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Foreign Affairs Committee

British foreign policy and the 'Arab Spring'

Second Report of Session 2012–13

Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

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The Foreign Affairs Committee

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Summary

The wave of uprisings that swept across the Middle East and North Africa region at the start of 2011 and which came to be known as the Arab Spring continues to represent both the greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity to date for this Government’s foreign policy. It presented a practical, consular challenge to ensure the safety of tens of thousands of British nationals abroad; a diplomatic challenge as the Government sought to engage constructively with the old and new regimes; and a military challenge to protect civilians in Libya.

Economic problems including high unemployment, poverty and inequality, as well as a lack of political and social participation and human rights were all underlying causes of the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, which united diverse groups through a shared sense of economic, social and political injustice and opposition to autocratic government. The FCO seems to have understood the long-term problems well, but the number of FCO staff, its linguistic expertise and its information-gathering methods were all questioned by witnesses. While it is not reasonable to expect diplomats to have predicted the outbreak of the uprisings with precision, it is reasonable to believe that had there been more emphasis on political reporting and larger political teams in post, this would have improved the FCO’s information-gathering before the uprisings, and its ability to respond once they had begun.

The Government provided a good consular service to British nationals in Egypt and Tunisia, but the challenging evacuation of British nationals from Libya exposed serious weaknesses in the FCO’s emergency consular response systems.

The UK has a difficult history over many years in the MENA region and is perceived as having prioritised its own interests, particularly in stability, commerce and counter-terrorism, over the promotion of more representative governments and criticism of human rights violations. British statements on human rights and democracy are consequently met with scepticism in the region today. The Government must avoid discrediting its ‘values based’ approach to the Arab Spring by promising more than it can deliver.

The UK’s targeted bilateral support for the Arab Spring through its Arab Partnership Initiative is an important signal of British support for democratisation. However, its value as a tool of UK soft power is limited if its projects are not visible to most of the public in the region. The UK’s valuable ‘soft power’ tools in the British Council and the BBC World Service should be supported and maintained.

It is difficult to judge the success of the large multilateral initiatives to provide support for the Arab Spring, and some have argued that support is not reaching the countries that need it. It is important that the UK and its EU and G8 Deauville Partners are seen to be keeping their promises to states in the MENA region. The UK should make the Deauville Partnership a priority of its G8 presidency in 2013.

The EU’s failure to apply conditionality to its aid to former dictators has consequences for their attempts to ‘learn lessons’ and apply conditionality today. It is right that there be a
relationship between aid and human rights, but this should be done sensitively and gradually for struggling and fragile democracies.

The Government has rightly begun to develop greater contact with Islamist parties in the region, which have proved successful at elections. It should work to deepen its engagement with Islamist parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, at this early stage in order to demonstrate the assistance and support available to those who respect human rights and democratic reforms.

The suffering and loss of life in Syria is unacceptable and the Government is right to seek a consensus both within and outside the UN. We are concerned that the consequences of the perceived ‘stretching’ of the terms of the UN resolutions on Libya are now impacting upon efforts to resolve the situation in Syria, although it is by no means certain that a less interventionist approach in Libya would have guaranteed Russian and Chinese agreement on Syria.
Conclusions and recommendations

Could the FCO have anticipated the Arab Spring?

1. It is not reasonable to expect diplomats to have predicted the advent of the uprisings with precision. Successful uprisings are, by their very nature, somewhat unpredictable. However, it is concerning that the UK appears to have been taken so completely by surprise and little comfort that other states suffered the same problems. In its response to this report, the FCO should respond to criticisms that it did not have a sufficiently broad base of contacts from different social groups and geographical regions from which to draw information about approaching crises and set out what steps it is taking to improve its ability to anticipate such events in the future. (Paragraph 19)

2. We conclude that the decline in staff numbers in post in the MENA region may have contributed to a lower information gathering capacity but it cannot be conclusively drawn that such a decline had affected the FCO’s ability to predict the Arab Spring uprisings. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that had there been more emphasis on political reporting and larger political teams in post, this would have improved the FCO’s information gathering before the uprisings, and its ability to respond once they had begun. (Paragraph 20)

Did the FCO have the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to the Arab Spring?

3. We conclude that the work done by the FCO in its Middle East and North Africa Directorate in 2010 to improve Arabic language skills and to revise its strategic approach showed some foresight and demonstrates that the Department had recognised the need for improvement. However, the fact that the Department considered it necessary to plan a 40% increase in the FCO’s Arabic speakers implicitly acknowledges that it had significantly degraded its language capacity by 2010. At the outbreak of the Arab Spring these programmes had yet to have a demonstrable impact in raising language skills or significantly changing the Department’s approach. (Paragraph 25)

The consular response in Tunisia and Egypt

4. We conclude that the Government provided a good consular service to British nationals in Egypt and Tunisia, providing well-judged and practical advice. We congratulate the FCO for its decision not to advise against travel to the Red Sea resorts. (Paragraph 32)

5. In its response to this report the FCO should confirm that its consular evacuation plans elsewhere in the region take into account the much higher number of independent British travellers, who may require more consular assistance than those on package holidays. (Paragraph 33)
The consular response in Libya

6. The evacuation of British nationals exposed serious weaknesses in the FCO’s emergency consular response systems, particularly with regard to chartering flights for evacuations. The Foreign Secretary was right to commission a full and detailed review, and we commend the FCO for producing detailed conclusions. While we hope that this will improve the FCO’s response, some of these new procedures are yet to be tested. (Paragraph 38)

7. We commend the hundreds of FCO staff who worked long hours over a number of months during rolling crises. The staff in Libya and the FCO’s Rapid Deployment Teams deserve particular recognition for their work to ensure British nationals reached safety. (Paragraph 39)

8. We conclude that the problems encountered by locally engaged staff in reaching work during the crises, and the subsequent strain placed on remaining staff, are of particular concern in the light of the FCO’s policy of engaging an ever greater number of locally engaged staff. We recommend that in its response to this report the Government provide details of how it intends to mitigate the effects of these problems in future crises. (Paragraph 40)

9. We recommend that the Government review its policies in order to ensure that it is satisfied it is providing the best possible level of diplomatic protection to its locally engaged staff, and that they are aware of the limits of this protection. (Paragraph 41)

Political and diplomatic responses in Tunisia and Egypt

10. We conclude that the Government was right to focus on human rights protection and to call for political reform rather than making an explicit call for President Ben Ali or President Mubarak to step down. (Paragraph 45)

11. We recommend that the Government provide the Committee with an explanation of the difference between the times taken to achieve an EU-wide asset freeze for Ex-President Ben Ali and for Ex-President Mubarak. (Paragraph 48)

Response to the Libyan uprising

12. We conclude that securing a UN resolution was vital to the legitimacy of subsequent intervention and a significant diplomatic achievement. (Paragraph 52)

13. We conclude that the Government responded to the Libyan crisis boldly on both bilateral and multilateral levels. The UK demonstrated leadership at the United Nations and in the EU to achieve its desired response. (Paragraph 58)

Legacy of UK involvement in MENA region

14. We conclude that the UK’s policy of engaging with autocratic powers in the MENA region while remaining relatively quiet in public on human rights and political reform has linked us in the eyes of many people with those deposed and discredited governments. However, even if the UK had applied more pressure to the previous
autocratic governments on human rights and democratic reforms, it would have been unlikely to have brought forward the revolutions. Yet an approach that more consistently advocated the need for human rights and democratic reforms might have helped to improve the human rights situation in each of these states, as well as having a positive impact on the public perception of the UK in the region today. (Paragraph 63)

**A values-based approach**

15. We conclude that it is right to place democratic values at the heart of the UK’s response to the Arab Spring. The Government is right to consider interests and values as connected, although we share our witnesses’ doubts that they will always be in such clear alignment. (Paragraph 68)

16. The Government must be sensitive to the scepticism with which British statements on human rights and freedom are met in the region. We recommend that the Government avoid discrediting its ‘values based’ approach by promising more than it can deliver. (Paragraph 71)

17. We conclude that arms sales to the MENA region have been a source of concern for a number of years. In calculating whether to award export licences, the Government should also consider the effect on the public perception of the UK in the region. (Paragraph 75)

18. We conclude that the goodwill that could have been generated by a Prime Ministerial visit to the region at such a critical time was somewhat squandered by the Government’s misjudgement in including members of the British arms trade in the delegation to the Gulf, as indeed it has been damaged by decades of arms sales to repressive governments. Regardless of its legality, it was a mistake for the Prime Minister to be seen to be promoting the UK’s arms trade on a visit to a region undergoing uprisings in which some authoritarian regimes had used force against their own people. (Paragraph 77)

**Accepting new partners: Islamist electoral success**

19. We recommend that the Government prioritise the particular concerns of women and religious minorities as it pursues closer relations with new Islamist governments. (Paragraph 83)

**UK bilateral support for democratic transitions**

20. We welcome the Arab Partnership programme as a tool to promote political and economic reform in the region and a demonstration of the UK’s support for reform and commitment to the region. The FCO should provide us with an annual report on the spending and achievements of the Arab Partnership. (Paragraph 89)

21. We recommend that the UK be bold in seeking new partners for Arab Partnership funds. In its response to this report the FCO should set out the steps it is taking to improve its communication with alternative organisations that could bid for...
funding, and to raise public awareness of the programmes it funds in each country. (Paragraph 90)

22. We conclude that at a time when soft power and public diplomacy is more needed than ever, the British Council programmes are vital in generating goodwill and promoting Britain and British education in the region. We particularly commend the British Council’s youth engagement work, including its Global Changemakers programme. (Paragraph 95)

23. We conclude that the Arab Spring further highlighted the importance of the BBC World Service in providing a vital independent news service to the world and in enhancing the UK’s reputation in the region. We welcome the Government’s belated move to secure funds for the BBC Arabic Service, and hope the Government’s funding will not prove to be a one-off commitment, but rather a sustained investment. However, we remain concerned that cuts made elsewhere in the World Service will prove detrimental to the UK’s national interests. We stand by our previous conclusions that funding for the World Service must be protected and maintained as responsibility for funding transfers from the FCO to the BBC. (Paragraph 99)

**Multilateral support: a ‘Marshall Plan’ for the region?**

24. It is important that the UK and its Deauville Partners are seen to be keeping their promises to states in the MENA region. The UK should make the Deauville Partnership a priority of its G8 presidency in 2013. The Government should set out in its response to this report more information on the use of the UK’s contribution to the $38 billion identified by Deauville. (Paragraph 106)

25. We share the Government’s frustration that Egypt did not accept international funding last year. The UK, as a key member of the international financial organisations, should engage with the new loan negotiations to ensure that they result in an offer of funds that is acceptable to Egypt. (Paragraph 109)

26. We conclude that the EU’s response to the Arab Spring has been somewhat mixed. We welcome the EU’s stated commitment to a new approach, but there have so far been limited results. We recognise the difficulties in engaging with countries that are undergoing transitions but are disappointed that the EU has yet to engage with Egypt during a critical period for that country. (Paragraph 117)

27. We further conclude that the number of separate EU funding programmes contributes to a lack of transparency about where and how money is spent. We regret that this inhibits proper parliamentary scrutiny in this area. (Paragraph 118)

28. We conclude that for many years the UK did not do enough to prevent, or apply conditions to, the EU’s provision of support to authoritarian governments in Egypt and Tunisia before the revolutions and that this has consequences for attempts to do so now. It is right that there be a relationship between aid and improvements in human rights, but this should be done sensitively and in a phased manner, with conditionality increasing gradually rather than being imposed immediately on struggling and fragile democracies. (Paragraph 125)
UK-Tunisia bilateral relationship

29. We conclude that the UK should continue to pursue stronger ties with Tunisia and should encourage Tunisian former exiles to maintain a relationship with the UK and with the British embassy in Tunisia even after they have returned to their first home. (Paragraph 131)

30. We conclude that there is great potential for the UK and Tunisia to improve their bilateral trade and investment to their mutual benefit. (Paragraph 133)

31. We conclude that the value of the Arab Partnership and DfID funding as a tool of UK soft power and sign of British support for democratisation will be limited if its projects are not visible to most of the public in those countries. (Paragraph 134)

UK-Egypt bilateral relationship

32. It is disappointing that the Egyptian people had such a limited and polarising choice of presidential candidates. However, now that Egypt has chosen a president the UK should provide support and assistance to President Mursi to help him achieve much-needed stability in Egypt and a transfer to civilian control. (Paragraph 145)

33. We conclude that with the benefit of hindsight, it would have been beneficial if the Prime Minister had met the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in February 2011, particularly given the election of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Dr Mohamed Mursi as President of Egypt in June 2012. (Paragraph 147)

34. We welcome the Government’s willingness to work with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and we urge the Government to deepen its engagement at this early stage in order to demonstrate the assistance and support available to those who respect human rights and democratic reforms. (Paragraph 148)

35. The human rights situation in Egypt under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces’ leadership is a matter of serious concern, and we welcome the Government’s recognition that extra monitoring is required. The UK should maintain a consistent and robust approach to supporting human rights in Egypt and should prioritise women’s rights and the rights of religious minorities as particularly under threat. (Paragraph 150)

36. We conclude that some degree of scepticism about the UK’s intentions is to be expected, but a poor perception of the UK among the Egyptian public is of increasing concern as Egypt’s political leaders become more responsive to public opinion. The FCO should dedicate further staff resources to its public diplomacy in Egypt. (Paragraph 151)

37. We conclude that it is too early to judge if a free and democratic Egypt will prove to be a stronger partner in the Middle East Peace Process than Egypt under President Mubarak. (Paragraph 154)
UK-Libya relationship

38. The Government is correct to press the Libyan authorities on the need to establish human rights protections in Libya and to eliminate the use of torture in places of detention. We recommend that the Government encourage the Libyan authorities to issue a standing invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the country as soon as practicable. In its response to this report the Government should set out its timetable and objectives for the conference on human rights in Libya that it announced in February 2012. (Paragraph 163)

39. We conclude that the UK should continue to encourage the Libyan authorities to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and deliver Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and Abdullah al-Senussi into its control. The Government should explore options with Libya and the international community to agree that the suspects could be returned at some point in the future to stand trial in Libya. (Paragraph 164)

40. We conclude that it is important that the UK does not squander the goodwill it enjoys in Libya. The Government should maintain its steady approach to the promotion of trading ties during Libya’s transition. (Paragraph 166)

41. We conclude that the Government should negotiate permission for British investigators in the Lockerbie and Yvonne Fletcher cases to have access to Gaddafi regime records in Libya as a matter of urgency. We suspect that resolution of these issues, for all those who suffered personally, may be more important than financial compensation for what was done. We encourage the Government to consider the merits of promoting a resolution which is not contingent on payment by the Libyan authorities to victims if such payment is an obstacle to gaining access to information and records. (Paragraph 167)

42. We are surprised at the Minister’s indication that the allegations of British involvement in rendition and subsequent torture of two Libyan nationals have had no effect on the UK-Libya relationship. We conclude that even if the allegations have not caused immediate damage, they may do in the long-term if there is no adequate investigation and resolution of the matter. In its response to this report the Government should set out the progress of police investigations so far, including whether British police have been given all necessary access to information held in Libya, and also provide an estimate as to when it expects police investigations to be completed. (Paragraph 171)

43. We would be deeply disturbed if assurances given over many years, including assurances given by Ministers to this Committee’s predecessors, that the UK had not been involved in the rendition of any individuals are proved to be inaccurate. We expect to return to this issue. (Paragraph 172)

Implications for British foreign policy elsewhere in the region

44. The suffering and loss of life in Syria is unacceptable and we welcome the Government’s efforts to reach a consensus on international action both within and outside the UN. However, we note with concern that the consequences of the perceived ‘stretching’ of the terms of the UN resolutions on Libya are now being
visited on attempts to secure a UN Security Council resolution which takes a tougher line on Syria. There can be no certainty, however, that a less interventionist approach in Libya would necessarily have led to readier support from Russia or China for vigorous condemnation of President Assad’s actions. On balance, therefore, we do not believe that the diplomatic stalemate over Syria should be seen as too high a price to pay for the scale of intervention in Libya. (Paragraph 178)

45. We conclude that the Government is right to support peaceful reform efforts where possible in Bahrain, but it must also be clear in its public criticism of human rights violations there if it is to avoid charges of hypocrisy. (Paragraph 179)

46. It is important that the UK is seen to be applying these lessons to its relations with other Arab and Gulf states, and more widely, whose governments as yet show no sign of reforming, or that are actively resisting reform. In this regard, the greatest challenges of the Arab Spring may still lie ahead. (Paragraph 184)
Introduction

1. The Arab Spring is a term used to describe a wave of popular uprisings that began in Tunisia in December 2010 and swept across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the first half of 2011, astonishing observers and succeeding in overthrowing decades-old authoritarian rule in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and posing a challenge to undemocratic governments in Bahrain, Syria and elsewhere. It has variously been described as the biggest geopolitical event since the end of the Cold War; “already set to overtake the 2008 financial crisis and 9/11 as the most important development of the early 21st century”;¹ and in the words of our own Prime Minister: “a precious moment of opportunity for this region”.²

2. The term ‘Arab Spring’ is considered by some to be misleading, suggesting a pan-Arab movement and conferring positive connotations. The use of the term ‘Spring’ also became more problematic as the uprisings and transitions continued and lengthened, and it is now over 18 months since they began. Some observers, including the FCO, prefer the term ‘Arab Awakening’. We have used ‘Arab Spring’ in this report because it is the most commonly used and understood term for the uprisings and their aftermath.

3. The Arab Spring arguably represents the greatest foreign policy challenge for our own Government to date. The region is vital to the UK’s commercial, energy, and security interests, and the changes wrought by the Arab Spring revolutions have enormous implications for Britain and British foreign policy. In its early days, the Arab Spring presented a practical, consular challenge to ensure the safety of tens of thousands of British nationals abroad, as well as a diplomatic challenge as the Government sought to engage constructively with the old regimes as they reacted and then crumbled, and new leaders as they emerged in each state. In Libya, as Colonel Gaddafi³ threatened to react to the uprisings with military force, the UK was among the countries leading diplomatic condemnation of violence and was in the forefront of a military intervention to protect civilians. UK foreign policy must adjust to the loss of old strategic partners such as former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak; do what it can to guard against the risk of instability and economic collapse in the region; and support what it is hoped will be the emergence of new democratic states, with all of the stabilisation, development, and support for democratisation that the transitions entail.

4. The Arab Spring today is far from complete and events are moving quickly. At the time of publication of this report, the three states that are the subject of our inquiry—Tunisia, Egypt and Libya—have entered transitional periods but have yet to agree new constitutions; Libya is yet to hold parliamentary elections and Egyptian authorities have recently dissolved the democratically elected parliament. Each state is experiencing some form of continuing unrest, and recent developments in Egypt, whose army has announced

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¹ Foreign Secretary speech to the Times CEO Summit Africa, 22 March 2011, via the FCO website (www.fco.gov.uk)
² Prime Minister speech to the National Assembly in Kuwait, 22 February 2011, via Number 10 website (www.number10.gov.uk)
³ The surname is spelled in a number of different ways. Here we have chosen to follow the spelling used in Hansard. Other sources, including the FCO, have used alternative spellings such as ‘Qadhafi’. Where quotations used in this report have used alternative spellings we have allowed them to stand.
new powers for itself and limited those of the new president, have thrown the democratic transition into confusion. The new Egyptian president, Muslim Brotherhood member Dr Mohamed Mursi, will take up his role in the absence of either a parliament or a constitution. Other governments in the region may yet be challenged further by uprisings, and some have begun a reform process in their own states. This report will be published in the midst of events and will inevitably be overtaken by further developments. It should be read as a report on the interim period, not the transitions as a whole.

5. We launched our inquiry into the implications for British foreign policy of the Arab Spring in July 2011. We chose to look in particular at the contribution the UK can make to reform and reconstruction in Arab countries. Our initial focus was on Egypt and Tunisia, as these two countries appeared to have moved into a post-revolution transition period. The inquiry set out to answer the following questions:

- What forces are driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Egypt and Tunisia, and to what extent are they paralleled elsewhere in the Arab world?

- Could the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) realistically have done more to anticipate the ‘Arab Spring’? Did FCO staff in Egypt and Tunisia have the right level and mix of skills, including linguistic skills? Was there too much focus on contact with the previous regime rather than tracking popular, oppositional or youth opinion? Was policy overly dominated by considerations of regional stability and counter-terrorist co-operation? What contingency plans were in place for a change of regime in either country? Are there lessons to be learned in terms of intelligence gathering and strategic planning?

- How well did the FCO perform in providing consular assistance to British citizens at the time of the political upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia?

- What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive their economies? Does the FCO have the right resources in place to deliver its objectives in the region? What role can the BBC World Service and the British Council play? How can the British Government best work with allies and through international institutions to support reform in Egypt and Tunisia?

- What are the prospects for establishing stable multi-party democracy and a human rights culture in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere?

- What will be the future role of Islamist movements in the region and what should be the British Government’s stance towards them?

- What are the implications of the ‘Arab Spring’ for Egyptian/Israeli relations and regional security?

- To what extent can Egypt and Tunisia function as role models for the wider Arab world?

- Bearing in mind the Prime Minister’s comments in Kuwait in February 2011 about potential conflict between British “interests” and “values”, do recent events in Egypt
and Tunisia, and in the ‘Arab Spring’ generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa?

In November 2011, once military action in Libya had ceased, we announced that our inquiry would be extended to cover Libya.

6. We received 33 written submissions of evidence and took oral evidence from Intissar Kherigi, Dr Eugene Rogan, Dr Claire Spencer, Robin Lamb, Lord Malloch-Brown, Alistair Burt MP (the FCO Minister with responsibility for the Middle East and North Africa), Dr Christian Turner and Jon Davies. A full list of witnesses is on page 90. As part of the inquiry we undertook a visit to Egypt, Tunisia and Libya at the end of February / early March 2012, during which we met government ministers, electoral candidates, new political parties, civil society representatives and activists. We also held an informal meeting with Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Kamal Amr, in London in February 2012. We took the opportunity to question the Foreign Secretary on the Arab Spring when he gave evidence on developments in UK foreign policy in September 2011. Our report also draws on the Defence Committee’s report on the UK’s military operations in Libya.4

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4 Defence Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2010–12, Operations in Libya, HC 950
2 The Arab Spring uprisings

The uprisings in brief

Tunisia

The uprising in Tunisia, dubbed the ‘Jasmine revolution’, was triggered by the self-immolation of street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010, in protest at his treatment by officials that had confiscated his property and humiliated him. Protests began locally in the deprived, rural area of Sidi Bouzid and quickly spread throughout Tunisia, protesting about Mr Bouazizi’s treatment and about wider social, political and economic grievances. The protests intensified in January, particularly following Mr Bouazizi’s death on 4 January, culminating in over 10,000 people protesting in the capital of Tunis. President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali had ruled Tunisia since 1987 and was only its second leader since independence from France in 1956. He offered some concessions to the protestors by dissolving parliament and promising new legislative elections within six months, but these were not enough to halt the protests and on 14 January he stepped down and left Tunisia with his family. He has since been convicted in absentia over the deaths of protestors during the uprising and Tunisia is seeking his extradition from Saudi Arabia.

Egypt

Egypt had an unsettled 2010, which saw President Mubarak’s illness prompting speculation about his succession, and protests about alleged parliamentary poll rigging after the main opposition won no seats in the new parliament in November 2010. Inspired by Tunisia, protests in Egypt began in January 2011, with activists organising the first large scale protest in Cairo on ‘Police Day’ on 25 January, in part as a symbol of protest against abuses by the security state. Protests continued for the following 18 days with protestors congregating in Tahrir Square in central Cairo, which became a symbol for the uprising. President Hosni Mubarak, a former military commander who had ruled since 1981, re-shuffled his cabinet, appointed a Vice President, and promised to step down in September but the concessions failed to placate the protestors and his resignation was announced on 11 February 2011. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces assumed control, and promised a transition to democracy. Mr Mubarak was arrested in April 2011, along with a number of his family and former officials. On 2 June 2012 he was sentenced to life in prison for his part in the killing of protestors during the revolution, over 800 of whom are thought to have died in clashes with security forces.

Libya

Following the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the arrest of Fathi Terbil, a prominent Libyan lawyer and campaigner, was the trigger for the outbreak of protests in Libya. These began on 15 February 2011 in the eastern port city of Benghazi and quickly escalated into a major rebellion. Colonel Gaddafi, who had controlled Libya since he came to power in a military coup in 1969, stated that he would not quit as leader and responded with violent force; the military fired on protestors and used aircraft to attack them. By the end of February 2011 the opposition National Transitional Council (NTC) had been established by rebel forces in Benghazi and the rebellion had spread across the country. There was international condemnation of Colonel Gaddafi’s actions and in March 2011, following a request from the Arab League, the UN Security Council authorised a no-fly zone over Libya and “all necessary measures” to protect civilians. Air strikes began under British, French and US leadership on 19 March 2011 until NATO assumed control on 31 March. In August, the rebels took control of Tripoli and Colonel Gaddafi went into hiding. In September the rebels besieged the pro-Gaddafi town of Sirte, where he had been born. Colonel Gaddafi was killed on 20 October 2011 after his capture by rebel forces near Sirte. The NTC announced the liberation of Libya on 23 October 2011 and declared control of the country’s transition, promising elections within eight months.
The causes of the Arab Spring

7. There was general agreement among witnesses as to the long-term causes of the Arab Spring revolutions. It is clear that the protests as a whole were not ideological, in that they did not seek to impose a particular set of beliefs or order. Instead, they united discontented citizens from across political, economic, class and religious divides in opposition to their autocratic governments. The figures that united the protestors were not political leaders but ordinary people who had suffered at the hands of the authoritarian systems. In Tunisia, this figure was Mohammed Bouazizi, a street vendor frustrated by police harassment and humiliation who set himself on fire in protest on 17 December 2010 and later died of his injuries. In Egypt, momentum for the protests was nurtured in part by a movement called ‘We are all Khaled Said’, dedicated to a young Egyptian who had died in suspicious circumstances in police custody in June 2010.

8. Although there were some differences in emphasis, all of the evidence we received agreed that protests were spurred by a potent combination of economic, social, and political grievances that created “fertile grounds for dissent” and united disparate groups in opposition to their autocratic systems. Our witnesses described chronic economic underperformance across the region, drawing particular attention to unemployment—especially youth unemployment—which averaged 20% across the region and reached 30% in Libya in 2011; poverty; widening inequality; rising food prices; and increasingly visible evidence of corruption and the enrichment of elites. The food riots that took place in the region in 2008 also contributed, demonstrating existing discontent, as well as the people’s ability to protest. Witnesses also highlighted a huge and unsustainable demographic expansion that had seen the population of the region double since 1980 with 60% of that population under 25 years old, which exacerbated the existing problems produced by economic mismanagement. Several of our witnesses considered these growing economic problems to be the main driving factor behind the outbreak of the revolutions.⁵

9. The social and political causes of the Arab Spring included resentment of authoritarian rulers that had denied freedom of expression and limited opportunities for participation in civil and political life; long-standing ‘emergency laws’; a malfunctioning or absent justice system; and a repressive security state apparatus that was responsible for myriad human rights abuses, including torture and killings.⁶ This was particularly true in Libya, where public hangings and instances of collective punishment loomed large in recent memory.⁷ A number of our witnesses were also struck by a desire to re-assert individual and national pride that characterised the protests.⁸ Bell Pottinger Public Advocacy and Dr Claire Spencer, Head of the MENA programme at Chatham House, both spoke of a feeling of a lack of dignity or an insult to one’s dignity that spurred individual participation in the protests.⁹ The Middle East Monitor (MEMO), a media research organisation, saw this on a national scale, speaking of “a visceral sense of national humiliation and lack of self-esteem”,

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⁵ Q 4 [Intissar Kherigi], Q 24 [Eugene Rogan], Q 103 [Lord Malloch-Brown]
⁶ See Ev 147 [Christian Aid], Ev 155–156 [Redress Trust], Ev 164–165 and Ev211–212 [Amnesty International]
⁷ Ev 107
⁸ See, for example, Ev 174.
⁹ Q 40 and Ev 207
stating that “In Egypt, a popular slogan was written and chanted everywhere: ’Raise your head, you’re an Egyptian.’”

10. Social media has been widely recognised in media commentary as an important platform during the uprisings for the expression of dissent and to organise and connect protest movements. The BBC World Service noted in its evidence that “the use of social media by demonstrators played a pivotal role in developments”, although Intissar Kherigi considered that social media was “just an enabling factor” that highlighted underlying problems. Globalisation, as well as a greater ease of travel, was also highlighted as a contributory factor, as frustrated young people became “acutely aware” of their relative deprivation and understood there existed alternatives to the repressive governments under which they lived.

Could the FCO have anticipated the Arab Spring?

Were the uprisings predictable?

11. The underlying frustrations that contributed to the outbreak of the Arab Spring were evidently well known before the uprisings. Many of the factors listed above had been recognized in successive United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports on Arab Human Development from 2002 onwards. However, almost all of those who provided evidence to the Committee agreed that the scale and success of the protests took most people by surprise, including close observers of the region and even those who participated in the uprisings. The FCO argued that:

While we were aware of the fundamental underlying frustrations of people in the region, and were orientating our policies to address them, we did not predict that a spark in Tunisia in December 2010 would trigger such an outpouring of protest. No other international player, academic analyst, or opposition group within the region foresaw this either.

12. It is true that none of our witnesses claimed to have predicted that revolutions would occur either in the manner or at the precise time that they did. A number of witnesses also agreed that the FCO was well aware of the problems in the region. Dr Claire Spencer stated that the Foreign Office “certainly knew” about them, and Dr Eugene Rogan, Director of the Middle East Centre at St Anthony’s College, University of Oxford, argued that Ambassadors displayed a “depth of knowledge that comes with a long history of engagement with the region”, and that: “I think it is asking too much of diplomatic officials to be able to predict with [a] degree of precision [when uprisings would occur].”
13. However, some of the same witnesses identified particular factors that they believed ought to have warned observers of an imminent outburst. Dr Eugene Rogan suggested that the loyalty of the military to the governments in Egypt and Tunisia could have been monitored more closely. A number of witnesses noted that the growing inequality and corruption was becoming very visible in the time leading up to the revolutions, with a construction boom and “more flagrant displays of wealth” in Tunisia, for example. Dr Rogan considered that the growing inequality “should have alerted people across the region to the risk of revolution”.

Were the FCO’s resources and approach at fault?

Information gathering

14. Some evidence questioned the FCO’s methods of information gathering, including criticism of the FCO for failing to consult more widely. Dr Rooney suggested that the FCO should have consulted with “articulate” members of the public (such as intellectuals and writers) to understand better the societies in which they worked; while Christian Aid suggested that FCO staff should have prioritised travel to areas outside Cairo, and should have engaged with more civil society organisations to deepen their analysis of the region. Lord Malloch-Brown was particularly critical, noting that:

Whereas the world of Whitehall was fairly blind to the imminence of change, if you talked to civil society types in Egypt in 2010, they were telling you that things were getting close to blowing point, and it was the same with good, astute investigative journalists.

15. These criticisms are not new. In our 2011 report on The Role of the FCO in UK Government, we noted that a number of witnesses argued that the FCO needed to improve its skills in “basic diplomatic technique”, and reflected on the recommendations of the FCO’s internal report on its failure to foresee the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The FCO’s report listed various requirements for UK posts in countries where important UK interests would be at risk in the event of political upheaval, including the recommendation that posts should have at least one officer working full-time on internal political affairs, knowing the local language, ideally with previous experience of the country, and with time to travel outside the capital.

16. In its written submission the FCO robustly defended its approach, stating that:

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17 Q 25
18 Q 41
19 Q 24
20 Ev 142 and Ev 143
21 Ev 147
22 Q 117
23 Foreign Affairs Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2010–12, The Role of the FCO in UK Government, HC 665, para 180
In any regime where people are not free to express their concerns or opposition to the policies of their governments, there is a risk of frustrations bursting out suddenly and with potentially dramatic consequences. No amount of intelligence effort or further consultation with oppositionists or youth groups could have forewarned us or others of the actual outcome.24

**Staff numbers and expertise**

17. Lord Malloch-Brown also said that the UK had lost its previous Arabist “touch and feel” for the region, and criticised the diminished staff resources in post, stating that: “although the British Ambassadors I met in the region were still of a very high calibre, they had much smaller political teams per country than in the past. In that sense, it is correct to say that they could not dig down deep enough”.25

18. We have previously mentioned the reduction in the number of FCO staff and resources. Our 2011 report on FCO Performance and Finances noted that the 10% cut to the FCO’s core budget came on top of previous budget cuts which our predecessor Committee had considered a threat to the FCO’s effectiveness. In our 2011 report, we commented:

> We conclude that reductions in spending on the FCO, if they result in shortfalls in skilled personnel and technical support in key countries and regions, can have a serious effect in terms of the UK’s relations with foreign countries, out of all proportion to the money involved, especially in relation to the UK’s security and that of its Overseas Territories.26

19. It is not reasonable to expect diplomats to have predicted the advent of the uprisings with precision. Successful uprisings are, by their very nature, somewhat unpredictable. However, it is concerning that the UK appears to have been taken so completely by surprise and little comfort that other states suffered the same problems. In its response to this report, the FCO should respond to criticisms that it did not have a sufficiently broad base of contacts from different social groups and geographical regions from which to draw information about approaching crises and set out what steps it is taking to improve its ability to anticipate such events in the future.

20. We conclude that the decline in staff numbers in post in the MENA region may have contributed to a lower information gathering capacity but it cannot be conclusively drawn that such a decline had affected the FCO’s ability to predict the Arab Spring uprisings. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that had there been more emphasis on political reporting and larger political teams in post, this would have improved the FCO’s information gathering before the uprisings, and its ability to respond once they had begun.

24 Ev 67
25 Q 106
26 Foreign Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2010–11, FCO Performance and Finances, HC 572, para 25
Did the FCO have the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to the Arab Spring?

21. Without claiming that they were in direct anticipation of the Arab Spring, in its written submission the FCO highlighted various programmes established in 2009–10 that enabled it to respond better to the events as they occurred. Most notably, in late 2009 the Middle East and North Africa Division (MENAD) commissioned the FCO’s strategy unit to examine whether ‘Arab Human Development’ should be an FCO policy priority. It concluded in 2010, making a number of recommendations for a more strategic approach toward human development in the region. The Foreign Secretary approved the creation of a four-person Arab Human Development team in MENAD in summer 2010 and a £5 million fund for the programme at the end of 2010. This team was later re-named the Arab Partnership Initiative and went on to form a key part of the FCO’s response to the Arab Spring. However, by the time that uprisings had broken out in Tunisia in December 2010, only the team leader was in place; the three other staff posts were filled in January 2011.27

22. The FCO claims that this policy work “placed the UK in a strong position to respond strategically and rapidly to the Arab Spring, both bilaterally (including with strategic partners such as the British Council) and through the multilateral mechanisms of the EU and G8”.28 Christian Aid was more sceptical about the FCO’s long-standing commitment to addressing the region’s problems, stating that its creation of the Arab Partnership Initiative before the revolutions, although welcome, was “a rather isolated case of the FCO making efforts to engage in addressing long term issues of poor governance and accountability in the region”.29

23. The FCO also highlighted certain communications programmes it had established that proved effective during the Arab Spring, including ‘Partners for Progress’—a communications programme which focused on the FCO’s internet presence and ensured that each embassy in the region had a website in both English and Arabic, and developed the use of Facebook, Twitter and Ambassadors’ blogs. The FCO cited comments by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s Advisor for Innovation, Ben Scott, in support of its efforts. He reportedly described how “when the Arab Spring broke, and the role of social media came into focus, we had to pedal very hard just to get close to where the Brits were”.30

Language skills

24. We have already placed on record our concern at evidence that the FCO’s specialist geographical expertise, including knowledge of foreign languages, has weakened. During this Committee’s inquiry into The role of the FCO in UK Government, Sir Oliver Miles, a former British diplomat, told the Committee that:

27 Ev 126
28 Ev 61
29 Ev 147
30 Ev 68
By the time I retired from the service in 1996 I felt (and I said as much to the then head of the Diplomatic Service) that we had compromised our traditional position of strength by allowing deep understanding of the world outside Britain to be sacrificed in favour of peripheral objectives. A symbol and more than a symbol of this is the fact that in the region I know best, the Arab world, too many key positions at home and abroad are now occupied by non-Arabic speakers. This is sometimes unavoidable, but it is nonetheless deplorable.\footnote{31}{Foreign Affairs Committee, The Role of the FCO in UK Government, Ev w47}

Lord Malloch-Brown voiced similar concerns during this inquiry, asserting that: “Whatever they tell you, Foreign Office languages are in crisis. […] Even with a mainstream language such as Arabic, the cutbacks that have occurred are key.”\footnote{32}{Q 121}

25. In response to questions about the MENAD’s resources and expertise, MENAD Director Dr Christian Turner told us that just prior to the outbreak of the Arab Spring, in November 2010, the FCO had launched a “MENA Cadre” initiative, a key part of which is a renewed effort on language skills. As part of this programme the FCO would:

a) restore the length of training for Full Time Arabic Training to 18 months;

b) provide more opportunities and encouragement to staff in London to learn and maintain foreign languages, with weekly conversation classes for existing Arabic speakers, a 12-month beginners Arabic class (to which over 60 FCO staff have subscribed), and French classes, and

c) re-classify approximately 20 existing jobs at MENA Posts overseas as speaker slots, i.e. posts which have a language requirement. The FCO told us that once trained staff were in place, this would represent an approximate 40% increase in Arabic speaker capacity in the network compared to 2010 levels.\footnote{33}{Ev 58}

The MENA Cadre initiative would also seek to enhance expertise by hosting in-house seminars and roundtables with outside experts, including think tanks and retired Diplomatic Service staff.\footnote{34}{Ev 58} Dr Turner reported that there were now approximately 70 speaker slots in the overseas MENA network (out of over 155 UK-based staff). In MENAD in London, there are “over 30” officers who speak Arabic, Farsi or French to operational standard\footnote{35}{FCO language exams are aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The FCO operational exam is equivalent to CEFR level C1.} (about a quarter of the directorate), but the FCO provided no further breakdown as to which of those 30 members of staff speak which of the three languages specified.\footnote{36}{Ev 58} We conclude that the work done by the FCO in its Middle East and North Africa Directorate in 2010 to improve Arabic language skills and to revise its strategic approach showed some foresight and demonstrates that the Department had recognised the need for improvement. However, the fact that the Department considered it necessary to plan a 40% increase in the FCO’s Arabic speakers implicitly...
acknowledges that it had significantly degraded its language capacity by 2010. At the outbreak of the Arab Spring these programmes had yet to have a demonstrable impact in raising language skills or significantly changing the Department’s approach.
The FCO’s immediate response to the crises

26. When protests began to take place in the MENA region, the FCO was responsible for coordinating both the consular and diplomatic response to the crises. The Government told us that the Arab Spring put “significant strain” on MENAD’s resources. Before the Arab Spring, the Department had approximately 90 staff. Between January and July 2011, over 570 staff based in London and the FCO’s offices in Milton Keynes had volunteered to assist the work of MENAD and the Consular Directorate as they responded to the series of crises in the Arab Spring, as well as earthquakes in Japan and New Zealand.

27. The Consular Crisis Management Department deployed 16 Rapid Deployment Teams, totalling 90 staff overseas to support the consular response, and over 50 staff were deployed to the states on an ad-hoc basis to support the response to the Arab Spring. In April 2011, the FCO Board decided to increase staffing in MENAD “on a more permanent and sustainable footing.” The Directorate was re-organised into five departments:

- Libya Unit
- Near East and North Africa Department
- Northern Gulf Department
- Arabian Peninsula Department
- Arab Partnership Department

The FCO told us that the new Libya Unit had approximately 25 new slots. Across the remainder of the Directorate, three slots were upgraded and approximately 15 new slots created, including an additional Director. This suggests that an additional 35–40 positions have been added to the MENA Directorate since the start of 2011, an increase in staffing of around 40%.

The consular response in Tunisia

28. On the eve of the Arab Spring, there were approximately 4,000 British nationals in Tunisia. The UK embassy in Tunis was one of its smallest in the region, with approximately 65 staff. The FCO told us that it had “extensive contingency plans for handling unexpected crises in Tunisia, including those related to public disorder.” The FCO’s travel advice for Tunisia was updated 22 times between 5 January and 4 February...

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37 Ev 58
38 Ibid.
39 Ev 59
40 Ev 82
2011, escalating its advice to advise against all travel and for British nationals to leave Tunisia between 13–15 January, at the time of ex-President Ben Ali’s departure.41

29. By 20 January, the FCO estimated that there were only 300 British nationals remaining in Tunisia, most of whom were long-term residents.42 There was no need for a government-sponsored evacuation as Britons were able to leave on commercial flights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 January</td>
<td>FCO advises against all but essential travel to Tunisia</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 January</td>
<td>President Ben Ali departed Tunisia for Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FCO advises British nationals to “consider their need to remain in Tunisia”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCO staff member from Rabat arrives to support Embassy work</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tunisian airspace briefly closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 January</td>
<td>FCO advises all British nationals without a pressing reason to remain to leave Tunisia by commercial means</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCO staff member from Algiers arrives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Non-essential FCO and British Council staff and dependents leave Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 January</td>
<td>FCO / consular service Rapid Deployment Team arrives to help with ‘assisted departure operations’</td>
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<tr>
<td>15–20 January</td>
<td>An estimated 4,000 British nationals leave Tunisia by commercial means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 February</td>
<td>FCO relaxes its travel advice for Tunisia</td>
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</table>

**The consular response in Egypt**

30. Cairo is one of the largest posts in the region, serving as a regional hub with 150 staff from the FCO and other Whitehall departments.43 At the time of the revolution the Consulate-General in Alexandria accommodated approximately 20 staff. The FCO also had Honorary Consulates in Sharm el-Sheikh, Luxor, Suez and Hurghada.44 The Government estimated the resident British community in Egypt to be around 15,000 including dependants, concentrated mainly in and around Cairo. Around 120,000 British nationals visited Egypt each month, with around 20,000–25,000 in the country at any one time. Unlike in Tunis, the FCO judged that chartered aircraft were required to supplement commercial capacity in evacuating British nationals from Egypt. The FCO chartered two flights which were used by 200 British nationals and dependants who were charged £300 per adult fare.45 FCO travel advice for Egypt was updated 22 times between 26 January and 21 February 2011.46

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41 Ev 88–93
42 Blog post by HMA to Tunis, 20 January 2011, via FCO website (www.fco.gov.uk)
43 Ev 82
44 Ibid.
45 Ev 83
46 Ev 99–104
### Timeline: the consular response in Egypt

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>First major protests in Cairo</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 January</td>
<td>FCO escalates its advice to advise against all but essential travel to Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor and Suez</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 January</td>
<td>FCO advises all British nationals without a pressing need to remain in the major cities of Cairo, Alexandria or Suez to leave by commercial means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>The first Rapid Deployment Team (RDT) arrives in Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 January</td>
<td>A second RDT and an Ministry of Defence planning team arrive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3 February | Non-core staff in the Cairo embassy are either evacuated or told not to attend work at the embassy  
First FCO chartered aircraft to supplement the commercial flight capacity departs |
| 5 February | Second FCO chartered aircraft departs                                 |
| 15 February| FCO partially relaxes travel advice                                    |
| 21 February| FCO lifts all advice against non-essential travel to Egypt             |

31. A major point of concern for the FCO was the advice it gave to the thousands of British nationals at the resorts on the Red Sea. Many other states, including the US and almost all EU countries, advised their citizens against travel to Egypt as a whole during the uprisings. In contrast, the FCO judged that the risk to British nationals in tourist resorts was “significantly lower than that in the major cities” and did not advise British travellers to leave. The FCO told us that it deployed extra consular staff to Sharm el-Sheikh to support the Honorary Consul and reviewed its assessment on a daily basis in consultation with staff in Egypt.\(^{47}\) The FCO told us that its approach in differentiating between different parts of the country had since been praised by the Egyptian government, UK tour operators and British travellers who were able to continue their holidays. The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) agreed and suggested that there would have been negative consequences had a travel ban been issued “hastily and impulsively”, and it praised the FCO for recognising “geographical differences” which ensured “orderly evacuations where necessary and the prevention of general panic amongst UK nationals.”\(^{48}\)

32. ABTA praised the FCO’s Consular Services Directorate, describing communications during the crisis in Tunisia and Egypt as “strong, effective and constructive”. ABTA also applauded the FCO’s travel advice as well-timed, balanced, and “based on well-informed decisions”.\(^{49}\) Where ABTA did see fault, such as in an administrative error which it said resulted in a case of unnecessary evacuation of some British nationals,\(^{50}\) and a problem with the visibility of consular staff at airports, it was satisfied that the problems were quickly addressed and lessons learned. **We conclude that the Government provided a good consular service to British nationals in Egypt and Tunisia, providing well-judged**

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47 Ev 83  
48 Ev 226  
49 Ev 225  
50 Ev 226
and practical advice. We congratulate the FCO for its decision not to advise against travel to the Red Sea resorts.

