



DELEGATE BACKGROUND GUIDE

# ARAB SPRING

## Table of Contents

Director's Letter	02
Topic 1: Taking Steps To Rebuild Tunisia	04
From Progressivism to Coup: The Bourguiba Administration	04
Human Rights, Dictatorship, and Corruption	06
The Rise of a Movement	09
Reconstruction of a Nation	11
Topic 2: Rising Tensions in The Arab World	14
A Catalyst For Uprising	14
Food Prices	14
Limitations on Basic Freedoms	14
The Presence of a Martyr	15
The Effects of The Internet	17
The Threat of Militarization	18
The Profile of a Dictator	20
Fear and Vengeance	20
Malignant Narcissism	20
The Messiah Complex	21
The Strategy of a Successful Revolution	21
The Interests of Other International Actors	22
Character List	25
Conclusion	34
Bibliography	35

## Director's Letter

Dear Delegates,

As the director of the *Arab Spring committee*, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all of you and I am excited to have all of you attend this year's iteration of TMUN. Whether this is your first Model UN conference or your hundredth, this committee will have something to offer to you and will be an amazing learning experience. It will allow you to grow to become a better Model UN delegate as well as a more informed global citizen. I am certain that whatever route this committee takes, it will be one with many twists and turns that will keep you all on your toes.

Now for introductions, my name is Adam Ben Lassoued (he/him). I am enrolled as a grade eleven student attending The Woodlands Secondary School's enhanced program in Mississauga - just outside of Toronto. I have been doing Model UN since the seventh grade as both a delegate and a dias member. Similarly to many of you, I have an interest in politics, world events, and understanding the roots of global issues as well as solutions. Outside of MUN, I have an interest in engineering and I am part of my school's aerospace and robotics clubs. I am also an avid soccer fan and during my spare time, I enjoy playing the piano.

In terms of details about this committee, it will take place beginning on **January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011** and time will pass accordingly as the conference continues from session to session. The discussion will revolve around two topics. The first will revolve around the rebuilding and a rebirthed nation of Tunisia by coming up with solutions to solve its economic crisis, instilling a model constitution for the protection of the rights of their people which can be replicated in other Arab nations, and eliminating the future possibilities of corruption. The goal is to solve Tunisia's problems to gain familiarity with the possibility of similar issues arising in the future with other Arab nations. The second topic indulges in the discussion of strategies to create a sustainable, successful, and relatively peaceful revolution across the Arab world while considering the role of the dictators themselves that are aiming to remain in power.

It is important to understand where the characters lie on their stance on revolutions and what are the goals of each character, whether that would be remaining in power, gaining power, protecting the rights of the people, or a completely different angle on its own. Although the main goal is to reach a civil and democratic society the ultimate goal is for your characters to succeed.

This background guide discusses events that have already occurred or are presently occurring according to the date with certain small exceptions cited in this document. Despite this background guide containing a thorough general synopsis of the Arab Spring situation, **I encourage delegates to further continue their research on the state of their specific regime** since this is a complex issue that cannot be fully covered within these 40 pages.

As you may be aware, this is a crisis committee, meaning there will be crisis updates occurring occasionally to update the current events based on public and private directives that are passed. If this is one of your first crisis committees, a private directive is similar to a public directive except it is sent directly from your character to the crisis staff and contains detailed points that you would like to pass but does not contain any preambulatory clauses. If you have any questions about the crisis and how it will work or have any questions regarding the background guide, you can contact me via my email which can be found at the end of this letter.

Having said all this, I am excited to be your crisis director for this committee and cannot wait for the conference to begin.

Sincerely,

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## Topic 1: Taking Steps To Rebuild Tunisia

### From Progressivism to Coup: The Bourguiba Administration

Coups and revolutions were not uniquely occurring events that solely took place during the Arab Spring rather; the nation of Tunisia, alongside many other Arab nations, were long familiar with such events. Ever since Tunisia gained its independence from the French in 1956, turmoil constantly plagued the Tunisian government. This can be seen even with the first president of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, who was ultimately overthrown despite serving for 30 years and being generally liked by the Tunisian population.

Bourguiba was seen as a man of the people and pushed for a stronger and unified Tunisia. His policies focused on promoting universal education, gender equality, neutral foreign policy, and economic prosperity. He was a figure that was unlike any other in the Arab world at the time and a pivotal figure in the modernization of Tunisia. He pushed for a more secular and fair society by establishing free and public education not just for men, but for women as well. In addition, Bourguiba also abolished the dual justice system that intertwined Islamic religious law with governmental laws. He furthered his secular ideology by prohibiting the law that allowed men to marry up to 4 wives, which was previously allowed in accordance with the Quran. He also allowed people to break fasting during Ramadan, shown when he controversially drank orange juice publicly during the religious holiday. His free and equitable society after generations of oppression, paired with Bourguiba's charismatic and likable personality led to him being seen as a favorable leader among many. However, his progressive views had also caught the attention of many extremists and conservatives in other Arab nations. For example, well-respected individuals within the Arab world such as the scholar and grand mufti Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz accused Bourguiba of apostasy. His controversial views led an extremist group to plan a military coup and assassination against him, which was ultimately thwarted and led to the hangings of the eleven culprits.

Bourguiba had a vision to unite other North African states by forming the United States of North Africa, which would have included Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania. This would have promoted free cultural and economic trade between nations. Unfortunately, the deal fell through due to internal disputes within these nations despite its initial interest. By 1974, Bourguiba gained the

power of the national assembly and held a vote to instate him as President for life. Upon his death, the succession would go to the prime minister until the next federal election. This massive gain of power upset many Tunisians, which led to a series of protests that lasted for 3 months. These protests started on Thursday, January 26, 1978, a day remembered as Black Thursday. It led Bourguiba to declare a state of emergency and pushed him to mobilize the military, which led to a significant number of civilian casualties.

This marked the beginning of the turning point of Bourguiba's presidency. Additionally, as Bouguiba's health conditions worsened due to his age, the people started to lose confidence in his ability to govern the state. Simultaneously, Tunisia saw its first rise of clientelism, where politicians were bribed for their vote to push certain social and economic policies. Furthermore, in 1983 the fall of gas prices affected Tunisia's oil export prices and led to a dip in the Tunisian economy, causing Bourguiba to seek out a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), on the condition that the Tunisian government cut spending. This led to an end to agricultural subsidies (which inflated bread prices severely), leading to another series of riots now known today as the Tunisian bread riots. This resulted in the deaths of another 150 civilians from confrontations with the Tunisian military forces.

As the 1980s continued, his behavior grew increasingly erratic. He fired the manager of a major newspaper only 24 hours after appointing him and the head of the country's United Nations delegation only a few days after as well. The newly appointed Prime Minister Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, who had previously served as the Defense Minister, had been appointed after organizing a medical coup d'état. Although Bourguiba's presidency began positively with liberal secular progressivism, it ultimately ended within a climate of economic and financial crisis.



