



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT YOUTH CONVENTION 2017

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

TOPIC GUIDE



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Note: For the UNSC Guide, the bibliography will be provided as hyperlinks within the written content so that delegates may easily access source content.



ABOUT THE CHAIRS

Huang
Feiyang
HEAD CHAIR

Feiyang discovered the joy of MUN when he attended SDYC 2015 as a delegate in WHO. Since then, he has explored the circuit as chair and delegate, this being his third chairing experience and his second for SDYC. When he is not sampling the buffet at a MUN, Feiyang can be found at debating tournaments (where the food is considerably less appealing), mashing WASD keys or seeking out the newest memes. He hopes to make the SDYC experience as memorable for his delegates as his own first experience.

Tan Yong Yi
VICE CHAIR

Yong Yi is a person who looks dead most of the time, yet becomes the loudest and most salty person when you play a game of “Bluff” with him, Yong Yi’s sleepy eyes and constant yawning is but a disguise. As a first-time chair at this year’s conference after being both delegate and journalist at earlier SDYCs, he furiously draws chair conformations of cyclohexane in the feeble hope it would translate to chairing ability, to no avail. His love for MUNning is only rivalled by his love for sweets and baking, which is obvious from his Instagram feed. Yong Yi hopes that all delegates will secure a great experience in this council and looks forward to seeing them, and perhaps a game or two of “Bluff” during the Socials.



INTRODUCTION

The “Jasmine Revolution” or “Arab Spring” began on 18 December 2010 with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in protest of a lack of fair justice systems in his country, as part of a greater opposition to the repressive autocracies characteristic of the Middle East and North Africa. A wave of political dissent and pro-democracy movements sprang forth and spread rapidly among neighbouring regions.

Tunisia, the origin of the Arab Spring movement, is also its notable exception – a month of protest caused authoritarian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to flee the country in 2011, and the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet played an instrumental role in mediating the transition of power from the Islamic Ennahda party in 2014 amidst political deterioration. While revolution in Tunisia yielded a successful transition to democracy and vast improvements in civil and political rights for individual citizens, the outcomes for its neighbouring states are a far cry from these positive changes. The authoritarian regime in Bahrain has tightened its grip on dissent, conducting violent crackdowns on popular protests. Protests in Egypt forced President Muhammad Hosni Said Mubarak out of power, only for civil rights to regress when a military coup toppled its failed attempt at instilling a democracy. Meanwhile in Libya and Yemen, removal of long-time dictators has led to power vacuums which has created sectarian divides, militia rule, weak institutions and territorial fragmentation. In Syria, the Assad regime remains in power, in part due to backing from major foreign powers such as Russia and Iran, which have played a critical role in the military viability of the regime. ([The Arab Spring, Five Years On](#))

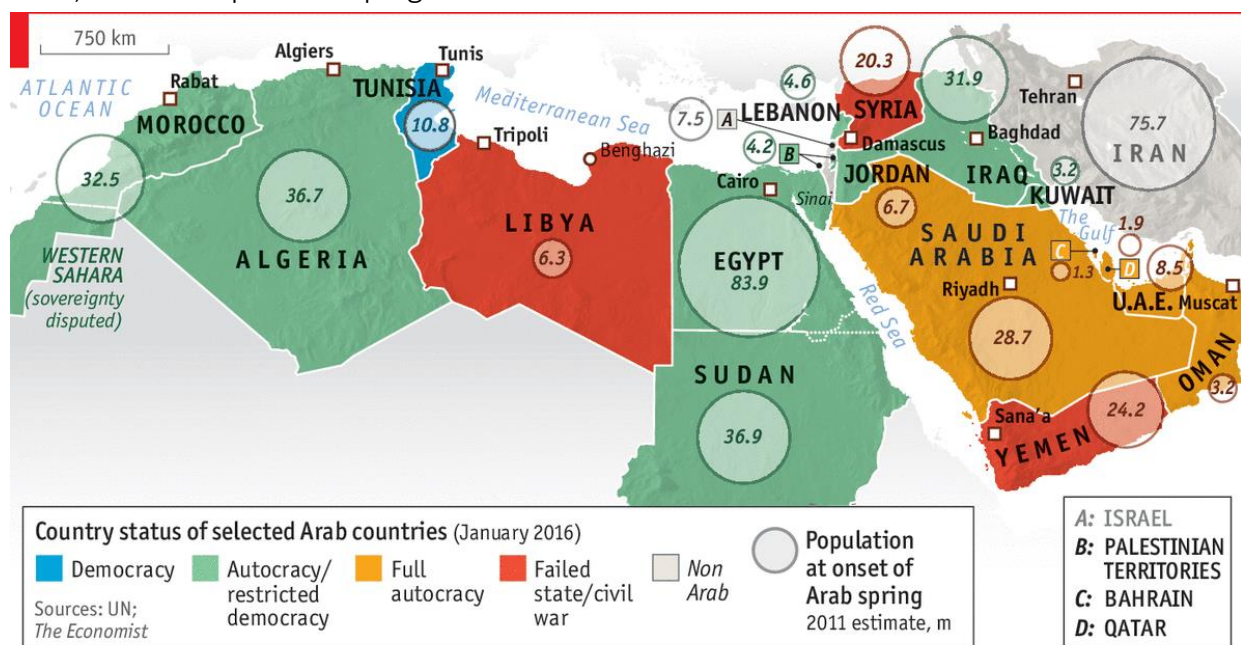
As the Arab Spring conflicts continues into its 6th year since 2011, the world witnesses its far-reaching implications in a destabilised Middle East, the emergence of proxy warfare, a refugee and humanitarian crisis, and increasing transboundary terrorism. Combined with the presently deteriorating situation in Yemen and Syria, these create the impetus for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to re-examine its role in the Arab Spring and chart future steps needed to attain long term security in the region in a sustainable manner.

With international powers taking different sides, the Syrian conflict is unlikely to see resolution in the short term, and the UNSC is likely to continue finding itself hindered by political deadlock. By comparison, the government and civil society of Egypt and Tunisia, although not ideal, have gained



sufficient stability to no longer fall under the UNSC mandate of maintenance of international peace and security.

The armed conflict in Yemen and the political and security situation in Libya are the primary fronts on which UNSC participation can substantially advance peace processes. Both states are sufficiently destabilised to fall under the UNSC mandate, while the relative lack of political gridlock allows for the possibility of effective intervention. In Yemen, the UNSC can play a stronger role in mediating peace between the Houthi rebels and the internationally recognised government of Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi, as well as addressing the lack of civilian protection and humanitarian assistance. The power invested in the UNSC also enables it to oblige foreign military actors in the region to abide by International Humanitarian Law, as outlined in the Geneva Convention. In Libya, the UNSC has the potential to facilitate political processes - power sharing agreements between the warring parties, and the formation of an interim government which cedes power to a democratically elected government. The UNSC also plays a key role in ensuring long term peace through disarmament and combating the threat of terrorism, as well as peacekeeping.



Economist.com

The Arab Spring, Five Years On - The Economist:

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2016/01/daily-chart-8>



KEY QUESTION

How can the United Nations Security Council mandate be more effectively employed to catalyze and facilitate Yemen and Libya in the transition from conflict to long term peace and democratic governance?

KEY DEFINITIONS

Arab Spring

Revolutionary waves of protests, uprisings and armed rebellions against autocratic regimes in Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The movement has led to violent conflict and regime changes with mostly undesirable geopolitical and socioeconomic effects.

Peacekeeping

UN intervention with armed military forces, with diverse goals including [conflict prevention and mediation, peacebuilding, peacemaking and peace enforcement](#). Peacekeeping operations are conducted with [consent from main parties, impartiality, and minimum use of force](#).

Power Sharing

[A policy agreed between parties or within a coalition to share responsibility for decision-making and political action in regards to governing](#). In the context of the Arab Spring conflicts, this usually entails the parties involved recognising each other's legitimacy, ceasing the use of military force, and agreeing to honour the democratic mandate from an election.

