result of the vast interest in revolutions, different revolution theories have been presented within the field of social science. Goldstone (1980) divides the scholarly work on revolutions into generations using a chronicle order. Based on this classification, the literature on revolutions is divided into four generations; the first generation is represented by the scholarly work in the first half of the twentieth century, which was mainly descriptive with a narrow theoretical perspective (Goldstone, 1980).

The second generation includes the work of Samuel Huntington and Charles Tilly and dates from the 1950s to the 1970s, the years which witnessed the rise of the behaviorist revolution and the introduction of new research paradigms in social science. This generation provided a broad theoretical base for the study of revolutions by using theories from psychology, sociology, and political science (Goldstone, 1980).

The third generation of revolution scholars is marked by the work of Theda Skocpol (1979) and Barrington Moore (1966) and focused mainly on the classical revolutions of France, Russia, and China. The literature of this generation argued that the main causes of revolutions include structural weaknesses of regimes, class conflict, and external pressure. Attempting to fill the gaps in the work of the second generation, the literature of the third generation proposed an

alternative perspective on how and why revolutions occur; it also offered a new perspective on questions related to revolutions' outcomes (Goldstone, 1980).

The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed different types of revolutions starting with the Iranian and the Nicaraguan revolutions. The fourth generation of scholarly work on revolutions therefore started when some scholars pointed out the shortcomings of the structural approach and called for a consideration of factors like ideology and leadership as the main reasons for revolution in addition to studying revolutions within the framework of social movements (Goldstone, 2001).

This review is concerned with the major scholarly work from different approaches and shows the contributions of different research methods in terms of explaining revolutions and whether or not those methods, or any of them, succeeded in answering the main questions about revolutions; Why do they occur? When do they start and when do they end? What are the main causes of revolutions and what determines their outcomes? And why did they happen in some societies and not in others with similar revolutionary circumstances?

<u>What is a Revolution?</u>

Before presenting the main debates within the discipline that aimed to answer the above questions, it is important to identify the definition of revolution. This does not take us far from the ongoing debates on revolutions in general, as there is no agreement among scholars on the meaning of the concept. However, a basic element seems to exist in all definitions, which is the element of change; all revolutions bring change to their societies. However, the scope and size of that change and how it affects the society are the debated areas among scholars.

Based on the scope of change caused by revolutions, scholars identify different types of revolutions. Charles Tilly (Tilly, 1995) and Theda Skocpol (Skocpol, 1994) differentiate between a coup or a political revolution, which happens from the top down and leads to changes in the political aspect only, and the great revolution (Tilly, 1995) or social revolution (Skocpol, 1994), which brings fundamental changes to all aspects of society. Skocpol describes the latter kind of revolutions as "rapid, basic transformations of socio-economic and political institutions" (Skocpol, 1994, p. 69). According to this perspective, only a few events throughout history fit within the social revolution category; these include the classical revolutions of France, Russia, and China, the more recent ones of Iran and Nicaragua, and the latest cases of the Arab Spring. In that sense, those great revolutions act like the earthquake that shakes and affects all aspects of the societies in which they happen.

For decades the scholarly research on revolutions was limited to studying Western cases. The classical work on the great Western revolutions (Tilly, 1978; Sewell, 1980; Skocpol, 1979) remained the source for any effort that aimed to study revolutions. However, radical changes in other areas of the world, especially in the post-colonial era, challenged the existing literature on revolutions and made it necessary for scholars to search for different answers to the same questions. The specific features of the Third World required comparative scholars to adopt a wider perspective on how and why revolutions occur.

An important distinct feature of Third World revolutions is that peasants are not the only driving force of the revolutions. Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol (1989) argued that in the case of the Third World revolutions, "the literature that emphasizes the role of peasants in revolutions

tends to ignore the role of professional revolutionary organizations, groups that tend to be disproportionately middle class in social composition" (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989, p. 492). Moreover, Goodwin and Skocpol did not emphasize the role of peasants in Third World revolutions, arguing that "except for those peasants who happen to live in relatively autonomous and solitary villages, as did the peasants of France, Russia, and central Mexico, rural cultivators simply do not have the organizational wherewithal to rebel in the absence of outside leaders" (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989, p. 492).

The nature of the Arab Spring revolutions, which were mainly urban-centered, takes them away from the classical analyses of social revolutions as a result of mass peasant movements (e.g., the analyses of the great revolutions of France, Russia, and China) (Skocpol, 1979). The absence of peasants as the main force behind the Arab Spring revolutions means that it was replaced by other social groups as agents of change.

Even though the scholarly work on the Arab Spring revolutions did actually recognize this nature in the Arab revolutions, most of the studies conducted on the Arab Spring revolutions emphasized the role of the military (Anderson, 2011; Barany, 2011; Masoud, 2011) or of organized Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Berman, 2003; Lust, 2011; Masoud, 2011). There is a dearth of studies that focus on the role of women as a social group in the Arab revolutions. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature on the Arab Spring revolutions by highlighting the role of women as agents of change in the Libyan revolution.

Women and Revolutions

Observing other cases in which women played a considerable role in huge social and political changes and the long-term consequences of such contributions is useful for an understanding of the mechanism of women's political and civic engagement in Libya. A wide range of cases reflect women's challenges and contributions during major political and social changes in various areas of the world, but these are mostly in the less democratically developed countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Women in those societies face different types of political and social changes, which sometimes take place through the context of warfare such as in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, or by changes in the political regime through a military coup such as the case of Angola, or even through an ideological revolution as in China. However, the common feature in all these cases is the effect of those rapid changes on political and social life, class relations and, in some instances, gender relations.

This review has an exclusive focus on the role of women during instant social and political changes that are caused by social revolution or civil war. Previous cases provide examples where women made strong contributions during times of political instability such as revolutions, civil wars, and social uprisings. Yet women were excluded from the political arena in the aftermath of the political upset and had to continue to fight to be engaged in the political decision-making process.

One interesting case is the role of Vietnamese women in the liberation movement against French colonization. The patriarchal family structure in Vietnam is similar to the Libyan family structure. Women in Vietnam were part of the labor force mainly through working as peasants on

family lands or as servants (Tetreault, 1994b). The political mobilization of women started in 1930 and was led by the Women's Union, which was part of the lead liberation entity in the country: the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. The party adopted the principle of liberating women as one of its ten goals. Ho Chi Minh fulfilled his promise when the constitution of 1946 proclaimed equal political and economic rights for women and granted women's suffrage (Tetreault, 1994b).

However, women's participation in public life did not stop at practicing their political rights through voting and representing the constituencies in the chamber of deputies. During the years of war against the French (1946-1954) women engaged in activities like mobilization and information gathering. Furthermore, in the early 1950s, women were on the front lines of the war serving as members of small groups of commandos when "about 840,000 female guerrillas operated in the north and some 140,000 in the south" (Tetreault, 1994b, p. 115).

Even though the nature of conflict took a different direction after 1954 on the two sides of the country, women's struggle to gain recognition remained the same. In the aftermath of the war in Vietnam, women and other minority groups were pushed to the back seat by the leadership, who worked for its own interest, sought more power, and consolidated the patriarchal social structure (Tetreault, 1994b).

The war of the Vietnamese liberation movement against the French is similar to the Libyan revolutionary fight against Qaddafi's regime in more than one aspect. Similarity can be found in the mobilization of women during the liberation process and the unprecedented level of women's engagement in the revolution. However, the outcome of the Vietnamese revolution,

just like in the Libyan one, brought bad news for women when women were pushed back again in terms of political and civic engagement, as "the paucity of women in important positions in government and industry in Vietnam today demonstrates the failure of the regime to consolidate the cultural as opposed to the class and political gains made by the revolution" (Tetreault, 1994b, p. 130).

In her book *Why Women Protest* (Baldez, 2002), Lisa Baldez studies women's protest movements in Chile under two different governments: the socialist government of Salvador Allende and the military government of Augusto Pinochet. She explains why women mobilize as women and why gender was the baseline for both women's protest movements studied in her book despite the differences between the two movements in terms of motivations and ideologies. Baldez argues that women are mobilized to form women's movements when three factors are present: tipping, timing, and framing. She explains tipping as the point when different women's organizations are unified to form a women's movement. Timing and framing are necessary conditions for the tipping to happen. In order for women's mobilization to succeed, Baldez puts forth two conditions: partisan realignment, which is described as "the formation of new coalitions among political parties" (Baldez, 2002, p. 5) and particular cultural norms about gender differences that are held by the society.

Baldez presented an argument on why women organize themselves by forming gender-based organizations. She claimed that despite the different ideologies and political stances women might have, they all share similar grief, the lack of women's political representation in the decision-making process. She asserted that "Appeals to gender identity bridge women's

different and sometimes contradictory interests: exclusion from political power. No matter what specific agenda women's organizations wish to pursue, they cannot pursue it efficiently without political access" (Baldez, 2002, p. 11).

Although Baldez's framework provides a valid explanation as to why women mobilize themselves under the gender umbrella and their mechanism to do so (tipping, timing, framing), she applied her method exclusively to societies with stable political institutions and active party systems. She asserted that partisan realignment or "the fundamental changes in the issues that political parties represent" is an essential condition for women's mobilization: "Women's movements emerge in response to a realignment, understood here as the formation of new coalitions among political parties" (Baldez, 2002, p. 7).

It is important to point out here that Baldez's theory does not apply to the case of Libya, where women formed gender-based women's organizations in an absolute absence of state institutions and within a newly formed political party system, which was formed in a country with no previous experience in party systems by women who had lived under a dictatorship regime for more than four decades.

A closer example to the Libyan case is that of Lebanon, another Arabic country with similar social and cultural structure. The brutal Lebanese civil war, which lasted for more than fifteen years, took thousands of lives, destroyed the infrastructure of the country, and damaged the country's industrial sector and its main income source: tourism. The war also displaced more than seven hundred thousand people. One-quarter of the population was estimated to have immigrated to other countries (Shehadeh, 1999b).

In the midst of the war disarray, women stood up as individuals and groups and called for security, peace, and an end to the war. The Lebanese Council of Women issued a statement in the beginning of the war in 1975 demanding peace and termination of war and calling for quick solutions to the crisis. Moreover, the council, along with other women's organizations, arranged antiwar demonstrations, conferences, and sit-ins throughout the years of the war. One famous sit-in was the one at the American University of Beirut in 1980 when 100 women protested for 23 days, including three days of hunger strikes, against the siege of Beirut by the Israelis and the shortage of medication and water; the sit-in ended with the lifting of the siege (Shehadeh, 1999b).

The role of women in the Lebanese war took a logistic turn when women provided meals, medical assistance, and even emotional support to the fighters; in this sense their role was crucial, because "Active involvement must not be understood solely as bearing arms, even though women were engaged in combat on all sides in the conflict, but should also include the great number of women who were engaged in supportive activities, essential for the male combatants' efficiency" (Karame', 1999, p. 196).

The war gave Lebanese women an opportunity to move out of their traditional roles and forced the society to change some stereotypical views regarding the accepted roles of women economically and socially (Shehadeh, 1999a). However, despite women's achievements in various domains, women in Lebanon in the years after the war struggled for a better political status. Decision-making positions are still dominated by men, and women's political presence is almost nonexistent. In the first postwar parliamentary elections held in 1992, out of 128 members

of Parliament only three were women and all three of them won their seats "for and through traditional parameters," as they were all either sisters or widows of prominent male political figures and "None was known for any political or feminist activism" (Shehadeh, 1999a, p. 327). Two of the three women were re-elected in 1996 (Shehadeh, 1999a).

According to Alexis de Tocqueville, who studied the French revolution, and Theda Skocpol (Skocpol, 1979), who studied the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions,

> there are vast continuities between pre- and post-revolutionary societies and cultures. Over time, these can challenge novel social arrangements and keep old notions of legitimacy and old patterns of social relations alive, even when the identities of the groups occupying the various positions in the patterns have changed. (Tetreault, 1994b, p. 129)

The previous cases of women's engagement in the political and social aspects of public life during critical times show similar outcomes with some variations. The gains women manage to obtain through their active participation in times of war or political instability might not be permanent. Women, in most cases, are pushed back to their original position in society when the unusual political, economic, and social circumstances are over. This research study on Libyan women provides insights on the role of women in the revolution and the prospects women have with regard to their future engagement in public life and the limitations of their role in the state-building process in light of women's similar experiences in other nations.

<div align="center">Political Culture and the Changes in Society</div>

The recent political and social waves of change which have marked Libyan society since 2011, and the active engagement of Libyan women in it, provide a reason to study cultural

changes which have a direct impact on the Libyan society's perception of social and political rights in general and gender roles in particular.

Studying social and political roles of women in any society requires considering the relationship between culture and political participation in general. Political participation in any society depends mostly upon the political culture and margins of freedom the people have to express their opinions and views towards the policies of their government. Political culture is the type of culture that motivates values like freedom of speech, self-respect, and the importance of an individual's role in the system and has the main influence on the level of political participation in general and gender participation in particular.

Political culture can play an essential role in promoting social and political participation when it gives emphasis to values like self-expression, tolerance, trust, and life satisfaction (Inglehart & Welzel, 2003). On the other hand, the political role, played by particular cultural and social entities which don't have a traditional political role like tribes or clans (Collins, 2004) or even religion (Kalyvas, 2000), can hinder the democratic process. The political recruitment of some cultural aspects to serve the interest of some parties within a particular society is what I call politicizing culture.

There is no agreed-upon definition for culture in comparative politics literature. However, the general term refers to a framework that includes people's beliefs and values and attitudes. The part of those beliefs and values that is relevant to politics is called political culture.

Almond and Verba (1963) argue that countries differ significantly in their patterns of political culture. They present three types of political culture in relation to democracy. The first

type is parochial political culture, in which people have minimum knowledge of the mechanism of the political system and they are neither aware of their rights nor their duties. The second type of political culture is the subject political culture; in this type of culture people are informed about the outputs of the system and their obligation toward the government, but they are still ignorant regarding the importance of their participation in the political system. The third type of political culture is the participant political Culture, where individuals are fully aware of their position in the system and they are active in both aspects of the system, the inputs and the outputs.

If we apply the previous classification of political culture to locate the cultural traditions that facilitate democracy and the ones that hinder democracy, it could be said that the third type of political culture (i.e., participant political culture) is the type in which the values and beliefs held by people are supporting factors of democracy and active political participation. On the other hand, the first and second types of political culture (i.e., the parochial and subject political cultures) are the types of cultures that can hold back the democratic process and do not support political engagement.

More importantly, in the political systems where the first and second types of culture are dominant, people's beliefs and values are easily manipulated, which opens the door to what I call politicized culture, which means the attempts of some political actors to recruit some aspects of social culture, which don't have a political role by nature, and use them for political purposes.

An example of politicizing cultural aspects is the work of Posner (2004), who conducted a field study to examine the effect of cultural cleavages on the relation of two African tribes in

two different countries. Posner applied a multi-approach strategy by using cultural, institutional, and social structure approaches to analyze his cases. He concluded that even though the cultural cleavages between the Chewas and the Tumbukas are similar in Zambia and Malawi, those cultural differences only became politically salient in Malawi, where both groups are large in size, whereas in Zambia they are both small in size relative to the rest of the country. The large size of the two groups in Malawi gave them importance for political competition. This made the politicians in the country tend to politicize the social cultural cleavages between the two groups to gain political power. Posner describes the dynamics of politicizing cultural cleavages:

> If the cultural cleavage defines groups that are large enough to constitute viable coalitions in the competition for political power, then politicians will mobilize these groups and the cleavage that divides them will become politically salient. If the cultural cleavage defines groups that are too small to serve as viable bases of political support, then these groups will go unmobilized and the cleavage that separates them will remain politically irrelevant. (Posner, 2004, pp. 529-530)

Another example of politicized culture is the usage of religion by religious groups or parties in the parochial societies to score political gains. Understanding the differences between politicized culture and political culture can help clarifying the ongoing misconception which depicts a certain religion like Islam as an obstacle for the democratic process in developing Islamic societies. In his study on "the Rise of Muslim Democracy," Vali Nasr (2005) examined the case of Muslim democracies which arose during the 1990s in some Muslim-majority countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey. He described those parties as pragmatic who "do not seek to enshrine Islam in politics" but at the same time they use it "to help them win votes" (Nasr, 2005, pp. 13-14). This kind of Islamic parties, along with the

Islamist radical groups that demand the application of *sharia* in politics, are examples of how politicians politicize a cultural aspect for political gains.

Overall, and despite the goal from it, politicizing culture in a society dominated by parochial or subject culture and mobilizing people's political choices will delay the realization of democracy in the long run because such mobilization does not contribute to building a genuine democratic culture that is based on citizenship and political participation. On the contrary, mobilizing people's choices through monopolizing their religious sentiments will result in dragging the society backwards instead of moving it toward democracy.

Cultural traditions can contribute to facilitating and promoting political participation, especially in developing countries. However, the dominant type of political culture in any country can play an essential role in creating the atmosphere for certain actors to politicize and manipulate people's choices and beliefs to win political gains. Thus, the first and most important step to promote political participation and support the democratic transition in developing countries is to improve the individuals' political culture and transform it from a parochial and subject culture to a participant one.

At this point, it would be useful to apply the previous analysis of political culture to the case of Libya in order to understand the level of political participation in the Libyan society and consequently, women's political participation. Zahi El-Mogherbi (1989) conducted a study on the political culture in Libya during the Gaddafi regime. Mogherbi applied Almond and Verba's three types of political culture to the case of Libya and concluded that the Libyan political culture is a subject one, in which citizens are aware of the output of the political system but

unaware of their role in the system, and as a result, they will not participate in the policy-making process (found in Obeidi, 2001, p. 16). According to these findings, Libyan people, before the revolution, were fully aware of their duties but they had a much lower level of awareness with regard to their rights. The effect of this type of culture can be found in the low level of public civic engagement and political participation, as products of political culture.

Therefore, it is important to mention that the Libyan society with its categories, including women, had low-level participation rates by the time of the revolution. However, some social groups, especially women, showed high levels of political engagement and social activism since the beginning of the revolution, a behavior that contradicts the previous scholarly findings on this type of political culture. Therefore, my research explores the sudden changes in Libyan political culture after the revolution through studying women's activism and political engagement. It does that with special attention given to the effect of politicized culture, especially the religious aspect of it, on the future of women's participation in public life in Libya.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the actions of Libyan women during and after the revolution will be undertaken by applying the predominant frameworks derived from social movements theory to this case. Using social movements theory to explain the changes in the role of women in Libyan society would contribute to closing the gap in social movements literature, which has been limited to the contexts of North America and Europe and suffers from a dearth of studies on the Middle East and North Africa (Beinin & Vairel, 2013). Studying women's movements in Libya will also shed light on possible areas of interest for social movement studies on the region, which

had a sole focus so far on modern Islamic social movements (Bayat, 1997; Wickham, 2002; Wiktorowics, 2004).

The literature on social movements provides a way to understand how social movements emerge and evolve. The predominant approaches are structural (Gould, 1993; McAdam, 1999), rational (Lichbach, 1995; Olson, 1965), and cultural (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001; Jasper, 1997).

These three approaches arose as responses to the classical theories of social movements such as the mass society theory (Komhauser, 1959; Swingewood, 1977), and collective behavior theory (Blumer, 1951; Smelser, 1962). The classical framework argues that social movements are neither social nor political phenomena; rather, they are irrational, emotional events that come as the final stage of psychological tensions resulting from stressful social pressure (McAdam, 1999).

The departure from the psychology-oriented model to the rational, structural, and cultural oriented visions of social movements enriched the literature. An example of such approaches is the resource mobilization theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), which is considered the dominant social movement theory and is based on the idea of social movements as rational social organizations. However, this theory was criticized by the new wave of social movement theorists, who brought up missing elements from resource mobilization theory that weaken the theory's capability in providing a thorough understanding of social movements' mechanisms (Buechler, 1993; Fitzgerald & Rodgers, 2000; Piven & Cloward, 1991).

Elements like identity (Buechler, 1995) and culture (Morris & Mueller, 1992), which are missing from resource mobilization theory, are considered as two main factors in the social movement mobilization process. Becasue culture and women's self- realization of their identity during the revolution are important factors in understanding Libyan women's movements, resource mobilization theory provides a limited explanation of women's activism which is not enough to explain all aspects of Libyan women's social and political movements.

Another model in social movement literature, the political process model (McAdam, 1999), sees the movements as purely collective actions that rely on three basic factors that are essential to understand the origins of any collective action. Those factors are the political opportunities that make it possible for the group to take action, the framing process which presents the social context in which the opportunity and the action can take place, and the mobilizing structure which includes the organizations through which the group can function (McAdam, 1999). This model serves the purpose of this research study with regard to understanding women's choices in seizing and creating political opportunities in Libya. It also highlights the importance of the social context and cultural norms in the society within which the social movement is operating. The model also considers the relationship between the movement and the political structure.

Therefore, the political process model is modified in this dissertation to study the interaction of women and the revolutionary status in the society. This interaction can be understood by analyzing the mutual effect of women's contribution in revolutions, and the revolution's success in improving women's situation in the society. In this regard, the political

process model should be taken into account when studying this interaction in terms of the political structure of Libyan society, the relationship between the social structure and the state, and the rhetorical and symbolic bases of legitimacy which are based on the notion that "women as well as men have paid the price of victory [and] require that the achievements of women be integrated with other revolutionary myths, and that women share authority over them" (Tetreault, 1994a, pp. 18-20).