Figure 1: Former President Habib Bourguiba

## Human Rights, Dictatorship, and Corruption

Ben Ali had been an accomplished individual receiving training in a French military academy and graduating with a degree in engineering from a US university. From 1964 to 1974 he was head of Tunisian military security and in 1974 he began a three-year term as military attaché to the Tunisian embassy in Morocco. By 1980 he was the ambassador to Poland and after returning to Tunisian he was appointed the state secretary for national security in 1984 and a cabinet minister in 1985. Although already a well-known individual in the political atmosphere, his first public appearance was as the figurehead of the military leader during the bread riots which illustrated him as a tough individual. His job before the presidency was to suppress the Islamic Tendency Movement which was an Islamist group associated with anti-government demonstrations.

Similar to Bourguiba, Ben Ali had initially been liked by most of the public with a certain population seeing his peaceful coup as a stab in the back, however, he was objectively effective in growing the nation's economy with a 4-5% growth per year from the 1990s to early 2000s by entering trade deals with European Union in exporting agricultural produce and expanding tourism in Tunisia. This is seen in the following figures where Tunisia's Gross Domestic Product as of 2006 was composed of approximately 12.5% agriculture, 33.1% industry, and 54.4% services.

The issue with Ben Ali's presidency had not stemmed from its economic or foreign policy, but rather the atrocious human rights violations, authoritarian government, and multiple reports of corruption

found by Amnesty International, Freedom House, and Protection International. The public outcry peaked in 2011 when unemployment rates reached an all-time high at nearly 20% of the population without a job. In comparison, nations such as the US and Canada have unemployment rates of 3.7% and 5.1% respectively.

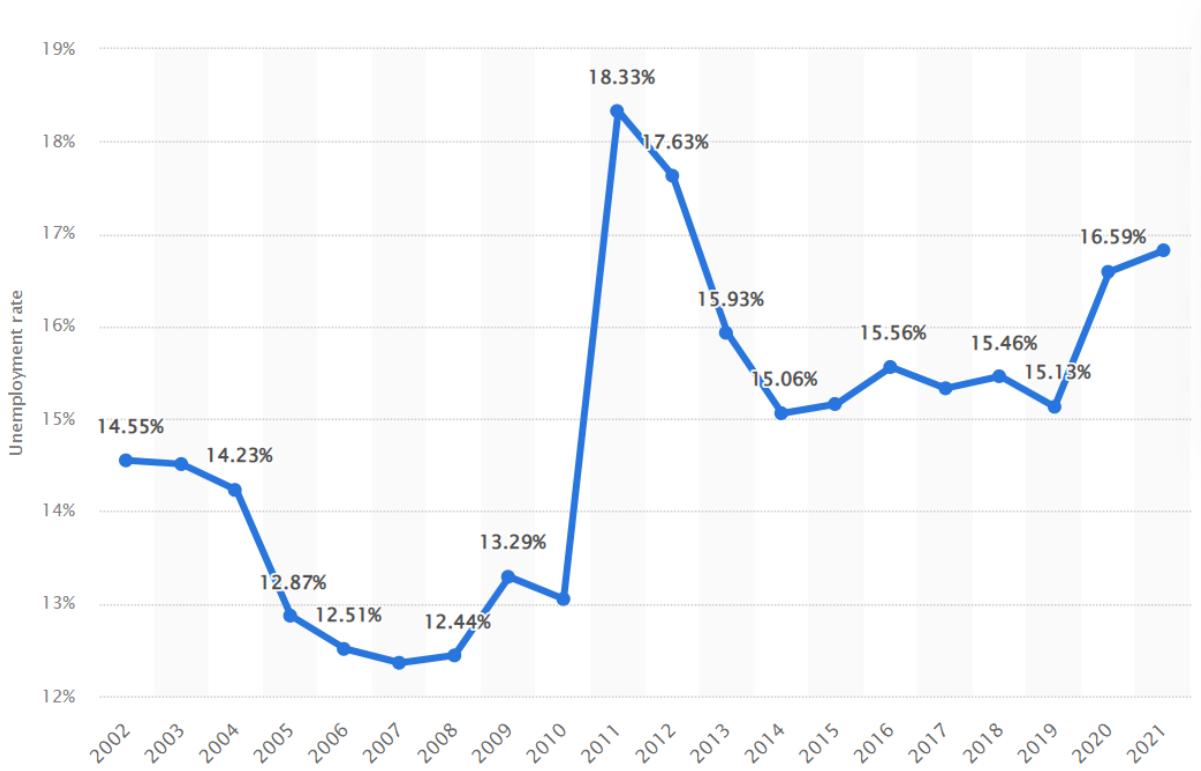


Figure 2: Unemployment rates in Tunisia from 2002 to 2021

Even more troublesome is the absence of the younger workforce in the job market. Many students graduating from higher degree education in Tunisia that have been promised jobs have nowhere to work and must choose to either leave the country or in more common cases where that is not affordable, must stay and continue to be unemployed. The figure below showcases the rates of individuals who are not pursuing education, employment, or some training for future employment. The figure showcases that not only are young men ages 15 to 29 years old 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed but women are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to their male counterparts. This illustrates the gender gap that Bourguiba had previously been fighting against being once again prevalent. The issue with this low employment is that there will not be growth in future industries, not

enough jobs are being created, and there will be a negative feedback loop where fewer students will pursue higher education studies if they will at the end of the day not yield more job opportunity than those who did not attend a school which leads to a less educated populace. The issue further continues when many of the jobs that are in place are low-paying agricultural jobs or running food stands which barely cover the bills and taxes needed to live.

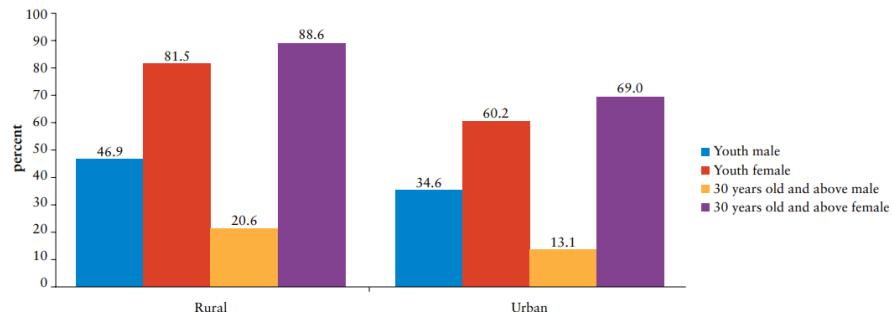


Figure 3: Percent of unemployed, uneducated, or non-career pursuing Tunisians by age (youth are between the ages of 15 years and 29 years), gender, and urban vs rural setting.

The human rights concerns continued as Ben Ali would continue to win back-to-back 5-year election terms with extraordinary election numbers from 1989 to 2009. This was largely due to the fact that the largest political party running against the Ben Ali administration during the 1980s was the religious and conservative Islamist Opposition Group that had largely been oppressed and many of the members had been arrested or executed by the Ben Ali government. After suspicion of election fraud in 1989 and 1994, Ben Ali introduced a bill to allow for a multi-party system to be introduced, however, the 1999 vote continued with an astonishing victory of 99.4% of the votes in favor of Ben Ali despite rising opposition to the government within the Tunisian people themselves. These numbers of voter popularity in the high 90s would not change and anybody who protested or claimed that there was any fraudulent behavior would be prosecuted and jailed immediately. This caused fear among the people considering Ben Ali's ruthless past and led to the oppression of the people.