33. ABTA warned that other states in the region have a much higher number of British tourists that do not travel on package holidays, for whom no airline or travel provider has a legal obligation to support their repatriation. Should unrest spread to these countries the evacuation of British citizens would be more challenging. **In its response to this report the FCO should confirm that its consular evacuation plans elsewhere in the region take into account the much higher number of independent British travellers, who may require more consular assistance than those on package holidays.**

**The consular response in Libya**

34. When protests broke out in Libya on 15 February 2011, violence escalated much more quickly and severely than it had in Egypt or Tunisia, and within a week the situation required a major consular response and an evacuation of British nationals from various locations in the country. There were an estimated 3,500 British nationals in Libya in February 2011.\(^{31}\) The Embassy had approximately 80 staff, and held emergency plans for “potential consular disasters”, including plans for evacuations by land, air and sea due to its designation as a “medium risk” country.\(^ {52} \)

35. The Government described the Libya crisis as “the most complex FCO-led evacuation in recent years, involving combined commercial charter and military operations.”\(^ {53} \) The particular difficulties in Libya were the collapse of administration in Tripoli; chaos and danger at the airport, with live gunfire being used to control crowds, and few if any Libyan airport ground staff; and the fact that UK nationals were dispersed over a vast swathe of remote desert. In addition, the FCO was dealing with an “unprecedented” series of crises in the first few months of 2011, including the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and major earthquakes in New Zealand in February and Japan in March.\(^ {54} \)

36. In total the UK evacuated over 800 British nationals and over 1,000 foreign nationals between 23 February and 1 March 2011.\(^ {55} \) By 7 March, the Foreign Secretary reported to the House that the UK was aware of only around 180 British nationals remaining in Libya, including some journalists, some of whom had informed the FCO of their wish to remain.\(^ {56} \) British nationals in Libya were not charged for FCO charter flights or evacuation by military assets as there were no commercial options available. The UK also provided humanitarian support to repatriate 12,700 foreign nationals fleeing the violence from the Libyan borders and to evacuate 4,800 Libyans and other foreign nationals from Misrata.\(^ {57} \) A timeline of the consular response is attached as Annex 1 to this report.

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52 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures, 4 July 2011, p18
53 Ev 111
54 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures, 4 July 2011, p.11–12
55 Ev 109 and HC Deb, 3 March 2011, Col 35–36W
56 HC Deb, 7 March 2011, Col 644
57 Ev 109
37. The Government received significant criticism in the press for its handling of the Libya crisis.\(^\text{58}\) The media reported severe delays with call handling, which the Government has acknowledged were “unacceptably long”, and major problems in obtaining and delivering aircraft on which to evacuate British nationals from Libya. A number of problems, including a technical fault on the first aircraft chartered by the FCO, meant that British citizens waited for over 48 hours after UK commercial flights had been cancelled for Government charter planes to evacuate them. Some of those who were in more remote areas waited considerably longer. Conditions at Tripoli airport and the provision of information to British nationals were criticised, and the plight of British oil workers in more remote parts of Libya was a particular focus of attention. In media interviews, there was praise for the staff on the ground but communications with London were described as a “fiasco”.\(^\text{39}\) Both the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister delivered public apologies for the problems and acknowledged that Britons had had a difficult time.\(^\text{60}\)

38. Following the experience in Libya, the FCO commissioned a Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures, which was published on 4 July 2011 and updated in December 2011. The Review details the problems encountered and the FCO’s revised structures and procedures. We note that the FCO has taken steps to clarify decision-making structures and has introduced set triggers to escalate call handling responses and to move more quickly to outsourcing call handling during future crises.\(^\text{61}\) Most importantly, the FCO is extending the range of possible suppliers of charter aircraft, including by formalising arrangements with the Ministry of Defence. The FCO’s revised “decision making matrix” now makes clear that options for chartering aircraft should be routinely explored at early stages in “pre-crisis planning”. To guard against problems such as the technical fault in Libya’s case, the FCO will ensure that there is extra redundancy capacity when chartering aircraft, but notes that this will entail extra cost.\(^\text{62}\)

The evacuation of British nationals exposed serious weaknesses in the FCO’s emergency consular response systems, particularly with regard to chartering flights for evacuations. The Foreign Secretary was right to commission a full and detailed review, and we commend the FCO for producing detailed conclusions. While we hope that this will improve the FCO’s response, some of these new procedures are yet to be tested.

**Staffing during crises**

39. In response to appeals by the Permanent Under-Secretary, 570 staff from across the FCO network in London and Milton Keynes volunteered to work in the crisis centre and to support the response. The Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures noted that this


\(^{61}\) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures, 4 July 2011, p.5–6

\(^{62}\) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures, 4 July 2011, p.6. This policy was put into practice in Bahrain in March 2011, when the FCO chartered three aircraft from Bahrain to mitigate against the risk of one failing. The first aircraft was cancelled due to lack of demand.
included many junior A and B band staff at a time when announcements were being made on the future of the workforce structure that particularly affected them. The Review also notes that Rapid Deployment Teams and Embassy teams operated in extreme conditions with minimal support. For example, in Tripoli the Government reported chaos and danger at the airport, with live gunfire being used to control crowds and few if any Libyan airport ground staff. Some staff reportedly worked shifts of more than 24 hours with little or no rest before returning to duty. **We commend the hundreds of FCO staff who worked long hours over a number of months during rolling crises. The staff in Libya and the FCO’s Rapid Deployment Teams deserve particular recognition for their work to ensure British nationals reached safety.**

*Locally engaged staff: specific challenges*

40. The Government told us that locally engaged staff were particularly badly affected by travel restrictions during the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, noting that on one occasion only 40% of locally engaged staff managed to reach work in Tunis, although where possible staff worked from home. Locally engaged staff in Cairo who attempted to work from home were hampered by government restrictions placed on mobile phone and internet use. The FCO stated that this “meant the loss of valuable expertise for both political and consular operations”, and that the loss of manpower “also presented problems for rostering and adequately resting staff.”

**We conclude that the problems encountered by locally engaged staff in reaching work during the crises, and the subsequent strain placed on remaining staff, are of particular concern in the light of the FCO’s policy of engaging an ever greater number of locally engaged staff. We recommend that in its response to this report the Government provide details of how it intends to mitigate the effects of these problems in future crises.**

41. Although we have received no evidence to suggest that locally engaged staff played a role in protests in Tunisia, Egypt or Libya, we remind the Government of problems experienced in 2009 when a member of locally engaged staff of the British Embassy in Iran was arrested and detained during protests in Tehran. The Committee’s Report on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2008–09 urged the Government to consider requesting the extension of limited diplomatic immunity to some locally-engaged staff, as permitted under the Vienna Convention.

**We recommend that the Government review its policies in order to ensure that it is satisfied it is providing the best possible level of diplomatic protection to its locally engaged staff, and that they are aware of the limits of this protection.**

*Political and diplomatic responses in Tunisia and Egypt*

42. The Government told us that when the uprisings in Tunisia began it had had a “limited” bilateral relationship with the Ben Ali government, and there was “no reason to believe that the unrest would represent a serious challenge to the survival of the Ben Ali
regime.” The UK therefore focused on addressing the deterioration in the human rights situation. The Foreign Secretary made three public statements on 11, 14 and 15 January condemning the violence and urging restraint and the protection of human rights. These messages were also made public via social media and the Ambassador’s blog. The FCO worked with the EU to reinforce its message through, for example, a meeting with EU ambassadors and the Tunisian Foreign Minister on 13 January to express concern about the rising violence, which the British Ambassador attended.

43. In respect of Egypt, the FCO told us that it had believed President Mubarak did not intend to step down, and had judged that “while it was not for the UK to decide who governed Egypt, it was clear that stability in Egypt required a process of political change.” The UK pursued a similar policy as it had in Tunisia of publicly condemning the violence and calling for political reforms, and conducted what it described as “sustained UK engagement” with its Egyptian contacts—which were much more extensive than those it had in Tunisia—to call for an orderly transition to a more democratic system, avoidance of violent repression, and the lifting of restrictions on freedom of speech. There were “at least 20” contacts by UK Cabinet ministers in a three week period during the revolution to Egyptian interlocutors including President Mubarak, his son Gamal Mubarak, Prime Minister Omar Suleiman and Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit. At least two of these calls were made by the Prime Minister.

44. The UK discussed the situation in Egypt with US, Jordanian, Arab League and UN interlocutors, and worked with EU Foreign Ministers and Heads of State to issue conclusions and a statement condemning the violence and calling for a transition to a broad-based government. The UK Government also issued 11 public statements on the violence, including joint statements with France, Germany, Spain and Italy, as well as a number of media interviews and updated Parliament three times on the MENA region between 28 January and 11 February.

45. The FCO noted that in both Egypt and Tunisia the leaders had indicated a willingness to make limited concessions on some of the issues, but that those concessions had been insufficient to assuage protestors. We conclude that the Government was right to focus on human rights protection and to call for political reform rather than making an explicit call for President Ben Ali or President Mubarak to step down.

Freezing assets

46. The issue of deposed leaders’ assets is a very sensitive one in the MENA region, particularly in Egypt where the UK is popularly believed to have frozen and failed to return large amounts of Egyptian assets.
47. In the case of Tunisia, the FCO told us that it lobbied hard within the EU to ensure a rapid decision on freezing assets belonging to President Ben Ali and his family. The EU froze assets of the President and his wife on 31 January, adding a further 46 allies and relatives to the freeze on 4 February. On 7 February the Government issued a Financial Sanctions Notice against all 48 named in the asset freeze.

48. In contrast to the Tunisia asset freezes, which were implemented by the EU 16 days after Ben Ali’s departure, it took over six weeks to achieve an EU freeze of Mubarak’s assets from the time it was first requested. This delay caused some comment in the press, particularly after Switzerland took steps to freeze Mubarak’s assets within days of his losing power. The Government told us that the Egyptian Embassy in the UK submitted asset freezing evidence to the FCO for Mubarak and family members, former ministers and officials between 13 and 28 February and the Chancellor of the Exchequer discussed a freeze with EU Finance Ministers on 13–14 February in Brussels. Yet it was not until 21 March that the EU formally imposed an asset freeze on Hosni Mubarak and 18 of his associates, and over £40 million of assets were frozen in the UK. It was reported in European Voice on 21 March 2011 that a number of EU member states had already taken steps to freeze assets in the meantime. We recommend that the Government provide the Committee with an explanation of the difference between the times taken to achieve an EU-wide asset freeze for Ex-President Ben Ali and for Ex-President Mubarak.

Response to the Libyan uprising

49. Colonel Gaddafi’s decision to respond to the uprisings against his regime in Libya with violence and repression resulted in a British response of a different order and scale to that in Tunisia or Egypt. The Government noted the importance of the defection of some army units to the opposition, but concluded that the situation “required external intervention on a serious scale to avoid Qadhafi crushing the voices of change.” Colonel Gaddafi’s approach, including his reference to protestors as “rats” and “cockroaches”, and now-infamous threats to “cleanse Libya house by house” galvanised international action to protect civilians from his regime.

Shaping the international response

50. The FCO states that the UK played a “key part” in shaping the international response to Colonel Gaddafi’s attempted repression of the Libyan uprising. The UK was active from an early stage in responding to the situation in Libya, working with France and the US, as well as in the EU and United Nations to achieve a unified response. It co-sponsored the UN

72 Ev 70
73 Ev 91
74 Ev 97
75 Ev 71 and Ev 104. See also: HL Deb, 27 April 2011, cols 123WA.
76 “EU freezes Mubarak funds”, European Voice, 21 March 2011, via website (www.europeanvoice.com)
77 Ev 107
78 See, for example: “Libya protests: Defiant Gaddafi refuses to quit”, BBC News Online, 22 February 2011.
Security Council resolution 1970 against Gaddafi’s regime, and worked with the Arab League as it made a formal request to the UN to establish a no-fly zone over Libya.

**UN action on Libya 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Resolution</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 February</td>
<td>UNSCR 1970</td>
<td>Imposed arms embargo on Libya and referred the situation to the International Criminal Court and imposed a travel ban and asset freeze on some members of the regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>UNSCR 1973</td>
<td>Reinforced and tightened the arms embargo and asset freeze, established a no-fly zone in Libyan airspace and authorised “all necessary measures […] to protect civilians […] while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 September</td>
<td>UNSCR 2009</td>
<td>Established the UN Support Mission in Libya and modified the asset freezes to allow some to be unfrozen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October</td>
<td>UNSCR 2016</td>
<td>Ended the mandate for the use of all necessary measures to protect the civilian population and lifted the no-fly zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 December</td>
<td>UNSCR 2017</td>
<td>Called on Libya and the international community to take steps to prevent the proliferation of arms in the region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51. Beyond the UN, the UK reaffirmed its leading role in responding to events in Libya by holding a London Conference on Libya with 40 countries in attendance on 29 March, and by creating and co-chairing with Qatar the first meeting of the Libya Contact Group on 13 April. The FCO told us that these efforts “presented a unified international voice on Libya” and argued that this was reinforced by a joint letter by the Prime Minister, President Obama and President Sarkozy, which stated that Gaddafi must “go, and go for good.”

52. The UK’s role in international military action, including its legality, aims, and allegations of seeking regime change, has been considered extensively by the Defence Committee in its report on Operations in Libya, published earlier this year. We also recall our earlier conclusions in our report on The Role of the FCO in UK Government that “the Government’s significant contribution to achieving UN Security Council approval for a No-Fly Zone over Libya prevented major loss of life in Benghazi.”

53. Since the end of military action, concerns have been raised by NGOs and others about the effect of military action on civilians in Libya. In one reported incident, NATO has been criticised for failing to respond to distress calls and to take action to assist a stranded boat of 72 Libyan migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, only nine of whom survived. A report by the Council of Europe’s Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons found a “catalogue of failures”, as Libyan authorities, Italian and Maltese Maritime Coordination Centres and NATO all failed to fulfil their responsibilities toward the vessel. The report was particularly critical of the apparent failure of the crews of a helicopter and naval vessel to go...
to the boat’s assistance. Of particular concern to our Committee was the conclusion by the Council of Europe that:

there was a failure by NATO and individual member States involved in planning Operation Unified Protector off the Libyan coast. It was foreseeable that there would be an exodus of people fleeing the country, including by the dangerous sea route.  

UK-Libya diplomatic relations throughout the revolution

Breakdown of relations with former regime

54. The Government told us that throughout the period of the revolution it continued to take action bilaterally to apply pressure to the Gaddafi regime. Following the evacuation of British nationals from Libya, British Embassy operations were suspended and the Embassy in Tripoli closed on 26 February 2011. The UK took a number of steps to apply diplomatic pressure, including revoking Gaddafi’s immunity as head of state so that neither he nor his family could freely enter the UK, and expelling five members of the Libyan Embassy on 30 March. On 30 April, the British Embassy in Tripoli was attacked and burned following reports that a NATO airstrike had killed one of Colonel Gaddafi’s sons. The Foreign Secretary responded by expelling the Libyan Ambassador to the United Kingdom Omar Jelban on 1 May, and two more Libyan diplomats were expelled on 4 May.

Establishing new relations

55. As it sought to increase the pressure on the Gaddafi regime, the FCO also looked to increase the UK’s contacts with the leadership of the opposition, the National Transitional Council (NTC). The FCO’s first efforts to re-establish a presence in Libya at the start of March 2011 ended in disaster after the UK sent a “small British diplomatic team” to eastern Libya to “build on initial contacts and to assess the scope for closer diplomatic contact.” The team was withdrawn after what the FCO termed “a serious misunderstanding about its role.” The eight members of the team, six of whom were reportedly members of the SAS, were detained and disarmed by guards after landing by helicopter on farmland near Benghazi, then handed to opposition forces. British diplomatic efforts to have the team released included a phone call from UK Ambassador to Tripoli Richard Northern, a recording of which was leaked to Libyan television channels. The team was released and left the country on 6 March 2011, but the incident was labelled an embarrassing fiasco in media reports. The Foreign Secretary made a statement to the House on the events and accepted responsibility for the mission. Later in March, the FCO succeeded in establishing relations with the NTC and a British diplomatic mission was established in Benghazi. The UK built on this by sending military advisers to Libya to help the NTC

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82 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Lives lost in the Mediterranean Sea: who is responsible?, 29 March 2012, para 11

83 “Libya unrest: SAS members ‘captured near Benghazi’”, BBC News Online, 6 March 2011, via BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk/news); “SAS and MI6 officers released by Libya’s rebel commanders”, Guardian, 7 March 2011, via Guardian website (www.guardian.co.uk)


85 HC Deb, 7 March 2011, Col 648
improve organisation and communications (though not to train or arm, which would be against UN sanctions).

56. Although not as fast as France, the UK moved relatively quickly to recognise the rebels.86 When the Prime Minister received NTC Chairman Abdul Jalil in London on 12 May, he referred to him as “the legitimate political interlocutor in Libya and Britain’s primary partner there.”87 On 27 July, the UK announced it would recognise the NTC as the sole governmental authority in Libya. The Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and the Secretary of State for International Development visited Libya between June and September 2011.

57. Sir John Jenkins, former Ambassador to Baghdad, took over the UK’s mission in Benghazi in September, at the same time that a UK office was established in Tripoli. As the British Embassy had been damaged in an attack on 30 April, the new office operated out of a commercial hotel and included a cross-Whitehall team. The Foreign Secretary formally re-opened the Embassy in Tripoli on 17 October and a new Ambassador to Libya, Dominic Asquith, took over in mid-November 2011.88

58. We conclude that the Government responded to the Libyan crisis boldly on both bilateral and multilateral levels. The UK demonstrated leadership at the United Nations and in the EU to achieve its desired response.

86 France recognised the NTC on 10 March 2011 as the ‘legitimate representative of the Libyan people’.
87 Ev 119
88 Ev 109–110
Support for democratic transitions

Progress in democratic transitions to June 2012

**Tunisia**

After the fall of President Ben Ali, an interim government was formed headed by Mohamed Ghannouchi, to oversee the transition. Following a slightly rocky start, in which protestors criticised Ghannouchi and other ministers’ links to the old regime, new ministers were appointed and the interim authorities oversaw elections for a constitutional assembly in October 2011 that were considered free and fair by international observers. The moderate Islamist party Ennahda won the most seats (41%), with the centre-left secular Congress for the Republic Party (CPR) coming second with 14% and centre-left secular Ettakatol in third place with almost 10%. Representatives of 25 other parties won seats, with the secular centrist Progressive Democratic Party as the largest opposition party. A coalition government was formed by the three largest parties. The constitutional assembly took up its role in November 2011, with the dual task of acting as a legislative assembly and as a constitution-drafting committee, and an agreement to take no longer than 18 months to draft a constitution and hold elections to the new legislative bodies.

**Egypt**

Egypt has experienced a far more turbulent transitional period than that in Tunisia. Following the departure of President Mubarak the Supreme Council of the Allied Forces (SCAF) took executive control, promising to oversee a transition to democratic elections. Despite the surge in popularity of the army following its announcement that it would not fire on protestors during the revolution, concern quickly mounted about the SCAF’s control of power and its lengthy timetable for the elections. The SCAF’s first suggested timetable for the transition foresaw the transition lasting until late 2012 / early 2013, and prompted major protests. The arrests of protestors and trials of civilians in military courts, also caused outcry. Major street protests took place in October and November against SCAF rule, during which accounts emerged of police and security forces’ abuse of protestors, including women. Following a revised timetable, parliamentary elections took place in three stages between November 2011-January 2012, resulting in a landslide win for the Muslim Brotherhood’s party, which won 47%, and the conservative Islamist Salafist Party, with 24%. Liberal and secular parties won fewer seats, prompting comment that the revolution had been “taken over” by Islamist groups from the young, liberal activists who took part in the Tahrir Square protests. This was of particular concern in relation to the Parliament’s decision to appoint a 100-member assembly dominated by Islamist members to write the new constitution. A court subsequently dissolved the Assembly before it had begun work.

Presidential elections, which were originally planned to complete the transition, took place in June 2012 against a background of confusion as to the rules on who could run and the nature of the new President’s role. Only four weeks before the first round of voting, the electoral commission barred 10 candidates from standing, including a number of front runners. Liberal and secular candidates did not perform well in the first round, and the presidential race was narrowed down to a rather polarised choice between the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party candidate Mohamed Mursi and former Prime Minister and retired air force general Ahmed Shafik. Relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and SCAF deteriorated even further with each accusing the other of attempting to distort the progress of the revolution. The Muslim Brotherhood characterised Shafik as a counter-revolutionary member of the ‘old guard’, while others expressed concern that the Muslim Brotherhood would become too powerful if it held both the parliament and presidency, and could control the constitution drafting process. Four days before the Presidential election was due to take place, a court ruled that the Egyptian Parliament was to be dissolved and new elections held, prompting public outcry. In a further surprise move, on the eve of elections the SCAF announced a ‘constitutional declaration’, which gave the army powers over legislation and budget, removed the army from legislative oversight and gave it a veto over the decision to go to war. This has widely been interpreted as an attempt to strip the presidency of its power and remove the SCAF from parliamentary oversight. Both candidates initially claimed victory in the Presidential election, but after some delay Dr Mohamed Mursi was announced as the winner on 24 June 2011.

**Libya**

The Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) was established during the uprising and recognised by a number of foreign countries, including the UK, as the legitimate governing authority of Libya. In August 2011 it issued a constitutional declaration outlining a roadmap for a transition to a democratic government, including the election of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution and holding of free and fair elections. The NTC announced Libya’s liberation on 23 October 2011 and became a caretaker government, headed by Mustafa Abdul Jalil as Prime Minister. The NTC has since struggled to impose its authority across the country. It has proved difficult to bring the militias that fought against Colonel Gaddafi under government control, and there have been sporadic battles between rival militias, as well as a refusal to hand over prisoners to a central authority. Security and stability remain major concerns, and there have been a number of attacks on government, and foreign embassies and aid organisations, some of which have been blamed upon radical Islamist groups. In addition, leaders in the eastern part of the country, including Benghazi, have suggested that it could be run as a separate federal state. Progress towards elections has also been slow, in part because Libya had fewer established institutions than Egypt and Libya, and infrastructure was damaged during the conflict in 2011. Elections to a constitutional assembly were scheduled to take place in June 2012 but have been delayed until 7 July 2012.
59. In March 2011 the Foreign Secretary spoke about the need for a major international response to the Arab Spring, stating:

> It is a historic shift of massive importance, presenting the international community as a whole with an immense opportunity. We believe that the international response to these events must be commensurately generous, bold and ambitious.\(^9\)

In its submission, the FCO identified a number of “key principles” that have informed the UK’s response to the Arab Spring: including the adoption of a “values based” approach, the recognition that “each country is different and has the right to develop its own political model”, and support for the transitions in Arab Spring countries on both a bilateral and multilateral basis. We will examine each of these elements in turn below.

### Legacy of UK involvement in MENA region

60. Witnesses and written evidence voiced diverse and significant criticism of the UK’s previous foreign policy approach to the MENA region. A number of submissions referred to the widespread belief that “For many decades Western governments favoured stable military dictatorships over democratically elected civilian rule”, and that the UK had accepted authoritarian governments as “guarantors of ‘stability’ and dedicated opponents of ‘Islamic fundamentalism’”.\(^9\) Dr Spencer, from Chatham House, characterised the UK’s approach as being “dominated by an obsession with controlling terrorism and a secondary obsession with controlling migration.”\(^9\) Amnesty International and PLATFORM, a research organization that monitors the impacts of British oil exploration, both suggested that “commercial considerations, particularly regarding arms sales”\(^2\) were also significant, and PLATFORM argued that the UK’s foreign policy toward Gaddafi had been particularly misguided with regard to the UK’s encouragement of British oil companies in Libya, on the basis that the revenues were an “important source of funding” for the Gaddafi regime, making the British companies “complicit in its abuses”.\(^9\) Perhaps most damningly, Intissar Kherigi told us that “There has been a perception that there is a gulf between the UK’s values and its external practices, and this is a very widespread perception in the region.”\(^9\)

61. Amnesty International acknowledged that the UK’s foreign policy toward the region had not been “monolithic” and had varied between states, but concluded that:

> the UK Government’s failure to be more outspoken about human rights violations in countries which were seen as strategically important for counter-terrorism operations was an error of judgement which has been borne out in the popular uprisings of the ‘Arab Spring’. A consequence is that the credibility of the UK

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\(^9\) Foreign Secretary speech to the Times CEO Summit Africa, 22 March 2011, via the FCO website (www.fco.gov.uk)
\(^9\) Ev 174 [Middle East Monitor], Ev 166 [Amnesty International], Ev 142 [Professor Caroline Rooney]
\(^9\) Q 56
\(^2\) Ev 166 and Ev 180
\(^9\) Ev 181
\(^9\) Q 17
governments, the balance was wrong, but my point is that, anyway, the impetus for change was always going to come from within these societies and not from our external pressure. We should self-criticise ourselves, in that we could have done better, managed more balanced relationships or pressed for change, but we should not go on from that to say that, if Britain had broken earlier with Mubarak and Tunisia, the regime change would have come sooner. That overstates our influence.  

63. We conclude that the UK's policy of engaging with autocratic powers in the MENA region while remaining relatively quiet in public on human rights and political reform has linked us in the eyes of many people with those deposed and discredited governments. However, even if the UK had applied more pressure to the previous autocratic governments on human rights and democratic reforms, it would have been unlikely to have brought forward the revolutions. Yet an approach that more consistently advocated the need for human rights and democratic reforms might have helped to improve the human rights situation in each of these states, as well as having a positive impact on the public perception of the UK in the region today.

A values-based approach

64. The FCO told us that it has adopted a “values-based approach” to the Arab Spring, as set out in the Prime Minister’s speech to the Kuwait National Parliament in February 2011. In this speech the Prime Minister spoke about previous UK foreign policy and the Government’s new approach:

For decades, some have argued that stability required highly controlling regimes, and that reform and openness would put that stability at risk. So, the argument went, countries like Britain faced a choice between our interests and our values. And to be
honest, we should acknowledge that sometimes we have made such calculations in the past. But I say that is a false choice.

As recent events have confirmed, denying people their basic rights does not preserve stability, rather the reverse. Our interests lie in upholding our values—in insisting on the right to peaceful protest, in freedom of speech and the internet, in freedom of assembly and the rule of law. But these are not just our values, but the entitlement of people everywhere; of people in Tahrir Square as much as Trafalgar Square.

The Prime Minister went on to offer “a new chapter in Britain’s long partnership with our friends in this region” that embraced political and economic reform, while emphasising that the UK would respect different cultures and not dictate how each state should achieve such reform.98 The FCO’s submission supported the Prime Minister’s statement, “judging that the UK’s long term national interests in security and prosperity in the region are best served if we are dealing with governments with legitimacy built on the consent and participation of their people.”99

65. Some witnesses welcomed the Government’s commitment to upholding UK values in its foreign policy, with Christian Aid agreeing that “when we consider how best to assure our long-term interests, we can do so most effectively by consistently aiming to uphold our values.”100 The Henry Jackson Society said that the Prime Minister was “absolutely right” and agreed that the belief that the UK could choose to advance either its values or its interests was a “false dichotomy.”101

66. Other submissions to this inquiry cautiously questioned whether it would always be possible to avoid a conflict between perceived interests and values. Robin Lamb, Director of the Libyan British Business Council (LBBC), was supportive of an approach which recognised that “our values must also be counted among our interests.” However, he concludes:

it will generally be possible to uphold both our values and our material interests. But when there is a perceived potential conflict between them, the government’s responsibility to its people will require a public interest test around whether giving our moral interests superior weight would cause significant damage to our material interests. The latter should prevail.102

PLATFORM has criticised the LBBC for this position, stating that it should be regarded “with most anxious scrutiny”.103

67. Dr Eugene Rogan was also sceptical that this approach was practicable in the long term, stating:

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98 Prime Minister speech to the National Assembly in Kuwait, 22 February 2011, via Number 10 website (www.number10.gov.uk)

99 Ev 62

100 Ev 149

101 Ev 190 and Ev 197

102 Ev 106. See also Ev 123–124 [supplementary evidence from Robin Lamb].

103 Ev 182
It would be ideal to try to square national interests with national values, but the real interests that Britain holds in the region have to do with energy security and markets. Those realities are not going to go away because it happens to be a revolutionary year.\textsuperscript{104}

However, Dr Rogan suggested that by clearly advocating its values during the transition period and forming good ties with the new governments, the UK Government could gain advantages for its interests in the region in the long term.

68. Amnesty International also anticipated that the Government would have to make choices:

The UK Government’s approach to the MENA region is that such values and interests are mutually reinforcing—in our view, however, this will not always be the case and clearly has not always been the case. There are occasions when in their diplomatic and other relationships the UK Government will have to make choices.\textsuperscript{105}

However, Amnesty concluded that in such circumstances, values “must and do come first.”\textsuperscript{106} We conclude that it is right to place democratic values at the heart of the UK’s response to the Arab Spring. The Government is right to consider interests and values as connected, although we share our witnesses’ doubts that they will always be in such clear alignment.

69. Bell Pottinger commented on what it considered to be a lacklustre public response in the region to the Prime Minister’s Kuwait speech, stating: “all communications attributed by the local audience to the British Government will be viewed with a significant degree of scepticism or indifference by the majority. Regional responses to the Prime Minister’s keynote Kuwait speech and to most HMG-attributed comment since consistently display this scepticism.”\textsuperscript{107}

70. Middle East Monitor (MEMO) warned that “Public declarations of support for such aspirations could backfire if they are not backed by action and achieved.”\textsuperscript{108} But Christian Aid also offered a way forward, recognising that “The UK should recognise the often limited options available for action”, and considered that by seeking to act in partnership with others, the UK could “minimise the potential gaps between values-based policy raising expectations and being able to implement those values”.\textsuperscript{109}

71. The Government must be sensitive to the scepticism with which British statements on human rights and freedom are met in the region. We recommend that the Government avoid discrediting its ‘values based’ approach by promising more than it can deliver.

\textsuperscript{104} Q 29  
\textsuperscript{105} Ev 170  
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{107} Ev 208  
\textsuperscript{108} Ev 174  
\textsuperscript{109} Ev 150
Trade promotion and arms sales

72. The MENA region is a primary market for British arms sales, with the region accounting for over 50% of all UK defence sales by value in the past 10 years.\textsuperscript{110} A number of our witnesses questioned whether the UK’s stated aims of a “values-based” approach and human rights promotion are compatible with its arms sales to illiberal regimes. The Henry Jackson Society called for the UK to “fundamentally reappraise its policy of selling arms to undemocratic regimes”, and warned that the UK should recognise “how quickly situations can develop where those arms are used not to deter foreign aggression but to quell internal dissent.”\textsuperscript{111} Amnesty International was even stronger in its criticism, asserting that “the UK’s focus on arms sales to the MENA region both now and in recent years is completely at odds with its stated aim of upholding human rights.”\textsuperscript{112}

73. When we put these concerns to the Minister he told us that:

We do make no secret of the fact that the entitlement of people to defend themselves in a volatile region, and other places, is extremely important. This country sells arms to other people. It is legal; it is known, and it is covered by some of the most severe rules that, we think, exist anywhere in the free world.\textsuperscript{113}

The Minister later added that “We have the tightest rules we can, to ensure that the United Kingdom does not engage in selling things to those who would use them to further regional conflicts or to oppress their own people.”\textsuperscript{114} He argued that by providing proper training, the UK can do positive good by being engaged, arguing that “where people have been poorly trained in the past you get a much higher degree of violence, risk of death and the like.”\textsuperscript{115}

74. The issue of British arms sales became particularly controversial during the Arab Spring. The Government revoked a number of export licences to Libya and Bahrain, and allegations were made that equipment sold by the UK was used by Saudi Arabia in dealing with protests in Bahrain.\textsuperscript{116} The Minister stated that he had seen no evidence to support this. In its latest report, the Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) concluded that “whilst the Government’s revocation of an unprecedented number of 158 arms export licences following the Arab Spring is welcome, the scale of the revocations is demonstrable evidence that the initial judgements to approve the applications were flawed.” CAEC recommended that the Government state whether it remains satisfied that none of the extant UK arms export licences to states in the region, including Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia (among others) contravenes the Government’s stated policy not to issue licences where it judges that there is a clear risk that the proposed export might

\textsuperscript{110}Ev 63
\textsuperscript{111}Ev 198
\textsuperscript{112}Ev 167
\textsuperscript{113}Q 147
\textsuperscript{114}Q 149
\textsuperscript{115}Q 151
\textsuperscript{116}See, for example, evidence given to this Committee by Amnesty International as part of its Human Rights report. Foreign Affairs Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2010–12, The FCO’s Human Rights Work 2010–11, HC 964, Ev 9–10
provoke or prolong regional conflicts, or which might be used to facilitate internal repression.117

75. Dr Eugene Rogan commented on the anger that was directed at the USA after the Egyptian security forces used US-made gas canisters in Tahrir Square, labelling it a “disaster scenario” and stating:

That kind of perception should be avoided at all costs. There should be sympathetic engagement, and nothing made in Britain that brings harm to the people. Then when the transition comes, the markets will all still be there for the interests, but you will be doing so with friendships that are based on having respect and values.118

Dr Rogan also warned that, at the current time, he would urge “particular caution” with regard to the arms trade and the monarchies in the Gulf Cooperation Council. He viewed these states as highly likely to encounter protests in future, and considered that “the need not to be seen to be bolstering autocracy against demands for change at this moment will serve your long term better interests.”119 We conclude that arms sales to the MENA region have been a source of concern for a number of years. In calculating whether to award export licences, the Government should also consider the effect on the public perception of the UK in the region.

Prime Minister’s trade delegation, February 2011

76. The Prime Minister’s Kuwait speech was made during a three-day visit the Gulf aimed at promoting trade ties, on 20–23 February 2011. In response to the success of the revolution in Egypt, a stopover was arranged so that the Prime Minister could visit Cairo on 21 February before starting the Gulf trip. Several witnesses to our inquiry commented on the inclusion of seven defence industry representatives in the Prime Minister’s delegation during the Gulf leg of the visit. Intissar Kherigi argued that this played into old stereotypes of the UK, noting that people felt:

a sense of déja vu when David Cameron first visited the region and it emerged that the vast majority of his delegation were in fact defence companies and arms traders. I think that sent a mixed signal to the region in terms of whether the UK had really changed its thinking or whether it was just on the level of rhetoric.120

77. Dr Rogan told us he would have liked to see the Prime Minister accompanied by a more sensitive delegation of “wise women and men” who could offer assistance to Egypt and Tunisia as they move from an autocracy to an open political system, rather than defence representatives in the Gulf.121 We conclude that the goodwill that could have been generated by a Prime Ministerial visit to the region at such a critical time was

118 Q 29
119 Q 30
120 Q 13
121 Q 31
somewhat squandered by the Government’s misjudgement in including members of the British arms trade in the delegation to the Gulf, as indeed it has been damaged by decades of arms sales to repressive governments. Regardless of its legality, it was a mistake for the Prime Minister to be seen to be promoting the UK’s arms trade on a visit to a region undergoing uprisings in which some authoritarian regimes had used force against their own people.

Accepting new partners: Islamist electoral success

78. Although Islamist groups did not play a leading role at the start of the Arab Spring revolutions, they have since emerged as the dominating political force in the region and have won striking successes wherever elections have been held so far. Dr Rogan explained the popularity of Islamist parties, noting that while other parties have been discredited:

The people who have filled the gap, who have been eloquent in expressing opposition and who have shown the courage of their convictions by taking on the regimes for the past 20 to 30 years have all been Islamists. They are organised, and they are omnipresent in providing for social needs—welfare and education—in societies.  

122 A recent paper by the Carnegie Middle East Centre noted that many of the current leaders of Islamist movements have experienced long periods of repression under the previous regimes and have personally experienced imprisonment:

For example, in Egypt, Khairat al-Shater, deputy chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood, was imprisoned for a total of more than twelve years between 1992 and 2011, while FJP vice chairman Essam el-Erian spent the equivalent of eight years in jail between 1981 and 2010. In Tunisia, the current prime minister, Hamadi Jebali, spent a total of sixteen years in jail after 1990, ten of them in solitary confinement. Ennahda Chairman Rached Ghannouchi was imprisoned in 1981 and again in 1987 for a total of four years, spending another twenty-two years in exile.  

79. There is a broad spectrum of Islamist parties across the region, many of which had been banned under the previous regimes. The Ennahda party in Tunisia is often described as ‘moderate’; having accepted a requirement to alternate male and female candidates on the electoral lists in Tunisia, it has governed in coalition with secular centre-left parties for the last eight months. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was founded in the 1920s and is the largest Islamic organisation in Egypt. One of its stated aims has been to create an Islamic state based on Sharia, although the Freedom and Justice Party has more recently referred to an Islamic “frame of reference” and has stated that it will not impose Islamic dress codes, for example. For some, the political success of the more conservative Salafist El Nour party in Egypt was a new and more worrying development. Salafism refers to an interpretation of Islam that seeks to restore Islamic faith and practice to the way they existed at the time of Muhammad and the early generations of his followers, and considers

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122 Q 27

that the only valid system of rule for Muslims is based on Sharia law.\textsuperscript{124} Although electorally unsuccessful in Tunisia, Salafist groups have staged a number of protests including, for example, occupying a university in protest against men and women being taught together. The success of these Islamist groups after decades of repression by authoritarian leaders has required many Western states, including the UK, to adjust their foreign policies to begin engaging with the new political leadership.

80. Several witnesses have called for the West to exercise greater discernment in its approach to Islamist groups, noting that the term “Islamist” is unhelpfully applied to parties across the spectrum, from moderate to extreme. Intissar Kherigi explained that:

There is a disconnect between what the term means in the West and what it means in the Muslim world. In the Muslim world, it seems to mean any Muslim who enters the political arena using their faith as a frame of reference, whereas in the West it has increasingly come to mean those of a Muslim background who take up violence as an end and means of political change.\textsuperscript{125}

Dr Claire Spencer agreed that “far too often, we have assumed that the word ‘Islamism’ covers everything on a spectrum from ‘moderate and engaged in democracy’ to ‘radical’”.\textsuperscript{126} Intissar Kherigi further stated that Islamist parties have existed since the 1920s and “have increasingly embraced democratic pluralism and the concept of equal citizenship”. However, she noted that different Islamist parties in the region have “very different visions, different views.”

81. Although there has been a great deal of concern expressed by commentators both within and outside these countries about the commitment of Islamist parties to democratic freedoms and human rights, there was overwhelming support among our witnesses and submissions for the UK to accept and engage with Islamist movements that operate within democratic systems. MEMO, for example, argued that Islam is part of the Middle East’s identity and culture, and stated that “To try to negate reality would be self defeating. Let the people choose who they trust.”\textsuperscript{127} The FCO’s policy is now clear: “We will interact with parties which are committed to the democratic process, operate within the law of their country and reject violence.”\textsuperscript{128}

**Islamist parties and human rights**

82. For some witnesses the success of Islamist movements is an ominous development that threatens to hijack the revolutions and take them in an anti-democratic direction. Religious minority groups and women’s rights organisations have registered particular concern that their rights and access to public life may suffer if conservative Islamist groups seek to impose strict religious laws and culture upon the new state structures. Some groups have reported growing discrimination, and there have been instances of sectarian violence.

\textsuperscript{125} Q 12
\textsuperscript{126} Q 51. See also Ev 202 [Royal African Society and Libya-analysis.com].
\textsuperscript{127} Ev 175
\textsuperscript{128} Ev 62
against Coptic Christians in Egypt.\(^{129}\) Amnesty International has registered concern that women are being shut out of the political process in Egypt and Libya, and a Salafist occupation of university campuses in Tunisia, in support of the demand that women wear headscarves, has surprised and concerned observers in a state that has been known for its relatively advanced approach to women’s rights.\(^{130}\)

83. Partly in response to these concerns, the UK Government revised its National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security in February 2012 to include a Middle East and North Africa component. The review registers concern that the role of women in the revolutions and improvements to women’s education in the region “is not translating into political and economic opportunities for women,” and sets out the Government’s “emerging thinking” on the topic. A further plan will be submitted in June and a full plan developed by September 2012.\(^{131}\) Amnesty International has called on the UK to ensure that there is a “clear gender component” to the Arab Partnership Initiative and to require that women are not discriminated against in the provision of development assistance and in the process of economic reform.\(^{132}\) We recommend that the Government prioritise the particular concerns of women and religious minorities as it pursues closer relations with new Islamist governments.

**UK bilateral support for democratic transitions**

**Arab Partnership**

84. From a small pilot project launched at the end of 2010 with four staff and a £5 million fund, the FCO’s Arab Partnership initiative expanded to become a full FCO department by May 2011, alongside a joint fund with DfID totalling £110 million. The Arab Partnership Team’s work is now the top priority on the MENA Directorate Business Plan to 2015.\(^{133}\) The amounts of money involved in the project are extremely small relative to the size of the states and their political importance, but the FCO argued that it would provide a “targeted, high-impact UK-led bilateral programme of support for reformers in the region through the Arab Partnership Fund”.\(^{134}\)

85. The FCO states that the over-arching objective of the Arab Partnership is “Politically and economically open and inclusive societies in the MENA region.”\(^{135}\) Arab Partnership funding is available for programmes in 19 MENA countries. The FCO has defined seven as priorities: Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria and Syria.\(^{136}\)

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\(^{129}\) See Ev 176–179 [Barnabas Fund], which notes that the Foreign Secretary, warned that ”the unleashing of sectarian divisions” was one of the biggest risks of the Arab Spring.

\(^{130}\) See Ev 165–170 and Ev 213 [Amnesty International], Ev 177–9 [Barnabas Fund] and Ev 183–185 [Human Rights Watch]


\(^{132}\) Ev 165

\(^{133}\) Ev 66

\(^{134}\) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “The Arab Partnership Strategy”, FCO website (www.fco.gov.uk)

\(^{135}\) Ibid.

