

# COMMENTARY

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## The Downfall of Qaddafi: A Major Milestone for the Post-Colonial Middle East

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Freedom and liberation achieved without boots on the ground, which was essential to this cause; something Qaddafi most likely hoped would happen in order to try turn things in his favour. Excellent job NATO and those who supported this revolution, and excellent job Freedom Fighters, your efforts were not in vain." This is the message that the Libyan Youth Movement posted on Facebook just an hour or so into the fall of Tripoli on Sunday August 21. What a remarkable year 2011 has been for the Middle East and North Africa. The demise of Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, in power for 42 years, marks a particularly significant milestone for the region's dictators and the masses who are finally fed up with them.

Still, this does not mean that the policies of Western powers are viewed as completely sound in the Middle Eastern region. The greatest sticking point for the regional public opinion is still the US-Israeli relationship and, as the populace views it, this is an example of tremendous hypocrisy on the part of the US.

If there are major changes in policies regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in terms of pure and simple foreign policy, that indeed would be the true game-changer in the Middle East as far as Western involvement is concerned. The fact that President Obama already decided to veto the UN resolution for Palestinian statehood is not endearing the Arab/Islamic world to the US, the NATO campaign in Libya notwithstanding. However, NATO/the US will be acknowledged for taking a firm stance against Qaddafi, and due credit will be given, as the quote from the Libyan

Youth Movement attests.

If indeed the Libyan rebels finish the job today, or within the next 24 hours, this will have been a swift and decisive, incredibly determined effort on the part of the rebels and the significance of the timing of Ramadan and this victory will certainly not go unnoticed by the Libyan masses and throughout the Islamic world. The danger is for fatalistic attitudes to set in once Qaddafi is truly uprooted. The Libyan people must not get complacent.

Qaddafi's downfall also signifies a milestone for the post-colonial Middle East: The region's longest ruling dictator has fallen. Even the ouster/overthrow of Ben Ali and Mubarak arguably did not have the calibre, comparatively, of such a symbolically significant political marker, which will reverberate in the most pronounced manner throughout the region.

The fighting skills of the ragtag rebels in Libya will potentially inspire others as well. The Libyan rebels' success will certainly inspire the Syrian anti-government movement even further (even though that is not an armed resistance), boosting the morale of the protesters.

Now the crucial task at hand in Libya is to form a viable government, maintain national unity, as well as stability and security, and apply lessons learned from Tunisia and Egypt for post-revolution Libya.

The party is on, and what an Eid ul-Fitr this will be for the Libyans!

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