Democracy

A government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections

Autocracy

Government by a single person or small group that has unlimited power or authority, or the power or authority of such a person or group



Proxy War

A war fought between groups or smaller countries, in which each represents the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these powers. Some form of proxy war was observed in Yemen and Syria, as elaborated later in the guide.

BACKGROUND

Given the scale and far-reaching consequences of the “Jasmine Revolution”, the movement should not be viewed in a vacuum but with sufficient considerations for the decades of social, political, and policy fault lines leading up to it.

Sectarianism was ingrained into modern Arab states due to the failed decision calculus of colonial powers when they carved their colonies in the [Sykes–Picot](#) agreement ([Weakening of secular authoritarianism](#)). Alawite Shia minority controlling the government and military in Syria, while the Sunni minority played a similar role in Ba'athist Iraq under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, and this pattern of sectarianism is repeated across virtually all Arab states.

Secular regimes have controlled much of the region for several decades under authoritarian rule, effectively suppressing underlying social tensions. [However, repeated destabilisation – during conflicts with Israel, the Gulf war, and the invasion of Iraq](#) – and economic downturn amplified the discontentment with the corrupt ruling elite, catalysing the “Jasmine Revolution”. Besides the unrepresentative nature of the minority ruling elite being a key cause of ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq, sectarian divide also contributed to the fragmentation of Yemen and Libya post-civil war.

Furthermore, under authoritarian rule, the elite aggregated wealth and political influence through corruption, while failing to implement sound economic development and social policies. Through undermining the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the independent judiciary and government institutions, the ruling elites also eroded institutional and political legitimacy, thus setting the foundation for the “Jasmine Revolution” with the convergence of three factors:

1. Decline in social welfare and economic cronyism leading to broad decline in productivity and investment. These resulted in the lack of social development and impaired state co-optation through financial payouts, despite a rise national income from petroleum exports. ([Inherent institutional failure and overaggressive crackdown leading to uprising](#))



2. A significant proportion of the population consisted of highly educated, but unemployed, youth with a deep sense of socio-economic exclusion, who would later play a pivotal role in organising grassroots protests. ([Youth unemployment](#)) ([Arab Human Development Report 2016 - Youth Employment](#))
3. Development of excessive military power and the use of repressive force to consolidate power not only siphoned resources from social and economic development, but also led to the avoidable usage of “hard power” to crackdown on protests. Subsequent retaliation by citizens has thus acted as the catalytic factor which sparked nation-wide armed conflicts. ([Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region](#)) ([Inherent institutional failure and overaggressive crackdown leading to uprising](#))

Activists on social media were critical in the initiation of the Arab Spring as well. Civilians from the international community have accelerated the Arab Spring by sharing relevant material using media technology, with the belief that it would realise better human rights condition and a functional democracy in the League of Arab States (LAS). Unfortunately, a humanitarian crisis unfolded, with political instability rife across the continent. Hence, international organisations and developed countries are obliged to provide a peaceful solution for the countries affected by the Arab Spring to salvage an unexpected and bloody wave of political revolutions.

Firstly, the use of media technology has allowed for communication and interaction between participants of political protests and international audiences with respect to the various movements in each of the nation's affected by the Arab Spring. This results in political revolutions vastly accelerated as compared to those from decades ago, as not only is the government less effective in completely ceasing fomenting of revolutionary ideas and communication of opinions amongst the intelligentsia and activists, it has also provided raw and live coverage of the unfolding of events for the whole world to observe through citizen journalism. [One of the most prominent examples of a political movement powered by social media was the “We Are All Khaled Said” Facebook group](#), which stoked the popular anger of Egyptians against Hosni Mubarak, and [has facilitated massive protests such as the convergence of thousands of protesters at Tahrir Square, Cairo on January 2016](#). Clearly, the increasingly unrestrained political activity of people from the international community have served as catalysts for revolution within nations of the LAS, with no idea of the dire consequences that result from it.

In addition to the LAS citizens and international community’s proficient usage of social media, the technology has also given many international observers ranging from watchdog organisations to



established press agencies a better view of the political climate and dynamic situation of each nation despite the immense censorship of information. This results in unprecedented pressure on the various regimes in the region by international media as well as increasing public dissatisfaction with the government, which serves as catalysts for political upheaval.

[Many members of the LAS are ranked amongst the bottom 20 on the 2017 World Press Freedom Index, with Syria ranked 177 out of 180 nations evaluated.](#) Various barriers to press freedom and censorship are exercised in the LAS, such as threats, attacks and abductions being carried out on local and foreign journalists; more than 15 journalists and media workers have been held by the Houthis since 2015 in Yemen. The governments also exercise complete autonomy over the few media outlets in the nations, which were forced to publish propaganda. Foreign media is also frequently obstructed as well, with methods such as denial of visitor visas or even public denouncements of the legitimacy of such outlets, describing them as false news providers.

Owing to the current wave of information technology, media outlets such as Al Jazeera have been able to publish raw coverage of the current events in the countries in real-time. [Al Jazeera was one of the accelerants of the Arab Spring, as its presence dispelled the monopoly once held by state-owned media outlets in the market which served to promote the regime and the country's leader. It also provides a truly Arabic perspective towards current affairs in the Middle East as the LAS citizens previously relied on Western sources such as the Arabic services of the BBC.](#) All these factors strengthen the notion of free speech and accelerate the pace of revolution by increasing the political awareness of the citizens and pressuring the regimes as their actions and statements are privy to an international audience. As a result, they have unwittingly increased the volatility of the respective political situations and adversely affected the security and safety of the citizens in these nations.

(Delegates should consider the [Arab Spring guide by country - Cornell library](#))



CURRENT SITUATION

Yemen

Since the Cold War, Yemen has suffered from extended civil conflicts between the communist South and the capitalist, democratic North. Although Yemen was unified as the Republic of Yemen in 1990, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country continued to experience political divide and armed conflicts between the North and the South. Pre-Arab Spring, cleric Hussein al-Houthi led Shia insurgency in Northern Yemen, thereby creating the precursor of today's Houthi rebel group.

The Arab Spring saw President Ali Abdullah Saleh ceding power to Deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, and the formation of a unity government with the backing of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the endorsement of the UNSC (Security Council Resolution 2014). The interim government introduced reforms in early 2014, including the basis of a new constitution and restructuring Yemen into a [Federation of 6 regions](#). During this period, the UNSC used economic sanctions as a deterrent against political factions to safeguard political stability, and endorsed the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference in establishing a new constitution, through Security Council Resolution [2051](#) and [2140](#).

However, later in 2014, destruction of oil pipeline infrastructure caused the government to raise fuel prices, which led to widespread protests. While President Hadi [sacked his cabinet and reverted](#) fuel prices, the Yemeni government was driven out of the capital Sanaa by Houthi rebels. While the UN successfully brokered a peace deal under which the Houthis will surrender control of the cities, contingent to the formation of a unity government, the draft constitution proposed by the Yemeni government was rejected. In February 2015, the Houthis appointed a new presidential council after dissolving parliament and taking control of government institutions, a move that was condemned in [Security Council Resolution 2201](#). The resolution demanded that the Houthis negotiate a power sharing agreement under the patronage of the GCC. This was followed rapidly with substantive actions by the international community: Saudi Arabia led a coalition of regional powers which commenced air strikes against the Houthis, while the UNSC imposed arms embargo and sanctions against the Houthis in Security Council Resolution [2216](#).

A massive humanitarian crisis has developed since Yemen descended into civil war in 2014. While the UN has initiated dialogue between the Yemeni government and the Houthis' General People's Congress (GPC), there has been a lack of further substantive action by the UNSC. It is worth noting that the [Saudi-led coalition has been accused of violating international law](#) and targeting civilians, an [accusation that has also extended western militaries supporting the Saudi coalition](#). Meanwhile, [Al-](#)



[Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula \(AQAP\)](#) has gained both territory and influence during the prolonged conflict, threatening regional stability and security.