\(^{136}\) The fund is also open to programmes in Mauritania, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, UAE, Yemen and Iran.
86. In 2011 the FCO’s Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) spent £5.27 million.\textsuperscript{137} It expects to increase these allocations to around £10m in 2012, but states that it is limited by a lack of recipient capacity; the risk of duplicating efforts (noting that the US has spent significant funds on their Economic Governance and Egyptian Government and Democracy Fund); and its desire not to “exacerbate existing tensions about international interference.”\textsuperscript{138}

87. The FCO told us that its 2011/12 APPF programme for Egypt was the “largest and most challenging”, spending £1.4m. This comprised five projects relating to political participation, two media projects linked to the parliamentary elections, and two projects on countering corruption and promoting transparency and integrity, as well as a series of smaller initiatives, including visits between the UK and Egypt, and supported British Council work. The APPF spent £1.2m in Tunisia on 12 projects on electoral assistance, public voice, countering corruption and economic reform. APPF assistance to Libya in 2011/12 was limited to a project that worked with local television broadcasters to develop ‘Question Time’ style programmes. The FCO is developing a full programme in Libya for 2012/13 and expects to spend around £2m.\textsuperscript{139}

88. DFID did not have programmes based in the MENA region prior to the Arab Spring, due to their status as middle income countries. The DFID-led Arab Partnership Economic Facility (APEF) was established in May 2012, and the first round of APEF programmes worth just over £13m was approved toward the end of the 2011/12 financial year and three further programmes worth £14.8m were approved in April/May 2012. The APEF programmes place strong emphasis on working with International Financial Institutions

\textsuperscript{137} Ev 127
\textsuperscript{139} Ev 133
(IFIs) to leverage funding and expertise for projects, and has so far funded projects with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the African Development Bank, the World Bank and International Finance Corporation. 140

89. We welcome the Arab Partnership programme as a tool to promote political and economic reform in the region and a demonstration of the UK’s support for reform and commitment to the region. The FCO should provide us with an annual report on the spending and achievements of the Arab Partnership.

90. We recommend that the UK be bold in seeking new partners for Arab Partnership funds. In its response to this report the FCO should set out the steps it is taking to improve its communication with alternative organisations that could bid for funding, and to raise public awareness of the programmes it funds in each country.

**British Council and BBC World Service**

91. As part of its response to the Arab Spring, the FCO told us that it had sought to deepen its relations with “strategic partners”, including the British Council and World Service. 141 While not part of the UK’s formal diplomatic mission, these organisations help to represent British arts and culture abroad, and are vital tools for the UK’s projection of ‘soft power’.

**British Council**

92. The British Council is long-established in the MENA region, operating in Egypt since 1938 and in Tunisia since 1962. It re-opened its offices in Libya in 2006 following a 30 year break. Its aim is to build the UK’s cultural relations with other states via the English language, education and skills, the arts, and youth leadership and networks. The British Council states that there is “endless demand” in these areas, noting that the region’s population is getting bigger and younger, further increasing the already substantial demand for English. 142 Existing British Council programmes in the region include *English for the Future*, supporting the development of national policies for English language teaching; *Skills for Employability*, which helps to provide work skills directly linked to local industry and business needs; and *Global Changemakers*, a youth engagement programme that works with social activists and young entrepreneurs.

93. The British Council argues that its long history of work has enabled it to build a “legacy of trust” that will be “crucial” to the UK’s engagement with the region in the future, stating that “in the post-revolutionary period the British Council is still trusted and wanted”. 143 With the help of Arab Partnership funds, it has expanded its programmes in Tunisia and Egypt and expects to work with government ministries responsible for education and vocational training in Tunisia and to establish a Centre for English education reform in

140 Ev 134–141
141 Ev 66
142 Ev 151
143 Ev 150 and Ev 153
British foreign policy and the ‘Arab Spring’

Egypt. It has also introduced new youth engagement and arts programmes in Tunisia and Egypt, some of which engage directly with the Arab Spring.

94. The British Council’s work in Libya is more limited than in Egypt and Tunisia, both because of its shorter history in the country and the suspension of its work between February and September 2011. It was officially re-launched in December 2011 and expects to bring further UK-appointed staff to Libya in the near future. The National Transitional Council has requested that the British Council continue its work in Libya and the Council expects to resume and expand its English and vocational training programmes, as well as youth engagement and civil society support.

95. The British Council’s long history of providing education and vocational training, as well as its work with youth networks, makes it ideally placed to respond to the Arab Spring revolutions that were led by young people in part as a response to a lack of employment and opportunities. We conclude that at a time when soft power and public diplomacy is more needed than ever, the British Council programmes are vital in generating goodwill and promoting Britain and British education in the region. We particularly commend the British Council’s youth engagement work, including its Global Changemakers programme.

BBC World Service

96. The BBC World Service also has a long history in the MENA region and is a leading international broadcaster in the Middle East. BBC World Service radio is available throughout the MENA region in English and Arabic, BBC Arabic TV was launched in 2008 and the English-language BBC World News television service is also available throughout the region. The World Service told us that BBC Arabic offered uninterrupted coverage during the height of the protests and reaches an audience of 22 million, while its online audience grew by 300% during protests in Egypt, adding that “the World Service’s strong reputation meant that audiences turned to the BBC for accurate news and information they could trust during the upheavals.” As proof of its impact, the World Service drew attention to “reports of crowds gathering around huge screens in Tahrir Square in Egypt, and other major cities in the region, showing BBC Arabic TV”.

97. The BBC told us that its well-established reputation for providing a “uniquely thorough, balanced and independent perspective” gives the UK an “exceptional advantage” in the region that is admired by other states. In addition to its news and information services, BBC Arabic broadcasts a range of political, social and other content including discussions and interactive programmes such as Question Time, “which expose Arab audiences to a unique range of views on current topics and debates.” The BBC World Service Trust, an international charity that trains journalists and supports local independent media outlets, is also active in the region and has a number of ongoing and new programmes to support the development of national and independent media in the

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144 Ev 186–189
145 Ev 186 and Ev 223
region, including through a programme funded by the Arab Partnership to transform the Tunisian national television station into a public service broadcaster. 146

98. On 16 January 2011, the Government announced cuts to the BBC World Service as part of its implementation of the Spending Review 2010. The Arabic Service was scheduled to lose 60 jobs in 2010/11, the single largest concentration of job losses in the World Service. In our report on The Implications of cuts of the BBC World Service we concluded that the events in the Arab Spring required that the World Service reconsider its announced changes and instead commit itself to providing enhanced resources to BBC Arabic. 147 The Government did not immediately come forward with additional funding, and on 19 May 2011 we instigated a Backbench Business debate in the House on the BBC World Service, in which members of the Committee questioned whether the planned cuts to the BBC Arabic Service were in the nation’s interest. In response, the Minister (Rt Hon David Lidington MP) acknowledged that “even before the outbreak of the Arab Spring, the decision to curtail Arabic broadcasting was somewhat surprising”. The Minister argued that there was a need for spending cuts and “hard decisions” in both the FCO and World Service, but also referred to efforts to find “potential sources of additional money for the World Service”. 148 On 22 June 2011, the Foreign Secretary announced additional funding for the World Service of £2.2m to enable the current level of investment into the BBC Arabic Service. 149

99. We conclude that the Arab Spring further highlighted the importance of the BBC World Service in providing a vital independent news service to the world and in enhancing the UK’s reputation in the region. We welcome the Government’s belated move to secure funds for the BBC Arabic Service, and hope the Government’s funding will not prove to be a one-off commitment, but rather a sustained investment. However, we remain concerned that cuts made elsewhere in the World Service will prove detrimental to the UK’s national interests. We stand by our previous conclusions that funding for the World Service must be protected and maintained as responsibility for funding transfers from the FCO to the BBC.

Multilateral support: a ‘Marshall Plan’ for the region?

100. It has been widely recognised that the new economies of Tunisia, Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Libya will need significant support and extensive reform. Economic problems such as unemployment, income inequality, rising food prices and corruption all contributed to inspiring the revolutions, which were themselves responsible for a precipitous drop in tourism income in Egypt and Tunisia and a temporary halt to oil production in Libya, further damaging the economy of each. Egypt and Libya both experienced lower GDP growth than in 2010, and Tunisia’s GDP fell in 2011. Egyptian and

146 Ev 75–82
147 Foreign Affairs Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2010–12, The Implications of cuts of the BBC World Service, HC 849, paras 49–50
148 HC Deb, 19 May 2011, Col 550–556
149 HC Deb, 22 June 2011, Col 15WS
Tunisian government reserves have declined and unemployment has also significantly worsened since 2010.\(^\text{150}\)

101. Witnesses agreed on the need for a “massive effort” to support the economies and put in place necessary economic reforms, with Dr Claire Spencer stating that “the worst case scenario is continued attrition in the economies”.\(^\text{151}\) Lord Malloch-Brown spoke about what he said he reluctantly termed “a kind of Marshall Plan for the region”, drawing a comparison to the US programme to provide financial and economic support to its post-war allies in Europe in the 1940s.\(^\text{152}\)

102. The international community, including the UK, has recognised the need for substantial economic assistance to the region to be coordinated and supplied multilaterally. The UK is involved in the large-scale EU and G8 responses to the Arab Spring countries, which are able to facilitate greater funding lines than the UK could achieve alone.

**G8 Deauville Partnership**

103. The G8 “Deauville Partnership” was announced at the G8 summit in Deauville in May 2011 to act as an umbrella for reform-related assistance in the MENA region by G8 partners. The Partnership committed to support MENA countries and encourage them to put in place economic and social reforms through a two-track process involving the states’ Foreign and Finance Ministers. The partnership was targeted initially at Egypt and Tunisia but is also open to other MENA countries that are engaging in reform.

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<th>G8 Deauville Partnership</th>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, and Libya</td>
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<tr>
<td>G8 countries (UK, US, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan and Russia), Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>The International Financial Institutions include:</td>
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<td>The African Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the International Monetary Fund, the OPEC Fund for International Development, and the World Bank. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development is also a Partnership member.</td>
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104. The Deauville Partners identified up to $38 billion of support available to countries in the region in a combination of loans, grants, budget support, and technical assistance.\(^\text{153}\) However, reports in the press in October 2011 claimed that little of these promised funds had actually been disbursed in the region.\(^\text{154}\) Lord Malloch-Brown echoed these concerns

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\(^{150}\) International Monetary Fund, “Middle East and North Africa: Historic Transitions under Strain”, 20 April 2012, via IMF website (www.imf.org)

\(^{151}\) Q 113 [Lord Malloch-Brown] and Q 58 [Dr Claire Spencer]

\(^{152}\) Q 113

\(^{153}\) HC Deb, 17 October 2011, col 618W

\(^{154}\) “The economics of the Arab spring”, Financial Times, 9 October 2011, via website (www.ft.com)
in January 2012 when he told us that “the large amounts of international public assistance promised in the early days have frankly not got there.” He suggested that the most evident reason for this failure was that Western countries were struggling for funds during the economic crisis, and he highlighted the need for regional partners to be involved.155

105. When asked why the promised funds had reportedly failed to materialise, the Minister denied that there was a problem in terms of the commitment to release funds and suggested that “the reason for the hold-up of the transfer of funds is purely that you have got to get the right projects in place”. He said that among EU and G8 countries there was “a recognition that unless the economies of these countries are supported, the impact on the European Union will be very severe. It is not in our interests to promise and not deliver.”156

106. **It is important that the UK and its Deauville Partners are seen to be keeping their promises to states in the MENA region. The UK should make the Deauville Partnership a priority of its G8 presidency in 2013. The Government should set out in its response to this report more information on the use of the UK’s contribution to the $38 billion identified by Deauville.**

**International Financial Institutions**

107. Much of the funding identified by the Deauville Partnership is expected to come from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Several of our witnesses commented on the poor reputation these institutions have in the MENA region because of their associations with the former authoritarian regimes, and that IFIs are now suffering from a “massive backlash” against them.157 Lord Malloch-Brown told us that this was particularly true in Egypt, where the fact that a former Egyptian Finance Minister now holds a senior position at the World Bank has furthered the sense that the World Bank was “completely in bed with the regime”.158 Dr Claire Spencer told us that when the outside world “applauded” Tunisia before the revolution for its liberal economic reforms, “most people in Tunisia knew that the money was not coming to them, and it was not creating sustainable employment.”159

Christine Lagarde, Director of the International Monetary Fund, acknowledged some of these criticisms in a speech in December 2011:

> speaking for the IMF, while we certainly warned about the ticking time bomb of high youth unemployment in the region, we did not fully anticipate the consequences of unequal access to opportunities. Let me be frank: we were not paying enough attention to how the fruits of economic growth were being shared.160

155 Q 113. See also: Speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon George Osborne MP, to the EBRD 21st Annual Board of Governors meeting, 18 May 2012, via the Treasury website (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk).

156 Q 158

157 Q 113 and Ev 148 [Christian Aid]

158 Q 113

159 Q 42

160 Speech by Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF, “The Arab Spring, One Year On”, 6 December 2011, via IMF website (www.imf.org)
108. Another witness stated that a key problem for IFIs in the region is “a belief that the liberal recipes, if you like—the Washington consensus of opening up the economy to trade liberalisation and the private sector—led directly to the kind of corruption against which the protestors went to the streets.”\footnote{161} Lord Malloch-Brown agreed that “poorly considered privatisation” by the former governments under pressure from IFIs to produce greater liberalisation had resulted in “almost a fire sale of state assets”, which the people had seen as deeply unfair.\footnote{162}

109. While Tunisia has agreed international assistance packages with the World Bank, African Development Bank and European Investment Bank,\footnote{163} Egypt was noted for having rejected World Bank and IMF funding last year. Egypt’s economy is now widely recognised as the most vulnerable economy in the short term, having experienced credit-rating downgrades and capital outflows, as well as a major fall in its international reserves leading to fears of devaluation.\footnote{164} We heard several reasons for Egypt’s refusal to accept funding, including its resentment of IFIs, domestic political considerations, and a reluctance to make major decisions in a transitional period. The Minister expressed “frustration on behalf of the UK and the international community at the fact that we believe well-intentioned and good measures that would assist the Egyptian economy were not picked up at an earlier stage.”\footnote{165} He accepted that transparency and governance conditionality had been attached to the rejected loans, and that it is a “fine judgement” to make, but argued that this is “a pretty important principle to establish at an early instance.”\footnote{166} Mr Burt pointed out that the Egyptian government has since resumed negotiations. Following the election of Dr Mohamed Mursi as president, media reports described his office as “upbeat” about the prospects for agreeing a loan with the IMF, noting that he had spoken to IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde but an IMF staff visit had yet to be arranged.\footnote{167} We share the Government’s frustration that Egypt did not accept international funding last year. The UK, as a key member of the international financial organisations, should engage with the new loan negotiations to ensure that they result in an offer of funds that is acceptable to Egypt.

**The European Union: good neighbours?**

110. The Government has been clear in its position that changes to the European Union’s approach to the MENA region were required in response to the Arab Spring. The Foreign Secretary told the House in March 2011 that the UK “would urge the European Union to change radically its thinking about the neighbourhood […] it is time for European nations to be bold and ambitious.” He said that the EU must “give every incentive to countries in the region to make decisions that bring freedom and prosperity” and stated that at the upcoming meeting of the European Council, “the Prime Minister will call for Europe to set
out a programme to bring down trade barriers, to establish clearer conditions for the help that it provides, and to marshal its resources to act as a magnet for positive change in the region.” The European Union first responded to the Arab Spring by issuing a joint communication on 8 March 2011 titled *A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*. In it, the EU expressed its intention “to support wholeheartedly the wish of the people in our neighbourhood to enjoy the same freedoms that we take as our right” and highlighted its own “proud tradition” of supporting countries in transition from autocratic regimes to democracies in southern and in central and eastern Europe. The Communication outlined a new “incentive-based approach based on more differentiation (‘more for more’)” for its partners in the region, promising that “those that go further and faster with reforms will be able to count on greater support from the EU.”

**New partnership**

111. In May 2011 the European Commission produced the results of its year-long review of its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the instrument by which it conducts relations with states to its east and south, including Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The review extended what the FCO described as “an ambitious offer to the EU’s reforming neighbours: a new partnership with the EU based on greater economic integration, trade and increased funding for the Southern neighbourhood.” As part of this offer, the EU allocated an extra €1.24 billion in funding for the region, on top of €11.5 billion already allocated for the period 2007–13. It also announced that the European Investment Bank had been authorised to increase its lending by €1 billion for Mediterranean countries undertaking political reform, as well as the creation of several funding tools, including a European Endowment for Democracy, a Civil Society Facility, and a €26 million ‘umbrella’ programme named SPRING to supplement reform efforts in existing country programmes in the region.

112. The Government told us that it was “broadly happy” with the EU’s review and that the UK, “with like-minded partners such as the Germans, had argued strongly for the EU to make a bold and ambitious offer to the southern neighbours”. Lord Malloch-Brown was more critical, suggesting that instead of the major new initiative that is required, “we have seen each institution try and re-jig its old programme for new leaders”.

113. The European Council for Foreign Relations has called for a “bolder EU approach”, suggesting that the EU has “struggled to achieve influence” in Egypt and that the EU

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168 HC Deb, 7 March 2011, Col 644
169 European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Affairs Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*, 8 March 2011
170 Ev 75
171 “Statement by President Barroso: a concrete response to the Arab Spring and the aspirations of our Eastern Partners”, European Commission, 25 March 2011
172 Ev 75
173 Q 113
“could and now should do more” to respond to the revolutions. Lord Malloch-Brown agreed, describing the EU’s response to the Arab Spring as “disappointing”, and stating that it had been “quite unable to assert itself as a real strategic partner of economic and political change in the way it did in central and Eastern Europe.” He added:

This is meant to be all the things that Europe claims it is supposed to be good at. Its own neighbourhood, and soft power, not military power projection, is what is needed, but it is missing in action.

Progress so far

114. A further joint communication entitled Delivering on a New European Neighbourhood Policy was issued in May 2012 and provides details of the ENP’s progress. The Commission highlighted some key innovations, including the appointment of an EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean Region and the extension of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development’s mandate. It described progress as “rapid but uneven”. Tunisia appears to have benefited from the ‘more for more’ approach, as the EU’s financial assistance has doubled from €80 million in 2010 to €160 million in 2011, to reflect the “decisive steps” made in its democratic transition. The Commission has reported “substantial progress” in its partnership dialogue with Tunisia to negotiate a ‘mobility partnership’, which would ease migration, visa and asylum issues between Tunisia and the EU, and the Council has also agreed for the Commission to open negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) which would allow Tunisia greater integration with the EU single market. The Commission has also re-launched discussions on the EU-Tunisia Agriculture Agreement.

115. The Commission’s review of Egypt was less positive, stating that ongoing political uncertainty and reluctance among the interim authority to engage on long term objectives had meant that “few advances were made”. Unlike in Tunisia, Egypt’s interim authorities were “not ready to engage” with preliminary negotiations with the EU for a DCFTA, and they had declined the EU’s offer to start a dialogue with the aim of concluding a mobility partnership.

116. Although a member of the EU’s southern neighbourhood, Libya does not have a partnership agreement with the EU. The Commission’s review of the ENP states that it is “supporting the transition progress” in Libya and is “ready to engage in negotiations with the new Libyan Administration for a contractual agreement and, in that context, discuss Libya’s participation in the ENP based on shared commitment to the values of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.”

117. We conclude that the EU’s response to the Arab Spring has been somewhat mixed. We welcome the EU’s stated commitment to a new approach, but there have so far been limited results. We recognise the difficulties in engaging with countries that are


175 Q 114

176 European Commission, Joint Communication, Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy, 15 May 2012
undergoing transitions but are disappointed that the EU has yet to engage with Egypt during a critical period for that country.

118. We further conclude that the number of separate EU funding programmes contributes to a lack of transparency about where and how money is spent. We regret that this inhibits proper parliamentary scrutiny in this area.

**Conditionality**

119. The FCO told us that it had argued strongly for “clearer conditionality” to be attached to EU aid to the MENA region in the wake of the Arab Spring. At a press conference in Qatar in February 2011, the Prime Minister stated:

> I’ve been very clear—including at the last European Union Council—that Europe has given a huge amount of aid to these countries, and while it has signed so-called association agreements it hasn’t really insisted on proper conditions for this money, and we’ve seen far too much money disappear down a great big black hole in some of these countries, not actually helping them to develop their democracy, to develop their systems. And I think we should insist on much greater conditionality in the future.

120. Witnesses to our inquiry shared the Prime Minister’s assessment that in the past the EU had failed to insist on reforms in exchange for its aid. Intissar Kherigi described the EU’s relationship with Tunisia as “all carrots and no sticks” and told us that:

> at the height of the crackdown on political opposition in the 1990s, when Ben Ali put 30,000 members of opposition parties in prison, the EU entered an association agreement with him. At the height of corruption in the decade leading up to the uprising, when corruption was reaching its worst levels, the EU was in advanced negotiations for advanced status.

121. Lord Malloch-Brown indicated that the situation was similar in Egypt, describing the EU-Mediterranean strategy, “which celebrated Mubarak and others long after that stuff should have been handled much more austere,” as “particularly egregious.”

122. The FCO told us that it had “lobbied hard” in the EU to ensure that the Tunisian proposal for ‘Advanced Status’ with the EU “was linked to specific and measurable steps on human rights to deliver real reform in Tunisia.” However, Intissar Kherigi commented that Tunisians believe that while others are not responsible for human rights abuses under President Ben Ali, “there has been complicity in the sense that the UK and EU have not

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177 Ev 75

178 Transcript of press conference with the Prime Minister of Qatar, 23 February 2011, via No 10 website (www.number10.gov.uk)

179 Q 15

180 Q 109

181 Ev 66
done enough to condemn them and have actually facilitated them by giving millions of pounds and Euros of funding.”

123. The Government claimed that, partly as a result of UK lobbying, strengthened conditionality is now a key feature of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Government has hailed this as a success. However, some observers have noted that the imposition of stronger conditionality rules on new governments struggling to transition to a more democratic situation could be seen as double standards. Dr Claire Spencer described the reaction of Tunisian and Egyptian youths to being assured that conditionality would now apply, who reportedly responded: “Where were you in December 2010? Why should we believe you? We don’t want your conditionality. We want you to listen to us.” Similarly, Intissar Kherigi commented that:

conditionality of aid is something that civil society activists have long campaigned for. It is something that, unfortunately, was not seen under the previous EU policy. [...] now that Tunisia has elected a democratic representative body and will have a democratic government, for the EU to come in and say, “Now we will place conditions on our engagement with you,” might send the wrong signals. So it depends on how the message is delivered.

124. The Minister defended the Government’s policy, stating that it shows that “lessons have been learned.” The Henry Jackson Society agreed with the application of greater conditionality, believing that “the UK should not be in the business of providing unconditional aid to undemocratic or oppressive regimes”.

125. We conclude that for many years the UK did not do enough to prevent, or apply conditions to, the EU’s provision of support to authoritarian governments in Egypt and Tunisia before the revolutions and that this has consequences for attempts to do so now. It is right that there be a relationship between aid and improvements in human rights, but this should be done sensitively and in a phased manner, with conditionality increasing gradually rather than being imposed immediately on struggling and fragile democracies.
5 New partnerships

126. The Arab Spring has brought about different levels of change to the leaderships and institutions of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, but in each state it has already brought about a new set of international partners with whom the FCO must build relations. In this section we consider some of the key changes to the relationship between the UK and these three states, as well as particular concerns during the transitional period.

UK-Tunisia bilateral relationship

Previous relationship

127. Prior to the revolution, the UK’s Embassy in Tunisia was one of our smallest in the region and the FCO described the UK’s bilateral relationship with Tunisia as “limited”. It attributed this mainly to the closed nature of the Ben Ali regime but added that the presence in the UK of Rachid Ghannouchi, a leading Tunisian opposition figure, and the UK’s “policy of contact with opposition parties and human rights groups in Tunisia” also “triggered negative reactions” from the Tunisian government.

128. Despite this, the FCO told us that “our access to decision-makers on trade and investment issues was generally good.” Although the UK’s presence in the Tunisian market is a low 1% of Tunisian imports, the UK is the market leader in Tunisia’s energy sector. We were told that Tunisia’s “significant appetite” for English language cooperation meant that the British Council had forged ties with the ministry of education and was supporting an overhaul of English language teaching in all secondary schools “with a view to influencing the coming generation and opening up the country to wider influence.”

Building relations

129. Following the fall of the Ben Ali regime, an interim government was announced on 17 January 2011. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Tunisia’s Foreign Minister and its President on 24 and 25 January respectively and was the first Foreign Minister to visit Tunis, on 8 February. The FCO told us that “the swiftness of this response has been widely recognised in Tunisia as putting the UK at the forefront of those supporting the transition.” Since then, the UK has hosted three Tunisian ministerial level visits, including a recent visit by Tunisian Foreign Minister Rafik Abdessalam on 28 March 2012. The Foreign Secretary has visited Tunisia twice and Alistair Burt has visited Tunisia three times since its revolution.

130. Despite a general understanding that the UK is starting from a lower position in Tunisia compared to other EU countries, witnesses to this inquiry were on the whole optimistic about the future of the relationship and suggested that there was an appreciation in Tunisia of what the UK could offer. Intissar Kherigi and Dr Claire Spencer both pointed...
out that a number of Tunisian opposition figures who lived in exile in the UK, including Foreign Minister Rafik Abdessalem and Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi, had now returned to Tunisia. Dr Spencer suggested that the UK could help to raise its profile in Tunisia by, for example, “making a virtue of having hosted Mr Ghannouchi over all his years of exile”.\(^{190}\) Ms Kherigi noted that Mr Ghannouchi’s political party, Ennahda, favoured a parliamentary system based on the Westminster model, concluding that “there are very valuable opportunities for providing political assistance that will feed in to a long term process.”\(^{191}\)

131. While disagreeing with the suggestion that the bilateral relationship was beginning from a low base, the Minister told us that Tunisia was looking to the UK “much more than it did in the past,” adding that the UK is “seeking to make the very most of that.”\(^ {192}\) We conclude that the UK should continue to pursue stronger ties with Tunisia and should encourage Tunisian former exiles to maintain a relationship with the UK and with the British embassy in Tunisia even after they have returned to their first home.

### Trade and investment

132. Both the British and Tunisian governments have consistently expressed a desire to increase trade and investment between the UK and Tunisia. Tunisia’s economy was badly affected by the revolution, which prompted over 80 foreign companies to leave Tunisia and caused foreign direct investment to fall by 20\%.\(^ {193}\) In a statement about the visit of the Tunisian Foreign Minister in March, the Foreign Secretary expressed support:

> British companies are significant investors in the energy and tourism sectors. There is real potential for expansion. We are working with the Tunisian Government to create openings in other areas where the UK is a global leader, such as renewable energy and financial services, and these initiatives in turn would create new job opportunities for the Tunisian people.\(^ {194}\)

133. The Government also drew our attention to events run by UK Trade and Investment that had generated “a good level of interest” in business opportunities in Tunisia. Dr Spencer asked that the Government consider the provision of expertise rather than simply providing funding, suggesting that the UK could play a valuable role by helping to facilitate relationships between young British and Tunisian entrepreneurs, and by providing technical and managerial expertise on how to grow small companies.\(^ {195}\) The UK also continues to have a strong tourist presence in Tunisia. After a drop in numbers immediately after the revolution, 31,000 British tourists visited Tunisia in May 2012 following a strong marketing campaign in Britain by the Tunisian tourist office, which

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\(^{190}\) Q 63  
\(^{191}\) Q 14  
\(^{192}\) Q 219  
\(^{193}\) Lahcen Achy, “*Tunisia’s Economy One Year after the Jasmine Revolution*”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, via Carnegie website (www.carnegieendowment.org)  
\(^{195}\) Q 48
described the UK as “one of our most resilient markets”.\footnote{196 “Tunisian tourism shows signs of recovery”, The Telegraph, 14 Jun 2012, via Telegraph website (www.telegraph.co.uk)} We conclude that there is great potential for the UK and Tunisia to improve their bilateral trade and investment to their mutual benefit.

**UK support for transition: visibility**

134. The UK’s Arab Partnership Fund has provided £1.2 million of support to Tunisia in 2011/12 for projects on political participation, good governance and economic reform. However, both Intissar Kherigi and Dr Claire Spencer raised concerns that these UK programmes supporting the transition were not particularly visible in the region, nor is it well-understood how they are allocated. On Tunisia, Intissar Kherigi told us:

> It is felt that, while we see announcements of funding being made, the follow-up to that—where the funds actually go, whether they are actually allocated, and in what way—is missing at the grass roots level\footnote{197 Q 14}

Another Tunisia observer, Alexander Lambeth,\footnote{198 Alexander Lambeth is Director for Africa and the Middle East at British Expertise. The British Embassy in Tunis has described British Expertise as the UK’s leading association for professional services.} has reportedly argued that DfID’s donations to the African Development Bank are also not well known, saying that “the French and German development agencies have a much louder presence than the British.”\footnote{199 Interview on with Alexander Lambeth, “Developing Tunisian-British economic relations”, FCO website in Tunis (www.ukintunisia.fco.gov.uk)} We conclude that the value of the Arab Partnership and DfID funding as a tool of UK soft power and sign of British support for democratisation will be limited if its projects are not visible to most of the public in those countries.

**Tunisia as an international partner**

135. Tunisia’s new government has been significantly more active in its foreign policy than it was under the previous leadership of President Ben Ali, suggesting that it might be willing to play a more active international role. This has been particularly evident with regard to the Maghreb, as Tunisia’s new president, Moncef Marzouki, visited a number of North African states in February in a bid to revive the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). The Minister welcomed this development, stating that the UK had long considered Maghreb integration to be an important objective, particularly given its potential for easing the economic pressures in the region.

136. Tunisia had also been bold in its approach to the Syrian crisis, expelling the Syrian Ambassador and hosting the first international ‘Friends of Syria’ meeting on 24 February 2012, which was attended by the UK Foreign Secretary. The Minister concluded that in light of Tunisia’s “very active” approach, “we do see the prospects for developing a good, sound relationship on foreign policy issues with friends in Tunisia.”\footnote{200 Q 222}
UK-Egypt bilateral relationship

137. The FCO told us that the UK’s relationship with Egypt remains strong, and stated that:

The FCO’s overarching priority is to see Egypt continue as an effective commercial and political partner of the UK, contributing to peace and stability in the region and representing an example of successful reform.201

Close history

138. Egypt has long been a key commercial partner for the UK. The UK is the largest foreign direct investor in Egypt with over $20 billion invested, and Egypt is also the UK’s third largest trading partner in Africa. Tourism ties are also strong; over 1.5 million British nationals visit Egypt every year.202

139. The FCO told us that Egypt was central to some of the UK’s main foreign policy goals, including the Middle East Peace Process, Sudan, Iran and nuclear non-proliferation. In addition, President Mubarak cooperated with the US and UK on counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation concerns. Given this cooperation, the UK has understandably been seen as close to the Mubarak regime, as well as a supporter of US policy. A Chatham House workshop conducted with Egyptian participants in April 2011 recorded that:

While the participants did not all see UK-Egypt relations as entirely negative, they did all perceive the UK as having played a part in supporting the Mubarak regime. Although the US was identified as having been the greatest supplier of military aid to Egypt, little differentiation was made between the foreign policies of the US, the UK and the EU, all of which were perceived to have been supporters of Mubarak’s regime.203

The FCO emphasised to us that it had regularly pressed the Egyptian authorities on issues of political reform, freedom of religion, and lifting the emergency laws.204

New partners

Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

140. The UK was swift to establish contact with the new leadership in Egypt. Two days after President Mubarak stepped down, on 13 February the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Egyptian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. On 15 February the Prime Minister spoke to Field Marshal Tantawi, who headed the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The FCO told us that both calls included discussion of the need for a clear timetable for democratic transition. On 21 February, only 10 days after the end of the Mubarak regime,

201 Ev 71
202 Ev 67
203 “Egypt in Transition”, Workshop Report, April 2011, Chatham House Middle East and North Africa Programme, via Chatham House website (www.chathamhouse.org)
204 See, for example, Ev 94–5.
the Prime Minister extended a scheduled trip to the Gulf in order to visit Cairo, becoming the first foreign leader to arrive in post-revolutionary Egypt. He met Field Marshal Tantawi, Prime Minister Shafiq and Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, as well as democratic activists who had taken part in the revolution, and visited Tahrir Square.

Emerging democracy?

141. Egypt’s transition period under the executive control of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has been considerably more unstable and subject to sudden and unexpected twists and turns than that of Tunisia. Most damagingly, the SCAF’s leadership during the transition has been widely criticised and doubts have emerged as to the extent to which the old order, or the Egyptian ‘deep state’, has been overturned, and relations between the transitional authorities in SCAF and the newly-elected Muslim Brotherhood have sharply deteriorated. Although the SCAF has repeatedly offered assurances that it intends to hand over executive power at the end of the transition, some Egyptian and international observers have increasingly doubted whether the army will be willing to give up its privileged position in Egyptian society after decades of holding power and influence and to submit to civilian government. The political situation has remained tense and the transition has seen a number of large scale protests and violent clashes with the Egyptian authorities, and the SCAF has been further criticised for its heavy-handed approach to protests and its use of military courts to try civilian protestors.

142. Despite these concerns, some progress has been made. Largely peaceful elections that were considered broadly free and fair took place for the Egyptian parliamentary assembly in November 2011-January 2012, and for the presidency in May-June 2012, although the latter was dogged by controversy over a number of candidates who were barred from running by an Egyptian court, and a failure to agree a constitution that would delineate the new President’s powers.

143. However, a number of decisions by Egyptian authorities over the last few weeks have prompted alarm that the SCAF is attempting to consolidate its control of parts of the Egyptian state. In early June, an Egyptian court made up of Mubarak-era appointees which was considering allegations that one third of the parliamentary elections were flawed surprised many by declaring the entire Egyptian parliamentary elections void and dissolved the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated parliament just days before the presidential elections. On the day of the presidential elections, the SCAF issued a ‘constitutional declaration’ granting itself considerable power and autonomy, control over Egypt’s foreign and defence policy, reinstating its ability to detain civilians, and a significant role in the constituent assembly that will draft the country’s new constitution. The move prompted domestic outcry and accusations of a “military coup”, as well as significant international concern.

144. The SCAF has since appeared to pull back from the brink. After a delay in announcing the results of the election, in which both presidential candidates claimed victory, it was announced that the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party candidate, 

205 Ev 96–97

Dr Mohamed Mursi, had won. There have also been reports in the media that the court’s decision to dissolve parliament could be reversed, and a court has overturned the army’s power to arrest civilians.\(^\text{207}\) Nevertheless, the new Egyptian president will take up the role in the absence of either a parliament or constitution, and with the role of the SCAF and Egyptian army still unresolved.

145. **It is disappointing that the Egyptian people had such a limited and polarising choice of presidential candidates. However, now that Egypt has chosen a president the UK should provide support and assistance to President Mursi to help him achieve much-needed stability in Egypt and a transfer to civilian control.**

**Muslim Brotherhood**

146. The UK’s relationship with Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, which has emerged as the major political force in the country, has developed over the last year. The Minister told us that although in the past the United Kingdom had almost no relations with the Muslim Brotherhood at all, the Government had “been on a recalculating of relationship”, which he described as “cautious and step by step”. Recognising their success in free and fair elections, and noting that the manifesto of the Freedom and Justice Party (the Muslim Brotherhood’s political wing) “did not cause the United Kingdom any particular concern”, the Minister told us that there had been “a gradual step-up of engagement” and noted that “in the future, prime ministerial engagements will be possible if the elections confirm the present trend and the Muslim Brotherhood and its parties maintain their positions in relation to moderate policies, human rights protection and the like.”\(^\text{208}\)

147. More than one submission highlighted that the Prime Minister did not meet any members of the Muslim Brotherhood on his visit to Egypt in February 2011. According to MEMO: “To many observers, this was a missed opportunity to reach out to the forces that currently lead the process of democratic change in Egypt. Whether we like it or not, the Muslim Brotherhood remains one of the most influential political bodies in Egypt and the wider region.”\(^\text{209}\) The Muslim Brotherhood’s English language website referred to the “snub”, and stated that it believed that the UK was “mirroring US suspicions because the Brotherhood seeks a democracy based on Islamic principles.”\(^\text{210}\) At the time, when the Prime Minister was asked why he had not met any of the Muslim Brotherhood he replied that:

> Part of the problem is that people say, either you have the Muslim Brotherhood or the old regime. But actually most of Tahrir Square was taken up with people who want more openness and freedom… My argument is that by opening up societies,

\(^{207}\) “Egypt Ruling Clips Military Powers”, Wall Street Journal, 26 June 2012; “New Egyptian president looks to reinstate parliament”, Foreign Policy, 2 July 2012, via Foreign Policy website (www.foreignpolicy.com)

\(^{208}\) Q 165

\(^{209}\) Ev 175

\(^{210}\) “Ignoring the Snubs—The Brotherhood Moves Forward”, Ikhwanweb, 26 February 2011, via Muslim Brotherhood’s English language website (www.ikhwanonline.info)
opening up participation, you give particularly young men something to believe in other than a more extreme Islamic route.\textsuperscript{211} However, Mr Burt responded to questions about the trip by stating that it was simply "an issue of time. The Prime Minister does not need to meet everyone on foreign trips."\textsuperscript{212} The Foreign Secretary has since met with a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. \textbf{We conclude that with the benefit of hindsight, it would have been beneficial if the Prime Minister had met the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in February 2011, particularly given the election of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Dr Mohamed Mursi as President of Egypt in June 2012.}

148. Following the announcement that Dr Mohamed Mursi had won the Egyptian Presidential elections, the Prime Minister wrote to President Mursi to congratulate him on his victory, and to welcome his statement that he intends to form an inclusive government. The Prime Minister emphasised the need for functioning democratic institutions and a broad representative government.\textsuperscript{213} \textbf{We welcome the Government’s willingness to work with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and we urge the Government to deepen its engagement at this early stage in order to demonstrate the assistance and support available to those who respect human rights and democratic reforms.}

\textbf{Human rights in Egypt}

149. The transition period has not witnessed the improvement in human rights that had been hoped. Human rights organisations have expressed increasing alarm, with Amnesty International reporting that:

\begin{quote}
Egypt’s military rulers have completely failed to lived up to their promises to Egyptians to improve human rights and have instead been responsible for a catalogue of abuses which in some cases exceeds the record of Hosni Mubarak.\textsuperscript{214}
\end{quote}

Human rights abuses include the use of military trials to prosecute civilian protestors, allegations that ‘virginity tests’ were performed by military physicians on female protestors, and arrests of foreign and Egyptian NGO workers. The transition has also been marred by sectarian clashes between Egypt’s Muslim and Coptic Christian communities. The Government told us that it had made representations to the Egyptian authorities on all of the above issues. The FCO’s 2011 Report on Human Rights and Democracy, published on 30 April 2012, recorded the Government’s concern over the human rights situation in Egypt, and the FCO committed to review the Egyptian case in six months’ time.\textsuperscript{215}

150. \textbf{The human rights situation in Egypt under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces’ leadership is a matter of serious concern, and we welcome the Government’s...
recognition that extra monitoring is required. The UK should maintain a consistent and robust approach to supporting human rights in Egypt and should prioritise women’s rights and the rights of religious minorities as particularly under threat.

**Public diplomacy**

151. Lord Malloch-Brown commented that alongside the US, the UK had adeptly “switched sides” at the time of the revolution, although it had not wholly been able to escape its past. While visiting Egypt, we observed that there remained notable scepticism about UK interests in the region, as well as popular conspiracies that hugely inflated the amount of Egyptian assets held in the UK. Several of our interlocutors expressed particular dissatisfaction that former Mubarak associates and Ministers were thought to be living in the UK. We put these concerns to the Minister, who insisted that the UK must follow due legal process, and that “if we are honest and transparent in what we say about our processes, which can be objectively checked by anyone in the Egyptian system, I do not think it harms our reputation for supporting Egypt”.216 We conclude that some degree of scepticism about the UK’s intentions is to be expected, but a poor perception of the UK among the Egyptian public is of increasing concern as Egypt’s political leaders become more responsive to public opinion. The FCO should dedicate further staff resources to its public diplomacy in Egypt.

**Egypt as an international partner: Middle East Peace Process**

152. The departure of President Mubarak, who was closely aligned with US foreign policy in the region, threw into doubt Egypt’s 1979 peace treaty with Israel and the wider Middle East Peace Process. Both the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood were quick to affirm that they would abide by all existing treaties, including those with Israel. However, there have been a number of worrying indications of public anger against Israel, including the storming of the Israeli embassy in Cairo by Egyptian protestors on 10 September 2011 following the deaths of five Egyptian security officers in an incident on the Sinai border, and a symbolic vote by the Egyptian Parliament in March 2012 in support of expelling Israel’s Ambassador in Cairo and halting gas exports to Israel.217 At the same time, the Egyptian government has opened the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt and adopted the role of mediator, moving quickly in 2011 to negotiate an agreement between Hamas and Fatah to work toward a unity government and elections. More recently, following four days of cross border-attacks in March 2012, Egypt reportedly brokered a truce between Israel and the Gaza Strip’s Palestinian factions, Hamas and Islamic Jihad.218

153. The majority of witnesses to this inquiry have expressed hope that Egypt’s new leaders would concentrate on domestic difficulties and would not provoke conflict. Lord Malloch-Brown, speaking in January 2012, told us that “the trend is not good” but concluded that:

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216 Q 174–5
217 “Egypt’s parliament wants Israel’s ambassador out”, Associated Press, 13 March 2012
218 “Egypt brokers truce between Israel and Gaza”, Foreign Policy, 13 March 2012. See also Ev 161 [Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre].
I just think that a government that gave in to its hotheads and went that last step would condemn itself and its people to economic disruption, no growth, more unemployment, more internal instability at home. I think Israel will find itself with a much more uncomfortable neighbour that will press for peace, but not a neighbour that will hurtle itself and Israel over the edge into new conflict.  

Similarly, Dr Claire Spencer and Dr Eugene Rogan both said that there will be more pressure on Israel to provide a settlement.  

The FCO acknowledged that “It is difficult to predict the direction of Egyptian foreign policy in the medium-term.” The Minister told us that he had “no reason to disbelieve at present” the assurances of Egyptian leaders that they would abide by the treaties, but he agreed that “we have to be honest—that is not necessarily the feeling of all the Egyptian people.” He concluded that the situation should be seen as an opportunity “to inject urgency into the Middle East Peace Process.” We conclude that it is too early to judge if a free and democratic Egypt will prove to be a stronger partner in the Middle East Peace Process than Egypt under President Mubarak.  

UK-Libya relationship  

Turbulent history  

The UK has had a turbulent bilateral relationship with Libya over the last four decades, characterised by suspicions over the Gaddafi regime’s involvement with the terrorist IRA, and traumatic events including the fatal shooting of WPC Yvonne Fletcher outside the Libyan embassy in London in 1984 and the bombing of a Pan Am aeroplane as it passed over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1988. The UK terminated its diplomatic relations with Libya in 1984 and they were not restored until 1999, when Lockerbie bombing suspects Abdelbaset al-Megrahi and Al Amin Fhimah were handed over by the Libyan authorities to stand trial, and Libya made a statement accepting responsibility for the death of WPC Fletcher.  

Rapprochement  

Steps were taken by the previous Government from approximately 2000 onwards to re-establish some form of relations with Libya. This diplomatic effort culminated in a meeting between Prime Minister Tony Blair and Colonel Gaddafi in Libya in 2004, which came to be known in the press as the ‘deal in the desert’. The meeting and the subsequent oil and gas commercial contacts elicited considerable criticism in the press. PLATFORM maintained that the UK’s foreign policy priorities since 2003 had “focused primarily on improving relationships with the Gaddafi regime and promoting British business interests, at the expense of human rights and engaging with popular and oppositional opinion.” PLATFORM added that that this approach had “strengthened Gaddafi’s hand while
effectively shunning democratic opposition movements and those subject to continued human rights violations.”  

