

History of Muammar Qaddafi's Political Pragmatism: His Thought of Arab Unity and Israel – Palestine Matter

Sejarah Pragmatisme Politik Muammar Qaddafi: Pemikirannya tentang Persatuan Arab dan Israel – Masalah Palestina

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Abstract: *Muammar Qaddafi's political policies in the Middle East were closely tied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This article explores Qaddafi's political ideology regarding Arab unity, support for Palestine, and condemnation of Israel and Zionism. The study employs a qualitative method with an analytical and descriptive character approach, using a political-historical framework to understand Qaddafi's thoughts. The findings reveal that Qaddafi leveraged the Israeli issue to strengthen his position as a revolutionary leader in the Arab world and a defender of the Palestinian people. He also used this issue to compete with other Arab leaders, such as those of Syria and Egypt, whom he regarded as political rivals. Although he maintained pragmatic trade relations with Israel, Qaddafi claimed that these did not influence his political vision. For Qaddafi, recognizing the legitimacy of the Jewish state was seen as a betrayal of the revolutionary principles he championed, particularly the liberation of the Arab world from imperialism and colonialism. His political ideology emphasized that supporting Palestine was a fundamental element in building a greater Arab identity and solidarity.*

Keywords: *Anti Zionist; Arab Unity; Israel; Muammar Qaddafi; Palestine.*

Abstrak: Kebijakan politik Muammar Qaddafi di Timur Tengah memiliki keterkaitan erat dengan konflik Israel-Palestina. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi ideologi politik Qaddafi terkait persatuan Arab, dukungannya terhadap Palestina, dan kecaman terhadap Israel serta Zionisme. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis karakter dan deskriptif, serta menerapkan kerangka sejarah politik untuk memahami pemikiran Qaddafi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Qaddafi memanfaatkan isu Israel untuk memperkuat posisinya sebagai pemimpin revolusioner dunia Arab sekaligus pembela rakyat Palestina. Isu ini juga dijadikan alat untuk bersaing dengan para pemimpin negara-negara Arab lainnya, seperti Suriah dan Mesir, yang ia anggap sebagai saingan politik. Meskipun memiliki hubungan dagang yang pragmatis dengan Israel, Qaddafi mengklaim bahwa hal tersebut tidak memengaruhi visi politiknya. Bagi Qaddafi, pengakuan terhadap legitimasi negara Yahudi dianggap sebagai pengkhianatan terhadap prinsip revolusi yang ia perjuangkan, yakni pembebasan dunia Arab dari pengaruh imperialisme dan kolonialisme. Ideologi politiknya menegaskan bahwa dukungan terhadap Palestina merupakan elemen fundamental dalam membangun identitas dan solidaritas Arab yang lebih besar.

Kata kunci: *Anti Zionist; Arab Unity; Israel; Muammar Qaddafi; Palestine.*

INTRODUCTION

Libya is located on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea in North Africa, with Tripoli as its capital. It is the fourth largest country in Africa, covering an area of approximately 680,000 square miles (1,761,000 km²).¹ Libya is a North African country with Tripoli as its capital. It has a unitary system of government that transitioned from monarchy to republic during the reign of Muammar Qaddafi in 1969. Libya is respected in the African continent and the Middle East. It is also highly regarded militarily and politically by Western countries. Libya's reputation reached its zenith and declined during the reign of Muammar Qaddafi. Qaddafi's political career had a significant impact on the politics and psychology of Arab leaders and society that shared similar circumstances to Libya.²

Libya does not need to worry about confronting Israel due to its geographical distance. This allows Libya to propagate without fear of retaliation from Israel. Unlike the previous Libyan leader, King Idris, who had close relations with the West in the 1950s and 1960s, Qaddafi's regime did not have such ties. During the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Libya expressed sympathy for the Palestinian side, but did not provide any further support. The anti-Israel sentiment in Libyan politics grew stronger after King Idris was overthrown by Qaddafi and his colleagues in September 1969. Libya became a vocal opponent of Israel, actively supporting Palestine and seeking to unite Islamic and Arab countries. Qaddafi envisions an Arab nation and Middle East region free from imperialism, exploitation, and Western interests. He opposes the presence of Zionists, whom he sees as the main actors in the political drama and Western government.

Muammar Abu Minyar Al-Qaddafi was born on June 7, 1942, in Qasr Abu Hadi, Sirte. He was born into a poor Bedouin family belonging to a small Arab tribe, the Qhadadfa. Technical terms are explained when they are first used, and the text follows formal rules. His father, Mohammad Abdul Salam bin Hamed bin Mohammad, was a goat and camel herder. His mother, Aisha, embraced Islam at the age of 9.³ Qaddafi received his education from a teacher in the village who taught him to read the Koran. He also received formal education at a traditional elementary school. Later, he continued his studies at a private junior high school in Misrata, where he focused on history. Finally, Qaddafi completed his education in the city of Sebha between 1956 and 1961. During his high school education, Qaddafi and his friends became the main leaders of the militant group that later took

¹ Ajid Thohir, *Studi Kawasan Dunia Islam*, (Jakarta: PT. RajaGrafindo Persada, 2009), 312.

