



SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC
MOVEMENTS IN THE MENA REGION

NATO – BATHMUN 2024

A Brief Message from the Dias

Dear Delegates

At the time of writing this BATHMUN 2024 is still months away, but we are already incredibly excited to welcome you to the majestic city of Bath.

For those of you who have never been a delegate, welcome, you have made an excellent choice of first conference, and for those of you with a wealth of experience, welcome back. BATHMUN is one of the most engaging conferences run in the UK MUN circuit, with its unique blend of both modern and historical committees.

As some of you know NATO and HNATO are typically very reactive committees, since they are a defensive alliance. That is why we are most excited to introduce our topic "Acting in Response to the Arab Spring", as it is uniquely an event where NATO were active in influencing external events, instead of responding to a threat.

Since its formation in 1949 NATO has nearly always acted in response to the Soviet Union, and more recently threats from the Russian Federation. However, as they have moved into the modern world, they have become more interventionist in protecting democracy, and their actions during the Arab Spring is a first prominent example of this.

Outside of what we hope will be a fruitful debate, we hope that you will make the most of your time in Bath, getting to know your fellow delegates, and form lasting friendships with them.

We look forward to welcoming you to Bath,
Kindest Regards,

Sam, Roshni, and Nilton.

Meet the Dais

Sam Fuller

I am a third year BSc Physics student at the University of Southampton. I've done ModelUN for two years but to be honest it feels longer. BATHMUN24 will be my eighth conference, my fourth time chairing, and my second time chairing NATO. Besides MUN I play a variety of (video/table-top/role-playing/war/mind) games, work in the third most profitable Wetherspoons in the UK, and drink because like all bartenders I am a functioning alcoholic.



Roshni Roy

Hey guys! My name's Roshni and I'm a final year BA European Studies student at King's College London. This is my fourth, and final (we'll see) year in the MUN game, so if you're a seasoned delegate from the UK circuit I'm sure we've crossed paths. If not, I look forward to meeting you. Fun fact: I have never been a part of a NATO committee despite my degree centring around Europe, so this is super exciting in terms of the new RoP. Once again, really looking forward to being a part of BathMUN's HNATO with you all, and discussing films at the socials!

Nilton Aranda

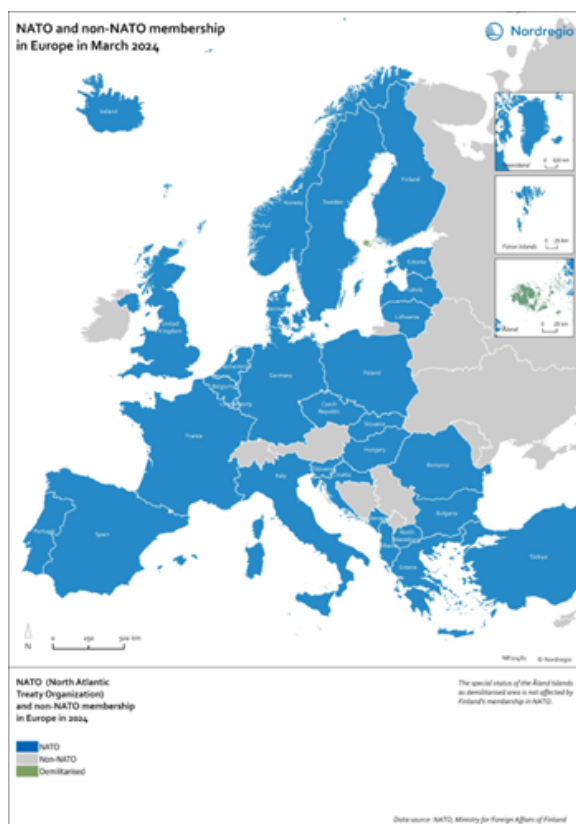
Hi everyone, Nilton here. I'm a second year BSc Biochemistry student at Queen Mary University of London. This is hopefully my last year chairing. It seems like I'm burning goodwill faster than gasoline ignites. I think this is about the 15th chairing introduction I have ever written and yet. I somehow have forgotten what to say. I can confirm Sam is an alcoholic, and considering my luck recently I might well be joining him. In my degree time I do MUN and in my free time I do my degree. In my sleeping time I sleep and in my breakfast time I also sleep. I play 5 instruments, all of which are going awfully. Looking forward to meeting you all!