The political process model will be used as the theoretical base in this study to examine the origins and continuation of women's political and civic involvement following the revolution in Libya. Women's activism will be analyzed within temporal frames that include three time periods: the pre-revolutionary setting, the revolution period, and the post-revolution context. Analyzing the political and social structure of pre-revolutionary Libya is essential to this study, as it examines the environment in which specific gender roles were inherited in and accepted by the Libyan society. Also, studying the relationship between the society and the previous regime and its institutions provides necessary knowledge in order to understand the changes the revolution brought to this relationship. Finally, the examination of the rhetorical and symbolic legitimacy of women as equal partners in Libya after the revolution will provide a thorough understanding of how women perceive their role in the society and how this perception aligns with or contradicts the predominant norms and traditions of Libyan society.

CHAPTER 4

A BRIEF LOOK AT LIBYA'S HISTORY BEFORE GADDAFI

An Historical Review

With its 1200-mile-long Mediterranean coast and its strategic location in the center of North Africa, Libya, with its three historical regions of Fezzan in the south, Tripolitania in the west, and Cyrenaica in the east, was a constant target for conquerors and invaders throughout history. Starting with the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Vandals, and then the Arabs, who "transmitted the cultural and religious foundation to Libya that survives to the present" (Mark, 2003, p. 14), the Ottoman Turks took over in 1517 until the beginning of the twentieth century when Italy invaded and occupied Libya.

The Italian invasion lasted for 34 years (1911-1945) and ended when Italy was defeated in WWII. The Libyan battle against the Italian occupation was strong under the leadership of the Sanusi family, who provided not only military leadership for the resistance movement but also a spiritual one. In 1920 an agreement between the Italians and the Sanusi Family recognized Idris Sanusi as the Amir of the Libyan Interior. Yet the armed Sanusi resistance against the Italian occupation continued until 1931 when Omar Al-Mukhtar, the leader of the Libyan resistance movement, was executed (Mark, 2003).

Women played a big part in the Libyans' struggle against the Italian fascist army. Some women participated in the actual fighting; others provided logistic services for the freedom

fighters. Besides, women also contributed economically by initiating local services to provide for their children in the absence of the father (Henderson, 1984).

After World War II, and under the auspices of the United Nations, Libya gained its independence on December 24, 1951. King Idris Al-Sanusi announced the creation of the United Libyan Kingdom. The name was changed later to the Kingdom of Libya. For the first time in its modern history Libya was under an inland government, which established the first constitution of the country. The constitution declared the political system of government to be a federal system with central authority entitled to King Idris-I. The political system included an executive branch of Prime Minister and a Council of Ministers, and a bicameral legislative body composed of 103 elected Senate members. The first national elections were held two months after independence, in February 1952. In 1963, King Idris-I changed the state type from a three-state federal system to a unitary monarchy that "gathered more power to the throne and diminished the authority of the states" (Mark, 2003, p. 15). The three states of the federal system (the historical Fezzan, Tripolitania, and Cyrenaica described earlier) were replaced by 10 governorates. On September 1, 1969 the monarchy was ended when a group of low-ranked army officers seized control of the government and declared Libya a republic. A Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) was created with the membership of twelve of the revolutionary officers.

<div align="center">Political Environment in Libya Before Gaddafi</div>

The historical background of Libya provides an indication of the political environment in Libya before the 1969 military coup under the leadership of Mu'ammar Gaddafi as well as some understanding of the factors and elements that have shaped the nature of political engagement in

Libyan society. The long occupation history along with absence of political stability all contributed in preventing the Libyans from practicing a healthy political participation within a healthy political environment. For a long time, the connection between the nation and the government reflected a colonial relationship. Even after gaining independence in 1951 and during the short term of the monarchy, changes in the Libyan political culture did not appear to be obvious.

The reason for the slow changes in political culture is the fact that political culture requires time and action to be transformed from type to type. In the Libyan case, the challenge was to transfer the Libyan society, which suffered from being excluded from the political game for centuries, to become politically active. In this regard, the new monarchy regime faced multiple challenges, as it had to "create a sense of political loyalty, to develop a sense of national identity among the three provinces' citizens, and to build a state out of their multiple and contradictory interests" (Vandewalle, 2006, p. 43).

One important task was to transfer the Libyan political culture from being a subject culture to become a participatory one. In order to do so, the monarchy regime needed to provide not only a wide range of political freedom to the public but it also needed to draw an orientation program in which people could begin to learn how important their role is to the political process, considering the fact that

> Libya had passed from colonialism to independence at the behest of the Great
> Powers, without a unifying ideology or a movement whose goals and aspirations
> were shared throughout the country. In neighboring countries, independence was
> the end result of a drawn-out ideological or physical struggle that was instrumental
> in creating a sense of national identity. In Libya, however, political independence
> was sudden and unexpected. (Vandewalle, 2006, p. 44)

<u>Women in Libyan Society Before Gaddafi</u>

The social structure of Libyan society during the first half of the twentieth century until the independence in December 1950 was similar to that in most of the Arab world. The patriarchal nature of the society gave men the lion's share in participating in public life with all its political, social, economic and cultural aspects (Metz, 2003). This masculine nature led the community to deal with women often as second-class citizens with regard to rights and duties and also in terms of the ability to pose initiatives and to contribute in public life. Up until the early 1960s, conservative attitudes regarding women controlled the society (Metz, 2003).

Multiple factors contributed in this socio-cultural classification. Some of them are socio-economic and others are culturally related ones. Those factors are summarized in the following three main points: The profound social traditions, poor economic conditions, and low literacy rates. A thorough examination of each factor follows.

The profound social traditions linked the honor of the family, particularly that of the men, to the conduct of the females in the family. Women, based on those traditions, were treated as vulnerable creatures that required constant care and protection. The society was very strict in terms of women's public behavior to the extent that "the slightest implication of un-avenged impropriety, especially if made public, could irreparably destroy a family's honor" (Metz, 2003, p. 112). This constant pressure by society made it more convenient for families to keep their wives and daughters at home and away from the public eye to avoid any sullied reputation as a result of bad behavior. It also contributed to the well-accepted tradition at that time which

allowed families to marry off their daughters at a relatively young age, where they were expected to work (mainly at their husband's home) taking care of the family (Metz, 2003).

Through a number of laws and regulations to improve women's social and legal rights, the monarchy system attempted to make changes to the traditions of a society that depicts women as inferior creatures, morally and intellectually (Harris, 1986). Those rights included a "woman's right to choose her husband, the right for divorce, the right of political participation through voting. These regulations also gave women the right to own properties, and the right to establish forums and associations" (Obeidi, 2013, p. 5). Another law, passed to protect women from getting married at a young age, stated that no girl should be married against her will (Harris, 1986).

However, social changes require time to take place and the rights women gained through those progressive regulations took a long time to be applied on the ground in a broad scale. Only a small number of women took advantage of those rights at that time, a reality that was reflected in the limited participation of women in public life as compared to men.

Poor economic conditions limited women's participation in public life. By the time of its independence in December 1951, Libya was one of the poorest countries in the world. The per capita income per year was $30 in 1951. In 1960, just one year after oil was discovered in Libya and before the rapid development in the industry, the per capita income per year was $100 (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980). During that period of time, more than 70% of the labor force worked in the agricultural sector (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980). Women's role at that time was mostly limited to their work in the fields with other family members. It is worth noting that most

agricultural areas in Cyrenaica were destroyed during WWII (Vandewalle, 2006), which means that for women in the eastern part of the country even that option of work was limited. In addition, their lack of skills and qualifications limited other job options for women to the ones with low skill requirements (Obeidi, 2013). The hard economic conditions in the 1930s and 1940s led women to search for more financial resources by establishing small factories at home to make clothes, shoes, horse saddles, and crochet products (Alusta, 2006). Women were absent even from jobs traditionally practiced by women like nursing, administrative positions, and teaching (Vandewalle, 2006).

During the 1950s, Libya adopted a six-year social and economic development plan prepared by three United Nations' technical assistance teams aimed to improve the country's economic performance, which was hindered by long-held social beliefs. One of the main improvement-needed sections in the plan was the status of women and their absence from the labor force (Vandewalle, 2006).

The low literacy rates of only 10% literacy rate by the time of independence (Vandewalle, 2006) were a direct result of the poor economic levels in the newly independent state. Up until the end of the first half of the twentieth century, the education system in Libya was extremely underdeveloped. During the Ottoman period, the sole paths for learning were religious institutions, mostly in the mosques; this type of education was called "Kuttab." In such educational institutions, which provided mainly Arabic languages and Islamic studies, the number of students was limited to the youths whose families "recognized the value of education or had economic conditions that allowed the children to be spared from working" (El Fathaly &

Palmer, 1980). These factors—the awareness of the importance of education, and sacrificing extra income—made most families prefer educating their male children over their female ones, especially as the only future jobs that were available for the graduates were either working as teachers of Arabic language and Islamic science or as judges of Islamic jurisprudence (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980), all domains that are reserved for men.

The Italian colonization allowed the opening of some secular schools in the big cities. In the academic year of 1939-1940, there were 121 state elementary schools (including 81 schools for Italian settlers' children), fourteen of which were for girls (Wright, 2010). However, the Italian policy prevented Libyan students from proceeding education beyond the elementary level. This policy shows in the fact that by 1939 there were only two Arab secondary schools in Tripoli and one in Benghazi. All school subjects were taught in Italian language which appeared to be a policy to "produce relatively large numbers of Italian-speaking pupils, instilled with 'respect and devotion' for Italy" (Wright, 2010, p. 167). Those who wanted to pursue higher education had to travel to neighboring countries, mainly Egypt. These obstacles provided extra reasons for families not to invest in educating women.

Nonetheless, and despite all the discouraging circumstances regarding women's education, Libyan history in the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the work of some women who challenged all those circumstances and managed to prove their capability to learn and participate in the education process. Women like Hameeda Elenayzi, Khadija Eljahmey, Salha Eftaieta, and others were pioneers in Libyan history.

The name of Hameeda Tarakhan, or Hameeda Elenayzi, stands out in Libyan history as an example of a trailblazer who led the way for women in Libya and contributed to changing the society's perception of the role of women in general, and the importance of women's education in particular.

Hameeda was born in 1892 in the city of Benghazi. She was sent to Turkey to receive her education. When she came back to Libya with her teaching degree, she opened the first girls' school at her home in 1917. She taught the girls reading and writing and also sewing and knitting to provide them with skills to help them financially (Scout Arena, 2003). She was the first Libyan female teacher, the first female school principal, and the founder of the first women's association in Libya. (Majdey, 2014). Hameeda was also a cofounder of the first nursing school, female teacher institute, and the girl scout organization in Libya (Majdey, 2014). She also established the first women's association in 1954, through which she and her colleagues provided services to the society like helping women find jobs or teaching them crafts to help them financially.

Hameeda Tarakhan's success was achieved with the support she received from her family first and then from her husband, Abduljaleel Elenayzi. Her husband's belief in her social duty was behind his challenge of the profound conservative social norms. He protected Hameeda socially by committing an act that is not familiar to the Libyan traditions when he added his last name to hers and made her Hameeda Elenayzi, a name she became known by throughout her life.

The story of Hameeda Elenayzi summarizes the stories of those pioneer women whose social conditions helped them contribute to the development of the emerging Libyan society of the 1950s.

Even though the active participation of pioneer women was limited to the elites whose families were able to educate them and challenge the conservative norms of the society (Obeidi, 2013), those women took the lead in the process of women's education in Libya by teaching and administrating the first Libyan schools for girls in Benghazi, Tripoli, and Derna, an initiative that was supported by the new literacy law of 1952. According to this law, school education became mandatory for both sexes (Obeidi, 2013).

Women's Political and Social Participation Before Gaddafi

The limited representation of women in the social and work sector was reflected in their poor participation in the newly established political system. Libyan women were granted the right to vote in 1964 (Noureldeen, 2006). However, their actual political participation was limited and had an elective nature (Obeidi, 2013).

The civil work of Libyan women started with the establishment of the Women's Renaissance Society in Benghazi in 1954 followed by the formation of another women's organization in 1957 in Tripoli. Those organizations led the women's movement in Libya, which demanded—through petitions and demonstrations—equal political and civil rights for women in Libya (Bugaighis, 2012).

A careful examination of women's political participation under the monarchy shows that the focus of pioneer women at that time was not in getting elected to Parliament or being chosen

for a political position. Rather, the main goal for those women was building a strong social base for women's participation through spreading awareness of the importance of women's role in public life. They encouraged public engagement for women by the establishment of a number of women's associations and forums that flourished during the 1950s and 1960s. They also found a voice for women in the media by establishing magazines and radio shows targeting women.

One advocate for women's rights and cultural awareness through media channels was Khadija Al Jahmi. She was born in Benghazi in 1921, and finished her primary-school years in the Italian school in Benghazi with the support of her father and against all cultural traditions. She travelled to Egypt to continue her higher education and came back after five years with a teaching certificate and eagerness to improve women's conditions in Libya.

Khadija worked at different jobs from a teacher to a seamstress, and in 1956 she was offered a job on Libyan radio, an offer she hesitated to accept. With the support of Hameeda Elenayzi and others, Khadija challenged her cousins's death threats if she went on the air and took the job, which made her the first female voice on Libyan radio (Alusta, 2006). Her career in the media lasted for many years, during which she produced and hosted many radio shows targeting women and concerned with family issues like "Lights on the Society," "Woman's Corner," "Child's Corner," and "People's Lives," in addition to being the first female news presenter (Alusta, 2006).

In 1964, Khadija established the first women's magazine, which she used to reach out to women and encourage them to practice their newly gained rights and participate in the development process of their country. She showed a huge amount of devotion to her cause in that

she used to take the magazine's issues in her personal car and distribute them (Alusta, 2006). She was also the founder of the first youth magazine, *Alamal* (*Hope*) in 1975.

Khadija Al Jahmi's efforts, along with her colleagues of devoted women, contributed profoundly in awakening women's realization of their role in the social and political arenas and their capabilities of making changes in society. But the realization was oppressed before it could flourish when Gaddafi led a military coup against the monarchy in September 1969 and started a dictatorship regime that lasted for 42 years.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

This chapter studies women's political opportunities in three different time frames in order to examine the changes in the degrees of political participation and the levels of political opportunities available for women in Libya over time. The chapter starts by analyzing the political system under Gaddafi's regime and the level of political participation during his dictatorship. It highlights women's presence at every chance of opportunity or signs of political openness. The second section discusses the new prospects for women's participation as part of the rapid political and social changes that accompanied the uprising in February 2011. The last section is concerned with the opportunities available for women in the revolution's aftermath and during the state-building stage.

Women's Political Opportunities under Gaddafi's Dictatorship

In order to understand the level of engagement for a particular group in the society under a tyrant regime, we need to run a thorough analysis of the political relations present in the system. Women's political participation under the dictatorship rule of Gaddafi was a segment of the political system created and directed by Gaddafi.

Under dictatorships, the ceiling for political opportunities is normally low. The restrictions in political opportunities result from the fact that the tyrant regime has complete

control over all venues of public life in the society. The limitation in political opportunities could also result from the fact that the risks that arise from challenging the regime are higher than the potential benefits; those risks are more concerning in the case of a dictatorship regime like Libya.

This section analyzes the risks associated with political opportunity channels in Libya under Gaddafi's dictatorship. It sheds light on the general environment of political freedom and political opportunities under the Gaddafi regime, including the political opportunities' choices that were available for women.

<div align="center">Term Clarification</div>

Due to the special nature of the Libyan political system under Gaddafi's rule, there is a need to clarify some terms which will appear in this section. Those terms are:

*Mu'ammar Al-Gaddafi***:** The leader of the military coup in September 1969, which overthrew the monarchy. He is the creator of the Third Universal Theory, and the author of the Green Book. In 1979, he resigned from all his official positions. In 1989, he declared himself the leader of the revolution, and took the role of Head of State without official responsibilities (Martinez, 2007).

The Third Universal Theory (Alnatharya alaa'lamya Althalitha): The theory presented by Gaddafi as an alternative to Capitalism and Marxism. It presents Gaddafi's views of the best solutions for the political, economic, and social problems of mankind. This theory is described in Gaddafi's Green Book.

The Green Book (Alketab Alakhdar): Divided into three small volumes, the Green Book claims the answers for the most controversial questions in the universe. In the Green Book, Gaddafi described his ideas of "statelessness and of people managing their own affairs without state institutions" (Vandewalle, 1998, p. 93). He also insisted on "direct democracy" through which citizens will take control of the state (Vandewalle, 1998, p. 93).

Basic Popular Congress (Moutamar Shaa'bie Asassie): This term refers to the Libyan formal political structure since 1977, which was presented by Gaddafi as the solution for the problem of Democracy. The first part of the Green Book, published in January 1976, considered the BPCs to be the way in launching the "state of masses" (Obeidi, 2001, p. 48). In this system, all citizens are members in the BPC in their area of residency, and every BPC elects from its members a committee to lead the congress.

<div align="center">The Political and Social Environment under Gaddafi's Rule</div>

Since the military coup in September 1969, Libya witnessed remarkable changes that elongated to nearly every aspect of the Libyans' lives; political participation was an important aspect of those changes. To understand the mechanisms of political participation in Libya during Gaddafi's regime, it is important to focus on the nature of the political system, which can be roughly divided into three main periods:

1. (1969-1985): This period witnessed the introduction of Gaddafi's ideology and aimed to converse the newly established participatory political culture.

2. (1985-2000): This was the "golden era" for Gaddafi's regime in which he was able to establish his dictatorship and secure his regime through coercion and arbitrary procedures.

3. (2000-2011): This was the period when the regime started to open up to the West in an attempt to normalize relations with the Western powers through initiating domestic political and economic reforms.

These three periods are distinctive because each one provides "different mobilization and modernization processes initiated by the revolutionary regime" (Obeidi, 2001, p. 137). This mobilization process was programmed, according to the regime, in order to "provide different channels for mass political participation" (Obeidi, 2001, p. 137). This distinction in the political system had its effect on social life and political opportunities, as explained below.

<u>The First Period: The Diminution of Political Opportunities</u>

Gaddafi spent the first few years of his regime introducing his political ideology to Libyan society and tightening his control over the country. He sought to erase the validity of the monarchy era from people's lives (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016).

The first decade (1969-1979) witnessed a distinctive role of the army as an essential element of the authority structure. On April 15, 1973, Gaddafi announced the five principles of the popular revolution, which included the call for the formation of popular committees in each city, school, university, etc. The five principles stated that:

1) All existing laws are to be repealed and replaced by revolutionary procedures.
2) The country shall be purged of those who are politically unhealthy.

3) Civil liberties shall be accorded to the proletariat, but not to those who disdain the masses of common people. Consequently, arms will be distributed to many sectors of the population.

4) The people who will be agents of bureaucracy destruction will remove all those who belong to [the] caste of parasitic bureaucrats.

5) A proclaimed Cultural Revolution against all that is reactionary, misleading, and ruinous to young people's minds (Obeidi, 2001, p. 48).

Those five points carried a clear message to the mass public that no one was allowed to disagree with or criticize the political ideology of the new regime. They set up the restrictions within which people were permitted to express their political opinions. The only opinion allowed, according to these points, was the one agreeing with the trends of the revolution leadership; otherwise it would be considered an unhealthy political opinion and would be eliminated.

At that early time in Gaddafi's regime, the political culture in Libya, which was developed during the monarchy era, was still not affected by the new ideology. The new social and political dogma presented by Gaddafi faced opposition from wide sections of the population, especially intellectuals and university students. This resistance produced further state intervention (Simons, 1993).

Examples of the clashes between the regime and the groups who declared their dissentient opinions from Gaddafi's new political ideas occurred in different parts of the country. Some of the heaviest clashes took place in April 1976 when the Libyan army was involved in Guarian and Misrata in the northwest, and Yefren in the south (Simons, 1993). Another clash deserving mention happened in Benghazi, the largest city on the eastern side of the country,

when the regime interfered in the university student elections in 1976. The incident led to conflicts on the campus of Benghazi University. That particular incident led to a new phenomenon of public executions, which started with the public killing of three university students in Benghazi on April 7, 1977 (Makhlouf, 1988). That tragic event, which was the beginning of a series of public executions that took place in the following years in different parts of the country, occurred just one month after the announcement of the new political system on March 2, 1977. This new method to deal with opponents was meant to guarantee the lowest degree of domestic opposition. Even more, it made people accept the new political system without expressing their opinions; in other words, it reduced political opportunities to the minimum.

