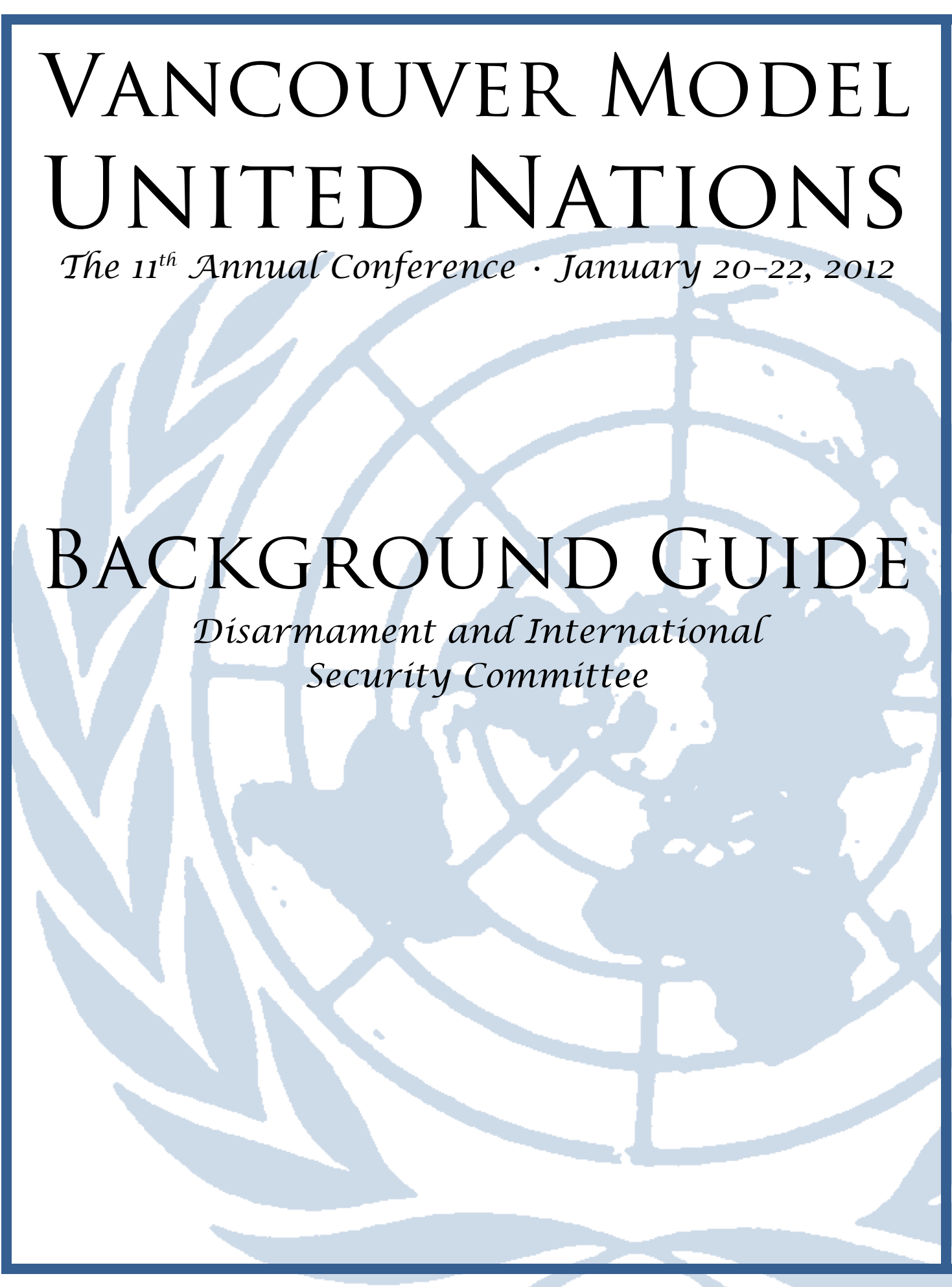


VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The 11th Annual Conference · January 20-22, 2012

BACKGROUND GUIDE

*Disarmament and International
Security Committee*





VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The 11th Annual Conference · January 20-22, 2012

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Dear Delegates,

I am David Choi and I will be serving as the director of the Disarmament and International Security Committee this year at VMUN 2012. I have been involved in Model United Nations for five years and have taken a liking to the combination of interpersonal skills and knowledge of the world it requires. I also have a history with DISEC, having served as an assistant director in the committee last VMUN, and as a delegate three years previous. This year, I am taking up the mantle of Director as well as the Undersecretary General of Information Technology and through these positions hope to make this year's VMUN the best yet.