² Muh Ilham Shohib, M. Kholil Baidhowi and Amrosi Amrosi. "THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION OF 2011 AND THE IMPACT OF MUAMMAR GADDAFI'S IMPEACHMENT ON LIBYA AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES." *At-Turost: Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2023): 1-12

³ Apriadi Tamburaka, *Revolusi Timur Tengah Kejatuhan Para Penguasa Otoriter di Negara-Negara Timur Tengah*, (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2012), 216-217.

control of Libya.⁴ Qaddafi recognised that the only way to liberate the country from the injustices committed by King Idris was through revolution and the restructuring of social life based on justice, equality, and the equitable distribution of wealth. The formation of militant groups with military power helped them achieve their objectives and commitments, particularly the Arab Union.⁵

In 1961, Qaddafi withdrew from the University of Libya to continue his studies at the Libyan Military Academy in Benghazi. He believed that the military could bring change to Libya, and many of his friends in the Revolutionary Command Council graduated in the 1965-1966 period. Qaddafi was selected to pursue further military studies at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, England, and the Hellenic Military Academy in Athens, Greece. Muammar Qaddafi grew up during a time of conflict in the Middle East, including the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, the Egyptian Revolution in 1952, the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956, and the emergence of the United Arab Republic in 1958-1961. These events had a significant impact on Qaddafi's mindset. Qaddafi developed an interest in the military and looked to Egyptian politician Gamal Abdul Naser as a role model, particularly for his opposition to Western imperialism in the Middle East.⁶

Qaddafi's political stance supports Palestine and condemns Israel, demonstrating his competitive attitude towards Egyptian presidents Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. This competition is motivated by the desire of both countries to become the dominant power in the Middle East. Such competition often leads to radical thinking and showmanship among Arab leaders, who seek to demonstrate their power and influence in the region. The Arab defeat in the 1967 Six Day War against Israel dealt a severe blow to their pride. The conflict started when Egypt's President at the time, Gamal Abdul Nasser, responded to Syria's challenge to abolish the UN Emergency Force group that separated Egypt and Israel. However, Egypt did not take this decision seriously and was then exploited by Qaddafi to support his political campaign in the Middle East.

Qaddafi is widely regarded as a dictatorial figure in politics and is seen as having caused trouble for Israel and its Western allies. His motivation was to replace Egypt as the leading figure in the Middle East and unite the Arab countries. Qaddafi expressed hostility towards Israel and Zionism. Also Qaddafi frequently spoke out about Israeli colonialism and interference in Africa.⁷ It is important to note that Qaddafi's actions remain relevant today. It should be noted that Qaddafi had no animosity towards Jews who had lived with Arabs in the Middle East before 1947. However, he attempted to eradicate Zionist Jews who had migrated to the Middle East from Europe.

⁴ Ahmad Bahaudin, *Menyingkap Perjalanan Hidup Tokoh-Tokoh Kejam Dunia*, (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2012), 197.

⁵ Adinda Afriyenti and Humaidi Humaidi. "Muammar Khadafi: Kepemimpinannya Dari Awal Kudeta Tak Berdarah Hingga Revolusi Berdarah Di Libya (1969-2011)." *PERIODE: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Pendidikan Sejarah* 1, no. 1 (2019): 40-53.

⁶ Bahaudin, *Menyingkap Perjalanan Hidup*, 197.

⁷ Lindsay J. Benstead, "Differentiation and diffusion: shifting public opinion attitudes toward foreign policy in North Africa." *The Journal of North African Studies* 24, no. 4 (2019): 618-639. doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2018.1525007

Several methods are used by Qaddafi to establish his political dominance in the Middle East, including political intimidation, punishment, and rewards with political partners in Africa, the Middle East, and other Asian regions. Islam does not separate spiritual matters from worldly affairs but encompasses both aspects comprehensively. Islamic law (sharia) governs both dimensions, including the relationship between humans and God as well as relationships among individuals. Recognizing this, Muslims require political power as a vital instrument for implementing Islamic values.⁸ Qaddafi is also suspected of forming special military agencies or providing financial assistance to Palestinian extremist groups to carry out attacks against Israel and its Western allies.⁹ His political journey in uniting the Arab nation and fighting Israel was not without challenges. Libya is often viewed with bias by other Arab countries due to the actions of its leader, including intimidation, provocative behaviour, and personal rivalry with Egypt.¹⁰ Arab leaders also had a negative opinion of Gaddafi. This was partly due to his shift away from Arab unity towards economic privatization.¹¹ Additionally, Qaddafi's provision of aid to extremist groups has further damaged Libya's reputation in the eyes of the world. Globally, the position and development of the Muslim community is greatly influenced by historical reviews, political conditions and developing cultural perspectives.¹²

It is suggested that his pursuit of political ambitions to unite the Arab peoples and eradicate Israel and Zionism is linked to his personal ambition and violent character, with which he is often associated. This article aims to explain Qaddafi's political thinking and the dynamics of its implementation in promoting Arab unity, defending Palestine, and propagating anti-Israel and Zionist sentiments.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research conducted is qualitative with analytical and descriptive reporting. Qualitative research is valuable for comprehending the world around us, as it requires researchers to focus on the meaning and processes that shape social phenomena. This type of research is suitable for investigating phenomena related to a region, community, group, or individual.¹³

⁸ Mahanani, Q. D., Marintan, M. A., Dewi, I. A. K., & Fuadi, M. A. (2022). Islam dan Politik di Indonesia. *Jurnal al-Isnad*, 3(1).