Introduction to NATO

In 1949 a collection of twelve democratic powers came together to form an alliance of collective defence and security, in effort to protect each other from Soviet expansionism. All members are committed to not only the military defence of each other, but to upholding and promoting democratic values, to build international trust, and prevent conflict in the long term. Over the last seventy-five years NATO has expanded greatly from the original twelve members to thirty-two, and whilst its purpose has changed since the fall of the Soviet Union, ultimately it still exists to protect the sovereignty of all member nations.[1]

History of NATO



Post-war Europe was marred by trouble and tension, as the two global superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union vied for control. In 1947–48 there was a civil war in Greece, and a Soviet sponsored coup in Czechoslovakia, with the US responding by committing further aid to Europe. This aid was stepped up even more, when in 1948 the Soviets blockaded Berlin, and America feared that all of Europe would fall behind the Iron Curtain. To prevent this a Euro-American alliance was proposed, and after a year of negotiation, the Washington Treaty was signed in 1949 by the US, the UK, France, Italy, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, and Portugal.

NATO existed throughout the Cold War, expanding its membership several times. In 1952, Turkiye and Greece joined, and shortly after in

1955, Germany (at the time the Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany) also joined. The last member to join before the end of the Cold War was Spain in 1982.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell, marking the end of the Cold War, and the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union, which collapsed in 1991. Eventually in 1999, NATO expanded further gaining its first Eastern Bloc members: Czechia, Hungary, and Poland.

On the 11th September 2001, the United States was hit by a series of major terror attacks, leading to the first (and so far only) invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which called the alliance into a war to defend the United States. In 2004 NATO expanded their membership further to include Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, the largest expansion to date.

In more modern history the expansion has been more sporadic, Albania and Croatia joined in 2009, Montenegro in 2017, North Macedonia in 2020, Finland in 2023, and finally Sweden in 2024.[2]

NATO RoP

Outlined below are the procedural differences between ModelNATO and ModelUN:

- Ambassadors not Delegates – All representatives on the North Atlantic Council are known as ambassadors.
- Unanimous Decision – All substantive decisions of the NAC (the chief governing body of NATO) are made through unanimous consensus. Therefore during roll call all ambassadors must be Present and Voting, and to pass a policy document all present members must vote in Favour.
- Communiqués/Resolutions/Instruments of Accession – The North Atlantic Council can submit any of the preceding as policy documents to be voted on. All three kinds of policy document may be passed at the end of session, though as with standard MUN, only one policy document of each type may be passed. The standard policy document for NATO is a communiqué. Communiqués are structured similarly to resolutions, but contain no operative clauses, and the content is statements of intent, not statements of action. In the case where action should be taken (such as in response to a threat), a resolution is instead submitted and voted on; a resolution has the same structure as a standard ModelUN resolution. An Instrument of Accession is a special policy document inviting a non-member state to join the Alliance. In all cases of policy documents the following applies:
 - Policy documents have no signatories or sponsors, instead all members are considered to be sponsors.
 - Policy documents are introduced to the committee formally by a chosen representative (historically the Ambassador for Belgium as Brussels is the home to the NATO headquarters).
 - Following closure of debate, all members vote substantively on the policy document. Should the vote pass, the document is then passed to the ambassador for the United States, who then chooses whether the document ultimately passes or fails.

Background: The Arab Spring

In the early 2010s, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was simmering with social, economic, and political tensions that eventually ignited into mass movements demanding change. Much of this discontent was rooted in decades of authoritarian rule, where political corruption, economic stagnation, and social injustices had bred widespread dissatisfaction.

Tunisia

In December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old street vendor in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, set himself on fire after enduring years of police harassment, this event symbolised the pervasive state corruption that dominated the daily lives of Tunisians. Bouazizi's self-immolation was not an isolated incident; rather, it became emblematic of the struggles endured by millions across the region. Tunisia's population faced persistently high unemployment, especially among educated youth, a situation compounded by economic stagnation and an unresponsive government led by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. For over two decades, Ben Ali's regime had restricted civil liberties, cracked down on dissent, and nurtured corruption at the highest levels. The lack of opportunity and oppressive state control created a highly charged atmosphere, and Bouazizi's tragic act served as a rallying point for Tunisians desperate for change.[3]

What started as localised and social media based resistance in response to Bouazizi's death quickly escalated into a national movement against Ben Ali's regime. The demonstrations spread to major cities, and despite the government's attempt to stifle them through censorship and police force, protesters remained undeterred. Tunisians' demands expanded beyond economic reform to encompass freedom of speech, an end to state corruption, and calls for democratic reform. In January 2011, only weeks after the protests began, Ben Ali fled Tunisia, becoming the first of several Arab leaders to be ousted from power during this period. The success of the Tunisian movement was a beacon of hope for people across the MENA region, where similar conditions prevailed, igniting calls for reform and challenging the assumption of invulnerable authoritarianism.

Libya

Libya suffered from immense discontent from authoritarian rule much like Tunisia. The man who was to be toppled, was most likely the most high-profile dictator of the Arab Spring. Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi came to power from a military coup in 1969 and quickly became the ire of the international community in the decades after. After taking office in 1970 he made it legally required for Italians to leave the country within the year. Gaddafi committed numerous human rights violations, one famous example being the massacre of 1,270 prisoners and political dissidents in the Abu Salim prison in Tripoli [4].