157. The current Foreign Secretary told us last year that the rapprochement had had three important benefits: it had ensured that those suspected of the Lockerbie bombing could be tried; it had resulted in the decommissioning of Libya’s Scud missiles and chemical weapons; and an agreement had been reached with the Libyans that they would desist from their nuclear programme. He described this policy as “the right thing to do”. Robin Lamb, Director of the Libyan British Business Council, provided support for this position, placing the deal in the context of “a period in which we were focusing in foreign policy on counter-terrorism and on the fears of development of the weapons of mass destruction”, and arguing that “although the policy of normalisation is understandably much criticised now, it did achieve something with Libya”. He accepted, however, that it had not improved the human rights situation.

158. The FCO described its efforts from 2004 onwards to increase bilateral cooperation with Libya in a variety of fields, including economic and administrative reform, defence and security cooperation, international affairs and the commercial relationship. Nevertheless, it characterised the UK’s relationship with Libya by 2010 as “limited”. The FCO told us that its assessment in the years prior to the revolution was that Colonel Gaddafi intended his children to succeed him in Libya, and that in the absence of any prominent opposition figures, the prospects of reform appeared to depend on the attitudes of his close family. The Government said that it therefore focused its efforts on Saif al-Islam Gaddafi “as the son most open to talking about reform and as a family member with strong links to the UK.”

Post-conflict relationship

159. The UK has worked to re-establish an embassy presence in Tripoli following the end of the Gaddafi regime. The FCO told us that the UK Ambassador arrived in Libya ahead of “most of the comparable countries”, and the embassy in Tripoli formally re-opened in November 2011. The Minister emphasised that Tripoli was “a significant embassy for us”, and explained that the UK now had a team of over 100 staff in post (compared to approximately 80 before the revolution), comprising 20 UK-based staff from across Government; 60 locally engaged staff; a UKTI team of 10; a defence advisory team of 10; and six Arabic speakers.

160. The UK’s leading role in the international response to the crisis in Libya and its rapid establishment of links with the National Transitional Council in opposition appears to have been rewarded with close ties and a warm relationship with the new Libyan government. The Foreign Secretary has recently described the UK-Libya relationship as

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222 PLATFORM is a London-based research organization which monitors the impacts of the British oil industry.
223 Foreign Affairs Committee, Oral and written evidence, Developments in UK Foreign Policy, 7 September 2011, HC 1471-i, Q24
224 Q 85–6
225 Ev 108
226 Q 228
“changed beyond all recognition”. The Henry Jackson Society commented on the “high levels of goodwill that exist across a broad cross-section of Libyan society”, and Libyan Ministers have expressed gratitude to the UK for its response. The Libyan Prime Minister Abdrraham El-Keib visited the UK in May 2012, where he met the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, among others, and expressed his “wholehearted appreciation and gratitude for the continued support of both the British people and Government.”

Post-conflict challenges

161. The Libyan interim authorities face formidable challenges, including the need to secure a transfer of control over parts of the country from militia groups to the central government; the provision of healthcare, particularly for those wounded in the civil war; the organisation of elections; the writing of a new constitution; transitional justice; justice and security sector reform; infrastructure development; and corruption. The UK has expressed its willingness to provide support and “stand shoulder to shoulder” with Libya through its transition, and agreements were signed between the UK and Libya in May 2012 on health, education, cultural and civil society cooperation and on open government and information technology.

162. A number of submissions to this inquiry have emphasised a need for the UK to engage with Libya on human rights and justice issues during the transition period, in what Amnesty International called a “golden opportunity to establish the norms by which the new Libya will operate”.

Detention and torture

163. There has been significant disquiet among NGOs and observers about the safety of detainees in Libya. Over 7,000 people detained during or after the conflict were believed to be held by government and militias in Libya by autumn 2011. Human rights organisations estimate that thousands are still being held and there have been reports of extra-judicial killings and reprisals. Amnesty International, Reprieve and Medicines Sans Frontieres have all claimed that there is “widespread torture and ill-treatment” in post-revolutionary Libya, particularly by militia groups on Libyans accused of having belonged to pro-Gaddafi forces. In a speech on the anniversary of the start of the uprisings in Libya in February 2012, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the UK’s commitment to Libya and set out a number of support programmes, including the Government’s intention to:

hold a conference in the Spring on human rights, which will look to identify ways the Transitional Government can take urgent steps to implement commitments made

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227 Ev 196
228 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Foreign Secretary welcomes Libyan Prime Minister’s visit to the UK”, press release, 26 May 2012, via FCO website (www.fco.gov.uk)
229 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Foreign Secretary welcomes Libyan Prime Minister’s visit to the UK”, press release, 26 May 2012, via FCO website (www.fco.gov.uk)
230 Ev 216. See also Ev 183 [Human Rights Watch].
231 Ev 184 [Human Rights Watch], Ev 201 [Royal African Society and Libya Analysis], Ev 212–3 [Amnesty International]
on upholding human rights and ensure reports of detainee abuse are being addressed.\footnote{232}

The Government is correct to press the Libyan authorities on the need to establish human rights protections in Libya and to eliminate the use of torture in places of detention. We recommend that the Government encourage the Libyan authorities to issue a standing invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the country as soon as practicable. In its response to this report the Government should set out its timetable and objectives for the conference on human rights in Libya that it announced in February 2012.

**Transitional justice**

164. The history of grievous human rights abuses under Colonel Gaddafi, as well as allegations that human rights abuses and even war crimes were committed by both sides during the recent conflict, presents a serious challenge for the new authorities. Amnesty International has called on the Libyan government to investigate all sides and to ensure that there is no impunity for human rights abusers.\footnote{233} A number of submissions also pointed to Libya’s refusal to hand over Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and former head of intelligence Abdullah al-Senussi to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for trial. Up to this point, Libya had refused to do so and had stated that it intends to try the men in Libya.\footnote{234} We conclude that the UK should continue to encourage the Libyan authorities to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and deliver Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and Abdullah al-Senussi into its control. The Government should explore options with Libya and the international community to agree that the suspects could be returned at some point in the future to stand trial in Libya.

**Trade and investment**

165. The UK’s commercial ties with Libya under the Gaddafi regime were a source of significant controversy. Since the revolution, the UK has been criticised by some business representatives in the media for not doing enough to promote British business in Libya.\footnote{235} However, Robin Lamb told us that other states have suffered damage to their reputation by taking private sector representatives to Libya too quickly; other evidence agreed, adding that in contrast “Britain has been patient, for example the oil and gas mission arranged for January 2012 has been postponed.”\footnote{236} On his recent visit to the UK, Prime Minister al Keib stated that he was “happy to meet with British business leaders to discuss the opportunities for trade between our two countries.” He was accompanied by Libya’s Oil Minister and the Head of the Libyan Investment Authority. BP has since announced that it intends to re-start its operations in Libya.

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\footnote{232}{Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Reaffirming the UK’s commitment to Libya”, press release, 16 February 2012, via FCO website (www.fco.gov.uk)}

\footnote{233}{Amnesty International, “Militias threaten hopes for new Libya”, 16 February 2012. See also Ev 158 [Redress Trust].}

\footnote{234}{Saif al Islam is being held in Zintan in Libya. Abdullah al-Senussi was detained in Mauritania in March and is still being held. Both the ICC and Libya have requested his extradition. Ev 212–216 [Amnesty International] and Ev 183 [Human Rights Watch]}

\footnote{235}{Ev 196 [Henry Jackson Society]}

\footnote{236}{Q 81 and Ev 204 [Royal African Society and Libya-Analysis.com]}
166. Several witnesses to our inquiry warned the UK against any attempt to secure favourable contracts from Libya as a form of thanks or of compensation. Robin Lamb, representing the Libyan-British Business Council acknowledged that “We may well be in a slightly better position in terms of the view that is taken of countries that did or did not assist the rebellion,” but told us that “we do not expect favours. I think that would be wrong.” We conclude that it is important that the UK does not squander the goodwill it enjoys in Libya. The Government should maintain its steady approach to the promotion of trading ties during Libya’s transition.

Legacy issues

167. The Government told us that it is discussing ways in which to address the unresolved ‘legacy issues’ in the relationship between the UK and Libya. These include responsibility for the killing of WPC Fletcher in April 1984, responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing in 1988, and the Gaddafi regime’s support for the IRA. The new Libyan authorities have indicated that they are willing to cooperate, and Prime Minister al Keib reinforced this message on his visit to the UK by laying flowers at the memorial to WPC Yvonne Fletcher. Officers from the Metropolitan police force have since travelled to Libya on 11 June 2012 in connection with the Yvonne Fletcher case. However, it is not yet clear how, and how quickly, the investigations will be able to move forward. We conclude that the Government should negotiate permission for British investigators in the Lockerbie and Yvonne Fletcher cases to have access to Gaddafi regime records in Libya as a matter of urgency. We suspect that resolution of these issues, for all those who suffered personally, may be more important than financial compensation for what was done. We encourage the Government to consider the merits of promoting a resolution which is not contingent on payment by the Libyan authorities to victims if such payment is an obstacle to gaining access to information and records.

Allegations of involvement in extraordinary rendition

168. In September 2011, international media reported that Human Rights Watch had discovered documents in Libyan former intelligence offices in Tripoli which appeared to indicate that the UK had provided intelligence to the Libyan authorities in 2004 on a terrorist suspect, Abdul Hakim Belhadj, as a result of which Mr Belhadj was subject to extraordinary rendition. Abdul Hakim Belhadj was a member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which opposed Gaddafi in the 1990s. He reportedly moved to Afghanistan after 1998 where he is alleged to have developed “close relationships” with al-Qaeda leaders and Taliban chief Mullah Omar, and ran and financed training camps for Arab mujahedeen fighters, according to an arrest warrant issued by the Libyan government in 2002. Mr Belhadj was arrested in Thailand in 2004 and allegedly ‘rendered’ from Thailand to Libya, where he was held in the Abu Selim prison until 2010. Mr Belhadj
had since become a commander in the rebel forces and an important political figure in Libya. He has alleged that the UK had been involved in the rendition and that he was subsequently tortured by the Libyan authorities. Another Libyan, Sami al-Saadi, also made allegations that the UK was involved in his rendition from Hong Kong to Tripoli, along with this wife and daughters, despite the risk that they would be tortured.

169. On 12 January 2012, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Metropolitan Police Service announced that allegations relating to Abdel Hakim Belhadj and Sami al-Saadi and their alleged ill-treatment in Libya were so serious that it was in the public interest for them to be investigated immediately. Given that investigations were expected to take many months if not years, the Justice Secretary announced to the House on 18 January that the Detainee Inquiry, which had been charged with examining whether Britain was implicated in the improper treatment of detainees held by other countries, would cease its work. The Justice Secretary said that “the Government fully intends to hold an independent, judge-led inquiry, once all police investigations have concluded, to establish the full facts and draw a line under these issues”.241 The two Libyans have since announced their intention to bring a civil action against Sir Mark Allen, a former intelligence official, and Jack Straw MP, who was Foreign Secretary at the time of their alleged renditions.

170. The Government has consistently denied any involvement in the practice of extraordinary rendition. Our predecessor Committee has commented on allegations about British involvement in rendition in the past. In its 2005 Report on Foreign Policy Aspects of the War Against Terrorism, the Committee concluded that the Government had “failed to deal with questions about extraordinary rendition with the transparency and accountability required on so serious an issue”, and argued that “If the Government believes that extraordinary rendition is a valid tool in the war against terrorism, it should say so openly and transparently, so that it may be held accountable.”242 In its Human Rights Annual Report 2005, the Committee concluded that:

the Government has a duty to enquire into the allegations of extraordinary rendition and black sites under the Convention against Torture, and to make clear to the USA that any extraordinary rendition to states where suspects may be tortured is completely unacceptable.243

Since then, our predecessors have pursued allegations about the use of British Indian Ocean Territory of Diego Garcia for re-fuelling flights being used in renditions. A compilation of Committee conclusions and Government statements on renditions is attached as an annex to this report.

171. When asked about the Libyan rendition allegations, the Minister was unable to comment on the documents that had allegedly been discovered. However, he maintained that the UK’s relationship with Libya was “very broad based” and was not “hampered” by the allegations that the UK participated in these renditions, or any other “legacy issue”. We are surprised at the Minister’s indication that the allegations of British involvement in

241 HC Deb, 18 January 2012, col 752
242 Foreign Affairs Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2004–05, Foreign Policy Aspects of the War Against Terrorism, HC 36-I, para 98
rendition and subsequent torture of two Libyan nationals have had no effect on the UK-Libya relationship. We conclude that even if the allegations have not caused immediate damage, they may do in the long-term if there is no adequate investigation and resolution of the matter. In its response to this report the Government should set out the progress of police investigations so far, including whether British police have been given all necessary access to information held in Libya, and also provide an estimate as to when it expects police investigations to be completed.

172. We would be deeply disturbed if assurances given over many years, including assurances given by Ministers to this Committee’s predecessors, that the UK had not been involved in the rendition of any individuals are proved to be inaccurate. We expect to return to this issue.
## 6 Implications for British foreign policy elsewhere in the region

### Reform in other MENA and Gulf states

**Yemen**

In February 2011 protests broke out in Yemen against the rule of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had ruled for over 30 years. Hundreds of people were killed in violence between security forces and demonstrators. President Saleh repeatedly promised to step down but backed out of deals brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council to remove him from power. In June, he was injured in an attack on his compound and flown to Saudi Arabia for treatment. He returned to Yemen in October, but under international pressure eventually agreed to step down in return for immunity, handing power to his deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi in November 2011 and flying to the US for medical treatment. Mr Hadi led an interim national unity government until February 2012, when he was elected president in an uncontested election.

**Bahrain**

Protests took place in Bahrain between February and April 2011, which saw protestors occupying ‘Pearl roundabout’, the central square in the capital, and demanding greater freedom and political participation. The protests in Bahrain are widely considered to be more sectarian in nature than those elsewhere, as the Shia majority protested against the rule of a Sunni minority. The unrest was forcibly put down by the authorities, with controversial assistance from Saudi Arabian forces. There has been public and international outcry about the abuse of arrested protestors, and allegations of torture and deaths in custody. The arrests of medical personnel for treating protestors were particularly criticised. A number of opposition figures were arrested and sentenced. The King agreed to an International Commission to investigate the way the authorities dealt with the protestors, which reported in October 2011.

**Reforming monarchies**

**Jordan**

King Abdullah responded to protests in Jordan by announcing reforms, including a move toward elected, rather than appointed, cabinets. He has also announced changes to the constitution based on the principles of a parliamentary democracy. Elections are due before the end of 2012, but ongoing disagreements about changes to electoral law have caused confusion and delay, and some parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, have threatened a boycott. The King has also spoken out about corruption.

**Morocco**

King Mohammed VI announced a programme of political reforms resulting in a new constitution on 1 July 2011. This has strengthened the power of parliament, allowing for a Prime Minister to be selected from the largest parliamentary party, strengthened human rights protections, and enshrined the independence of the judiciary. The King is described as the “supreme arbiter” of political and institutional life and remains head of the Ministerial Council, but the FCO describes the reforms as “an important step”.

173. The Arab Spring revolutions have had repercussions for the UK’s foreign policy across the region. The FCO told us that although the full impact of the Arab Spring could not yet be addressed, “it is already clear that it has irrevocably changed political and social landscapes in the Arab world, impacting on UK policy in the wider region.”

We asked
the Minister for his comments on accusations that the UK is not implementing a consistently ‘value based’ human rights policy, and has been inconsistent in its responses to protests across the region. The Minister defended government policy, stating that:

Each of these countries is different.[...] The values may be the same, but the way in which we work must depend on the circumstances of the place. Almost without exception, no two places have given rise to exactly the same set of answers to help deal with the problems.”

However, the consistency of the Government’s policies has come under particular scrutiny with regard to those states where uprisings have been met with force, as they were in Syria and Bahrain.

**Syria**

174. While the achievements of pro-democratic forces in overthrowing authoritarian rule in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are celebrated, there is an ongoing and escalating conflict in Syria. The Syrian government’s decision to respond to protestors with violent force has posed a major challenge to the international community over the last year. The country has descended into conflict between government and opposition forces, with the government standing accused of multiple human rights violations and responsibility for the deaths of thousands of civilians. The verification of casualties is extremely difficult and the UN stopped providing estimates in December 2011 when the death toll stood at 5,000. Estimates by various organisations now put the figure somewhere between 9,000 and 16,000 lives lost in the conflict. 246 The UK has been outspoken in its condemnation of the Assad regime and active in coordinating an international response, including through EU sanctions, and a Friends of Syria contact group. On 1 March 2012, the UK withdrew its Ambassador to Syria “on security grounds” and closed its Embassy.

175. Efforts to reach consensus in the UN on Syria have proved significantly more difficult than for Libya. Russia and China have blocked a number of attempts to achieve a UN resolution condemning the Syrian government’s actions, although they have both endorsed Kofi Annan’s ‘Six point plan’ for the region, and for a UN observer mission to Syria. The Foreign Secretary criticised a veto by China and Russia of a draft resolution supported by the UK in February, calling it:

a grave error of judgement by the Governments of China and Russia. There is no need to mince words. Russia and China have twice vetoed reasonable and necessary action by the United Nations Security Council. Such vetoes are a betrayal of the Syrian people. 247

176. Many observers attribute Russian and Chinese reluctance to allow UN resolutions on Syria in part to a sense of betrayal over the perceived “stretching” of the Libya resolutions

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245 Q147

246 See, for example, “U.N. alarmed at rising death toll in Syria, Homs situation”, Reuters, 19 June 2012, via website (www.reuters.com)

247 HC Deb, 6 Feb 2012, Cols 23–24
not just to protect civilians but to facilitate regime change in Libya.\textsuperscript{248} At the time of the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya, then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin called it “defective and flawed” and stated that it would allow a “crusade” in Libya. In September 2011, then-President Dmitry Medvedev said “we believe that the mandate granted under Resolution 1973 on Libya was exceeded. We would not want to see the same thing happen in Syria.”\textsuperscript{249} Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has echoed this view, stating that “The international community unfortunately did take sides in Libya and we would never allow the Security Council to authorise anything similar to what happened in Libya,” adding that a second Libya “would be a disaster for the Arab world and for world politics.”\textsuperscript{250}

177. However, criticism of the Russian position has grown ever louder, and many observers have attributed Russia’s refusal to allow criticism of Syria in the UN as having more to do with Syria’s long-standing status as Russia’s only major ally in the region. The continued provision of Russian arms to the Syrian government has elicited further criticism, including public condemnation by the US Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{251}

178. Nevertheless, there is also considerably less enthusiasm internationally for a Libya-style intervention in Syria, because it is perceived to be a challenge of even greater complexity, and with much greater consequences for the region. Doubts also exist about the coherence of the opposition to the Assad regime. Following the suspension of the UN observer mission to Syria and a general acknowledgement that the Annan plan had stalled, a Syria Action Group meeting in Geneva on 30 June 2012 agreed a communiqué which:

- identified steps and measures by the parties to secure full implementation of the six-point plan and UNSCRs 2042 and 2043, including an immediate cessation of violence in all its forms;
- agreed on guidelines and principles for a political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, and
- agreed on actions they would take to implement the above in support of the Joint Special Envoy’s efforts to facilitate a Syrian-led political process.

The Foreign Secretary commented that this was the result of a compromise and did not contain everything the UK had wanted, but it is “a step forward that is worth having. It is the first time that the P5 and other key players have spelled out in detail what transition should look like, including a transitional unity government involving the opposition and based on the principle of mutual consent. I welcome the fact that Russia and China have signed up to this.”\textsuperscript{252} The suffering and loss of life in Syria is unacceptable and we welcome the Government’s efforts to reach a consensus on international action both within and outside the UN. However, we note with concern that the consequences of the perceived ‘stretching’ of the terms of the UN resolutions on Libya are now being

\textsuperscript{248} See, for instance, “Putin rejects intervention but fears civil war in Syria”, New York Times, 2 June 2012.

\textsuperscript{249} Transcript of interview with Euronews TV Channel, 9 September 2011, via RT website (www.rt.com)

\textsuperscript{250} Transcript of interview with ABC Lateline programme, 31 January 2012, via ABC website (www.abc.net.au)

\textsuperscript{251} “US accuses Russia over Syria helicopters”, Financial Times, 13 June 2012, via FT website (www.ft.com)

visited on attempts to secure a UN Security Council resolution which takes a tougher line on Syria. There can be no certainty, however, that a less interventionist approach in Libya would necessarily have led to readier support from Russia or China for vigorous condemnation of President Assad’s actions. On balance, therefore, we do not believe that the diplomatic stalemate over Syria should be seen as too high a price to pay for the scale of intervention in Libya.

**Bahrain**

179. Bahrain’s government also responded with force against its protestors between February and April 2011 and almost 100 protestors are thought to have died in the clashes. The government succeeded in quelling the protests with some controversial assistance from Saudi Arabia. Bahrain’s treatment of the protestors was a particular dilemma for the UK, which counts Bahrain as an important ally in the region. The FCO stated that “the subsequent sentencing of opposition figures, the reports of deaths in custody, the allegations of torture, the denial of medical treatment and the censorship of the media are extremely troubling.” Bahrain has since been heavily criticised by NGOs for failing to introduce reforms, and continuing detention of human rights activists. The Minister agreed that progress was too slow, but he praised “the most extraordinary independent commission, which reported on it in public, in a manner previously unknown, I think, in the region. […] we can see a reform process that we are engaged in.” We conclude that the Government is right to support peaceful reform efforts where possible in Bahrain, but it must also be clear in its public criticism of human rights violations there if it is to avoid charges of hypocrisy.

**Reforming states**

180. Although it did not result in large scale protests in every country in the region, the Arab Spring caused a number of governments in the region to institute reforms. The kingdoms of Jordan and Morocco have each announced a programme of reforms that includes some form of elections and strengthening of parliaments. Algeria’s President Bouteflika has lifted its State of Emergency laws and embarked on reforms. The FCO told us that it is “still too early to assess whether declared reform programmes will deliver tangible change,” but the UK is providing support to reforming countries through the Arab Partnership and multi-lateral channels.

253 Ev 81
254 Q 147
255 Ev 79
7 Conclusion

181. The Arab Spring is not a short-term phenomenon, and nor should the changes to UK government policy be. None of the Arab Spring countries we have examined in this report has yet succeeded in establishing a constitutional democracy. Progress in Tunisia has been impressive and promising, but continuing violence and instability in Libya and recent developments in Egypt both cause deep concern. The UK Government cannot be held responsible for the success or otherwise of the transitions to democracy: these are in the hands of the citizens of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. However, we began this report by noting that the Arab Spring presented both a challenge and an opportunity for British foreign policy in the MENA region. The Government has coped with the challenge reasonably well, but it has not yet proven able to grasp the important opportunities that the Arab Spring has offered, and still offers, to the UK.

182. The Government has succeeded in providing consular services; navigating the diplomatic troubles as authoritarian systems gave way to transitional governments; and beginning to build new relationships with incoming governments in the region. It has also carefully avoided the pitfalls of intervening too quickly or too much in the new societies, understanding that the revolutions are owned by the people in each state.

183. However, the Government has not grasped each opportunity it could have to create a new engagement and understanding with the region. It has outlined a new ‘values-based’ approach in UK foreign policy toward the Arab Spring states, but this was swiftly undermined in the eyes of many in the region by the circumstances of the trade delegation. The UK is still struggling to create a compelling and—most importantly—consistent narrative for its approach to the region. Efforts such as the UK’s Arab Partnership, the G8 Deauville Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy will have only limited impact if they are seen to be undercut by actions that reflect a more traditional view of UK interests in the region.

184. The Government states that it has learnt lessons from the revolutions. It is important that the UK is seen to be applying these lessons to its relations with other Arab and Gulf states, and more widely, whose governments as yet show no sign of reforming, or that are actively resisting reform. In this regard, the greatest challenges of the Arab Spring may still lie ahead.
### Annex 1: Timeline of FCO consular response to Libyan crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 February</td>
<td>Protests break out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 February</td>
<td>Embassy discusses evacuation plans with the FCO’s Consular Crisis Department. A Libya crisis unit is established in London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 February</td>
<td>FCO advises against all but essential travel outside Tripoli.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 February</td>
<td>FCO advises against all but essential travel to all of Libya and advises British nationals to leave by commercial means if it is safe to do so. Embassy in Tripoli identifies a charter plane to evacuate UK nationals from Benghazi to Tripoli.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional call handlers deployed to FCO crisis centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 February</td>
<td>Foreign Secretary agrees that an MOD Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance team be deployed to Libya to evaluate the potential for military evacuations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[evening] Foreign Secretary authorises the chartering of a commercial flight out of Tripoli to augment commercial capacity and asks MOD to re-route HMS Cumberland toward the Libyan coast. FCO Crisis Centre initiates charter booking process with its broker, Air Partner, books first charter to depart Gatwick on morning of 23 February, to allow time to obtain landing permissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embassy in Tripoli recommends aborting the planned charter flight from Benghazi as airport is no longer safe.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA informs FCO it is suspending commercial flights with immediate effect (other commercial flights continue).</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 February</td>
<td>Aircraft operator applies for flight permits to Libya.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BMI informs FCO it has suspended its commercial flights to Tripoli.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tripoli Embassy informs that other airlines are still operating but warns that the airport is overcrowded and British nationals without tickets might not be able to leave for 2–3 days.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Secretary announces that a charter plane will travel to Libya in the next 48 hours and is seeking landing clearances and permissions from the Libyan government. The Libyan Foreign Ministry advises the Embassy that the Civil Aviation Authority is authorised to grant clearance to all charters brought in by foreign governments to evacuate nationals. Embassy seeks confirmation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt Air offers charter for 23 February, but its landing permit does not come through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The FCO’s Consular Crisis Department explores the possibility of BMI running charter flights if the FCO will underwrite its insurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid Deployment Team deployed to Crete to join HMS Cumberland. MOD decides, with consent of FCO and Maltese officials, to establish an international cell in Valletta to coordinate evacuations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Crisis Centre in London moves onto 24 hour footing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23 February

**BMI decides not to fly charters discussed on 22 February.**

FCO confirms to Air Partner that landing permits are not required for evacuation flights to Tripoli. A delay occurs as Air Partner seeks confirmation that insurance will cover a flight without a landing permit. Departure time from Gatwick revised from 0900 to 1300.

**Foreign Secretary decides to send a second FCO charter plane. FCO contacts Air Partner to arrange.**

Embassy consular team and the first Rapid Deployment Team are deployed at Tripoli airport to try to help British nationals. Some commercial flights continue, but with extreme delays. Security at the airport is poor, with authorities firing live rounds in the air and administering beatings to control crowds.

**A second RDT arrives but is refused entry to the country so operates airside.**

A technical fault is discovered with the first charter plane at Gatwick on start up at 1320. Departure is delayed until 2145.

**Significant call waiting times reported in London. Additional staff called in to support call handling but times increase again toward the end of the day.**

24 February

**[early hours] Flight for Gatwick, chartered by BP, leaves Tripoli. Passengers include British nationals as FCO staff agree with BP to use its extra capacity to accommodate as many British nationals as possible.**

**[morning] First FCO charter flight and an RAF Hercules depart Tripoli for Valletta carrying British nationals. First charter flight takes passengers from both planes on to London from Valletta.**

**Call waiting times in London reach up to 90 minutes. FCO call-handling team reinforced and special police capacity put on standby. In the afternoon the decision is taken to transfer calls to an outsource partner, Teleperformance, in Northern Ireland. FCO staff fly to Northern Ireland to support.**

**[evening] Second FCO chartered flight departs Tripoli for Gatwick.**

HMS Cumberland departs Benghazi for Malta carrying 200 evacuees, including 70 British nationals.

25 & 26 February

Four further FCO charter flights depart Tripoli.

26 February

Embassy operations are suspended and the Embassy in Tripoli is closed.

**RAF aircraft departs Tripoli for Valetta carrying several embassy staff.**

26 & 27 February

UK military flights extract British nationals and others from the Libyan desert and oilfields to Valletta.

27 February

**HMS Cumberland departs Benghazi for a second time carrying around 200 evacuees.**

27 & 28 February

Three FCO charter flights depart from Valletta to Gatwick.

2 March

**HMS York departs Benghazi carrying evacuees.**

6 March

**HMS Cumberland departs Benghazi for a third time carrying evacuees.**
Annex 2: Statements on rendition

15 November 2004: Rt Hon Jack Straw MP, Secretary of State

The British Government including the intelligence and security agencies, never use torture to obtain information. Nor would we instigate others to commit torture for that purpose. The UK intelligence and security agencies carefully evaluate the intelligence they receive against a range of factors; any concerns about the source of the intelligence or the means by which it may have been obtained would be taken into account.\(^\text{256}\)

11 January 2005: Bill Rammell MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

We oppose the use of torture ourselves. We would never advocate anybody else using torture and to my knowledge we have not knowingly received intelligence that we have known has been gained under torture.\(^\text{257}\)

11 March 2005: Letter from Parliamentary Relations and Devolution Team, FCO

The British Government’s policy is not to deport or extradite any person to another state where there are substantial grounds to believe that the person will be subject to torture or where there is a real risk that the death penalty will be applied … The British Government is not aware of the use of its territory or airspace for the purposes of “extraordinary rendition”. The British Government has not received any requests, nor granted any permissions, for the use of UK territory or airspace for such purposes.\(^\text{258}\)

Committee recommendation [published 5 April 2005]:

We conclude that the Government has failed to deal with questions about extraordinary rendition with the transparency and accountability required on so serious an issue. If the Government believes that extraordinary rendition is a valid tool in the war against terrorism, it should say so openly and transparently, so that it may be held accountable. We recommend that the Government end its policy of obfuscation and that it give straight answers to the Committee’s questions of 25 February.\(^\text{259}\)

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258 Sixth Report of Session 2004–05: Foreign Policy Aspects of the War Against Terrorism Page Ev 68 of written evidence
259 Sixth Report of Session 2004–05: Foreign Policy Aspects of the War Against Terrorism Para 98
24 October 2005: Rt Hon Jack Straw MP, Secretary of State

We are not aware of the use of our territory or air space for the purpose of extraordinary rendition. We have not received any requests or granted any permissions for use of UK territory or air space for such purposes.\textsuperscript{260}

23 November 2005: Ian Pearson MP, Minister of State for Trade, FCO

As I say, certainly we are not aware of UK territory or airspace being used for the purposes of extraordinary rendition. We have not received any requests and we have not granted any permission for the use of UK territory or airspace for such purposes, so we can be very clear on that.\textsuperscript{261}

**Committee recommendation [published 23 February 2006]:**

We conclude that the Government has a duty to enquire into the allegations of extraordinary rendition and black sites under the Convention against Torture, and to make clear to the USA that any extraordinary rendition to states where suspects may be tortured is completely unacceptable.\textsuperscript{262}

17 March 2006: Rt Hon Jack Straw MP, Secretary of State

It does not follow for a second that because there are flights here with CIA aeroplanes that on those aeroplanes, in breach of undertakings given by successive American administrations, there were people being rendered through UK air space or territory without our agreement...if there had been people rendered in this way, I think it is a fair bet that somebody would have spotted this, somebody on the ground, or somebody would have told somebody. No one has come forward, nobody at all.\textsuperscript{263}

2 May 2006: FCO Command Paper

27. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have completed a search of all relevant records back to May 1997. They have not found any evidence of detainees being rendered through UK territory or airspace (or that of the Overseas Territories) since 11 September 2001. We have not found any evidence of detainees being rendered through the UK (or Overseas Territories) since 1997 where there were substantial grounds to believe there was a real risk of torture. There were four cases in 1998 where the US requested permission to render one or more detainees through the UK or Overseas Territories. In two of these cases, the Government granted the US request, and in the other two it refused. In both the cases where the request was granted, the individuals were being transferred to the US in order to face trial.

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\textsuperscript{260} Fourth Report of Session 2005–06: Foreign policy aspects of the war against terrorism Q 105 of oral evidence

\textsuperscript{261} First Report of Session 2005–06: Human Rights Annual Report 2005 Q 100 of oral evidence


\textsuperscript{263} Fourth Report of Session 2005–06: Foreign policy aspects of the war against terrorism Q 233 of oral evidence
30. We are also clear that the US would not render a detainee through UK territory or airspace (including Overseas Territories) without our permission. As noted above, the US has sought such permission in the past.264

Committee recommendation [published 2 July 2006]:

… The British and US governments have categorically denied that either UK airspace, or airports have been used by the US government for rendition or extraordinary rendition since 11 September 2001. We reiterate our strong view that the Government must deal with extraordinary rendition in a transparent manner with timely answers to questions from this Committee … 265

Committee recommendation [published 29 April 2007]:

We recommend that the Government ask the United States administration to confirm whether aircraft used in rendition operations have called at airfields in the United Kingdom or in the Overseas Territories en route to or from a rendition and that it make a clear statement of its policy on this practice.266

29 June 2007: FCO Command Paper

... There is no new evidence that UK airspace (or that of the Overseas Territories) has been sought by the US to use for rendition, other than the four cases already known about and mentioned by the Committee in its Report. The Committee also heard a full, clear statement of the Government’s policy on rendition at this time. Our position has not changed.

The Government has made clear to the US administration that we expect the US to seek permission to render detainees via UK territory and airspace (including the Overseas Territories). We have made clear that we will grant permission only if we are satisfied that the rendition would accord with UK law and our international obligations ... We are clear that the US would not render anyone through UK airspace (including the Overseas Territories) without our permission.267

21 February 2008: Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State

... Contrary to earlier explicit assurances that Diego Garcia had not been used for rendition flights, recent US investigations have now revealed two occasions, both in 2002, when that had in fact occurred. An error in the earlier US records search meant that those cases did not come to light. In both cases, a US plane with a single detainee on board refuelled at the

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265 Fourth Report of Session 2005–06: Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism Para 58

266 Third Report of Session 2006–07: Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism Para 58

US facility in Diego Garcia. The detainees did not leave the plane, and the US Government have assured us that no US detainees have ever been held on Diego Garcia. US investigations show no record of any other rendition through Diego Garcia or any other overseas territory, or through the UK itself, since then.

Yesterday, US and UK legal teams discussed the issue, and I spoke with Secretary Rice. We both agree that the mistakes made in those two cases are not acceptable, and she shares my deep regret that the information has only just come to light. She emphasised to me that the US Government came to us with the information quickly after they discovered it.

The House and the Government will share deep disappointment at the news, and about its late emergence. That disappointment is shared by our US allies. They recognise the absolute imperative for the British Government to provide accurate information to Parliament. I reaffirm the Government’s commitment to that imperative today. We fully accept that the United States gave its earlier assurances in good faith. We accepted those assurances, and indeed referred to them publicly, also in good faith.

For the avoidance of doubt, I have asked my officials to compile a list of all the flights where we have been alerted to concerns regarding rendition through the UK or our overseas territories. Once it is ready we will be sending the list to the US and seeking their specific assurance that none of those flights was used for rendition purposes...  

18 March 2008: Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State

The Government has no record of any request having been made by the US regarding the rendition of the two individuals through Diego Garcia. The Government previously received assurances from the US in 2005, 2006 and 2007 that no detainees had been transferred through the territorial waters of Diego Garcia. These assurances were given at the annual Diego Garcia political-military talks.

3 July 2008: Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State

I promised the House that … my officials would compile a list of flights where we had been alerted to concern about rendition through the UK or our overseas territories. … The US Government received the list of flights from the UK Government. The US Government confirmed that, with the exception of two cases related to Diego Garcia in 2002, there have been no other instances in which US intelligence flights landed in the United Kingdom, our overseas territories, or the Crown dependencies, with a detainee on board since 11 September 2001.

Our US allies are agreed on the need to seek our permission for any future renditions through UK territory. Secretary Rice has underlined to me the firm US understanding that there will be no rendition through the UK, our overseas territories and Crown dependencies or airspace without first receiving our express permission. We have made

268  Oral Statement to the House 21 February 2008, cols 547–8
269  Evidence to the Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2007–08, Overseas Territories, Ev 346
clear that we would only grant such permission if we were satisfied that the rendition would accord with UK law and our international obligations. The circumstances of any such request would be carefully examined on a case-by-case basis.  

**Committee recommendation [published 20 July 2008]:**

We conclude that the Government has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that flights that enter UK airspace or land at UK airports are not part of the "rendition circuit", even if they do not have a detainee on board during the time they are in UK territory. We recommend that the Government should immediately raise questions about such flights with the US authorities in order to ascertain the full scale of the rendition problem, and inform the Committee of the replies it receives in its response to this Report.  

**25 September 2008: FCO Command Paper**

The Government does not consider that a flight transiting UK territory or airspace on its way to or from a rendition operation constitutes rendition. Nor do we consider that permitting transit or refuelling of an aircraft without detainees on board without knowledge of what activities that aircraft had been or would be involved in, or indeed whether or not those activities were unlawful, to be unlawful in itself.  

**16 June 2009: Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State**

I have had assurances from the highest levels of US Government—the former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice—and at official level we have had confirmation too that thorough searches of American records produced the evidence of the two cases that you referred to. The American Government then came to us promptly with that new evidence. We have subsequently sent them details of allegations in respect of the use of Diego Garcia and they have responded, as I have reported to Parliament, with no further cases. I have had assurances, as I say, at the highest level that there are no cases beyond those two, and also that if there was any desire on the part of the United States to use Diego Garcia for so-called extraordinary rendition, or for any kind of rendition, the British Government would be consulted.  

We have assurances from the US that there have been no people rendited on boats or ships in Diego Garcia territorial waters.  

We said, very clearly, that our understanding of the agreement in respect of Diego Garcia was that there had to be agreement. They [the US Government] subsequently said, “We

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270 Written Ministerial Statement to the House 3 July 2008, col 58WS  
give you absolute assurance that, in all future cases, there will be; we will see that agreement.”

July 2009: Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State

The territorial waters of Diego Garcia extend to three nautical miles. Replenishment at Sea (RAS) requires a stable transfer system between the two vessels concerned. This would usually be provided by an auxiliary vessel. No such vessels are currently berthed in Diego Garcia and consequently all vessels have to come into port to be replenished. It is highly unlikely therefore that re-victualing outside the port would occur. Under the UK/US Exchange of Notes which govern the use of the British Indian Ocean Territory for Defence purposes, the US undertakes to inform the UK of intended movements of its ships in BIOT territorial waters in “normal circumstances.”

Committee recommendation [published 9 August 2009]:

We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government indicates whether it considers that UK law has effect in British Indian Ocean Territory, and whether it considers that either UK law or the agreements between the US and UK over the use of BIOT were broken by the admitted US rendition flights in 2002.

... We further recommend that the Government provides, in its response to this Report, full details of its record-keeping and record-disposal policy in relation to flights through British territory, particularly BIOT, and state for how long it now retains such records. We recommend that, in its response, the Government addresses the question of whether it considers that current aviation law and aircraft identification procedures are sufficient to identify flights which may be carrying out rendition both through Diego Garcia or elsewhere through UK airspace.

... We recommend that the Government requests the US Administration to supply details of any movement of ships in Diego Garcia’s waters since January 2002 that were not notified at the time to the UK authorities, and seek assurances that at no point were these or other vessels used for re-victualling of vessels outside Diego Garcia’s territorial waters which were being used for purposes of rendition.

9 October 2009: FCO Command Paper

The law applied by the courts of the Territory of Diego Garcia consists, first, of those Acts of Parliament and Orders in Council, etc, that apply (or have been applied) to the Territory; second, the Ordinances that have been enacted by the Commissioner (under the usual power to make laws “for the peace, order and good government of the Territory”)

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and the subordinate legislation made under such Ordinances; and third and always subject to any such “specific law”, the law of England as from time to time in force in England.

We consider that the US Government should have sought permission from the UK before undertaking rendition operations through Diego Garcia.  

As the Committee will be aware, following receipt of the information from the US in 2008 about the two US rendition flights through Diego Garcia in 2002, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office instructed all Overseas Territories, including the British Indian Ocean Territory, to retain all flight records until further notice…

… It would be unreasonable and impractical to check every aircraft transiting UK airspace. Instead, an intelligence-led approach is and must be employed. The Government is confident that if individuals are reasonably suspected of committing criminal offences, or if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that aircraft are being used for unlawful purposes, then action can be taken.  

… The US has already confirmed to the UK that no detainees have been held on ships within Diego Garcia’s territorial waters since 11 September 2001.

The US has also informed us that they do not operate detention facilities for terrorist suspects on board ships, although US naval vessels were used in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to screen and temporarily hold a very small number of individuals pending their transfer to land-based detention facilities. The US has informed us that these ships were not located within the territorial waters of Diego Garcia. The Government has no information to suggest that these ships were ever supplied from the island. Neither is the Government aware of any ships holding detainees outside the territorial waters but being supplied from the island.

… the US Government has confirmed that, with the exception of the two cases of rendition through Diego Garcia in 2002, there have been no other instances in which US intelligence flights have landed in the UK, our Overseas Territories or the Crown Dependencies, with a detainee on board since 11 September 2001. They have also underlined their firm understanding that there will be no rendition through the UK, our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies or airspace without first receiving our express permission.

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Draft Report (British foreign policy and the ‘Arab Spring’), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 3 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 4 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 5 and 6 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 7 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraph 8 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 9 to 24 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 25 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 26 to 29 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 30 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 31 to 49 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 50 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 51 to 57 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 58 read, as follows:

We conclude that the Government responded to the Libyan crisis boldly on both bilateral and multilateral levels. The UK demonstrated leadership at the United Nations and in the EU to achieve a positive international response.

Amendment proposed, in line 3, to leave out “a positive international” and insert “its desired.”—(Mr John Baron.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.
Question accordingly agreed to.

Paragraph 58, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraph 59 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 60 and 61 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 62 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 63 to 68 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 69 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 70 to 73 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 74 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 75 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 76 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 77 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 78 to 81 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 82 read and postponed.

Paragraphs 83 to 99 (now paragraphs 82 to 98) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 100 (now paragraph 99) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 101 (now paragraph 100) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 102 to 109 (now paragraphs 101 to 108) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 110 (now paragraph 109) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 111 to 129 (now paragraphs 110 to 128) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 130 (now paragraphs 129) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 131 to 133 (now paragraphs 130 to 132) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 134 (now paragraph 133) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 135 to 138 (now paragraphs 134 to 137) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 139 (now paragraph 138) read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 140 to 143 (now paragraphs 139 to 142) read and agreed to.
Paragraph 144 (now paragraph 143) read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 145 to 147 (now paragraphs 144 to 146) read and agreed to.
Postponed paragraph 82 (now paragraph 147) again read and agreed to.
Paragraph 148 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 149 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraph 150 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraphs 151 to 162 read and agreed to.
Paragraph 163 read, amended and agreed to.
Paragraph 164 read.
Amendment proposed, in line 7, to leave out from "Libya" to the end of the paragraph.—(Sir John Stanley.)
Motion made and Question proposed, That the proposed Amendment be divided.—(Mr John Baron.)
Question put and agreed to.
Amendment proposed, in line 11, to leave out from "control." to the end of the paragraph.—(The Chairman.)
Question put, That the Amendment be made.
The Committee divided.

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Question accordingly negatived.

Another Amendment proposed, to leave out from "Libya." in line 9 to "The" in line 11.—(The Chairman.)
Question put, That the Amendment be made.
The Committee divided.

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Question accordingly negatived.
Paragraph agreed to.

Paragraphs 165 and 166 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 167 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 168 and 169 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 170 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 171 and 172 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 173 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 174 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 175 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 176 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 177 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 178 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 179 to 184 read and agreed to.

