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Qaddafi's Death Places Focus on Arab Spring's 'Hard Road'

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

TUNIS — Like the flight of Tunisia's dictator or the trial of Egypt's, the capture of Col. Muammar el-



Qaddafi on Thursday afternoon captivated the Arab world, giving a renewed sense of power and possibility. But the photographs of his bloody corpse that circulated just moments later on cellphones and television screens quickly tempered that exhilaration with a reminder of the many still-unresolved conflicts that the Arab Spring has also unleashed.

"This isn't justice," Mustafa Haid, 32, a Syrian activist, said as he watched Al Jazeera's broadcast in a Beirut office. Colonel Qaddafi should have been put on trial, his crimes investigated, Libya reconciled to trust in the law, he said, as though he still hoped better from the regional uprising that began with peaceful displays of national unity in Tunis and Cairo.

Across the region, Colonel Qaddafi's bloody end has brought home the growing awareness of the challenges that lie ahead: the balancing of vengeance against justice, impatience for jobs against the slow pace of economic recovery, fidelity to Islam against tolerance for minorities, and the need for stability against the drive to tear down of the pillars of old governments.

"For all of us, it is a hard road, because our battle is against ourselves," said Ahmed Ounaies, a former Tunisian ambassador who served briefly as minister of foreign affairs after the ouster of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. "We have to listen to our values, our aspirations, our present, against all the past that we have lived. It is a hard test, and success is not assured."

Libya's path is in many ways the most tortuous of the North African revolutions. When Colonel Qaddafi came to power 42 years ago, Libya was divided among three loosely confederated provinces and dozens of insular tribes. He forged Libya into a single nation built around his own bizarre cult of personality. He did not build any national institutions; he insisted that Libya was a direct democracy of people's committees with no need for a government — that might challenge his power.

Even after he fled from Tripoli, the quest to capture him served as a glue holding together the loose confederation of local brigades that toppled his government. The provisional government in Benghazi,

unable to resolve a contest among various power centers over government positions, put off a promised reshuffling until after the capture of Colonel Qaddafi's last stronghold and hide-out, Surt, which means they are due to resume that work now.

"Libya is going to have a terrible time," said Lisa Anderson, a political scientist who studies Libya.

"For a long time, what knit them together was a kind of morbid fascination with Qaddafi, and until now everybody felt that until they saw his body that he almost might come back, like a vampire," said Ms. Anderson, who is the president of the American University in Cairo. But when the euphoria dies down, "they don't have a credible institution in the entire country," she said. "They don't have anything that knits them together."

Tunisia, poised to hold its first free elections on Sunday, may be the Arab state best positioned for a successful transition to a liberal democracy. Among factors in its favor are its relatively small, homogenous population of about 12 million, comparatively high levels of education, a large middle class, an apolitical military, a moderate Islamist movement and a long history of a unified national identity.

But with the removal of Mr. Ben Ali's strong hand, the Tunisian elite has been bitterly divided by many of the questions soon to confront Libya, especially the role of Islam in their new society, law and government. In the final days of the election campaign, the biggest secular-liberal party has pledged to try to build a governing coalition that excludes the Islamists, while the leader of the Islamists said his party members would "take to the streets" if they deem the election stolen.

Nor has either Tunisia or Egypt resolved the frustrations of the legions of jobless youths who enlisted in the revolts for reasons of bread and butter, not civil liberties. In the hard-pressed southern Tunisian town of Kasserine, for example, many say that they are so disillusioned with the lack of change — lack of jobs — since the revolution that they no longer plan to vote. "They want me to vote so they can get a seat?" said Mabrouka Nbarki, 43, whose 17-year-old son was one of the dozens of young people killed in Kasserine during the revolt.

"Why would I vote?" she said, weeping. "There is no point."

Her 7-year-old son, she said, had dreamed of growing up to be a policeman so that he could bring to justice whoever shot his older brother. But the younger son died of a fever; his mother blames heartbreak.

Egypt, in addition to far greater poverty and illiteracy, is also wrestling with deep sectarian tensions. Its Islamist movement is divided among factions eager to incorporate Islamic moral codes into the civil law

and others committed to liberal tolerance. The open debate over the country's future has added to tensions with its Coptic Christian minority, who make up about 10 percent of the population.

Then there is the mixed blessing of Egypt's military. While it provided the kind of national structure for a change of government that Libya lacked, its continued hold on power since the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak has led many to question whether the correct term is "revolution" or "coup." Most political players believe the military is seeking some guarantees of its autonomy and influence under the next civilian government.

"People who saw the benefits of this at the beginning are starting to see the costs," said Ms. Anderson of the American University in Cairo. "Everyone will have to decide how much of those costs they can bear, including the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces."

Still, the military appeared to be engaged in a gradual negotiation toward "a more civilian kind of government," she said, adding, "Nobody ever gave up power without a negotiation."

Some in the region now say they hope that the success of the Libyan insurrection in toppling Colonel Qaddafi without the aid of an institution like the Egyptian military, and by force of arms rather than moral suasion, could reinvigorate activists in violent struggles elsewhere, especially Syria and Yemen.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh's Yemen, with its weak state, splintered national army, and strong tribal affiliations, may be the region's closest analogy to Libya — without oil, said Paul Sullivan, a Georgetown political scientist.

"The brutality of the Assad regime in Syria and the Saleh regime in Yemen is still being felt," he said. "But with the demise of Muammar el-Qaddafi, the light at the end of the tunnel is a lot less dim."

Or, he added, Libya may yet follow Yemen to chaos. "Libya still has its chance of becoming a failed state," he said.

Still, Mr. Ounaies, the former Tunisian ambassador, argued that in some ways Colonel Qaddafi's government had prepared the Libyan people to avoid that fate. "Now they are very well-trained not to accept the rule of one unique leader or party," he said.

"And this experience of liberations from inside is itself an experience of national union and integration," he said. "Though martyrdom, through sacrifice, through heroism, they have built up a strong union, a strong Libya, and that is very important for the building of a nation."

Anthony Shadid contributed reporting from Beirut, Lebanon, and Heba Ajify from Cairo.