The arrest of a prominent human rights activist and lawyer Fathi Terbil in 2011 sparked protests in Benghazi which spread nationwide. As is the case with dictatorships, these protests were violently met by crackdowns by the Gaddafi regime. It should be noted these were not the first ever large-scale protests to be witnessed in Libya. In 1976, University students in Tripoli and Benghazi protested against 'total military subjugation' of the civilian population. These protests resulted not only in the public executions of some students but led to set a standard for annual public executions up until the late 1980s [5]. In the context of the situation in Tunisia, and with major dissent of the Gaddafi regime building with. The more I read about the Gaddafi regime, it is surprising that there was not a revolt sooner. This is really a testament to how much momentum and unrest was building up at this time across the Arab states.

Purpose of the committee agenda

The topic itself is meant to also act as a thought exercise into the political strategisation and true values of NATO as an organisation, and a mission. NATO was founded on a set of ideologies and values that stemmed from the ideological struggle at the centre of the Cold War. Although the Cold War has been over for more than three decades, NATO still stands for these ideologies and values today. Although bound territorially to Northern Atlantic and in anti-Soviet undertones, outlined in the preamble of the founding treaty itself are certain values that bind parties together:

They are determined to safeguard the **freedom**, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of **democracy**, **individual liberty** and the **rule of law**.

Considering the expanding mandate of NATO in a post-Cold War climate, where it begins to overlook the conflict management of peripheral countries (exemplified in their involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Yugoslav wars) and in Kosovo, and then its further expansion into military engagement beyond the European hemisphere (Afghanistan in 2003 and Libya in 2011), it can be established that these core values run true throughout mandate expansions, changing political players and climates, and individual Party objectives.

Despite this, there was notably minimal involvement by NATO in one of modern history's most poignant eruptions of democracy and freedom: the Arab Spring.

Some people have asked why NATO acted in Libya but not elsewhere, in particular in Syria. My answer is clear. We took action in Libya because we have a strong mandate from the Security Council and solid support from countries in the region. That is a unique combination which we have not seen elsewhere. – Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary-General of NATO, June 2011[6]

As outlined in the background section, several points are identifiable where there was value-based scope for NATO to involve themselves. In expansions beyond the European domain there lays strong basis for Parties to make strategic decisions that equally expand beyond Article 5. Why was the Arab Spring not seen as an ideological gold-mine for NATO, and yet Libya was, despite the former also sharing the risk of the violation of R2P, the violation of NATO and its Parties' values, the risk of migration crises and European spillover, or even the risk of involvement of States like Russia or Iran?

For example, although in certain ways successful in how it played out, the lack of organisation and the lack of consistent, collective power therefore are arguably reasons for why involved countries are yet so unstable and lacking long-term, democratic political leaders or alternatives to either dictatorial systems or extremist groups such as the IS. An article by Al Jazeera on Iranian civilian perspectives on the Spring, show that these failures perhaps tend to the continuation of lack of individual liberties and democracy within the country, and even a preference for their own undemocratic system¹.^[7]

Hence with this topic, the committee should aim to explore how NATO could play a hand in orchestrating the reconstruction of political systems in the MENA region, what this involvement would look like, and to find reasons as to why this would benefit them. In a plane beyond direct, evident impact on Parties, how far could other political motivations and ideology come into play?

This assembly of NATO takes place after the ousting of Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on 14th January 2011, and before the 25th January 2011 revolution in Egypt.

¹ It states, "the catastrophic consequences of the Arab Spring, the deepening instability in the region, and the rise of ISIL have brought millions of Iranians to cherish the political stability delivered by the Islamic Republic"

Further Discussion

What is democracy really? It's an interesting question. One which probably an undergraduate student is not qualified to answer very well. Especially on a dais of 2 STEM majors. The case can be made that these protests, while 'Pro-democratic' at their centre, were more about gaining more personal, social, and economic freedoms that were previously unavailable.

It is well documented that after the ousting of Gaddafi Libya fell into disarray [8] until the formation of the provisional government in 2021 [9]. The question on everyone's mind being, "What took so long?". This is a valid question, and one that is most likely (considering how these things usually are) mired in controversy. One could argue that the short lived NATO intervention which ended after Gaddafi's death was the cause. However, I am inclined to disagree. The intervention itself wasn't (entirely) the problem, it was what they did afterwards, which can be argued again to be not much [10]. From a 'Pro-democracy' perspective, as one might easily approach via NATO it is easy to assume that the goal was to just 'establish democracy' however this was largely incomplete as an operational goal. What steps could the intervention have reasonably taken to ensure lasting peace in Libya through a democratically elected government?

NATO troops were on the ground for less than a year. It can easily be argued that had the presence of the troops been more long term, they would have been able to stabilise the region further and prevent the splitting of Libya into warring factions.