Corruption within the government was clear with the Ben Ali family living an unrealistically grandiose lifestyle. The media publicly prorated the family image as that of royalty and rumors had been spread among the local population that millions or even billions of dollars of the people were being spent on wasted on luxury items and for the enjoyment of the Ben Ali family and their friends but it was only

when the Wikileaks along with other media sources such as Spain's El País, France's Le Monde, Germany's Der Spiegel, the United Kingdom's The Guardian, and the United States The New York Times came out with a number figure of how much the Ben Ali spent that the last straw was pulled and the public was fuming.

It is estimated that the Ben Ali family had spent USD 13 Billion which was over a quarter of the country's GDP. This included USD 66 million in Swiss banks, USD 362 million in German banks, multiple yachts in Italy and Spain, racehorses and luxury cars held in France, a Falcon 9000 Jet in Switzerland, properties in Paris's most expensive Cote d'Azur and Alps real estate as well as properties in Canada, the US, England, Libya, Qatar, the UAE, and other countries, USD 60 million in gold bullion and numerous other assets. The people abusing this power included Ben Ali's wife Leila Trabelsi who presented herself as a philanthropist running multiple organizations that supposedly helped empower Tunisian women by funding social programs, however, much of the money that the government had funneled into her NGOs was transported directly to her bank account. Other family members who benefited included Ben Ali's brother-in-law Belhassen Trabelsi, Ben Ali's son-in-law Mohammed Sakhr El Materi, and another son-in-law Slim Chiboub. The members of Ben Ali's family were also not shy with their money and would publicly display such wealth in the form of material items. The corruption could not have been any clearer and something had to change to move the wealth from the 0.1% to the rest of the country to do so, a revolution was necessary.

## The Rise of a Movement

The initiation of Arab Spring began on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010 when a street vendor in Sidi Bouzid named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in public to protest against Ben Ali. Bouazizi was like any other street vendor and had no other job to turn to with few career options in Tunisia's job market for young individuals. He made his money off of selling products and wares but was often humiliated by police officers that would confiscate his goods, spit at him, toss his stand to the ground, and file reports against him for not having a permit despite no other vendors having a permit as well. The real reason is the police asked for payment to halt the report of not having a permit similar to what other vendors had done but Bouazizi had no surplus of cash to pay off the officers. Out of frustration and self-disappointment, he lit himself on fire to make a statement and would eventually pass away from

the damages of this event. He later became an idol and a martyr to the Tunisian people. A symbol that change must occur.

Before continuing, it is also important to acknowledge the role of the media during the protests. This is important since control over the media ignites protests and if the government restricts or gains control of the media, then entire movements can fail. In Tunisia, however, the media was in the power of the citizens as seen when a poll was conducted and found that 9 out of 10 protestors gathered from Facebook events and they helped spread awareness through Facebook. Another important media source was Wikileaks which released a total of 251,287 confidential government documents that entailed the corruption within Ben Ali's government as well as the inhumane use of rubber bullets, tear gas, and live ammunition of the military and police forces against the protestors.

Throughout December protests raged on across the nation including the cities of Sfax, Tunis, Sidi Bouzid, Sousse, Gafsa, Monastir, Meknassy, Shbikha, Chebba, and practically every other city across the nation. By December 29<sup>th</sup>, the Labour Union blocked the streets to stop the movement of security forces and by January 6<sup>th</sup>, 95% of Tunisia's 8000 lawyers came to rally against the human rights violations. Many of these protestors were beaten, killed, or arrested and on January 12<sup>th</sup>, there was an incident with an Italian reporter that was nearly beaten to death for filming the protests. This resulted in a curfew to avoid further confrontation but it was already too late. By January 13<sup>th</sup>, men, women, and children of all ages and backgrounds fled to the streets in the tens of thousands to gather in front of the Presidential Palace to call for the immediate resignation of Ben Ali. By January 14<sup>th</sup>, Ben Ali had fled the nation to seek refuge in Saudi Arabia after he announced that he would not run for re-election. Ben Ali was immediately deemed ineligible for the presidency and by law, the Prime Minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, would take his place as interim President until the next elections.



Figure 4: January protests in Tunisia on Bourguiba Avenue.

Although the removal of dictator Ben Ali was a success, it did come at a cost. Approximately 150 individuals lost their lives during the riots and many more were injured. Another cost was economical, during times of unrest and instability, major industries in Tunisia took a halt including the agricultural and tourism industries which were one of the largest. However, the revolution also inspired nations across the Arab world in similar situations to rise against their authoritarian and kleptocratic leaders to promote a more equal and just society.

### Reconstructing a Nation

The date is January 14<sup>th</sup>, and article 56 of the Tunisian constitution states, “In case of temporary disability, the President of the Republic may, by decree, delegate his powers to the Prime Minister with the exclusion of the power of dissolution. During the temporary disability of the President of the Republic, the Government, even if it is the object of a motion of censure, remains in place until the end of this disability. The President of the Republic informs the President of the National Parliament of the provisional delegation of his powers,” the newly designated President is Mohamed Ghannouchi.

The current economy of Tunisia is in shambles, there is a lack of trust within the government, and governmental reform is required to ensure that such a dictatorship cannot exist again. There are many different methods to grow a nation's economy. The tourism industry in Tunisia attracts nearly 10 million in tourists annually, allowing for income in the nation's hospitality sector. Tunisia also has the potential to grow its higher education institutions to attract attention from students from other African nations to encourage an inflow of workers into Tunisia to help develop its industries such as car manufacturing and technological developments. Another benefit to attracting potential students is the relationships and physical proximity Europe has with Tunisia which offers more possible job options.

There is also a lack of trust which directly stems from the structural system of government that needs to be changed. The past "multi-party system" was ineffective since there were over 20 parties yet all of them were spread so thinly that each party retained very few votes. Furthermore, there was election rigging which caused a public outcry. There must be a new party system that is based on opinions represented by the people rather than a system synthetically created to appear to be a democracy. Furthermore, changes in the rights of the people must occur to allow the freedom of speech of all people and to abolish the government's ability to arrest political leaders or ban political parties based on opposing beliefs. Reform is also needed to prevent corruption and conflicts of interest as well as better handling of the nation's funds to ensure that is being used to develop the country and not the assets of its leaders. Having a free press and media coverage over governmental issues also allows for accountability which can further increase if the government would make public announcements on current policies.

## Guiding Questions

1. How can we model an ideal government in the Arab world and what does this ideal look like?
2. What are measures that could have been taken to protect human rights and prevent corruption within the government?
3. How can the newly formed government gain the trust of the public after such a tarnished reputation?
4. The economy is in ruin, what can be done to bring Tunisia out of the economic crisis and back to its glory days?
5. Is there a way to ensure the creation of a multi-party system that is able to not only represent all people and create debates in the house that are not controlled by a single supermajority party but also limits the amount of bureaucracy?
6. What role did the rise of secularism play in the initial progress of constructing a liberal society in Tunisia and how did it lead to its downfall with the rise in power of the religious opposition?
7. A large amount of the Tunisian young working population is unemployed, how can the government ensure the creation of future jobs?