Libya

The Libyan Revolution was triggered by violence between anti-Gadhafi protesters and government security forces, which eventually escalated into an armed conflict between pro-Gadhafi loyalists and rebel forces. During the conflict, the National Transition Council was established to politically consolidate numerous rebel factions. Regime change occurred in stages: beginning on 16 September 2011, when the United Nations officially recognised the National Transition Council as the legitimate government of Libya, followed by Gadhafi's death on 20 October 2011 and the declaration of liberation by the National Transition Council 3 days [later](#).

Foreign intervention played a key role in the development of the conflict. The UN Security Council froze assets associated with the Libyan government through Security Council resolution [1970](#), and imposed a no-fly zone over Libya through Security Council Resolution [1973](#). The no-fly zone was implemented by a NATO-led coalition after the Libyan government conducted airstrikes against civilian targets, with the goal of protecting civilians from both the government and the rebels. In hindsight, both the [neutrality](#) and [legality](#) of NATO's actions have been questioned, highlighting the need for a [structured framework](#) to regulate the engagement between the UN Security Council and regional organisations which acts upon the Security Council mandate. Regardless, it is clear that foreign agents, including NATO and the League of Arab States (LAS), intervened extensively in support of the rebel forces even before they received political recognition by targeting the Libyan military with airstrikes, [supplying rebel forces](#), enforcing a [naval blockade](#) and directly participating on the ground with [special forces](#).

In post-Gadhafi Libya, power was transferred from the National Transition Council (NTC) to the General National Congress (GNC), and the head of state was democratically elected. However, political progress and stable governance was hindered by conflicts [between militia powers, Islamists and liberal-leading Nationalists in parliament, and tribes which constituted the dominant non-state actor](#). Political instability led to a disillusioned population, while the attempt to legitimise and integrate autonomous militias into the military instead of pursuing disarmament eroded the territorial control of the GNC. The attack on the [U.S. embassy in Benghazi by militias](#), including Ansar al-Sharia, and the [GNC's refusal to disband after their mandate expired](#) were key triggers of civil movements and widespread protests that further destabilized the interim government.



The ineffectiveness of the interim government culminated in the fragmentation of Libya into two governments, each backed by their own military forces. The Tobruk-based House of Representatives was internationally recognised as the Government of Libya, while the Libya Dawn Coalition was created from the GNC and governed from Tripoli after the GNC's mandate as the interim government expired. The attempt to consolidate governance in Libya produced the UN-brokered [Libyan Political Agreement](#) and the Government of National Accords. Present day Libya continues to witness instability as the [Government of National Accords struggles to gain recognition from the Tobruk House of Representatives](#) and the [Libyan National Army](#) . [The multitude of autonomous stakeholders continues to present a complex situation.](#)

Syria

Major civil conflicts in Syria began in 2011 with protests against political oppression by the Assad regime. Although the Syrian government took measures such as sacking officials and releasing political prisoners to pacify the population, the military was also mobilised to quell uprising, effectively sending out a confrontational narrative. Throughout 2012, armed conflict developed, together with 2 key events: the UNSC adopted [Security Council Resolution 2042, the first resolution in syria, aiming to reduce casualties by monitoring a ceasefire](#) and report on violence; the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces was formed in Qatar, and recognised by European powers and the GCC as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people.

The Syrian civil war has since scaled into a nation-wide armed conflict. Notably, the international community have proactively participated in responding to the chemical weapons attack in 2013 by securing the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile ([S/RES/2118](#)) and mediating negotiations between the Syrian government and the National Coalition. From September 2015, the power dynamics in Syria changed dramatically when Russia launched its aerial campaign in support of the Assad regime, while at the same time adopting a stronger pro-Assad stance within the UNSC.

Major geopolitical powers continue to invest in the military success of groups (both rebel and government-aligned) that support the foreign power's geopolitical and military interest. The Russian Federation has aligned itself with the Bashar al-Assad government to maintain Russian military presence in Latakia and Tartus, while [United States and NATO allies have favoured indirect participation through arming and advising moderate rebel factions instead of direct military intervention](#). The regional power vacuum has allowed for the proliferation of ISIS, [leading to a significant rise in organised, transboundary terrorism with lasting consequences](#). Until the recent



chemical weapons usage by the Syrian military, western efforts have [focused on combating ISIS forces instead of direct confrontation against the regime of Bashar al Assad.](#)

The conflict has evolved elements of a proxy war between Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah militia supporting the Assad regime, and the Gulf states together with Turkey in support of the opposition. In particular, American support for the Kurdish YPG, which Turkey views as terrorist affiliates of the Kurdish Worker's Party, have [created tensions between these two key players in the conflict.](#) The Syrian conflict has also resulted in the [development](#) and [strengthening](#) of relations between Russia and Turkey.

The refugee crisis which has developed in Syria has created [political tension in Europe](#) and influenced Europe's interactions with Turkey. Neighbouring states such as Lebanon and Jordan have also been challenged with the burden of [hosting refugees](#). Domestically, a humanitarian crisis continues to unfold in Syria.

Overall, the outcome of Arab Spring is presently a combination of destabilised and recovering states. It is necessary to note that stability itself does not equate to the actualisation of socio-political reforms sought by the populace, nor does it guarantee the long term political stability. In Bahrain, dissent was contained by force with sectarian oppression against the Shi'ite by the Sunnis, and a similar pattern can be observed in Egypt. However, addressing crises in destabilized states is the less resolved UNSC issue.



NECESSITY OF INTERVENTION

Humanitarian Crisis

[\(Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region\)](#)

Despite the Arab Spring's original aims to uphold the social and political rights of individuals in the Middle East and North Africa in a peaceful manner, it has unfortunately resulted in massive casualties. Power vacuums in the region have increased the political instability of the area as well as neutered the very democratic institutions and movements the Arab Spring was supposed to establish. Despite being mandated to maintain international peace and security as per Article I Chapter I of the UN Charter, the United Nations has been acting as a passive observer in this issue. However, international organisations and developed countries with mature democratic institutions have a duty of care and vested interest in the region, given the humanitarian and political crisis that is unfolding. The UNSC has a duty to take action given the urgency of the humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, the international community is complicit in creating regional instability and instigating the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring has escalated into a humanitarian crisis with many of the countries involved, especially the ongoing civil war in Syria. In fact, 6.5 million Syrians are internally displaced as a result of the protracted conflict in the region, and more than 250,000 lives have been lost as of 2015. A recent example of the humanitarian nature of this crisis would be the alleged usage of chemical weapons by the Assad forces earlier this April in the Idlib region, killing 89 people. Away from Syria, the crisis manifested in the forms of human rights abuses; in Bahrain, people were captured and tortured by the country's Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) yet 46 out of 92 cases of abuse reported to the Special Investigations Unit were dismissed by the judiciaries in 2012. War crimes were potentially committed in Yemen, where 34 documented airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition seemed to deliberately target public infrastructure and civilian areas. The United Nations has a track record of providing extensive humanitarian assistance in areas afflicted with natural disasters or ongoing military engagements, such as the [recent air-lifting of biscuits to 31,000 people to Mogadishu following an intense drought in south and north-eastern Somalia](#). Given the extent of the atrocities in Arab Spring countries, the United Nations has a duty to provide proportionate humanitarian assistance to the victims caught in the political crossfire and brutality of military campaigns, especially since it has consistently done so in the past.

Foreign Intervention



Apart from the collective efforts of people from both the LAS nations and the global community, international political actors have also leveraged the situation of the Arab Spring to their own advantage. Various countries and blocs have sought to restructure the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East by expressing support for the various political camps present in the Arab Spring conflict, with no care for the security and welfare of the civilians in those countries.

The United States is an example of a country seeking to consolidate its presence in the region as well as to introduce the mechanism of democracy into a group of nations that otherwise exercise autocracy and dictatorship. Since 2008, the U.S. has funded various political movements that called for the ouster of autocrats in the region, such as the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. This was done indirectly through state funding of non-governmental organisations that helped train members of the political movements and activist groups involved in the Arab Spring. These institutes, which were created by the U.S. Congress, are financed through the National Endowment for Democracy, which receives approximately \$100 million annually. Through this, the U.S. advances both her foreign policy and geopolitical objectives.