⁹ Aviva Guttman, "Turning oil into blood: Western intelligence, Libyan covert actions, and Palestinian terrorism (1973-74)." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 45, no. 6-7 (2022): 993-1020. doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2020.1868995

¹⁰ Mufti Almas Gul, "Chaotic Libyan Arab Spring: A comparison with Egypt." *Global Regional Review* 4, no. 2 (2019): 318-328. [doi.org/10.31703/grr.2019\(IV-II\).34](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2019(IV-II).34)

¹¹ Katlyn Quenzer, "Out of place, out of time: Gaddafi and the Palestinian resistance in the 1970s." *Postcolonial Studies* 26, no. 1 (2023): 77-93. doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2023.2178702

¹² M. Noor Sulaiman Syah, "MUSLIMWORLD: HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE." *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 4, no. 1 (2016): 82-105; Kazeem Oluwaseun Dauda, "Islamophobia and religious intolerance: Threats to global peace and harmonious co-existence." *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 2 (2020): 257-292. doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v8i2.6811

¹³ Umar Suryadi Bakri, *Metode Penelitian Hubungan Internasional*. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2016).

The research employs the character study approach as its analytical method. The assessment is based on several indicators, including: The assessment of a figure's integrity should be based on objective criteria such as their knowledge, leadership methods, achievements, moral integrity, and unique qualities compared to their contemporaries. Works that benefit society and empower humanity, whether physical or non-physical, are considered monumental. Contributions to community life, including thinking, leadership, and example, should be recognized. They should be admired and used as a source of inspiration for future generations. Character studies can focus on living or dead characters.¹⁴ An ideal character study should include four main elements: firstly, showing the character's personality; secondly, displaying the social forces that support it; thirdly, describing the historical context; and finally, describing the success and development of figures during their time.¹⁵

As a historical political figure with significant global impact, Qaddafi's political thought can be understood through a political history approach. The analysis of this topic starts by examining the factors that drive historical events. According to Carl G. Gustavson in 'A Preface of History' developed by Kuntowijoyo, there are six forces that drive historical events: economics, religion, institutions/politics, technology, ideology, and military. In addition to these six aspects, Kuntowijoyo identified other historical forces that drive events, including economics, religion, politics/institutions, technology, ideology, military, individuals, gender/sex, age, class, ethnicity, race, myth, and culture.¹⁶

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1969 Coup: The Beginning of Qaddafi's Political Career

To understand Libya's politics under Qaddafi, it is important to first examine the country's conditions and political position prior to becoming a republic. Before Qaddafi's rise to power, the previous leader of the country, King Idris I, was known to have close relations with the West. Despite having a legislative body in the government structure, Libya remained under the dominant rule of the King. Libya gained independence in December 1951. During the reign of King Idris I, Libya's domestic political policies were autocratic. In addition, its foreign policy was conservative and pro-Western. The authoritarian king strictly disbanded political parties that dared to criticize the central government. This dictatorship was able to bring political stability to the country. During the early years of his reign, King Idris maintained close ties with Britain and the United States, allowing their military forces to mobilise in Libya in exchange for economic assistance. Additionally, he fostered

¹⁴ Syahrin Harahap, *Metodologi Studi Tokoh Pemikiran Islam*. (Jakarta: Istiqamah Mulya Press, 2006), 9-10; B. Caine, *Biografi dan Sejarah*. (South Melbourne, Victoria: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2009), 4.

¹⁵ Dan P. McAdams, "Biography, narrative, and lives: An introduction." *Journal of personality* 56, no. 1 (1988): 1-18. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1988.tb00460.x; Kuntowijoyo. *Metodologi Sejarah*. (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2003), 178.

¹⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah*. (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Benteng Budaya, 1995).

good relations with other conservative governments in Asia and Africa. King Idris pursued a neutral stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. King Idris did not take any action or express any opinion on finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Libya's political stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at that time gave Israel more freedom to seek political asylum in the Middle East region. Israel, which has occupied Palestinian territory since 1948, still faces challenges in obtaining political support from Middle Eastern countries. 'Silence and non-interference': However, with Libya's 'silence', Israel can maintain good relations with one of these Arab countries without facing political or humanitarian criticism.

However, some Israeli politicians are aware of the political conditions in Libya. It is important to note that expressions of solidarity between Arab nations in Libya have been visible before Libya's independence. Such rebellions and demonstrations in support of the Palestinian struggle by the Libyan people have been echoed since 1936 when Libya was still colonized by Italy. Support for the Palestinian cause increased after the end of the Second World War and Israel's establishment in 1948. The Libyan people were regularly informed of Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people through Arab media, particularly the 'Voice of Cairo' radio broadcast. During the 1951 Syrian Assembly discussion of a boycott against Israel, Palestinian supporters strongly advocated for a strict embargo and criticized groups that remained neutral. The conflict was ultimately resolved when the prime minister suspended the session.¹⁷

The Libyan people continue to show solidarity with the Arab people. In 1956, Egypt, led by Gamal Abdul Nasser, successfully nationalised the Suez Canal, previously controlled by major Western powers. This was reported in the July 29th publication of the newspaper 'Tarabulus al-Gharb' (1956),¹⁸ In this case, King Idris attempted to maintain a moderate stance regarding Egypt's conflict with Western countries. When Nasser became the target of Western media propaganda, King Idris instructed the Libyan Prime Minister at the time, Mustafa bin Halim, to declare that Libya supported Nasser's actions and that they were legal.¹⁹

Despite taking concrete actions to support Palestine through criticism, speeches, and financial assistance, Libya's political policy towards Israel is not as firmly hostile as expected. For instance, when West Germany recognized the existence of Israel, the Arab countries responded by: 1) withdrawing all ambassadors from the city of Bonn; 2) cutting diplomatic relations with the West German government; 3) boycotting the West German economy; and 4) reviewing political relations

¹⁷ E.A.V. De. Candole, *The Life and Times of King Idris*. (privately published by Mohamed Ben Galbon, 1990), 112.