## Topic 2: Rising Tensions in The Arab World

### A Catalyst for Uprising

Although each nation is unique when it came to its individual revolutions in their own right - which will be further discussed in detail in later parts of this background guide - there are still some commonalities and metrics that can be analyzed to predict not only the possibility of revolt in a nation but its potency on the regime it is revolting against. Previously, protests in the Arab world were not unheard of but were often on scales much smaller than this global phenomenon. What made the Arab Spring a particularly unique event is its ability to spread ideas through populations. Similar to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, one of the reasons why there was such fear from the Monarchs of Europe of Napoleon was not just that he had successfully conquered territory, rather it was the thought of replacing the perpetual power hold of the Monarchs on their nations spreading to their regimes.

### Food Prices

In terms of the commonalities between Arab nations, certain traits are universal in many of these countries which include the rise in food prices, sudden limitations on basic freedoms, the presence of martyrs, and most importantly the internet. In many nations like Tunisia, there was a rise in food prices which was seen during Tunisia's bread protest that had occurred during the increasing movement of detest against the government. This was also seen in Egypt where a reported 14 million of the Egyptian population suffered from food insecurity and over 50% of a family's household income was spent on food during 2011 - one of the worst years in food prices. While in Yemen a similar fate was faced with food prices increasing by 42% over the years 2010 to 2011. To put this in perspective, the average family in Canada in 2011 spent only 14% of their household income on food. When the basic necessities that are required for an individual and their family to live are at risk, there is a natural instinctive need to revolt to gain the power to change the status quo and allow for essentials to be met.

## Limitations of Basic Freedoms

Another trait that led to the rise in protests was the restricted freedoms and violence against civilians. In Egypt, after the assassination of a prominent military figure, Anwar Sadat, in 1982, the government enacted the Emergency Law Act which extended the powers of the military and the police, legalized the limitations on constitutional rights, allowed for unchecked censorship, and abolished habeas corpus which protects against unlawful and indefinite imprisonment. In most other nations such an act would have been suspended after the threat had been negated, however, this law had continued to this day. The result of this overreaching of power from the government was the crackdown on any opposition, particularly a group known as the Muslim Brotherhood which the nation deemed a terrorist organization and any opposition was automatically affiliated with this group. Approximately 15 000 individuals were wrongfully arrested for simply opposing the views of the government. Furthermore, there was a heavy presence of police brutality. The police were given the right to torture and beat prisoners and convicted individuals which led to 567 cases of torture, including 167 deaths from 1993 to 2007.

In Syria, many similar rights were infringed upon on the people with the increased military presence on the streets as well as the establishment of 18 separate security forces all under the direct control of Al-Assad which were permitted to physically torture any who are arrested or resisting arrest by breaching minor laws such as curfews. However, one of the major differences between Syria and Egypt was the war and the death of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The conflict created many socioeconomic stressors from the increase of Iraqi refugees in Syria, the harboring of terrorist groups in Syria, and its impact on the means of income for many families in Syria. There was also the law of mandatory conscription into the Syrian military which was popularly disliked by the people.

## The Presence of a Martyr

The Arab Spring had redefined what it means to be a martyr and what such an individual symbolizes. The martyrs' image was personalized and portrayed the stories of their personal lives as the victims of the nation and turned this initial victimization into empowerment and agency. In the Arab Spring

model, the martyr is not only a symbol but the narrative framework used to create opposition to state regimes. Unlike the pre-Arab Spring era, there was a paradigm shift from what the martyr had represented. Previously, such death was viewed as an honorable sacrifice for the larger national or religious community. In comparison, this martyr was seen as an unnecessary victim of society, a by-product of a failed regime and the push for universal values of dignity and human rights. Many nations formed similar revolutions as seen in Tunisia with the first martyr Bouazizi. In Egypt, a similar trend occurred with the self-immolation of Abdu Abdel-Monaim Kamal in front of the parliament building in Cairo (for the purposes of this committee the events of self-immolation had already occurred as of January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011). Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, an unidentified man in his 60s self-immolated using the petroleum the country exports in protest against the government. In Mauritania, similar self-immolation occurred with Yacoub Ould Dahoud. The list of self-immolations has been seen in Algeria and Yemen as well. Self-immolation had become a symbol of a new resistance. It was never heard of before in the Arab world and showcased a new era of expression and resistance against the government.

Other institutions such as the University of North Dakota have attempted to quantify and predict the uprising risk and the extremity of the revolution based on certain metrics. They have successfully predicted the aggressive uprising in Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia. The figure below shows the metrics that are being measured which include the change in the trade as a percentage of national GDP, infant mortality, conditional GDP growth, the percentage of females in secondary education, the figure on the civil liberty index, instability, and factionalism. These factors were able to produce a prediction accuracy of 77%.

Table 3 Logistic Regression Results on Three Versions of Dependent Variable						
Independent Variable	Dependent Variable					
	Most Restricted		Standard Definition		Least Restricted	
Trade As Percentage of GDP	Coefficient -0.0082	P-Value 0.012	Coefficient -0.0090	P-Value 0.004	Coefficient -0.0080	P-Value 0.008
Infant Mortality Rate	0.0111	0.002	0.0126	0.000	0.0136	0.000
Conditional GDP Growth	-0.0971	0.000	-0.0999	0.000	-0.1049	0.000
%Female Secondary Education	0.0456	0.003	0.0538	0.000	0.0604	0.000
Civil Liberties Index	0.3131	0.000	0.2388	0.000	0.2448	0.000
Instability	2.2518	0.000	2.1156	0.000	2.0381	0.000
Factionalism	1.0396	0.000	0.8706	0.001	0.9160	0.000
Constant	-6.7928	0.000	-6.5222	0.000	-6.8631	0.000
Observations	1014		1014		1014	
Correctly Classified	77.22%		75.94%		75.94%	
Classification Cutoff	0.175		0.19		0.188	
All Regressions Ran Using Heteroskedasticity Robust Standard Errors						

Figure 5: Table of metrics to predict the possibility within a nation.

## The Effects of The Internet

The effect of the internet had two major effects which include the spread of the movement through social media and the introduction of spaces to provide room for the spread of progressive ideas and the influence of visualizations of prosperity in the West. The influence of social media such as Facebook and Al Jazeera can be studied when looking at the first attempt at a protest in 2008 under similar conditions but it was unsuccessful because at the time Al Jazeera was not well established and there were only 28 000 users on Facebook. By 2011, the number of Facebook users spiked to 2 million and Al Jazeera had become a reputable news source which allowed the movement to gain traction. Additionally, the introduction of mobile phones to the general public allowed the public to record videos and take pictures as events developed. This was used when Bouaziz was self-immolated which was recorded and posted on the internet on Facebook, Youtube, and Al Jazeera.

