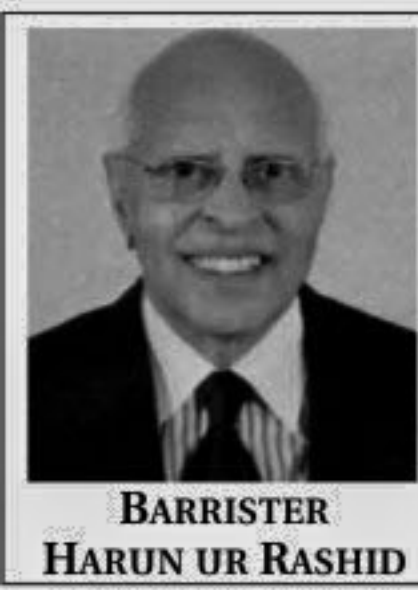


BOTTOM LINE

# Four phases of Gaddafi's rule



**O**N September 1, Muammar Gaddafi would have been a ruler for exactly 42 years, making him the longest ruler of a country.

With no parliament, no civil society, no trade unions and no freedom of speech and media, he ruled the country of 6.5 million people. He officially had no position in the state machinery -- he was not president or prime minister and no ambassador could present credentials to him. He was known as the "Leader" of the country, being the chairman of a revolutionary council. Very few close aides knew his exact whereabouts in the country.

I had the opportunity of leading a trade delegation to Libya in 1987 and I carried a message from Bangladesh's head of the state to him. At first I was advised that I could not meet him because he did not hold any position in the state or government machinery. However, on my insistence to deliver the message and after a few days wait, I was able to meet him in a tent at a desert town far from Tripoli. He avoided direct eye contact with me. During the discussion I found him well informed about global and regional politics.

His long rule can be divided into four phases. The first was from 1969 to 1986. He had a key role in the increase in energy prices in 1972. He challenged international oil companies' control over pricing of energy prices and brought the decision-making to the capitals of oil producing countries. By 1973-74, he helped bring about the four-fold increase in oil prices.

Gaddafi saw Arab unity as the first step to Muslim unity, and his Green Book detailing

the "Third International Theory" revealed his thinking -- socialism mixed with Islam. During this phase, Gaddafi kicked off what was then known as an Islamic revival. He declared political union with Syria, helped Iran against secular Iraq, sent troops to Chad imposed a political union and helped a Muslim ethnic group in Nigeria where violence left more than 100 dead.

He provocatively supported Muslims in conflict with non-Muslims, such as those in Mindanao in the Philippines. Ms. Marcos had to travel to Libya and was believed to have sung a song to the leader to broker an interim compromise between the Muslims and the Christians.

He also supported any group which was in conflict with major stakeholders of the state. He supported Northern Ireland's Irish Republican Army, which ran terrorist activities not only in Northern Ireland but even in England. Jimmy Carter's 1980 re-election bid was derailed by the payments to his brother Billy.

Gaddafi threatened Malta over oil exploration in disputed waters, and reportedly bribed the Cypriot government to accept a Libyan radio transmitter,

The first phase ended in 1986 with the US bombardment in retaliation for the bombing of a disco in Berlin. The bombing in Tripoli seemed to have affected his psyche. His adventurism with terrorists declined and he turned his attention towards bring-

Pan Am plane in Scotland. Under the deal, Libya did not accept responsibility for the attacks, but agreed to compensate victims.

Gaddafi, whom President Ronald Reagan once famously called "the mad dog of the Middle East," was well on his way to mending ties with the United States and other Western governments after renouncing terrorism and efforts to build weapons of mass destruction.

But when Libya wanted the US to have close relationship, the US waited for a time, although it restored diplomatic relations with Libya.

Meanwhile, Gaddafi became closer to Russia and reportedly offered them a naval base on its Mediterranean coastline. For Russia, a Mediterranean base would cement its military resurgence after it dispatched a flotilla of warships in a show of might in the Mediterranean.

The last phase began this year with the Benghazi rebellion. Inspired by pro-democracy uprisings

across the Arab world, Libyan dissidents had planned a "day of rage" for February 17.

On February 15, security forces arrested a prominent lawyer named Fathi Terbil, who had represented families of some of the 1,200 prisoners massacred by Libyan secu-

city forces at Abu Slim prison in 1996. Once released later that day, Terbil set up a webcam overlooking Benghazi's main square, where some of the families had been protesting. With help from exiled Libyans in Canada and around the world, the video spread rapidly on the Internet.

The political fate of Colonel Gaddafi's regime was sealed when the UN Security Council adopted a resolution (Number 1973) in March to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians in Libya, and Nato started bombing government armouries.