My staff and I have chosen what we believe to be interesting and engaging topics that are important in the political climate of the world. The first topic, responses to the Arab Spring, involves dozens of countries and raises many important issues. Harsh condemnations of the violence lead to questions about sovereignty of nations and social media's role in organizing the protests demands policies regarding the Internet. Formations of the response will help in bringing stability to the Arab World and therefore to the world as a whole. The second topic, regulation of Private Military Companies, is similarly important. Lacking much regulation, they are not beholden to any specific government and have been involved in scandals. In the Arab Spring, they have caused both stability through creating order and chaos through illegal acts.

Of particular note to research is the first topic of the Arab Spring. Private Military Companies have established literature about them that can be found in the bibliography of the backgrounder, but revolutions have constant updates. A successful delegate will need to keep track of current events in both legislation and in the countries affected. We, the staff of DISEC, wish you the best of luck in your research and look forward to meeting all of you. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

David Choi

Director of the Disarmament and International Security Committee and
Undersecretary General of Information Technology

disecc@vmun.com | it@vmun.com

Special Note from the Under-Secretary-General Committees

Dear delegates of DISEC,

In Topic A, Intervention in the Arab Spring, your committee will be taking on the challenge of a very current and a very fast-moving topic. You will be called upon to approach the issue from several directions: most certainly, DISEC will need to address the current situation in the Middle East and formulate an international response to the wave of revolutions, but perhaps will also come to consider the wider implications of the Arab Spring and the precedents it will set for citizens, governments, the international community, and DISEC itself in the future.

I am addressing this letter to you specifically because the Arab Spring is a very current and a very ongoing issue. As a result, events in the real world have moved on considerably from how they are described in this background guide, which cuts off around the beginning of September 2011. Delegates who have been keeping up with world news will certainly know that Muammar Gaddafi of Libya was captured and killed by rebel forces in October of this year, but that is only one example of the several important developments in the Arab Spring.

Therefore, you should expect **a supplement and letter from your director** closer to the actual conference in January. They will survey the major developments in the Arab Spring since September and update you on the crucial points you need to be aware of.

That being said, you can and most certainly should perform your research on Topic A starting right now. Further information on both the events covered in this background guide and the events that have occurred since then is widely available, and as long as you are familiar with both, you are sure to do well at the conference.

If you have any questions, please email your committee's director at disec@vmun.com or either of your USGs of Committees.

Sincerely,

Zach Hauser
Chief of Staff and Under-Secretary-General of Committees
usgcommittees@vmun.com

Topic A: Intervention in the Arab Spring

Introduction

Freedom has been a rallying call in the Arab world since December 2010,¹ when the series of revolutions and protests known to the Western world as the Arab Spring first began. “*Ash-shab yurid isqat an-nizam!*”—“The people want to bring down the regime!”—goes a prominent slogan used by protestors all around the Arab World. The protestors want freedom from corruption, freedom of information, and freedom in their lives. The revolutions of the Arab Spring have received international attention in the media and in communities throughout the world. In fact, these protests have spread around the world to countries such as China, Spain, and Albania. International response to the events have been mixed, however, as many countries have had ties with the previous governments and face the decision to support them or the protestors. The Arab Spring has brought a host of other topics to the table, such as the use of social media in revolutions and foreign interventionism in civil wars. DISEC must formulate a comprehensive strategy for the events during the Arab Spring, determining what aid the international community should render to the Arab world, where that aid should be applied, and what response the UN has to both the positive and negative developments thus far.

Timeline²

December 17, 2010 — Street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself on fire in protest.

December 28 — Tunisian President Ben Ali warns protestors to stop protesting.

January 14, 2011 — Tunisian President Ben Ali flees to Saudi Arabia.

January 25 — Thousands protest in Egypt.

February 11 — Egyptian President Mubarak hands over power to the army.

February 12 — Thousand of protestors defy a ban on demonstrations in Algeria.

February 16 — Tens of thousands of people protest in a major intersection in Bahrain.