The internet also provided a place for opinions to be shared and to see the prosperity of the West, however, this is not to say that the West has the highest standards of ideals, rather it is promoted in such a form on the internet that it appears to be a more ideal society. The internet also provided a place for political discussion through platforms such as Twitter which allowed ideas to be spread from the more progressive liberal populations in the west and the population in the Arab world. It is no coincidence that in Tunisia, internet usage had increased by 411% from 2005 to 2009 and that the first Arab nation to adopt the internet was Tunisia in 1991. This is no surprise when considering that Tunisia is often claimed as the most progressive Arab nation, was the first nation to revolt and begin the Arab Spring, and is one of the most secular states across North Africa and the Middle East. This effect was also noticed by dictators such as Mubarak who described the internet as the fifth estate and used it to justify the censorship and blocking of access to the internet from their citizens.

## The Threat of Militarization

The role of the military during the Arab Spring had a profound impact on the success of a revolt and it is crucial to have the support of a portion or all of the military force to have a successful revolution, otherwise, oppression will continue and nothing can be accomplished. Therefore three options may occur within the nation, either the military is on the side of the government, on the side of the people,

or is divided between the government and the people. When looking at Tunisia's government, the military was on the side of the protestors because previously the military had never taken part in politics under the Bourguiba administration.

Furthermore, military forces such as those in Tunisia are more likely to side with the protestors if they share a common interest which is unfair treatment. The Tunisian military, similar to the military in Egypt, is underpaid and is deeply intertwined with the local population. Unlike the military forces in areas such as Syria where they are separated from their families to defend, fight wars, and train, the military forces in Egypt and Tunisia had a deeper connection to their communities and families which they returned to frequently and thus had a connection with the protestors who were their friends and family by extension. Furthermore, in Egypt's case, the Director of Military Defense, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, wanted to remove the current president to replace the government with a military government that would allow El-Sisi to rise to power.

When it comes to the Syrian military, their incentive is not monetary to stay loyal to Al-Assad, it is the ethnic and cultural incentive. The Syrian military largely consisted of the ethnic minorities in the region which include the Turks, the Alawis (Syrian Shias), the Kurds, and the Druzes. Additionally, the majority of the military force came from rural areas of Syria where only 44% of the population lives. The President of Syria, Bashar Al-Assad, also comes from a minority background being Alawite and is from Qardaha which is a suburban area of Syria. Since the military ethnically and culturally resonates more with the President than the people they were supposed to protect, it is much easier to support Al-Assad than the Syrian people.



Figure 6: Al-Assad in front of the Syrian Army.

In Libya, the situation is more divided with multiple military forces. The regular military also known as the Libyan National Army (LNA) is under the control of Khalifa Belqasim Haftar, the Supreme Commander of the military force. Meanwhile, Gaddafi is the head of the elite military and paramilitary force which consists of well-paid mercenaries contracted from sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and Latin America. The soldiers were commanded to be prepared to fight any protesters and were told that the protesters were in fact, a foreign-backed terrorist group. After the initial protest at the start of January, Gaddafi attempted to retain the military's support by increasing pay, however, by now the air force and military units from Tobruk, Kufra, Misrata, the Western Mountains, and Zawiya regions. The result of such groups is the creation of violent protestors who targeted the elite forces under Gaddafi who were backed by the LNA, the rebels who were targeted by Gaddafi's forces, and smaller Tribal groups that supported Gaddafi and his regime. This, however, does not include the many international actors that support opposing sides which will be further discussed in this background guide.

Similar to Libya, Yemen had a divided military force but for very different reasons. Initially, the military is strongly in favor of supporting Saleh since he is seen as the individual who reunited Yemen in the 90s and ended conflicts between the pro-union northern and the socialist separatist southern Yemeni states and their supporters. It was during the War on Terror that the military support for Saleh began to split.

Publicly, Saleh had been strongly against Terrorism but it was later found that he was the largest supporter of a terrorist group named Al Qaeda which was responsible for the US embassy bombing in 2008 which led to the death of 18 US officials and also the group responsible for the 9/11 attacks in New York. For Saleh, the military was also important to fight against the rise of the Houthis movement in Yemen which consisted of a militia force of religious individuals who fought to avenge Shia Houthis after the government arrested their leader. After the Yemeni General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar who had been Saleh's tribesman and longtime ally and was distinguished over the past decade by fighting Houthi separatists in the north had left Saleh's side, many other Generals followed his lead.

Despite the loss of generals and the following dissertation of many of their units that were under their control, the defense Minister of Yemen remained loyal to Saleh and bought him Republican Forces and Central Security Force who were loyal to Saleh and better trained. The dissertation of these generals was largely due to the pressure from the West and their force from intervening and targeting the Yemeni military after accusations of supporting terrorist groups. This disappearance of the Yemeni military was unlike the Libyan military since they had not fully turned against Saleh, rather they no longer wanted to continue the fight out of fear of assassination and death in battle from Western intervention alongside the other threats of the Huthis, protestors, and extremist organizations that were against Saleh.

## The Profile of a Dictator

Although the role of the protestors is the basis for such revolutions, an equally impactful actor is the dictators themselves. When it comes to a revolution against an authoritarian government, it is important to understand each dictator and the reasoning for their actions. Although diving into each individual and their cabinet's history, reasons for the power, and psychological profiles would be

excessive for the purpose of this committee, it is still possible to generalize certain characteristics of dictators which will aid in understanding the reasons for their actions.

### Fear and Vengeance

An aspect that affects the decisions of dictators is the feeling of fear and paranoia. In some cases, such fears were somewhat justified. In the case of Al-Assad, his father Hafez Al-Assad was also not a well-liked individual, however not as hated as Bashar Al-Assad himself, and had several assassination attempts against him including a very violent attempt in 1980 where the Muslim Brotherhood threw multiple grenades in his Guest Palace as well as heavy machine gun fire which led to the deaths of his bodyguards. This fear and suggestion warrant retaliation in the form of vengeance against the groups causing the pain which is a natural mechanism in dictators. In the case of Hafez Al-Assad, he ordered his troops to assassinate all prisoners of the Muslim Brotherhood the following day which was known as the Tamdor Prison Massacre, and ten days later law 49 was passed which allowed law enforcement to punish any member of the brotherhood by torture and death.

### Malignant Narcissism

Another trait that is prominent in many dictators is narcissism. Narcissistic individuals such as these dictators have a greatly exaggerated sense of their importance and are overly fixated on their goals, achievements, and administrations above other matters. This leads to the feeling of being special which builds to the messiah complex which will further be discussed in the next topic. This narcissism is harmful when the image of self is diluted and there is a required amount of admiration of others to fuel the dictator's happiness. This also leads to these dictators requiring more power and financial prosperity to fuel their massive egos and have the feeling of being worthy. This behavior explains the irrational actions of Gaddafi, Ben Ali, and Bouteflika who bought expensive luxuries and constantly looked to grow their influence over their regimes. There are many branches of narcissism and two present in dictators include grandiose narcissism which was discussed above and vulnerable narcissism. Vulnerable narcissism is associated with insecure grandiosity, which seems to produce intense defensiveness and feelings of inadequacy. This explains the anxiety and fear felt by many

dictators which are so extreme that narcissistic personality disorder is often misdiagnosed as a borderline personality disorder, which is associated with high levels of anxiety. This anxiety causes dictators to view even their allies as foes in fear of a possible betrayal.