With the assistance of Nato air power, the rebels consolidated their position in Benghazi and a transitional government -- National Transitional Council (NTC) -- led by Mustafa Abdul Jalil was installed. France was the first to recognise the NTC as the legitimate government of Libya. Gradually many European nations followed and the US also accorded recognition on July 20.

Tripoli fell on August 23. Gaddafi's whereabouts are not known, except that he was in Libya at the time of writing. His wife, daughter and two sons took refuge in Algeria. One of his sons, Saadi, has fled to Niger and his top generals have reportedly fled to Bourkina Faso through Niger. Some say Gaddafi is hiding in Ben Walid, 150-km southeast of Tripoli. The place has been under attack by the anti-Gaddafi forces since September 10. Meanwhile, the head of the TNC Mustafa Abdul Jalil is back in Tripoli, a defining moment.

Meanwhile, on September 9, Interpol issued a warrant of arrest for Gaddafi, his son Saif al-Islam and brother-in-law Senussi on behalf of the International Criminal Court.

The writer is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.



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ing unity among Africans as he had failed to unify the Arabs and the Muslims. During this period, he attempted to produce weapons of mass destructions.

The third stage commenced around 2002, when a tamed Gaddafi paid reparations for the Libyan role in the 1988 downing of a

| The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

# Last train from WTC

SHAZIA OMAR

**T**HE train pulled into my stop, the World Trade Center. I stepped out and was fumbling in my purse for my Lehman Brothers ID when I heard the blast and then a crashing sound. The world shook for a moment. Then there was a cacophony of screams from outside. Inside the station, pandemonium erupted.

Panicked people stampeded towards the two exits. Security guards blew whistles as people shoved their way past each other. I scanned the station for signs of a bomb blast as I ran with the crowd.

Outside was chaos. Fear hung over the confused frenzy. Cars honked and swerved around screaming pedestrians. Rocks and rubble fell from the sky.

Staring up through the haze, I thought I saw a plane. I ran across the street and turned back, squinting to keep the particles out of my eyes. I was still too close to see the top of the building properly, but it was a plane, that much I could tell, and there was black smoke billowing out of its burning tail.

I'm not sure now why I called him of all people, he was back in Bangladesh, a million miles away, but I guess the stress of that moment made me a little girl, so I called my father. I told him about the plane and he instructed me to get in a cab and go home immediately.

In the midst of the crumbling sky and panicked pandemonium, there were no cabs to hail down. Shielding my eyes with my hands, I stared at the plane and wondered what was going on. How could such an accident happen?

I tried calling my boss to tell him about the plane crash. Our office was less than fifty feet away and our windows faced the World Trade Center. John's phone rang, but he didn't answer. I felt unsettled and wondered if I should go home. I didn't want to annoy him and get fired. There was a hungry pack of Magna cum Laude over-achievers waiting to get their hands on my job, but I felt queasy.

I decided to take the train back home, despite the work on hand. The smoke made the air thick and it was difficult to breathe or see. I hurried back towards the station, against the flow of the hysterical masses. A huge chunk of building fell from above and smashed the top of a car parked on the street in front of me. I recoiled in horror and returned to the task of push-

*We saw the mighty ivory towers crumble. In unison, we screamed, tears poured down my face and someone held my hand. Despite our differences in race and religion, we shared a connection. We were all New Yorkers, in shock.*

ing my way back into the World Trade Center.

A lady next to me had a crying child in a stroller and was trying to get in as well. The baby howled and the lady, with both the stroller and a large bag, was unable to manage her way. I grabbed the child and pushed the stroller back onto the street. The lady held onto my arm and together we elbowed through the crowd, back into the building, then down the escalator into the subway station. A north-bound train was parked, with open doors, and we rushed in.

The lady collapsed on the seat next to me, looking like she might faint. The child crawled out of my arms, back to his mother. As we waited in the nearly empty train, visions began to flash before me. I wondered if anyone was in the offices above when the plane crashed. Were they okay?

"Why won't the train start?" yelled the lady, frantic. The other passengers eyed her with blank expressions. They had not stepped out. They sipped their Starbucks, blissfully ignorant of the plane lodged 70 floors above us.

I thought about how absurd and precious life is, how in a moment anything could happen. I whispered a prayer.

Suddenly my past worries seemed insignificant. I didn't have to be a banker to give definition to my existence. I didn't have to accept the beaten path. I didn't have to make money; it didn't really matter to me much. I didn't have to find a husband just yet. I had everything going for me, my health and sanity, my friends and family, my education and opportunities, peace and freedom. Life was beautiful and finite, and I was lucky to be alive.

After what seemed like a century, the door of the train finally closed. The announcement on the speaker said: "There's been an emergency folks, this is the last train leaving the station. All services to this station will be shut until further notice. I repeat, this is the last train to leave the World Trade Center."