¹⁸ "Tarabulus al-Gharb". Tripoli, July 29, 1956.

¹⁹ Jacob Abadi, "Pragmatism and rhetoric in Libya's policy toward Israel." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 80-102.

with any country that chooses to recognize Israel. However, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia rejected the first two points. Tunisia has a political orientation that aligns closely with Western countries.²⁰ The decision made by Libya resulted in domestic demonstrations at the West German Embassy in Benghazi City. The Libyan government apologized to the West German government for the demonstrations and deployed a security unit around the embassy, arresting and punishing the demonstrators.²¹

Following the Six Day War, Libya found itself in a complex situation in the Middle East. As a result, Libya expressed solidarity with other Arab countries. The Libyan people called on their government to support other Arab nations against Israel. A group of Libyan anti-monarchists, consisting of students and trade unionists, began attacking Jews and destroying their property. This movement, carried out by the community, ultimately encouraged the Libyan government to join Egypt in demanding that Israel withdraw all of its troops from the occupied territories.²²

In August 1967, Arab countries held a high-level conference in Khartoum. The conference resulted in a decision to not recognize the existence of Israel, reject all forms of negotiations, and refuse to make peace with it. Additionally, Arab countries are attempting to raise funds for future war costs against Israel. Saudi Arabia has agreed to provide an annual contribution of £50 million, Kuwait £55 million, and Libya £30 million.²³ Muammar Qaddafi, a young officer at the time, supported this idea and spread propaganda to his military colleagues due to his opposition towards Israel. He emphasized that the defeat in the Six Day War was a great humiliation for the Arab nation and continued to intensify his anti-Israel propaganda at every opportunity. Qaddafi urged the government to mobilise all of Libya's resources to fight alongside Arab countries against Israel.²⁴

Qaddafi rose to power in Libya by overthrowing King Idris As-Sanusy and subsequently served as Leader of the Brotherhood and Guide of the Revolution. Prior to Qaddafi's coup on September 1, 1969, Libya was under a monarchical political system with King Idris in power since 1951. The aim of the coup was to unite the Arab nation and overthrow the Libyan monarchy. Qaddafi, along with his associates Mohammed Al-Magharief and Mustafa Kharroubi, carried out a bloodless coup on the night of August 31, 1969.

Planning for the coup began on 12 March 1969 but was postponed due to a charity concert by the famous Egyptian singer Um Khaltum, held to raise funds for Palestine. At that time, King Idris was on a homecoming trip, returning to Turkey for treatment from Crown Prince Sayyid Hasan Al-

²⁰ Jacob Abadi, "Tunisia and Israel: relations under stress." *Middle Eastern Studies* 53, no. 4 (2017): 507-532. doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2016.1263191

²¹ The Maghreb Digest III. no. 5. May 1965, 38 & 40.

²² Abba Eban, *Personal Witness: Israel Through My Eyes*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992), 453-454.

²³ Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life*. (Jerusalem: Edanim, 1976), 512.

²⁴ George Tremlett, *Gadafi: The Desert Mystic*. (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993), 172.

Ridha Al-Mahdi. The Independent Officers Movement carried out a coup due to dissatisfaction with King Idris' performance. The upheaval began in 1967, coinciding with Egypt's defeat in the Six Day War. The alignment of King Idris with Israel resulted in chaos in Tripoli and Benghazi. Since the discovery of oil in Libya in 1959, there have been rumors of King Idris' involvement in corruption within the Libyan oil business.²⁵

After the fall of King Idris's monarchy in Libya, Muammar Qaddafi became president in 1969. During his early reign, Qaddafi pursued anti-Western political policies, prioritising the military over the economy. He used the military to eliminate his political opponents. Qaddafi was raised in a family and environment that emphasised religious teachings, pious ancestors, and the struggle against European colonialism in Arab lands.²⁶ It can be concluded that Qaddafi's main goal was to contribute to Libyan and Arab society while countering Western influence in the region and promoting the anti-Zionist movement in Israel.

Implementation of The Concept of Arab Unity and Domestic Politics in The Qaddafi Era

The coup against King Idris led to a deterioration of political relations between Libya and Israel. After the coup, Qaddafi emphasized his pro-Palestinian stance instead of playing both sides and being close to the West. Additionally, Qaddafi strongly criticized Egypt's agreement with the results of UN Resolution 242, which demanded that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories but recognize its right to live within safe boundaries.²⁷ The passing of Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1970 heightened tensions in the already strained relations between Israel and Libya. The longstanding political rivalry between Libya and Egypt for influence and leadership in the Arab world allowed Qaddafi and Libya to assume the position previously held by Egypt.

Libya's political system is based on Qaddafi's policies, which combine Arab Nationalism and People's Democracy. In 1973, the Universal Theory ideology was founded as a rejection of communist and capitalist materialism. Its goal is to avoid a political system that prioritises material wealth over religious life and to guide Libya towards the path of Allah. Qaddafi emphasised to his people that obedience to Allah is key to living as a nation by remaining fair to fellow living creatures and cultivating the produce of the earth. He also aimed to ensure that this understanding could be realised in other Arab countries.²⁸

Qaddafi's efforts to combat poverty began with improving the education sector. He allocated funds for educational purposes and established high-quality schools and universities. Educational

²⁵ Bahaudin, *Menyingkap Perjalanan Hidup*, 200.