In addition, the U.S. capitalises on the aid packages she gives to certain LAS nations, especially Egypt, in order to influence the proceedings of government in the country or as means of sanction to dissuade the country's' leaders from pursuing a certain policy. In fact, they have spent close to \$5 billion in 2011 solely on military aid sponsored to various nations in the LAS. Not only do the actions of the U.S. affect the political climate of the region, but her indifference or anemic responses has brought about unwanted consequences as well. An example would be the U.S. decision to disengage from the Egyptian situation after Mubarak's ouster and Morsi's election to office. They failed to keep the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) under check, which resulted in the latter's domination and corruption after the critical transition period of the revolution. The reluctance to put pressure on the SCAF by the U.S. has resulted in a reversion to autocratic rule in Egypt, as the military managed to dissolve parliament and reinstate martial law in June 2012. Thus, U.S. indifference led to the preventable political deterioration in Egypt, renewing public anger towards the democratically-elected government which ended in the ouster of Morsi and the downfall of his party, the Muslim Brotherhood, just within a year of his election. Clearly, the action and inaction of foreign powers can catalyse revolution in the Arab Spring, or bring about unpredictable situations that otherwise harm the institutionalisation of democracy and the welfare of the common people.

Organisations and political blocs have also been instrumental in shaping the conflict and eventual crisis resulting from the Arab Spring. NATO is an example that has sought to stabilise the region through the coordination of military intervention as well as hosting political dialogue amongst leaders of the



countries involved in the Arab Spring. NATO was especially crucial in the downfall of Muammar Gadhafi in Libya, as the alliance was empowered by the UNSC Resolution 1973 to intervene militarily in Tripoli, in order to ensure the safety of the citizens living in areas threatened by Gadhafi's army. However, NATO's intervention has left a power vacuum in the region, as after the intervention, the alliance was no longer authorised to proactively shape the political situation of the region. This limited intervention has sustained the Libyan crisis that still continues today as the Second Libyan Civil War rages on between the House of Representatives and the General National Congress since 2014.

[International observers desire swift means to end the repression of citizens](#) by their autocrats and the immense threat to their lives due to lack of human rights and excessive conflict in the area. The cost of inaction is simply too significant for many international observers to bear, hence when the mandate for military intervention is clear and strong from both within the oppressed country and global community, countries with vested interests are likely to intervene. An example which looks at external military action supporting a regime can be found in Bahrain. Specifically, [Riyadh-led military intervention in stifling pro-opposition Shia forces in support of the Sunni dynasty](#) was carried out with economic and geopolitical goals in mind. Saudi Arabia has brought in Emirati and Saudi police forces and military troops into the region through the Gulf Countries Cooperation (GCC) in order to quell domestic unrest. This was [initiated by](#) deployment of the Peninsula Shield Forces which included more than 1000 troops on the ground. This was done firstly to stabilise the oil market as the ensuing political and domestic chaos may result in sabotage of Bahrain's oilfields, which causes volatility in the market price of oil as well as investors flocking to alternative sources of energy; [the eventual decrease in demand for oil is frowned upon by Riyadh](#). Additionally, this has led to increased peace and security in the region, which facilitates subsequent democratic processes.

The European Union has also made attempts to influence the various governments in the LAS to promote democratic processes as well as combat terrorism in light of fanaticism and the 9/11 attacks. The EU approach was more diplomatic as compared to NATO, due to their inclination to hold structured dialogues with the countries' leaders as well as provide various incentives in exchange for democratic reform. In fact, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was set up in 1994 to direct EU human rights, democratisation and conflict resolution policies, and it was mainly through this initiative that the EU sought to cement democratic processes in the LAS. The EU has also signed Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) with Morocco, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia in 2011, in exchange for democratic reform and the implementation of sound economic policies at home. Yet, the EU's approach to the Arab Spring was mainly to work with the corrupt regimes previously, in hopes that through providing the appropriate economic assistance, it would be a generous bargaining chip to influence the autocrats to reinstate democratic processes in



their countries. Yet, the local leaders in power only materialised cosmetic changes to their mode of governance, knowing full well that a democratic system would lead to the ouster of their familial dynasties. Furthermore, the establishment civil society organisations (CSOs) which was emphasised by the EU became a toothless strategy as the CSOs fell into state control and the funds redirected for government purposes. Consequently, the EU's diplomatic approach and belief that the autocrats were willing to remove the authoritarian measures that cemented their sovereignty has led to unchecked power vacuums, which voids were immediately filled in by yet another host of corruptible politicians, as seen in Egypt, or escalated into a gruesome civil war, exemplified by Libya and Syria.

International Spillover

The UNSC is tasked with maintaining peace and security around the world. Beyond this mandate, individual members of the Security Council have a vested strategic interest in the evolution of Arab Spring countries. The conflicts have resulted in massive international spillover and each member of the UNSC should evaluate the collateral to the international community as a consequence of their action or inaction. These have included:

1. Mass migration
2. Transboundary terrorism
3. Regional destabilisation

[The International Organisation for Migration has classified the migration crisis triggered by the Arab Spring as the largest since World War II.](#) While the number of migrants and refugees are difficult to quantitate, they now make a significant share of neighbouring Jordan and Lebanon's population. Mass migration to Europe have triggered both domestic political crisis and altered the power balance between Turkey and the European Union.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) splintered from Al Qaeda at the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2013. The subsequent chaos in Syria, Yemen and Libya provided these groups with access to arms, protection from military action, as well as effective propaganda. [Thus terror groups were able to gain large swaths of territories](#), gain legitimacy and inspire the rise of affiliate groups and foreign cells. [A number of high profile attacks have also occurred in Europe](#), partly due to individual self-radicalisation.

The direct effect of the Arab Spring on individual countries have been extensively discussed above. Beyond that, however, the conflict profoundly impacts regional stability through indirect factors such as oil economics. [Fall in regional oil production and oil prices](#) in particular affects the [sustainability of rapid economic expansion among the Gulf states](#). The region's [political stability](#) is highly dependent on



the high quality of life derived from oil revenue. At the same time, stability and growth in fragile states transitioning from the Arab Spring (such as Egypt) lies contingent to [economic](#) and [military aid](#) from the Gulf states.

Power of the Security Council

Meaningful intervention in Arab Spring countries is best achieved through the [UNSC due to its strong mandate](#) to maintain international collective security when presented with "[threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, or acts of aggression](#)", via authorising the use of force and introducing legally binding economic sanctions. Although the veto mechanism may hinder progress, as previously described, it necessitates consensus between major world powers and ensures international unity in enforcing actions generated.

The [Rome Statute](#) invests the UNSC with power to refer cases to the International Criminal Court when they are outside of the Court's jurisdiction. Thus, the UNSC bears the responsibility of facilitating justice against atrocities committed during and post-conflict, in addition to the conventional burden of protecting civilians during conflicts. This power is affirmed through Security Council Resolution [1674](#) and [1706](#), which compels the UNSC to provide protection against "genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity". [In the context of the Arab Spring, this power has been exercised to initiate investigations into the Libyan Civil War by the ICC.](#)



THE PATH FORWARD

Historically, the UNSC has conducted armed intervention and brokered peace talks during conflicts. Post-conflict, the Security Council ensures regional stability and facilitate transition of power through its peacekeeping missions. [These missions serve to prevent conflicts from spilling across borders; and assist the implementation of peace agreements, disarmament, elections and restoration of state authority.](#)

The UNSC has been involved in a series of actions since the beginning of Arab Spring.

- Libya: [Implemented no-fly zone](#), initiated ICC investigation into potential war crimes, [supported efforts of United Nations Support Mission in Libya](#)
- Yemen: [Enforced sanctions, arms embargo against Houthi rebels](#), calls for withdrawal of rebels.
- Syria: Authorised delivery of aid, called for action against terrorist groups, implemented monitoring mechanisms for civilian evacuations and chemical weapons usage.

Looking forward, the Security Council should take steps to end existing conflicts, provide stability to post-conflict regions, implement political solutions and assist the establishment democratic governments, and device solutions which ensures sustainable peace.

