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Of all the generalizations commonly made by foreign observers and subjectively augmented by Gaddafi about Libya, especially during the people`s present remarkable quest for freedom and democracy, one of the least valid is that tribalism is pervasive in the Libyan society and its politics.

Characteristically, Libya is the most homogeneous, both culturally and religiously, in Africa and the Arab world. The tribal structure is merely a social phenomenon and has no fundamental importance aside from being only a thing of the past, a part of the cultural lore of the people and their history. There is no lack of effective sense of national unity in Libya. This unity has been formally initiated by Independence and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and subsequently preserved by astute political awareness on the part of the citizens and a deep sense of common destiny. Thus, conscious of their identity as an independent political unit, the Libyan people all over the liberated regions of the country are relentlessly and genuinely sounding their voice in their peaceful demonstrations nowadays that "Libya is one nation, one clan, one family" and that the myth of tribalism exists only in the mind of the dictator and his few deceived followers. Furthermore, the appearance and amazing proliferation of the constitutional flag, the symbol of national independence, fluttering almost everywhere in great numbers and shapes, bear unmistakable witness to such unity.

National unity is further strengthened by the fact that Libya is also the most urbanized country in Africa and, perhaps, one of the most urbanized in the world. It is a true nation of cities. For all its recent history, dating back to the end of World War II and the period of independence which followed at the outset of the second half of the 20th-century, the Libyan society has been steadfastly shaped into a flourishing urban system, perhaps reaching a stage of maturity, though by developing countries` standards, at the turn of the 21th-century when the great majority of the population lived in urban settlements. Despite the sheer size of the country and the low density of population, cities and towns were socially, culturally, and functionally interconnected serving not only as viable economic means for a growing population, but also as sources of identity for a mobile society that moved freely and constantly from place to place in search of jobs and the promise of city life. Naturally, the traditional urban centers of Tripoli, Benghazi, Misrata, and Derna acted as foci of the economic activities made possible by the petroleum industry. These cities and many others scattered over the vast area of the country, served as genuine melting pots where formerly nomadic peoples and migrants from smaller settlements and farming communities were thoroughly assimilated.

Indeed, in these glorious days of the people`s revolt, national unity is aptly demonstrated by the remarkable solidarity and cohesion felt all over the system of cities. For example, when the first spark of the February Revolution was ignited in the second largest city of Benghazi located on

the eastern coast, its echoes immediately reverberated through the small community of Zintan in the far western mountain region. Ultimately, reverberations felt within a couple of days in almost all other urban communities regardless of size and location. Even under siege, cities proved to be interconnected, interdependent, and able to provide vital assistance for each other. Hence, the defense line of Benghazi, the eastern stronghold of February Revolution, does not end at the nearby western gate of heroic Ajdabiya; it extends to formidable Misrata and the valiant towns of Zintan, Zawia and many others in the most westerly parts of the country.

During the first days of the revolution, some international tv channels were broadcasting clips of the epic movie `Lion of the Desert` featuring Omar Mukhtar and his brave men fighting the Italians. At that particular moment, their great-great-grandchildren were marching through the streets of Benghazi and other cities all over the country making their own episode, showing the world the true face of Libya. At that particular moment the world at large witnessed Libyan youths writing their own history, abolishing a false image that for some four decades has tainted the true, authentic image of their country. The spirit and valor of Libya were clearly manifested in both episodes. Libya was united for a noble cause during both events: struggle for freedom, dignity, democracy and identity. One cannot miss a deep sense of historical continuity fostering a strong sense of national identity, and could eventually culminate in a conception of a real democratic civil society.

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