February 27 — Tunisian Prime Minister Ghannouchi announces that he is stepping down and gives power over to Beji. Libyan National Transitional Council opposition party formed.

March 3 — Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq resigns to coming protests and chooses Essam Sharaf as his successor.

March 19 — NATO begins operations in Libya.

April 1 — Thousands of Algerian guards protest against government.

June 22 — Constitutional amendment talks in Algeria end. Opposition parties call them a sham.

July 2 — Bahrain Sunni rulers begin to talk to opposition.

¹ <http://www.tropicpost.com/middle-east-in-revolt/>

² <http://professional.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703842004576162884012981142.html>

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July 8 — Egyptian protesters demand justice for Mubarak's victims and a clear plan towards democracy.

August 25 — Rebels capture Tripoli in Libya.

August 29 — Gaddafi's family is found to have fled to Algeria.

Historical Analysis

Origins

Revolution in the Arab world did not come from nowhere. During the decades before the Arab Spring began, the Arab world suffered numerous revolts for human rights.³ These riots were driven by government corruption, totalitarianism, high unemployment rates, economic decline, high starvation rates, human rights violations, and lack of transparency in many Arabic countries.⁴ Rising quality of life and education rates only increased the unrest, due to the rising hopes of the citizens and the slow rate of change.⁵ As more youth became educated in the Western world, people began to realize that their own countries could someday look very different. The most educated people—the students, teachers, lawyers, and professionals who saw what life was like in Western countries—were often the ones who led the protests.

In some countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria, protests were especially frequent leading up to the period now known as the Arab Spring.⁶ One of the events that sparked the escalation of these protests was the leaking of secret American diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks.⁷ The two hundred and fifty thousand confidential documents released, transmissions between the U.S. and its diplomatic missions throughout the world, revealed widespread government corruption and other factors that led to the revolts. The second major catalyst for the Arab Spring was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi.

Tunisian Revolution

The Tunisian Revolution is commonly considered to have begun on December 18, 2010, when 26-year old Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after a policewoman confiscated his only method of income.⁸ After the confiscation, Bouazizi attempted to complain to the provincial headquarters, but was refused an audience and soon lit himself on fire in protest. Bouazizi's radical act served to unite different groups together in a series of escalating protests.⁹ These violent protests led to President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's fleeing to Saudi Arabia in January 2011.¹⁰

After Ben Ali's departure, one of the members of his party, Mohamed Ghannouchi, formed a new government with the promise to resign and hold a new election within six months.¹¹ His government included many people from the same party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD), but after protests

³ http://old.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=234768

⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/13/amnesty-international-wikileaks-arab-spring?>

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ http://old.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=234768

⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/13/amnesty-international-wikileaks-arab-spring?>

⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12195025>

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

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Ghannouchi removed all RCD members except for himself. After numerous protests, with more than one hundred thousand protesters, Ghannouchi too resigned and Beji Caid El Sebsi assumed the reins of power. The RCD was ordered to dissolve on March 9, 2011; however, there are still minor protests continuing in the country.

Algerian Protests

As a result of widespread protests in 1988, an attempt at a democratic government, the military seizure of power, and three terms of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (the third occurring only because of a constitutional amendment), protests were common in Algeria.¹² Although the protests were not very active for a while, they grew to unprecedented levels on December 29, 2010, over a lack of housing. The Algerian protests turned increasingly violent—and increasingly frequent—including further self-immolation attempts presumably modeled after Mohamed Bouazizi's. In early February 2011, President Bouteflika was driven to promise the end of a nineteen-year state of emergency and later vowed to increase democracy in Algeria. However, inspired by the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, protests still continue in the country.¹³

Egyptian Revolution

Hosni Mubarak was President of Egypt for thirty years, and ruled in a constant state of emergency.¹⁴ This legality allowed Mubarak to suspend constitutional rights and increase his personal power by citing threats of terrorism. Police brutality, low quality of life, high rates of corruption, and poor economic conditions were all problems under Mubarak's reign.