Summary read, amended and agreed to.

Annexes read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report, as amended, be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report, together with written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 15 November 2011 and 24 January, in the previous session of Parliament, and 22 May.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 10 July at 10.00 am.]
Witnesses

Tuesday 29 November 2011

Intissar Kherigi, trainee lawyer and daughter of Rachid Ghannouchi, leader of the Ennahda party, Tunisia

Dr Eugene Rogan, Director of the Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford

Tuesday 6 December 2011

Dr Claire Spencer, Head of Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

Robin Lamb, Director General of the Libyan British Business Council and Executive Director of the Egyptian British Business Council

Tuesday 31 January 2012

Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown KCMG PC

Tuesday 20 March 2012

Alistair Burt MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East and North Africa, and Dr Christian Turner, Director of Middle East and North Africa Directorate (MENAD), Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Wednesday 18 April 2012

Alistair Burt MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East and North Africa, and Jon Davies, Additional Director of Middle East and North Africa Directorate (MENAD), Foreign & Commonwealth Office

List of printed written evidence

1. Dr Christian Turner, Director, MENAD, FCO Ev 58
2. Rt Hon William Hague MP, Foreign Secretary Ev 60: Ev 126
4. Robin Lamb Ev 105: Ev 123
5. Dr Eugene Rogan Ev 123
6. Alistair Burt MP, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa Ev 125
7. Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee to Foreign Secretary Ev 126
8. Prof Caroline Rooney, University of Kent Ev 142
9. Roger Higginson Ev 144
10. Christian Aid Ev 146: Ev 210
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Oral evidence

Taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee on Tuesday 29 November 2011

Members present:

Richard Ottaway (Chair)
Mr Bob Ainsworth
Mr John Baron
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Andrew Rosindell
Mr Frank Roy
Sir John Stanley
Rory Stewart

Examination of Witness

Witness: Intissar Kherigi, trainee lawyer and daughter of Rachid Ghannouchi, leader of the Ennahda party, Tunisia, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: I welcome members of the public to this first evidence session of the Committee’s inquiry into British foreign policy in the Arab uprising. It is a great pleasure today to welcome—I hope I can get the pronunciation right—Intissar Kherigi to speak to us. May I thank you very much indeed for coming along and for agreeing to appear in public? Is there anything you would like to say by way of opening remarks?

Intissar Kherigi: Just to clarify that I am speaking as a British Tunisian, who has long been active in the struggle for human rights and democracy in Tunisia, and in a personal capacity. Thank you.

Q2 Chair: When you say British Tunisian, where do you spend most time?

Intissar Kherigi: Britain, at the moment—but back and forwards.

Q3 Chair: And what have you done in Tunisia in the past?

Intissar Kherigi: While working with the Tunisian diaspora community across Europe, we co-ordinated, through a number of human rights organisations and volunteering with mainstream organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, to raise awareness of the human rights situation over the years, particularly the plight of political prisoners or prisoners of conscience. We ran letter-writing campaigns, raised awareness by speaking to politicians and to EU diplomats etc., sent assistance to people in the country, particularly to families of political prisoners, and raised awareness through media and civil society.

Q4 Chair: Thank you. Well, we are delighted to have the benefit of your experience. Looking at it very broadly at the moment, a number of reasons have been put forward for the uprisings across northern Africa, but in Tunisia in particular, which was the first. We had the immolation of the street-stall worker, which sparked things off, but what would you say are the deep-rooted causes of the Tunisian uprising?

Intissar Kherigi: Well, it came as a shock to many people around the world, even those who knew Tunisia well. But actually, if you look back over the decades at the political scene in Tunisia, it has long been clear that there are deep-rooted problems. There is a high level of authoritarianism, which has been raised by international human rights organisations—for example, Freedom House ranked it on a par with Zimbabwe, Iran and China in terms of political participation. It was named as one of the worst 10 places in the world to be a blogger. Numerous reports by Amnesty International and other organisations have highlighted the political problems.

It is clear that freedom of expression, association and participation have long been a problem, but what really ignited the situation in recent years was the economic problems, which have added to the underlying political problems. Corruption has been rising throughout the decade, as documented indeed in cables by the US Ambassador to Tunisia, who highlighted that Ben Ali’s family were known as the mafia and that they put their hands on literally every piece of private property that they coveted. For example, Transparency International mentioned that Tunisia had missed out on two to three growth points due to corruption. So up to 20% of the GDP was being wasted through corruption.

These issues really contributed, particularly the disparities between regions in terms of economic development. Mohamed Bouazizi, whose suicide of course sparked the revolution, was from Sidi Bouzid, which is a very marginalised area. It has long been known that the south of the country has been left behind, and that there have been high levels of deprivation, marginalisation and unemployment—there is a youth unemployment rate of 30%. These are structural issues that are replicated across the Arab world: a very high youth population, high rates of corruption and high rates of unemployment.

I think in Tunisia, it was a random event that created a spark on fertile ground for dissent. Of course, the role of social media has been highlighted, but that was just an enabling factor in highlighting a lot of issues that were already there and that were underlying.

Q5 Chair: Do you think we should have seen it coming? Someone said to me the other day that the first sign that this was coming was the food riots in Egypt two years earlier, but President Mubarak did
not see it coming, the CIA did not see it coming and our own intelligence agencies, I suspect, did not see it coming. Do you think we should have seen it coming?

**Intissar Kherigi:** It is difficult to say that it could have been predicted in terms of timing, but the instability of these regimes has long been recognised. In the aforementioned cables by the US Ambassador, he did note: “the chorus of complaints is rising...the risks to the regime’s long-term stability are increasing”. So there has long been an awareness that the stability of these regimes is very much in question. I think the question to be asked is what was done about it. I think the awareness was there, but the question is whether a contingency plan was put in place or there was alternative thought as to how to deal with this instability.

**Q6 Andrew Rosindell:** Good morning. Tunisia was the first country to move towards democracy. How would you assess the success of that transition since it began? Do you think that a multi-party democracy is now embedded in Tunisia, or is there a long way to go before we can say that it is such a democracy?

**Intissar Kherigi:** In some ways, Tunisia is a likely candidate for democratisation in the sense that it has strong state institutions, a highly literate, educated population and a functioning administration, so there are certain things that herald well for democracy. In terms of multi-party democracy, although the crackdown on political parties had been very severe under Ben Ali, there were still vestiges of opposition. There was the official Opposition, who had worked with Ben Ali in his makeshift Parliament, and the unofficial opposition, who had been banned under him and who worked together to form alliances. The reason why an interim—a new, incoming—government have come together so quickly is that many of these political parties had relations before and had a long history of dialogue. CPR, Ettakatol and Ennahda are currently in the government. CPR and Ennahda had had extensive relations before. They came together to write common papers and to produce common intellectual and political positions on issues such as freedom of political participation, freedom of expression and association, the rights of women, and political pluralism, so there is a strong basis for multi-party democracy in Tunisia.

The story that has gone untold at the international level is that vestiges of the previous regime are still there and there is a risk of counter-revolution. For example, it came out in a court case a few weeks ago that Ben Ali’s wife had been in touch with various associates in the country to urge them to cause riots and unrest. We have seen some of this happening in the country in the past few weeks, so it is particularly important that we recognise that it is still a very nascent democracy. It is very promising, but at the same time there needs to be a great deal of support. Just as central and eastern European countries might not have been able to move to democracy without the extensive political and economic support they received from the international community, Tunisia could be a model for the region and it really needs to be supported right now.

**Q7 Andrew Rosindell:** Were the elections genuinely free and fair by standards we would expect in our own country, here in Britain? Do you think that respect for human rights and all the values that countries like ourselves have enjoyed are becoming secure under a new, democratic system in Tunisia?

**Intissar Kherigi:** Having been there during the elections and spoken to several international observers and domestic monitors, I think the elections were largely free and fair. There have been observations by Council of Europe delegates, for example, that they were fairer than some elections they have seen in old democracies. There has to be recognition of the tremendous achievement in getting the elections finished and getting a political transition in a very satisfactory manner. Some issues were raised in terms of transgressions, political funds and so on, but the good thing is that they have been largely resolved through the courts—through the legal process. As for human rights, I think the uprising shows that Tunisians want exactly the same rights as those enjoyed by other nations. Unfortunately, there has long been a perception that while Europe wants democracy for itself, it does not want it for peoples of other regions, including Tunisia. The commitment to human rights is very high and civil society has been flourishing in the 10 or 11 months since the uprising. We have seen a plethora of human rights organisations and student, youth and women’s groups—all sorts are engaging in political debate and constructing a democratic culture in Tunisia. As for the institutionalisation of these rights, there is still a long way to go. For example, Tunisia could benefit from international expertise in how to regulate the media, how to develop an independent and free media that is able to investigate allegations of corruption against government and to highlight social issues and so on. The judiciary is also a significant issue in relation to human rights. Given that most of the abuses that happened passed through the hands of judges, judicial reform is going to be very important, particularly the judicial appointment process. The security forces are also a significant issue, because there is a significant lack of trust in the police forces. Again, that is an area where the UK could lend its expertise.

**Q8 Andrew Rosindell:** Is the fact that your new constitution is still to be sorted out going to leave a political vacuum in the interim?

**Intissar Kherigi:** It is clear that the incoming government have legitimacy from the people, and the constituent assembly has the clear role of appointing or electing the President, who will then appoint the Prime Minister, who will then appoint the government. There is a clear process set out for how the political transition will take place, and I believe the announcement of a new government will take place next week. I do not think there is too much risk of political vacuum at present.

**Q9 Ann Clwyd:** Hello. A lot of new democracies pay lip service to human rights, but there is usually quite a big gap between what they understand as human rights and what we understand. It is not part of the Tunisian culture, is it? So, how long do you think it
will take to instil a concept of human rights in the country? Is there a human rights minister, for instance, in the government, who specifically deals with human rights? What sort of status has that minister, if there is such a one?

Intissar Kherigi: In terms of the basic freedoms that we understand, from civil liberties in terms of freedom of association, expression and so on, those are very much understood in Tunisia. The demands for those rights were the well spring; the demands for those rights were enshrined in the demands of the revolution, particularly the issue of political participation and freedom of association. The fact that the Tunisian people were denied those rights for many decades gave them an awareness of their meaning, true significance and value. There is an awareness of the importance of human rights. Of course, that is going to take different forms; institutional mechanisms have to be put in place. Several parties have proposed having a human rights council, and a minister specifically responsible for human rights, but that has to be discussed among the different parties. In terms of an understanding of human rights, there is an awareness among the population, and there is a commitment specifically to civil liberties, particularly in terms of women’s rights. It is very encouraging that a large number of women were elected to the constituent assembly and that all the main political parties have committed themselves to the maintenance of women’s rights, as enshrined in the personal status code, and to furthering them. While Ben Ali was lauded on the international level for progressing women’s rights, in fact if you look behind the scenes, only a fifth of the labour force in Tunisia are women. There is a significant gender pay gap, and women tend to be concentrated in insecure employment with low pay, and also in part-time employment. This will be a significant part of the work programme for the incoming government, and I hope they will be supported in achieving that.

Q10 Ann Clwyd: You talked about freedom of the press. What is the spread of ownership of TV and the written press? Is it evenly spread or is it in the hands of one strong person? Can you describe it?

Intissar Kherigi: It is very difficult to give figures, as there is such a lack of transparency in the media. There is a national public media service broadcaster, which is the main source of information for many people. As to private channels, there is little public information available as to the percentage of ownership. It is very difficult to get those figures. What is known is that very large channels are still owned by people who were close to the Ben Ali regime, such as Nessma and so on. While they have changed their narrative slightly after the revolution, it is still ambiguous as to how the channels will be opened up, and how competition will be introduced into the media sector. Currently, it is oligopolistic really and needs to be opened up. Much better scrutiny needs to be afforded to the ownership and management of the companies. The press has been liberalised somewhat since the revolution. New licences have been granted to some new newspapers, so there has been an improvement in the written media. But standards are still somewhat lacking. Because of the fact that the only journalism training school, which was controlled by the regime, had a very low level of teaching, it will obviously take some time to improve. I think that a media code and a press code are really needed to encourage transparency and greater information as to the ownership of these channels.

Q11 Ann Clwyd: Have all political prisoners been released?

Intissar Kherigi: They have been released, yes. There will be a process for working out compensation for political prisoners and all victims of the former regime, but it will be for the incoming government to decide. The issue of transitional justice is, of course, very fraught. The line from the incoming government has been that they don’t wish to institute collective punishment; they wish to bring about a clear legal process within which individuals who were directly responsible for violations will be tried, and compensation will be given to victims. It will be difficult also to keep on side parts of the administration and bureaucracy that will be needed for the transition, so that is also a difficult process at the moment.

Q12 Mr Ainsworth: I do not know the degree to which it applies to Tunisia itself, but certainly more widely, a couple of generations ago the freedom movement would have been led largely by people with a secular vision. Now we are seeing increasingly, not only in the Muslim world but elsewhere, people with a faith-based perspective leading some of the liberation struggles. What is your perspective on that? Is it right? Has there been that big change? What is the reason for it?

Intissar Kherigi: It is definitely an accurate observation that there has been much more faith-based political participation. That has been revealed by, for example, several Gallup polls, which showed that the vast majority in many Muslim countries would like religion to play some role in public life but were also very supportive of democracy, so clearly a stable relationship has to be instituted in public life between the two. I think that there is a disconnect in the understandings of religious-based political organisations, or as they are known, Islamists in the western world. There is a disconnect between what the term means in the West and what it means in the Muslim world. In the Muslim world, it seems to mean any Muslim who enters the political arena, using their faith as a frame of reference, whereas in the West it has increasingly come to mean those of a Muslim background, who take up violence as an end and means of political change. That has caused friction between the regions in terms of political reform and progress.

It must be said, as we have recently seen in Morocco, that faith-based political parties are evolving, but I do not think that the West should see that as a threat to democracy. In fact, many such parties have been around for several decades. Islamist parties have existed since the 1920s. They have already taken part...
in the government in various countries. For example, in Jordan in the early ’90s, they held five cabinet positions. They have taken part in the government in Morocco, Algeria, Sudan and Lebanon. They have learnt a great deal from parties facing the democratic process. They have increasingly embraced democratic pluralism and the concept of equal citizenship as a basis for political participation. Taking Tunisia as a case in point, the Ennahda party embraced the personal status code, which enshrines women’s rights, under Tunisian law in the 1980s and also accepted political pluralism at a very early stage.

In the 1980s, there were tensions between Islamist parties and Communist parties, and when asked about this in the 1980s the Ennahda party clearly said, if the Tunisian people wish to elect a Communist party, we would accept it. If we try to convince them through political means, and it will be tested at the next election, through the ballot box.

So I think it needs to be understood that there has been an evolution in terms of the political thinking of these parties; and that they are differentiated as well. Different parties in the region—different Islamist parties—have very different visions, different views. For example, a number embraced democracy in the 1980s. It has taken perhaps longer, for example, for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, but it has been a process of political evolution, and it is something that is important to people in the region. I think if we are to accept that a stable democracy will emerge, that is important to people in the region. I think if we are to accept that a stable democracy will emerge, that is important to people in the region.

Q13 Mike Gapes: On that issue—it flows nicely into what I was going to ask—a number of countries, including the British Government, have announced since the start of this year an increase in, or the establishment of, new programmes of political or cultural engagement with countries in North Africa and the Middle East. The British Government announced a £110 million Arab Partnership Fund in February. What is your assessment of what that will do? How do the initiatives like those, for example, in the Middle East and North Africa, or specifically in Tunisia—particularly ideas of assistance through organisations like the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, or helping to establish political pluralism and so on? Given that you have just had a pluralistic election, what is your assessment of assistance and attempts to assist from outside?

Intissar Kherigi: Just to preface that, I think while the messages from the Prime Minister of assistance—political and economic assistance—to Tunisia were welcomed by the Tunisian people, there was a sense of déjà vu when David Cameron first visited the region and it emerged that the vast majority of his delegation were in fact defence companies and arms traders. I think that sent a mixed signal to the region in terms of whether the UK had really changed its thinking, or whether it was just on the level of rhetoric. I think these programmes can play a significant role, but they must also fit within the wider context of the messages and policies that the UK Government are communicating to the region.

In terms of these programmes, I think they can be effective. I have seen various programmes—particularly cultural programmes, run by the British Council—for young people in Tunisia, which have had an impact in terms of raising cultural awareness.

Q14 Mike Gapes: Was that before the revolution?

Intissar Kherigi: No, this is after the revolution. The British Council has ongoing activities in Tunisia. I have not participated in any political assistance programmes, but, from what I understand from those whom I have spoken to in Tunisia, the visibility of these programmes is not very high, and the level of information that is available leaves something to be desired as well. The process of making funds available, how to apply for the funds, how the funds are allocated, the criteria, etc., are quite unclear. It is felt that, while we see announcements of funding being made, the follow-up to that—where the funds actually go, whether they are actually allocated, and in what way—is missing at the grass-roots level, from the civil society perspective.

I think a great deal more needs to be done in terms of the visibility of these programmes and the sectors of society that they are reaching, because, unfortunately, when it came to political assistance during Ben Ali’s regime, much of the funding from the EU in terms of political assistance tended to go to elites with a close connection with the Ben Ali regime. Given that civil society is still evolving, I think it is very important for the UK, when it gives such funding, to be careful that those organisations are not supported that organisations that were favoured under Ben Ali’s regime, which have already developed links with the EU, etc., and are the ones that tend to get the funding.

It can be very useful, though, and it needs to take place primarily at an institutional level because the vital thing in the coming phase is for the processes to be put in place. Not necessarily the right policies or the right people, but the right processes in terms of the judiciary, the police and security forces, government and parliament, and instituting transparency and accountability. The UK has a number of mechanisms that it can be very proud of and that Tunisia can benefit from. A case in point is that many British Tunisians are active in Tunisia, and it is not inconceivable that some might play a senior role in the political process going forward. It has been proposed by one of the parties, Ennahda, for example, that Tunisia adopts a UK-style parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster model.

So there are very valuable opportunities for providing political assistance in a way that will feed in to long-term processes.

Q15 Mike Gapes: You mentioned the European Union. There has been quite a lot of criticism of the European Union’s neighbourhood policy and its approach over the past decades. There is a reassessment going on of how future assistance from the EU will be developed. One of the arguments is that there should be much greater conditionality about
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how funding is spent. How is that going to be received in Tunisia?

Intissar Kherigi: I think the implementation of conditionality of aid is something that civil society activists have long campaigned for. It is something that, unfortunately, was not seen under the previous EU policy. So at the height of the crackdown on political opposition in the 1990s, when Ben Ali put 30,000 members of opposition political parties in prison, the EU entered an association agreement with him. At the height of corruption in the decade leading up to the uprising, when corruption was reaching its worst levels, the EU was in advanced negotiations with Tunisia for advanced status. So I think there has been a perception that there have been absolutely no conditions in the relationship between the EU and Tunisia and that it has been all carrots and no sticks. Unfortunately, the way that conditionality is implemented is going to be important, because now that Tunisia has elected a democratic representative body and will have a democratic government, for the EU to come in and say, “Now we will place conditions on our engagement with you,” might send the wrong signals. So it depends on how the message is delivered.

I do not think that Tunisia and the new Tunisian government will have a problem with conditionality, given that they intend to respect human rights. So I think it is really a message for the wider region, for those regimes that have not yet democratised. Given that there is already a context of pressure on them, it might now be the time for the EU to say, “In fact we are changing our policy. We will be taking this more seriously.”

Chair: We still have a number of questions and there are just a few minutes left. We would be grateful if you could give us relatively succinct answers, Miss Kherigi.

Q16 Mike Gapes: A final question—what you are really saying is that, because Tunisia has had a democratic transition, or at least is on the way, it will be more receptive to the idea of conditionality than, say, some other countries that might regard it as those on the outside trying to tell them what to do when they have not yet had that transition. Is that what you are saying?

Intissar Kherigi: I think that Tunisia, given that it has committed to human rights, will not have an issue with conditionality of aid at this present time, whereas some other regimes might.

Q17 Mr Baron: Miss Kherigi, may I just raise with you very brieﬂy the issue of interest versus values and Britain’s approach to the region generally? The Prime Minister gave an interesting speech in the Kuwaiti Parliament in February that perhaps acknowledged that Britain in the past has not always got this right and maintained that our interests lie in upholding our external practices, and this is a very widespread perception in the region. While people recognise that every country must pursue its interests, people would wish for a better fit between values and interests and for the utilisation of various mechanisms to try to create a better fit between the two. For example, the UK, when it has wished to raise human rights issues with a particular country, has found ways to do so. So with Zimbabwe, for example, I believe that the UK was trying to get the European Union to ban Mugabe from coming into the EU at a certain point and that the former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, refused to attend various international summits at which Mugabe was present. Of course, there are state visits at which there are opportunities to raise human rights concerns, as David Cameron did in China, and there are various means such as summoning ambassadors and using the mechanisms that a government has to place pressure on a particular country.

I do not think that people would say that the UK is responsible for these human rights abuses. I think simply that the feeling is that there has been complicity in the sense that the UK and the EU have not done enough to condemn them and have actually facilitated them by giving millions of pounds and euros of funding. So it would be interesting to know whether, when Amnesty International or the UN Committee against Torture raised these issues, the Tunisian ambassador was brought in to have a word.

It would be interesting to know why the European Union’s Association Council with Tunisia, which was intended to be a mechanism for raising political issues, did not convene between 2004 and 2007. There are questions about the fact that several mechanisms that were available were not utilised. So I do not think that people expect the UK to go around changing human rights practices around the world, but at the very least they expect it to use the mechanisms available to it as an influential country to raise such issues.

Q18 Mr Baron: Leading on from that, to what extent do you think British—how can I put this?—subservience to US policy in the region is a hindrance rather than a help? In certain parts of the region, as we know, American foreign policy is not well-appreciated, particularly when it comes to the Israeli-Palestine issue. Do you think there needs to be a redefinition of our relationship with allied countries in the region such as the US?

Intissar Kherigi: I think there is definitely a perception that the UK has been very closely aligned with the US, and the perception in the region is that that is sometimes against its own interests. For example, the war in Iraq had a significant effect on how people in Tunisia saw the UK and on the level of trust that was present with regard to the UK’s foreign policy. So, I think that there needs to be a fundamental realigning of values and interests.
I think that this is a really unique opportunity for the UK to really examine previous policy making and decision making and to think about whether the decisions that have been made have really served British interests in the long term. Nobody is asking the UK to toss its interests aside. In fact, what these events show is that stability, in the Ben Ali model, has not served Britain’s interests in the long term. The same can be seen in Egypt, where people have not rested at getting rid of Mubarak but have also sought deep-rooted political reform, and this will of course have ramifications for the UK. I think it really shows everybody that there can be no stability without liberty and democracy in the region and that this is a unique opportunity for the UK—vis-à-vis Tunisia—to align its interests and its values, given that it now has shared common values with Tunisia.

Q19 Mr Baron: Sure. A good friend is sometimes a critical friend, in other words.

Very finally, let’s bring it back to Tunisia. In defence of the British Government, to a certain extent you could say that Ben Ali was not necessarily very open to dialogue and so forth. What else could Britain have done with regard to Tunisia? How has its approach in the region generally affected perceptions in Tunisia of British foreign policy?

Intissar Kherigi: As I mentioned previously, I think that there were a number of mechanisms that the UK could have used to at least make its concerns heard and known. That could have been through calling in ambassadors, through mentioning the issue or through trade. The UK has significant economic interests in Tunisia and there are a number of ways in which it could have used them to place some pressure on the regime. Its role in EU policy towards Tunisia was somewhat mistaken as well. It appears that the EU policy has been largely driven by France and Italy, which are much closer in terms of economic relations. That could be to the UK’s benefit, actually. In Tunisia, the main perception of the EU has been mediated through France and Italy, so, in a sense, they are seen as the greater transgressors in the relationship.

I think that the UK has an opportunity, while working within the EU to try to change that policy, to set itself apart slightly by also working apart and coming forward and saying, “We support democracy in Tunisia. We are going to put resources into this and show that Tunisia can be a model for the region.” The UK can play a role in building a stable democracy and British Tunisiains can play a significant role there. The UK should really think about the assets that it has—both the political assets and its cultural influence—and use them.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed, Miss Kherigi. That has been really helpful. It is very much appreciated that you have taken the time to come to speak to us.

Intissar Kherigi: Thanks for inviting me.

Examination of Witness

Witness: Dr Eugene Rogan, Director of the Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford, gave evidence.

Q20 Chair: Our next witness is Dr Eugene Rogan, the director of the Middle East Centre at St Antony’s College, Oxford. Dr Rogan, thank you very much for coming. I am afraid that, because of the change in today’s business, this is a shorter session than we might have liked. If there are any outstanding items, we will get back to you. I hope that we can maintain the dialogue.

Dr Rogan: With pleasure.

Chair: I will leave it to Rory Stewart to open the questioning.

Q21 Rory Stewart: Dr Rogan, welcome. Thank you very much indeed for coming. You have written a powerful piece trying to look overall at the shape of these Arab Spring events. Why is it possible to see any pattern at all, given the enormous differences between the different countries in the Middle East and North Africa? Why is it that there is a single unified pattern or structure?

Dr Rogan: I think that there is probably not a single unifying pattern to the events of the past year. I would discern three distinct groups of countries across the Arab world whose experiences of opposition movements have been very different in 2011. On the one hand, we have the revolutionary republics. Those are the countries that have undertaken mass popular uprisings against their regimes, starting in Tunisia and followed by Egypt. Syria and Yemen would be the other examples at hand. We could add Bahrain to that, but it is sort of an anomalous example.

Secondly, there are countries that have a recent experience of civil war, which, it seems to me, has made them reluctant to mount this kind of mass popular uprising. I am looking here at countries such as the Sudan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Iraq and Algeria, which otherwise would be ripe for revolution. In those countries, the reticence on the part of the public to risk it all in a violent confrontation with the state may reflect their recent experience of civil war.

Thirdly, we have the monarchies, which have had a very different trajectory this year. So in a sense, there is not one template that has emerged.

Q22 Rory Stewart: Sorry, maybe I was not being clear enough. You are seeing an overall pattern, even if you categorise it into three or four different units, stretching across a very varied region. Some of these monarchies are as far out as Morocco. What is it that unifies this region? Why are you able to see these different categories within a single whole?

Dr Rogan: The one common feature of all the countries is the autocratic nature of their governments, whether we are talking about a republic or a monarchy. That has been fairly consistent across the
region, so if one common feature is motivating people to take action in 2011, it has been a growing unwillingness to live under autocratic rule, and particularly autocracies that fail to deliver for the needs of their people.

Q23 Rory Stewart: Why does it not spread to Chad, Niger or Iran? Where are the boundaries? How are they defined? Why is it such an Arab spring?

Dr Rogan: I think that there are cultural regions where the actions of one country might prove a more immediate influence locally than they would in the rest of the world. It was interesting to see the way in which revolution swept eastern Europe after 1989. These developments were watched very closely across the Arab world, but because they were happening in the Balkans, they did not inspire the Arabs to take action. I think what happened in Tunisia inspired a distinctive response among a cultural sphere defined by people who speak the Arabic language. It clearly has had repercussions beyond the Arab cultural sphere; I noted that in Madrid, protesters liberated a central square and called it Plaza Tahrir. However, the immediacy of the situation is what has really been influencing fellow Arabs.

On whether the reverberations are felt in China or India, or a government to pick up that would tell you, “It is me that you would expect an ambassador, an analyst, or a government to pick up that would tell you, “It is time to take action in 2011, it has been a growing unwillingness to live under autocratic rule, and particularly autocracies that fail to deliver for the needs of their people.

Q24 Rory Stewart: If you were advising the Foreign Office or some political officer and trying to help them understand how they could predict such events, looking back, what would be the warning signs for an ambassador in Tunisia, which would let them guess that a country like Tunisia might go before a country like Yemen?

Dr Rogan: Ambassadors seem to have shown deep awareness of the underlying tensions in the societies in which they served. We have not been given access to British diplomatic dispatches with the same liberality with which WikiLeaks has shared American diplomatic documents, but the American ambassador in Tunisia showed a real understanding of the frustrations of the Tunisian people with the corruption surrounding President Ben Ali, and particularly his in-laws, and how their extravagances were feeding a growing sense of outrage over corruption and inequality. If one thing should have alerted people across the region to the risk of revolution, it would be the growing inequality that was really becoming visible.

Q25 Rory Stewart: These are deep, long-term, underlying trends that you are pointing to, but what is it that you would expect an ambassador, an analyst, or a government to pick up that would tell you, “It is time to take action in 2011, it has been a growing unwillingness to live under autocratic rule, and particularly autocracies that fail to deliver for the needs of their people.

Dr Rogan: You know, Mr Stewart, it think it is asking too much of diplomatic officials to be able to predict with that degree of precision, given that someone is posted to one country without the comparative advantage of being able to study what conditions are like in other countries. However, if there is one thing that I think they could have done a better job of monitoring, it would have been the loyalty of the military to the regime, because if one feature emerged quite early in both Tunisia and Egypt that I think was unpredictable from the outset, it was whether the military would stand by the regime or would declare its autonomy or separation from the policies of the regime. That was completely unpredictable before 2011, and I argue that without it, there would have been no revolution in Tunisia or Egypt.

Q26 Mr Ainsworth: Dr Rogan, you wrote that the “secular vision”—that was so strong a century ago—“no longer inspires the majority of the population” in the Arab world. Why is that? What is happening? What, therefore, is the outlook for secular states that have existed in the Middle East?

Dr Rogan: We tend to use the word “secular” to refer to the non-religious sphere. Our greatest concern in 2011 is to see pluralist political systems emerge from the transition, where religious-valued parties can compete on an open playing field with those that do not share religious values.

I would like to separate our discussion about secular parties from that vision for just a moment. When we talk about secular parties in the Arab world, we are really talking about parties that are formed around Marxist-Leninist ideologies, around Arab nationalism, or those of pre-revolutionary nationalisms, such as the Wafd party in Egypt, which was created in 1919 in opposition to British rule. These are parties of old men that hold absolutely no appeal to a younger generation, and you know the demographic profile of the region.

Q27 Mr Ainsworth: Why?

Dr Rogan: Because their ideas have all been discredited. It’s very hard to sell Marxist-Leninism in the 21st century, and there is no longer belief in the pan-Arab ideal that once motivated the Nasserists. The people who have filled the gap, who have been eloquent in expressing opposition and who have shown the courage of their convictions by taking on the regimes for the past 20 to 30 years have all been Islamists. They are organised, and they are omnipresent in providing for social needs—welfare and education—in societies as different as south Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, the slums of Egypt and right across Morocco.

In that sense, they are speaking a language of politics that is much more immediate and comprehensible to their constituents, but it need not mean a language that insists on the application of Islamic law, for instance, over the civil laws that the countries currently enjoy. There, I think, we have already seen Islamist parties that are emerging into politics for the first time in 2011 trying to calm fears, at home and abroad, that their ultimate aim is to impose sharia and a new sort of Islamic autocracy to replace the old, secular autocracy. That is where we then come back to the other notion of secularism, meaning a multi-party and pluralist environment, to which I think most people in the region aspire.
Q28 Mr Ainsworth: Do you think we should be a bit more relaxed about this?
Dr Rogan: I don’t think it is going to profit anyone to be particularly nervous about it. This is one of those moments where outside actors play a very limited role in events and where modesty dictates that we take a back seat, in the West generally, and watch events unfold with as much well-wishing as we can give the countries in the region.

As the Chancellor will tell you later today, we are much poorer than we had hoped we would be at this point. Our scope for doing good with our resources, whether we are in America or Europe, is extremely limited in 2011. So the notion that the Middle East and North Africa represents a problem that the West can fix in 2011 is illusory. So don’t worry too much. Reengagement in transition, such as we are experiencing now, will still be a market for British exports of all industries; I would not want to privilege the arms industry. Better relations with the new governments that emerge from these transitions.

Q29 Ann Clwyd: How would you describe the approach of the UK in trying to balance principles against trade? Have we got it right, or have we got it very wrong?
Dr Rogan: I think Miss Kherigi already made allusion to the Prime Minister’s visit to the region in February, where the perception that he was on a trade delegation rather than on a mission to congratulate the new revolutionary republics played very badly in the perception of Britain’s interests in the region. I would say this: it is unrealistic to expect any country to pursue a disinterested foreign policy. Parliamentarians have been elected by their constituents to bring benefit to their own country, not foreign countries. It would be ideal to try to square national interests with national values, but the real interface is where the perception of Britain’s interests in the region is taking place. That is a very complex one. Opposition in the Middle East has tended to mean people who want to overthrow the regime, so the notion of a working political system is being led by the peoples in the countries involved, and then try to help them in such symbolic ways as maintaining good relations between Britain and the new governments that emerge from these transitions.

Q30 Ann Clwyd: One witness acknowledged that there would be conflicts of interest in values in the various regions in relation to arms exports, and added that the “normal view” in the Arab world was that Western countries were “hypocritical”. Is that the view in the Arab world?
Dr Rogan: The sale of arms has been primarily to enable autocratic governments to stay in power. The complex weapons systems we have sold to countries across the region—the Europeans and the United States alike—have primarily been used against their own people; with only very few exceptions have they been used in defence of their country against outside aggression. That feeds a perception that we are being inconsistent. I think that all countries have the right to acquire such weapons as their militaries need, and people have confidence in weapons produced in countries such as Germany, France, Britain or the United States, so that market will continue.

I think that I have already alluded to the way in which an engagement with countries in transition might enable the UK to continue to work those markets, but not perhaps at the moment and not in a way seen as upholding autocracies against protest movements in their own countries. Here, I would urge particular caution with reference to the monarchies in the Gulf Co-operation Council. Though that region has not seen particular ferment, I cannot imagine that Saudis or Omans will long be happy to see Egyptians and Tunisians enjoying more rights than they do. The pressures that have been initiated in 2011 are long term and will continue to play across the region, so I think that in the most lucrative market for the British arms trade, the need to be seen not to be bolstering autocracy against demands for change at this moment will serve your long-term better interests.

Q31 Mr Roy: Dr Rogan, if David Cameron was wrong to lead a trade delegation laden with defence contractors to the region, what kind of delegation should he have led, bearing in mind the aid money that could be available from the United Kingdom or, indeed, the European Union? What should we have been offering instead?
Dr Rogan: It seems to me that in a moment of transition, such as we are experiencing now, the elements of soft power will bring most plaudits from the countries in question. I was invited to assist in a delegation from Jordan that came to Britain to study the workings of opposition politics. That is a very novel idea in Jordan. They tried the experience once, in the 1950s. Opposition in the Middle East has tended to mean people who want to overthrow the regime, so the notion of a working political system based on opposition is really quite alien. That kind of engagement—bringing civil society, constitutional lawyers and people who might help with the transition to a free press—and a lot of the work that the British Council does are all elements of reinforcing what people in the region most value and admire in Britain.
I would have liked to see the Prime Minister surrounded by wise women and men, coming to a new Egypt and a new Tunisia with offers of assistance in the areas where they are most likely to need it as they go from autocracy to an open political system. That would have been a more sensitive delegation. That said, I understand the motives of taking trade delegations abroad. I am myself a child of the arms industry, so I do not wish to make knee-jerk reactions against countries engaging in arms sales, but we are where we are, and the country will be judged by the way in which it conducts its relations with the region. I think soft power will promote Britain’s image better in the region than being seen to continue the old methods of selling arms to autocracies.

Q32 Mr Roy: In the promotion of reform, is the United Kingdom sensitive to local differences and cultures, for example, or is it a broad brush approach?

Dr Rogan: I think that Britain is extremely sensitive to differences across the region. I think you have an outstanding foreign service. The ambassadors that I have come to know who serve in British embassies across the region have a depth of knowledge. Many of them are Arabists. They are very impressive, and they represent this country very well. They have staff who are very well engaged in the countries where they are working and they do extensive research. What I have come to learn of the working of the intelligence services suggests that they are not nearly as bad as you would have the world believe. I think that there is a depth of knowledge that comes with a long history of engagement with the region.

Britain is no stranger to the Middle East and North Africa. For that reason, I think it has a reputation of being a country that understands the Arab world better than, say, my native country, America. A lot of people say, “The Brits understand us better.” I do not know whether that is true, but the perception is there, and I would say take advantage of every positive perception you can.

Q33 Mike Gapes: In Egypt, with the first phase of the elections yesterday, carrying on until January, at some point—perhaps you can tell us when—there will be some kind of stability and some kind of political system. What will be the consequence of this process for relations with Israel and the treaty? Also, what is happening in the Gaza Strip and with relations between Egypt and the Rafah crossing into Gaza?

Dr Rogan: I hope we can come back to the question about the way the polls are being conducted in Egypt and what is going on in Egypt as it redefines itself. You started with one area and went to another. Let me address your question about Israel, because I think that is where your primary interest is. I would say that there are two countries in the Arab world at peace with Israel—Jordan and Egypt. Both those countries have every interest in preserving their peace with Israel. They are driven by the interest of showing the outside world that they honour their international commitments and that they are open for business, because both Egypt and Jordan are suffering economically very drastically. They know that it will undermine their credibility in the international community and it will cost them the support of Europe and the United States if they frivolously break relations with Israel.

My sense is that even in the transition, and even though we have seen very ugly protests against the Israeli embassy in Egypt—the ambassador was virtually driven out of town along with his staff—and a total breakdown in the responsibility that the Egyptian government owes to diplomatic missions in its country, I do not think that is a sign of the government’s unwillingness to preserve its ties to Israel. It is just a very delicate balance, because there is not a party on the political spectrum that has support for Israel on its platform. Israel is, in democratic terms, a liability for any party that is running for office right now. You could not take to the stump and say, “Our ties to Israel are something we all have an interest in”, but realpolitik dictates that the government of Egypt will do all it can. It just means that the onus is on the government of Israel not to make itself a greater liability to its Arab allies across the region. Some of them are very sensitive to disproportionate action against neighbours in south Lebanon with the ongoing hostility with Hizballah, and in Gaza with the ongoing hostility with Hamas. If anything, it should put more pressure on the Israelis and their allies abroad to try to work towards a normalisation of Israel’s relations with the Arab states. In a moment where the Arab League is showing itself to be unusually dynamic, to return to the Arab League’s initiative of a withdrawal from occupied territory in return for full normalisation is a good basis for meaningful engagement. By putting more effort into trying to bring this Israeli government, as fractious and difficult as it is, into more meaningful engagement towards a two-state solution and throwing full weight behind a two-state solution, you will beaddressing your concerns about Gaza, about relations with Egypt and about Israel’s position in the region more generally.

What is not going to work is continuing with the status quo, seeing the expansion of settlements eating into the viability of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, or squeezing off resources to the Palestinian Authority either by the West in punishment for Hamas-Fatah reconciliation talks or by Israel for the same reason, by not making their tax deliveries. Stepping up the pressure on Palestine adds to the destabilisation of all parties involved and is very much against western interests.

Q34 Mike Gapes: And on the Egyptian elections, what are the implications?

Dr Rogan: What is clearly unrolling in Egypt is a second revolution, where having decapitated the Mubarak regime, they found it has grown a second head in the supreme command of the armed forces. The Egyptian people seemed yesterday to have decided that they would better fight to exclude the military from political power by voting and being active in parliamentary processes. They are now, it seems to me, trying to elect a Parliament that they can task with the job of writing the army out of the

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constitution, but that is going to be a very long-term battle for the new representatives of the Egyptian people.

What is so interesting is the way that even people who are disillusioned turned out to vote yesterday, because they felt it was their duty and because they thought it was using their political voice and empowering people to represent them. It is very clear that they see a battle going on to try to win the people's freedom from the military, as they have done from the civilian Mubarak administration.

Q35 Mr Ainsworth: To use your word, what is behind the “dynamism” of the Arab League? I was surprised by their support for the no-fly zone against Libya, despite Gaddafi’s relatively isolated position. Now, they are pushing hard for change in Syria. What has happened? What do you think that is representative of?

Dr Rogan: It is a remarkable change to see the Arab League acting in concerted action and effectively. Those are not things you would ever have said about that particular regional organisation. I think it reflects the way in which wealthy Gulf states have decided to put their weight behind the Arab League and use the Arab League to try to advance the policies that they wish to pursue in this volatile moment—particularly Qatar, but also Saudi Arabia. Without the weight of those countries, which have the financial resources to give them disproportionate muscle in Arab affairs, the Arab League might not be able to take such decisive moves.

Their interest is also to deflect concern from what might be popular challenges to the legitimacy of the government, particularly in Saudi Arabia, and to keep the focus very much on certain hot spots such as Syria or Libya—keeping the Arab world engaging with those issues, but perhaps removing the Gulf states from the purview of change in 2011. But, whatever the reasons behind it, it has made a drastic change in the workings of the Arab League, and they clearly wish to be engaged as a dynamic partner in change.

Q36 Mr Ainsworth: So it is good old-fashioned conservatism—go forward slowly?

Dr Rogan: There are countries where the pace of change may come at a conservative rate. I think Saudis in general are happier with evolution than with revolution. That reflects a population that has a very high percentage who have a vested interest in the status quo, and to see the status quo thrown into disarray might put their access to their jobs, salaries, health care, kids’ schooling, housing and what-not in jeopardy.

Perhaps one part of the formula we should be considering is the way in which governments broaden support for their regimes through spending, which is what the Saudis and Omanis have been doing, but which is going to put real pressure on them to see the price of oil stay up. Do we wish to encourage these countries not to engage meaningfully in political reforms by making pay-outs, when the pay-outs mean that the price of oil has to stay at $100 or $130 a barrel? That is not in the West’s long-term interests, and I would argue that it is not in the interests of the oil-producing states themselves.

Should we instead be encouraging countries in the region openly to consider a broadening of political participation? The Sultan of Oman is by all accounts a very benign ruler, but he is not just the Sultan, I may have this wrong, but he is holding the foreign ministry, the interior ministry, the prime ministry and the defence ministry. There is room for devolution in the Sultanate of Oman without a radical revolution, but it should be coming, because I think the demands for change will not stop with the revolutionary republics. I really think it is something that is going to be felt across the region as a whole. We in the West do not wish to encourage our allies in the Gulf to try to defer that day, by the kind of spending that might put our energy policies in jeopardy through higher oil prices.

Chair: We could dwell for some time on the forces of conservatism, but we won’t do it now. John Stanley.

Q37 Sir John Stanley: Can you explain, in answer to the previous question, why you still have apparent faith in the possibility of a negotiated two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians? The whole history of the past 20 years has been the two-state solution negotiations effectively providing a very useful and convenient smokescreen for the Israeli government, behind which they have carried out, with relentless determination and conspicuous success, the ever-increasing de facto annexation of East Jerusalem and the water-bearing areas of the West Bank.

Dr Rogan: Sir John, I have been pressed by the Chairman to keep my answers brief. Your question could provoke a very long discussion. I will cut to the quick. The two-state solution remains the only solution that will satisfy both Israelis’ and Palestinians’ nationalisms. For the Israelis, the imperative to preserve a Jewish state in Israel is clearly being undermined by their own initiatives to encroach on territory that is so densely populated by Palestinians.