### The Messiah Complex

This narcissistic behavior builds onto the feeling of being superior and more important to those around them. Those suffering from this messiah complex also see themselves as the saviors of people, picturing themselves as that on the same level as a god. This was most clearly seen with Gaddafi who claimed to be the supreme leader in command of Libya with a grandiose title and claimed to be the savior of the African people. This feeling of superiority over the inferior citizens of these nations has caused many dictators to have a lack of empathy toward their citizens. In the case of Al-Assad or Gaddafi, this was particularly impactful because these leaders have little remorse for the use of violence against their citizens.

### The Strategy of a Successful Revolution

There are multiple aspects that aid in a successful revolution and one of the most crucial of which is the use of social media. As stated before, access to social media is crucial in stirring a movement. Beyond social media, the use of mass protests is significant.

The mass protest involves not only the organization of a large number of protestors, rather it is the strategic positioning of such protest. It is important to disrupt daily life to gain attention which involves taking to the streets to stop traffic to bring awareness to the movement, and protesting in front of government buildings which gains media coverage and pressures the government into taking action or locating at any other visible area. A mass protest is effective because unlike in liberal democracies where such events are commonplace, many of these nations had never seen movements to this extent and popularity. This president's behavior stirs up new possibilities for the ability to fight for freedom, a renaissance means of thinking so to speak. There is a sense of power in numbers which gives each individual the feeling of strength and empowerment to rise against the government even in the face of retaliation from military forces. In Tunisia, the gatherings of hundreds of thousands of people from all different backgrounds, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses brought an

unprecedented feeling of unity within the population, the idea of an entire identity being shared among all.

Another important strategy is the use of civil society structures which are organizations that help unify people under a name that offers an identity for those within the group and helps provide an understood goal of these groups of people. Such civil social structures tie into the use of mass protests as they are a means of organizing large groups of people and also tie into the use of social media which helps publicize these structures. Such structures include the Muslim Brotherhood which has gathered a massive international following over the years.

Lastly, the use of non-violent demonstrations is effective for a variety of reasons. It rejects the assumptions of classical theory which argues that violence is often a necessary component of a revolutionary process. This was used in Tunisia where the protestors were largely non-violent which helped gain more mainstream support for the movement as most saw the movement, not as a niche group of violent individuals, but rather as a collection of everyday citizens that are going against oppression. This also helps gain the side of the military which is crucial for a successful revolution. This can be explained since the military with orders to attack harmless and innocent citizens are less likely to act on such orders because there is no visible threat and the feeling of being morally wrong. Without violence against the military officers, the officers themselves feel little justification to force violence upon the people and are more likely to defect against those who gave the unjustified orders which in this case is these dictatorial governments. This can be seen in Tunisia where the military had originally supported Ben Ali before defecting to the side of the non-violent protesters.

### The Interests of Other International Actors

The exact interest, motivations, and incentives of international actors can be in part covered below in the character list - which I encourage all of you to read regardless of the character you represent. This section of the background guide offers a generalization of the blocs that are formed in this conflict. Primarily, 3 oversimplified blocs can be identified. The first bloc is the West which includes the US, its allies, and Israel; the pro-authoritarians such as Russia and China; and the semi-neutral groups namely NATO and the UN peacekeepers. The Western bloc has the incentive to promote pro-democratic

regimes as part of their foreign policy. It is in their best interest to promote human rights and reduce the amount of violence during the revolutions. In the case of Israel specifically, the situation is slightly more complicated with authoritarian regimes such as Mubarak's administration being one of the few nations in the Arab world that are allied with Israel and support the repair of Arab-Israelis relationships. This is a threat with the possibility of more extreme Islamist parties taking power in many of the nations undergoing a revolution.

The pro-authoritarians have the incentive of supporting authoritarian regimes for a wide variety of reasons. In the case of Russia, many of these Arab nations had ties dating back to the Soviet era and also were crucial when it came to trade in oil where in return Russia provided military training and support to these Arab nations. For both China and Russia, taking part in the conflict allows for soft political power in the region which could be proven to be a worthwhile long-term investment. For China, supporting Russia and its efforts in the region helps gain a powerful ally for the future, and supporting such regimes against the US can secure China in the future to deter the intervention of the West within their nation.

NATO and the UN peacekeepers are sources that can be implemented to provide protection and support for the people of these nations. Although these are intended to be neutral powers that are only concerned with providing safety and reducing violence within these conflict zones, these neutral powers are largely in favor of a new democratic regime and can be utilized to create a transitional period between dictatorial powers and a new government. These organizations have been used in the past in Yugoslavia and Rwanda to diminish civil war tensions and to create a new provisional government, however, many have seen these interventions as partially successful after the unnecessary loss of thousands of lives during those conflicts and the continuation of corrupt and unstable governments within these regions after the UN and NATO had left. Utilizing such organizations could also instigate a response from the pro-authoritarian supporters which could only grow the proxy war. For these reasons, it is important to utilize these resources with caution.

## Guiding Questions

1. How do martyrs play a role in initiating a revolution in the Arab world?
2. Why is access to the internet so significant to a revolution and how can it be taken advantage of to control the outcome of a revolution?
3. What was the role of the military from coups to oppression to protests, and how do you gain control over a military force?
4. Why is the military key to a successful revolution?
5. What are the reasons for the actions of dictators and how can their actions be predicted in the future?
6. What strategies can be used to hold a successful protest and revolution and what can be done to prevent such occurrences?
7. What are the major external parties taking part in this conflict and what are their incentives?

## Character List

### **Zine El Abidine Ben Ali: Former President of Tunisia**

Ben Ali was the president of Tunisia from November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1987, to January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011, after stepping down out of force and being convinced by close cabinet members to leave the country allowing the government to replace him with an interim president according to an article 56 of the Tunisian Constitution. Currently, he remains exiled in Saudi Arabia with the pilots of his presidential plane leaving without him to return to Tunisia. Ben Ali has largely acknowledged his wrongdoings and the wrongdoings of his family with little resentment against the nation that exiled him. He is in favor of peaceful revolutions to remove leaders undeserving of power in office, however, without the backing of a government, he must find other means to use his influence to sway the direction of the Arab Spring as well as his input in constructing a new Tunisia.

### **Abdelaziz Bouteflika: President of Algeria**

Bouteflika has been in office as of April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999, and is largely disliked by the general population after he amended the Algerian Constitution to allow for more than 2 terms served in office followed by winning a third term in 2009 to 2014. There are claims of a fraudulent election with a reported 90.24% of the population in favor of his next term. This was followed by press reports on the corruption within the government which were suppressed by Bouteflika. Currently, the emergency act that was put in place in 1992 has given him the power to create a police state to control protestors, opposition, and the threat of uprising. It is in Bouteflika's best interest to remain in power regardless of the cost to Algerians.