AREAS OF CONSIDERATION

Humanitarian Aid and Conflict Prevention

The Arab Spring conflicts have resulted in a [massive humanitarian crisis](#): massive internal displacement and migration; large numbers living in refugee camps; malnutrition; lack of access to clean water and sanitation. [The World Bank estimates that among Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) countries affected by the Arab Spring, about 13.5 million in Syria, 21.1 million in Yemen, 2.4 million in Libya need humanitarian aid.](#)

Despite dire need to aid, humanitarian aid missions face considerable hindrances in conflicts. [Aid convoys and aid workers are often denied access to conflict regions](#), lack adequate guarantees for their [safety](#), and presents strategic targets for [targets deliberate](#) attacks. The UNSC has condemned attacks on health workers and facilities through Resolution 2286; condemned attacks on humanitarian workers through Resolution [2175](#); and called for protection for humanitarian workers through Resolution [1502](#). However, despite existing mechanisms, violation of International Humanitarian Law continues to occur in current conflicts: attacks on [hospitals](#) in [Syria](#) and [Yemen](#), [intimidation of health workers in Yemen](#),



and [attacks on humanitarian workers by the Libyan navy](#). Weaponization of healthcare and aid for strategic gains compromises medical neutrality and the access of all parties to medical care and aid.

Civilians are provided with due protection guaranteed under the Geneva Convention and Security Council Resolutions [2150](#), [1674](#), [1296](#), [1265](#) and others. Despite strong obligation towards civilians, parties of conflicts continues to inflict large civilian death tolls. [The situation is exacerbated by the use of weapons of mass destruction \(chemical\), cluster munitions and incendiary weapons which are banned under the Convention on Conventional Weapons](#), and forced disappearances. Inhumane treatment of civilians on a large-scale - the use of child soldiers, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, torture, denial of access of aid - have been well documented. Potential violation of International Laws have been observed on [all sides](#) of the conflict. [Drone strikes](#) have also resulted in [disproportionate civilian deaths](#), and the legality of its usage have been challenged both through a [UN General Assembly Resolution](#) and in the [UNSC](#).

The vulnerability of aid workers and civilians can be largely attributed to gross violations of the International Humanitarian Law by legitimate parties in the conflict, or the inability to enforce the IHL. The Security Council may discuss the efficacy of providing armed protection to selective aid deliveries, providing better measures to account for civilian safety, and creating stronger mechanisms to prosecute parties violating the IHL. Individual member states also plays an important role in ensuring that their coalition partners abide by the IHL. [The US State Department, for example, has extensively considered the legal implications of unlawful airstrikes conducted by its allied Saudi Arabia coalition in Yemen](#). It is interesting to note that an ICC ruling on Sierra Leone in 2013 has played a higher burden on coalition partners to act against war crimes by finding that "[practical assistance, encouragement or moral support](#)" is sufficient to determine liability for war crimes.' Delegates may wish to consider implementing mechanisms to enforce this legal burden through Security Council Resolutions.

The need for more active military intervention, through a UN mandate, or the deployment of a peacekeeping force should also been considered. The geopolitical realities of MENA states are complicated by the conflicting interests of key international players and deep sectarian divides, which adds additional considerations to the decision making calculus of military intervention. Although the internationally recognised government of Yemeni president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi has [requested for intervention by ground forces in the UNSC](#), current intervention measures only features air and naval operations. Although a strong case can be made for armed intervention through the UN mandate and on humanitarian grounds, arguments exist for the UN to take on a softer approach. [By acting as a mediator, neutral arbitrator and provider of aid, the UN has in past conflicts guaranteed itself access to all parties and facilitated the negotiation of ceasefires and political solutions](#). The neutrality of the UN



is also important in providing it with the moral authority to condemn parties which violated international laws. Conversely, the presence of ground troops from regional powers such as the GCC amidst deep sectarian divide risks stirring further tensions, hindering long term peace and political solutions.

Yet the status quo in MENA countries may once again indicate a paradigm shift, when the Assad regime and the Saudi coalition in Yemen are able to act with impunity due to strong international backers like the US and Russia shielding them from Security Council action. Delegates of the UNSC should consider the efficacies of the use of hard power versus soft power to achieve the best outcome for conflict resolution.

Regional Security and Terrorism

The regional power vacuum created by the Arab Spring has allowed terrorist groups to recruit and proliferate. Ineffective governments in post-conflict regions have been unable to effectively limit the activity of terrorist groups due to their lack of resources and control, while terrorist groups remain key players in current conflicts in Syria and Yemen. Groups which have gained significant international attention include Al Qaeda in Yemen and Libya (AQAP), and the Al Nusra Front and ISIS in Syria.

In status quo, the UNSC has focused most of its counter-terrorism actions in Syria. Member states have been called upon to take action against UNSC designated terror groups in Syria though Security Council Resolution [2249](#). Security Council Resolution [2258](#) further urges member states to suppress flow of foreign terrorist fighters in and out of Syria. Previous [resolutions](#) have also addressed the [activities](#) of ISIS and Al Nusra Front, and introduced counter-terrorism [frameworks](#). The [Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee](#) have also provided evaluations on the threat of various terror groups to international security to facilitate UNSC actions.

However, the UNSC has had a smaller presence in other Arab Spring countries like Libya, Egypt and Yemen. Where the UNSC has been absent as a collective, some member states have taken unilateral action against perceived terror threats. Notable cases included the [bombing against Islamic State affiliates in Libyan terrorist by the United States](#). In Yemen, the US and the [UAE](#) have conducted both [ground](#) and [aerial](#) assaults against Al Qaeda.

Counter-terrorism efforts in Arab Spring countries suffer on several fronts. In general, international efforts are reliant upon the cooperation of regional partners, and are thus hindered by [regime instability](#) and the [political agenda of the local government](#). In Egypt, the Al Sisi government has faced



wide criticism of employing stringent counter-terrorism laws for [political gains](#) and [human rights abuses](#). When countries take unilateral action against terror groups, political factors and individual strategic interests have led to differing definitions of terrorism and inconsistencies in the actions of the international community. While the United States continues to [supply Syrian Kurds with arms and training](#), [Turkey have conducted extensive bombings on Kurdish militias](#), thus creating further difficulties in resolving the Syrian situation.

Delegates should consider the expansion of counter-terrorism under the UNSC outside Syria, and examine the need to expand upon existing resolutions against terror groups. Collectively, the Security Council should implement measures which result in more unified counter-terrorism efforts, while members states must ensure their own strategic interests are protected at the same time.

Political Climate

Delegates are reminded to be especially sensitive to the volatile and charged political climate in Arab Spring states, particularly due to religious undertones and sectarian strife. Additionally, the short life span of past governmental institutions further underscores the political instability in the region. Hence, solutions should seek to establish a lasting, democratic government in order to effectively administer peace and security.

Firstly, on the sectarian strife inherent in the region, Islam has significant clout over the LAS region. Sectarian conflicts have become commonplace between the Sunni and Shia theocracies as opposing political parties rush to fill in the power vacuums left by sudden ousting of various autocrats in the region. [This was seen as a mean of reinstating authoritarian rule](#) as political actors such as Saudi Arabia sought to sow discord between the Sunni and Shia sects that were initially united in their overthrowing of the undemocratic governments. Hence the regime would be able to rally the religious sect affiliated with them in the oppression of the other and ultimately utilize it as one of the means of reestablishing their domestic legitimacy. This is observed through Saudi Arabia's backing of the Sunni networks in Syria and Iraq, while Iran bolstered the Shia forces in those regions.