Within that political atmosphere, Libyans met the new political system ("the authority of people") when the formal name of the country changed from the Libyan Arab Republic to become the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. One of the main declared goals for this change was to help people obtain more power to express their opinions and views. However, at about the same time of formally handing out the authority to the masses to govern, Gaddafi created the "revolutionary committee" movement; this movement was introduced to the people as an enlightened group of young citizens whose mission was to help people to start ruling themselves by themselves. In reality, however, the revolutionary committees were

> ideologically committed activists keen to serve as cadres of the revolution. This group began with agitation and educational activities but came to acquire coercive and security responsibilities: the 1979 General People's Congress granted the revolutionary committees a range of powers to supervise the elections in the basic people's congresses, to nominate and veto candidates for office in the people's committees, and to dispense "revolutionary justice." (Simons, 1993, p. 196)

This revolutionary justice translated into violent activities against everyone who declared his or her opposition to the principles of revolution. Those activities ranged from terrifying people by crashing into their homes in the late hours of the night to blatant executions, an action that became "an annual routine pursued by the revolutionary committees in the streets and on [university] campuses" (Makhlouf, 1993, p. 6). One of the most shocking incidents occurred between May and June 1984, when Libyan television broadcast the assassination of Libyan citizens in several Libyan cities and villages. These violent actions, which took place during the holy Islamic month of Ramadan, came as a response from the regime to an unsuccessful attempt to execute Gaddafi earlier that year (Makhlouf, 1993).

<div align="center">Women's Role in Resistance</div>

The ruthlessness of the regime made it difficult for citizens to express their opinions. The situation was even harder on women, who would face two challenges: the regime's brutality and the society's restrictions. However, some cases of women publicly opposed to Gaddafi were recorded during the first and second periods of the regime, when his power and control were at their highest points.

Female students were engaged in the students' movement of the 1970s and 1980s. They were present during the bloody events of 1976. Women's engagement did not take the form of armed resistance or violent opposition; it was mainly in the form of verbal mobilization, providing logistic support to male associates, and printing and distributing flyers against the regime (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015). However, the way the regime reacted to those actions was not different than its reaction toward any other opposition.

A prominent case with the names of the girls involved is still alive in the memory of the conservative society. A group of female students was active in mobilizing the students on the campus of Tripoli University in 1976 as a response to the regime's executions of the university students in Benghazi. Seventeen female students, fifteen originally from Benghazi and two from Tripoli, went from classroom to classroom calling for suspension of classes and urging the students to go out on demonstrations. They were arrested and tortured for a few days before they were released with travel restrictions and a suspension from the university (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015).

Fatima Al-Ta'aeb was one of them. Her story with the regime did not stop there. Even after what she went though with her friends, they did not stop searching for venues to express their resistance. Fatima, along with her younger sister Zakiea and three of her college friends who shared the previous prison experience with her, tried to contact the opposition abroad and offered their help: she reported, "They did not reply to our request. We then formed a cell and sent our names to them" (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015).

After a failed attempt to assassinate Gaddafi in 1984, the cell's information was found with the attack squad. All cell members were arrested. Fatima, who was by then married and the mother of a two-year-old daughter, was transferred from Benghazi to Tripoli with her sister and Iman Faitoury, another member of the cell, with their heads covered in black plastic bags and their hands cuffed.

> They put us in isolated cells for three days, they would call us late at night for investigation, they would hit us and call us names and make us sign on papers without reading them. We would spend the whole day with our heads covered and our hands cuffed. This torture lasted for three months then we were transferred to [a] women's criminal jail in which a new section was built just for us; the political prisoners. (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015)

Fatima's sister was released after two weeks of imprisonment after Fatima took full responsibility and claimed that her younger sister knew nothing about the cell: "There was an aged guard who used to bring food to our cell. Every time he entered the room I see tears in his eyes. One day when he was delivering the food he whispered to me that my sister was released" (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015).

Fatima and her female friends spent four years in the political prison. There were ten people in a small room with no visits allowed. Their release came as part of a blanket amnesty in 1988. Their husbands, who never gave up on them, came to Tripoli to take them home to Benghazi. Fatima's daughter, who was about six years old by then, did not recognize her (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015).

Fatima stated that, despite all the pain and agony, she never regretted what she did: "A lot of people told us why you did this? You are women; this is not your business. We as girls never thought we would be in danger; our movement was easier than men whose movement was under the regime's tight control. That was our duty towards our country" (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015).

If Fatima and her friends came out from their confrontation with the regime stronger, other women suffered from psychological and social problems. Jameela Fallag was imprisoned and tortured for distributing political leaflets against the regime; she went on food strikes and tried to kill herself several times (Fallag, 2013).

<u>The Second Period: More Control, Less Brutality</u>

Women, as a component of Libyan society, did not stop searching for opportunities to project their voice. The brutal reaction towards opposition in general and female political

activities in particular which took place in the first period of the Gaddafi regime tuned down in the second period when the regime started using different strategies to deal with women's activism. An example is Shahrazad Kablan, who had an encounter with the Gaddafi revolutionary committee in her first year of college during one of the obligatory mobilizing camps for new students. She recalled,

> It was 1986, right after the American airstrike on Tripoli and Benghazi. A member of the revolutionary committee was lecturing us on how bad Reagan was. I stood up in the lecture hall and told him that the whole thing is a disagreement between two presidents. He did not like it when I called Gaddafi president; he wanted me to call him the leader of the revolution. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

Shahrazad insisted on her opinion and told the lecturer that he would be deceitful if he did not admit the fact that Gaddafi had all the powers of a president even if he did not call himself so. Shahrazad stated that the revolutionary committee member asked her about her name and then

> He started reviling my family and called it a bourgeoisie family. They dragged me out and took me to the committee's office on campus and detained me there for twelve hours. They finally allowed my brother to take me home at two o'clock in the morning after my brother told them that I am young and don't understand what I am saying. He even pulled my ear in their office and apologized to them just to get me out of the situation. It was a hard experience to learn that you must lie and close your mouth in order to be safe. We as girls should not cause troubles to our families. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

Under such circumstances it was difficult for ordinary citizens to gain any political opportunities to challenge the regime, especially under the firm hand of the revolutionary committees who "developed a broad power base within society and have become tools to destroy the opposition (the enemies of the revolution) inside or outside society" (Obeidi, 2001, p. 146).

When the revolutionary committee movement was established, its role was supposed to be temporary; it was meant to withdraw when the state of masses came into existence (Obeidi, 2001). However, things did not go that way, and as time went by, the movement started to play a bigger role within the Libyan political system.

> A wave of dissatisfaction and alienation emerged among many segments of society as a consequence of the heavy tactics used by the revolutionary committees to silence any opposition. In effect, their role undermined any meaningful popular participation and stifled freedom of expression. Many citizens felt that they were not able to express themselves. They were frightened that any criticism might be understood as opposition to the revolution and its leader. (Obeidi, 2001, p. 146)

As a result of the regime's repressive policies, the whole country was reformed politically, socially, economically, and culturally. Metz describes the situation in Libya after two decades of Gadhafi's regime.

> By the late 1980s, Libyan society clearly showed the impact of almost two decades of attempts at restructuring. The country was an army-dominated state under the influence of no particular class or group and was relatively free from the clash of competing interests. Almost all sources of power in traditional life had been eliminated or coopted…...Libya had discarded most of the traditional trappings and was using its great wealth to transform the country and its people. (Metz, 2003, p. 109)

Those restrictions were harder on women, as women were seen as the carriers of their family's honor: "if the man got arrested for political reasons, it is ok, he is a hero. But if a woman was arrested for the same reasons, it is a serious deal" (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016).

The Third Period: Economic and Political Reforms

Gaddafi conducted hostile actions in the international arena during the 1970s and 1980s targeting Western countries; those actions included funding terrorist groups like the IRA, bombing a nightclub in Berlin in 1986, and finally the involvement in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988. That latest involvement led to the isolation of Libya from the international system and to the imposition of economic and political sanctions on the country. The sanctions were imposed in 1992 and lifted in 2003 (UN News Center, 2003) after the invasion of Iraq. His fear of facing a fate similar to Saddam Hussein's made Gaddafi anxious to repair his relations with the West. He terminated his program of Weapons of Mass Destruction and opened the country for foreign inspectors (Murphy, 2004).

Normalizing relations with the West required Gaddafi to apply limited reforms to gain the trust of the world powers. These reforms included the improvement of human rights conditions and liberties and were led by Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi, Gaddafi's second son, who was seen as his father's most likely successor (BBC News, 2012). The reforms included changing the regime's strategies towards the opposition. Deals were made with long-term opposition groups like the Muslim Brotherhood movement in order to include them in the political system (Altaweel, 2015).

Individuals and associations took advantage of the new political openness to lobby for more human rights reformation. Women were part of the process. Azza Maghur, a lawyer and human rights activist, worked for years to improve legal rights for women in Libya. She had multiple encounters with the regime during the last decade of the Gaddafi rule when she took

advantage of the new political openness. She called for improvement in human rights conditions in general and women's rights in particular. Azza takes credit for the progress made towards passing a law to approve women's rights to pass Libyan nationality on to their children, a privilege only men in Libya enjoyed. Libyan men who are married to non-Libyans can automatically pass their nationality to their children, whereas Libyan women who are married to non-Libyans are denied that right (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016). She was the first lawyer in Libya to call for criminalizing sexual harassment in work places and criticized the legal restrictions on creating effective civil society organizations (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016).

Azza stated that her activities were constrained by the regime. She recalled one of her latest clashes with the regime just a few months before the revolution: "In November 2010, I spoke with the chairman of the Bar Association in Libya about the issue of not having an active civil society in Libya. I told him that since a normal civil society is not allowed, there is a need to visualize a different type of it" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016). Azza and a group of lawyers decided to hold a public seminar to discuss the issue. "We planned for the seminar in my office. At that day I felt scared; when you live under a dictatorship for a long time you would feel scared when you cross the line. I felt the danger that evening; I felt we were crossing the line" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016).

The seminar was held in the Bar Association in November 2010, during which Azza presented her paper titled "Civil Society in Libya: The Shadow Institutions." In her paper, Azza

criticized the conditions of the civil society in Libya and compared it to the civil society the

Libyans created under the Italian colonization.

> I concluded with the prediction that the civil society in Libya will evolve virtually
> through social media and one day it will come out and change reality. I remember
> that the whole room had a burst of outrage; members of the revolutionary
> committee movement attacked us verbally and demanded [that I] apologize for
> what I had said in my presentation. I went home that night with an alarming
> feeling all over me. (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016)

Azza published her paper online and after a few days she received a phone call from the

main office of the revolutionary committee. She was ordered to come to the committee office the

next day. She called a friend and gave her the number of Human Rights Watch. "I told her if

anything happened to me, call them. I went there without even telling my husband. A member of

my staff went with me. I told him if I did not come out in two hours to go tell my husband to take

my daughters and flee the country" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016).

Azza, who acted based on her knowledge of the brutal history of the regime, knew that

she did nothing wrong when she used a peaceful way to oppose the system: "I was doing my job

as a lawyer; I had no anticipation of authority" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11,

2016). Azza found seven men from different security institutions waiting for her in a dark

meeting room. They told her that reports were filed about her anti-popular system activities.

> Their words were full of indirect threat. I asked them if any of them read my
> article? And I found out that only one did actually read it. I asked that guy if there
> was any instigation in my paper and he said that I used a scientific approach and
> that he did not see any incitation in it. Then I argued with them, saying that they
> lost communication with the youth who started a new type of civil society in the
> shadow. I broke my pencil and said, "You don't want anyone to tell you what's
> right and what's wrong." I felt that I managed to convince them. (Azza Maghur,
> personal interview, May 11, 2016)

When Azza left, she called the Bar chairman, who told her that other participants in the seminar were also questioned: "A few days later, I met a friend who was close to the leadership of the revolutionary committee movement. He told me that our seminar was a big issue and Gaddafi was going for more brutal ways to punish us and even execute our chairman but other voices in his close circle convinced him to listen to us" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016).

Azza's experience with the regime in its last years proves the changes in the regime's approach towards the opposing voices domestically and abroad. The margins of political opportunity expanded and Gaddafi started to tolerate the challenging opinions more than before. However, this new strategy toward opposition was limited and did not last long enough for people to use it more effectively. Individual cases of lighter encounters with the regime were recorded but a significant change on a broader level was not accomplished.

<p align="center">Women's Political Opportunities During the Revolution</p>

A basic assumption in social movements literature explains that political opportunities become possible when changes in political and social settings take place and lead to the vulnerability of the established order (Wickham, 2002). Social movements scholars specify five conditions under which political opportunities can be prolonged (Wickham, 2002, p. 2):

1) The extension of participation to new actors.
2) Changes in political alignments.
3) Emerging divisions among elites.
4) The appearance of influential allies.
5) A decline in the state's capacity or will to repress dissent.

Based on these conditions, the possibility for political opportunity to expand is subject to the type of political environment and the degree of political flexibility the government obtains. Therefore, it goes without saying that increasing political opportunities under dictatorship regimes is much harder than developing those opportunities within a democratic environment. Wickham (2002) stated that

> In authoritarian settings, in which the risks of participating in an opposition movement are high and the prospects of effecting change are, at best, uncertain, even the most aggrieved citizens may retreat into self-preserving silence. Hence the burden is on movement organizers to create the motivations and venues for political protest and, in so doing, enable citizens to overcome the powerful psychological and structural barriers to participation erected by the authoritarian state. (p. 204)

Thus, the likelihoods to develop new political opportunities become limited under nondemocratic regimes and more likely to happen as part of, or as a result of, a major political and social event like an uprising or a revolution. Such huge events would disturb the previous political and social balance to create the perfect environment for the five conditions mentioned above to thrive.

The usage of political opportunities and constraints in studying Libyan women's participation in the revolution represent the basic idea of creating and seizing the chance. Taking into consideration the limitations of women's pre-revolution public participation in Libya, one would expect that women would lean on the society's profound vision of women as recipients of care and citizens with no leadership abilities. Women had to decide whether to be free riders, a position that comes with no shame in this case, or decide to take initiatives and participate profoundly in the revolution despite the risk that comes with that participation.

Holding back and being free riders was expected, welcomed, and even accepted by the Libyan conservative patriarchal society. However, women decided not to be free riders; the involvement of women in the Libyan revolution against Gaddafi's regime was splendid. Iman Bugaighis describes the beginning of the revolution as a "volcano"; she explains the effect of it on women and society:

> What happened was beyond any logic. The revolution empowered everyone, especially women. Women participated from day one. The fact that those women were from well-known families with good reputation and they chose to leave their comfort zone to join the uprising without any previous planning caused a shock for the society. The number of women who took that responsibility caused another shock and made the presentation of women in this event a de facto. (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November, 4, 2015)

<u>Harbingers of the Revolution</u>

Even though the revolution against Gaddafi's tyranny was an impulsive popular action, two factors contributed in inflaming the spontaneous event: the other Arab uprisings which took place in neighboring countries, especially in Tunisia and Egypt, and the increased tension in Benghazi which started to become part of the city's daily life until it was surmounted with the arrest of Fathi Terbil, the lawyer in the infamous case of Abu Salim prison, on February 15, 2011.

The Libyan uprising started a few weeks after the Tunisian and the Egyptian revolutions took place. The timing of the Libyan revolution places it third in the series of the popular uprisings that swept the Middle East in 2011 and connects it with the rest of the uprisings. Zahra' Langhi was in Egypt when the Egyptian revolution broke. She opened a Facebook account on January 28, the "day of rage" in the Egyptian revolution, and called for a day of rage in Libya. At

that moment she felt that there was "a real opportunity to have a homeland to go back to" (Zahra'
Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015).

A page on Facebook was created to call for a popular uprising in Libya and February 17,
2011 was to be the date for it. That particular date was chosen to honor the people who were
killed by security forces on the same date back in 2006. On that day an impulsive protest took
place in Benghazi in response to anti-Islam statements made by Roberto Calderoli, the Italian
minister of reforms. The angry protestors attacked the Italian consulate in Benghazi (Cole, 2014).
The protests led to confrontations between the angry protestors and the security forces. The
clashes lasted for three days and resulted in the burning down of more than 30 governmental
buildings; 11 protestors were killed and 35 others were injured (*Alriyadh Newspaper*, 2006). The
fact that the suggested rage date marks a bloody day in the collective memory of the Libyan
people indicates that the uprising in Libya was not just inspired by the revolutions in other Arab
countries. It was, rather, an opportunity for old grievances to come back to the surface.

<u>The Arrest of Fathi Terbil</u>

As part of the regime's cautious measures to prevent the planned protests on February 17,
the regime security forces arrested Fathi Terbil, the lawyer of Abu Salim's case,[1] in the evening
of February 15. At that night, the mothers, wives, and daughters of Abu Salim's victims

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[1] The Abu Salim case refers to the infamous event of June 29, 1996 in which the regime responded to the strikes of political prisoners in Abu Salim prison demanding better conditions by killing 1270 political prisoners in about three hours. The regime hid the crime for years and families of the victims were not informed of the killing of their beloved ones until 2003, when rumors started to spread about the massacre and Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi took charge of the issue through his human rights organization and tried to resolve the situation before it received international attention.

protested in front of the internal security building in Benghazi demanding Terbil's release

(Obeidi, 2013). "The ladies chanted that night, 'Wake up, Benghazi, this is the day you've been

waiting for'; there and then, the revolution started (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November

13, 2015).

The women's protest lasted for a few hours, and the lawyer was released in the early

morning of February 16 (AlArabiya, 2011); however, Benghazi did not rest. The next day, a

small number of protestors, mostly lawyers and human rights activists, started a sit-in in front of

the court building in Benghazi, holding signs demanding better human rights and urgent reforms.

Iman Bugaighis, along with her sister Salwa, the lawyer, were among the first handful of people

who protested at the court that day. She recalls what happened:

> I told my sister, "If you go out to protest, I will come with you." She called me
> and said, "They are going to the court." I was preparing to grade exam papers for
> my class in the college of dentistry; I put the papers aside and came back to them
> six months later! I picked up my daughter from school and dropped her off at my
> mother's place. My sister did the same with her kids; she only went with her
> husband and her oldest son. We left home around noon and did not know if we
> [would] come back. (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015)

Iman and her sister Salwa were among the first group of people to protest for democracy

and human rights. The group was around 60 to 70 people, 15 of whom were women. "At first,

we demanded reforms and called for democracy, freedom, and equality but when the killing of

the unarmed protestors started, the young people started to arrive at the court and demand the

toppling of the regime" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015). Iman and the

other court protestors tried to keep the protest's original demands. They thought that the pressure

would eventually lead to the long-awaited reforms, but they failed in convincing the angry youth

to continue the call for reforms (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015). The young protestors led the crowds, carrying the demands for Gaddafi to step down. The regime forces met the unarmed protestors with live bullets and anti-aircraft missiles. At that time, there was no turning back: "It was too late, the blood was already shed" (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015).

Iman Bugaighis reflected on the situation: "The regime was very confused and did not know how to deal with the situation. If Gaddafi sent people to arrest the women in the court, the whole movement could have ended. There was a list of wanted people and my sister Salwa was one of them because she was one of the organizers" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015).

During the first few days of the uprising, the women's role was established on different levels. When considering the brutal history of how Gaddafi dealt with opposition, it is worth noting that women came out of their comfort zone during the most threatening and dangerous days of his rule. Hana El-Gallal left her home on February 17, 2011 without telling her family. She took her two children to her sister's and told her to take care of them because she was going

> on a one-way-ticket journey. No one believed that Gaddafi could be overthrown; it was a crazy moment. I arrived [at] the court and everyone was cheering. I felt so safe. It was an amazing feeling. The feeling of suspicion and hate was not there anymore; we were one. It was a feeling I never experienced before; it was like a dream. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015)

<u>Women's Role in the Uprising</u>

The decision made by Libyan women to participate in the revolution was reflected in the level of participation and the number of turnouts in the protests and social programs to help the wounded and search for the missing people during the war. Women were the backbone of the

revolutionary movement by providing logistic services to the front line from nursing to cooking thousands of meals a day for the revolutionists at the battlefront (Bugaighis, 2012).

Women's participation in the revolution was not limited to the women in Benghazi and the eastern part of the country. The western side of Libya, especially the capital city, Tripoli, suffered from a siege that lasted for six months. During this time, the people had to respond to the regime's brutality by using different forms of resistance. Even there, women were involved in the revolution as they "hid fighters and cooked them meals. They sewed flags, collected money, contacted journalists. They ran guns and, in a few cases, used them" (Barnard, 2011). Moreover, women smuggled weapons to the revolutionists, tended wounded rebels, and some of them worked as guides for NATO to find airstrike targets in Tripoli (Barnard, 2011). Examples of the courageous acts of Libyan women in the besieged cities during the revolution included the following:

> Aisha Gdour, a school psychologist, smuggled bullets in her brown leather handbag. Fatima Bredan, a hairdresser, tended wounded rebels. Hweida Shibadi, a family lawyer, helped NATO find airstrike targets. And Amal Bashir, an art teacher, used a secret code to collect orders for munitions: Small-caliber rounds were called "pins"; larger rounds were "nails." A "bottle of milk" meant a Kalashnikov. (Barnard, 2011)

Hana El-Hebshi was a recipient of the International Women of Courage Award in 2012 (U.S. Department of State, 2012) for her intelligence role during the revolution, as she advised NATO of the military locations to strike. She also worked with her family in manufacturing hand-made bombs and delivered them to the revolutionaries. International media knew Hana by her pseudonym "Numidia." She provided regular reports on the situation in Tripoli and human rights violations under the siege of Gaddafi. She recalls her strategy: "I was using different

phone numbers—up to 18 and with two different phone companies. I would only call while in a moving car, I never call[ed] from home and my brother was always with me" (El-Hebshi, 2012).