### **Hosni Mubarak: President of Egypt**

Mubarak has been in office since October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1981, but he is currently in fear of losing power with similar events beginning to occur in his nation with major protests in the Capitols and every major city across the nation. He is also in fear of losing control over the military with El-Sisi convincing the military to turn against Mubarak and the military also losing faith in Mubarak's ability to sustain his

power. The military is also underfunded and wants the protests and bloodshed to end as soon as possible. However, Mubarak has taken actions to suppress protests by restricting and censoring the internet to his population but it may be too late as millions have already gathered in protest. Mubarak needs to regain control over the military and remove opposition within his government to retain his power.

### **Bashar Al-Assad: President of Syria**

Al-Assad was signed into office on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000, following the death of his father who was largely disliked and held the top office position for 30 years. The Al-Assad era was the first time in Syrian history that consecutive presidents had served a consecutive term were previously military coups, after a government overthrow, and assassination attempts had led previous leaders to be removed from office. This has brought large instability in Syria and allowed groups such as the Ba'ath party and Muslim Brotherhood to grow within the country with large numbers, resources, and a huge following of hundreds of thousands of people. Based on the very present hatred in the Syrian population, Al-Assad had provided a lot of funding to its 18 different intelligence agencies and police forces. Although the people are against Al-Assad, the military sharing the same ethnicity and political interests as Al-Assad are strongly on his side, however, the threat of overthrow remains. It is in Al-Assad's best interest to remain in power no matter the monetary cost or cost of human life.

### **Ali Abdullah Saleh: President of Yemen**

Saleh had been in power since the unification of Yemen on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1990, and was initially a liked figure during the 90s. This changed at the start of the 2000s when the US began its War on Terror. Saleh had been a highly supportive individual of the United State's initiative and many in the public had started to see Saleh as a puppet to the US. This led to the death of a prominent Islamic religious figure named Hussein Al-Houthi in 2004 by the Yemeni bounty hunters. This caused a public outcry which would later evolve into the rise of the Houthi movement. The reality on the other hand was quite the contrary. There are rumors from high places in America's CIA, Britain's MI6, and the UN's intelligence agencies that Saleh had not only been harboring Al Qaeda but had been funding them using the finances from America which were intended to fight terrorism. This led to the targeted Al Qaeda attack

on the US embassy in 2008 which many speculate was at the hands of Saleh. This was a shock to the general population who had also feared for their safety with their president being in control of the world's most prolific terrorist organization and led to massive protests. Saleh is currently in a tight spot with fear of the Houthi, the West, and his people threatening his place in government. It will take a miracle and a creative concrete plan to save Saleh and retain his power.

### **Muammar Gaddafi: President of Libya**

Gaddafi has been in office since September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1969 and his ideology revolves around Islamic modernism and nationalism. He believes himself to be the savior and ultimate leader of not just Libya but the whole of North Africa. Currently, the protests in Libya had resulted in the division of the military forces with the LNA under the control of Supreme Commander Haftar and the purchased elite mercenaries of Gaddafi. Gaddafi rose to power after being the de facto leader after the coup d'état against the previous ruler, King Idris I. The nation is split with the majority of the population supporting the LNA and threats of such supporters taking over and blockading major oil extraction sites that support the nation's economy. Additionally, the West is unsupportive and may intervene seeing the risks of Gaddafi creating a possible genocide considering that at this point nearly 15 000 Libyans were already massacred. Although many nations are against Gaddafi, Russia on the other hand continues to support the nation and its regime.

### **Nouri al-Maliki: Defense Minister of Iraq**

Al-Maliki had served as Prime Minister since May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and was a prominent figure in toppling Saddam Hussain. He worked alongside the American government to coordinate attacks to assassinate Hussain which occurred in December 2006. He also helped motivate the local population to protest against Hussain and built relationships with Syria and Iran to aid in this coup. As of December 12<sup>st</sup> 2010, he had served as the Defense Minister of Iraq. He is not a power-hungry individual and would rather see the development of the Arab world and the success of the Arab Spring despite the failures in Iraq after Hussain where there was a downturn in the economy.

### **King Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein II: Monarch of The Kingdom of Jordan**

King Abdullah had been on the throne since February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1999. He is a member of the Hashemite dynasty which is the royal family of Jordan that has ruled since 1921. He is publicly accepted as the 41st-generation direct descendant of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. This royal family had been ruling Jordan for the entirety of its existence with little resistance over most of its years. Although Jordan is thought of as one of the more peaceful nations in the Arab spring, there is a risk of major protests in the region against corruption, inflation, unemployment, and the monarchy. Many Jordanians suffered from the nation's record deficit of USD 2 Billion from 2010 to 2011 and its rise in inflation from 1.5% to 6.1% during the same period. There were also record levels of unemployment from 12% in 2010 to 25% in 2011. These people largely believe that the electoral system is outdated and needs reform if the country were to move into the modern era. However, the vast majority of Jodrians are heavily religious and believe that the royals have the right to rule being the descendants of the prophet. King Abdullah will have to prove himself able to handle economic instability if he is to remain in power.

### **Mohamed Ghannouchi: Interim President of Tunisia**

Ghannouchi is currently serving as President of Tunisia out of obligation of Tunisia law, however, he has little interest in being the President. He does not want to have appeared to have the image of strategizing against the President to gain power. He is a man of the people and did support the removal of Ben Ali but condones violence and bloodshed. He wishes to see a democratic and economically prosperous Tunisia. He also believes that the current Tunisian constitution is outdated and requires change. It is his opinion that massive governmental reform in terms of cabinet members, party regulation, and most importantly the increased freedom of Tunisians must occur.

### **Karim Tabbou: Leader of the Democratic and Social Union of Algeria**

Tabbou had taken the role as the leader of the Algerian Democratic and Social Union in late April of 2007 which was the opposition group to Bouteflika. Although this group is not legally recognized by the Algerian government, they are the figures that are pushing for protests against Bouteflika.

Tabbou's goal is to replace Bouteflika as President of Algeria. Although Tabbou would like to seize power, he is a modest man and hopes to have a change in power through peaceful means. Tabbou's goal is to promote change through civil means, unlike other nations during the Arab Spring. Although Tabbou does not approve of violence, he has partial support from the Algerian military as he is a well-respected individual.

#### **Abdel Fatah El-Sisi: Egyptian Director of Military Intelligence**

El-Sisi has been the Director of Military Intelligence since January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 before taking part in multiple military roles as commander and chief of staff of multiple brigades, divisions, and infantry groups. He is a well-respected individual in the military community and has the loyalty of the armed forces after previously serving in the gulf wars. He is against the Mubarak regime and is eager to take control of Egypt if Mubarak falls, however, if he fails to topple the government, he is at risk of death at the hands of Mubarak.

#### **Naser al-Hariri: Leader of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces**

Al-Hariri is a large opposition figure running against Al-Assad and had been in his position since the start of the Arab Spring. Al-Hariri is a prominent figure in representing the violations of human rights that the Syrian population is feeling. The goal of the National Syrian Coalition is to establish an executive branch in government that aims to create a joint leadership of the military council, the revolutionary council, and the FSA, to generate a fund that supports Syrians and their protest efforts, to establish a Syrian National Legal Committee, and to interject a transitional government after receiving international recognition.