Additionally, the presence of non-secular Islamist parties is also a distorting factor in considering what political system should be implemented, as the number of such secular political parties are very few in nations outside the LAS. Furthermore, the popularity they enjoy is barely comparable to the support parties like the Muslim Brotherhood receive from the citizens. [These Islamic parties tend to go against certain democratic values](#) such as racial tolerance as well as women's rights, especially in light of renewed sectarian conflict. Hence, delegates are reminded over the course of debate, to properly



address the issue of secularism and sectarian conflicts when solutions are fleshed out to reinstate political stability in these regions. Methods can include holding structured dialogues not only between the current leaders and international governmental organisations (IGOs), but also with the various secular parties, especially those of different sects. In addition, national borders can be discussed as many countries in the LAS previously under European colonialism had borders designed that were callous to the religious and racial makeup of the region. [Hence, this is also a root of conflict between the various religions and sects in the LAS nations which delegates can discuss.](#)

The presence of marginalized groups in the region highlights the pressing issue of sectarian conflicts as well. Delegates are reminded to consider the oppression of religious and ethnic minorities in the region, exemplified by the [killing of 27 Coptic Christians by the Egyptian Army in Cairo during the Maspero Demonstrations in 2011](#) when they protested against the demolition of a church in Aswan. In addition to the lack of representation and maintenance of human rights of the ethnic and religious minorities such as Kurds, Turkmen and Armenians, delegates must also consider the political clout the various sects of Islam attempt to present. Hence, the council is encouraged to consider power-sharing agreements that ensure the fair representation of not just the various sects of Islam, but also the ethnic and religious minorities in the region. The various demographic sizes should be considered as well, hence proportionality in terms of electoral representation and employment in public sectors ought to be observed.

Erosion of Institutions

Failure to manage power transition between regimes has resulted in the chaos in Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Erosion of institutional integrity – often artificially engineered – by sustained autocratic rule played into the inability of interim governments to achieve political legitimacy and to organise a functional policy and political structure. Autocratic regimes employ a series of measures to systematically undermine the political and institutional capital in the country in order to solidify their own political legitimacy.

1. Political threats were eliminated through coercion and forced disappearances, exile, and censorship. Under Mubarak's Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood were intentionally tolerated as a political opposition so as to frame all opposition to the government as Islamic political extremists, in order to present citizens with a false choice and an illusion of democracy. As an extension of this, religion was often suppressed in autocratic regimes to ensure the people were unable to utilize religion as an excuse to act against the regime. This is one of the reasons religiosity often rises once autocratic rule is deposed in a country.



2. Key roles in the government were allocated based on allegiance rather than through democratic elections or the capability to govern. This resulted in policy mismanagement by both negligence and intent. State organs were plagued with rampant corruption and bureaucracy, resulting in loss of public trust. Operation of the government was often unsustainable and maintained by the sheer unilateral political will of the ruling autocrat. This was exposed by the inability of most Arab states to produce a stable transition post Arab Spring, as the long trajectory of economic and political recovery Egypt and Libya unfolds.
3. The military is viewed as an instrument to safeguard the ruling regime and therefore controlled by loyalists or family members, as is in the case of Yemen and Syria. Close links between military leadership and the regime's power hierarchy created heavily politicised allegiances. When the "Jasmine Revolution" threatened regimes, militaries acted with unchecked brutality according to the will of the autocrat, which descended into chaotic power grabbing, or fragmented into rebel militias along sectarian lines.
4. The judiciary lacks independence and the power for self-preservation from the ruling regime. Elements of the judiciary are often in close association with the regime. In the aftermath of revolutions, lack of resources or partiality severely impairs the judiciary's ability to provide fair checks and balances on the legislature and executive. Due to its bias, the judiciary also often fails to provide elements of the revolution with closure through fair trials against the ousted regime.

Hence, while revolutions may possess the popular mandate, deficient political reserves result in the lack of a unifying force needed to effectuate a sea change in the political landscape of a nation. [Under autocrats, intellectuals were often exiled and thus possess neither support from the masses nor the military resources necessary to enforce control and govern; inherently sectarian militia and military leaders lack the capability to unite sectarian interests and successfully govern during transitional periods; incumbent members of government closely associated with their regimes are unacceptable in transition councils.](#) A similar situation is seen in other elements of the state, from civil security forces to financial institutions. For petroleum export-dependent economies, regime changes resulted in an immediate plunge in oil output and national revenue, leading to hyperinflation and widespread resource shortage. Control over vital oil resources also catalyses conflicts over opposing militias and interest groups. Such resources are often destroyed and otherwise damaged, leading to further loss of income. This is often described as the "resource curse".



Foreign Power Projection

[\(Geopolitics and Democracy in the middle east - regional and external country stakeholder\)](#)

Power projection by regional groups in conflict areas gave rise to counterproductive diplomacy and proxy wars which has exacerbated and sustained instability in Syria and Yemen. Major blocs in these conflicts include western powers, the Gulf states, Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, Russia, as well as Turkey.

The Syrian conflict has evolved from a conflict between the Assad regime, Syrian Kurds and the rebel forces into a struggle between Iran and the Gulf states for regional control, and between the strategic interests of Russia and the United States. Divisions between key stakeholders and even coalition partners is apparent in America's support and Turkey's opposition to arming Kurdish forces such as the People's Protection Units (YPG). Despite overwhelming evidence suggesting that Assad's forces deployed sarin gas against civilians in Khan Sheikhoun, Russia has officially endorsed an alternative account of the events and vetoed a draft resolution in the Security Council which calls for independent investigations. At the same time, it is flawed to blame the conflict on the regime as the rebels have also been repeatedly accused with evidence of conducting similar attacks with equipment stolen from the regime.

In [Yemen](#), Iran backs the Houthi rebels occupying the capital while a Saudi-led coalition conducted extensive military intervention in support of ousted President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. These activities included airstrikes and a naval blockade. The coalition has been supported by western militaries which have played key roles, along with their governments, in arms sales and providing logistical support.

When foreign powers with conflicting interests intervened in the Arab Spring countries, their actions may contribute to:

1. Reduced incentive to engage in peaceful resolution. When the Assad regime receives staunch support from Russia and the Yemeni government receives strong international backing, there is a greater incentive to pursue conflict resolution through the use of force than to pursue diplomatic compromise.
2. Insulation of warring parties from international pressure and scrutiny. Russia has to date vetoed eight UNSC resolutions on the Syrian conflict on behalf of the Assad government, while Saudi-led coalition airstrikes continues despite well documented civilian casualties and potential violations of international law. When P5 countries are actively vested in Arab Spring countries, the international community has little power in ensuring enforcement of International Humanitarian Law through mechanisms such as the Security Council and the ICC, which



countries of such power are able to ignore. With regards to the International Criminal Court, several countries have already refused outright to respect and acknowledge its legislation.

3. Escalation of conflicts and the creation of a potential post-conflict power vacuum. Turkey is actively targeting Kurdish rebels which are fighting the Assad regime; domestic political realities constrained western powers to invest disproportionate resources in the narrowly limited scope of terrorist organisations. In Libya and Egypt, there is little incentive for foreign powers to stay once regime change has occurred, and the limitations of the succeeding government are insufficiently addressed or ignored.

CASE STUDIES AND INITIATIVES

Egypt

Egypt is a prime case study for reference with regards to the political and economic consequences stemming from the Arab Spring, if the UNSC adopts a passive stance. [One of the main reasons why the UNSC has done little to resolve the political crisis in Egypt and ensuing flagrant human rights abuses is due to its endorsement of humanitarian intervention.](#) Additionally, the [seemingly “peaceful” transition from autocracy to democracy in the country removed the justification of the “Responsibility to Protect” \(R2P\) for the body to directly take action against the regime.](#) Hence, the background of Egypt’s political climate, the resultant socio-economic aftershocks and the link between Egypt’s failure to be a truly democratic state and the UNSC’s passive response will be discussed below.

After Sisi’s rise to the position of Egypt’s President, the authoritarian and military-centric government had engaged in brutal persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood, increased the military’s stake in society, and oppressed political dissent, human rights and activism. One example of this is the suppression of freedom of speech. Bassem Youssef, a former surgeon in Egypt, started a comedy show to attempt to unite the Egyptian people but was forced to flee to America once he invoked the regime’s displeasure.