<div align="center">Seizing the Opportunity</div>

Political opportunities in the time of crisis are not given; they are detained and earned by the challenging group. Various factors can play a role in deciding the size and limits of political opportunity. In the case of the Libyan revolution, women earned their opportunity from day one when the mothers of Abu Salim's victims protested in front of the security building commanding the release of their attorney. At that time, those women were the only section in the Libyan society that had experience in protesting. The permit given to those families to protest was meant to absorb the popular outrage that was fueled by the crime committed by the government of killing more than 1200 prisoners in Abu Salim prison in three hours. Years of silent protests in Benghazi made those women the perfect starters of the uprising. Fathi Terbil, the attorney for the victims' families, explained the circumstances under which those women played a major role in initiating the uprising.

> In the last four years of Gaddafi's regime, the mothers, sisters, and wives of the Abu Salim Massacre used to protest every Saturday to demand justice for their beloved ones. They took advantage of the regime's signs of openness, which were the result of national and international pressure. Therefore, women played a huge role in preparing for the revolution and participating in it. The bravery of those wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters was unimaginable. They created the rebellion culture through their weekly protests. (Obeidi, 2013, p. 9)

When the uprising started, the situation required the revolutionaries to put in the foreground the people with expertise and capabilities who were able to manage the situation.

Women rose as the perfect choice. Iman Bugaighis described the situation during the first few

days in the court:

> Most of the people inside the courthouse did not have leadership qualities; they
> did not have the skills or the vision to deal with the situation. Most of them were
> lawyers who did not speak other languages. I was chosen to be the spokesperson
> of the Transitional Council because I was prepared for the position. I was
> professional and tried to provide as accurate information as I could. I worked with
> efficiency and professionalism; that made foreign press and international human
> rights organizations ask to work with me by name. It was a foregone conclusion I
> would be the perfect person for the job. (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview,
> November 4, 2015)

However, even though Iman believes that she was the best choice to be the first

spokesperson in the revolution, she admits that being a woman in that position in itself was a

message sent to the international community: "Women's presence in the picture was very crucial

in the beginning of the revolution. My sister and I did not wear *hijab* (head scarf); our role was to

change the stereotype of Libyan women and to reassure the West that our revolution is not an

Islamist one" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015).

Women's choice to take the newly opened opportunity to the maximum limit did not

come without a risk. Najla Elmangoush was willing to take that risk when she agreed to go on

the third day of the revolution to a radio station located in Abu-Dezzerah, a small town located in

the Benghazi suburbs. She went with two other female activists, Salwa El-Deghali and Hana El-

Gallal. The three women were accompanied by a group of young revolutionary men whom Najla

had never met before. They had no weapons, yet she trusted them for protection. They drove

about an hour to check whether they could use the radio station to broadcast the revolution's

updates and to encourage the people of Benghazi and the surrounding cities. The building was

partly destroyed, and the young men spent a long time trying to fix the wires and get the station working again. Najla describes that moment:

> When we started the broadcasting, we all sat [in] a circle and handed the microphone to each other to say one thing: "Libya is free." It was a wonderful feeling and a touching moment I will cherish forever; we were all crying…. I did not think at that time of the risky situation we were in. I did not want to think that our broadcasting was live and Gaddafi's air forces could have easily located our position and strike us. I was like a child exploring a new toy. When I recall that day, I always ask myself, "What was I thinking when I did that?" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015)

Najla read the first declaration of the uprising and requested people to remain calm and to submit any arms in their possession to the collection points in the city. She and her companions stayed in the radio station until a late hour that night (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

<div align="center">Creating Opportunities</div>

Participating in the revolution was not limited to certain geographic locations. Libyan women in exile did not allow the distance to stop them from doing their share. They created their own opportunities to participate in the revolution. Shahrazad Kablan, who had lived in exile in the United States for more than sixteen years by the time of the revolution, decided it was time for her to do something for her country. She left her home in Ohio and took an unpaid leave from her work to camp in front of the White House. She felt that it was her duty to get the Libyan people's message across to the decision makers in Washington, D.C. She risked her family's safety and her chances of re-entering Libya, had the revolution been suppressed, when she agreed to appear on Al-Jazeera news channel with her full name to talk about the uprising in

Libya (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016). Shahrazad also created a network to deliver the revolutionary message to decision makers in the U.S. She met teams from the National Security Council and the United Nations and talked to them about the demands of the revolutionaries and the brutality of the regime. She also played a role in convincing the Libyan ambassador to declare his dissension with the regime (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016). However, her biggest contribution was when she became the first female face to appear on TV on the revolutionary channel "Libya al-Ahrar" to present a daily show that lasted until the liberation of Tripoli in August 2011 and earned huge popularity among Libyans.

Another example is Zahra' Langhi, daughter of a prominent opposition member, who left the country when she was three years old and had lived her whole life in exile. However, when the revolution started she felt responsible to do her share in the big event. She started contacting international media to provide an update on what was going on in Libya. When she was asked who she was, she gave herself a title as the Libyan opposition coordinator in Egypt (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015).

Zahra' was emotionally affected by the Egyptian revolution and decided it was time for Libya to revolt against Gaddafi's dictatorship. She contacted Libyan and Egyptian journalists and intellectuals and created a movement called Egyptian Friends for a Free Libya through which she tried to show

> the real cultural and civilizational face of Libya to counter the image of Libyans in the West as illiterates and uncivilized. I knew the West was apprehensive of the situation in Libya. Our goal was to show the civilized dimension of our revolution and highlight the fact that Gaddafi's intransigence was the reason our revolution changed from being a peaceful uprising to become an armed revolution. (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015)

Zahra's contribution did not stop there. She started a hotline with her cousins in Libya to follow up with the developments on the ground and worked as an outreach station connecting the international media with people inside. She also organized different courses for Libyan youth to be trained in Egypt in areas like civic journalism and documentation of human rights, in which she insisted on including female participants. Those girls who were eager to learn by taking the risk of traveling by car from Libya to Egypt "formed the basis of youth journalism in Libya which took off in the period after the revolution and many of them [are] still working as correspondents for news television channels and newspapers (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015).

Rationalizing Women's Actions

When looking at women's actions in the beginning of the revolution and how they chose to rise for the occasion, a question must be asked: Why didn't women choose to be free riders? Why did they choose to risk their lives and reputations by being in the heart of the event? Women made their decision to be part of the event at all levels—individually by taking specific responsibilities at the leadership level and collectively by protesting in the streets and conducting sit-ins in the squares of Benghazi and other eastern Libyan cities since day one of the revolution. They also decided to be in the heart of the event by tending the wounded rebels and smuggling weapons in Tripoli and other western cities when it was under siege by Gaddafi's soldiers. That decision was taken under critical circumstances considering the fact that Gaddafi's regime was still in its full powers.

Therefore, women participated in the revolution because they sought an ultimate goal of freedom and equality, which exceeded their narrow interests of safety and risk-free choices. As Najla Elmangoush, a divorced mother of two girls, explicitly stated, "I did not join the revolution to pursue a personal dream, I did so because I always believed that we deserved a better life. Part of me wanted to rebel [against] the social and political restrictions we suffered from. That's why I was working for more than twelve hours a day during the revolution without feeling tired; the revolution was our hope" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

Iman Bugaighis provided a different motivation for participating in the revolution when she claimed it was her duty to participate since she was a role model for her students: "I had to be in the first line; I felt I would betray my students if I [didn't] participate" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015).

Hana El-Gallal, the international law professor who joined the revolution on February 17, 2011 and was present during the first official meeting of the Transnational Council, offered another illustration of women's motivations for joining the revolution:

> There are hidden memories we all have; those memories affect our decisions in life. I was a child during the 1980s and I lived through Gaddafi's public executions of university students. I always wondered why the older people at that time did not support the youth and stop Gaddafi from doing what he did to them. I always thought things could've been different had they stood up to his actions. When the uprising started in 2011, I was … the same age my parents were in the 1980s; I felt responsible not to let the youth down. I did not want to repeat the mistake the generation before us did back in the 1980s. Therefore, when the youth went out on the streets, I went with them. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015)

Women's Political Opportunities in Libya After the Revolution

The rapid political and social changes that accompanied the occurrence of the revolution were temporally attached to the status of revolution in the first few months of the uprising against the Gaddafi regime. A new status was created as soon as Gaddafi was captured and killed and the chair of the National Transitional Council delivered the liberation speech on October 24, 2011. That date marked the start of the state-building process that requires a separate analysis of the political opportunities accessible for women during this transition era.

Women started the state-building phase willing to maintain their newly gained political and social status and sustain it through the transitional period. However, despite the efforts to secure a place for women in the decision-making process, concerns were raised about securing sustainable public activities and a continued political participation for women after the revolution. Women's presence in the public sphere witnessed a backlash two years following the revolution. Women, who scored new records of participation and creating new opportunities in the first two years after the revolution, started to lose their position as a complete partner in the state-building process. The interviewees for this research indicated three main factors as the reasons for the decrease in women's political opportunities:

1. The assassination of Salwa Bugaighis, the lawyer and Vice Chair of the National Dialogue Preparatory Commission on June 25, 2014.
2. The rise of Islamist groups.
3. Lack of security and the proliferation of arms.

Those new factors show that obstacles to women's political participation go beyond the traditional perception of women; the lack of security and the absence of the rule of law along

with the extreme levels of violence among the unchecked militias, the rise of extremist Islamist groups, and the increased number of war crimes are all indicators of the challenges women encounter in new Libya.

Hana El-Gallal stressed the role played by the Islamist groups in reducing women's chances of keeping their political gains: "Islamist stream gained a sudden strength in the Arab Spring countries. Its extreme thought does not accept women's presence in the public sphere; it does not allow women to work or travel without a male chaperone. All these restrictions led to the reduction of women's public role" (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015).

The call for a limited role for women in politics came from different sides, from Islamist political groups and armed militias to some General National Congress (GNC) male members. Examples of violations against female politicians ranged from verbal abuse to assassination. Mohamed Kilani, an Islamist member in the GNC, demanded the female members of the GNC to be seated in a different room from men because "GNC members are distracted by their colleagues who wore make up, dressed indecently and mingled with men" (Libyan Women's Platform for Peace [LWPP], 2014). Another incident happened when a member in the GNC physically attacked a female GNC member because she disagreed with him. The same individual is now the head of Dawn of Libya Operation, the biggest militia group in Tripoli (LWPP, 2014).

The lack of security and the absence of the rule of law had a negative effect on women's participation in the public arena. Women became

> targeted segments in the streets and in their homes. During the revolution we knew where the threat is coming from. Now I receive threats and I cannot tell who is behind them. I received daily threats in the form of message on the phone or a letter on my car [wind]shield. They threatened me that that if I don't stop my

work they will enter my home and kill my kids. I had to flee the country with my family. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015)

Female members of the Council of Representatives received their share of threats and attacks as well. Houses of some female representatives and candidates were robbed and burned down. Other female representatives received threats to burn down their houses (LWPP, 2014).

However, the attacks against women reached an unprecedented level with the murder of Salwa Bugaighis, a lawyer and human rights activist and Vice Chair of the National Dialogue Preparatory Commission (LWPP, 2014). Salwa, who was one of the first Libyans to participate in the uprising against Gaddafi, had to flee the country, just like other activists, after receiving death threats. She came back to Benghazi to vote in the parliamentary elections held in June 2014. She posted her photos in the voting center on social media and spent the day encouraging the people of Benghazi to go out and vote to secure a better future for Libya (LWPP, 2014). That same day, according to the story of her gardener, several hooded men entered her home and brutally killed her and kidnapped her husband (*The Guardian*, 2014). An investigation was claimed to be opened on the incident but no charges been filed since.

Salwa's murder was a "decisive event" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016) and a turning point for women's activism in Libya, as most female activists had to flee the country after receiving death threats, the thing that made "the whole women's movement [revert] to an idle status. After Salwa's assassination, women came under huge familial and societal pressure to stop or reduce their activities for their own safety" (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015).

After the assassination of Salwa Bugaighis, more women were murdered in different Libyan cities. Fariha Al-Berkawi, a former GNC member, was killed in Derna, her home city, and Salwa Henied, a member of the national security under the Gaddafi regime, was also killed by uncharted killers.

The difficult times through which the country is going call for cautious measures to be taken by women's organizations and individuals alike. However, Libyan women, who refused to be free riders during the revolution, did not stop their efforts to secure a sustainable and meaningful place for women in the Libyan political and civic arenas. Even though most female activists fled the country after the increased violence against women and after receiving threats (LWPP, 2014), women's rights organizations did not stop their work in supporting women's rights through organizing regular meetings and workshops held abroad in countries like Egypt and Tunisia. Moreover, despite freezing their activities on the ground, a large number of activists

> used their time outside of Libya to improve their skills in building capacity camps and training sessions in different countries. I believe that this forced exile of women has a positive side [in] the long run, as those women will return to Libya stronger and more capable of contributing in the state-building process. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015)

Conclusion

Political opportunities depend, for the most part, on the type of regime and the window of political participation it allows for its citizens. Libyan women, however, did not only seize the provided opportunities, they created their own. Even when political participation was at its lowest levels during Gaddafi's rule, individual cases tell the story of women who tried to make their voice heard under the most oppressive circumstances.

Those stories, however, remained limited to a small number of women who seized or created their prospects until the revolution in 2011. Women then acted collectively; they were present in every aspect of the revolutionary act. Their participation is not connected to individuals, though some individuals took the initiative; it is the uprising of a whole segment of the society. Women in the revolution were aware of their role, their duty, and their potential. Therefore, their strong presence during the revolution and the opportunities they obtained were targeted and attacked. Attempts to exclude women from the political scene and the state-building process show a backlash in the progress made to secure a sustainable presentation of women in the political arena.

CHAPTER 6

THE FRAMING PROCESS

The framing process factor represents the collective effect of social compositions including culture, norms, social structure, and challenges that work as mediation factors that contribute to, or sometimes limit, the process of social movement from opportunity to action.

It is important to emphasize that the main challenge to women's social movements in Libya is not limited to a government that may refuse to allow women more political rights, or political institutions which can deny women's rights in equality. The biggest challenge is, rather, the predominant culture. That culture has always depicted women as second-class citizens with regard to political and social rights. As a result, the participation of women in public life before the revolution almost did not exist.

The Framing Process under Gaddafi's Regime

Libya is a patriarchal society that considers men's presence in public life a natural right, while placing societal and ethical restrictions on the participation of women in certain areas in public life, especially in areas where women would stand out individually and are being recognized by their name and description, such as working in the fields of politics and media. In addition, as part of a society that lived under the rule of a dictator, women were under extra pressure to hide away from the society's public stage, as the coercive nature of Gaddafi's regime made it much safer for people to be inconspicuous in terms of being active in public life. The

combination of restrictive social norms and a brutal dictatorship regime created an atmosphere in which "women had no guarantees for their safety. There were no institutions or laws or even a state as we all know it, only a confusing popular system" (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015).

The women who entered the public sphere at that time would become "subject of ethical suspicions by the society" (Hana El-Gallal, Personal interview, November 15, 2015). It was a profound belief in the society that each person, man or woman, who would agree to be part of the political system, must "give compromises to Gaddafi of all sorts; that's why the government was not a decent place to work in, especially for women, who were used physically and sexually" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015). The interviewees for this research agreed on two types of women that were active in the public sphere during Gaddafi's regime:

1. Gaddafi's female guards (The Amazonians).
2. The female loyal members in the revolutionary committees who held political positions (the revolutionary nuns).

<u>The Amazonians: A Blatant Challenge to the Values of Society</u>

Gaddafi's female guards, known as The Amazonians, started to be a regular segment in Gaddafi's public appearances as responsible for his personal security since the 1970s and were always around 30 women (Flock, 2011). Gaddafi's insistence on surrounding himself with female guards was to promote his image as a women's rights advocate, or, as he liked to refer to himself, "the women's liberator." He promoted gender equality in his Green Book and called for the liberation of women from the constraints of society. Gaddafi challenged the conservative norms of Libyan society through a series of radical measures regarding women, one of which

was in 1979 when "women were required to undertake military training" (Bugaughis, 2012, p.

3). In 1981, the first class graduated from the women's military academy in Tripoli (Henderson,

1984).

Recruiting women to work in new fields like the military was part of Gaddafi's policies

aimed to apply his Green Book ideas to Libyan society. "Man and woman are equal as human

beings, in religion, in philosophy…in all concerns of humanity. None of them can marry the

other against his or her will or divorce without a just trial…. Discrimination is a flagrant act of

oppression without justification" (Qaddafi, 1979, p. 35).

However, opening the door for women to enter a domain that historically been dominated

by men was seen by the society as a way to "humiliate men. Gaddafi gave women opportunities

but did not respect them" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015).

Moreover, the call for gender equality and the policies taken by Gaddafi to empower

women's conditions were meant to promote the ideas presented in his Green Book to the

international society by emphasizing his image as a progressive leader; they did not reflect any

actual improvement on women's social or political conditions (Bugaighis, 2012). Moreover,

during several interviews made by *Le Monde* journalist Annick Cojean with former Gaddafi

female guards after the uprising in 2011, claims were made that the truth behind keeping a large

number of female guards and female companions around Gaddafi was to use them as sex slaves.

The testimonies asserted that Gaddafi used women to satisfy his strange sexual habits which

made him desire women of all ages from as young as 15 years old (CNN Arabic, 2012). In her

book, Cojean described how most of the girls in Gaddafi's personal guard and in the military

academy were taken from their homes and schools by force to join Gaddafi's "harem" after

being chosen by him or by Mabrouka Al-Sharif, head of his personal guards (Cojean, 2013).

Furthermore, the declared progressive polices to improve women's conditions carried an

underlined disrespect to the norms of the Libyan conservative society. Gaddafi used the public

appearance of female women by his side and his controversial relationship with them as pressure

tools on their families and tribes to remain under his authority to prevent any social scandal if the

details about the real job of those women were revealed to the public. Some sources indicate that

Gaddafi used the same policy towards his closest diplomats and military generals by raping their

spouses or daughters to "dishonor" and blackmail them (France 24, 2012).

The Revolutionary Nuns: True Believers in Gaddafi

Another type of women who were active in the public sphere during Gaddafi's regime is

the members in Gaddafi's revolutionary committees, known as "the revolutionary nuns" (Issawi,

2014): a group of women who were very loyal to Gaddafi's ideology and ideas. A few names can

be fit into this category such as Huda Ben Amer, who is well-known in Libya as "the

executioner," a name she earned after her participation in a series of public executions the regime

undertook between 1972 and 1985 (Kobeissi, 2011).

Ben Amer gained her infamous reputation after she grabbed a young man's legs as he

was hanged and pulled them down in an attempt to end his life on live TV broadcasting in 1984

(Kobeissi, 2011). After that incident, Ben Amer became very close to Gaddafi and one of his

"most trusted lieutenants" (Watson, 2011). Throughout 20 years, Ben Amer held different

political positions such as serving as the secretary general of the Women's Affairs Committee at

the General People's Committee, and the speaker of the Arab Parliament. She also served as the mayor of Benghazi and the secretary general of the people's Committee for Inspection and Censorship (Kobeissi, 2011). Ben Amer remained loyal to Gaddafi until the last minute; she fled the country during the revolution and has no known address.

Another example is Fawzya Shalabey, who was an active member in the revolutionary committees since the 1970s and very loyal to Gaddafi's thoughts and ideology and who held the position of minister of information for years (Issawi, 2014).

For Ben Amer and Shalabey and other women who held prominent positions under Gaddafi, loyalty to the "leader of the revolution" was a crucial factor in their advancement to higher positions. In this particular aspect of Gaddafi's system, men and women had equal chances in getting promotions. Therefore, women "seriously competed with men for senior positions. The loyalty to the person of the 'leader' and an active engagement in defending and spreading the revolutionary ideology were the main requirements to access power, and this equally for women and men" (Issawi, 2014).

<u>The Role of Mass Media</u>

The media as a source of news and information plays an essential role in shaping public's political awareness. Consequently, it has considerable influence on people's beliefs and opinions. However, under authoritarian regimes, media's channels become a mobilizing tool and an instrument to deliver the regime's messages.

Libya, as a Third World country, had a short history with local media before the coup took place in September 1969. During the monarchy era there were about five or six private

newspapers working under the press suppression. The broadcasting service in Libya began in 1957. Television broadcasts, however, did not start until 1968 (one year before the coup) with almost no significant local programs (Obeidi, 2001). Within the early years after the coup, media did not provide the expected support for the revolutionary regime. The media structure, which was inherited from the monarchy, became an object of criticism by Gaddafi. He accused it of being unsuccessful in publicizing the revolutionary ideology (Obeidi, 2001).

In the late 1970s, the traditional channels of mass media were replaced with a new type of media presented by Gaddafi as "the Jamahiriyan media." However, despite the theoretical prologue to the Jamahiriya media, popular committees in practice were under strict control:

> All the information media and the mass media in Libya are supervised by the Secretary of Information, Culture and Jamahiriyya Mobilization. There are two types of newspapers. On the one hand, some newspapers express the views of groups such as students, farmers and professionals…. On the other hand, there are those newspapers which are not tied to any professional grouping, but are issued by the revolutionary committees……Television and broadcasting are also supervised by the Information, Culture and Jamahiriyya Mobilization secretary. (Obeidi, 2001, p. 55)

The regime used the mass media to spread its ideology domestically and abroad (Obeidi, 2001). Recruiting young girls to enroll in the military was done through televised advertising. The concept of women in the military was new and challenging to the conservative Libyan society. Most of the time girls who wanted to join the military academy had to either confront their families or flee their homes to enroll in the academy against their family's will (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015). An example is a case of a group of teenagers who left their homes, escaping from oppressive families during the 1980s; one of them arrived at the academy disguised in men's

clothes (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015). The life in the academy was not as they saw on TV; things were different, and sexual assault was a surprise for them. They questioned the regime's claims of advocating women's rights and reacted with writing and distributing leaflets against Gaddafi with the help of a military general who himself was against the unethical behavior inside the academy. The girls were arrested and tortured (Al-Ta'aeb, 2015).