#### **Abdul-Malik al-Houthi: Leader of the Houthi Insurgency**

Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi was the first Houthis leader of the insurgency in Syria and served alongside his brother Hussein Al-Houti until Hussein was assassinated after a \$75 000 USD bounty was put on him by the Yemeni government. His death fueled Al-Houthi and the movement and helped gain thousands of more followers. This led to the group gaining a militia force of 1 000 in 2004 to 10 000 by 2009.

Al-Houthi is a persuasive figure and sees aggression as the only way to instigate a coup against the government. Al-Houthi is also in constant fear of a potential assassination similar to the one that occurred to his brother.

#### **Khalifa Belqasim Haftar: Supreme Commander of the Libyan National Army**

Haftar has been the commander of the LNA since the revolts in early 2011, previously he had been the general of the Libyan army and is a decorated officer serving as a field marshal from 1966 to 1987. He currently controls most of the Eastern portion of Libya including the cities of Benghazi and Tobruk meanwhile Gaddafi is in control of Tripoli and the surrounding cities. It is in Haftar's best interest to overthrow Gaddafi and seize his position, however, in the meantime, Haftar is planning the creation of a new government under his rule if the coup fails.

#### **Mohammed Younis al-Ahmed: Leader of Al-Awda, The Underground Ba'ath Movement**

Al-Ahmed was a former aide to Saddam Hussein before becoming the leader of the Ba'ath movement on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007. He formally received military training in Moscow after the war in Iraq and is now hiding from the public eye reportedly located in Syria by many intelligence agencies, however, his exact location is unknown. Al-Ahmed has a good relationship with Al-Assad who is supporting the Ba'ath movement. After the failure of the Ba'ath movement in governing Iraq after Hussein, the American government had been looking to capture Al-Ahmed which changed to a shoot-to-kill mission when Al-Ahmed and the Syrian government were linked in the 2009 Baghdad bombings. The goal of Al-Awda which is the new Ba'ath movement is to remove multinational forces from Iraq and to regain control over the nation.

#### **Hamza Mansour: Leader of the Islamic Action Front of Jordan**

Mansour is the current leader of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) a religious group based in Jordan which was first founded in 1992 and is a political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. The IAF has a minority of seats in Jordan's chamber of deputies. The goal of the IAF is to bring more freedom to Jordanians and to form a relationship with the US that is based on mutual respect. The IAF does not approve of the

power of the monarchy and prefers to reduce its power to a constitutional monarchy. Mansour along with the IAF is not as radical as many other political parties and organizations across the Arab world and generally condemn violence, however, they publicly support violence against Israel and their government.

### **Hillary Clinton: United States Secretary of State**

As US secretary of state, Clinton carries out the foreign policy of the US government through the State Department and Foreign Service of the United States. It is her job to enact the policy of the Obama administration. Originally, the US opted to remain isolated from the conflict. This was seen during the revolution in Tunisia. Though once it was a success, the US supported revolutions but, there was a tough decision the US would have to make. In Egypt, Mubarak was a close ally to the US as an opponent of Iran and in favor of Arab-Israeli peace. The decision was difficult but in the end, the US verbally supported the revolution in Egypt, though they were against the use of violence. The US had remained cautious during the Arab Spring considering their last intervention in the Middle East resulted in a power vacuum in Iraq after the death of Hussein. Nonetheless, the US is willing to provide military aid if necessary to nations that have put the safety of their citizens or citizens of the global community at risk. The US also realizes the role of other foreign backers and the risk of remaining neutral could result in the resulting empty void to be filled by opposing nations such as Russia and China who support the authoritarian regime.

### **Sergey Lavrov: Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Lavrov and Russia's interests often differed from those of the West. During the Tunisian and beginning of the Egyptian uprising, he came to say that they were American-sponsored revolutions. Although against the West, Russia was in support of the revolution in Tunisia and supported the downfall of Mubarak. Russia would also differ from the West and take a more passive approach in Yemen due to its rapid escalation of violence. Moscow's opinions on Syria and Libya were quite different. Russia had been a prominent supporter of Gaddafi and Al-Assad because they had had trade relations going back to the Soviet era and were also a supplier of oil to Russia. Both governments would also give Russia political soft power in North Africa and the Middle East by funding the regimes. They had provided

military training, weapons, and armed support to their troops long before the Arab Spring had begun with many of the regime's high ranking generals and officials of these nations having gone through training in Moscow. Russia is also in support of these nations to counteract the forces of the US that are seen to cause more disorder than progress based on past actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Russia is supporting the regimes to go against the Saudi-backed radicals in the nations that Russia sees as a threat due to their extremist ideology. In the end, Russia has political, ideological, and economical incentives to intervene if necessary in the Middle East and North Africa to enact its influence on the outcome of the Arab Spring.

### **Dai Bingguo: Chinese Secretary-General of the Foreign Affairs Leading Group**

Bingguo is China's right-hand man when it comes to foreign affairs and has promoted China's foreign policy which is largely aligned with Russia's plans. Although for different reasons than Russia, China had supported these authoritarian regimes largely out of fear. China has a serious concern about similar uprisings occurring within its nation against its repressive government known for similar censorship and suppression as those in the Arab world. China also feared the possibility of Western intervention against these governments for human rights violations that also occur in China. There was also the aspect of economic concerns since the Middle East had been a significant exporter of oil and had begun forming close relationships with China. Bingguo largely aligned himself with Russia not only to create a power allyship but to also form a bond where Russia would be in debt to China. This can be seen in the UN security council where China supported the vetoes against policies that Russia was against which avoided Russia from international isolation. This favor system was highlighted by the news network *Asia Pacific Bulletin East-West Centre*.

### **Avigdor Lieberman: Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Lieberman and Israel had a complex relationship with the Arab Spring. Israel publicly promotes democracy, freedom of speech, and protection of human rights, however, it was in their best interest to retain many of the authoritarian regimes in power. In nations such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Jordan, the individuals in power were promoting a secular government and cracking down on Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, Islamist Action Front, and similar smaller movements.

Many of these groups shared a common anti-Israel ideology and were in favor of violence against the Israeli people. This caused fear which would not occur during the Mubarak era that supported the relationship between Arabs and Israelis. Meanwhile, Israel had a strong relationship with the US and one that must be retained to guarantee its protection in case of war despite the US supporting the downfall of Mubarak which had been Israel's long-time ally. The Arab Spring had put Israel in a time of uncertainty, and fear, and put the nation in a gray area between supporting sides. One certainty is that Israel must prepare itself for the possibility of anti-Israel groups taking power in Arab nations which requires Israel to prepare for these possible threats to their security.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Arab Spring is a complex situation with many different actors from the dictators of the regimes, the protestors, and revolutionary movements, the extremist groups, the international actors, and the average everyday citizen. Everyone has something to gain and it is in the hands of these leaders to shape the outcome of the revolution and whether it is deemed "successful" but the truth is that there will always be one side that gains and one side that loses. Ideally, peace is reached with the protection of human rights but with the politics and incentives in place, such idealistic outcomes are not always feasible - unless they are, that is something only you, as delegates, can decide.

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