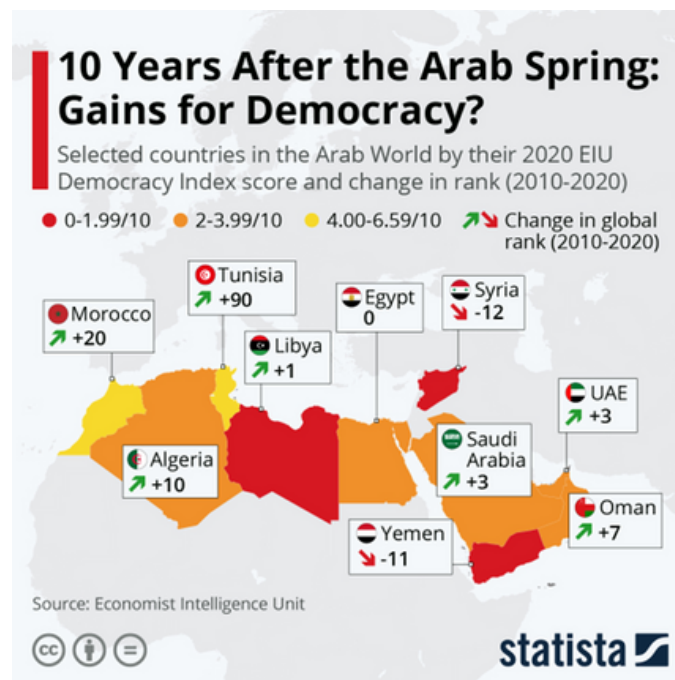


Figure 1: Change in EIU Democracy Index Score of countries 10 years on from the Arab Spring

When we look at how gains for democracy changed after the Arab Spring (Fig. 1), it becomes clear that the only country with significant gains was indeed Tunisia:

Important to note however, the transitional government was established in 2021 and this chart is from 2020, hence the +1 score for Libya when it should be -6 now (as of 2023). Indicating rather interestingly a decrease in democracy. [11]

So the important question. Why did Tunisia's democracy score change so much? It should be briefly noted that in the period post 2020 to now, Tunisia's democracy has been severely undermined; however, that is out of the scope of this discussion.

Post arab-spring Tunisia underwent many reforms. Which can be broken down simply into constitutional, judicial, and democratic reforms. In 2014 Tunisia adopted a new constitution which enshrined the rights of people and their civil liberties into law. Via the constitution, Tunisia also was able to form an independent Judiciary which is often the first thing to go when totalitarian regimes take power. This meant that the government no longer had the power to be lawmaker and judge. Power was also decentralised from the government and local authorities were formed with enough autonomy to encourage civic participation in local governance.

In 2015 the Nobel Peace prize actually went to a coalition of labour unions and human rights groups called the "Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet". Which in the words of the nobel committee:

The Norwegian Nobel Committee emphasised the fact that Islamist and secular political movements worked together to democratise the country. The National Dialogue Quartet can take much of the credit for Tunisia's adoption of a new constitution that paved the way for parliamentary and presidential elections.

So now we can see a very clear picture as to how Tunisia was democratised after the Arab spring. The most important aspect I would mention is the formalisation of human rights, an independent judiciary, and decentralised government within the constitution, which has served as a cohesive framework for Tunisian democracy.

Further Reading

NATO

<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/structure.htm>

NATO is a complex alliance with an intricate civilian and military structure. Whilst understanding its inner workings is not fundamental to this committee, the NATO website contains the answer to most questions about how NATO works.

Amnesty International Report on Libya

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde19/025/2011/en/>

In mid-February 2011 Libyans called for a “Day of Rage” against the iron-fist rule of Colonel Mu’ammar al-Gaddafi, in power since 1969. The protests were met with lethal force. By early March the uprising had evolved into an armed conflict between forces loyal to Colonel al-Gaddafi and armed protesters coalesced into a loosely structured force led by the newly established National Transitional Council. This report documents serious and widespread human rights violations by al-Gaddafi forces and also abuses committed by the opposition.

Winning in Libya: By Design or Default?

<https://www.ifri.org/en/studies/winning-libya-design-or-default>

While the United Nations Security Council resolutions did not direct regime change, many key political leaders saw it as a highly desired outcome of the conflict. This divergence in objective led to a lack of clear political guidance at the strategic level, which often translated into somewhat inconsistent military planning at the operational level. The authors contend that this confusion tends to demonstrate that the means as well as the final result were reached by default rather than by design. The gap that was experienced between policy and military operations may impact NATO’s future operations and political cohesion. In turn, the Libyan case, which underlines the need to develop consistent strategy and military plans, may deliver insights for strategists and planners, especially for the air component.

UNSC Resolution 1973

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n11/268/39/pdf/n1126839.pdf>

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