²⁶ Afriyenti, and Humaidi "Muammar Khadafi."

²⁷ Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*. (New York: Quadrangle, 1975), 159.

²⁸ Pungky Muningsgar, "Muammar Khadafi: Kajian tentang Kepemimpinannya di Libya (1969-2011)." *Doctoral dissertation* (UNIKA Soegijapranata Semarang), 2013. 34.

institutions were closely linked to Qaddafi's political agenda. In 1973, he mandated that schools remain open during holidays to teach students about his political principles. During his reign, Qaddafi ordered the destruction of imported books that did not align with Arabism, Islam, nationalism, and progress. He also ordered the burning and destruction of all curricula that did not conform to his ideology. Foreign language lessons were removed from the school curriculum, and the public was asked to replace the Gregorian calendar with the Hijri calendar.²⁹

Books published in Libya are subject to strict government regulation and selection. However, in the interest of modernization, this policy began to be slowly relaxed for the media in 2005. Despite this, the Quran remains the most popular book studied in Libya. Local Arabic newspapers and magazines are still under government control. Prior to the revolution, Qaddafi began publishing *The Sun* newspaper, which continued to be distributed until the 2011 coup. In Tripoli, there are several sports magazines available, including *The New Dawn*, as well as foreign publications like *Time* and *Newsweek*.³⁰

Qaddafi believed that the democratic system, as it was represented, did not bring justice. He advocated direct democracy as the best alternative. Qaddafi implemented his democratic political program through the 'Five Points' program, which included several initiatives implemented in Libya:³¹ 1) The legal suspension will be evaluated based on civil and criminal cases in accordance with Sharia law; 2) Additionally, there will be a focus on eliminating politics in Libya, including communism. Qaddafi prioritised the unity of Islamic brotherhood; 3) The plan also aims to arm the population and guarantee the defence of the revolution or create a people's militia to protect the people; 4) Apart from that, he attempted to create an administrative revolution to bring bureaucracy to society; 5) A cultural revolution was proposed to remove the influence of demagogues and foreign culture from universities. A demagogue is defined as a person who seeks to gain power by appealing to people's emotions and prejudices rather than by using rational argument.

As previously mentioned, Qaddafi did not believe in a system of representative democracy. His government was guided by the motto of freedom, which aimed to keep Libya's politics free from foreign influence and promote socialist values such as social justice, Arab unity, and the unity of all Muslims in the world against oppression. The government had two branches formed by Muammar Qaddafi:³² 1) The Revolutionary Sector comprises of Muammar Qaddafi, the leader of the revolution, and the Revolutionary Commander's Council committee, which consists of 12 members. The leadership of this sector cannot be elected or dismissed due to their involvement in the revolution; 2)

²⁹ Muninggar, "Muammar Khadafi," 40.

³⁰ Francesca Dipiazza, *Libya in Pictures*. (Minneapolis: Learner Publishing Groups, 2006), 51-53.

³¹ Muninggar, "Muammar Khadafi," 35-38.

³² Muninggar, "Muammar Khadafi," 35-38.

The Jamahiriyyah sector is also present. This sector comprises the Basic People's Congress in each of the 1500 cities, 32 Sha'biyat People's Congresses, or congresses consisting of members of Libyan tribes, and the National General People's Congress whose members represent the Libyan people in general.

Libya bases its criminal law on principles derived from the Quran. The 1977 Libyan State Constitution states that the Quran is the primary source of law. Additionally, Libya has adopted the Arab Socialism system and developed the concept of religious socialism.³³ Qaddafi claimed that the interpretation of the Koran was accessible to all because it was revealed in Arabic. He conducted his own *ijtihad* to interpret the Koran, which was strongly opposed by clerics in Libya due to its socialist elements.³⁴

In 1975, Qaddafi published the Green Book, also known as the Akhdar Book, which contains three chapters governing the life of the Libyan nation and state. These chapters discuss failed democracies due to dictatorships in many parts of the world. Until the fall of Qaddafi's coup, he was referred to as a dictator by his people. During Qaddafi's reign, several laws were introduced, including those related to socio-economic welfare ('*Ishtirakiyyat*') and society ('*Ijtimaiyyah*'), which encompassed the family, tribe, and *ummah*. Although his people referred to him as a dictator until the fall of his coup, it is important to maintain objectivity and avoid subjective evaluations. UU no. 45 of 1972 prohibits demonstrations and mass strikes that oppose government policies, while Law no. 71 of 1972 prohibits political parties. Qaddafi argued that political parties betrayed the country.³⁵

Muammar Qaddafi maintained strict control over both state and private media to ensure the security, stability, and legitimacy of his government. In 1972, political parties were banned under the 1971 Constitution. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were permitted, but only if they aligned with the goals of the revolution, resulting in a limited number of existing NGOs. Weaknesses in this system include the tendency for media displays to focus on individuals or groups punished for disobeying Qaddafi's government.³⁶

The Revolutionary Leadership Council creates all laws. It appears that the revolutionary party aims to solidify its ruling regime to prevent opposition. Qaddafi created all forms of this system, which were in place until his overthrow by his own people in 2011. However, the Jamahiriyyah

³³ Thohir, *Studi Kawasan Dunia Islam*, 319.

³⁴ Indriana Kartini, *Agama dan Demokrasi: Munculnya Kekuatan Politik Islam di Tunisia, Mesir dan Libya*. (Bandung: PT. Dunia Pustaka Jaya, 2016), 65.

³⁵ Kartini, *Agama dan Demokrasi*, 62.