The nature of mass media under Gaddafi's regime indicates that this important source of political information has been paralyzed for a long time. The policies taken by the regime imposing restrictions on the freedom of media, along with allowing one single voice to be heard through the mass media (the voice of revolution) all played a significant role in pushing people away from using the information provided by the mass media to shape their opinions. Even more, the government control over the mass media created a negative relationship and lack of trust between this important information medium and the mass public. It was used as another tool of oppression to remind the people of the risks they would take if they thought of challenging the regime.

<div align="center">The Gradual Effect of Gaddafi's Policies on Women's Position in Society</div>

As part of his effort to promote himself as women's liberator, Gaddafi made progressive changes in the legal system. He modified the judicial law in order to give women the opportunity to be promoted to a judge position. Based on this new law, the first female judge, Rafieaa Al Obiedi, was assigned in 1989.

Moreover, Gaddafi passed laws in favor of women such as law 22 in 1991, which states

that it is "Not permissible for a man to marry another woman, without obtaining one of two

conditions, a written consent of the wife or the issuance of a court warrant" (Obeidi, 2013, p. 16).

In addition, Gaddafi did not pass any laws to limit women's social rights, as he gave

women and men equal rights in areas like education and work. The free education system

provided women with a much-needed opportunity to prove themselves as a qualified partner in

work places. The society took the chance and the percentage of female students enrolled in

public schools reached 98% in 2004 (UNDP, 2005).

The free education system created a positive environment for women to reach new levels

in work places. Increased numbers of women started to enter the work force due to the economic

pressure practiced by the regime (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015). Some

people argue that Gaddafi's economic policies of shutting down the private sector and limiting

the scope of work in the public sphere had unplanned positive outcomes for women:

> In our societies, the public sector is well respected by the community. Therefore,
> women have benefited from the closure of the private sector and tended to work
> in public sector in large numbers. Even though Gaddafi's regulations did not
> provide freedom and political rights, they actually helped women socially.
> Regulations in conservative societies do improve women's social conditions.
> Social change takes centuries to happen whereas legal change is fast. Laws and
> regulations are supposed to pull women towards faster social change. (Azza
> Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016)

However, despite Gaddafi's declared ideas about liberating women, his actions and

policies created a negative image for women in the public sphere. That image made women in

senior positions, politically or administratively, a target of cultural disgrace. The negative

reputation surrounding women in high positions made a lot of educated women refrain from

following their ambitions in getting promoted in their jobs or even accepting senior positions in the government because they didn't want to be in the circle of social attention. This assumption was reflected in reality through the low representation of women in both legislative and executive institutions throughout the 42 years of Gaddafi's rule.

Keeping a low-key profile provided people with a sense of security, as the whole system was "scary with no sense of security and safety for everyone, especially women. People were acting "as if they were haunted. They walked beside the walls. People have become alike in their dress so as not to draw attention. When I came back to Libya, I noticed that all female students in the law school dressed in black and grey so they won't stand out in the crowd" (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015).

Furthermore, there was a push by the community for women to work in specific jobs, as "families started to encourage their daughters to choose 'less dangerous' careers like teaching and men requested their wives to work as teachers or stay home" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The fear of being associated with the regime or even getting noticed by its leader and his inner circle was a main reason for the retreating role of women in the public sphere under Gaddafi's rule. The major steps of women to become complete partners in building their society, which started during the monarchy, had a backlash when the image of progressive women was narrowed to the one in military form who is willing to break all social and cultural rules in order to satisfy the leader of the "revolution."

The Framing Process During the Revolution

The great social and political changes that accompanied the occurrence of the revolution in Libya played a role in society's sudden acceptance of Libyan women to be active in areas that were formerly not accepted by society and had been associated with bad reputations for decades. Women were socially banned from working in two areas in particular: politics and the media. Families did not encourage their daughters to work in theses two sectors because "those domains were perverted. Whoever worked in politics and media ought to have a direct relation with the corrupt system of Gaddafi. That's why working in these areas was socially unaccepted, it was a stigma" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015).

Breaking this stigma and challenging a long-lasting culture was not an easy task. Making a change to the society's perception of women in public space and in these two domains in particular was inspired by the revolution. Women were

> the leaders of the revolution, they were involved on all fronts. The women's presence was a message in itself; it showed that our uprising was a popular one. Throughout our lives, we were taught not to display our capabilities, we were told to stay in the shadows, and we were always reminded to account for the society's reaction for our doings. The revolution broke all those taboos. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015)

The sudden event of the uprising in mid-February 2011 came as a shock to the conservative society, and to women themselves. Hana El-Gallal described the new feelings: "I was surprised myself. I discovered a new Hana in me, another person with exceptional capabilities" (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015). The new horizons opened for women through the revolution showed how ready Libyan women were for changes.

Zahra' Langhi, who left Libya at the age of three and lived in exile her whole life, recalled her

first reaction to women's presence in the revolution:

> The first interview I watched when the revolution started was with the attorney
> Amal Bugaighis on Alhurra TV. I did not know that there were women in Libya
> who knew how to speak and make an argument about the demands for human
> rights and constitution and institution building. I thought since the Libyans were
> oppressed for so many years, such conceptions would be absen[t]; I was
> impressed! (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015)

<div align="center">Breaking the Stigma: Facing the Family</div>

The unexpected public role of the Libyan women in the beginning of the revolution

brought women under the spotlight. This new reality required exceptional will to break the long-

lasting cultural traditions, which had limited women's role in the society for such a long time.

Women's challenges had different levels. In order to challenge the societal norms and traditions,

the women of Libya had to face the authority of the patriarchal figure in their family first. That

figure can take the image of a father, brother, or husband. Being part of a patriarchal society,

seeking the approval of that figure was important for two main reasons: first, to provide support

and help her with her new roles, and second, to provide protection to her from the society which

might not accept this sudden change positively. Shahrazad Kablan, the first female anchor to

appear on TV during the revolution and a leader of a successful campaign in support of the

implementation of the No Fly Zone in Libya, summed up this social need for approval:

> If a woman in our society did not have a husband, a father, or a brother to support
> her and stand behind her brave decisions to get involved in public space, women
> would not be able to do what they have done in the revolution. There should be a
> platform to thank those men who supported their wives, sisters, and daughters in
> breaking those old traditions because they (the men) would receive most of the
> criticism. The easiest thing people would say is that he is not a "man" because he

allowed his female relative to have an active public role. A man should have special qualities to be in that position; he must be very strong to face the society's backlash on him. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

The women interviewed for this project, who come from different social backgrounds, provide different accounts for family reactions with regard to their involvement in the early days of the revolution. However, they all agreed that their family's approval was a priority for them when they decided to participate in the revolution. Hana El-Gallal, who lived most of her life abroad and came back to Libya three years before the revolution, stated that since her return she kept a low social profile and she "did not know anyone; I had low social contacts, my social network was limited to the faculty of the law school. Women were always hunted with a feeling that anyone can hurt them" (Hana El-Gallal, ersonal interview, November 15, 2015).

However, Hana disregarded all previous restraints when she left her home on February 17, 2011 to go to the courthouse to join the protestors. She did not tell her conservative family she was going. When her brothers found out, they called her and told her to wait for one of them to come to the courthouse to follow her home. Hana recalled that day:

> When I arrived home, I was worr[ied] my brothers would give me [a] hard time for leaving the house without telling them and they would ask me not to do it again. What happened was the opposite! They sat down with me to discuss the plans for [the] next day. They supported me and we coordinated together. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015)

The BBC interviewed Hana on the third day of the uprising. She put herself and her family at risk when she gave her full name in the interview. At that critical time, her father and brother were in Tripoli and managed to escape a day before Gaddafi's forces arrested them

because of her. Her father's office was destroyed and her picture was hung there by Gaddafi's

men as a threat message (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015).

Hana claims that hers was not a unique case, as many other women went through similar

experiences with their families. At that time "the social differences between men and women

dissolved, societal barriers all collapsed in an instant, there was that collective feeling we all

shared together; the feeling of freedom" (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15,

2015).

Najla Elmangoush confirms Hana's reading of the society. Najla never thought she would

be part of an event as big as a revolution. As a divorced mother of two little girls, her movements

were socially restrained. She gave all credit to her family, who supported her decision of going to

the courthouse to protest. She explained that it only took her one conversation with her father to

convince him of her decision.

> It was a hard decision but it was also a patriotic issue; we did not need to argue about it.
> My father went with me to the courthouse on the first day; he examined the place and
> made sure the people there were trustworthy and then he let me go on my own since then.
> My mother never opposed my decision; when I was working in the courthouse for long
> hours each day, she was taking care of my daughters without complaining. (Najla
> Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015)

Najla was not the only interviewee who praised her mother's support for her in the

revolution. Iman Bugaighis stated that her mother's role was essential for her to continue her

contribution in the awakening of the revolution:

> While I was at the courthouse the whole day with my sister and brother, my
> mother was at home taking care of our kids. She knew how serious and dangerous
> the situation was but she never asked us to quit, even when we would lose contact
> with her for a whole day, she would remain strong. She endured Gaddafi's slander
> campaign against our family and stood up to my husband when he asked me once

to slow down and keep a low profile. I remember she told him this is her country
and this is her duty. (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015)

Families' support for their female members in the revolution was a clear challenge to the

norms and traditions which had ruled the society for so long. When Shahrazad Kablan called her

brother in Benghazi in the first few days of the revolution and told him that she was asked to go

on Al-Jazeera TV and she was worried about her family in Libya, he told her to go out and

speak: "He said that they broke the wall of fear and Benghazi would not kneel to Gaddafi again.

He supported me and my husband supported me" (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March

6, 2016).

Nadine Nasrat, a married activist and a mother of four, also emphasized the importance

of the approval of the male figure in her life, in this case her husband, who understands and

respects her work even though he is against it because he is worried about her safety. She

stressed that "if it wasn't my husband, I would not be here. I have four kids; if he is not the type

of person who is willing to help and take care of the kids, I would have not been able to do what

I am doing and continue in it. He is very supportive; he helps me in taking decisions and always

gives me his advice" (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015).

<u>Breaking the Stigma: Facing the Society</u>

The extreme transformation of Libyan women from being limited to traditional roles in a

conservative society to handle the most progressive roles during the revolution in areas like

politics and the media could be understood by the performative and transformative cultural

approach, which argues that "social movements are not just shaped by culture; they also shape

and reshape it" (Johnson & Klandermans, 1995, p. 9). For the performative view, culture is a

"tool kit" that includes all habits, symbols, styles and norms, all of which people of the society agreed to and used to construct their social actions (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). However, during crises and dramatic social changes the old cultural system could be rejected and replaced by new cultural models through which the society learns to practice "unfamiliar habits until they become familiar" (Swidler, 1986, p. 278). In this case, the performative culture turns into a transformative one.

Shahrazad Kablan is an example of a pioneer woman, being the first female to break a longtime stigma in Libyan society with regard to women's work in the media. Shahrazad, who worked s a teacher and educator in the U.S. for many years, was the first female anchor on the first non-governmental TV station, Libya Alahrar TV that was launched in Doha, Qatar on March 30, 2011 in support of the Libyan revolution. Entering a work field that was regarded as a disgrace in a conservative society like Libya would not be considered an option for Shahrazad under regular circumstances.

However, when she received a phone call from Mahmoud Shammam, a prominent journalist and a long-time opponent of the Gaddafi regime, asking her to join the new TV channel which was to be broadcast from Qatar, she did not hesitate. She explained her decision: "At that time I did not think of my life, my work, my kids, all my life was devoted to one thing: my country which was in danger. I was so passionate about my cause" (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016). Shahrazad recalled her husband's reaction when she informed him about the offer she received, which required her to travel across the world to work in a TV station:

I was still in Washington, D.C. and he was back home in Ohio with the kids. When I told him about the offer he did not hesitate a second: he said "Go!" It was a most pleasant surprise. He has always been supportive but that was a big decision. He even prepared my suitcase for me and paid all my travel expenses.
(Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

When Shahrazad accepted the offer to work in the revolutionary TV station, she did not know what her job would be. She thought she would be an editor behind the scenes. However, when she arrived in Qatar, she found that the people in charge of the station did not have a clear vision on what to do. "I would ask, what are the plans? How you will make this channel work? And they would say, we still don't know" (Shahrazad Kablan, Personal interview, March 6, 2016). When she was asked to be the anchor of a TV show named "Libya: The People," she agreed despite her lack of experience in TV work and media in general. On that show, Shahrazad would hold an hour of live TV during which she would talk about the situation in Libya, receive phone calls, and read messages from all over the country.

When I started the show, I did not stop to think if going on TV was the right thing to do or not. I was not thinking of the society's reaction to me as a female TV presenter. The youth were dying in Libya, our beloved country was in danger, and the situation was greater than the snags of the society. It was our duty to liberate our country; people were giving their lives; going on TV was the least I could do. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

Shahrazad's show started on March 30, 2011 and lasted for six months. The show was very successful and gained a large base of popularity in Libyan society; people called her "the lady who embraced the country." Shahrazad remembered her feelings during the show: "I was very honest, I spoke from my heart and the people felt it" (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016). Shahrazad claimed that the reaction of the Libyan society to her show came as a surprise for her.

I felt the people's support from the beginning. People did not care about who I am or how I dress, they focused on my message. What I did shocked the society, but it was a positive shock. I changed people's perception about women in media; people became more accepting and I opened the door for other females to enter the domain. I received a lot of encouraging messages. People would send me messages saying that I am their hope for a future Libya without Gaddafi. I remember receiving a letter from a woman saying that I have a "clean" face unlike Gaddafi's people. Her words moved me so much because I finally conversed the image that Gaddafi managed to implement about Libyans as ignorant, unsophisticated, and [un]civilized. I proved that Libyans are refined people. At that time, I felt that [it was] my duty not just to fight Gaddafi, but also to fight the longtime misconception people had about women in media. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

Even though Shahrazad understood her effect on Libyan society and the profound culture of disgrace to women in the media, she stated that she did not realize the level of that effect until she visited Libya for the first time after the revolution ended. She arrived at the Tripoli airport in December 2011to attend women's workshops and she expected people from the Free Generation Movement to welcome her in the airport. She was surprised when she left the airplane to find a

myriad of people standing in the runway holding welcome banners and chanting the national anthem for me. It was a magical moment; I cried and my feeling was a mix of joy and fear. When I hosted the TV show I never thought I would be famous; I felt the appreciation in the eyes of the people who followed me to the hotel. Thousands of people came to say hello and thank me. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

The last show aired in September right after the fall of Tripoli into the hands of the revolutionary forces. Shahrazad explained the reasons behind ending her program:

After freeing Tripoli from Gaddafi's control, my job was done… media was not my domain. Plus, there was so much politics going on behind the scenes. The people in charge of the station tried to change the show's message and I wanted to keep the original one, which aimed to create a platform for all Libyans. I used to read a poem at the end of each show...those poems were sent to me from all over Libya. My strategy was to read a poem from a different city each day. Apparently, the producers had different agendas, as they wanted me to focus on certain cities and ignore others, the thing which was unacceptable for me. The differences in

vision between us were a real challenge. For instance, I refused to follow the station's request to call Gaddafi bad names. I insisted [on] referring to him by his name, I wanted to be factual; I did not want to use the same demeanors Gaddafi used with his enemies. My goal was to set the base for a new culture of differences. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016)

In addition, Shahrazad did not want to risk the trust she gained from the Libyan people. Despite the fact that, unlike the majority of Libyan women, Shahrazad did not wear a headscarf, her dress code was modest and reflected her conservative background. Therefore, she refused the requests made by the station's new Lebanese producers to change her look and "[loosen up] my modest dress code; I told them, 'If you want me to work here, I am going to dress this way'" (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2016).

Despite the fact that some of the social restrictions on women's public roles claim a religious base for their validity, those restrictions were disregarded during the revolution, not just by women but also by religious authorities that praised women's active role during the revolution. Iman Bugaighis provided an example of the notable transition in the socio/cultural acceptance of women in public sphere during the revolution:

My sister Salwa and I are liberals in the Libyan society. We don't wear headscarves but at the same time we are earnest and very respectful to others and ourselves. One day during the revolution, a religious scholar came to our workstation in the courthouse with his two daughters. He pointed at me and said, talking to his daughters, when you grow up I want you to be like her…He did not see me unveiled, he saw me as a strong, capable woman. That situation proved to me that our society needed a big event like the revolution to change the prominent culture. (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2016)

Sexual Violence: Systematic Act or Limited Behavior?

Even though rape has been a flagrant act in wars throughout history, the recent documentation of rape crimes during contemporary wars gave the issue more attention on the international level, which was confirmed with the UN 1820 resolution in 2008 stating that "rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide" (UN Security Council, 2008).

In ethnic and civil conflicts, rape is used systematically for psychological and sociological reasons. The sexual attack of women during wartime has a psychological component to show the men in the other fighting group that they are too weak to protect and defend their community (Amnesty International, 2004), especially when the crimes are committed in front of the victim's family. In addition, the act of rape against women of a particular community aims to humiliate the whole group, as women are often seen as "the reproducers and carriers of the community" (smith-Spark, 2004) and their rape will therefore bring social dishonor upon their entire family (Amnesty International, 2004) and on the community at large.

Cases of rape crimes against women have been reported during armed conflicts in countries like Somalia, Rwanda, Bangladesh, and Uganda (UNICEF, 1996). During the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, for instance, more than 20,000 Bosnian Muslim women and girls were raped and deliberately impregnated to force the girls "to bear 'the enemy's' child" (UNICEF, 1996).

However, in many of these cases, especially ones in conservative societies, war victims of rape are treated by their community as carriers of shame and disgrace for their families, which prevents a large number of rape victims from reporting these incidents out of fear of being dishonored. The refrainment from reporting rape cases makes rape one of the most effective psychological weapons in the contemporary world.

Libya was not an exception. Evidence of systematic rape committed by Gaddafi's forces against women in different parts of Libya during the revolution were reported and documented by different news sources. The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, opened an investigation on the issue. The high sensitivity of the issue of rape in general and in the Libyan conservative society in particular made it one of the taboos to be discussed and investigated. Talking in public about rape crimes committed during the Libyan revolution against Gaddafi was an unusual topic.

All news reports and documented cases are centered on the allegations of one person: Doctor Seham Sergewa, a female psychologist who worked in Benghazi's Psychiatric Hospital and carried out the first and only on-the-ground investigation with regard to war-related rape crimes. Doctor Sergewa claimed that she came across the first case of rape a few weeks after the start of the revolution when she received a phone call from the mother of a young girl who was kidnapped in Ajdabiea, a city to the west of Benghazi, which was a war zone between the revolutionaries and Gaddafi forces. Sergewa stated that the girl told her that she was kidnapped by three to four men, raped few times, and then left in the desert (Sergewa, 2011).

After receiving the first report, Sergewa started her investigations, searching for evidence of systematic rape. She travelled to Libyan refugee camps on the borders of Tunisia and Egypt and began a mental health survey to identify more rape victims. Sergewa claimed that out of 50,000 survey results, 295 women answered yes to a question asked if they were raped, and they all accused Gaddafi's soldiers of that crime. She also personally interviewed 140 victims (Fahim, 2011). Sergewa recalled one of the victims telling her, "They tied up my husband, and they raped me in front of him, and they killed him" (Sergewa, 2011). Another story was told by an 18-year-old accusing Gaddafi's militias of tying up her father and brothers and raping her in front of her entire family (Sergewa, 2011). Sergewa believed that the numbers of rape victims are much higher than the ones she managed to document, but social shame and psychological trauma stopped the victims from disclosing what happened to them.

However, Seham Sergewa's research methods came under criticism by her colleagues. Some of them argued that it is "unlikely that she could have distributed so many surveys, even in the best of times" (Fahim, 2011). The head of Benghazi's Psychiatric Hospital, Dr. Ali M. Elroey, who found Sergewa's results to be "a bit exaggerated," stated that the female doctor was not willing to share her research for peer review" (Fahim, 2011).

Other criticism focused on the negative social impact the publication of Sergewa's research had, especially with the media attention given to the issue. Essam Gheriani, a psychologist who worked with victims of sexual violence, stated that "The rape question is highly sensitive everywhere in the world, and even more so in a conservative society like ours" (Fahim, 2011). He asserted that the publicity of the issue brought by Sergewa discouraged more

victims from coming forward (Fahim, 2011). In her response, Sergewa claimed that some of her colleagues tried to underestimate her research on sexual violence because she was exposing a social taboo that Libyan society is not yet prepared for. She even accused the head of Benghazi's Psychiatric Hospital, Dr. Elroey, of obstructing her research by locking up her papers in her office at the hospital (Fahim, 2011).