The situation of human rights in Egypt has vastly deteriorated ever since Sisi’s election to office, due to his authoritative approach towards policy and governance. This is marked by the expansion of the scope of military jurisdiction implemented in 2014, which resulted in extensive and intrusive investigations from National Security Officers that have unfolded into more than 7,400 military trials of civilians, often without hard evidence. Additionally, officers of the National Security Agency (NSA) are reported to have often abused their authority, and tortured as well as forcibly disappeared many suspects under their custody, with the number of enforced disappearance at 912 between 2015 and



2016. Various basic rights, such as right to expression, are also not guaranteed as the government prosecute and convict individuals or groups that seek to expose the government's corruption or undermine Sisi's authority. An example is Sisi's removal of Hisham Geneima from his post as the country's top corruption watchdog after the latter was said to have uncovered more than \$70 billion dollars in state corruption.

Meanwhile, Egypt's economy took a drastic beating. Youth unemployment surpassed 40% in 2016, and inflation rate surged to almost 30%. The rising prices of commodities in Egypt and the reliance on food subsidies have led to civil unrest and riots over subsidy cuts. The Egyptian economy has cost the international community \$12 billion through IMF's bailout loan, plus additional foreign aid payouts. A major contributor to this effort is the United States, which contributes close to \$1.5 billion per annum to Egypt.

The political oppression present in Egypt is a clear mandate for UNSC to step in and correct the autocracy that was slowly being realised through extended martial law. The result of this was the deterioration of Egypt's economy as discussed above, which further destabilised the country. However, R2P was not invoked due to the absence of mass atrocities committed or protracted military conflict as observed in Libya, which sent UNSC into stasis towards the issue of Egypt's government.

Although the UN [had attempted to facilitate democratic elections through the United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#), the democratic process had failed and spiralled down into interim military rule each time. Other than the hosting of democratic processes and firm statements towards the ruling government with regards to the unacceptable political climate and human rights situation, the UNSC exercised limited intervention into the regime. This highlights the inherent double standards towards intervention within the council due to the vested interests of the permanent members, or the P5. For example, while UNSC has taken bold measures to empower NATO to execute military intervention into Tripoli, this assertive attitude was absent as 850 were killed and 6,000 were injured, mainly civilians, during conflicts between protesters and security forces in Egypt. This latter was a result of inconsistent application of R2P and humanitarian intervention, as the council did not view it as a humanitarian crisis, since mass killings, war crimes or other atrocities against humanity were not committed. Furthermore, the regime in Egypt benefit from the patronage of certain key nations in the UNSC, such as Britain and the [US](#). Thus, Egypt and her regime are effectively shielded from most sanctions or direct interventions from the UNSC, as the aforementioned countries have a veto power. In addition, despite the expansion of Article 39 to allow the UNSC to determine what constitutes a "threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression", [there has been no formal definition or domain of such in the UN Charter](#). Thus, the council has no effective baseline or benchmark to



determine what a humanitarian crisis or threat to peace is. Hence as Egypt's political transitions fall under the grey area of being considerably peaceful yet featuring flagrant abuse of human rights under militia rule, the council has been unable to come to a consensus as to what actions must be taken to resolve the crisis. The clear result is a volatile political climate susceptible to external pressures, a lagging economy, the absence of human rights maintenance and millions of Egyptians hungry for "bread" and "freedom".

Afghan Civil War

Despite some of the failures in resolving security issues or humanitarian crises, the UNSC has had a few successes as well. Other than mandating the successful NATO-led intervention into Libya that removed Gadhafi's autocratic regime, one key case study of reference is the UNSC's response to the Second Afghanistan Civil War. Similar to the UNSC's stance towards the Gadhafi regime in Libya, the council authorised numerous foreign military action into Afghanistan to swiftly curb the humanitarian crisis caused by the Taliban and al-Qaeda. [In addition, the concept of R2P, which was relatively new at the time, is featured prominently in UNSC's deliberation as there has been a strengthening consensus on humanitarian intervention.](#) Thus, a brief background of the Afghan Civil War, the actions UNSC has taken and the current situation will be covered in this section.

Afghanistan has seen many bloody civil wars from the 20th century onwards, and the [conflict spanning from 2001 to the present time, also dubbed as the "War on Terror",](#) has resulted in death tolls climbing 104,00, with 31,000 being civilians and an additional 41,000 civilians injured. [The cause of the conflict was primarily the US response towards the 9/11 terrorist attacks,](#) where they believed that the political instability in Afghanistan would result in further potential spillover to other countries that may pose as security issues. Hence, the US was confident that they could eradicate the terrorist groups in the region, mainly Al-Qaeda, and the support networks present and eventually, establish peace in Afghanistan. This justification manifested as the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, termed "Operation Enduring Freedom". [During the War on Terror, Afghanistan also saw internal struggle, as armed conflict arose between the Taliban insurgency and the Karzai administration.](#) Additionally, various terrorist networks, notably Al-Qaeda, took advantage of the conflict to secure regions within Afghanistan for use as their bases or strongholds.

As a result, the [UNSC authorized and supported the US invasion](#) in order to dispose of the Taliban government and suppress the terrorist networks in Afghanistan, through Resolution 1386, which called for the establishment of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). [The ISAF was led by NATO, and consisted of more than 18,000 troops from both US and her allies. The main goals of the ISAF was](#)



to promote stability in the region by assisting the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) in curbing the Taliban insurgency and to prevent Afghanistan from being a 'safe haven' for terrorist organisations by eliminating terror cells and providing training and development of ANSF troops.

In addition, through [Security Council Resolution 1401 in 2002](#), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was [established to manage all UN humanitarian, relief, recovery and reconstruction activities in war-torn Afghanistan. UNAMA receives \\$86 million in 2008, which increased up to \\$241 million in 2010, reflecting greater UN presence in the region, increase in staff and more extensive humanitarian missions.](#) Through UNAMA, UNSC was able to directly guide the development and rebuilding of Afghanistan, through initiatives such as the Afghanistan national Development Strategy (ANDS) and the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), the latter having affirmed that significant progress had been made in health and education, infrastructure and economic growth. [UNAMA has also aided in the maintenance of the Afghanistan Support Group \(ASG\) which coordinates international relief efforts into the country, as well as hosting dialogues between Afghanistan and her neighbours to foster stronger bilateral relations.](#) This reflects the multi-pronged approach UNSC has taken to resolve the crisis in Afghanistan, since the council has complemented a direct military intervention to forcibly remove the autocracy with a humanitarian mission mandated to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan people.

Most importantly, the UN, especially UNSC, has provided the environment necessary for the signing and implementation of the Bonn Agreement. [The Bonn Agreement was a series of agreements that sought to recreate the State of Afghanistan by implementing a transition period](#) It was done to promote peace and stability after the power vacuum created from the rapid removal of the then Taliban Government. The Agreement's main objectives were to

- Establish a new Constitution
- Designate the Afghan Interim Authority to manage daily national affairs
- Set up the Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, to facilitate the convening of a traditional assembly of leaders to select the Head of State
- Implement free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections
- Call upon the international community to aid in the establishment of Afghan armed forces and maintenance of security, which eventually evolved into the ISAF

The Agreement allowed the UNSC to properly handle the resultant power vacuum, while ensuring democracy and human rights were not ignored in the crisis by facilitating state-building and reestablishing key institutions.



Furthermore, not only were short-term solutions provided for Afghanistan, the UNSC has taken steps to ensure the country could slowly resolve security issues independently, sustain viable economic growth and come to a peaceful agreement with the various warlords and insurgencies in the region. For example, the UNSC backs and supports the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) through [Resolution 2189 in 2014](#). The mission aims to demilitarise Afghanistan by redrawing international troops from the area, whilst enhancing the defensive capabilities of the ANSF through a new non-combat, training, advisory and assistance mission. This ensures that the endemic corruption prevalent in the military institutions of Afghanistan can be removed, as well as channelling international efforts into equipment procurement and infrastructure building for the ANSF to allow the Afghans to better defend themselves against threats in the region. [In fact, the ANSF has swelled in ranks from 40,000 six years ago to nearly 350,000 today](#). Although much left is to be desired due to heightening security problems in Afghanistan after the handover, it is indeed a moment of pride and sovereignty for the Afghan people as now the security of the whole of Afghanistan is the responsibility of the ANSF. [Furthermore, the UNSC, together with key international actors such as the US, have provided the backdrop for peace and reconciliation talks between the Karzai Administration and the Taliban insurgency. UNAMA, which mandate has been extended by one more year through Security Council Resolution 2344 in 2017](#), has also brokered power-sharing agreements or peace negotiations between warlords in the region and the Karzai Administration, since the current state of the ANSF would mean a protracted, violent conflict that would spell further disaster for the Afghan people. From here, it is clear that the UNSC has implemented various frameworks and missions to allow Afghanistan to regain her sovereignty, whilst upholding significant political stability and regional security.



