



The Arab Spring: Libya & Syria

Chairs: Cody Hoeffel & Veronica Dulin

Introduction:

On December 17, 2010, Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself aflame. His act of self-immolation sparked a series of uprisings and revolutions across the North Africa and the Middle East that have been collectively labelled 'The Arab Spring'. In the progression of this Arab Spring that has now stretched well into autumn, seemingly immovable dictatorships have been toppled, intransigent governments have been forced to compromise, and the people of this region have risen up in droves to protest and demand change. Change has not come so easily; thousands are displaced or dead, many driven out or murdered by the forces of their own government. And once the called for changed have been put into motion, whether it be the resignation of government officials, a change in voting laws, greater political freedom, or the wholesale overthrow a government and its system, what happens then? Established regimes fumble with new ideas of democracy and freedom, and fledgling administrations struggle to construct completely new institutions without repeating the transgressions of their predecessors.

Where is the international community's place in all this? What is the level of involvement necessitated by these upheavals? That is for this Security Council to decide. In this session we will focus on two unique nations currently facing crises: Libya and Syria.

Background/History:

Libya: The Arab Spring reached Libya on February 16th with protests for democracy hitting the streets. Many of the protestors were killed by the Gaddafi regime. One week later the National Transitional Council (NTC) was formed by what became the Libyan rebels. The rebels began an armed opposition against the Gaddafi regime aided by NATO air forces holding a no-fly zone over Libya created by the Security Council under Security Council Resolution 1973, which placed fuel and arms embargoes as well as a freeze on Libyan assets. During the fighting the International Criminal Court (ICC) released warrants for the arrest of Gaddafi and certain cabinet members. The rebels struggled against the regime until August 21st, when the rebels entered Tripoli.

The people of Libya can be divided into tribes, the government originally unified these tribes allowing for a peaceful nation. Following a military coup lead by Gaddafi in 1969 the government began to change, the government became one of Gaddafi's tribe, the Kadhafa, and the two largest tribes, the Warfalla and the Magahara. Under the Gaddafi regime there were no political parties, unions, or independent media, there was only the government. However, the Libyan government did allow the wealth from oil to spread, most Libyans could afford cars, health care was free, even medical fees from Libyans abroad was paid by the state. The government did much to improve the infrastructure of the nation. The index of human development place Libya as 53, it was considered Africa's most developed country.

Syria: The current unrest and protests in Syria are the result of years of political repression. Syria has been under an authoritarian government for the past forty-one years, following the bloodless coup orchestrated by and ascension to the presidency of Hafez al-Assad in 1970. Assad's government ratified a new constitution in 1973, several clauses of which have caused long standing resentment by the people and are clear indicators of the lack of political rights in Syria. Article 8 of the Syrian Constitution ensures the supremacy of the Ba'ath party, and while the Constitution allows for other political parties, only those with views closely in line with the Ba'ath Party are given legitimacy. As a result, opposition views are given no voice in government. Article 101 gives the Syrian government the right to enact a state of emergency within Syria. A state of emergency was actually declared in 1963, ten years before the Constitution's inception, the year when the Ba'ath party came to power. The state of emergency suspends constitutional freedoms, allows for heavy censorship of publications (all of which go through the Syrian government), and for the arrest of indefinite imprisonment of citizens without a trial. The emergency law has been ostensibly maintained to protect Syrians from the ongoing war Syria claims with Israel, as well as to protect the state from terrorists. This lack of freedom, coupled with a youth unemployment rate of 24.4% in the socialist state has resulted in a disillusioned and dissatisfied populace, especially among the younger generation.

In 2000, Hafez's son Bashar al-Assad came to power. He has followed in his father's footsteps, authorizing the imprisonment of dissenters and censoring the Syrian media. His regime has been purported by the West to support Hezbollah, he continues Syria's outspoken hatred for Israel, and Syria is currently on the U.S.'s list of terrorist threats.

Current Situation:

Libya: Now that the rebels have taken much of Tripoli a new phase begins. The NTC must now form a government, restore order, and rebuild the nation. The rebels have sworn to end the shortages of fuel, food and water in Tripoli and have asked workers to return to their duties to restart various public services. However, Gaddafi and his son, Khamis, and his soldiers are still avoiding the rebels. Scud missiles, weapons that are forbidden under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), are still scattered throughout the country, in spite of claims that these weapons would be destroyed to comply to the MTCR. While many of the weapons may not currently be operational, they may be repaired and taken by terrorist organizations if they are not secured or destroyed in a timely fashion. Gaddafi has offered talks, however, the rebels refuse to negotiate without the surrender of Gaddafi.