Other than Sergewa's assertions about rape crimes during the revolution, there was a dearth of material evidence to prove those crimes. One video aired on Anderson Cooper's show in March 2011 showed a woman being sexually assaulted by two to three men, allegedly from Gaddafi's forces (CNN, 2011b). The revolutionary forces claimed that they found condoms and Viagra pills in the vehicles they seized from Gaddafi's militias. They also claimed that they found a large number of rape video recorded on cellphones found with detained Gaddafi forces. However, all those videos were destroyed based on the orders of the revolutionary leaders to save the women on the videos and their families from social disgrace. Abdullah Alkabeer, one of the revolutionary leaders in Misurata (a city with most of the alleged rape crimes during the war), stated that the revolutionaries "don't care if they are evidence of war crimes; rape is a heinous crime, it does not just destroy the victim, it destroys the whole family. Therefore, all those videos were given to a revolutionary leader named Muhamad Halbous, who was in charge of destroying all of them personally" (CNN, 2011a).

Social constraints and the culture of silence along with "the lack of reliable statistics, the evident use of torture to extract confessions, and the political sensitivity of the issue" (Human Rights Council, 2012, p. 14) all made the confirmation of systematic rape hard to achieve. The

International Commission of Inquiry on Libya Report made by the Human Rights Council (2012) stated the difficulties in confirming institutionalized rape episodes. However, the Commission confirmed the occurrence of two patterns of sexual violence committed by the Gaddafi forces during the revolution. The first pattern was when women were beaten and raped by armed men, either in their homes or elsewhere. According to the Commission report, some of the victims were targeted because they were from opposing cities or for their relationship to the revolutionary fighters, and others for no known reason. In this pattern, sexual assault is considered to be a "means to punish, terrorize, and a message to those who supported the revolution" (Human Rights Council, 2012, p. 14).

The second pattern reported by the Commission is sexual violence and torture of men and women in detention centers in order to "extract information, humiliate, and punish" the victims (Human Rights Council, 2012, p. 14). The Commission also referred to limited evidence of sexual violence committed by the revolutionary forces against Gaddafi loyal females (Human Rights Council, 2012).

The International Commission of Inquiry on Libya Report concluded by stating that investigating rape crimes in Libya during the revolution was their most difficult task (Human Rights Council, 2012). The report highlighted the effect of sexual violence on Libyan society when stating that

> Some female victims of rape have been ostracized, divorced, disowned, forced to flee the country, have committed suicide, and some have allegedly been killed by their relatives because of the shame and dishonour that rape brings to the family and even the tribe. The silence surrounding rape existed before the conflict as well. In several conservative areas of Libya, female victims have been pressured or threatened by their community to remain silent about rape, as it is considered

shameful for the community not to have been able to protect its own women. (Human Rights Council, 2012, pp. 139-140)

In spite of the fact that rape and sexual assault are taboo in Libyan society, a young woman broke that taboo in the loudest way possible. Iman Obiedi, a law graduate from Benghazi who was working in a law office in Tripoli, burst into a hotel in Tripoli late March 2012 in which foreign media representatives were gathering and started screaming and accusing Gaddafi's forces of gang-raping her. She showed bruises and dark marks on her body to prove her story. She claimed that 15 of Gaddafi's forces took turns assaulting her after she was stopped at a checkpoint in Tripoli. She said that they raped her because her ID stated that she is from Benghazi, the revolutionary city. She also claimed that other girls were raped with her, one of whom, who helped her escape, was no older than 15 years old (Basu, 2012).

Iman's story became the center of the international news, especially after she was brutally removed from the hotel by Gaddafi intelligence under the eyes of the world. She was accused by the regime of being a drunken prostitute in an attempt to downplay her story. However, the effect of Iman's story on the Libyan conservative society came as a surprise. An overwhelming wave of sympathy was expressed toward the young victim. Libyans considered her a hero—they respected her courage of coming forward to expose the actions of Gaddafi's thugs. As described in the media, Obeidi "drew sympathy and fame, her image painted for the public on a canvas of courage" (Basu, 2012).

In summary, the relationship between the revolution in Libya as a major event, and women as participants in that event, is a two-way relationship. Women were the spark that initiated the uprising and the fuel that helped it endure and succeed. At the same time, the

revolution provided women with the means to break long-lasting social restraints and change a prominent culture and system that had long viewed women as backseat riders who are not able to make real contributions to the public sphere. Women had challenges on different levels. They challenged the political system as part of the whole revolutionary wave. They also had to create a new space for themselves in society. They exposed themselves to new challenges as they acted against the profound social perception of public roles for women. Those challenges included breaking the taboos of subjects like rape and some debated religious views of women's public role.

<center>The Framing Process After the Revolution</center>

The question remains whether all the changes and gains achieved by women during the revolution are momentary or the changes in the social perception of women are enduring. The social perception of women in Libya after the revolution is discussed in this section.

The end of the revolutionary momentum and the beginning of the state-building process is marked with the liberation speech which was delivered by Mustafa Abduljaleel, the chair of the NTC, on October 23, 2011. The speech was expected to draw the path for the post-liberation phase and set the tone for the next step in state building. However, the speech brought disappointment to many female activists when Abduljaleel announced that he was dropping "the right of [a] woman to sign a document allowing her husband to marry again, adding that he will work to issue a law that does not prevent a man from polygamy" (Obeidi, 2013, p. 16). The interviewees for this research considered the speech a setback with regard to women's social status. The declaration, coming from the highest authority in the country at that time, opened the

door for consequential court cases and called for lifting the bans on second marriages and the appeals submitted claiming the unconstitutional cases of women working as judges (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016). Some voices even called the female judges "judges of Gaddafi," and threats to those judges were received (Obeidi, 2013, p. 17).

Abduljaleel's public degradation of women was repeated during the handover ceremony to transfer power from the NTC to the newly elected General National Congress on August 9, 2012. Abduljaleel publicly expelled Sara Misselatey, the female presenter of the ceremony, and ordered her to leave the stage because she was not wearing the *hijab*. He even defended his decision during his speech, which he delivered at the event, stressing that "We believe in individual freedoms and will endeavor to consolidate them, but we are Muslims and are sticking to our values. Everyone should understand this point" (Sudaress, 2012).

Women's Participation in the New Political System

On the public level, signs of regression regarding women's public presence started early after liberation. Women were told on different occasions to give up public engagement in favor of going back to their homes (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November, 13, 2015). Iman Bugaighis, the first spokesperson of NTC, confirmed the new trend: "I was participating in a demonstration three months after the liberation when I came across a group of young men. They kept saying stuff like 'This is enough, the revolution has ended; go back to your homes.' A lot of people wanted the social status of women to retreat to what it was before the revolution" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015).

The call for a limited role for women in politics came from different sides, from Islamist political groups and armed militias to some male GNC members. Examples of violations against women politicians ranged from verbal abuse to assassination. Mohamed Kilani, a member in the GNC, demanded the women members to be seated in a different room from men because "GNC members are distracted by their colleagues who wore make up, dressed indecently and mingled with men" (LWPP, 2014). Another incident happened when a member in the GNC physically attacked a female GNC member because she disagreed with him. The same person is now the leader of Dawn of Libya Operation, the biggest militia group in Tripoli (LWPP, 2014).

Female members of the Council of Representatives received their share of threats and attacks as well. Houses of some female representatives and candidates were robbed and burned. Other female representatives received threats to burn down their houses (LWPP, 2014).

The obstacles for women's political participation go beyond the traditional perception of women; the lack of security and the absence of the rule of law with the extreme levels of violence among the unchecked militias, the rise of the extremist Islamist groups, and the increased number of war crimes are all indicators of the challenges women politicians are facing.

<center>The Position of Religious Authorities Regarding Women's Rights</center>

The Supreme Mufti, Alsadiq Al Gheriani, issued several *fatwas* to limit women's rights to travel, put restrictions on their marriage choices, and even force a dress code on them. The *fatwas* called on the government to ban women from traveling alone without a chaperone and required the government to pass a law to ban the marriage of Libyan women to foreigners. The Mufti also declared that female teachers "should cover their faces if they are teaching teenage

boys" (LWPP, 2014). Incidents of verbal and physical attacks against women based on the previous *fatwas* were reported in different cities in the country, one of which is the case of a university professor who was harassed by members of a Security Support Unit in Tripoli because "she was travelling in a car with her driver, un-chaperoned by a *mehrem* (male relative or guardian)" (LWPP, 2014).

In addition, other *fatwas* issued by the Supreme Mufti called for separating male and female students in educational institutions for all ages (Obeidi, 2013, p. 17). Some of those *fatwas* were translated into action in different places in Libya. An example is Omar Almukhtar University in the city of Derna when a local extreme militia built a separation wall in the middle of the university's campus and wrote signs around campus warning male students from interacting with female students at the university (France 24, 2014).

<div align="center">

The Effect of Salwa's Murder on Women's
Social Status and Political Activities

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The assassination of the lawyer and human rights activist Salwa Bugaighis in her house in Benghazi on June 25, 2014 was a defining moment for women's activism in post-revolution Libya. Her death ended the momentum Libyan women had had since the revolution in 2011. It was not an ordinary criminal case against a human being; it was "the starting point of a new era. Her murder was the first in Libya against a woman, the first that happen[ed] inside the victim's house, and it was the first time in Libya that the sanctity of a home is violated" (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015).

Salwa's murder affected women's political activism significantly; women activists were under societal and familial pressure to stop or reduce their activities:

The assassination of Salwa affected me personally; my husband and my father asked me to decrease my political activities and keep a low profile on social media, especially with the daily threats I was receiving every day. I called the UN and they told me to take those threats seriously, especially after the murder of Salwa and Fareeha Berkaoey and that I was not the only activist who was receiving threats. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November, 13, 2015)

Since Salwa's death, women's activism witnessed a substantial decrease, as most female activists fled the country: "Security is a big issue; the death of Salwa was a shock for me, [and] I entered a state of depression after her death. I was not afraid before but after her death I was afraid; I had to leave the country like others, hoping to come back one day when it's safe enough for us to work there" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

Moreover, some activists see the effect of Salwa's murder goes beyond the position of women in politics and public space to affect women's social status in general. The murder of Salwa in her own home was

a fatal blow to the social status of women in Libya. Now there is no respect for women on the streets. Women lost that special place in society. For example, women used to get help if they had a flat tire; this does not exist anymore. A friend of mine had a minor car accident with one of the self-proclaimed revolutionists; he and his friends wrecked her car before her eyes and people in the street did not get involved. (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016)

Azza Maghur admitted that she felt the changes in the perception of women's engagement in the public sphere since the liberation speech of Abduljaleel. However, she faced a direct threat when she started a project called "She and the Sports" where she created a group of female cyclists who would go out on the streets of Tripoli and ride their bikes every Friday. Then they decided to expand their project and make it

more sophisticated by throwing a "women's sport day at the beach" for which we obtained all the security permissions from the municipality of Tripoli. We cleaned

the beach, brought balls and water for the participants; we brought female doctors to provide basic health checkups for the participants. We had the whole beach for us that day and it was a huge success. However, at the same night of the event, I received a phone call from an anonymous person threating to kill me for planning the event and mobilizing women to participate in it, it was a direct death threat. (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016)

Moreover, cases of violations against female activists were reported. The reports included threats and attacks on female lawyers and human rights activists and on the offices of some women's NGOs in different cities (LWPP, 2014). The Libyan women-rights activist Majdoline Ebeidah is an example of the dangerous conditions under which women activists are working. Ebeidah was one of the young Libyan girls who helped in delivering supplies to the revolutionists during the revolution, and after the liberation she continued her work demanding equal rights for women. Ebeidah had to flee the country to the UK after a militia of fundamentalists kidnapped her twice (Hooyuel, 2012). The group members kept Ebeidah in the militia base for few days, during which she was beaten and threatened. According to Ebeidah, "the man kept telling me, 'I'll kill you here and no one will know your way' and I thought they would kill me in that place" (Hooyuel, 2012).

In summary, women in Libya are facing great challenges; they are at risk of losing the gains they managed to accomplish during the revolution and returning to the back seat. The threats do not come only from the long-term societal traditions and perceptions, which view women as passive members and second-class citizens; rather, women are dragged into the new power conflict, which includes armed militias and clashing political ideologies. The price women are paying to protect their rights is high and it comes in complete absence of the law and an absolute failure by the consecutive governments to control the ongoing violence.

Conclusion

The role played by women in the revolution connected the event to women in the collective mind of Libyan society. Therefore, the success of the revolutionary powers against Gaddafi helped empower the new social status of women in the society. However, the chaos and disorder that followed the end of the revolution took away from women's gains, as "the revolution in Libya is linked to women. The failure of the post-revolution era pulled away a lot of confidence gained by women during the revolution and men used this mode against women and blamed them, especially in light of the lack of security conditions which have occurred" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015).

The new cultural habits that emerged during the revolution gave Libyan women a larger role in public space. Those changes were not viewed by the Libyan society as permanent cultural changes. Instead, they were treated as a revolutionary necessity, which should not be carried over when the revolution ended. This perception presents challenges to the future role of women in the public arena and civic activities: the role which was challenged by the increased influence of newly emerged powers of militant groups and Islamist extremists which affiliate with some political parties and some members of the government. Five years after the revolution, women's rights are undermined and targeting female activists has become a frequent and normal act. To prevent women from having a bigger role in society, tools from verbal attacks to harassment and abductions are used.

CHAPTER 7

MOBILIZING STRUCTURE

Mobilizing structure represents the structural approach to social movements. The formal and informal organizations, the internal and external structure of the movement's context are all main factors in the success of the mobilization process.

Studying the emergence and evolvement of women's movements in Libya, which took off largely after the revolution against Gaddafi's dictatorship in February 2011, requires expanding the scope of analysis to cover the whole picture of the Libyan context.

The dynamics of women's movements in Libya and their struggle to build institutions that are representatives of women is similar to the dynamics of a cogwheel in a clock. It has its own forcing power, yet, its circulation cannot be completely understood without looking at the whole machine and recognizing the position, size, and rotation of that gear within the clock and the importance of that part for the functionality of the whole clock. Therefore, it is important to highlight the institutional structure in Libya before the revolution.

Political Institutions under Gaddafi's Regime

Throughout the 42 years of Gaddafi's regime, the political structure of Libya, including the institutional system, was subject to a variety of tryouts by Gaddafi, who intended to apply his ideological thoughts, introduced in his Green Book, into the Libyan reality. He substituted the political institutions established during the monarchy era with "experimental and ephemeral institutions" (El-Kikhia, 1997, p. 147) in an attempt to secure the survival of his rule. It is not an

exaggeration to say that during his 42-year rule Gaddafi succeeded in establishing a stateless society.

It is important to stress that Gaddafi, and not the political institutions of the state, was the principal for the political chaos in Libya considering the fact that "Political institutions do not have legitimacy except through his blessing" (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980, p. 213). Therefore, when the revolution broke in February 2011 and after the overthrow of Gaddafi, the Libyans faced a great challenge of rebuilding their state institutions.

The political system introduced to the Libyans by Gaddafi could theoretically be considered a golden opportunity for the mass public to be politically engaged through the formal channels of basic popular congresses (BPCs) which provided people, according to the Third Universal Theory, with the power to have control over all aspects of their lives and made ordinary citizens the prime decision makers in the country. However, in practice, people in Libya were not interested in attending the BPCs, and if they did, they were not actively participating in the congresses' sessions. This passivity emerged from several factors (Obeidi, 2001, pp. 142-147):

a) Some people did not participate in the new political system because they felt uncomfortable facing this new experiment, or participated but were not active during the discussions.

b) The role of Gaddafi himself, who was involved in every decision taken in the country by establishing a unique political system in which he did not have a formal role as a traditional head of state but at the same time he was the real decision maker.

c) Some people were discouraged by the activities of the revolutionary committees, which mishandled their obligations and turned out to be the dominant group over the BPC's sessions.

One of the original responsibilities of the revolutionary committees, according to Gaddafi, was to "encourage the Popular Congresses to intensify their ideological work, to help the masses make progressive decisions and to get such decisions implemented by the People's Committees" (Obeidi, 2001, p. 142). However, practice proved to be very different from theory. A large sector of the population was convinced that the "help" provided by revolutionary committees in decision-making was in fact a sign of their domination over the BPCs. An example of the revolutionary committees' control over the public formal channel of political participation is when they "intervened in the work of the PCs by putting forward their own candidates, who were enthusiastic admirers of the leader of the revolution and were committed to furthering the goals of the revolution. In doing so, the revolutionary committees usually objected to other candidates and prevented the Popular Congresses from operating as they should" (Obeidi, 2001, p. 146).

Gaddafi relied a great deal on the protection role played by the revolutionary committees, which became stronger over time due to the power provided to them by the leader of the revolution. By the end of the 1990s "the 40,000 members of the revolutionary committees, together with the 40,000 soldiers of the Jamahiriya guard, were the bedrock of Gaddafi's power" (Martinez, 2007, p. 91).

Political Parties and Civil Society

In order for the mass public to actively participate in the political system, people of a society need information sources. Normally, those sources would include institutions like political parties and civil society organizations. Such a healthy political environment, where citizens receive political information through political elites and party representatives and adopt the political ideology they prefer, was missing from the Libyan political scene, where there was only one ideology to follow and only one political choice to take. In his Green Book, Gaddafi depicted the political party as the contemporary dictatorial tool of governing and the party system as an obvious form of autocracy (Obeidi, 2001, p. 140).

Political elites and traditional politicians were abbreviated in the Libyan case into the revolutionary committees, which were sturdily committed to one ideology and were not willing to give space to any other political thoughts.

Other institutions that normally contribute in shaping political behavior of the mass public including "networks, groups, and other social formations that largely determine their opportunities for the exchange of meaningful political information" (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1987, p. 1197) were also missing from the Libyan political system.

To ensure the absence of other political alternatives, the Libyan regime attempted to

Abolish political parties, trade unions and professional groups and associations (such as the lawyers' union). Within months of the overthrow of the monarchy the press was heavily censored and citizens of the new state were advised not to express public views hostile to the military leadership. (Simons, 1993, p. 192)

Even more, the revolutionary leadership issued the "Decision in the protection of the Revolution" right after a planned coup was uncovered in December 1969. This resolution

asserted that increasing falsehood, or participating in strikes and demonstrations, was considered

to be a criminal offence to proselytize against the state, and an attempt to provoke class hatred

(Simons, 1993).

In short, the political environment in Libya lost all meanings of diversity and the regular

state institutions were constricted. Social interactions such as unions and associations, even

entertaining clubs, were all eliminated. The only institution available to people to express their

opinions was the basic popular congresses, where people had to praise the regime's ideology.

Even the very few organizations which were permitted to be formed and work within the

system were expected to follow the revolutionary objectives. Those organizations, normally

representing particular legal interests, included "The Women's Union, The Students' Union, The

Judges' Association, The Lawyers' Union, The Doctors' Union, The Producers' Union, The

Union of Farmers, and The Union of Libyan Writers and Literati" (Mattes, 2008, p. 62).

<u>Women's Organizations</u>

The selective nature of women's organizations made the membership of those

establishments exclusive to women who believed in and adopted the regime's ideology.

Therefore, those organizations were subject to dissolution if they were to move away from the

ideological and mobilizing path drawn for them by the regime (Obeidi, 2013).

To make sure that civil society's organizations and sector unions were acting within the

system of Jamahiriya, the regime required that the formation of any new organization must be

made through the Secretariat of Public Security to ensure that proposed organizations shared the

same aims and ideology of the regime (Mattes, 2008).

Charities were also included in the forbidden organizations unless the charity was associated with the regime. The reason for that is that the regime did not recognize the poor and needy in Libya and always claimed that there was no poverty in Libya (Jameela Hwaiow, personal interview, April 3, 2016). Several women's groups attempted to form charity organizations over the years but their requests were rejected. Moreover, in order for their association to be accepted, "they had to change the title of their projects from charity and care for the needy to social solidarity to move it from being a charity to [a] social development type of organization; that was the only way we could form any social organization" (Jameela Hwaiow, personal interview, April 3, 2016).

Gaddafi's daughter, Aisha, formed the first charity association in 2001 with goals of caring for the poor and needy outside Libya, such as Africa, Bosnia, and other poor countries. Since then, every charity organization has had to have connections with Aisha's charity in order to get permission to operate. Jameela Hwaiow, a co-founder of the Sanabel El-Hedaya Organization, one of a handful of self-funded organizations founded during the Gaddafi era, recalled that when they applied for permission to form their organization, their request was rejected because some of the names included in the charity's founders had a long history of opposing the regime: "The only way for us to get approved and start provid[ing] services to the poor and needy was to operate as a branch of another organization in Tripoli headed by one of Gaddafi's close men; we had to agree to that in order to be approved, this was the case for all other charity organizations" (Jameela Hwaiow, personal interview, April 3, 2016).

The nature of the political structure under Gaddafi's regime did not differentiate between citizens with regard to their duties toward the system. All adult citizens were required to attend the BPCs and they were all under the threat of punishment if they did not. Women's attendance was mandatory, especially in the first two decades of Gaddafi's rule, which was part of his declared policy to empower women and enforce their presence in public life in an effort to promote himself as a women's rights' advocate.