LINKS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As per the 17 sustainable development goals established by the United Nations in 2015, the goals of “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”, “Decent Work and Economic Growth” as well as “Sustainable Cities and Communities” are relevant to the protracted crisis of the Arab Spring. The United Nations therefore has a duty to maintain and uphold these sustainable development goals where possible, through whatever council has the mandate and authority to take relevant action.

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The rule of law is not respected in the areas affected by the Arab Spring due to the presence of ongoing conflicts, evidenced by communal chaos such as the increasing trend of homicide rate in Egypt since 2003, which reached an all-time high of 2,703 on 2011 when the Arab Spring was at its peak. Furthermore, citizens are oppressed by the very law enforcement personnel that were supposed to maintain the rule of law and protect them; [close to 100 policemen tried for assaulting protesters in 2011 were acquitted in the Egyptian court.](#) In addition, the judiciary is powerless against the upper ranks of government, leaving them free to act with impunity. On the issue of trust in public institutions, 61% of the 11,000 surveyed felt that corruption has increased in the nations that have experienced reforms under the Arab Spring, with [1 in 3 stating they have recently paid a bribe to access basic services.](#) The Corruption Perceptions Index done by Transparency International in 2015 has shown that many of the LAS nations still display worrying traits of corruption, with Libya, Iraq and Sudan belonging to the bottom 10 of the list. Ultimately, the strife between the government and civilians, and even within civilians themselves, have eroded the strength of public institutions and the rule of law. This results in a vicious cycle, as this leads to an unsustainable government, which foments further conflict due to public dissatisfaction, encouraging further revolts and protests in the nation. [The rule of law is further inextricably linked to social order and development,](#) as the strength and transparency of the judiciary as well as the nation’s trust in it would ensure proper social order that facilitates peaceful day-to-day proceedings. Clearly, establishing strong institutions and maintaining peace has clear implications on the goals of “Decent Work and Economic Growth” and “Sustainable Cities and Communities”. Thus, keeping the goal of “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”. in mind, delegates are urged to relook the issue of rule of law, public order and sustainable modes of government throughout the course of debate.



Decent Work and Economic Growth

The political upheavals have detrimentally affected many of the economies of the LAS nations. Thus, it becomes clear why the protesters demand “bread” in addition to “freedom” during their demonstrations. In fact, a startling \$600 billion loss was incurred from the Arab Spring across the Gulf countries, which accounts for 6% of each nation’s GDP on average. The volatility of the oil market as a result of the Arab Spring has further impacted not only the Gulf countries, but the world as well, since crude oil’s previous status as an unsustainable energy source is made all the more insecure. This was a result of protests and armed conflicts erupting over the oilfields, causing instances of sharp decrease in oil output such as Libya, where oil production was stunted to less than a third from 2010 to 2011. This contributed to the volatility of oil prices, fueled by market speculation and political instability, allowing the price of oil to break from the \$70 - \$80 price band in October 2010, which proved to distort a weak global economy after the harrowing 2008 Great Recession. Thus, the delegates of UNSC are urged to consider the sustainability of the economy in the region, due to the ongoing conflicts which has severely weakened many of the Arab states’ financial outlook that lacked economic diversification. Solutions must facilitate the convalescence of the economies of the Gulf states adversely affected by the Arab Spring in order to restore peace and order in the region.

Sustainable Cities and Communities

As a result, by cementing the strength of institutions and reinvigorating the health of the Gulf states’ economies, a more sustainable city and community can be created in the region. This is especially pertinent to a region marked by deep sectarian rifts, expansive slums and susceptibility to climate disasters. The fact that MENA is approximately 60% urbanised is a good starting point for the council to work on, as further solutions within the UNSC’s power must be implemented to sustain and strengthen housing policies and efficiency of public services. Thus, the Arab nations must hold their municipal governments accountable for sound urban planning and development. Furthermore, a sustainable community is built upon a stable source of commodities that are affordable to the public. Yet, the volatility of the political landscape and lack of rule of law has affected the availability and price of basic necessities. For example, there is a critical water shortage faced by at least 12 Arab countries, despite the presence of 660,000 km³ of groundwater in the MENA region, due to lack of infrastructure to retrieve the water as well as unresolved disputes over those resources. Hence, the issue of extraction and distribution of resources is on the agenda as well, since such initiatives are directly affected by the stability in the region, which the UNSC ought to maintain. Delegates are reminded to defuse any aggression over strategic areas, such as key water channels, and to maintain the safety of the citizens in those areas. Finally, the issue of sectarian conflict is interlinked with the sustainability of the communities in the Arab nations, as the deep strife between the Sunni and Shia sects mainly have



promoted much violence in the region. Thus, delegates are urged to not only quell the armed conflict between the two branches in the short-term, but to also look towards fostering trusts to bridge the aeons-old schism between the two sects in order to bring about a more sustainable community free from religious discrimination.

Hence, UNSC ought to not only provide relevant solutions to immediately resolve conflicts in the region so as to restore stability to the region, but also provide long-term plans with the above sustainable goals in mind, such that the crises arising from the Arab Spring will not repeat themselves.

STAKEHOLDERS

United States of America, Saudi Arabia

The United States stands opposed to Russia and strongly backs Saudi Arabia and countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council, which are primarily Sunni. The tension between GCC countries and Iran is an important mechanism through which the US seeks to curb Iranian influence. To that end, the US have provided Saudi Arabia with diplomatic cover in the UN as well as access to its sophisticated arsenal. Despite benefiting enormously from the alliance, Saudi Arabia is not subjugated by the will of the US in the Middle East, as shown by the Yemen conflict, due to the mutual reliance of the two allies.

United Kingdom, French Republic, Senegal, Italy, Japan, Ukraine, Uruguay, Sweden, Tunisia

The European bloc and its allies have consistently voted for Security Council Resolutions which seeks to protect civilians, promote basic human rights, and promote conflict resolution in the Middle East. It should be noted that the United Kingdom and the French Republic have not exercised their respective vetoes in the UNSC since the invasion of Panama in 1989. Although the bloc shows similar voting records to the United States and Saudi Arabia, it must be noted their interest in the Middle East is not entrenched.

Russia, Iran

Russia have repeatedly abstained or [vetoed draft](#) resolutions against the Assad regime. Its support for the regime has been apparent through its direction military intervention and leading role in peace processes independent of the UN and western powers. In other regional conflicts, Russia oppose the presence of western influence in general. Iran, as a regional Shia power, exist in tension with Sunni powers in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Tension with the West over its nuclear program have also led



Iran to adopt positions with oppose western influence in the region. As compared to other states, these countries adopt strong positions, with Russia wielding decisive veto power in the UNSC.

Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, China, Libya, Bolivia

Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and China, Bolivia has voted in alignment, opposing or abstaining on several UNSC draft resolutions. These include resolutions [condemning](#) Syria's use of chemical weapons and attempts to impose [sanctions](#). These countries have emphasised the need for political dialogue and peaceful resolution as opposed to punitive measures. Emphasis has also been placed on the politicisation of the UNSC as well as the need for more extensive investigations as reasons to not support the above resolutions. Politically, these countries are generally opposed to the western block, but do not take on a strong position in the Middle East conflicts. Libya and Bolivia falls under the same category small state with strong interests in protecting state sovereignty and no strong alliances to the west.