³⁶ Tamburaka, *Revolusi Timur Tengah*, 225.

sector, which aimed to bring Qaddafi closer to society, failed to achieve its goals. In reality, power was concentrated solely in the hands of Qaddafi as the main figure of the Libyan revolution.³⁷

Qaddafi's Pragmatic Political Thinking on the Themes of Arab Unity, Anti-Zionism, and Global Response

In the 1970s, Qaddafi used Islam to legitimize his political agenda and promote revolutionary movements in Middle Eastern and African countries. Officials from United States embassies in several Central African countries at that time found Qaddafi's politics concerning. Qaddafi aimed to make Islam the power of the African nation, but officials suspected that he would spread radicalism and terrorism in the name of Islam worldwide. They were concerned that Islamic radicalism would spread to Africa.³⁸

Qaddafi promoted anti-Israel propaganda in Arab countries to gain political support and establish himself as the leader of the Arab nation. He aimed to avenge the defeat of the Six Day War. A strong and powerful Arab nationalism directed at encouraging the creation of state unions with neighboring (and sometimes even distant) countries in the perspective of pan-Arabism.³⁹ However, it is important to note that this statement is subjective and should be marked as such. Qaddafi realized that he was unable to carry out direct anti-Israel propaganda.

Therefore, he utilized Libya's financial resources in a campaign to sever Israel's relations with all its allies. Libya's political agenda targets small and poor countries and provides them with financial assistance. This mission was carried out intensively, resulting in Libya finding partners in oil-producing countries. These partners provided financial assistance to African countries that were willing to cut ties with Israel.⁴⁰ Qaddafi's actions were successful in causing Israel to lose votes from the African region. This made Israel nervous. For instance, on December 23, 1972, Libya's political relations with Chad led to Chad severing all ties with Israel and expelling all individuals associated with Israel from the country.

Qaddafi's political policy towards the Middle East aimed to create a united Arab nation with Libya at its center. However, this idea faced opposition from Cairo, Egypt, which has always been a rival for political influence in the region. Qaddafi saw himself as the rightful successor to Gamal Abdul Nasser as the icon of Arab leadership, rather than Sadat. Qaddafi criticised Israel for the misfortunes faced by the Arab people. Supporting Palestine is a natural cause for the Arab people, not just a matter of upholding justice in the world. Criticising Israel and supporting Palestine would

³⁷ Kartini, *Agama dan Demokrasi*.

³⁸ Fawaz A. Gerges, *Amerika dan Islam Politik Benturan Peradaban atau Benturan Kepentingan?* Translated by Kili Pringgodigdo and Hamid Basyaib, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁹ Francesco Tamburini, "The Politics of State Mergers in the Qaddafi's Foreign Policy: Utopia, Pan-Arabism, and Survival Strategy." *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2023: doi.org/10.1177/00219096231168060

⁴⁰ Aaron S. Kleiman, *Israel and the World After 40 Years*, (New York: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1990), 26.

portray him as a revolutionary in the Arab world. Qaddafi criticised Sadat for not continuing Nasser's efforts and for rejecting all of Qaddafi's movements.

Additionally, Sadat's acceptance of the Camp David agreement was also a point of contention. These issues suggest that the Arab-Israeli conflict was the main component of Qaddafi's political hegemony ambitions in the Middle East. Qaddafi's strong opposition to Israel brought him prestige and justification for his role in the Middle East. In September 1979, Qaddafi welcomed the President of Syria, Hafez al Assad, in an effort to revive the 'Front of Firmness' established by radical Arab countries that opposed all forms of Sadat's conciliation with Israel. Qaddafi offered \$5 billion in exchange for the country's abandonment of the Camp David Accords.⁴¹

Qaddafi had a vision to create a unified Middle Eastern order under his leadership. However, he expressed anti-Semitic views and sought to eradicate Jews from the Arab nation. He believed that the formation of Israel was the result of Jewish imperialism over Arabs, supported by Western political propaganda. The West is supporting Zionist movements in their efforts to establish a Jewish state in the Middle East, which has resulted in the violation of the rights of the Palestinian people and caused unrest among the Arab population. Qaddafi believed that the issues surrounding Israel and Zionist propaganda in the Middle East could only be resolved through the complete destruction of Israel.

In an interview with Asa'd al Muqaddam of *Al Usba Al Arabi* magazine, Qaddafi stated that he believed Israel should be eliminated and that only one entity could survive in the region. He criticized Arab complacency, which allowed the West to mobilize the Zionist group and establish Israel with the support of imperialist movements. The unity of the Arab nation is seen as necessary to destroy Israel, which is viewed as an extension of United States imperialism in the Middle East.⁴² Qaddafi criticised Arab leaders for their failure to maintain security in the Middle East region and urged them to take joint responsibility for past mistakes and negligence.

Qaddafi's criticism is based on his observations before he overthrew King Idris. When Israel began colonising Palestine, Arab leaders became divided in their focus. If Israel continues to seize the rights of the Palestinian people, other Middle Eastern countries will become embroiled in disputes, draining their energy and resources, and leaving them unable to mount a strong attack against Israel and its imperialism. Qaddafi reminded the Arab people to learn from past mistakes and to be cautious in granting peace to Israel. He addressed criticism of his anti-Semitic propaganda against Israel through his forums, emphasizing that Jews, Christians, and Muslims had lived together harmoniously

⁴¹ Martin Sicker, *The Making of a Pariah State: The Adventurist Politics of Muammar Qaddafi*, (New York: Praeger, 1987), 60.