As for holding a political position, women were present in different levels of the government from lower to senior levels. The main requirement for men and women to win a political position was the degree of loyalty to Gaddafi and the "active engagement in defending and spreading the revolutionary ideology" (Issawi, 2014). However, an analysis of gender representation in the legislative institution during the years 1969-2006 shows that of a total of 54 members, only six females were appointed during these years, which accounts for 11% of the total members (Obeidi, 2008). The picture in the executive elite was worse than the legislative one: of the 132 people who held different executive positions, only three were females; this accounts for only 2% of the total during the same period of time (Obeidi, 2008, p. 121). This low representation of women, which was limited to the areas of women's affairs and social affairs, contradicted with the official speech of the system, which "lauded the growing role of women in all aspects of life" (Obeidi, 2008, p. 116).

Mobilizing Structure for Women During the Revolution

It is important to stress that the women's movements and organizations that emerged during the revolution in 2011 were part of a larger social movement in the form of a

revolutionary act, which provided the opportunity for women's movements to emerge. The social uprisings that swept through Tunisia and Egypt in December 2010 and January 2011 and led to overthrow two long-term dictatorships struck at the legitimacy of Gaddafi's regime and encouraged the people of Libya to take away their moral consent of the state's authority. For Libyans, who did not have previous experience in protesting and forming civil society initiatives, the two revolutions served as "workshops from which the people in Libya absorbed the idea of challenging the regime and embraced it" (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015). Moreover, the Libyan revolution proved that moral force is "an effective weapon when challengers faced an opponent lacking legitimacy" (Oberschall, 1996, p. 94).

When the revolution broke in February 2011 and after the overthrow of Gaddafi, the Libyans faced a great challenge of rebuilding their state institutions. Women were part of the challenge. However, the challenge for women was not just against the regime and the hard task of building new, reliable institutions. Women's challenge was also against the deep-rooted perception of women as passive citizens who are not part of the decision-making process and whose participation in public life is limited. The challenge was to find a space for women in which to build organizations that speak directly to women, to find ways within the system to empower women and to get their voices heard.

Therefore, in the first few months after the overthrow of Gaddafi's regime, a considerable number of women's organizations emerged in Libya advocating women's rights and helping

women to improve their role in the society. Tamara C. Wittes[2] emphasized that women's organizations in Libya were getting support from the international community "through the United Nations Special Mission in Libya … we have already begun to offer our support to the newly emerging NGOs in Libya and to support those who want to create new political parties to compete in Libya's planned elections. We will continue to focus on ensuring that Libyan women are active beneficiaries of our efforts" (Wittes, 2011). Women took promising steps towards securing their position as participants in the state- building process, as "Some of the most promising and effective non-profit initiatives have been founded by women leaders" (Wittes, 2011). The mobilizing structure during the revolution could be divided into two main segments: political institutions and civil society organizations. The role of women in these two segments and the level of influence they had during the revolution will be examined in this section.

<div align="center">Revolutionary Political Institutions</div>

The first political institution formed in the revolution was the National Transitional Council (NTC), formed in February 2011 in Benghazi. The NTC, which was a unicameral legislative body, started to receive international recognition shortly after its establishment. The initial membership of the NTC included 33 members but not all member names were declared in the beginning for security reasons. Of the names released, only one female member was identified: Salwa El-Deghali, an academic who held a doctoral degree in constitutional law. El-Deghali was in charge of women and legal affairs and was also the head of the NTC's Legal Advisory

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[2] The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and Deputy Special Coordinator for Middle East Transitions Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Committee (National Transitional Council, 2011).

When the names were first announced, El-Deghali replied to the skeptical voices regarding the poor representation of women in the NTC by claiming that, while there was currently a total of three female representatives in the NTC, more would be added in the future. She explained, "This is just a transitional stage; once the regime falls, after that women will have a normal representation" (Faul, 2011). However, when the names of the rest of the NTC members were disclosed, the list included only one other female representative besides El-Deghali (her name was Intisar Al-Aqeli) and no more female members were added to the list, which grew after the collapse of the Gaddafi regime to include 150 members (National Transitional Council, 2012). As noted above, El-Deghali was responsible for legal affairs and was the head of the TNC's legal advisory committee, which contributed in writing the interim constitutional declaration and other legislative laws. However, some academics would argue that the committee did not pass any laws or regulations to improve women rights, a fact El-Daghali admitted but who justified that shortcoming in a TV interview, stating, "It is not necessary for the interim constitutional declaration to include articles on women's rights at this time. This will be taken care of when drafting the constitution" (Obeidi, 2013, p. 19).

Women expressed their concern for women's situation based on the poor representation of women in the newly established government with only one woman out of the 15 members of the executive office, and she was in charge of the portfolio of social affairs (Obeidi, 2013). In a comment about women's exclusion from the decision-making process, Amal Bugaighis, an attorney and a cousin of Iman and Salwa, accused men of "trying to put the women back in the

box" (Marlowe, 2011). Women's rights activists showed their disapproval of the government's restraint from granting women a bigger role in decision-making positions; however, they "openly admitted they had suppressed the alarm bells that rang when the NTC was formed, when out of 40 members, only two were women. Women decided that unity was more important than their individual needs and that as soon as Libya was truly free (i.e., after Gaddafi's capture) then they would speak out" (Omar, 2011).

Nevertheless, and despite the poor representation of women in the NTC and its executive office, women stepped forward to hold different positions in the newly established revolutionary government. Three of the women interviewed for this research study held positions in the NTC: Iman Bugaighis, who was the spokesperson of the NTC; Hana El-Gallal, who was in charge of the human rights profile, worked as administrator of education in the liberated cities, and was a member of the media committee; and Najla Elmangoush, who was the head of the public engagement unit.

Iman Bugaighis, a female orthodontist and one of the first women to join the revolution, was chosen to be the spokesperson for the NTC and held several media conferences in which she represented the NTC and the revolutionists' points of view on the events. About the circumstances of her appointment, Iman explained,

> Nothing was planned for. It was a popular revolution and no one had overarching authority. We, the people at the courthouse, obtained our authority from the event itself. All members of the NTC found themselves on a particular historic moment forced them to take initiatives. I am a multi-tasks person, I knew what to say and when to say it, I speak English fluently and use a scientific approach to any issue; I fit perfectly in the position. (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015)

Iman and her sister Salwa were at the center of attention for Western media. Reports were written about their contribution in the revolution in all sources of Western media, and her sister, Salwa, was named the mother of the Libyan revolution (Giovani, 2014). However, Iman only stayed in her position as a spokesperson for four months. She resigned in June 2011 when she started to see changes in the message of the NTC and deviation from its original path:

> At that time, I started to see a lot of disagreement points between me and the board. I saw the chaos and the flops in the government, people who were in charge were ignorant and did not have any proficiency, I could not justify many things, I felt like I am representing something I don't believe in anymore" (Iman Bugaighis, Personal interview, November 4, 2015).

Her decision was also a reaction to the increased level of unfair competition and the fight over positions among the new elite. She claims that jealousy led people to attack her personally:

> I was in the front; a lot of people did not like it. They started spreading rumors about my intention with my sister to be the only Libyan faces in international media. It all started when Western media wrote about my sister Salwa and me and called us "the sisters of the revolution." People did not like that attention and started making up stories. They even accused me of locking the foreign journalists up and forcing them to only interview my sister and I. I thought those false accusations meant to destruct and degrade the revolution. At that point, I decided to leave. The people in the government tried to make me change my mind by offering me positions in the foreign ministry but my decision was final. (Iman Bugaighis, Personal interview, November 4, 2015)

Iman decided to quit her political position and go back to being a college professor. She disagreed with her sister Salwa, who viewed the situation differently and thought they should continue their struggle till the end. Iman explained her decision:

> I decided to help through my academic position. Salwa insisted that we should continue our fight for a better Libya but politics at that time was like a tsunami. There was no system and political appointments were based on verbal endorsements; a mistake that led

the thieves and Gaddafi loyalists to find a place in the government. I told Salwa I will not rule out politics altogether but I will do that within the system when there is one. (Iman Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015)

Hana El-Gallal was present at the first meeting of the TNC and she was the only female to appear in the first footage of the NTC. She was assigned the human rights file and worked as administrator of education in the liberated cites on the east side of Libya, plus she was a member of the media committee (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015). Just like Iman, Hana resigned from all her official positions in May, 2011, only three months after the revolution. She recalled,

> I resigned … May 15, 2011 and went back to the streets to oppose my friends who were with me in the beginning of the revolution even before the collapse of Gaddafi's regime. I did not join the revolution to secure an official position, I joined it in a hope to establish a law and freedom state, to improve the people's life in areas like health, education, and infrastructure. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015)

However, when Hana found out that not all the people who participated in the revolution shared the same dreams as hers, she decided to leave. Hana explained her decision:

> I refused to compromise my reputation by being part of this new system, which started to repeat Gaddafi's mistakes and allow for human rights violations and corruption. Signs of reconciliation with the former regime were evident when Gaddafi's former minister became the head of the TNC and his internal minister became the Army Chief of Staff for revolutionaries. Almost 90% of people who held positions in the new government used to work with the former regime. There were not any new faces; it was the same system. I was braver than others and withdrew. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015)

After resigning from her official positions, Hana started to do non-governmental work and formed the Libyan Center for Development and Human Rights and continued her work as a political and human rights activist.

Najla Elmangoush was the head of the Public Engagement Unit during the period from April to October 2011. She considered her job to be a link between the TNC and the public. She referred to those days as the "best months in my life. We accomplished a lot with very little experience and meager capabilities available to us" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

Najla was responsible for organizing and moderating weekly events in which members of the TNC would meet with the public to answer their questions. The big success of those weekly events created positive reactions to Najla's idea, which was "meant to create confidence and trust between the TNC and the public, and succeeded in that" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

Just like Iman and Hana, Najla left her position in October 2011, right after the collapse of Gaddafi's regime. Her motivations were also similar, as she started to observe negative signs on the leadership level: "new names started to come out and hold political positions. In addition, jealousy among women started to come to the surface" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

After the collapse of Gaddafi's regime, the TNC moved from Benghazi to Tripoli. Najla was asked to move with them and continue her job as the head of the Public Engagement Unit, but she refused because she felt that

> Benghazi deserves better. Benghazi deserved to have its prestige as a second city in Libya. I started my job in Benghazi and I had a wonderful group working with me; we all had no experience in organizing and running public events. That's why our success was historic, in my opinion; I could not just leave. I offered my help to establish a similar unit in Tripoli to continue the work. I even offered to moderate the first session but I could not

leave Benghazi where I work and live. (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015)

<u>Civil Society Organizations and Non-Governmental Contributions</u>

Women's involvement in the public sphere was not limited to formal political institutions. In fact, the contribution of women in civil society and non-governmental work exceeded all expectations. Within one year of the revolution, more than 2000 civil society organizations were established in Libya to promote women's rights and protect the new advanced roles women gained during the revolution (the Election Assessment Team of the European Union, 2012). Naturally, most of those organizations were established in Benghazi and the eastern region of Cyrenaica because it was liberated from Gaddafi early in the revolution. At that time, women were strongly present in crisis-related activities and associations, which were created during the war (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015), such as the disaster and aid committee, the association to search for missing people during the liberation war, and civil society groups to work with refugees and document their cases. However, many of those organizations opened regional offices in the west—especially the capital, Tripoli—right before or soon after the collapse of the former regime (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015).

One of the first organizations founded during the revolution was the Committee to Support Women's Participation in Decision Making. The committee was established in Benghazi in July 2011 with the main purposes of empowering women and supporting women's involvement in gender equality, political decision-making, and constitutionalizing women's rights (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015). Nadine Nasrat headed the committee's main

branch in Tripoli, which was established in September 2011. She explained the circumstances of the organization's establishment:

> I have a personal relationship with Naima Jebril, the founder of the Committee to Support Women's Participation in Decision Making. I met with her in her house during the first few months of the revolution and she told me about her idea of creating an organization to support women's rights. I was excited and started to read about civil society organizations and their mechanism since I had absolutely no experience in that field. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015).

Despite her lack of experience and her hesitation in entering a new domain of social work, Nadine agreed to establish a branch of the organization in Tripoli, where she lives. Unlike most of the civil society organizations founded during and after the revolution, the Committee to Support Women's Participation in Decision Making had a strictly political agenda. The main concern was to advocate for women's political rights and help them "be part of the decision-making process and be aware of their political rights. In our society, women are heavily presented at the grassroots and middle level, not the high level; it was our job to prepare women for the new political environment" (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015).

However, people in power did not always welcome the committee's activities. The women in the organization faced multiple challenges in their campaign. Nadine related,

> We used to go the hospitals and give lectures to the nurses on their rights. We tried to do the same with the teachers in public schools but the minister of education at that time refused to give us permission to do so; he was against us, against our mission altogether and it took us a long time to reach a settlement with the ministry and get permission to work in certain geographic locations.

Between Enthusiasm and Lack of Experience

Even though women during the revolution were the leading force to establish and participate in civil society movements, entering this new domain from which Libya had been

alienated for more than four decades was not an easy task for women. Women's civic work, especially during the first few months of the revolution, ran into various challenges that included "lack of administrative and hierarchal structures, absence of experience in administrative skills, and scarcity of funding" (Obeidi, 2013, p. 28).

The women interviewed for this study admitted the weaknesses in the performance of women's organizations, especially during the first year following the revolution. Nadine Nasrat acknowledged that lack of previous experience affected the launch of civil society activities. She admitted that at the beginning of the revolution, activists did not know the differences between civil society and charity work:

> We would confuse the two. We also did not recognize the boundaries between civil society and the government and how the civil society should work as a monitor for the government and separate from it. Because of that confusion, some civil society activists ended up holding positions in the government. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015)

The internal structure and working mechanism was also a problem for those newborn organizations, as most of them did not have an organizational concept in terms of decision-making and objective planning. Instead, those organizations were run

> by only one or two people who monopolized decision making and participated in every gathering place or concourse without giving a chance to others. Unfortunately, some of them sought their own interests not the nation's; they wanted to be at the center of attention all the time, especially when dealing with international organizations. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015)

The absence of concepts like teamwork and professionalism, a deficiency that was inherited from Gaddafi's long-lasting tyrant regime, was reflected in the behavior of some women in civil society organizations who were "stealing the work and effort of others and

presenting it as theirs; fighting over who would give a speech or being recognized in a workshop. Those individual actions affected our work to a great extent. I always tell them we don't have to love each other; we only need to respect each other" (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015).

Hana El-Gallal, who worked as independent activist with different organizations (including women's organizations) during the revolution, reflected on her experience with those organizations.

> There are all types of organizations working in Libya since the revolution. On the one hand, there were some strong organizations with a clear message which managed to make a difference on the ground, working on issues like women, children, and elections and seeking to build capacities and raise awareness. On the other hand, there were some delusive organizations which did not really exist on the ground and only aimed to get funds from the international society. (Hana El-Gallal, personal interview, November 15, 2015).

Some women and organizations recognized some aspects of insufficiency in the newly established civil society in Libya and took initiatives to improve women's performance by taking advantage of the long experience in women's organizations in neighboring countries like Egypt. Starting in July 2011, Zahra' Langhi, who lived most of her life in Egypt, organized several civil society workshops in Egypt for Libyan youth with a special focus on women's participation. By training the youth and helping them learn from the civil society practices in Tunisia and Egypt, Langhi aimed to "build a civil society capacity in Libya" (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015).

The Role of International Society in Building Civil Society Capacities

The international society recognized the new Libyan civil society's urgent need for help. This recognition was reflected in various workshops and training meetings organized and run by international organizations like the EU and the UN, especially through the UNDP program (UNDP in Libya, 2014). Those programs were intended to support projects to improve women's political and economic situations.

However, the international help was ignorant to the particularity of the Libyan case with regard to the absence of experience. Nadine Nasrat explained the first encounter of her organization with an international society:

> They came to us assuming that we know how to write a proposal and how to specify our goals and link them to a budget; we don't do this in Libya! We have never done such work before. They would always undermine our effort and say it is below standards. I remember we presented a proposal in a meeting with the EU and several European ambassadors. They scolded us by saying, "This is not a proposal; this is rubbish." I was so upset and told them this not time for evaluation; you can evaluate us after ten years, not now. You should have focused on building capacity first by teaching us how things work instead of criticizing us. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015)

Another aspect of the international society's mishandling the case of civil society in Libya, according to Nadine, was to

> fund diaspora Libyan women in America and England to come to Libya for few days, organize and run workshops for women and when they leave the country they appear in international news to give a very grim picture about women in Libya. They undermine their work and depict them as ignorant and present themselves as the saviors and heroes. We suffered a lot from this type of women; they are pathetic. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015)

In summary, the revolutionary structure, with all its instability and crisis-related priorities, did not hinder women from seeking a firm foothold in the political and civil map of new Libya. Even though women had a shy formal political presentation in the transitional state

institutions, they managed to find a place in different levels of the political structure, relying only on their skills and qualifications which made women's involvement inevitable.

Moreover, women found their place in the civil work. The big wave of women's civil society organizations which had various interests, from women's rights to human rights to children and refugees, provided women with a larger space in which to engage and make changes on the ground despite the difficulties and regardless of their lack of experience.

Mobilizing Structure After the Revolution

Despite the potential social and security challenges and the long history of poor representation of women at the high levels of governance and their low access to their political, economic, and social rights, women started their campaign early after liberation to secure decent representation in the new elected bodies in the political system. The elections were held on different levels of the political system. However, the data for the local and municipal elections is not available for all cities in Libya. In general, women's presence in the municipal level was very humble. In Benghazi, for example, of 18 women who ran for seats on the local council, only one woman won, while women did not win any seats in other cities like Misrata (Obeidi, 2013). However, this research study focuses on the political participation of women at the national level. The country witnessed three general elections for three political bodies, the General National Congress (GNC), the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA), and the House of Representatives (HoR).

Libyan women entered the new phase of a Gaddafi-free Libya with a short experience of political involvement in state institutions and a leading role in the newly born civil society

organizations. Regardless of their brief experience in activism and mobilizing work, women used their new-learned tools to seek a sustainable political role and secure decent representation in the government branches.

However, concerns have been raised about securing sustainable public activities and a continued political participation for women after the revolution, considering the dynamics of the election process such as the "desire to have area representation from different parts of Libya, and particularly tribal representation, some of which harbor biases against the political participation of women. Libyan women are hesitant to become part of the political process without a guaranteed safe and enabling environment" (Omar, 2011).

<div align="center">Women in the Legislative Branch</div>

In December 2011, two months after the liberation address, and after the Draft Constitutional Charter for the Transitional Stage was declared by the NTC, women were given a 10% quota in the General National Congress (GNC) elections (Gender Concerns International , 2012). A huge campaign led by women's civil society groups was launched to demand decent representation for women in the upcoming legislative body. The campaign demanded a 40% quota in the upcoming elections for the GNC. However, some activists thought that those demands did not have a logical platform. Zahra' Langhi worked closely with the electoral law committee and her organization Libyan Women's Platform for Peace (2014) was monitoring the law-writing process. Langhi stressed that women's movements who called for those demands (quota) were pushed by the international community and the UN to demand a quota for women and a percentage in the parliament without any preparation for the society to accept those

demands:

> Women made a mistake when they worked for political change without social mobilization. People in Libya did not accept those demands, why 40% and not 50% or 60%? The word "quota" in itself is a foreign word. A lot of people considered it part of a foreign agenda that seeks to destroy our social norms; even women were against it for that reason. When they translated the term they called it (the positive discrimination) *Altamieez Aliejabey*. People objected to the term and considered it against the concept of equal citizenship. In the end, the demands were rejected. (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015)

When women's movements' efforts to pass the quota law did not succeed, Zahra' and other activists sought a different approach to secure decent representation for women in the GNC. "People accused me of giving up on the quota fight; that's not true. I rearranged my priorities. We cannot seek a change in one area and ignore the others. My goal is not just about empowering women anymore; it is about institutional reforms, inclusive democracy, and gender equality" (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015).

Zahra' started using her newly learned lobbying skills and the experience she gained from attending regional meetings with Tunisian activists. She contacted Salah Merghani, then Minister of Justice, and suggested using a "zipper list" in the upcoming elections. The minister liked the suggested revisions and drafted a law with vertical and horizontal lists so the names of men and women would alternately appear at the top of the lists (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015). After days of negotiations and debates with the committee, the NTC approved the revisions to the draft to add zippered candidate lists for political party seats in which both genders' names appear alternately on the list. This revision increased women's chances to win seats in the constitutional assembly from 0% to 20-40% (LWPP, 2014).

As a result of using the zipper list in the GNC elections (the first elected parliament since the fall of Gaddafi's regime), out of 200 members in the General National Congress, 33 women were elected; that is 16.5% of the total elected members (LWPP, 2014). Out of those 33 female members, 32 won as a result of the zipper list. In contrast, 85 women ran as individual candidates but only one woman won through that system (The Carter Center, 2014). The results in the individual system indicate that the voters, men and women alike, prefer to give their vote to a male representative and not a female one (The Carter Center, 2014). Zahra' Langhi explained that

> the zipper list was a success. Women do much better in the list system than they do in the individual system, as it gives a chance for women and other minorities to win. I supported the zipper list even though the Liberals were worried that the list system would give the Islamists bigger chances to win more seats. The Liberals even offered me personally a seat in exchange for giving up on the zipper list campaign, but I rejected their offer. (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015)

Despite the efforts to secure a place for women in the decision-making process, and regardless of women's noticeable success in the first elections in Libya in 42 years, indications of societal rejection for women in the public sphere are visible in the dynamics and results of the general elections. During the General National Congress elections in 2012 and the Constitutional Drafting Assembly in 2014, women's campaigns were more likely to be targeted and female candidates faced more security challenges than their male counterparts (The Carter Center, 2014).

