

Flake or Fox?

Libya's Kaddafi is a dangerous man, but he seems to know what he's doing

How His Mind Works

Egypt's Anwar Sadat once claimed that Kaddafi was "100 percent sick and possessed of the demon." Another old foe, former Sudanese President Jaafar Nimeiry, diagnosed him as "a split personality—both evil." Even his admirers concede that Kaddafi is moody, hot tempered and unpredictable. An administration official argues that Kaddafi "displays behavior typical of many sociopaths or psychopaths—extremely warm one moment, then hostile and cold the next." Unproven but persistent rumors speak of secret treatments in a Swiss sanitarium years ago. But there is no solid clinical evidence on which to base a judgment about Kaddafi's mental health, which forces analysts to rely on their own instincts. Former CIA Director Richard Helms, who has extensive experience in the Middle East, concludes that "Kaddafi is in some respects crazy like a fox. His various moves, even though seemingly outlandish, appear to have some strategic

or tactical motive behind them. I think he's peculiar, quixotic, eccentric. But I don't think he's crazy by any means."

In large part, Kaddafi is a product of Bedouin culture. He was born 43 years ago, the son of a shepherd who lived in a goatskin tent in northern Libya, a region steeped in poverty despite the oil that enriched a few under the Libyan monarchy. Kaddafi took to the gospel of revolution at an early age, modeling himself at various times on Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and China's Mao Tse-tung, among others. He learned a little English at a school in Tripoli and studied briefly in England, where he felt like an outsider, he says now. Back in Libya, he joined the Army, married a former nurse and eventually fathered seven children. In 1969 Kaddafi and a small group of fellow officers overthrew King Idris and steered

Libya on to a radically new course.

Reflecting his nomadic tribal background, Kaddafi instinctively opposes the rich and powerful and resists any form of political structure and the impediments that go with it. Under his leadership, Libya has been transformed into *al Jamahiriyah*—"the state of the masses." The oil wealth has been widely redistributed. Kaddafi's political, social and economic ideas,

some of them distinctly half-baked, are spelled out in the three slim volumes of his Green Book, self-consciously modeled on Mao's Little Red Book. "No representation in lieu of the people" is its overriding principle—the idea that everyone should share in government, town-meeting style. In practice, however, the Green Book concedes that any society will be ruled by the strong—in this case, Kaddafi. The colonel

holds no formal job in the state; he is simply *al Qaid*, The Leader.

"Kaddafi's foremost ambition is to dominate and unite the Arab world," says a white paper released by the State Department last week. "He frequently compares himself to Garibaldi or Bismarck and has justified his use of violence and terrorism against moderate Arab regimes as necessary to achieve Arab unity." Kaddafi is also

an egotist and a crybaby who sulks or throws tantrums when he doesn't get what he wants. He can act prudently and will even back down when he has to. But a study by the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies predicted a year ago that Kaddafi will never change. "We concluded that there is a zero probability that Kaddafi will abandon his dream of uniting the Arab world under his leadership

and of humiliating the United States," says an administration official. "and an equally remote chance that he will abandon terrorism as his principal weapon."

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