The train screeched out of Ground Zero, skipping all the stations in the financial district and onwards till it finally stopped midway. I stepped out of the subway station into the sun and surrendered to the universe. I could hear police sirens and fire trucks, people were running around in panic. Everything was Not going to be OK.

I walked around the corner and found a crowd of people huddled outside a store window, watching the news on display televisions. I joined them and watched another plane fly into the second tower. I thought of the people stuck in the buildings, the dreams and ambitions I shared with them, and how all those dreams shattered with the glass windows as the jets ripped open the building.

And then we saw the mighty ivory towers crumble. In unison, we screamed, tears poured down my face and someone held my hand. Despite our differences in race and religion, we shared a connection. We were all New Yorkers, in shock.

The writer is a Psychologist.

PRINCE TURKI AL FAISAL

**T**HE United States must support the Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations this month or risk losing the little credibility it has in the Arab world. If it does not, American influence will decline further. Israeli security will be undermined and Iran will be empowered, increasing the chances of another war in the region.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia would no longer be able to cooperate with America in the same way it historically has. With most of the Arab world in upheaval, the "special relationship" between Saudi Arabia and the United States would increasingly be seen as toxic by the vast majority of Arabs and Muslims, who demand justice for the Palestinian people.

Saudi leaders would be forced by domestic and regional pressures to adopt a far more independent and assertive foreign policy. Like our recent military support for Bahrain's monarchy, which America opposed, Saudi Arabia would pursue other policies at odds with those of the United States, including opposing the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq and refusing to open an embassy there despite American pressure to do so. The Saudi government might part ways with Washington in Afghanistan and Yemen as well.

The Palestinian people deserve statehood and all that it entails: official recognition, endorsement by international organisations, the ability to deal with Israel on more equal footing and the opportunity to live in peace and security.

Israel should see the Palestinian bid for statehood not as a threat, but as a chance to return to the negotiating table and prevent further conflict. Recent polls show that up to 70% of Palestinians say they believe there will be a new intifada if the deadlock is not broken shortly; this should encourage Israel to seek peace with the moderate Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

The Obama administration has had ample opportunities to lead Israelis and Palestinians into bilat-

eral peace talks, but US policymakers have unfortunately been more preoccupied with a deteriorating domestic economy and a paralysed political scene than with finding a workable solution to this epic injustice. Because Washington has offered no viable new proposals, the least it can do is step aside and not hinder Saudi, European

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and moderate Arab efforts to advance Palestinian rights at the United Nations.

Even Israeli officials have recently admitted privately to their European counterparts that only Saudi Arabia will be able to give the Palestinians the required religious, political and financial legitimacy they need to complete a deal with Israel. Saudi Arabia had earmarked more than \$2.5 billion in aid to the Palestinian Authority since June 2009, making it by far the largest single supporter of the Palestinian cause. But this money will not do much good until Palestinians are granted their fundamental rights.

The 2002 Arab Peace Plan must be the starting point for negotiations; a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders is the only realistic foundation on which to restart talks, seeing as how the Oslo Peace Process has proved fruitless.

The Palestinian statehood initiative is a chance to replace Oslo with a new paradigm based on state-to-

state negotiations -- a win-win proposition that makes the conflict more manageable and lays the groundwork for a lasting solution.

The only losers in this scenario would be Syria and Iran, pariah states that have worked tirelessly -- through their support of Hamas and Hezbollah -- to undermine the peace process. Saudi Arabia recently played a leading role in isolating Syrian President Bashar Assad's brutal government by demanding an end to the killing of protesters and recalling the Saudi ambassador from Damascus. The impending fall of Assad's barbarous regime provides a rare strategic opportunity to weaken Iran. Without this vital ally, Tehran will find it more difficult to foment discord in the Arab world.

Today, there is a chance for the United States and Saudi Arabia to contain Iran and prevent it from destabilising the region. But this opportunity will be squandered if the Obama administration's actions at the United Nations force a deepening split between our two countries.

Although Saudi Arabia is willing and able to chart a new and divergent course if America fails to act justly with regard to Palestine, the Middle East would be far better served by continuing cooperation and goodwill between these long-standing allies.

American support for Palestinian statehood is therefore crucial, and a veto will have profound negative consequences. In addition to causing substantial damage to American-Saudi relations and provoking uproar among Muslims worldwide, the United States would further undermine its relations with the Muslim world, empower Iran and threaten regional stability. Let us hope that the United States chooses the path of justice and peace.

The writer, a former director of Saudi Arabia's intelligence services and a former Saudi Ambassador to the United States, is Chairman of the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies.

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