On January 25, 2011, semi-violent protests against Mubarak began.¹⁵ In response to the protests being organised over Facebook, Twitter, and other social media, the Egyptian government shut off internet access throughout the entire country in an attempt to end the protests. The move was largely unsuccessful, and protests continued. Facing major opposition, Mubarak gradually made a series of concessions: he promised not to run again in September, dissolved his government, chose Omar Suleiman as his Vice President, and ceded many powers to Suleiman.¹⁶ Finally, on February 11 2011, Mubarak stepped down.¹⁷ A Prime Minister appointed by Mubarak later resigned before protests against him could take form, and he allowed a popular civilian lawyer trained in the United States, Essam Sharaf, to take the position.¹⁸ The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has taken control with several promises, most importantly to hold elections within six months, but protests about the slow pace of changes continue.¹⁹

Libyan Civil War

After the overthrow of King Idris I in 1969, Muammar Gaddafi became the ruler of Libya. Setting up a pseudo-democratic system while maintaining power and marginalising dissenters, he has been called a “master of tactical manoeuvring.” Though Libyan citizens probably had a higher quality of life than

¹² <http://professional.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703327404576194363244985344.htm>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ <http://apnews.myway.com//article/20110211/D9LA9H180.html>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/201121125158705862.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/04/AR2011030406364.html>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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people in Egypt or Tunisia, they had a government with much higher rates of corruption. The Libyan government could afford to offer public services that calmed rebellious feeling in the populace because of oil revenue that neither Egypt nor Tunisia could hope to match. As a result, despite the rampant corruption in the Libyan government, rebellion was largely bribed away for a long time.²⁰

An early protest about delays in housing projects in January 2011 led to about thirty billion dollars being earmarked for a housing investment fund.²¹ Soon, however, people became inspired by revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt and began to openly revolt, using things like social media to organise protests.²² Violence was common on both sides; protesters burned buildings and attacked police while police fired live ammunition and attacked protesters. In response, Gaddafi attempted to impose a blackout on information in Libya, but information still managed to leak to news sources and protests continued. Gaddafi also began to recruit mercenaries and private military companies in nearby countries. As protest followed protest, the National Transitional Council formed on February 27 as an opposing government to Gaddafi. By this point, both sides were using their full military resources, including tanks, airstrikes, and bombs.²³ The advantage swung back and forth between rebels (now including many defected politicians and members of the military) and Gaddafi loyalists as cities were captured and lost.²⁴ On March 17, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973 to protect civilians and impose a no-fly zone. In response, Gaddafi declared a ceasefire, but soon broke it.

NATO began operations in Libya against Gaddafi on March 19. Controversy soon erupted about allegations that NATO was overstepping the intention of protection of civilians mandated by Resolution 1973. NATO mounted thousands of airstrikes and attacks in the subsequent months.²⁵ The civil war has with no end in sight, and some NATO members have said that it may be necessary to allow a powerless Gaddafi to remain in Libya (though his family has already fled to Algeria). As of August 22, the rebels control Tripoli, the largest city in Libya, though Gaddafi reported that the loss was intentional.²⁶

Other Protests

Protests have occurred in many countries, such as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Oman, Mauritania, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Sudan, and Western Sahara.²⁷ In some cases, they have led to governmental changes, formation of new organizations, heads of state resigning, and economic, democratic, and human rights concessions. Delegates can find more information about other revolts in the sources listed below, and in their personal research.

²⁰ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/international/violent-clashes-wrack-libya-after-scores-said-killed-in-single-day-1.344666>

²¹ <http://www.tropicpost.com/middle-east-in-revolt/>

²² <http://www.haaretz.com/news/international/violent-clashes-wrack-libya-after-scores-said-killed-in-single-day-1.344666>

²³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8344034/Libya-civil-war-breaks-out-as-Gaddafi-mounts-rearguard-fight.html>

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/23/nothing-moral-nato-intervention-libya>

²⁶ http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/23/world/africa/23libya.html?_r=2&hp

²⁷ <http://professional.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703842004576162884012981142.html>

Current Issues

When discussing intervention in the Arab Spring, there are two main areas to be considered. These are “how much to intervene” and “where to intervene.” Below are some thoughts on these topics.

To What Degree Countries Intervene

With all the chaos, disorder, and death as an inescapable corollary of the revolutions, many countries may be called on by their citizens to intervene in the events in the Arab Spring. But equally important is the right of every country to self-determination and independence in the international community. Unlike in the colonial era of the past, it is no longer acceptable to have complete control of a region so different and separated from one’s home country (this condemnation of foreign occupation is one of the key pillars behind the United Nations) and furthermore few countries have the resources necessary to do this. A good solution should have a well-defined balance between minimizing casualties, intervention, and cost.