No matter how you cut it, you cannot stay a democracy and occupy other people and deny rights to the population that is living under your rule; nor can you drive them out by ethnic cleansing means. You want the land that comes with the people. They don’t want the people; you need a two-state solution. For the Palestinians, there are many who argue they would get a better set of rights and opportunities as Israeli citizens than they will as citizens of a Palestinian state, but they have aspired to statehood since the time of the British mandate, and that aspiration goes unfulfilled. If you look at the enthusiasm Palestinians showed just for the quixotic bid for membership of the United Nations, it brings home the point how much Palestinians aspire, even in such a small part of their country, to enjoy the legitimacy of statehood.
Given both the strong support and the imperative that Israelis and Palestinians show towards statehood, however difficult it now seems to us, for all the reasons you have outlined, I still think the two-state solution is the one most likely to lead to a long-term resolution between these peoples, to which I think all responsible parties should aspire.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed, Dr Rogan. I am pretty sure my colleagues would agree that we could listen to you for a lot longer, but time does not permit. Many thanks for coming along. This has been a very useful and interesting oversight and perspective.
Tuesday 6 December 2011

Members present:
Richard Ottaway (Chair)
Mr Bob Ainsworth
Mr John Baron
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Sir John Stanley
Rory Stewart

Examination of Witness

Witness: Dr Claire Spencer, Head of Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House, gave evidence.

Q38 Chair: I welcome members of the public to the second evidence session of the Committee’s inquiry into British foreign policy and the ‘Arab Spring’: the transition to democracy. I am delighted to have a witness who has been with us before—Dr Claire Spencer, who is the head of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Chatham House. Dr Spencer, is there anything that you would like to say by means of opening remarks?

Dr Spencer: I just wanted to declare a certain interest in that the programme I head is in receipt of funds either directly or indirectly from the Arab Partnership Fund, which is managed by the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development—the British Government. In respect of activities, there are some round tables that we are organising in Egypt and with the British Council in Rabat for a training programme that starts next year.

Q39 Chair: Thank you. I think it is pretty sensible to draw that to our attention, but I do not think that it makes much difference to your evidence.

Dr Spencer, I am just flipping through some of your recent publications, and you have one that was published in the FT in July called, “You’ve ousted the crooks everywhere,” in rather acerbic French. So people were beginning to speak out. You were aware around Tunis. They would tell me, “Madam, there are crooks everywhere,” in rather acerbic French. So people were beginning to speak out. You were aware that they could see what was going on in the construction boom and the more flagrant displays of wealth.

Q40 Chair: What do you think were the main causes of the uprisings?

Dr Spencer: I think it is the usual combination of economics and politics, which are inextricably linked across the Middle East. In brief, the figures no longer added up, with high demographic growth rates and high levels of unemployment, and the official version of state politics was no longer credible. So I think the catalysts were a combination of an insult to people’s intelligence, because they were better informed about where the money was really going, and an insult to their dignity—certainly in the case of those at the lower end of society.

Dr Spencer: The catalysts were a combination of an insult to people’s intelligence, because they were better informed about where the money was really going, and an insult to their dignity—certainly in the case of those at the lower end of society.

Q41 Chair: Do you think greater transparency through modern technology was a driving factor?

Dr Spencer: Also word of mouth. I have been going to Tunisia over the years. I go there at least once a year, and it was noticeable over the last five years—not just the last year—how many of the apocryphal taxi drivers were speaking out when I asked them direct questions, for example, about who was buying all the villas that I could see being constructed in and around Tunis. They would tell me, “Madam, there are crooks everywhere,” in rather acerbic French. So people were beginning to speak out. You were aware that they could see what was going on in the construction boom and the more flagrant displays of wealth.

Q42 Chair: So it is not necessarily an anti-government protest; it was “them and us”, with the poor complaining that others were doing better.

Dr Spencer: Well, it was directed against those who were seen to be directly or indirectly in government exploiting what were official growth rates, which were quite healthy in most of these states—5% or 6%—and which were applauded in the outside world, particularly in the case of Tunisia, which was applauded for its liberal economics. Most people in Tunisia knew that the money was not coming to them, and it was not creating sustainable employment.

Q43 Chair: No one saw this coming—let alone the Presidents of the countries involved. Do you think we in the West were a bit preoccupied with stability? Were we too comfortable with the regimes that were in place, which were not causing us any trouble? The Egyptians had signed a peace agreement with Israel. Were we actually turning a bit of a Nelsonian blind eye to some of these problems that were going on underneath?
Dr Spencer: I think there were certainly people who knew. The Foreign Office certainly knew. We have seen from WikiLeaks, which has been widely quoted, that others knew what was going on. I think the dilemma is that we are just coming out of a decade in which the key security preoccupation was the containment of terrorism. I think there was an oversimplified vision of the Arab world being made up contradictorily of rather passive people combined with those who had a tendency towards radicalism. I think the dilemma was, “How do you change a system from outside?” It was better to secure our own interests to work through known and trusted partners in the region like President Mubarak, who at least secured our interests by ensuring that the terrorist threat did not come through Egypt into Europe. I think that was the dilemma we were facing. People knew that the numbers no longer added up, but they did not know what to do about it without interfering. I think the British Government in particular could not do it alone.

Q44 Chair: That does not quite address the point of whether we were turning a blind eye to it. Do you think we were aware of the dilemma? Do you think we were saying, “Look, this does suit us, but we know what is going on is not morally right”? Were we in fact endorsing an unacceptable regime?

Dr Spencer: From the Foreign Office perspective, they were aware that the sequence of Arab Human Development Reports was actually reporting a situation that, over the longer term, would no longer be sustainable with high levels of unemployment and a crisis over education and demographic pressures, so they had already last year begun to address this. I think the problem was an over-reliance on persuading our partners and the leaders in the region to engage in reform. In my view, top-down reform, if it happens at all, is extremely slow and usually does not address the core problems.

Q45 Mr Baron: Dr Spencer, reports of the Tunisian elections in October were generally promising. You were an official observer. However, one of the reports suggested that vestiges of the old regime are, as one would expect, still lingering, and there were one or two concerns that there may be a counter-revolution. I understand that Ben Ali’s wife was on the phone inciting violence, for example.

Dr Spencer: There are elements of this. I was at the election with the Carter Center mission as a short-term observer, and certainly what I observed was pretty straightforward, open and transparent. The big surprise after the elections were the 26 seats that initially were contested for a number of reasons, won by this party Al Aridha, which is championed by a television magnate—Hachemi Hamdi, I believe his name is—who broadcast from the UK into the region. The rumour is, although I have yet to find any proof, that he was funded by elements of the former regime—namely, the former single party, the RCD. There have certainly been accusations, some of which have since been discounted, that votes were bought in the areas where those seats were gained.

The other risk is from the Salafist movement in Tunisia. It was active in protest just before the elections and it is subsequently now in occupation of the university of Manouba, near Tunis, in protest against the ban on women wearing full-face veils in the university system. There are a number of women wearing the niqab, which is the full-face veil, in occupation of the university. The two pressures are coming from those angles.

Q46 Mr Baron: Can I move us on to Egypt, if I may? How confident are you that the military will accept a purely military role once the transition to a civilian government takes place? There have been reports from Amnesty International, for example, suggesting that human rights abuses have, if anything, been worse under the present military junta than they were under Mubarak. There are concerns there, are there not?

Dr Spencer: There are certainly concerns, and there are two schools of thought. I have been assured by a fairly senior Egyptian that the military will be out of power by next summer. Others contest that, saying that they have a role within the economic package. There are estimates that range from 10% to 40%, and that if they are going to leave power they will want to secure an exit strategy that secures some of those interests. From the outside, we could have been doing more to challenge the use of military courts. A number of us, publicly and otherwise, have been challenging the use of military courts to try civilian protesters, particularly when former President Mubarak has been tried in a civilian court.

We are facing a dilemma; in an era where we are talking about greater conditionality, what levers do we as the UK or collectively with our partners have to protest against the use of these military courts? I think that is why we have seen things re-emerging into Tahrir Square in recent weeks, precisely to protest against the military’s role in politics.

Q47 Mr Baron: In our whirlwind tour of North Africa, we move to Libya very briefly. How confident are you that the transition to parliamentary elections and the timetable generally will be met? There are differing reports. Some say that the main concern is the clan-like tribal rivalries, but others say that that is not an issue—Chatham House does not believe that is an issue—and it is more a case of ensuring that there is a feeling of security, and law and order. Where do you think the potential pitfalls lie?

Dr Spencer: In the areas that you have identified, we are in completely unknown territory here, and this is a new experience for many Libyans, so there is a plus side and a minus side. On the plus side, I am encouraged by the energy and enthusiasm of many Libyans including, critically, the expatriate community, who can bring a lot in terms of technical assistance from their experience of having lived in exile here or elsewhere.

In terms of creating political parties and different political forces that actually represent elements beyond the tribal configurations in Libya, we have a long way to go. It will be problematic but, as I keep saying, if it is not noisy and argumentative, it is not
democracy. We should make a big distinction between the risk of continued use of violence—hence the emphasis on moving the militias into something that resembles a national army or disarming them as soon as conceivably possible; I think that should be a priority—and allowing the kind of debates to take place, including from the east and west of the country where there are historical and traditional divisions, in a way that can reach a consensus.

Q48 Mr Baron: Whether we are talking about Tunisia, where elections have just taken place, about the drafting of constitutions or about upcoming elections, as you look at the countries mentioned what do you think our role should be—if anything—in encouraging these nascent democracies to take root after a turbulent period in their histories?

Dr Spencer: We need to spend more energy getting to know some of the new actors—the younger generation. There are a lot of very qualified younger people who have not necessarily either affiliated themselves to political parties or engaged too heavily in civil society.

A role that the UK particularly could play is in introducing young entrepreneurs from Tunisia to young entrepreneurs in this country. There has been a lot of emphasis, including through the new European Commission funding lines, on putting money into civil society and small and medium enterprises when in fact, although money does matter, there is technical and managerial expertise—how you grow a small company into a medium-sized or larger one. We should be doing a lot more on our side to galvanise some of the interest here in partnering people from the UK. It is in the UK’s interest as well for us to do that.

Q49 Chair: I want to go back to Egypt for a second. What sort of dialogue has been going on about the role of the army—that you are aware of? Can we afford to distance ourselves from the army at the moment?

Dr Spencer: The assumption is that any dialogue is going on behind the scenes with the Americans, who are well known sponsors; they provide subsidies of $1.3 billion a year to the Egyptian military. The expectation has been that where there is influence—and there is not only financial influence, but professional military-to-military influence—it will be going on there. I have heard the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton talk about the misuse of military courts, but there should be more voices speaking out against that from Europe as well. I have not heard so many.

Q50 Chair: Do you think the Egypt-Israel peace treaty is in jeopardy?

Dr Spencer: Not at the moment, but the SCAF, the military authorities and, I believe, the Muslim Brotherhood will manage this as a balancing act in terms of keeping the peace treaty going. I think it is in their interests not to upset the apple cart for now, but the expectation will be that more pressure—and I believe they think more pressure will do it—will be put on Israel to provide a settlement for the Palestinians. There is widespread disappointment across the region and in Egypt that the Palestinians’ bid for recognition of statehood at the UN has not taken the issue any further.

Q51 Mr Ainsworth: In Egypt and Tunisia we have seen parties with Islamic values at the forefront of the liberation movement. Is that going to be the model in other parts of the Middle East? If so, how fundamentalist are the parties leading these liberation movements?

Dr Spencer: It may well be the case, for the obvious reason that they have been able to organise at grass-roots level, even in opposition. What is interesting is that a banned party such as Ennahda was able to reorganise itself at grass-roots level fairly quickly after the removal of President Ben Ali.

But I think we should move away from generalising about these parties; far too often, we have assumed that the word “Islamism” covers everything on a spectrum from “moderate and engaged in democracy” to “radical”. I see no necessary progression along those lines towards radicalisation and radical action. So I think we will see more of it, but I would hesitate to generalise as to whether, for example, the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria will resemble the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; it may be very different.

Q52 Mr Ainsworth: You talked about Salafists creating problems in Tunisia. Just paint us in on your views and analysis of that spectrum, as far as it is emerging so far, and where these different movements sit on that in terms of colours and shades.

Dr Spencer: They are a minority, but I think, as we have seen from the recent election results—the first round of three election results—in Egypt, the Salafists gained 24% of the vote, so they are not totally insignificant. I think the fear is—certainly I have heard it expressed in Tunisia—that they are not indigenous. There is a lot of talk about them not being authentic, that they are funded from outside.

There are vague allusions to the Gulf—the Gulf states—funding these movements as a way of preventing a full flourishing of democracy. I would not necessarily say they are anti-democratic, but an example of the sort of parties that they try to get recognised is Hizb ut-Tahrir in Tunisia, which, rather like in this country, was not legalised, and so they do not have an automatic vehicle. There may be one or two who are inside Ennahda, but Ennahda has recently spoken out against the occupation by the Salafists of the university that I mentioned.

I think it is a movement to watch in terms of where it came from, what it actually represents and whether it could be a stalking-horse for, dare I say it, those outside who are not so interested in democracy flourishing.

Q53 Mr Ainsworth: Dr Ragan told us that the reason that parties with a faith base have led these liberation movements was that the alternatives had been completely discredited and were now old-fashioned—the old Arab nationalists and secular
movements and the rest—and that there really was no alternative. Would you accept that?

**Dr Spencer**: Yes, to a certain extent. They have not been able to rejuvenate themselves—as I mentioned earlier, quite a few young people have not joined political parties, particularly those on the secular spectrum—and they are also numerically smaller.

What I observed when I was in Tunisia seemed to me less a struggle between Islamism and secularism in the victory of Ennahda; it seemed to me more like a good old-fashioned class struggle between the working classes, although not exclusively so—you do get middle-class merchants supporting Ennahda—the dispossessed at the lower ends of the spectrum, against the middle-class elites, largely Francophone, largely living in the better areas of Tunis, who numerically were smaller and didn’t really know what was going on in the hinterland of their own country; they hadn’t needed to for years. Their opposition as human rights activists had been focused on the government, so they hadn’t built up a grass-roots movement, and hadn’t really thought about how to do so in advance of the elections. I think some of them feel they have learned their lesson; we might see a rebalancing, particularly if the Islamist parties are not able quickly to address the economic issues that they represent in terms of their constituency.

A lot of people voted for Ennahda because they are honest and they were going to provide economic solutions. I would say probably their economic programme is their weakest point, and they know that they need the assistance of those who know more about job creation and the private sector to help them to do that.

**Q54 Mr Ainsworth**: The Foreign Office have said to us that they will engage with Islamist parties even if they are not well disposed towards the United Kingdom: sensible pragmatism?

**Dr Spencer**: Yes. I think it is in our interests to have parties who can produce results, create jobs, respond to popular demands and allow people to participate in the interests of their own state. I don’t think it is our role at all to pre-judge that. If I am going to make a distinction at all, it is between engaging with people who are competent and not engaging with people who are incompetent in the sphere in which they are acting. That is the distinction I would make.

**Q55 Mr Ainsworth**: Is that pragmatism new?

**Dr Spencer**: What—for me? I have always been pragmatic.

**Mr Ainsworth**: For the Foreign Office.

**Dr Spencer**: For the Foreign Office? No, but we should not always assume that the Foreign Office’s view—certainly from the professional Foreign Office perspective—is always the one that prevails when it comes to government policy. I always see a distinction between what the Foreign Office *per se* observes and advises and what actually happens.

**Q56 Mr Ainsworth**: So you think that British Government policy hasn’t necessarily been as pragmatic as it should have been, going back?

**Dr Spencer**: In the past, I think it was dominated by an obsession with controlling terrorism and a secondary obsession with controlling migration. I don’t think we have resolved the second of those, by the way, with talk of mobility. I don’t think we have really come to terms with that. In the last year we have certainly seen much more awareness of the complexity of these issues, and responses accordingly.

**Q57 Rory Stewart**: Dr Spencer, it is very strange: these huge revolutions have happened, yet we often get the impression that there is not really a great deal to be said about it from a UK foreign policy point of view and, actually, there is a view that it is not too bad—that the situation has been good for democracy and human rights, and that it does not pose any great threat to the United Kingdom, and in any case there is not a great deal that we can do about it. Is that right? Is there a worst-case scenario that we are missing? Are there active things that the Foreign Office should be doing to head that off or is our posture correct?

**Dr Spencer**: I think it has to be looked at on a case-by-case basis, in so far as—this is my understanding, because of the level of British investment in Egypt—the Foreign Office has considerably more influence there than it does in Tunisia, where, in fact, it is the French and France who are the primary investors. But I would go beyond looking at this as an issue that we have to manage in terms of British interests. I am currently embarking on a project where I think the future—certainly of southern Europe—lies very much more closely with, and indeed in, North Africa. I think the current euro crisis, which I find strikingly kept separate from the crisis in developments in North Africa, should be joined together with it.

We are facing a historical junction, at which our own future requires us to look much more closely at the advantages, certainly with a young and educated population in this region, that it holds for Europe. We should be engaging in this region much more in our own self-interest, which happens to be the interest of the region, than as yet another problematic foreign policy issue that has to be managed in so far as we can or abandoned if we do not feel that we have any influence. The only way the UK will do so is by convincing its European partners of that. It is not something that the UK can do alone, and also the US.

**Q58 Rory Stewart**: What is the worst-case scenario? Can you spell out what kind of threat these developments—this region—could pose if things went badly wrong? We tend to be quite comfortable about it, but is there a worst-case scenario if the United States and Europe do not get things right in their relationship with this region?

**Dr Spencer**: I think the worst-case scenario is continued attrition in the economies. We have accepted that they have weathered the storm and that zero growth rates for this year, given what has happened in Egypt and Tunisia, are acceptable, but particularly in Egypt, where we are dealing with a population of 85 million people, a third of whom are on the UN $2 a day poverty line, this is not sustainable unless something critical is done in the economy.
One of the key problems in Egypt is a belief that the liberal recipes, if you like—the Washington consensus of opening up the economy to trade liberalisation and the private sector—led directly to the kind of corruption against which the protesters went to the streets. We need to look at new economic models that are more appropriate to the societies in question—perhaps, for example, co-operative models of development—and accept that a certain amount of protectionism is acceptable in the short term in terms of nurturing small to medium-sized businesses. Egypt is an economy dominated by large businesses and very small-scale businesses employing fewer than 50 people. There is very little in the way of middle-level companies and firms, and that is where we should be focusing our attention. You talk about risks and threats. The overspill effects come from greater migratory pressures—disorganised migratory pressures—both into Europe and across the region, and a breakdown in social relations, fragmentation and eventually, sadly, a civil war if it goes extremely wrong. That is where we definitely have a self-interest.

Q59 Rory Stewart: Finally, how relevant is the Turkish model to the region in terms of a new moderate Islamist party—the way in which Turkey sees itself in the world? Is this a model that Egypt, for example, could follow?

Dr Spencer: I think there are certainly ways of looking at how the Turks overcame their own economic problems—a high level of inflation and so on—in the 1980s to nurture businesses within Turkey, but I am not sure, and even the Turks have said, “We are here to help, but we are not here to sell a particular model.” Every model will be a combination of the historical trajectory of each state and new additions coming out of the discussions that they have in a democratic way; that is the way in which I think it will go. Certain elements of the Turkish model are relevant, but they cannot be exported wholesale.

Q60 Mike Gapes: May I take you a bit further on that answer? Prime Minister Erdoan went to Egypt and, as I understand it, he was met by huge, enthusiastic crowds. Then he said, “I advise you to have a secular rather than an Islamist state,” and there were very few crowds when he left. Was that statement significant or are the media exaggerating its importance?

Dr Spencer: That, it seems to me, is a reflection of the Turkish constitution, which does not allow overtly religious parties. The fact that we all seem to think from the outside that the AKP is a fudge—in other words, it is a secular party, which they insist it is—drawing inspiration from religious values, is part of the sort of compromise that each society, including Egypt, is going to have to come to. There are many ways of doing that. In the constitutional debates that they are having in Tunisia and which they will soon be having again in Egypt, it is really the extent to which you can have articles referring to the Islamic heritage of the state that determines how far the interests of those who are not Muslims—the Copts, in the case of Egypt—can defend their own values and freedom of expression within that state.

The debates that make these things into a zero-sum game—in other words, you are either 100% secular or you are going to be an Islamic republic—seem to me to be a nonsense. In this country we, I believe, live in a state that combines, at the official political level, politics and religion. We see ourselves as a secular state, but our Head of State is also Head of the Church of England. Each society has to find the balance. By not explaining the Turkish model enough, Erdoan obviously set a few backs up, by suggesting that there would be no Islamic reference at all in the Egyptian constitution.

Q61 Mike Gapes: In your introductory remarks, you referred to the lack of conditionality on assistance and support from the European Union, in particular towards the old regimes. Obviously, there is now a need to reassess Europe’s approach to what is happening, and to the Neighbourhood Policy in particular. Should that now be much more conditional with these new governments, which, ironically, are democratic or in transition to democracy, than we ever were with the autocratic ones?

Dr Spencer: I think it is very difficult to impose conditionality. It sounds like a nice idea. As I mentioned, it is obvious to me that the misuse of military courts is not part of a transition to democracy, and yet from the outside, are we really collectively prepared to say, “Right, because of that we are halting any funding so far committed to Egypt”? Most of that funding has not yet arrived. It is very difficult to impose conditions, particularly in this era, given the attitude of the younger generations. I have seen it myself. We had a meeting here with the British Council, and the Deputy Prime Minister was there assuring a young group of Tunisians and Egyptians that now conditionality from Europe would be positive and pro-democracy. They were extremely sceptical. They were saying, “Where were you in December 2010? Why should we believe you? We don’t want your conditionality. We want you to listen to us, hear what we need and respond accordingly. We don’t believe in this abstract conditionality.”

So there are two problems: one, it is not very credible, given our track record; and two, I find it difficult to see how we will have the leverage or implement it in practice.

Q62 Mike Gapes: You mentioned the British Government’s Arab Partnership, which was only established after the events in Tunisia in February. I am wondering how important that could be—because it is quite small money, isn’t it? We have a position that is different from that of the French, who have historic influence in Tunisia. We have had Mr Ghannouchi living in London. Does that mean that, even with limited resources, we are in a better position to influence developments in Tunisia than President Sarkozy, whose former Defence Minister was on holiday, etc. etc., bearing in mind that the image of France is a very different one in Tunisia?

Dr Spencer: I will start with the end of your question—the role of France in Tunisia. I have been
impressed by how forgiving the Tunisians have been of the French role. A number of people still refer to it, but then, too, are very assertive about the amount of French investment in Tunisia. To move on to the British side of this, they have a huge appetite for diversifying their trade away from France and, to a lesser extent, Italy—80% of Tunisia’s external trade is with the EU, but most foreign direct investment in joint projects is French. There is a huge appetite for learning English.

I was there in April, September and October, and my sadness is that when I asked around, there was very little visibility of the British presence in Tunisia, and what is being done is small-scale money, but a number of people mention the British Council cultural activities, and more could be done on that level. I also think that if we are to fund civil society organisations and small and medium enterprise, we need to focus more on the justice system, which still needs reforming, not only in Tunisia but also in Egypt, in order to create the robust framework within which these new actors can act without being impeded in the way they were—without fear of arrest. If more was said and done about reforming the justice system at the governmental level, the British could make this their own and have greater visibility.

Q63 Mike Gapes: Will we be more effective with our soft power as the UK separately than through working through the much wider, new European Neighbourhood Policy?

Dr Spencer: The vast funding lines are going through the European Commission. Our £110 million is small fry beside what will be channelled, not just through direct aid lines, but through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development loans for business and so on—the sort of arrangements that were agreed through the G8 Deauville summit in May this year and subsequently.

Obviously, the British have to work with partners, but there are still ways to respond and make a mark by, as you say, making a virtue of having hosted Mr Ghannouchi over all his years of exile, and to say that the British way of doing business is different, and we believe in the rule of law. In the past, we have put money into training magistrates; now we must put some more energy into conditioning the environment in which trained magistrates can operate freely. In other words, a little more political pressure would be required to get on with things like transitional justice and appointing new judges. They are still the same judges and magistrates as were active under President Ben Ali. If you are focusing on the context within which new actors can act, that will be seen as much less interfering than more funding directly into organisations, because with small amounts of funding, some organisations see themselves as more favoured than others, and others will complain that the procedures to get funds out of the system are too complicated and so on.

Q64 Mike Gapes: Finally, how does the European effort in the countries of the region compare with what might come from other parts of the world? Are the Americans taking an interest in funding or development of civil society, or are they basically seeing it more as a European back yard?

Dr Spencer: No, the Americans have been very active through the National Democratic Institute and others in democracy promotion, and in training parties and observers to take part in the elections. Certainly, when I was there, it was not just that I was with the Carter Center; the American role in funding and supporting these sorts of activities was very visible. That is where they have put most of their emphasis.

Q65 Ann Clwyd: Several witnesses have talked about the UK pursuing its economic interests, particularly in oil and gas, and that this has been done at the expense of human rights—I think you have hinted at that. Do you feel that this is still the case—that we are soft-pedalling certain aspects of democratic development because we do not want to upset our future trading prospects in those countries?

Dr Spencer: Yes and no. I think that there is this difficulty, particularly for Britain. It is well known across the region, and commented on occasionally, that the role of Britain in Iraq has been countered by the more recent role of Britain with France and NATO in Libya. There is a sense, which I am certainly picking up, of great nervousness not to be seen to be interfering too much. My fear is that that means we are tempted to work with tried and tested actors, those well-established non-governmental organisations and people we already know, and that we will not do enough to reach out to new actors. Having said that, the activity of convening round tables with new actors in Egypt is countering that. It is not very wide scale and it is small numbers of people, but certainly a contribution of the British is to show how you can have debates without them necessarily ending up in a violent, zero-sum game. Teaching and demonstrating how you can agree to differ as a debating skill is something that the British have been doing more of.

The energy interest is clearly there, but it is there for everyone else. I think that the dilemma—certainly if you look at Libya and, in the case of Tunisia, British Gas is the foremost investor in the energy sector—is that there will be an interest there, but I do not think it is a zero-sum game. It is not a question of our interests versus human rights. We have to think much more constructively. I think we have learned the lesson, or should be learning it, from this year that the two are not opposite ends of the spectrum, but that they should work together. Therefore, ensuring our energy interests should not somehow trample over human rights.

Q66 Ann Clwyd: You criticised arms sales in a speech that you made in 2009: “It is in the interest of North Africa’s partners to recognize where their assistance towards these goals can most effectively be directed. This is not in arms sales.”

Dr Spencer: I am afraid—I think the witnesses last week commented on this—that the role of the Prime Minister, David Cameron, when he visited the region together with an arms sales delegation did not necessarily send out the best image. With the financial and economic crisis that we are facing here, there are many, many more British businesses that should be
going on such missions to show the diversity of what we do—areas in which Britain excels, like star companies such as Rolls-Royce, technical high-level animation or IT skills. There is a whole series of next-level-down businesses that, for the reasons I gave earlier, should have an interest in meeting up with potential partners in Tunisia in the interests of the Tunisians and of companies in this country, which have been losing market share and exports, and in putting in an investment potential over the recent years since the economic crisis here. If all we are doing is saying that the only things that matter to us in this part of the world are energy and arms, we are indeed still sending out the wrong messages.

Q67 Ann Clwyd: You said that we should do more to challenge the use of military courts. In the case of Bahrain, for example, a lot of politicians here have challenged the use of military courts. I think as a result of the criticism—not only from here, but from human rights organisations—Bahrain did transfer some cases from military to civil courts. Should more be done in that area?

Dr Spencer: Yes. That seems to be an area in which external pressure has an effect, if concerted and done by a number of parties—it is no use if it is just the UK doing this; it has to be the European Union, the US and others. People do worry about their reputations. As you know, in Bahrain there has been the recent Bassiouni report on how the whole protest period was managed. In the case of Egypt, more should be said in a concerted fashion, as well as elsewhere in the region, if we are in the business of supporting transitions when there are obvious examples of things taking place that cannot conceivably be part of a transition towards democracy. If there are alternatives—civilian courts—then we should be speaking out much more loudly about this.

Q68 Ann Clwyd: Would you say that UK policy in the region has been too closely aligned with US policy and that we should seek to be more independent of the US?

Dr Spencer: I think in the past, I get the impression recently it has been more independent.

Q69 Chair: Dr Spencer, I understand that you are going off to Jordan later today. I know that this is not specifically within our terms of reference, but I believe you may have met the King of Jordan when he was over here the other day. How do you see things panning out in Jordan, knowing the context of what we have been talking about today?

Dr Spencer: I am interested in going there. I am looking into European Union policy towards Jordan within the context of EU policy towards Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, the reason being that they are, if you like, the vanguard countries in receipt of European assistance. In the case of Morocco and Jordan, for being the reforming states who have not undergone—they have had protests, but not a change of government through protest. It is really to find out from the Jordanian perspective whether enough is being done. But I think the particular challenge facing Jordan—unlike, to a lesser extent, Morocco—is its neighbourhood. It is in a very tricky neighbourhood, as we see with Syria. There is a real risk in that part of the world—maybe not in Jordan itself, but certainly in Syria and elsewhere, and potentially in Lebanon—of a proxy war developing between Iran and Saudi Arabia. When I heard about the bomb attack against the British Embassy in Bahrain, I was thinking this could be another stage in that sort of conflict. The Jordanians are facing a number of difficulties, obviously first and foremost the economic challenge of creating employment, of engineering things in a top-down fashion for reform. There is a division within the population between the large number of Jordanians of Palestinian descent and indigenous Jordanians, and the influence of what is happening around them, including from Israel, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere.

Q70 Chair: In constitutional terms—I know they are geographically different issues—do you see Jordan ending up as a constitutional monarchy in the mould of Morocco?

Dr Spencer: That is certainly the stated desire. I think one of the problems with top-down reform programmes is they tend to be incredibly slow, because at each stage you have to deal with vested interests that may or may not wish to engage in reform and you have to encourage—from on high, if you like—new actors, particularly in the form of new and representative political parties, to engage in the political process. This is somewhat difficult if there is not a sort of grass-roots support for this, and incremental, rising credibility in the process actually amounting to something. If it is too slow, people tend to get disenchanted. I will give an example: my favourite taxi-driver quote from Morocco, where I was asking the taxi driver what he thought about the new constitution in Morocco. He said, “Madam, you can change the text; you can’t always change the reality.” Unfortunately, a journalist friend of mine says they are not allowed to use taxi-driver quotes, but sometimes they are short and just what you need.

Q71 Chair: Would a London taxi driver say the same?

Dr Spencer: I am sure.

Chair: Dr Spencer, thank you very much indeed. I wish you well in your trip to Jordan. I hope it goes well. We really appreciate the insights that you have given us today. Thank you very much indeed.

Dr Spencer: Thank you for having me.
Examination of Witness


Q72 Chair: I welcome our second witness this morning, Mr Robin Lamb, who is Director General of the Libyan British Business Council and Executive Director of the Egyptian British Business Council. He is also former ambassador to Bahrain. Can I welcome you, Mr Lamb? I am very grateful to you for finding the time to come and see us. Is there anything you would like to say by way of opening remarks?

Robin Lamb: Only that, as you described, the jobs I have on a temporary or part-time basis at the moment are giving me the opportunity to pay attention to what is going on in those countries. Those jobs are with membership organisations, however, and I do not represent the views of the British companies that belong to those two organisations. The views are mine and possibly, if I can commit them, those of the management of the two business councils.

Q73 Chair: That is understood and clearly on the record. This session is primarily about looking more recently at the business aspects of what is going on. Would you like to give us a quick overview of how you see trade with Egypt and Libya—and, for that matter, Tunisia, if you feel qualified?

Robin Lamb: I am less qualified on Tunisia, to be honest, so if I may I will major on Egypt and Libya. They are two very different countries, in the sense that one, Libya, is the least diversified country in the region, with a high, massive dependence on oil for GDP, exports and government revenues, whereas Egypt is the most diversified economy in the Middle East and has a very broad range of economic producing sectors—at least it did until the revolution this year. In both cases, business has been interrupted to a greater or lesser extent. It has been completely disrupted in Libya, but not totally disrupted in Egypt, and I can come back to that if you want to explore it. In terms of business with both countries, they are both potentially good markets for the United Kingdom, and ones that we want to see grow. Although they are very different economies, they have very similar key issues and associated jobs. That provides the UK, in partnership with others, with the opportunity to assist them in that, not least through helping them to develop their SMEs and helping in the area of skills development.

Q74 Chair: If political stability is restored, what is the attraction of doing business with Libya and Egypt?

Robin Lamb: I will start with Libya, because it is a country that has the wherewithal and the aspiration to develop very rapidly. The new authorities are very keen, once they have the opportunity, to reconstruct their economy and also to develop it, because they are very clear that over the past 42 years under Gaddafi the country has not developed as it should and could have done. Indeed, there is no reason—well, there is a reason, which is Gaddafi and his regime—why Libya should not today look like a Gulf country, because it has the oil and it has a sovereign wealth fund, which was held by the IMF to amount to $160 billion. The fund is largely uninvested—mostly still cash in one way or the other—because it could not make its mind up how to place it.

Q75 Chair: Whereabouts?

Robin Lamb: At the moment, a lot of the funds are frozen by us, by the Americans and by other countries. Unfreezing the assets when the time is right is a great interest of the new authorities. Some say the time is right now, but others within the regime say they are not sure that they are ready to provide the safe hands that Security Council resolution 2009 said must be there in order for the assets to be released. There will be tremendous business opportunities for all, and I expect that to be even-handed, in a sense, by the Libyan authorities. I do not expect favours, and we are not looking for favours; that would be a corruption of the purpose of the revolution, and indeed of the British help for that revolution, which was not business focused.

There is always more detail one can give on Libya, but I will move briefly to Egypt. In Egypt we are very familiar with the short-term economic problems that have struck the country, which you will have heard about. Growth has tanked to below 2%, and one of the reasons for that is the impact on tourism. Another is that business and exports have slowed. They were totally interrupted at one point, but have resumed, although at a lower level.

Egypt has the problem that it is not obtaining the revenue that it would have expected in normal times, so it is drawing down reserves, and is having to sell Treasury bills to cover the deficit because the provision of aid has proved to be very slow. Amusingly, to me at least, this week the Egyptian Army announced that it was lending the central bank $1 billion, which gives an idea of the Egyptian Army’s role in the economy—not just in military industry, but also in civil industry.

There were great promises from the Gulf that it would provide deficit financing, but according to reports from Egypt, only about a billion of that has arrived, and it is not enough. Egypt is beginning to reconsider whether it should pick up the IMF’s earlier offer of a loan of $3 billion to help to tide it over. There are serious short-term problems, but in the Business Council—we are not alone in this—we are very aware that the fundamentals of the Egyptian economy are still there. The IMF says that the medium-term prospects are positive as the economy’s potential remains intact. I read this morning that Ernst & Young include Egypt among four Middle Eastern countries in their identification of 25 global countries that are rapid growth markets. There will be a time when stability is returned, or maybe before, when the Egyptian market will take off. The fundamentals are a population of 85 million, and the Nile, which produces water, which is such a key asset in the Arab world, and produces agriculture. Agricultural products are some of our main imports from Egypt, for example.

Egypt has other strengths going for it—for example, oil and gas. It produces more gas than either the UK...
or Libya, and the expectation is that the amount it produces can be doubled through investment. I am trying to pick out a few examples, and another might be that although one could say that business has been interrupted this year, our exports to Egypt in the first nine months were only 6% down on the same period last year. Business opportunities continue to be available. Egypt promises to be an important market globally as well. In fact, there is an international bank that identifies it as likely to join the world’s top 20 economies—okay, by 2050, which is some way away, but a South Korean government minister recently predicted a return in two years to being an important economy and was urging all Korean companies, as he put it, to get on the bus now.

Q76 Chair: Going back to what you were saying about finance, are banks willing to lend to Egypt? I picked up the impression from what you were saying that they are, and that arguably they are more willing to lend in Egypt than they are here.

Robin Lamb: The issue there is that the banks are very wary of lending in Egypt. They’re very liquid, and in fact profitable. For example, BNP Paribas is not an Egyptian bank, but a bank with an Egyptian outlet. It has just announced its profits for the first three quarters of $15 million. They are very liquid and they can lend, but there is such good business from Treasury bills being sold by the central bank, at about 14%, that that is one reason why the banks are so profitable at the moment, I suspect. They have the funds, but the question is, when will it be right on economic grounds for them to invest in SMEs? There are issues with SMEs, which we hopefully can assist with. For example, a lot of SMEs operate in the grey economy and have absolutely no idea of how to produce a business case, books or anything like that. A lot of training needs to be done. So yes, I think the banks can play a role in due course, and there is a willingness in principle, as soon as the commercial realities make it a sensible thing to do so for their shareholders.

Q77 Chair: I think that answer begs a lot more questions, but I leave that to my colleagues on the Treasury Select Committee. You mentioned training. Are the personnel skills there? Have they got the right people? Should there be a focus on training?

Robin Lamb: We are focusing on training—both ourselves, as the Egyptian British Business Council and Chatham House and the British Egyptian Society, for example. This is a very key area in Libya as well as in Egypt, because they both have had education systems that have had almost universal membership for many decades, but as the Arab Human Development Reports have reported, as Claire has mentioned, they have found that the quality of the education was poor and it did not generally produce people who were qualified for jobs in the modern economy. So that needs to be upgraded. There have been attempts at reform, with differing degrees of success, in different Arab countries. Bahrain tried a lot, for example. But there is a lot more to do, particularly in the area of business management and training. We are working with the British Council and Chatham House. We are starting the process, perhaps with a round-table in January, when we will have people from the Egyptian business sector, British training providers and others with expertise in how you can upgrade the skills in an economy where there is a major problem to overcome. We will start with that and work our way forward.

We were already looking at programmes before the revolution. For the last couple of years, we have had a management development programme as a business council in Egypt, trying to relay some of those skills, but it needs to be done on a larger scale. Our resources are extremely limited, but we have the support of the two governments and some of the leading British and Egyptian companies. We have to get that trickle-down, which is what was lacking.

Q78 Mr Ainsworth: What do British companies operating or seeking to operate or invest in the area need from the FCO and UKTI?

Robin Lamb: If they are large companies, they need in many ways less from the Government than the SMEs that need the support of Government, because they have very shallow pockets. You need to be able to be in a market to be most effective. The SMEs can’t afford to spend time waiting for the good news; they have to get on with their very busy lives. So it is with the SMEs that UKTI can help in particular. Embassies, with the support of the political and commercial staff in embassies, can also help. Clearly, at the senior level, the policy level, it is important for the embassy and for the FCO to contribute to policies that support the right sort of climate in which business can be done. Business wants predictability and stability. Those are two key things for any business. The ability to be paid is rather important as well. So the FCO’s job is perhaps to work on trying to get the right context. UKTI can assist with identifying business opportunities. It can particularly assist SMEs to get into the country. We do that—for example, with the Libyan British Business Council. We take in trade missions of members to see what the opportunities are, how to get on in the country and who they need to work with to form business partnerships. Those are the key requirements.

Q79 Mr Ainsworth: Within the realms of the practical—you have sat on both sides and been within the government system—are there things that we could be doing that we are not necessarily doing?

Robin Lamb: It is important for Government and business to work together, and that is being done. I can go back, for example, to my days in Bahrain. One of the things that I did there was to take an active part in various business organisations. Every month, I hosted a meeting of the heads of leading British businesses in the market. I took part in local business meetings—the Rotary Club and so on. Contacts are so important in business, particularly in the Arab world, and that is something else that UKTI and embassies can provide. Introductions are something important that can be done by the Government for business, as
Q80 Mr Ainsworth: The coalition Government have told the world that there is a new emphasis from the Foreign Office on trade. Have you seen a change under this Government?

Robin Lamb: At this stage, because we have not yet been able to take our own companies and businesses back into those two markets, we have not had an opportunity to rub alongside them to see what change has been produced by that announcement. I think that support for business in the Foreign Office is not new—I was doing it, and others in previous generations did it.

Mr Ainsworth: I was rather hoping that you would say that.

Robin Lamb: In the end, the basic thing is that the UK is an export-dependent economy. Put basically and simply, internationally, since the days of empire—if I can use a dirty word—the job of Government was to enable business to prosper. Those were the specific and first words on which we were focusing in the initial appointments of consuls in the glossy document; it was to enable British merchants to pursue their business in the market. It is an important element; it is not new and the emphasis on it has risen and fallen.

If you read Sir Anthony Parsons’s book, after the revolution in 1979 you will see that he partially blamed too much of an emphasis on commercial business and too little attention on what was happening in the more remote regions of Iran, away from the gilded halls. If you are in the Foreign Office, you cannot afford to ignore either business or politics—neither can you in business, to be honest.

Q81 Mr Ainsworth: You, I am sure, will have taken part in conversations, of which I was part over a period of time, where there is a feeling that we have an active diplomatic service—we intervene in countries both positively and negatively—but when it comes to business and capitalising on commercial opportunities, we Brits often do not cut the mustard and we let other people beat us to the prize. Is that true? If it is, what are others doing that we are failing to do?

Robin Lamb: It is true in certain respects, and it is an inevitable result of who we are and what our system is. We have developed a very market-based economy—okay, it is still mixed, but not nearly as much as it was 30 years ago—and we have recognised that business should largely be the competence area of businesses.

What can the Government do for business that they are not doing? One thing that has changed is the reduction in subsidy from Government to business. That may well be appropriate, but it is an area in which we are not doing something that our European—and other—competitors are doing. Now, if you want assistance from UKTI, you are charged for it, and instead of it being subsidised, you have to pay. A recent spectacular example is that of the French, Germans and Austrians who all took trade delegations, provided with Government aircraft and led by a Minister, into Tripoli over the past couple of months. Actually, that was counter-productive and all the feedback we have seen suggests that they were not particularly welcome. The Libyan authorities had other priorities at the time, and it did the French, Germans and Austrians no good. We are looking to take great care not to be too late, but also not to be too early in going in. In September, I went in to see how it is, and we are looking to go back in January.

We think we are getting there now, but we were not going in with an aircraft provided by HMG, nor would we expect to at this stage.

Q82 Mike Gapes: For the record, you have been involved with the Libyan British Business Council and the Egyptian British Business Council. What period are we talking about?

Robin Lamb: Two years.

Q83 Mike Gapes: So you have been there in the old regime and in the new regime, if you like.

Robin Lamb: Yes.

Q84 Mike Gapes: Can I take you back to the old regime? The memo that you sent us concludes with a statement. You said that our material interests should prevail if our moral interests would cause significant damage. The emphasis that you are making is that having high moral aspirations on human rights and issues of that kind can be damaging to our economic interests. In the context of Libya, do you think that that was the case or were we inadequate in the human rights concerns that we expressed?

Robin Lamb: If I may say so, one of the things that I tried to bring out in the paper that I submitted is that, actually, I see our moral interests as part of our interests, as opposed to different from our material interests. In short, our interests comprehend both the moral and the material. I think that, most of the time, we can pursue both.

When I was in Bahrain, for example, I was supporting British companies, as I have said, but we also had programmes to assist the development and training in the Parliament and with other parts of civil society. Indeed, a member of my staff was the regional officer. Can we do both, on both sides. I was also talking to the Opposition.

Q85 Mike Gapes: Can I specifically focus—not on your role working for the UK Government in Bahrain?—I am asking specifically about what was happening in Libya in the period under Gaddafi and the transition.

Robin Lamb: Under Gaddafi, of course, for many years we were part of the international community’s imposition of sanctions on the regime. The change really came about in the beginning of this century, particularly with the embracing of the policy of normalisation. As Claire has said, this very much came out of a period in which we were focusing on foreign policy on counter-terrorism and on the fears of development of the weapons of mass destruction. Gaddafi had a record in both, and although the policy of normalisation is understandably much criticised now, it did achieve something with Libya.
Q86 Mike Gapes: Did it improve the human rights situation?

Robin Lamb: No, it did not.

Q87 Mike Gapes: So we basically took the view that there were bigger issues, particularly the weapons of mass destruction and the potentials of terrorism, and we put those as a priority because that was perceived to be more in our national interest. We downplayed the human rights issues. Is that your assessment?