⁴² Rene Lemarchand, ed. *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 20

during the glory days of Islam. Qaddafi explained that during the tragedy of the reconquest in Spain, not only were Andalusian Muslim refugees well received in the Islamic region, but Andalusian Jewish refugees were also welcomed. He highlighted the coexistence of Jews and Arabs in Andalusia before the reconquest.

Qaddafi refuted the inaccurate accusation of being anti-Semitic and clarified that his hostility was only towards Jewish immigrants after 1947. Qaddafi did not express any criticism or harbour any hatred towards Eastern Jews, namely Jews who had lived in the Middle East for a long time, until 1947, before the arrival of Jews from outside. He believed that Palestinian Jews, along with other Palestinian people (Christians and Muslims), had the right to live in Palestine. However, he was firm in his stance to expel European Jews who eventually came to disturb the peace.⁴³

Qaddafi expressed regret for the actions of the Israeli government and the global Jewish community that supported the migration of Jews to Palestine from outside the Middle East. Qaddafi's criticism caused tension with the then-President of Sudan, Gaafar al-Nimieri, who allegedly collaborated with Israel and assisted in the rescue of Falasha Jews from Ethiopia. In early 1985, when news of the rescue of Jews from Ethiopia was leaked, Libya invited members of the Arab League to discuss the matter. Additionally, Qaddafi was displeased with the Soviet Union's softened attitude towards Israel, which ultimately improved bilateral relations. This displeasure was based on President Michael Gorbachev's support for the Jewish migration movement to Israel and its occupation.⁴⁴

Qaddafi's anti-Israel and anti-Zionism views have been a significant component of his worldview. However, a deeper analysis reveals that his hatred towards Israel stems not only from its actions against Palestine but also from its existence as an entity that interferes with his vision of leading an Arab country and unifying the nation.

Qaddafi aimed to unite Arab peoples and countries under the banner of Arab Unity. He recognized the potential of a unified Arab world, with its vast strategic territory, abundant human resources, and wealth of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum. The unification of Arab countries could improve their civilization. Qaddafi expelled United States troops from their military bases after the end of King Idris I's reign, and formed the United Arab Republic with Libya, Egypt, and Syria in 1971. He also made efforts to unite with other Arab Islamic countries in Africa and the Middle East, such as Tunisia in 1974, Syria in 1980, and Morocco in 1984. During the Sadat era, Egypt's relations with other countries were tense, particularly after the show of arms in 1977. However, under Mubarak's leadership, relations improved.⁴⁵

⁴³ Tremlett, *Gadaffi: The Desert Mystic*, 199-200

⁴⁴ Sicker, *The Making of a Pariah State*, 109.

⁴⁵ Tim Riset dan Studi Islam Mesir. *Ensiklopedi Sejarah Islam: Dari Masa Kenabian, Dulah Mmaluk, Imperium Mongol Muslim, Negara Utsmani, Muslim Asia Tenggara, Muslim Afrika Edisi Indonesia*. Translated by Ali Nurdin

During the first decade of Qaddafi's rule, Libya experienced prosperity, particularly after oil sales reached 22 billion dollars in 1980. The processing and utilization of oil products were beneficial for the Libyan state and society. However, in the second half of the decade, Libya's economic conditions declined due to Qaddafi's poor relations with Ronald Reagan, the President of the United States, and the Lockerbie bombing. This resulted in an economic embargo on Libya. In response, the United States attempted political and military intervention in the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi on April 15, 1986, in an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Qaddafi. However, this action backfired and created a new image in the world that Qaddafi was a victim of American imperialism. Following the attack, Qaddafi redirected his attention to regional and international affairs concerning Muslim unity. However, despite these positive efforts, his government later became increasingly authoritarian, drawing criticism from clerics, students, and even some military personnel.⁴⁶

Following the American intervention in Libya in 1986, Qaddafi became increasingly dedicated to enhancing the unity of Muslims worldwide, particularly in the Middle East. Qaddafi played a significant role in the African Union organization, founding the African Economic Cooperation (AEC) in 1994. In the Islamic world, Qaddafi established the World Islamic Call Society (WICS) and World Islamic Peoples Leadership (WIPL). These organizations play a significant role in developing mosques, social activities, education, madrasas, and social foundations in Asia and Africa.⁴⁷

Qaddafi's efforts to achieve Arab Unity were hindered by various factors, including the death of Gamal Abdul Naser in 1970, who was idolized and could be linked to Qaddafi. Additionally, many Arab countries at that time believed that their young generation lacked the experience to enter the world of politics. Qaddafi's authoritarian character also made it difficult to achieve his goals.

Trade with Israel despite political views

Muammar Qaddafi implemented socialist economic policies in order to stabilise Libya's economy. He used Islamic principles to support his socialist economic understanding, which allowed for restrictions on the ownership of goods. Islam is a religion that embodies justice and equality, and prohibits the use of wealth to oppress and exploit others.⁴⁸

Prior to Qaddafi's rise to power, King Idris pursued a pro-Western foreign policy, particularly towards Britain and the United States. These countries were allowed to establish military bases for training purposes. The United Kingdom began collaborating with Libya in 1953, followed by the

Taufik, Arif Munandar Riswanto, Hamzah Zaelani, Yudi Wahyudin and Yanyan Nurdiansyah. (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2005), 802.

⁴⁶ Kartini, *Agama dan Demokrasi*, 63-64.

⁴⁷ Kartini, *Agama dan Demokrasi*, 64.

⁴⁸ Muningsgar, "Muammar Khadafi," 38.