Moreover, the success in reserving 16.5% of the GNC seats for women was followed with a much lower percentage of women's representation in the elected body of the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA). The Assembly consists of 60 members: 20 from each

region, who were elected by popular vote. Women were assigned six seats, or 10% of the total seats in the CDA (Electoral Law 17, Article 6, Section 2, 2013). This poor representation of women in the CDA led to limiting women's presence in the subcommittees of the constitutional assembly to three subcommittees out of eight (Constitutional Drafting Assembly, 2014).

The CDA election campaign started in December 2013 while the country was subject to insecurity due to the ongoing armed conflict among militias in different parts of Libya, especially in the east and south. Local civil society organizations reported minor campaign violations and incidents where candidates could not campaign because of the armed conflicts in the south or because of intimidation strategies in the east (The Carter Center, 2014). In the city of Derna, for example, candidates were not able to run their campaigns because militias openly targeted them. Civil society reports indicate that on Election Day, five polling centers were bombed in that city (The Carter Center, 2014). Therefore, the lack of security and the absence of the rule of law, along with the large-scale armed conflict, were direct reasons many candidates did not get a fair chance in the elections. These problems also contributed to lower numbers of voter turnout than in the previous GNC elections. In addition, the relatively short period between the beginning of the election campaign (December 25, 2015) and the actual election day (February 20, 2016) did not give the candidates enough time to communicate with their voters on main constitutional issues (The Carter Center, 2014).

In addition to the general factors that affected the chances of all candidates, women candidates faced more challenges running their campaigns in the CDA, as they were subject to "relentless campaigns against women with experience and competence in the legal and political

fields and other areas on the pretext that they were liberals and non-veiled women. Perhaps those were attempts to persuade the public not to vote for them in the event of their participation in the CDA elections" (Obeidi, 2013, p. 21).

The third general elections were to elect the House of Representatives, and took place in July 2014. Women's movements aimed to secure a better level of representation in the new legislative body. Therefore, women's rights activists campaigned for the inclusion of the same percentage of women's representation as the one obtained in the GNC elections.

The GNC formed a commission named the February Commission, whose task was to submit a proposal to modify the constitutional declaration. The Commission consisted of 15 members, nine of whom were independents and six of whom were GNC members. Only one woman was on the Commission: the lawyer Azza Maghur. Azza recalls being the most organized and the most energetic member on the Commission:

> I arrived to the first meeting prepared, I had the statute and general principles of the Commission ready. I insisted that the Commission would not take money from the GNC, to guarantee its independency. We finished our tasks in two weeks, I would stay late at night after all members left and write a daily report on our work and publish it to prove our transparency. (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016)

Azza took advantage of her membership on the February Commission to push for constitutionalizing the 16% quota for women. She insisted that women receive fair representation in the HoR: "It was not an easy task; the Islamist members in the Commission objected to my request to hold the 16% as a minimum percentage of women in the House of Representatives. I wanted to prevent what happened in the CDA when women's representation dropped significantly. I believe that quota is important at this stage" (Azza Maghur, personal

interview, May 11, 2016). The 16% quota for women was adopted in the new electoral law (Electoral Law 10, Article 18, 2014), and women were assigned 32 seats in the HoR.

However, the intensity of armed conflicts and the new registration regulations resulted in a very low turnout, as only 14% of Libyans voted in the HoR elections (Temuhu, n.d.), which is about half of the registered voters in the GNC elections.

<u>Women in the Executive Branch</u>

Women's success in guaranteeing a 16% quota in the two legislative bodies elected after the revolution was not reflected in the executive branch. The first government formed after the liberation was led by Abdulraheem Alkeeb and included 26 ministers. Only two of them were women, and they were assigned to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Services. Six other women were appointed as deputies of other ministries (Obeidi, 2013). The same pattern was repeated in the next formed government led by Ali Zaidan, who appointed two female ministers out of 29; again, they were assigned to social services and tourism (Obeidi, 2013).

After Zaidan's government, and due to the deterioration of the security situation and the proliferation of militias, the country was divided politically into two state governments, one in the East under the authority of the House of Representatives and the other in the West following the General National Conference. The political instability following the fall of Gaddafi's regime resulted in the creation of 10 short-lived governments in the East and West in six years, some of which did not last for more than a month (Sky News, 2016). Therefore, even though most of those governments included at least one woman in their ministerial lineup, the presence of women in those governments was not significant due to their short life span.

Nevertheless, some activists find the poor representation of women in the executive branch alarming based on the idea that "if woman could not be in the executive branch, she will not be able to accomplish a lot and she will lose the gains she obtained since the revolution" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016).

Women's Behavior as Voters

Women's participation in the three general elections that took place in Libya after the revolution was significant. Their participation in the GNC elections in 2012 reached 45%. The percentage dropped in the CDA elections in February 2014 to 41% and declined again in the HoR elections in June 2014 to 40%. Regardless of the slight decline in the women's voting percentages, these numbers indicate that women are aware of their weight in the elections and are fighting to maintain an active role in the political arena. The HNEC reports that in some constituencies, women scored higher participating numbers than men; this made women's vote the factor that "decides the winner of the seat at those constituencies" (HNEC, 2014).

However, the high turnout of women in the elections as registered voters was not translated automatically into higher female winners in the elections. In fact, according to a survey conducted by Danish Church Aid in 2014, both men and women in Libya support the idea of having female candidates running for political positions but only a few said that they would actually vote for a woman to represent them (The Carter Center, 2014). The High National Elections Commission supports these findings in its report on Libya's general elections, which states that "after comparing the percentages of women participation in election processes with seats won by women, it becomes clear that women usually go for male candidates" (HNEC,

2014). The women's tendency to vote for male representatives could have cultural roots from which most women still believe that it is more desirable for men to hold political positions and to become public figures than women.

<div align="center">Challenges for Women in the Political System</div>

Women candidates and women voters encountered more challenges as other social and systemic factors made women's participation in this election much lower than in the previous GNC elections. According to the Carter Report (The Carter Center, 2014), female candidates faced more challenges running their campaigns than their male counterparts. Those challenges included women's lack of access to financial resources in comparison to their male counterparts, the vulnerability of women when campaigning in absence of security, the targeting of female candidates by defacing their campaign posters, and lastly, the fact that women do poorly when running for open seats (The Carter Center, 2014). As a result, out of 649 candidates for the CDA, only 64 were women and only six were elected; this outcome led to a severe under-representation of women in the constitutional drafting process (The Carter Center, 2014).

Women voters faced their own share of obstacles that prevented a large number of female voters from casting their vote. Most of those obstacles resulted from the changes made by the High National Election Commission to the voting requirements, especially with regard to the voter registration system. Based on the new registration rules, voters should register to vote electronically by sending an SMS from their mobile phones. They also needed their national identification number to register. Reports showed that because fewer women possess mobile phones than men, it was more difficult for women to register to vote. Also, the family book is

normally in the possession of the head of the family figure such as the father or the husband, and this limits women's access to the information needed to register. In addition, women who are married to non-Libyan husbands (approximately 5500 citizens) did not have an identification number and even when this problem was solved, they were given ID numbers with a format different than the standard format, which was not accepted in the digital voting system. As a result, those women were disinclined to vote (The Carter Center, 2014).

In summary, despite their brief experience, women's movements in Libya showed that they could be real players in the political system. Their ability in making changes became visible in the legislative elections. Women's movements acted collectively to secure decent representation for women in both the GNC and the HoR elections. Moreover, individual female actors took advantage of their positions in the political system to promote women's rights. The results were a 16% quota for women in both legislative bodies. However, the CDA elections showed that the absence of women's movements' pressure would reduce women's chances of winning seats in the elections.

On the other hand, women as voters proved that they are aware of their political rights, as their participation levels in the general elections show. However, those votes are not necessarily going for female candidates.

The interviewees for this study expressed different opinions regarding the performance of female representatives in the legislative bodies and in the executive office. On the one hand, some interviewees like Nadine Nasrat and Shahrazad Kablan viewed women's performance

positively, especially the achievements of some female individuals like the appointed

ambassadors to the U.S. and the EU and some members in the GNA and HoR.

On the other hand, other interviewees like Najla Elmangoush saw the performance of

most female representatives in the political system as poor and disappointing. She believed that

the

> selfish performance of our female political representatives and their lack of
> experience and low capacity provided bad outcome. [That's] the thing which will
> affect women's future chances of getting elected again or to be in any future
> ministerial lineup. I blame the international society, who pushed for women to
> hold political positions with no regard to their deprived qualifications. (Najla
> Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015)

However, the interviewees agreed that the performance of women holding political

positions should be reviewed as part of the whole political system, which is characterized by lack

of experience and high levels of corruption. They also agreed that females' lack of experience is

more likely to be emphasized in the media than that of their male counterparts.

Conclusion

The political structure of Libya under Gaddafi did not provide much space for women to

be present. Due to political and social factors, women did not push to have a role in the political

system under Gaddafi. However, during the revolution, women started to form a new substantial

role for themselves in the political system, especially through informal institutions, which took off largely in the form of civil society organizations and women's rights movements.

The focus on informal institutions was associated with the fact that women did not have a strong presence in the formal political institutions in general and in the executive branch in particular. Other than a handful of women who proved themselves as actual partners in the political structure, the representation of women in formal institutions does not rise to the high expectations women had for themselves during the revolution. However, women revealed high levels of awareness of their capabilities as voters to make change. This awareness shows that women understand the importance of their weight in the election process, and if women's movements become more organized they can push for more women's rights to be recognized in the future.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The revolution in Libya opened the door for women to undertake new roles in public

space; at the same time, women were the real power behind the start of the revolution and were

an essential component in it. Politics and civil society are new domains for women in Libya, and

Libyan women had no experience up until the revolution in 2011 in how to organize a protest or

when to push for a particular regulation; they did not even know how to write a proposal to

request funds from international organizations.

The women interviewed for this research study recognized the change the revolution

triggered on both aggregated and personal levels. As one interviewee stated,

> In the revolution, we experienced new emotions we never felt before. We
> discovered how much we love our country. My daughter was raised in England;
> since we got home a year before the revolution, she was always criticizing
> everything about Libya and considered herself a British. During the revolution, she
> was with me everywhere, in the protests, in the meetings, she saw the
> revolutionaries hiding weapons in our home. One day she told me, "Mom, I am
> proud to be Libyan…I want to study hard so I can help in building Libya and make
> it like England." Her words were my biggest personal victory. The revolution gave
> her the most valuable lesson in patriotism and how to make a difference. (Iman
> Bugaighis, personal interview, November 4, 2015)

Female activists admitted that they rediscovered their own capabilities during the revolution; as Zahra' Langhi explained,

> The revolution empowered me, it changed me socially and intellectually, I am not the same person I was before. I never traveled without my husband before, now I travel alone a lot to attend conferences and meetings. It was not an easy change. It's not just me, a lot of women went through the same experience. I call it irreversible empowerment on both existential and social levels. (Zahra' Langhi, Personal interview, December 14, 2015)

Five years after the revolution, women have created their own space in society. They took initiatives in civil society work in general and women empowerment projects in particular. Even though they made fewer achievements with regard to decision-making positions, women are present in the legislative branch and in some other local political positions.

Yet, those achievements are far from being considered sustainable gains for women. Different factors are pulling women back to their old place in society. Those factors include the predominant culture, which, apparently, needs more than sudden political and social transformations to change. Soon after the revolution ended,

> women were told to go back home and men held all positions. Women, by nature, are the incubator element of the state and without a real representation for women the state will not advance. The elections brought weak women to the legislative seats so they can be manipulated. We are a patriarchal society and women are always the easiest target; the attack on them will also hurt their families. (Shahrazad Kablan, personal interview, March 6, 2015)

Another factor that contributes to the decline in women's participation is the rise of fundamental Islamism, which takes a reactionary approach to women's public engagement. Fundamental groups are one of the main concerns for female activists. Self-proclaimed religious political groups are getting involved in different areas in the society.

They are fighting us. Whenever we arrange for a protest to demand certain rights for women, they would go out on the same day and even use women to go against us and claim that our demands are against the religion. They got involved in the education system and called for separating the girls from boys in public schools. They even got involved in writing the curriculum for elementary and secondary education levels in which they presented women only as housewives with an ultimate ambition of cleaning the house and cooking dinner. (Nadine Nasrat, personal interview, November 13, 2015)

Moreover, activists see that the threat of extreme ideologies is not limited to the political and social aspects; it reaches its maximum levels when ideology differences take the form of armed conflict: "Arms are the main issue, you can not discuss anything with someone with a weapon in his hand. Women don't carry weapons; we talk, and we negotiate. As long as those guys have weapons, we can't talk. If those groups came to power, it is the end of women's activism" (Azza Maghur, personal interview, May 11, 2016).

Naturally, political instability and armed conflict are connected to the issue of security. The lack of security became the primary concern for the society. As a result, women's activism had a setback due to the lack of security: "Security is the key word, it is the only guarantee for women to continue their participation in public space" (Najla Elmangoush, personal interview, December 5, 2015).

Consequently, the current situation of women's activism is set back to the individual initiatives stage. Women now are not acting collectively to seize political opportunities. Instead, female activists and politicians are acting either as independent agents or through their own limited-resourced organizations in exile to improve women's chances to be part of the state-building process. Specifically, some activists focus their efforts on conflict resolution strategies as their means of action.

Even though women's engagement in the public sphere politically and socially which reached its peak during the revolution started to decline for the reasons mentioned above, the interviewees for this research all had big hopes for a larger role for women in the future. Almost all of them expressed their willingness to personally play a role in the future either in politics or in civil society initiatives. They considered the stage women are going through as a self-improvement stage and learning phase. They believe that women can play a role in the conflict resolution efforts and state-building process. "There is no magic spell to bring security and peace. Women should have their agenda to create peace and get to the roots of the problems. However, working within the same old paradigm and masculine mindset means that we are not moving forward. The real challenge is to build feminine discourse that is centered around feminist values" (Zahra' Langhi, personal interview, December 14, 2015).

Efforts towards creating this new discourse started to take place amid the current critical times the country is going through. Even though most female activists who played a role in the political and social arenas had to flee the country and slow down their activities, a new wave of women's activism started to take place. Projects led by youth and aiming to empower women are using the tools of social media to get their voices heard. An example is Project Silphium, an initiative created by a group of six activists (four females and two males) who work to change the traditional image of women in Libyan society through introducing a new feminist discourse (Project Silphium, 2015a). The project presents women's perspectives on various issues through short articles written by women. It also tells stories of successful women who managed to make

a difference in Libyan society through their social, political, or economic contribution (Project Silphium, 2015b).

Project Silphium was launched in 2015. The people who run the project keep their identities covert because they work from Libya. The group, which includes bloggers from Benghazi and Tripoli, did not want to take the risk of disclosing their real names in their blog and exposing themselves to threats. The new wave of young female activists working from inside Libya are trying to protect themselves while at the same time contributing in creating a new perception of women in Libyan society. One blogger in the group introduces herself by stating that she is a "Stubborn Libyan that won't accept the status quo. Exposed to the real struggles of working in a male-dominated environment. I try and change what I can in my spare time" (Project Silphium, 2015b).

Another member in the team describes herself to the readers as

Tamazight, feminist, activist and an eager soul for social justice. I love learning and experiencing. Learning about new languages, ideas and cultures, and experiencing adventures, complexities of thoughts and friendships. I take my strengths through activism and women's stories of Libya which inspires my life. (Project Silphium, 2015b)

The team members of Project Silphium work with awareness of their surroundings: the ongoing war, the rising fundamentalism, and the deepened political divisions. Their articles reflect strong feminist opinions on what is going on in Libya and offer possible solutions to the problems the country is facing.

Project Silphium reflects the current situation of women's activism in Libya, which is also a reflection of the whole picture of Libya. Women are working from within. Their tools might have been changed from direct activism on the ground to those which rely on social media

as their means of action. Women are trying to get their message across even if they do that from behind the keyboards and by using nicknames.

Finally, even though women's participation in political and social arenas in Libya is a new practice, women's activism went beyond expectations in such a short time despite the current challenges women are facing. The changes in women's political and social situations which were associated with the Libyan revolution in 2011 could have long-lasting effects on Libyan women and the way they perceive their role in the future Libya.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEWEES' PROFILES

Iman Bugaighis: is an orthodontist and one of the first women to join the revolution with her sister, Salwa. Iman and her sister were among the first handful of people who protested in the courthouse in Benghazi in February 2011. She was chosen to be the spokesperson for the National Transitional Council (NTC), the first political body created in the beginning of the revolution to speak for the opposition. During that time, Iman held several media conferences in which she represented the NTC and the revolutionists' points of view on the events. She resigned from her position after a few months and decided to go back to her original work as a university professor. Her sister Salwa continued her active political work and served on the peace-building committee; she was assassinated in her own home in Benghazi on June 25, 2014 on the day of national elections. Iman fled the country following that tragedy and she lives in exile with her husband and daughter.

Hana El-Gallal: is an international law professor at Benghazi University. She joined the uprising on February 17, 2011 and was the only woman present at the first official meeting of the National Transnational Council. Hana was in charge of the human rights profile on the Council, served as administrator of education in the liberated cities during the revolution, and was a member of the media committee at the same time. She resigned from all her positions in May 2011 and decided to go back on the streets to oppose the new leadership. She established the

Libyan Center for Development and Human Rights and has worked as an independent activist since then. She refused all political positions she was offered from the consecutive governments. Hana fled the country with her two sons after she received death threats from unidentified parties. Hana is still active through social media and has dedicated her time to raise political and legal awareness about the situation in Libya. She also has an active academic profile through presenting her research at international conferences.

Najla Elmangoush: is a lawyer and law professor. She worked in different positions in the NTC during the revolution including the media committee, relief committee, and communication with international media. She held the position of the head of the public engagement unit in the NTC. After the liberation, Najla worked as a field officer for the U.S. Institute of Peace in Libya. She was granted a Fulbright scholarship, through which she received her M.A. in Conflict Transformation. Currently, Najla is a Ph.D. student at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution in the U.S.

Jameela Hwaiow: is a board member in the Sanabel El-Hedaya Organization, one of a handful of self-funded organizations founded during the Gaddafi era that continued its activities during and after the revolution. The organization's activities are strictly social service-based with no political agenda and rely on charity and community contributions.

Shahrazad Kablan: is a Libyan-American who works as a teacher in an American middle school. Her political engagement in the revolution started when she lobbied for the implementation of the No Fly Zone and the international military intervention in Libya and

pushed for the UN to protect civilians in Libya after the brutal power used by Gaddafi to repress the revolution. However, her major contribution in the revolution was when she became the first female anchor in the first oppositional TV station created during the revolution, which was broadcasting from Qatar. Shahrazad maintained a strategy of sending community-unifying messages through her broadly well-received TV show and worked on emphasizing the common national sense among Libyans and sent positive messages to the revolutionary forces to continue their fight against Gaddafi. She stopped her program right after the liberation and has worked as an independent activist since then. She served as the Libyan National Advisor for the Libyan Out-of-Country voting in the U.S. during the general elections in 2012. She continues her political involvement with a special focus on improving the educational system in Libya.

Azza Maghur: is a Libyan lawyer and human rights activist. She is well known in Libya for her history of defending political prisoners and calling for a constitution during the Gaddafi regime. During and after the revolution, Azza campaigned for democracy, human rights, and women rights. She focused on calling for changing the unjust laws towards women, especially with regard to their social and divorce rights. She was the head of a legal committee to draft laws concerning NGOs. She also worked on broadening legislation, including the election law of 2012. Azza was the only female member in the February Constitutional Committee that was in charge of amending the Libyan Constitutional Declaration. The amendment led to the creation of the Libyan House of Representatives. Azza fled Tripoli after receiving death threats for her active role during and after the revolution; she lives in exile with her family.

Zahra' Langhi: is a women's rights activist. Her engagement in the revolution began early when she started advocating for the uprising from Egypt, where she had lived her entire life with her family, which had a rich history of opposing Gaddafi. She worked on mobilizing the international community in support of the uprising and contacted international media outlets with updates on the ongoing events. Zahra' is the co-founder of the Libyan Women Platform for Peace, one of the largest women's organizations founded after the revolution. The LWPP is a movement advocating for inclusive democracy and peace building. The organization takes a gender-sensitive approach to address women's issues rather than a gender-equality approach.

Nadine Nasrat: is an advocate for women's political rights. She joined the revolution from Tripoli, where she lived. Her engagement took a specific direction from the beginning, as she got involved in non-governmental work to build women's political capacity, raise women's awareness of their political rights, and mobilize for women's equal participation in the political decision-making process. She is a co-founder of the Committee to Support Women's Participation in Decision Making and the spearhead of the organization's branch in Tripoli. Nadine participated in several national and international initiatives to promote women's political rights in the post-Gaddafi Libya. Nadine left the country with her family after receiving several death threats from unidentified parties.