Robin Lamb: I would have thought that was true in Libya in that period, but we have to recognise that the UK was not acting alone in this. The whole of the international community was involved in that as well. We have to work with the possible and we have to work with others. Where I talk about a conflict between the moral and the material, it is that we must be very careful about taking the moral lead in a situation, unless we are quite sure that others will follow, because our material interests would be damaged without us achieving anything. Now that does not stop us trying to pursue the moral, in collaboration with others.

Q88 Mike Gapes: Evidence has been submitted to us that says that basically we allowed corporate oil interests to override other concerns, particularly in Libya, since the period after 2005. Would that be fair?

Robin Lamb: I think there is too much of an emphasis—concentration—on oil. We have much wider business interests than oil, and oil companies are only part of the scene of the business that was developing between our two countries.¹

Q89 Mike Gapes: Taking it a step further, to your knowledge, what warnings and advice were given to British companies operating in Libya and Egypt about the risks of becoming complicit in the human rights abuses that might occur in those countries?

Robin Lamb: It is hard to see how many of the companies that we were working with in Libya, for example, could have been complicit in human rights abuses. The concern—the risk—that needed to be avoided was being complicit in the corrupt practices of members of the regime. How exactly would British companies that are involved in oil, in building and designing waste water plants or in training be involved in supporting human rights violations?

Q90 Mike Gapes: But there is a Toolkit on business and human rights that is produced by the FCO, UKTI and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. There are also international guidelines from the OECD. How seriously have those been taken?

Robin Lamb: When they are going to enter a market, all businesses have to do their due diligence and they will be very aware through those discussions, if they pursue them, that there are issues like this to avoid. When I was invited to take over as Director-General of the Libyan British Business Council, before doing so, I asked what the policy was on corruption in Libya. I was assured that, as an organisation, we had zero tolerance of corruption. That is a necessary approach for any company approaching that sort of market. Not only is it not right to get involved in those things but, quite frankly, it is just too damaging for both sides.

Q91 Mike Gapes: You have mentioned corruption twice. I am also interested in human rights issues because the Toolkit from the FCO is specific. It talks about human rights. How seriously has that been taken within your organisations and also in terms of the FCO’s and other Government Departments’ advice? Is this just a document that has been produced but is not actually followed through, or is it at the centre of the advice being given by our representatives?

Robin Lamb: It is not at the centre of the advice. Nobody going to Libya, Egypt, China or many countries around the world will be unaware that there are lower levels of human rights observance, to put it mildly, than in our country.

Q92 Mike Gapes: Will they be aware because they just know generally, or will there be a specific effort by the British Government and their representatives to inform them and tell them, “These are the standards we expect you to apply”?

Robin Lamb: It will be part of the process that they follow in trying to learn about the market and, if they are a big firm, they are bound to be discussing their prospects with the Foreign Office. It may well be in that process.

Q93 Mike Gapes: But it will not be a central issue that British Government representatives will discuss with companies trying to operate in countries with poor human rights records?

Robin Lamb: I hesitate to be too definite on that. It has not been part of my experience with the Libyan British Business Council or the Egyptian British Business Council that we have had discussions of that level. Those sorts of discussions will be taken forward by our member companies. It is they who would be in a position to say to what degree the particular paper you mention is playing a part in their guidance.

Q94 Rory Stewart: Looking back at our relationships, for example with Libya, are there lessons that we can learn? For example, might we be able to say that it was necessary to develop good relations with the Libyan government, but that we went too far—that the Prime Minister should not have been portrayed kissing Gaddafi warmly on the cheeks and that there are limits to what Britain should have done in terms of its re-engagement with Libya?

Robin Lamb: It is very difficult. If you make a decision to pursue a particular policy line, you want to make it work. In retrospect, a hug in the tent doesn’t look too good, but in the context of the time, maybe he judged it necessary in order to show Gaddafi that the relationship would be fully normalised. I do not want to defend that particular thing. The point is that a process of normalisation, when we are trying to achieve an end to support for terrorism and the relinquishing of programmes for weapons of mass destruction, is an international relationship. There has to be something in return, and that was “normalisation.”

¹ See Ev 123
Q95 Rory Stewart: Are there not balances we could strike so that we could re-engage with a regime that has a bad human rights record in a way that retains our dignity and some distance in the re-engagement? Is it really necessary to go the whole hog and embrace them in the full way?

Robin Lamb: In the Arab world—you know this very well—embracing is a very normal part of interaction between males. He may have felt—I was in Saudi Arabia when Mrs Thatcher visited, and she wore very long clothing. She didn’t cover her face, but she covered her head, arms and legs. She was trying to adapt to the cultural requirements of the country she was visiting. I do not go in for the embrace myself, but maybe Mr Blair thought it would be appropriate.

Q96 Rory Stewart: What can we do and not do in Egypt? Obviously, you have come up with some good ideas about collaboration on technical assistance for SMEs, but can you sketch out, for when the British Government are feeling over-ambitious, where the limits are in Egypt of what Britain can do and what we may not be able to do in relation to the Egyptian economy?

Robin Lamb: That is a pretty broad canvas. We obviously cannot fund its deficit. It would be lovely for Egypt if somebody could help them fund their deficit. We need to look to others like the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to give them advice on how to manage their dwindling reserves and some of their economic policy, while recognising that the Egyptians will have to take the lead on that and ensure that the realpolitik of what they are coping with is taken into account. Similarly, in Libya, there are various things we could do. Maybe one is to be as sympathetic as we can to the defrosting of frozen assets as soon as the Libyans do. Maybe one is to be as sympathetic as we can to those assets from loss, diversion and corruption.

Q97 Rory Stewart: You seem to have a very different analysis of Egypt’s economy to that of the Foreign Office. You have portrayed a much more positive vision. Is that you as a technical economist challenging their GDP projections, their macro-economic projections or their deficit calculations, or are you simply saying as somebody representing businesses, “I think it’s not that bad”? Is it really necessary to go the whole hog and embrace them in the full way?

Robin Lamb: I think it is bad at the moment. Maybe the difference is between the short term and the medium term. It is not just me, in a sense. We had a round table at the Mansion House on 2 November with British businesses and some Egyptian members of the Business Council, reinforced by some other authorities. We had a presentation on the Egyptian economy, for example, by the director of research at the Egyptian Center for Economic Studies, Dr Magda Kandil. It set out some of their perspective on the possibilities and the potential for Egypt. As I said, these were shared by people from the British banking sector. It is shared by people like Ernst and Young. You are kind to refer to me as technically an economist. Technically, I am not. As a former diplomat, I am very much a generalist. I am trying to point out that there are gleams of light in the gloom, and that we must not assume that because things are bad at the moment they will necessarily be bad for a long time, or certainly not in the medium to long term.

Q98 Rory Stewart: Finally, may I just push one more time on the particular macro-economic indicators you are looking at? It’s fine that Audi launches the A1, but the structural problems facing the Egyptian economy in terms of unemployment, long-term growth figures, debt and deficit financing are appalling. This looks like one of the very worst of the southern European countries—and worse still. Where are you going to generate this kind of sustainable growth from in the Egyptian economy?

Robin Lamb: It has to come from SMEs, and SMEs need support and development. We cannot do it all ourselves. I have described how we will hope to assist in skill development, for example. Other agencies, including perhaps the World Bank and other aid donors, may be able to assist in funding greater assistance for developing the SMEs. They may be able to help develop an improved legal context for the development of SMEs. As I suggested, when access to capital for SMEs can be better structured and more available, that will help as well.

Q99 Ann Clwyd: Can you tell us what damage has been done to British-owned property and installations during the current conflict?

Robin Lamb: In Libya?

Ann Clwyd: Yes.

Robin Lamb: I have no figure. The LBBC is a membership organisation and we support our members but they do not report to us in any way; we do not regulate them. I can say that I am generally aware that the major damage from fighting has occurred in maybe three towns in particular: Zawiya, Misrata and latterly Sirte. Tripoli and Benghazi have relatively not been damaged. Very few refineries have been damaged. What has struck a lot of British companies with investments or capital in the country is that they lost a lot of vehicles, which were taken away by the forces of one side or another in the prosecution of their war. There has of course been some damage or loss on building sites of other equipment. Although this is not necessarily a British
Q100 Ann Clwyd: Who pays for the restoration? 
Robin Lamb: That is a very good question. Going back, there were already British companies in financial difficulty in Libya, because in 2010 there was a slowdown in business for opaque reasons. The government slowed down in its payment and the companies were already trying to retrench and see that period through. This year, their business stopped. They have not been paid. They have taken some loss. Some of them will have gone to the wall. When I went out in September, I asked a senior Libyan official what message we should give to British business about what in summary we might call reparations. He said that the Libyan authorities would want to “resolve problems” and to do so through negotiation. They wanted to offer new business, but he warned that companies that entered negotiations should have what he called a reasonable view of the outcome and that those that resorted to litigation should not expect to get new business in Libya. To a degree, some companies are going to look at the losses, accept it and look for new business, and realise that, actually, the prospect of growth and opportunity in Libya is worth the investment. Others will no doubt want to find what it is that the Libyans will agree to negotiate, and I don’t think those negotiations will have started yet. The Libyans have a lot on their plate. They are having to move stage by stage, from revolution, through victory, to government formation, to constitution building, and we do not expect to see a lot of brand new business let until we have a permanent government in Libya.

Q101 Ann Clwyd: Do you think the UK will get a fair crack at the reconstruction process? 
Robin Lamb: I think it will. We have a number of advantages going for us in Libya, some of which predate the revolution. As one senior Libyan told me last year, before the revolution—he was the general who was assassinated after he switched sides to the rebels—“Don’t forget that Libya is the only English-speaking country in northern Africa.” You might challenge that with Egypt, but it is still very chic in Egypt to speak French rather than English and, of course, the Maghreb countries are all Francophone. There is a long tradition of empathy with the United Kingdom, famously enough. Last February—in 2010—we took a health-care mission to Libya. Nearly every Libyan medical authority or person we met had trained in the United Kingdom and had worked in the NHS, and they wanted to continue that relationship. There are many ways in which, in terms of our traditional long-term position in Libya, we have a natural affinity and sympathy. One must also mention the presence of a lot of young British Libyans from families who fled the Gaddafi regime and have lived here—many of them have been educated here and so on. All that expertise and those relationships help. We may well be in a slightly better position in terms of the view that is taken of countries that did or did not assist the rebellion, but as I said earlier, I do not expect favours. I think that would be wrong, because although there may well be pragmatic reasons to look for favours to win a contract, if you do, there are others there who also qualify and—even in terms of self-interest, let alone in terms of what the point of the revolution was—it is not a good thing to be looking for favours. The best thing—what we will hope to see and what the NTC has promised—is essentially a level playing field, where we don’t have the arbitrary and corrupt government that we saw before, and where we can compete on the terms of all those good things that Britain has to offer.

Q102 Mr Baron: Can I return you to the issue of values versus interests? You’ve touched on it a little bit in a variety of your answers. The Prime Minister, in February earlier this year, certainly acknowledged to the Kuwaiti Parliament that we had perhaps got the balance wrong in the past. Given your business links and interests at the moment, what are your thoughts on this? Perhaps more importantly, are there any lessons going forward, given that, even after the parliamentary elections in certain countries and transition to a new government, you are still going to have a range of countries, both those that are authoritarian and those that are more democratic—nascent democracies taking root? You are going to have that range. Is our policy going to remain an ad hoc one, depending on who we are dealing with, or do you see us drawing some lessons from past mistakes? 
Robin Lamb: We have to approach different issues and different countries—yes I am not talking about a commercial basis—one by one, depending on who we are dealing with, or do you see us drawing some lessons from past mistakes? 

The Libyans have a lot on their plate. They are having to move stage by stage, from revolution, through victory, to government formation, to constitution building, and we do not expect to see a lot of brand new business let until we have a permanent government in Libya.

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seen whether they will work with us to try to improve a situation that is either of their own making or not—sort of unconsciously—we have to decide at what point we are going to push that interest, and how many British jobs we want to imperil in doing so. It is an issue where there is perhaps a degree of *ad hocery*, because it has to be on a case-by-case basis. We mustn’t be too hide-bound by an ideology, but we have values, and we must incorporate them overall in the policy that we pursue.

**Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Lamb. I know that you are a busy man. We appreciate that you have taken the time to come and talk to us. It has been very helpful.

**Robin Lamb:** Thank you.
Tuesday 31 January 2012

Members present:
Richard Ottaway (Chair)
Mr Bob Ainsworth
Mr John Baron
Sir Menzies Campbell
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Andrew Rosindell
Mr Frank Roy
Rory Stewart

Examination of Witness

Witness: Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown KCMG PC, gave evidence.

Chair: I welcome members of the public to this third evidence session of the Committee’s inquiry into British foreign policy and the Arab Spring. I am very pleased to welcome Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, who is, of course, a former Foreign Office Minister and current chairman of Europe, Middle East and Africa at FTI Consulting. He has also had a distinguished career in a number of posts, very importantly, in the United Nations.

Lord Malloch-Brown, welcome. It is very good to see you here today.

Lord Malloch-Brown: Thank you.
Chair: Is there anything you would like to say by way of an opening remark, or shall I ask you the first question?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Please, let’s go straight to questions.

Q103 Chair: Could you start by giving us your opinion of what happened a year ago? Why did the revolutions happen?

Lord Malloch-Brown: I was lucky enough in 2002, as head of the United Nations Development Programme at the time, to commission and publish the Arab Human Development reports. Those reports have been raised in testimony to you already. As someone steeped in those reports, the one question one is left with is: why did it take so long? The pattern of inequalities—not just economic inequalities, but the marginalisation of women, the lack of secular education and the lack of any kind of adequate political participation—all seemed to amount to a time bomb. But I think, and it is relevant for what happens next, that it is now clear that that pattern of economic inequality had got considerably worse by the time of the Arab Spring, for two reasons.

First, these stultified economies were just not creating enough jobs for the youth boom entering the job market, a youth boom that had disproportionately high access to university education. There were a lot who were not terribly capable; nevertheless, a wide number of places were available, almost universally in the case of Egypt—if you sought them—but you fell off the cliff afterwards because there were no jobs.

The other contribution to that inequality was poorly considered privatisation in the late stages of these regimes. Coming under pressure from international financial institutions and the demand for liberalisation, they engaged in almost a fire sale of state assets. If you do that in a politically closed system where there are a handful of people who control the economic and political power, what nearly always happens is that that privileged elite acquires those assets. This contributed to the sense of deep unfairness and inequality in this society.

My final opening point is that many young Arabs had the opportunity to travel and to see for themselves very different kinds of countries—not just western countries, but Muslim countries such as Turkey, Indonesia or Malaysia. They saw that it did not have to be like this; that there are countries that allow a much higher degree of participation, and that are securing a much higher degree of economic growth.

So I think these economic roots of inequality and marginalisation, which had been there for a while, had reached crisis point by the time the revolts broke out.

Q104 Chair: I slightly take issue with that. Certainly, I can see that there was serious poverty in Egypt. In Tunisia, where they are quite a bit better off, corruption seemed to be the main issue. And in Libya, it seemed to be just plain repulsion at the nature of the regime—and they were, indeed, quite well off. What is the ratio of international impacts to economic impacts?

Lord Malloch-Brown: That is a very good question. My thesis clearly does not cover Libya—there is no doubt about that. The African Development Bank is headquartered in Tunis—it should be in Abidjan, but it had to move because of the troubles in Côte d’Ivoire—and I heard its president say last week that one of the great surprises for him, thinking that he was moving to a stable, middle-income country when they evacuated Abidjan, was to see the astonishing level of youth unemployment and inequality in Tunisia. I think we all misread Tunisia. We saw it as authoritarian but stable with a relatively successful economic model, and it is, compared with Egypt; but it still has 30% youth unemployment, and indeed had it over the course of 2011. Perhaps they were less extreme, but still these economic issues were there. I think that is why the tragic story of the street seller who set himself on fire was such an emotive spark. That marginalisation and bullying by the petty officials of the state was very much what people felt.

Libya was much more, if you like—this is not to diminish an extraordinarily brave revolt—a copycat event. There was a sense that, “If we are ever to do it against this appalling leader, now is the time to gather our courage and do it.” I think that al-Jazeera, the social media and all of that, which allowed what was
...going on in Egypt and Tunisia to be clearly seen by people in Libya, provoked them finally to stand up to an absolutely ruthless leader who chucked anybody who spoke independently, let alone acted independently, in gaol. So they needed the electronic solidarity of seeing what was happening in Tahrir Square to gather the courage to come out in these numbers to do it themselves in Libya.

Q105 Sir Menzies Campbell: Would you agree with the thesis that the reason why we misread individual countries was that our policy sought to deal with the Middle East as if it was some kind of integrated whole? We did not distinguish between one country and another, and if we had, perhaps we would have been more conscious of the eventually seismic changes that were taking place.

Lord Malloch-Brown: That is a very good, thoughtful question. It is definitely partly true. We have been guilty, although not as guilty as some, of seeing the Middle East through the lens of several big conflicts: Israel—Israelis, Palestinians—Iraq. It is a great failing in a country that traditionally had the most astute analytical understanding.

Q106 Sir Menzies Campbell: Were the Arabists, were we not?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Yes, we were the Arabists, but we had lost that touch and feel. I did not travel heavily in the region when I was a Foreign Office Minister, not as heavily as I had in my UN days. However, although the British ambassadors I met in the region were still of a very high calibre, they had much smaller political teams per country than in the past. In that sense, it is correct to say that they could not dig down deep enough; and anyway, they had a client in London—Whitehall and No. 10—which, through a series of Governments, was only interested in the big picture conflicts, not this important nuance at the individual country level.

Q107 Sir Menzies Campbell: Would part of that be, if not expressly, then at least by implication, a policy that was based on two things: stability and availability of energy resources, particularly oil? Do you think it a legitimate observation that we saw political stability and the free access to oil—free in the sense of available; not costing nothing—as being of such importance that we were willing to subordinate issues of human rights, unemployment, lack of economic opportunity and corruption? Do you think we subordinated these issues, which have come to the fore now, because of the belief that stability and oil were more important?

Lord Malloch-Brown: I think the answer is yes, but with qualifications. Going back to the Arab Human Development reports that I was so involved in, a message of those reports, which had been written by Arab authors, was that when change comes in the region, it must be “at the hands of us Arabs”. In that sense I don’t think we should be whipping ourselves too severely for dealing with the regimes that were in place. Where there is a margin for legitimate self-reflection: okay, these were the governments we had to deal with, but could we have done more to stimulate the emergence of the civil society? Could we have done more in our engagement with them to make clear our concerns and objections about their performance on human rights?

As someone who was at the UN at the time, I believe that a critical turning point in all of this was 9/11. The premium we placed on counter-terrorism after 9/11 gave a tremendous licence to governments in the region to say, “We’re also mainstreaming the fight on terrorism; don’t criticise us on human rights.” Sitting at the UN, we saw the West falling away from being a friend of human rights reform and civil society development in the region from 9/11 onwards. Obviously, Iraq was a further step change in that. The energy point is a reminder that foreign policy is always a combination of values and national interest, and that to this day, the question of the security of energy supplies leads to an ambiguous foreign policy towards the region. There is not as much consistency as many would like between how we treat Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, and how we have handled Egypt or Tunisia. That is a fact of life that we struggle with all the time in foreign policy, but it would be very unfair to criticise the Foreign Office or the Secretary of State for not having a single gold standard. That is hard to achieve in today’s complex Middle East.

Q108 Sir Menzies Campbell: Can I explore briefly the reference you made to the Middle East peace process, or perhaps more correctly the lack of a Middle East peace process? Egypt and Jordan, of course, were the two countries that signed up to a peace treaty with Israel, and both of them pretty well adhered to the terms of that. Do you think that our attitude towards Egypt may have been conditioned to some extent by the fact that it had entered into that agreement and appeared to be willing to abide by it, when elsewhere in the region, people like Ahmadinejad were talking about how Israel must be destroyed?

Lord Malloch-Brown: I think so. In a sense, to the extent that our foreign policy in the region was also related to that of the United States, the US even more explicitly endorsed Egypt in this way and did it no favours by the passive fixed formula of provision, both economic and military, in the years after that peace agreement. That was probably the single subsidy that limited and deferred necessary economic reforms for as long as it did. So, yes, I think Mubarak was broadly seen in Washington and Whitehall as— to remake more politely the Lyndon Johnson phrase—a strong man, but our strong man.

Sir Menzies Campbell: And inside the tent.

Lord Malloch-Brown: And inside the tent. Subsequently, of course, that obviously led to much angst in Washington, particularly about desiring him at the time of Tahrir Square. I think both the US and the UK made absolutely the right decision to switch sides, if you like, to put it crudely. Both did it quite adeptly, even though they have not been able to escape the history of the past. But I think the future advantage for Israel is that while it will have a much bumpier relationship with Egypt, it will be a more honest relationship. Fundamentally, for Israel as a small
country in a neighbourhood that still harbours a lot of ill will towards it, honest relationships will be a better long-term strategy than the kind of propped-up relationship that it had with Mubarak.

Q109 Mr Baron: Lord Malloch-Brown, I agree with you that we shouldn’t be whipping ourselves about this, but I think you would agree that the Prime Minister made quite an important speech to the Kuwaiti Parliament in February last year. In effect, he admitted that we had at times got the balance wrong between interests and values. We tended, perhaps, to sacrifice what was right in order to achieve stability, given the interests we had in the region. To what extent did we get the balance wrong? Can I press you on that a little bit more? I sense you are defending the FCO, and one can understand that, but there is no doubt that there are things we did get wrong. I would be interested in your views.

Lord Malloch-Brown: I certainly do not mean to defend them too much.

Sir Menzies Campbell: Self-defence.

Lord Malloch-Brown: Well, I wasn’t the Minister for the Middle East. I would say two things. Yes, ultimately, the balance was wrong, but my point is that, anyway, the impetus for change was always going to come from within these societies and not from our external pressure. We should self-critique ourselves, in that we could have done better, managed more balanced relationships or pressed for change, but we should not go on from that to say that, if Britain had broken earlier with Mubarak and Tunisia, the regime change would have come sooner. That overstates our influence. For our own health as a democracy wanting a big values component of our foreign policy, we should be self-critical and say, “We could have done better”, but my point is slightly separate: even if we had done better, I don’t think it would have brought forward the time when change would have happened.

That said, we did go along with some particularly egregious things, like the EU-Mediterranean strategy, which celebrated Mubarak and others long after that stuff should have been handled much more austerely than it was. So, yes, we were a little bit in love with these authoritarian leaders. As I say, for me, the reasons for that were the closeness of the alignment of our foreign policy with that of Washington, the aftermath of 9/11 and failing to understand that change would come, because we failed to understand the extent of inequality. There was a complacency and a lack of self-questioning in the policy, which meant that it was less than it should have been. I’m sorry, but I want to be clear about that.

Q110 Mr Baron: One further question, if I may. Without getting too righteous about this, do you still think that we are committing errors now? If you look at our inconsistency—you referred briefly to there still being an inconsistency in our approach—such as intervening in Libya but not in Yemen or Bahrain, where similar atrocities were being committed, it seems as though interests are taking pole position rather than values, but correct me if I am wrong.

Lord Malloch-Brown: I think that is right. Once you do it in Libya, you certainly expose yourself in the region to the charge of double standards. That discussion is very alive in the region, both from those who oppose Libya and those who think, “You did Libya, do Syria as well.” The answer of the Prime Minister and this Government, which is an answer that Tony Blair also used to use and was in his Chicago speech, is that, if there are conditions for intervention because of the abuse of people and the risk they are at the hands of their own government, the final condition for intervention must be, “Can we realistically do it?” and “Are we willing to do it?” In other words, at a certain point there has got to be convergence of the national interest and the values. I find that a difficult balance to accept, ultimately. The multilateralist in me believes that the doctrine of responsibility to protect must be a legally bound doctrine and it is not on the menu to choose it or not. You buy into the menu, that the responsibility to protect requires the protection of civilians from atrocities by their own governments if they are on a large enough scale, or you don’t. I am troubled by the double standards.

Again, where I give Whitehall and this Government a little bit of an out, is that I am not at all sure that British military intervention, through NATO or the UN Security Council, in Bahrain, let alone Syria, would help solve the problem. There are huge practical and political difficulties to doing it, particularly in Syria.

Q111 Mike Gapes: Can I take you back to your remarks about Israel and Egypt? The Muslim Brotherhood political platform and statements made, imply that they are going to hold a referendum to put the Israel-Egypt treaty to the public. Do you share my concerns that that might actually lead to a serious unravelling of that agreement and there are other issues about potential migration of people into Sinai as well, which could lead to a breakdown of the cold peace that we have had for those decades?

Lord Malloch-Brown: All tactics are on the table. I can certainly see such a referendum happening. I hope they won’t distract themselves from the much more important business of rebuilding Egypt. It is not completely outside the realms of possibility. What I am putting my faith in is the fundamental need for an Egyptian Government devoted to creating jobs, development and growth for its own citizens, recognising that destabilising its relationship with Israel would hurt itself as much as Israel. I think it was reflected in Tahrir Square, where there was almost no talk of Israel at all. This was about domestic inequality and poverty. As long as the new government respects that is what it has been elected to achieve, it will chew away at the Israel relationship and will not be as easy a partner as the last government, the Mubarak regime, but I don’t think it will throw away the whole peace.

Q112 Mike Gapes: But the Tahrir Square demonstrations were then. Since then the dynamics in Egypt have very much changed. The Muslim Brotherhood were not in the lead in that but now they
are the dominant force in the new Parliament, so clearly things have moved in the last year. All revolutions have a process and the people at the end of the French revolution were very different from the people who started it.  

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** You are completely right. The attack on the Israeli embassy and the dramatic evacuation of the ambassador and his staff shows that the trend is not good at the moment. The point is where does it end up? Does it end up with some anti-Israeli rhetoric, some pressure on Israel to complete a peace agreement with the Palestinians, or does it go the whole hog to completely dismantling any kind of peaceful co-existence with Israel? I just think that a government that gave in to its hotheads and went that last step would condemn itself and its people to economic disruption, no growth, more unemployment, more internal instability at home. I think Israel will find itself with a much more uncomfortable neighbour that will press for peace, but not a neighbour that will hurtle itself and Israel over the edge into new conflict.

Q113 Mr Ainsworth: Mark, I want to take you back to the emphasis you made at the beginning about jobs, inequality and the economy. If that was the overriding fundamental, what chance is there? What is the hope to look forward to? The world’s economy is in a pretty appalling state at the moment. Is there any chance for successful transition to democracy and what role will democracy play in these countries?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Thank you very much for bringing us back to that, Bob. If my analysis is right or partly right that there was this strong economic root to it, then it would be good sense to keep an eye on that and to do all you could to assuage it and address it. For several reasons that is really not happening. I ran into a colleague of all of ours in the underground street in Washington, and it is now in negotiations at the invitation of Egypt for a major loan-cum-standby facility, which will give Egypt some relief and is very important. What has been missing in all this is international lenders, including suggestions like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, who have been assiduous in trying to work up a programme in these countries joining together under the kind of neutral chairmanship that says, “Fixing the economies of these regions is the key to their long-term democracy and political stability”. It needs a massive effort, which is the turning of the page and the chapter from the past, a new funding arrangement, accountable and responsible to the demands and priorities of the new leaders of these countries—a fresh start, in other words. We have just not seen that kind of political energy. We have seen each institution try and re-jig its old programme for new leaders, but we have not seen—I always hate to use this term, because it is as inaccurate as it is an accurate parallel—a kind of Marshall Plan for the region, which has real local leadership to it, which we need. It can be largely loan in character, because these are not, with the exceptions of Yemen and, in a way, Egypt, poor countries. It can be a loan-based approach, and it can focus around the issues that are such a priority, which are small and medium-sized enterprise development, improving infrastructure and supporting the removal of subsidies from critical issues like bread and fuel. This can be a very modern, forward-looking, market-oriented, economic programme, but it is missing, and without it you have to wonder about the sustainable future of the democratic movement in these countries.

Q114 Mr Ainsworth: Let us pursue that, because it is important. How realistic is it to start talking about a Marshall Plan? We know that there are current problems, and even without them, we cannot suggest that the European Union could be the sort of magnet for the Arab Middle East that it was for the east European countries, to which we were offering full membership and brotherhood. We have turned our back on Turkey. We are hardly going to accept Egypt. No matter how wonderful that might be, which is wishful thinking, do we not need to put our rhetoric where our actions are, and just accept that many of the solutions will have to come from within the region because we simply do not have the will?
Lord Malloch-Brown: In a way, that’s why I reluctantly used the term “Marshall plan”. It was so much an American-driven thing for war-destroyed allies in Europe. Whatever this is, it must be primarily locally owned and driven. It needs the Saudis and the Gulf countries to be not just add-ons, but to take the leadership in driving it. The funds that they have committed have not gone in either, as I should have made clear before, nor did I mean that the solution available to Europe after 1989 of promising membership is a carrot that is available now. It is evidently not. It would be absurd, and would be rejected anyway. Young Egyptians did not do what they did to become part of Europe, so you are perfectly right, Bob. But you must construct an alternative set of investments and incentives that appeal to them. As anyone who has entered an age where there is corruption that has been below the radar screen and not picked up as thoroughly as it should have been by governments, or some ways, not only has it given them access to a world beyond their own shores, but the social media and other tools of revolt that they used are all creatures of globalisation in a very real way. Unbalanced globalisation is a huge contributor today to global inequality. Inequality in the Arab world was long-term, structural and local, rather than driven by global change. This was a revolt about their failure to be integrated into the global economy, rather than the consequences of being integrated.

Q116 Ann Clwyd: You are now chair of a very large country group, FTI Consulting—I don’t know what FTI stands for, do you?
Lord Malloch-Brown: Now it is FTI but at its start it was Forensic Technologies International.

Q117 Ann Clwyd: If we can go back to predictions. I just wondered whether the analysts there were any better at predicting the Arab revolutions than the Foreign Office.

Lord Malloch-Brown: I’ve been busy hiring some ex-colleagues from the Foreign Office and other parts of the Government to see whether we can improve our predictive powers in future. I still think that they are not bad, but where I have built a team at my new company, it includes ex-Government people together with ex-investigative journalists and ex-NGO people. I think that all three perspectives are critical to building the right predictive insights and models of what is going on.

Whereas the world of Whitehall was fairly blind to the imminence of change, if you talked to civil society types in Egypt in 2010, they were telling you that things were getting close to blowing point, and it was the same with good, astute investigative journalists. The latter are important because one point that was raised earlier in this Committee, but goes wider than this particular issue, is corruption. I believe that corruption is particularly focused on in countries that have high levels of inequality because it becomes for people a particularly evocative expression of the unfairness of the society. In truth, however, corruption is ripping across the world at rates that we have not seen in quite a long time. There has been a sort of benign view that there was corruption in the communist system, and that when that system ended, the state economic links began to be sundered. Then, in the development world, as countries get to be middle income and have broader middle classes and more pluralistic decision making, and roll back the petty government regulations that are often excuses for bribes, the sense is that the world is somehow growing out of corruption.

One and a half years into my new private sector life, I must come back to my former colleagues and say: “not true.” Corruption is everywhere and is linked to the enormous strategic importance that resources at their broadest have in this modern global economy. It is not just about energy and mining, but even things such as commercial land in the booming new cities of the non-western world—Moscow, for example, but equally cities in Africa or south Asia and China. We are entering an age where there is corruption that has been below the radar screen and not picked up as thoroughly as it should have been by governments, or
even by many of the NGOs in the anti-corruption sector. I think to the extent that corruption was a feature in revolts in the Arab Spring, we are going to see it be a feature in revolts in many more countries over the coming years.

Q118 Ann Clwyd: Would you say that any other states have done better than the FCO in establishing good relations with the new regimes? Are there any that are doing particularly well compared to us?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Gloriously, the FCO’s civil society involvement, or more informal involvement, in Egypt came around its different programmes to support moderate Islamic development, if I can put it that way, which did give the FCO, by promoting academics and scholarship, access into university campuses in Egypt, and certain other groups, which I have no doubt have been a spearhead of re-engagement after the revolt; but I think Britain, frankly, suffers from its perceived closeness in the Middle East to the US policies. I think its position on the Palestinian statehood request will have been widely noticed in the region.

I think the UK long since ceased the sort of Arab camel train UK foreign policy. To the extent that it has been seen as very closely linked to that of the US in the region there are many who are in a much better strategic position than the UK, at this stage—not just France, which is a very close ally and tends to act as one with us in that world now, but Nordic countries. Obviously Turkey is the absolute favoured country of the region, despite its own colonial past there. I think there are plenty of countries, which have had less history with the old regimes and therefore have been able to turn the page more effectively than we have.

Q119 Ann Clwyd: Do you think that the Foreign Office needs to re-evaluate its whole approach to the region?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Look, the Foreign Office—I think from testimony you have received you will have seen its version of this—in a way which is a remarkable thing about it as an institution, scrambled to broaden its team. Some astonishing number of the whole of the Foreign Office were working on the Arab Spring at one point, so it was very adept in a Whitehall mandarin way at pulling people together to address this, but in terms of the strategy going forward, yes, it has not escaped its past in the region. It is doing bits and pieces to re-engage. It has played a pretty deft tactical hand over the past year, but there is a need for a back-to-basics strategic review of how we write our policy for the future.

Q120 Ann Clwyd: You are critical of the EU. What should the EU be doing?

Lord Malloch-Brown: I think the EU needs to do something similar. I think the EU problem is, first, that this isn’t eastern Europe, so obviously it does not have the same carrots to offer; but, secondly, if ever there was somewhere where the EU could line up the 27 members behind a coherent approach, surely it is this. In my view there is not much evidence that it has, and that it is therefore able to show leadership. The blame for that is partly the Brussels system and the external affairs apparatus; but it is also the member states. As an old UN man I am always first to point the finger at the member state for failures on these occasions.

Q121 Rory Stewart: Mark, you have very convincingly argued that we could have done more to have a full strategy for the Middle East—could have had more detailed, nuanced political information on the ground. Presumably, a lot of the challenge is institutional. We live in a world where the Foreign Office has to do much more multilateral English-language-medium work, and where the emphasis in Whitehall is much more on management skills and those sorts of competencies. Less and less of diplomats’ time and less and less of their careers are orientated around that kind of political reporting. Is there anything you can see in terms of institutional reform that would put the Foreign Office in a better position in the future to provide the kinds of things that you are looking for?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Rory, thank you. That is a rich area to reflect on. As I said earlier, I think a series of Prime Ministers who have reduced foreign policy to a fief of No. 10 has in a sense vulgarised and simplified the width of foreign policy analysis that the Foreign Office engages in. It is not peculiar to the British system; this has been happening across a lot of governments. If you were to ask in Washington, people would say that you have seen a steady consolidation. Sarkozy—whether you work at the State Department, the Quai d’Orsay or the FCO, this sense that a combination of modern communications and celebrity diplomacy makes the Head of Government the principal conduit, together with CNN, for modern diplomacy, has had this marginalising effect on officials. It evidently dumbs down the agenda to what the Prime Minister wants to focus on. In the Middle East that was Iraq, terrorism and Israel-Palestine, but it was not these other things. I think it starts at the top, and the National Security Council is a welcome innovation to—I hope—address that. Having a very strong Foreign Secretary is also very good news, although there were lots of very strong Foreign Secretaries under the Prime Ministers with whom this tendency happened.

The second issue is the nature of modern diplomacy. If you have a vision that political and social change in countries is no longer the old business of coups within elites—it is either democracy and what is bubbling up down there, or it is the street pressing for democracy—that means that the answers to where change is going to come from no longer lie in diplomatic cocktail parties or your counterparts in foreign Ministries. There is a huge need for our diplomats to get out and about. One of the most impressive young diplomats I know spent a year or so on the Congo border in the Kivus for the Foreign Office. We now have diplomats down in South Sudan, as it is now a country. The more we can get people to those places and get them to understand that their analytical points of entry are not just fellow government types but this broader array of actors who are so key to change, the more we will start seeing them doing better.
The third point is that increasingly foreign policy, even at the governmental level, is not just the preserve of the Foreign Office. DFID is hugely important, MOD is hugely important and BIS is hugely important. You look at a modern embassy and sometimes the Foreign Office people are the minority in it. Somehow, in a cross-Whitehall way we are capturing the analytical understanding, and that is important. To the extent that a lot of it is economics, what the BIS or Treasury people think about what is happening in the private sector of Egypt would have been critical to reporting on how that country was going to do. Similarly with what DFID thought about what it was seeing at the grass-roots levels of its projects. There has got to be a much more coherent breaking down of the boundaries between different Departments.

Accepting all of that, there are two major worries. One is languages. Whatever they tell you, Foreign Office languages are in crisis. The kind of diplomacy that I am talking about needs more, not fewer, languages. You are talking to people who do not have English as a language. If you are out in the Kivus or elsewhere, those languages are not there. Even with a mainstream language such as Arabic, the cutbacks that have occurred are key. This strange decision of the Foreign Office, which I view as highly politically correct, to make languages not a requirement for recruitment any more is a flipdown; Oxbridge and other universities have cut the language requirement as they do not want to discriminate against schools where those languages are not available. That has accumulated upwards to a Foreign Office without enough languages. Instead, it now tests for language skills, but that means that people have to take long periods off to acquire those languages, particularly the more difficult ones. That is not always consistent with a career track that is increasingly about Brussels, Washington, New York, and not about going and earning your spurs through being an Arab language expert in the Middle East region. We have the incentives and the recruitment wrong, and that was exposed by what happened in the Arab Spring, or our failure to see it.

Q122 Rory Stewart: The structural change that you propose is a very exciting one, but it is a very difficult one because it is something that we have failed to do over more than a decade. In order to achieve it, you would need to change the core competency criteria for promotion and the way that diplomats were posted. You would need to take away the diplomat’s choice of which postings they bid for. You would need to invest much more in embassies in the Middle East and north Africa. You would need to increase the political representation. Why has that not happened and what would one need to do to make sure that that happened in the future?

Chair: May I interrupt? Tempting as that may be, we are on the Arab Spring here, so could you answer that question in context?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Thank you. Chairman. I apologise for being encouraged by this typical insurgent, Rory, for going off on a sideline. In a way, the Arab Spring, if you accept the economic component of what I have described, is a perfect laboratory and testing ground for a cross-government approach. If you could make it work there, it should be a huge example of best practice which you could then import into the rest of government. This is something that politicians have to make work. Just as I saw in my UN career, I saw it equally strongly during my time as a Minister here. Civil servants are wonderful in so many ways, but telling them to merge their activities with the tribe next door is an almost impossible thing and they will not do it left to themselves. We saw it with the Afghan operation. There has to be political leadership of a really hands-on kind if you want to build that new integrated service.

Q123 Sir Menzies Campbell: In the coalition, we have some experience of the efforts to merge political tribes together, which has not always been straightforward. You used a very interesting word a little earlier. You talked about foreign policy being vulgarised. I guess that you were using that in the original term rather than the colloquial term. By that, I understand that what you say is that foreign policy is less a result of analysis, reasoning and conclusion, and more about—I think that you used the illustration of CNN—the headline. With that in the back of your mind, can you think of any possible advantage that the United Kingdom derived from its attitude towards United Nations’ limited membership for Palestine?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Of any advantage?

Q124 Sir Menzies Campbell: Yes, can you think of any advantage which accrued as a result of that?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Well, look, I think first it is not in the interest of the world, the Arab region or the UK that the peace process is stalled in the way it is and the clearest shot in the arm to revive it was, in my view, that Palestinian vote, strangely. It wasn’t a policy that you’d have chosen ideally and it had, like everything that happens in that region, its cons as well as its pros. But here was the moderate side of the Palestinian political system, saying, “In order to put pressure on Israel and to reinforce our position as moderates who believe in negotiation versus hard-line confrontation, this is what we believe it takes to kind of right that balance.” I think it was correct. I think the extent to which the UK is attached to what is now an utterly becalmed US foreign policy on this is very disappointing.

If I add a criticism of my own time in government— as I say, I was not Middle East Minister but would have loved to have been—I felt that for Britain then, in the tail-end of one American Administration before a new President was elected, there was a space where we could have been much more active in the Middle East, and as a consequence repositioned ourselves as a more balanced partner to both sides—to Israel and to the Palestinians and their allies. We missed that opportunity. The events around the September vote on Palestinian membership and the activism, not just of our Government but of Tony Blair as Quartet envoy, contributed to a view that the UK was on one side only of this argument.
Q125 Sir Menzies Campbell: Do I take it, then, that you would adhere to the conventional wisdom that, in the period of an American presidential election—this is an issue that no one is willing to approach—from the point of view of moving on the peace process, the becalming that you described is likely to subside for some time?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Well, the problem with conventional wisdom as to when American presidents can deal with the Middle East or not is that we’re rapidly discovering that there’s no time, because the old theory was you got to it late in your presidential term when you’d been re-elected for the last time and had the capital to do it, à la Clinton or Carter, and then the view was, no, under Obama, you got to it early—I should add Bush Junior to that list who got to it late—as Bush Senior had tried to. He gets it handed to him and it’s now a problem for him in his re-election.

I’ve arrived at a slightly different position, Ming, which is that actually I’m not sure there’s ever a right moment for America to lead on this. America is critical to a final agreement and, you know, must be involved in whatever happens, but again I would look to Europe in partnership with moderate regimes in the region to be much more forthcoming about leading on this rather than say an American election is a period when in close co-ordination with the Americans we do nothing to embarrass the administration. We should be laying the groundwork for a new go at this, and that is not happening.

Q126 Mr Roy: Can I turn this subject to economic and political assistance? It’s a hard time for everyone and everyone has to spend their money wisely, but the money that we intend to spend in these Arab countries—where best should it be spent in relation to political reform?

Lord Malloch-Brown: On the political reform side, western NGOs and democracy-building groups had a rough ride, particularly in Egypt. Most notably, the American ones are somehow seen as instruments of an American effort to subvert the course of the revolt. That is an extremely unfair characterisation, but given the history, you can understand why there is this level of suspicion about these groups. It has led the new government to crack down on NGOs, their registration and their independence much more than happened under President Mubarak, which is a reflection of this sensitivity.

My view is that the best we can do is to steer away from overly political education toward much more in the way of civil society development activities, which are viewed as less contentious, less political and less meddling. We should also recognise that a successful economic strategy of the kind I have described has a huge knock-on effect on the politics, because it starts to create jobs and a little bit of spending power in people’s pockets, and therefore totally transforms the political context from one of despair and anger to—dare one say it?—some first green shoots of optimism about the future.

Q127 Mr Roy: Are you therefore saying that it is really a monetary gift, as opposed to a gift in kind?

Lord Malloch-Brown: I am. Groups such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy should do what they can, but their support is viewed with great suspicion and caution and therefore has limited impact, whereas the British Council, and support through DFID for building economic and social institutions in civil society, steers away from the highly political and therefore seems much more acceptable to people in the region.

Q128 Mike Gapes: I would like to take you a bit further on that point. I understand that the FCO is planning to spend only €10 million in 2012, which is absolute peanuts compared with what the Americans spend, or compared with the money spent through the European Neighbourhood Policy—we are talking about billions of euros—in the Middle East and North Africa. In a sense, isn’t there a much more fundamental question here? We might be making ourselves look good by saying that we are helping with the Arab Spring and political and social development, but the reality is that what we are doing bilaterally is limited, and the most important thing is what is done by the EU—you touched on that earlier—and the international institutions.

Lord Malloch-Brown: Just one query on the number: is that FCO, or FCO plus DFID?

Mike Gapes: It’s the FCO saying that that’s the contribution to the Arab Partnership Fund.