What Areas Should Countries Intervene In

There are many areas that a successful solution could cover, in terms of intervention. One possible issue is the support of protesters in their acts against the government. In Libya, rebels have received immense support from NATO in the form of supplies, attacks, and technical advice. In other countries where the conflicts have not been as intense, there has been much less aid but public outcries against the governments and desires for peaceful solutions have been expressed. This sort of military intervention could be beneficial, if it helps bring down corrupt governments, but this form of aid is expensive and may be uncomfortably close to foreign occupation. There are also questions about its effectiveness and some believe that it only makes already dangerous conflicts bloodier.²⁸

The unrest in the Middle East has caused a rise in oil prices due to the number of oil-producing countries in turmoil. Both the stability of the Suez Canal and the oil-producing countries themselves have led to worry about the future state of oil.²⁹ Higher oil prices can lead to an increase in prices across the board, with an unhealthy effect on the entire world economy. In the past, high oil prices have led to revolts and famines. Finding ways to stabilise the Middle East in order to maintain oil production is important not only economically, of course, but also for stability in regions far afield.

Even when protests and revolutions culminate in the overthrow of a corrupt government and the installation of a—hopefully better—new government, the restoration of public order and good governance will remain a serious issue. Unstable governments can be a serious threat to the international community, and turmoil in single countries can lead to widespread instability.³⁰ Although the goal of ensuring stable governments that will not descend into chaos or form authoritarian regimes may conflict with state sovereignty, it is also of the utmost importance. In Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, governments would have to be reformed from the ground up to replace the constitution, bodies of government, and laws that were all designed to prop up the previous ruling party.

²⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/23/nothing-moral-nato-intervention-libya>

²⁹ <http://money.canoe.ca/money/business/canada/archives/2011/02/20110217-151716.html>

³⁰ *Ibid.*

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Providing for the safety of those not involved in the conflicts is also crucially important. Providing a place for refugees and aiding civilians within a dangerous country is necessary and usually has little effect on the conflict itself. International relations, such as trade embargoes, no-fly zones, and the use of private military companies, are likewise important to look over. Though these are already reasonably established, they can often force a country into non-independence.

Please note that not all of these must be in a prospective solution, nor should a solution be limited to the topics stated above. They are just be examples of ideas to consider.

UN Involvement

As the Arab Spring was a relatively recent and sudden phenomenon, there are very few United Nations and International responses to the events.

- UNDP Arab Human Development Report — The detailed report of the Arab world identified the developmental challenges in the region and the necessary steps to avoid instability. This report, beginning in 2002, led to little political action despite its contents.³¹
- UNSC Resolution 1970 — Adopted on February 26 2011, it asked the Libyan Government to respect human rights as much as possible, called for an end the fighting, and placed numerous sanctions on Gaddafi and his government.³² This resolution and UNSC resolution 1973 constituted the most “wide-ranging resolutions passed by the Security Council for more than 20 years.”³³
- UNSC Resolution 1973 — Adopted on March 17 2011, it created a no-fly zone over Libya, called to an end to the fighting, and strengthened existing trade embargoes.³⁴

Bloc Positions

Supporting Protesters

These countries largely support the democratisation and reform movements in the Arabic countries and give some support to protesters. These may or may not be reluctant shows of approval to quash protests within their own territory.

Most western and democratic countries; Australia, Botswana, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, Lebanon, Morocco, Philippines, Switzerland, and others.

Cautious

These countries are in the middle ground between supporting and opposing the reform movements. For example, Canada has had a careful attitude towards the Arab Spring and said that it would not offer direct financial assistance.

³¹ http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/270611lyall_grant.pdf

³² <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/245/58/PDF/N1124558.pdf?OpenElement>

³³ http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/270611lyall_grant.pdf

³⁴ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/268/39/PDF/N1126839.pdf?OpenElement>

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Early on, France supported the Arabic governments that it had close ties to and even offered support to the militaries of some leaders. Later, the French government admitted that it had made some mistakes and participated in actions with NATO. It has since supported changes in the Arab world.

Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and a few others have condemned some reactions to the protests, supported some protesters, opposed others, and may have directly aided in the suppression of protests.

Against Protesters

These countries support the governments already in place in the affected countries, may or may not operate under authoritarian rule themselves, and may or may not blame the Arab Spring on western countries.

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