Syria: Large scale protests in Syria began on March 15th. Citizens took to the streets to protest the lack of political freedom, government corruption, and the continued existence of the emergency law. Assad's regime arrested protestors in the streets on charges ranging from sedition to treason. Protests continued in the following weeks, spreading to more cities with participants numbering in the thousands. The Syrian government has gone so far as to send the military into cities of known protestors. Tanks rolled into Daraa, a hub of protesting, on April 25th and have also been sent to Homs, Talkalakh, and Jisr ash-Shugur, as well as several other cities. The military is cutting off electricity, food, water, denying medical attention in attempt to starve out protestors, as well as stationing snipers on rooftops, using water cannons, tanks, and machine guns to disperse protestors. On the 14th of August it was reported that the Syrian Navy had begun shelling port cities from warships. A U.N. investigation was allowed into the country



(a rarity as most foreign press and humanitarian aid groups are barred) and declared the the death toll was over 2,200 since March. Unable to pass a binding resolution without support from the veto powers Russia and China, the Security Council read aloud a strongly worded letter of condemnation on August 3rd.

The Syrian government has insisted that it has been fighting underground terrorist organizations and foreign conspirators. They have offered several concessions: lifting the emergency law and passing a law to allow more than one political party (a symbolic gesture seeing as the constitution guarantees the Ba'ath party is "The leading party in the society and the state").

Bloc Positions:

Libya:

Western Nations: The West wants to insure the success of the NTC and avoid situations similar to Iraq and Afghanistan. The European nations in particular are concerned with the frozen assets and the consequences of their release.

Asia: These nations are looking to minimize the role of western powers in Libya and seek a government guided by the United Nations.

Africa The nations of Africa have separated in their views, many opened their borders to refugees to Libya some have held talks between the two sides.

South America: These countries are divided on the issue, some nations such as Venezuela define themselves as friends of Gaddafi. Others such as Brazil have condemned the violence in Libya.

Middle East: Looks to avoid intervention in regime change, the Arab League has recognized the rebels and given them Libya's seat in the league, which has been empty since the 1980s.

Syria:

Western Nations- Western Nations including the U.S., U.K., France, Portugal, and Germany have put forward resolutions condemning Syria, none of which have been adopted. The U.S. and E.U. have placed their own sanctions on the Syrian government.

Asia- Russia and China have insisted that Syria's internal affairs should not be interfered with militarily or economically by Western Nations, citing Libya as a case where the West has become too involved.

African- African nations have focused more on the turmoil in their African neighbor, Libya, rather than Syria. They are not economically linked to Syria and may choose to support UN sanctions on the government of Syria or other measures leveled against the Syrian government.

South America- The South American countries have not been very vocal on the matter of Syria but they generally follow the U.S.'s lead when it comes to international crises (with the exclusions of those nations more politically independent and defined like Venezuela and Brazil).

Middle East- The Arab League has condemned the violence in Syria. Lebanon was the only member of the Security Council to disassociate itself from the Council's condemnation

statement, meanwhile Turkey is concerned about the over 9,000 refugees that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reports have fled to Turkey.

IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa): An IBSA coalition visited Damascus seeking to provide a peaceful resolution to the unrest in Syria and reportedly trying to avoid a Libya-like situation with military intervention. They would like to be able to negotiate with the Syrian government to help them solve their own issues.

Committee Mission:

The Security Council's duty is to maintain international peace and security. They tread the delicate balance between protecting the people of the world from their own governments and respecting international sovereignty. The mission of this committee is to determine whether a unified response to the crises in Libya and Syria can be given by the Security Council, and if so, what that response is. **The goal of this Council is to determine how best to end the violence in these two countries.**

Questions to Consider:

Libya:

Is there a need for further intervention in Libya?

Can the NTC build a stable government on its own?

Should Libyan assets be released for use by the NTC?

Should the international community recognize the NTC as the government of Libya?

Syria:

Is military intervention in Syria advisable?

Should Assad be referred to the International Criminal Court?

Should a resolution condemning the regime be issued?

Are UN sanctions or arms embargoes necessary?



Documents to Consider:

Libya:

Security Council Resolution 1973: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/268/39/PDF/N1126839.pdf?OpenElement>

EU Sanctions and Asset Freezes: Security Council Document: S/AC.52/2011/16:
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/AC.52/2011/16

History and Structure of Libyan War: "<http://translate.google.com/translate?client=firefox-a&hl=en&prev=/search%3Fq%3DCentre+Fran%u00e7ais+de+Recherche+sur+le+Renseignement&rurl=translate.google.com&sl=fr&twu=1&u=http://www.cf2r.org/images/stories/news/201106/rappo-rt-libye.pdf>

Timeline of Events NY Times:

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/timestopics/libyatimeline.html?_r=1

Syria:

Timeline of Events by Al-Jazeera:

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/03/2011329155923973612.html>

Security Council Condemnation Statement:

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10352.doc.htm>

IBSA policy & press website: <http://www.ibsanews.com/politics-ibsa-opposes-measures-against-syria/>

Human Rights Council report & Resolution: [http://daccess-dds-](http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/LTD/G11/155/02/PDF/G1115502.pdf?OpenElement)

[ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/LTD/G11/155/02/PDF/G1115502.pdf?OpenElement](http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/LTD/G11/155/02/PDF/G1115502.pdf?OpenElement)

General Research:

BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/> Particularly with keywords “Libya” and “Syria”

Websites for Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs or State Departments for your nations