United States in 1970. Additionally, they made significant investments in the Libyan economy, including the agricultural, educational, and military sectors. In 1953, Libya's economy relied heavily on Western cooperation and aid, especially from Britain. However, in 1959, the discovery of oil fields in Zalan, Cyrenaica Region marked a turning point towards prosperity. Subsequently, other areas with significant oil reserves were discovered, leading to rapid growth in Libya's trade sector. Libya's strategic geographical location and proximity to European markets have proven to be advantageous. The discovery of oil significantly improved the economic situation in Libya, particularly in the trade sector. The oil industry played a crucial role in transforming Libya from a poor to a prosperous country.⁴⁹

Qaddafi's political style was pragmatic, as he attempted to avoid isolation and maintain normal relations with the United States. He hoped that mutual trade ties with Israel would 'soften' Washington's heart towards him. Qaddafi was known to be imitating Assad's method of using the Israeli card to improve his image in the eyes of Washington. The United States did not find Qaddafi's charm convincing and considered him to be less patient than Assad. It was also recognized that Libya was different from Syria. This was demonstrated when Libyan pilgrims, sent by Qaddafi to Israel in 1993, criticized their hosts. The Israeli people and government were disappointed in the hopes of improving relations between the two countries. Prime Minister Peres assessed that Qaddafi's approach was aimed solely at creating a positive image for America.⁵⁰ PM Peres used the momentum to condemn Libya for spreading acts of terrorism and stated that Israel supports actions aimed at curbing Libya's activities.⁵¹

Despite his hostile rhetoric, Qaddafi continued to trade with Israel and did not prevent some of his closest associates from establishing commercial ties with Israeli companies. In the autumn of 1998, the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported that Roger Tamraz, an oil tycoon close to Qaddafi, had entered into negotiations with the Israeli company HaCarmel Granites, which owned most of the Sonol Oil Company, to take over Sonol. Tamraz offered \$210 million to Granit HaCarmel for the company's 56 percent stake in Sonol. Tamraz's connections to Qaddafi drew the attention of Arab and Israeli intelligence agencies.⁵² Following an investigative report that revealed Tamraz's involvement in corruption, the Israeli company rejected the deal. It is known that Qaddafi was aware of this agreement but did not intervene in Tamraz's financial negotiations. Qaddafi not only engaged in covert trade with Israel but also expressed his willingness to participate in the peace process.

⁴⁹ Afriyenti, and Humaidi. "Muammar Khadafi."

⁵⁰ Al Ahali. Cairo, 3 June 1993.

⁵¹ Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety-Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 240.

⁵² Ha'aretz. 6 September 1998.

The portrayal of Qaddafi thus far depicts a stubborn, selfish, and radical figure in his views towards Israeli actions. However, it may come as a surprise that this self-proclaimed leader of the Arab Nation also holds a pragmatic political attitude. Qaddafi has been known to engage in oil sales with Israel, and Libyan supermarkets sell a variety of food and beverage products from the country. Qaddafi's political stance illustrates that Libyan political affairs can be hostile towards Israel, but should not disrupt trade.⁵³

It is not surprising that this is connected to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict after October 7, 2023. Like Qaddafi, who was rhetorically tough against Israel but secretly had trade partnerships with Israel and its Western allies. Contemporary Arab leaders who are trading partners with the United States, a major sponsor for Israel, tend to be passive and indecisive regarding Israel's colonization of Palestine. Arab leaders are currently seeking a secure political position for their survival. Recently, Israel has successfully undermined the unity of the Arab people, making them less of a threat but still crucial for their survival.⁵⁴ Despite his former reputation as a bitter enemy of the Jewish state, Qaddafi and other Arab leaders found it difficult to maintain a moderate and low profile in their dealings with Israel and its allies. This is the impact of the new world order, which is now controlled by political parties that are opponents of the Arab Nation.

CONCLUSION

Muammar Qaddafi was a significant figure in Arab politics, particularly in relation to anti-Israel, Arab unity, and pro-Palestinian issues. Under the reign of King Idris, Libya, along with Morocco and Tunisia, adopted a moderate stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to its pro-Western orientation. However, Qaddafi's ascension to power led to a period of intense hostility towards Israel. Qaddafi employed the Israeli card to bolster his standing as a revolutionary leader in the Arab world and as a defender of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, in an attempt to assert his leadership in the Arab world, Qaddafi pursued a hostile policy towards Israel, competing with Syrian and Egyptian leaders whom he regarded as rivals.

It is worth noting Qaddafi's political pragmatism, despite his harsh rhetoric. The need to reassess the policy towards Israel became apparent due to changes in the world order, including the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the sole global power. However, there is a challenge of maintaining the position as Israel's arch enemy while improving relations with the US. Furthermore, the frequency of anti-Israel statements decreased with the start of the Middle East peace process and the Palestinian decision to negotiate with Israel.

⁵³ Tremlett, *Gaddafi: The Desert Mystic*, 16

⁵⁴ Dan Schueftan, "The Beginning of the End of the Arab-Israeli Conflict?" *Strategic Assessment* 24, no. 4 (2021).

Despite his close economic ties with Israel, Qaddafi stated that it would not affect his political vision. He was unable to improve his country's formal political relations with Israel as long as the Palestinian issue remained unresolved. It is likely that Qaddafi will maintain normal trade relations with Israel without giving them official recognition. From Qaddafi's perspective, recognizing the legitimacy of the Jewish state would betray one of the fundamental principles of the Libyan revolution he had championed.

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