Lord Malloch-Brown: That’s its contribution?

Mike Gapes: Yes.

Lord Malloch-Brown: DFID is, I think, putting in significantly more. For the accuracy of the record, the DFID fund as a whole is, I think, £110 million, although I don’t know what the spending period is. However, that in no way takes away from your point, Mike, which is surely completely correct, that the bilateral money is very modest. Even DFID characterises most of these countries as middle-income countries, or not the countries where it concentrates its resources. We need to focus on using our leadership and leverage of EU, World Bank, IMF and EBRD funds. The barrier to much of that is lack of strategy and acceptability, because they haven’t been put in a new, dynamically Arab-led framework. That is just the kind of thing that British multilateral diplomats are very good at conjuring up, and they would do well to work the corridors of Brussels, Washington and New York to create such a fund. They would probably do more there than with their modest amounts of money on the ground in Cairo.

Q129 Mike Gapes: The previous European Neighbourhood Policy, which was launched to assist the region, was initially going to be €11.5 billion for the 2007–13 period. Then it was relaunched last year, and it was said that a further €1.24 billion would be put in. You were critical earlier, but you’re not the only critic of the way in which this policy works. Even the Prime Minister made some very critical remarks about a year ago about the way in which European funds had been spent, and insisted at that point that there should be greater conditionality. May I put it to you, the Prime Minister and all the other
critics that it seems a bit perverse that we adopt a non-
conditional policy towards autocratic, authoritarian, 
repressive regimes, but as soon as there is a transition 
to a political process with more pluralism, things start 
becoming much more conditional?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I would not be on the track of 
more conditionality; I would be more strategic. 
European funds have grown into a huge amount by 
volume. They are right up there as one of the global 
big feet of the development scene, yet, because of all 
sorts of historical problems—the fact there are 27 
cooks in the kitchen and goodness knows what—they 
have not had the quality of management, strategy and 
evaluation of results that you would see in, say, a 
DFID, a World Bank or a UNDP. They have somehow 
escaped that kind of scrutiny and internal capacity 
building. I'm talking about a really able cadre of 
experienced development people to manage the funds 
of the kind that you have at the World Bank.

Q130 Mike Gapes: Can I be clear? You’re saying that 
the European Union’s decision—taken last year, 
when it relaunched these programmes—to have much 
greater conditionality.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Yes—well, let me correct that. 
I would perhaps like to come back to you, having 
read about the conditionality, to make sure that we’re 
thinking of the same thing. To me, the issue is much 
more about this: EU funds are pulled out by 27 
countries, which all have their own priorities and 
things they think should be done in a region such as 
this, and they are so conservative with a small ‘c’ 
about disbursement, for fear of the kind of audit 
difficulties they have had in the past. This massive 
amount of money could have a huge strategic impact 
and change the whole direction of the region, if 
applied right and used to mobilise money from the 
Gulf and other sources. Instead, it is the sum of 1,000 
little projects, dribbling out in small amounts, which 
does not have the change impact that a fund of this 
size could have.

Q131 Mike Gapes: You have UN experience of 
many years in dealing with those kinds of areas. How 
can we make the G8 institutions, the EU institutions, 
the UN and all the international programmes work 
more effectively, avoiding unnecessary duplication or 
bureaucracy? There is a real dilemma in the way we 
deal with these programmes. Given your experience, 
how can we take that forward?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** The short answer—in 
defence to the Chairman and the topic of the Arab 
Spring—is that the G20 is an attempt to do things 
better than the G8, through its inclusiveness. It’s 
starting to get more into the development area. The 
forthcoming Mexican chair is trying to do a lot in this 
space. Within the old G8, there are countries such as 
the US and the UK particularly that are learning how 
to co-ordinate their activities more effectively. I was 
in a meeting last week with both Andrew Mitchell and 
his American counterpart to talk about the food 
security initiative that the Americans want to launch 
at the G8 summit. There is a lot more work on this 
than in the past, but there is always a sense that they 
are addressing yesterday’s problem. There just is not 
the modernity and flexibility of coalition building that, 
whether you’re talking about the Arab Spring or 
global food security, gets the right private, not-for-
profit and civil society players at the table, as well as 
the old G8 types in their pinstripe suits. We are not 
very good at modern coalition building and putting the 
right people in the room who can really effect change.

Q132 Ann Clwyd: Listening to Egyptian women in 
personal recently, who played a very important role 
in the revolution, they already feel frustrated and 
marginalised. Would you agree that that is happening 
and how can we assist them in getting their rightful 
place in the future of Egypt?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** It sounds as though it is 
happening. I have had more one-on-one conversations 
with women journalists and others in recent weeks 
and months who have come out. It is a real problem. 
We had almost begun to take for granted that, even if 
it was slower than we anticipated, the rights of women 
were being addressed—from Afghanistan to Egypt to 
the Congo. This is another one of those compasses 
that seems to have suddenly come to a halt. We are 
running up against deep barriers and resistances in 
societies. We have to renew our efforts and our 
commitment to those values, but equally realise that 
the only way we will ultimately prevail is when 
conservative, religious-driven groups accept the rights 
of the women in their midst. That is not an easy battle 
to win.

**Chair:** We are trying to finish the session by 12.00, if 
that is a help to you.

Q133 Mr Roy: On the economy, what actions would 
have the most immediate, positive impact on the 
economies of Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, in your 
opinion?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Both are tourism economies, 
so if there was the stability for tourism to genuinely 
restart, that would be hugely significant. Both 
countries need an economic stimulus to get economic 
activity going again. This is not a time for fiscal 
austerity, if I can put it that way, in either economy. 
There is a huge absent demand in those economies at 
the moment. That needs to be addressed. In the case 
of Egypt, the planned IMF package is almost certainly 
the single most important thing on the horizon at the 
moment.

Q134 Mr Roy: Do you think, taking you on about 
that, that a worsening economic position could derail 
the politicisation of that area?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Yes, I do.

Q135 Mr Roy: In any state in particular?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Well, I think Egypt is the most 
vulnerable. Yemen, as well—there is a very difficult 
transition there—is vulnerable to the terrible condition 
of the economy. There is always a risk of a dip to a 
more populist, fundamentalist outcome, just because 
of people’s frustration with their daily lives.

Q136 Mike Gapes: May I take you back to an 
answer you gave a long time ago? You referred to the 
resistance by the new regimes to having the IMF or
the World Bank or international institutions come in with assistance. It is still fluid. As far as I understand it, there are still discussions in Egypt between the new authorities and the IMF. Do you expect that they will change their attitude or, given the way that international institutions have behaved in the past towards countries in Latin America, for example, or the way that the German Government seem to be making remarks about running Greece, there will be a sense that it is their country and their revolution and they will not be told how to do it?

Lord Malloch-Brown: That was what led to both institutions’ initial overtures being rejected out of hand. I think a combination of necessity and the extreme suave astuteness of the IMF has meant that they have come back into negotiation. Egypt needs the money to keep going, to keep economic fuel in the tanks, so to speak. It is a $3 billion-plus package. The IMF director for this region is an ex-No. 2 at DFID. I invited him as a guest to a session at Chatham House on the economies of the Arab Spring late last year. He was saying all the right things in front of an Arab audience about the IMF not putting in a budget commissioner to run the Egyptian economy and being highly respectful of their objectives. This is not an unnoticed change—the IMF, which a few years ago looked as if it was almost on the butcher’s block, has in many ways come back. Under its last two managing directors it has introduced a political savviness into how it deals with countries that strangely has made it more acceptable than its sister institution, the World Bank, which traditionally has always been seen as more the friend of the poor and of developing countries.

Q137 Mike Gapes: Christine Lagarde has made some quite strong self-critical remarks recently about failures to look at youth unemployment in particular. Will that be anything more than a mea culpa statement? Will it lead to a change in approach, given the austerity drive in so many governments around the world at the moment?

Lord Malloch-Brown: I think the IMF realises—and for a long time has been internalising—the lesson of 1997 and the Asian financial crisis when it behaved as if it was trying to put a budget commissioner in every country. The result was that the Asians almost set up their own Asian IMF, they were so offended by it. It has been a long time since there has been a major IMF programme in that region because even though they did not set it up, they all built up huge financial self-sufficiency so they would never again be humiliated by the IMF. The IMF has realised that while it will always be an agent of adjustment, which usually means austerity because it is brought in when there is a crisis in a country to help right the boat, if it does not come in as the guest of that country with a programme that is collaborative, where it is working with the government and not coming in as the paymaster in heavy boots, it will not succeed. It thinks its near death experience in the early years of this century was because it had come to be seen as the western budget commissioner.

Q138 Mike Gapes: Finally, would you take the same view regarding Tunisia as about Egypt, or do you think the Tunisians will be more willing to receive international assistance?

Lord Malloch-Brown: They are a bit more willing. The same factors are in play but they are for different reasons, less aggravated and extreme.

Q139 Mr Baron: Lord Malloch-Brown, you mentioned in passing the importance of what we would call soft or smart power. There is a lot to be said for the view that what will be important going forward is the winning of the story as much as the winning of the conflict. Looking at our track record as a country in the region, and particularly the announcement of recent cuts, although we as a Committee have played a rearguard action in trying to reverse some of those and with some success, what is your view on whether we should be doing more in this regard?

Lord Malloch-Brown: We should be doing more is the simple answer, but we live within our means and limits, and I understand that. That is why I think that it is important that we use the multilateral institutions that we are part of to be our agents in this, rather than believing that there is a huge amount we can do ourselves.

Q140 Mr Baron: Can I push you slightly? The extent of the cuts and the moneys we are saving, given total Government expenditure, are so relatively miniscule, it seems to be a very false economy. Can I press you on that?

Lord Malloch-Brown: Yes, you can. I am welcome to be pressed, and immediately say that I said it as an ex-Minister under the previous Government, and I am happy to say it now. If Britain’s vision of itself is as a country which, through its projection of soft power and its position in the global economy, is still one of the great trading nations of the world, and if it is to be consistent with that vision, the cuts it has made in the Foreign Office are utterly self-defeating. That is true of both Governments, who both made such cuts, and I even praise William Hague for having contained the cuts and stopping them being worse—he played the Whitehall game quite skilfully—but the fact is that we are now completely undersized in our diplomatic establishment for the role and ambitions we have in the world.

Q141 Mr Baron: Fine. I accept that, and I think that is absolutely right, but can I ask you to analyse in a little more detail the causes of this? Is it just bureaucrats bean counting, or does it reflect a larger malaise and perhaps a loss of confidence in this country, or a combination of both? It is such an obvious statement to make, we are saving such small sums of money and we have a good hit rate on the international stage—if you look at the potential for our reach when it comes to soft power, Britain is up there with France and one or two others, beating the States even—so why are we not doing more?

Lord Malloch-Brown: I think one can list several factors. First, under the previous Government, of
whom I was a member, the strangest model of cost-cutting was introduced, which was that you expand programme and investment but cut headcounts and buildings, basically. This fell astonishingly disproportionately on the Foreign Office, which is all people and some rather grand buildings. The whole model of Treasury-driven cuts over the previous Government cut into the bone of the Foreign Office. Bob could retire a plane, and protect his headcount if he so chose, but there were no planes or weapons systems—

Mr Ainsworth: A point you used to make at the time, as I recall.

Lord Malloch-Brown: There were no weapons systems or development programmes to retire for the Foreign Office: there were people. I think it was a huge mistake. The cuts were also driven by a view that settled on the British political class that we were slipping into the second tier, that we could cover Africa with development and not embassies, that we did not have interests any more in Latin America, or large parts of it, and that we were a subordinate actor in the framework of Brussels, Washington and New York, so we should just put our people there and run our foreign policy in that way, with Afghanistan, Iraq and other key priorities. I do not think that we understood that while some of the economic decline is right it is not nearly as rapid as people believe, and it does not get away from the fact that our interests are global and we are in both military and diplomatic terms one of a minute handful of countries that can project power—hard and soft power—globally. You give away that extraordinary asset at real cost. There has been some self-fulfilling analysis in cutting our diplomatic footprint; it is as though we have been wishing ourselves into a second-tier status that we are not ready for yet and can resist for a lot longer.

Chair: On that cheerful note, thank you very much, Lord Malloch-Brown; it is much appreciated.
Tuesday 20 March 2012

Members present:
Richard Ottaway (Chair)
Mr Bob Ainsworth
Mr John Baron
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Andrew Rosindell
Mr Frank Roy
Sir John Stanley
Rory Stewart

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Alistair Burt MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East and North Africa, and Dr Christian Turner, Director of Middle East and North Africa Directorate (MENAD), Foreign & Commonwealth Office, gave evidence.

Chair: I welcome members of the public to this evidence session of the Committee’s inquiry into “British foreign policy and the ‘Arab Spring’: the transition to democracy”. I am delighted to welcome the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for the Middle East and North Africa, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa Directorate, Dr Christian Turner. Minister, as you and I have just discussed, unfortunately a vote is probable at 5.13 pm and there will possibly be more than one, which will drive a coach and horses through the evidence session. You have kindly agreed that if there is still a lot outstanding, you will come back on a date to be arranged.

Alistair Burt: Either that or we can just carry on. I am entirely at the Committee’s disposal.

Q142 Chair: Thank you very much. Thank you for coming. We have had an opportunity to hear from a lot of witnesses. We all went to Cairo, then we split up, with half going to Tripoli and half going to Tunisia. As a general question, what do you think the prospects are for establishing democracy in these three countries?

Alistair Burt: I don’t think they’re bad. The reason for that is that we have seen momentous change in these countries over the past 12 to 15 months. People have won their freedom by their own actions, through great determination and at some cost of loss of life in all three countries, varying in scale, as we know. My sense is that there is great determination to see the principles on which people sought to have control over their own destiny maintained.

The two examples to date are Tunisia and Egypt. In both cases, after significant events in their country and within a relatively short space of time, they put together sufficient of a constitutional approach to be able to hold elections, which international observers, including ourselves, felt were free and fair. There was no argument about those elected in the majority parties in each case, and now they are working through the pressures in these countries. One thing that the political revolutions have not gone away. One thing that the political revolutions have not gone away. There are no certainties. Many of us have been around for some time. I have been a Member for Parliament on and off for about 25 years, as you have, Chairman. When we started, there was apartheid in South Africa, and the iron curtain was in place. We would never have envisaged the world looking as it did at the end of the ’90s, let alone as it does now. So there are no certainties, but there is a sense that there is great determination to make the most of the opportunities that they have. Although everyone must remain wary of the pressures on these particular states, our sense would be that they are working well towards the objectives that they and their people have set themselves.

Q143 Chair: My question is whether you can see any threats to that transition to democracy. When we were in Tripoli, we saw young kids walking around carrying AK47s. In Cairo, people spoke quite openly about their concerns as to whether the Army would really stand back. Have I just highlighted a couple of your concerns, and are there concerns about other things that might block the path to democracy?

Alistair Burt: Sure there are threats—absolutely. We would be naive not to think of them and where they may come from. Let’s start away from politics and with the economy. Remember: the underlying pressures in these countries were not necessarily political at first. As everyone knows, in Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi was not protesting about the politics. He was protesting about his ability to find a living for himself and the restrictive regulations that made that impossible. That was against a background of a growing young population, which is common across North Africa and other areas in the Arab world; problems of employment; and a sclerotic economy to go with sclerotic politics. These issues have not gone away. One thing that the political revolutions have not solved is the underlying economic issues.

In Egypt, the position is very serious. There has been a year of indecision, because of the transitional government being unable to take the decisions that the economy needs for restructuring. Everything is waiting until the end of the election process in June. Libya, of course, has been through a savage conflict. Capacity issues are great there, although the oil will come back on stream and be a bulwark for the country. Tunisia, as I indicated earlier, is further down
of the road. The economy is less of an immediate concern there. So you have the economic threat. Then, of course, there is the political threat. People wonder whether these new democracies can hold when the going gets rough. You could say that, a year on from the events, there is still a degree of, if not euphoria—we have come down from where people were—pride at what has been achieved. But politics is rough stuff. What is going to happen when the going gets tough? Of course, there are parties that come from a background where there are still questions to be asked about the relationship with democracy and the like. Will those who have very strict views on culture and social mores be determined to enforce them? Will that impinge on human rights? Will it lurch into democratic processes?

So, we really have to do that, absolutely, but we have to make a judgement as we go along—one that is well informed by excellent posts abroad, as you will have seen. We have our own evidence, and there is regular ministerial contact and, may I say, regular parliamentary contact. In each of the countries that I have been to—you will have found the same—parliamentarians initiative is very much what they want to engage with us because they see what we do in our Parliament, the way we keep a check on the Executive and the work that we do, and they want to be informed about that. We have a great deal to offer in terms of strengthening their early democracies and working with them.

Q145 Rory Stewart: In terms of predicting the Arab Spring, one of the challenges the Foreign Office faced was that, compared with our historical position 20 or 30 years ago, our political sections in countries such as Egypt are quite small. In fact, your entire presence in Cairo at the moment is about comparable to what it would have been in Jakarta in 1997, despite Egypt’s extraordinary importance as a regional player. A lot of this has been driven by personnel and human resources procedures, and particularly by the Jay reforms. The core competency framework and the desire to allow people to manage their own careers has meant that it is difficult to fill speaker slots. Is the Foreign Office taking any of those lessons on board? Is it re-examining the fundamentals of the HR and personnel procedures?

Alistair Burt: I am going to ask Christian to deal with the bulk of that. Mr Stewart, if I may. From a political direction point of view, the Foreign Secretary looked very carefully at the structure in the Foreign Office when he took up his position and has made some changes towards that. We are as constrained as anyone else in Government in terms of costs and making sure we provide value for money. There is nothing particularly new about that, but we have also been looking at a changing world and seeing where we need emphasis. Some decisions have necessarily to be long-term—certainly in relation to people’s careers—and that means it is not easy to shift resources quickly. Equally, if we are looking at the way in which the world develops, you can see countries and regions where you might want to put more emphasis. Certainly, we intended to do that with Middle East and North Africa in any case.

As I know the Committee will be aware, there was a growing sense over the years—although no one predicted the timing of the Arab Spring or whatever it might be called—that the underlying pressures were there and we knew that our engagement with the Arab world was likely to change. Already the Foreign Office had put things in place and, when we came into office in 2010, the start of the Arab Partnership and the like built upon that and developed that. In order to make that work, there have been necessary personnel changes to accommodate it. I think that Christian is best placed, Mr Chairman, to detail some of those if that is all right.

Dr Turner: Briefly, the Committee knows well the changes that the Foreign Office is going through. The bulk of that at the minute is related to trying to move, if you like, from the pyramid shape to the diamond shape and put more resource at the front line with the diplomats who are out getting the sand on their toes and doing the influencing, rather than with the people in the back office sending reports. It is very much the thrust of the so-called diplomatic excellence programme.

The MENAD Cadre Initiative that we initiated before the Arab Spring has now been running for over 18 months, as detailed in the written evidence. That has specifically tried to reclassify speaker slots across the region in posts, so about 20 jobs have been reclassified as speaker slots as part of the uplift in language skills. Once they are all trained and in place, that is about a 40% increase in Arabic speaker
capacity in our network compared with 2010. So as Director, in terms of the staff I have at my disposal to be out there doing the influencing and getting out of the corridors and ministries of foreign affairs and talking to people on the ground, it is a real improvement.

Q146 Rory Stewart: Just to follow up on that, Dr Turner, one of the problems is that you can establish a speaker slot and then not fill it with a speaker. In Turkey, we discovered that we had 25 extensive Turkish speakers in the diplomatic network and only one in Turkey, despite there being a number of speaker slots. The only way in which we are going to be able to address that is by looking fundamentally at your personnel procedures. You would have to try to move from the system that you currently have, whereby people can simply build and manage their own careers, towards your being able to direct them towards certain slots. I suggest that perhaps you might also need to look at paying people more for extensive language skills. In Cairo, for example, three members of the embassy claim to be able to speak extensive Arabic—but not necessarily have taken the exams. That means it is almost impossible to hold them to account. What sort of steps are you taking practically in terms of personnel procedures to make this happen?

Dr Turner: These are all good points we are working on. As you know, people get allowances for their language skills. So if they are not up to the level, they should not be claiming those allowances. That acts as an incentive. In terms of filling those slots, there is obviously a tail from announcing those slots to recruiting. We have accelerated the numbers on language training to try to get the pipeline moving, so that the people starting out are going through quicker. At the same time, we are considering and may need to look at select recruitment—if the freeze on recruitment procedures allows us to do so—for people with specific language skills. Of course, we are talking about Farsi and other languages as well as Arabic. More broadly, a very important part of my job as Director is to do the kind of proactive succession planning that you describe. So I think I would say that if the pendulum had swung to a completely laissez-faire approach—which I am not sure we entirely recognise, there is now quite a strong onus on geographic Directors to provide that succession planning at all levels—Head of Mission, Deputy Head of Mission and chancery teams. I need to make sure that I can fill those slots. An important part of my role is to provide a wide enough pool to do that. There are therefore quite a lot of active tools that we use to make sure that I can encourage people to come in. I have to say that in a way it is proving easier in the MENAD patch because so many people see such a rich career and such a rich array of possibilities. There are 19-plus countries they can work in and build a career around, compared with, if I may say, the Sinologists, who ultimately want a job in Beijing; so we are seeing a response to that offer.

Alistair Burt: Perhaps I might make it clear that this work of prioritising language skills predates the Arab Spring; this was something the Foreign Secretary was committed to doing when he came into office. This work to improve what we had seen as declining language skills—give them fresh priority, get more people learning the appropriate languages, and give those language courses longer time, so that people would indeed become fluent—was an innovation which the Foreign Secretary brought in when he came into office. So it is not a response to the Arab Spring. It is something which I believe has helped us be prepared for what is not an event but a process that is going to be very long lasting.

Q147 Mr Baron: Minister, there is a concern that British foreign policy in this region needs to, in effect, raise its game; that there have been inconsistencies displayed, and perhaps a wholesale review is required. In a way, the Prime Minister intimated this in his address to the Kuwait Parliament of February 2011, when he discussed the balance to be struck between values and interests, and admitted that perhaps we had got that balance wrong in the past. What almost immediately undermined that address, very good address though it was, was the fact that at the time he was leading a trade delegation, which was not just dealing with radar and state security, but arms traders who were selling weapons that can be turned against populations.

Another contradiction, if you like, or inconsistency, was our intervention, perhaps, in Libya, for some, in that you had witnesses suggesting that this again showed inconsistency, in the sense that we were intervening in Libya but turning a blind eye to the persecution by autocratic regimes in Bahrain and Yemen that was happening at exactly the same time. How would you counter those criticisms from people perhaps less charitable than myself?

Alistair Burt: Let me give you a general outline dealing with policy in the past, and bring it up to date—and deal with the specifics that you mentioned, if I may. The United Kingdom maintains, and has maintained, relationships with states whose values may not be ours. This has been in the United Kingdom’s strategic interest. For instance, over the years Egypt has been a key partner in the Middle East peace process in Sudan and Iran, and is host to a key religious authority in al-Azhar; but our engagement has also included opportunities over the years to raise issues concerned with transparency, accountability and human rights. So our engagement neither implies total acceptance of the system of government of another state, nor complete rejection, except in the most extreme circumstances. In all, we use our engagement, we believe, to further our strategic and regional interests, and our values, but not at any price. That is a general sense of how we deal with the fact that not all governments are like ours, and not all governments are necessarily going to be like ours—and it is not our sovereign right to make that choice; but in our interest, and in the interest of what we stand for, both as a nation and with the partnerships that we have, it is important for us to engage, and it is on that basis. Let me deal with the issues that you mentioned. Yes, in his speech to the National Assembly in Kuwait the Prime Minister did indeed set out our approach to the
Arab Spring, based clearly on upholding universal values, rights and freedoms, with respect for different cultures, histories and traditions of countries in the region, and recognised that there are occasions when we have not necessarily always got that right, though hindsight is a wonderful thing, and it is difficult sometimes to make judgements—and it is difficult to make judgements with competing interests. We accept that.

You went on to mention things about which I would take rather more exception, if I may. You spoke of him going with those involved in arms trade. Yes, we do make no secret of the fact that the entitlement of people to defend themselves in a volatile region, and other places, is extremely important. This country sells arms to other people. It is legal; it is known, and it is covered by some of the most severe rules that, we think, exist anywhere in the free world, absolutely scrutinised to the hilt by Parliament—the Chairman of the appropriate Committee is with us. On your extra remark that some of these items could be used by someone to oppress their own people, the answer is no, because our rules do not allow it, and we do not sell that to people that breach criterion 2 of the arms export controls covering that. We would resist that charge absolutely.

The Libyan intervention was not the United Kingdom’s sole doing. The Committee will well know the circumstances of the intervention in Libya: a desire, prompted by the Arab League and taken to the United Nations, and a unanimous sense in the United Nations that after Colonel Qadhafi had declared what he was going to do to the people of Benghazi, there had to be a clear international response about which there was no doubt or contradiction—something that has not pertained, for instance, in Syria. That made it clear that the intervention in Libya was international, with an international force designed to protect civilians. A mandate from the United Nations was carried out to the letter by this country, through our involvement in the coalition.

In relation to Bahrain and Yemen, the context of what has happened in terms of dealing with issues in those countries has varied. One of the things we have all learned—I mentioned earlier—is that each of these countries is unique. Although you can pick out symptoms in each of the countries, where similar things have been going on, the response of each country has been different, because each country is unique. In some places, reforms were already under way to some degree; in others, they were not. In Bahrain and Yemen are an interesting contrast; they are very different. In Bahrain, a reform process put in place some years ago by the ruling family had stalled to a degree. There was very sharp internal conflict between Sunni, Shi’a and elements on all sides about moving that on. That resulted in violence, as we know, and then in the most extraordinary independent commission, which reported on it in public, in a manner previously unknown, I think, in the region. We are supporting efforts there so that the population can come to terms with its own issues of reform. We can see a process there that we are engaged in. We think that is the right response there.

Similarly in Yemen, our ambassadors, over a period of time, and working with others, have helped engineer an extraordinary answer to the country’s many difficult political and other problems, to produce a situation where although there was bloodshed, there was much less than anyone had anticipated. There has not been a civil war, and there has been an almost peaceful transition and an election for a new President, leaving Yemen, for the first time in its history, with a living ex-President. We have played a significant part in that through our ambassador and through our work on the ground.

Each of these countries is different. How do I explain inconsistency? Exactly that way: each place is different. The values may be the same, but the way in which we work must depend on the circumstances of the place. Almost without exception, no two places have given rise to exactly the same set of answers to help deal with the problems.

Q148 Mr Baron: Can I move us on, if I may? What conclusions do you draw, if any, from the fact that this country has quite literally spent billions of pounds and lost hundreds of lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, but that it is in North Africa and the Middle East where democracy is flourishing?

Alistair Burt: Possibly, to come back to something mentioned by the Chairman, the time scales of all these things are incredibly uncertain, and I do not know if the time has yet passed in Iraq to make an assessment of the extent to which they will move towards democracy over a period of time. They have had elections, as we know. They are now in a difficult situation, but there is a parliament, and there is a functioning democracy—it is not in the easiest circumstances, but it is carrying on.

In Afghanistan, again, no one has made the case that we are seeking—that there will be—a Swiss-style democracy there in a short period of time, but an immense amount of effort has been spent on political reconciliation, and the opportunity to do that was the result of the extraordinary work of our forces, as they pursued what was our first reason for engagement—protecting our security and the security of others in the region. Through in exactly that, they provided the opportunity for a political process to work through.

So I would answer by saying that our forces and others have been engaged, and money from the United Kingdom has been engaged, in giving those places the opportunity to develop democracies, and it is much too early in virtually all cases to say what the final outcome will be. Without the work that has been done and the sacrifice that has been made, I am not certain whether those countries would be on the pathway they are, but there is much still to be done.

Q149 Ann Clwyd: Minister, may I follow up on some of the points that you made? Whether we like it or not, a lot of the witnesses to this Committee criticised the Prime Minister’s tour of the MENA countries, because of the people he took with him. One of the witnesses said that the perception that he was on a trade delegation rather than on a mission to congratulate the new revolutionary republics played very badly on the perception of Britain’s interests in
the region. That was the view of many of the witnesses who came before the Committee. I think that it was just the wrong signal.

Alistair Burt: I fully understand the point that you make, and of course you must accurately reflect what the witnesses who have been before you have said. I maintain that our commitment to a general prosperity agenda is very clear, and although the arms trade is difficult, we have to be very straightforward about it. We have not banned the arms trade. We recognise its value in providing equipment to countries that often feel under pressure from others and wish to defend themselves. We have the tightest rules we can, to ensure that the United Kingdom does not engage in selling things to those who would use them to further regional conflicts or to oppress their own people.

Of course this is a difficult trade. There are many different opinions. There are those who dislike the whole thing and those who would have us sell things to only very safe people—

Ann Clwyd: May I interrupt you there?

Alistair Burt: It is not a thing that we have ruled ourselves out of and it does provide good in many places.

Q150 Ann Clwyd: The Foreign Secretary told us that these were compatible aims and that pursuing commercial interests could in fact give the UK leverage in securing improvements in human rights.

Alistair Burt: Yes.

Q151 Ann Clwyd: Amnesty and Human Rights Watch were sceptical about such claims. What evidence is there, so far, that pursuing commercial interests has assisted the development of human rights in those MENA countries?

Alistair Burt: If you take, for instance, the engagement of the United Kingdom in selling things—either training or riot control gear—to those who are put under pressure in the streets, we have clear evidence that where people have been poorly trained in the past you get a much higher degree of violence, risk of death and the like. It is not so much commercial leverage as pure practical common sense and good training, and if we get involved and engaged—often the sale of crowd control equipment is coupled with good training and use—we can reduce, in situations, the risk of injury and casualty.

None of it is very nice to our eyes or ears or anything else, but if you are in a situation in which without the support of the United Kingdom people might have used equipment indiscriminately, and there might have been more death and injury because they were poorly trained in dealing with the situations they were confronted with, we are doing positive good by being engaged. We are perhaps supplying things that people would find uncomfortable, but provided that they are within the rules and that we have given support and encouragement to people who are doing the right things, we are helping, in that particular context, to ensure that people’s human rights are improved.

Q152 Ann Clwyd: But how are we doing the right things in Bahrain, for instance, if, according to this week’s Jane’s Defence Weekly, some of the equipment that we provided to the Saudis was used in suppressing the Shi’a protests in Bahrain? That cannot be right.

Alistair Burt: First, I have not seen any direct evidence either that Saudis were involved in dealing with those protests when the Bahraini government brought them in, or that any UK equipment was involved. The Baharians invoked a Gulf protection pact and the Saudis came in. Our understanding is that they essentially protected installations and that the Bahraini authorities dealt with the problems that they felt they had on the streets.

On the wider context of why we are involved in Bahrain, the situation there is difficult and its government have made mistakes. However, not only have they owned up to those mistakes, but they have, through the independent commission, made that clear to the world, in what I would describe—we are all experienced here—as an extraordinary process that has led them on a path with a series of recommendations to make changes. Not everyone, for understandable reasons, necessarily agrees with that or wants it to be the case, but we do.

Q153 Ann Clwyd: I have seen the recommendations, looked at the report, and spoken to one of the people who worked on the commission, and the recommendations are being implemented extremely slowly. We have a great deal of leverage in Bahrain—why don’t we use it?

Alistair Burt: We will use it in just the manner that I am sure you would wish us to. We have seen the recommendations, too, because they are all on the website, as, indeed, is the progress of implementation. Again, that is extraordinary, considering the context. Of course we want them to do more. We are in regular contact with them. There are independent advisers out there from the United Kingdom—not through the UK Government, but independently. They look to us to help and encourage them to meet their objectives, and they are doing that very publicly. The fact that it is clear to you that concerns remain and that there is still more to be done indicates a degree of openness that is not evident in all other societies. That does not mean that they are getting where they or we would like them to be as quickly as possible, but it is an extraordinarily open process. We will be doing what you, I hope, would want us to do, which is using our influence to urge them to do more and to meet the recommendations and their own objectives. That is the only way that peace will come to Bahrain and the only way that a political process will follow from the stability that is offered through the commission’s work.

Dr Turner: I want to address the initial question about the potential tension between commercial interests, prosperity and our political objectives. I stress that much of what we are doing is not about arms; it is a much broader trade agenda. The Minister made a point earlier about the importance of the economy to transition in Egypt, for example, and of stimulating the private sector to get that transition under way. The UK accounted for more than 70% of Egypt’s foreign direct investment in 2010, so companies such as Vodafone, GlaxoSmithKline, AstraZeneca and
Unilever are the types of British companies that we need to encourage to get in there and be part of rebuilding the Egyptian economy if that transition is to work. The Arab Partnership programme that we have set up has a deliberate political and economic component, so we are putting in place the building blocks to try to encourage such investment.

Q154 Ann Clwyd: Isn’t there a lack of consistency, though, when we welcome the Arab Spring yet are very close to illiberal regimes, such as Saudi Arabia? That seems inconsistent.

Alistair Burt: I have tried as best I can to deal with the point about inconsistency, which will always come up in foreign policy. For many of the years that I have been in the House, I have been well removed from such direct involvement in foreign affairs, but have had an interest in all sorts of countries where the United Kingdom has an interest. To return to my earlier point, I think it is impossible to set a standard of consistency that is capable of being met on each and every occasion. What you have to do is have your basic values and principles and work with them.

There will be times—it is clear that this country deals now with regimes well outside the Middle East and Gulf area that we would not necessarily champion for their human rights values, China being one. But nobody is advocating that we withdraw from our engagement with China, or anything like that. We work with them. We take the opportunity. We have colleagues, including yourselves, who, when they visit such governments, engage them on human rights issues and the like. Although there may be elements of inconsistency—people may ask why we do one thing with one country and condemn another—it depends on the individual circumstances.

As I indicated, there is usually a great deal of difference between each individual state and how they are coping with pressures upon them. We condemn violence very straightforwardly, wherever it may be, even-handedly between those in government and those who may use violence to protest against it. We urge accountability, freedom of assembly, freedom of the media and transparency as the basic, staple building blocks of any government, and we will continue to do that. It is circumstances and individual countries’ difference that provokes, on occasions, different responses each time, but you can detect a thread through what British Government foreign policy does, government in, government out, which I think works for the best in so many different places.

Q155 Mr Ainsworth: Minister, can I ask you about promised assistance in the crisis that is the democratic struggle in these countries? Deauville highlighted $38 billion, and I do not know how many million euros were committed through the European Neighbourhood Policy. How much of that money actually found its way to those countries, or the projects in those countries? If, as the Committee has been told, it is a relatively small proportion of the pledges that were made, can you give us some explanation of the problems and barriers, and why these commitments are not being fulfilled?

Alistair Burt: Okay. Let me do so both about the G8-Deauville stream of funding and our own Arab Partnership, because that is a good illustration of the issues. The £110 million in the Arab Partnership is split, with £40 million from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and £70 million from the Department for International Development. Some £5 million has been spent in this financial year. Because it is the first year, you have got to get programmes on track. We budgeted for £5 million this year and we will spend £5 million, on a series of partnership projects right across the area we are talking about.

Q156 Mr Ainsworth: You have pledged £40 million, but you only planned to spend £5 million in the first year.

Alistair Burt: That’s correct.

Q157 Mr Ainsworth: So we are going to take eight years to spend the £40 million, are we?

Alistair Burt: No, no. It does not build up—it is not £5 million every year. It goes up as projects come on stream, because you have got to plan the things in the first place. I will ask Christian to deal more with the G8 and Deauville money, but it is exactly the same. For example, in Egypt and Tunisia, an effort is being made to work with these countries on where they want the money spent. The last thing we want to do is to say, “Here is a pot of $38 billion; we must spend it this year.” We have all been in places where people have done things like that. If your object is to get x amount of money out by the end of the financial year, anybody can do that, but you are not necessarily spending it in the right places. In each of these countries, it is taking time for them to come forward with the projects on which they want the money spent. So I have no issue in terms of lack of commitment, either through our own Arab Partnership money, or through the G8-Deauville process. Engagement is going on in each and every place. It is different country to country. In Tunisia, it is more advanced. It has a clearer idea of what projects it wants. In Egypt, it has been much more difficult. The engagement of the transitional government with international institutions has been much more difficult. The military were rather resistant to being engaged with IMF, as you must have encountered when you were there as well. Interestingly, however, FJP, the Muslim Brotherhood party which is now the majority party in Parliament, does not have such a concern, and is actively engaged in looking at projects and working through this money. The reason for the hold-up of the transfer of funds is purely that you have got to get the right projects in place. Christain may have more details of what has been spent to date.

Q158 Mr Ainsworth: Look, we all understand fully that things have got to be properly planned and that there is no point in simply throwing money. There have to be projects that work off the back of the money pledged, but that is not what we have had in evidence presented to us. We have had complaints that promises have simply not been fulfilled and have not amounted to anything. They came from organisations
in-country, but were backed up by Lord Malloch-Brown in his evidence to the Committee. He said that the amounts that the international community promised in the early days had, frankly, not got there. You would have us believe that this is just programming. Is that really what you think, or do you believe there is a problem? I am trying to tease out your opinion.

Alistair Burt: I don’t believe, from the information made available to me, that there is a problem in terms of the commitment to release funds. It is perfectly possible there is more than one opinion as to whether or not a particular project is the right one. Understandably, for those seeking funds, it is like a business going to the bank for a loan. You will think what you are proposing is absolutely bang on the button, and then the people releasing the money may have other questions. My understanding is that the discussions are in that sort of area, but they are definitely not conflicted by the commitment to deliver. Having been part of international conferences where these have been discussed, the sense in the European Union, for example, through the Deauville process, is a recognition that unless the economies of these countries are supported, the impact on the European Union will be very severe. It is therefore in all our interests. It is not in our interest to promise and not deliver, but it is very much in our interest to get it right.

Dr Turner: I would just add on the numbers, Mr Ainsworth, that you mentioned a G8 number. The figures I have for the EU are €1 billion in extra assistance in addition to the €5.7 billion already budgeted for 2011 to 2013. For the World Bank, the lending portfolio in the region as a whole is over $2 billion. The Minister has touched on some of the reasons why that has not all been handed over already. There are issues of capacity with some of these governments. That is certainly true, as you know, of Libya, for example. The willingness to receive that has been the big debate in Egypt. It is excellent that the IMF loan discussions are now up and running. Also, of course, with the European money, there is a live debate about conditionality and the conditions set. The procuring set out through Bernardino León and the taskforces with Jordan and Tunisia are taking through that discussion. I am confident that the plans are in place for that money to be spent in the right way. I have only one other caveat. In many ways, when we were designing the Arab Partnership, which is of course a drop in the ocean compared with the size of the problem, it was not actually about the money. The projects that we are funding are incredibly important, and they are building blocks of democracy, as the Prime Minister said, but we are trying to address issues of capacity, governance and participation rather than simply regarding the money as the cure for the problems.

Alistair Burt: But we do have to take it very seriously; you are absolutely right. If there are concerns on the ground about things not getting through, we have got to be absolutely rigorous in ensuring it is not a blockage in the system. Again, it is all too easy to be told about that. The problems are all at somebody else’s end. We have got to be rightly alert to that to make sure that there are not artificial blockages to money getting through, and that concerns on the ground are being dealt with and met. You can be assured that they will be.

Q159 Sir John Stanley: Minister, in response to Ann Clwyd’s question, you came out with a Foreign Office euphemism, describing the arms being sold into the region as “crowd control equipment”. You will be aware that the Committees on Arms Export Controls have extracted from the Government details of the arms that can be used for internal repression which the previous and present Governments sold under export licences to countries in the region. You will be aware that those arms included armoured personnel carriers, machine guns, automatic weapons, sniper rifles and any amount of ammunition. Do you not consider, on reflection, that it is frankly insulting to those who put their lives at risk, who demonstrated peacefully and who tried to stand up for human rights and overthrow dictatorships to describe the equipment that I have detailed as “crowd control equipment”? What did it not do better for the Foreign Office and the British Government to drop this disgraceful euphemism?

Alistair Burt: There are two things, Sir John. First, I did not describe machine guns or sniper rifles as “crowd control equipment”; you have just done that. Secondly, your Committee is responsible for supervising what is sold and making sure that everything that is sold is sold under the appropriate licence. Border control equipment includes sniper rifles. Some of the countries that we are dealing with—Libya, for instance—I had a good look at. For a long time, Libya faced issues, and still continues to face issues, on its borders in terms of infiltration. And we have indeed sold some sniper rifles in order to deal with that, but they have all come under the same criteria of not being used for regional conflicts or for internal repression. Of course there are differences between matériel sold, which you know very well and so do I. Some matériel is available for “crowd control equipment” and some does not fit that description at all.

Q160 Andrew Rosindell: Minister, in view of the strategic importance of the Arab Spring states—being in the backyard of Europe—do you feel the European Union is doing enough to support those countries in their development?

Alistair Burt: Sorry, Andrew?

Q161 Andrew Rosindell: Do you believe the European Union is actually doing enough to support those countries in their development?

Alistair Burt: Yes. One of the issues here is to make sure that everybody is not trying to do the same thing. Sometimes you visit ministers who have had a queue of people coming to see them to talk about what they can do to provide support. The whole aim of working through our own bilateral partnership programme and working through the EU is to make sure that we have some co-ordination, in terms of what is done to support capacity-building and the like. But my
understanding is that there is strategic work going on to try to ensure that that is being done.

Just as an illustration, I was with one of the leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood last week. As part of our lengthy discussions, during which he was giving me a very good set of explanations of what the Muslim Brotherhood is doing, I asked a lot of questions. I said at the end, “Look, I have asked you a lot of questions, but what can we do best for you— for Egypt—at present?” “Well,” he said, “we are looking very carefully at what European Union countries do best. We are looking back over 30 years and seeing what you have done well, and what you have done well we might be interested in.” So they were going to Germany, to Italy and to Spain. These are not people who are saying, “Give us everything you’ve got, we’re poor people who want all your help.” They are very discriminating and they are looking for the right things that will help them.

I have not had any sense that people—either collectively as the EU, or as individual nations—do not want to provide support. As I mentioned earlier, the point is that there is a clear sense that the EU benefits from the successful development of those countries that are in transition; it benefits economically, commercially, politically and strategically. So my sense is that the EU, through its work via the G8 and the Deauville Partnership, is indeed engaged in supporting those countries.

Q162 Andrew Rosindell: When it comes to assistance, and the imposition of conditionality on that assistance, what do you say to those who are critical of that, bearing in mind that no such conditions were placed on dictators in some of those countries before but they are being imposed today?

Alistair Burt: Well, you might argue in the first place that lessons have been learned and, secondly, our experience is that unless there are some structural reforms in some of the countries that we are talking about, applying funds without that support will just mean that the funds could well drain away and not do the job they are designed to do. Again, let us take Egypt as an example. This is a country whose economy has been skewed for decades by what happened under the previous regime. A combination of the corruption of individuals and the amount of money taken out of the economy on the side by the military has left that economy in a desperate state. Merely putting money into that situation will not improve it. So structural reforms, which the Egyptians are already looking at very hard, are absolutely necessary to ensure that their public services deliver what they need to deliver, and that the infrastructure improves in a measured way.

That capacity-building and that advice is there, but conditionality has to be there too. It goes back to Mr Baron’s point about how people were treated in the past and to the Prime Minister’s point that it has not always been consistent. But learning lessons about conditionality and financial support is very important.

Q163 Andrew Rosindell: Apart from the EU, do you not feel that the British Government should be doing a lot more to encourage the wealthy Gulf states to put forward something like a Marshall plan for that region? Is it their region and the European Union— the countries of the EU—are not rolling in money at the moment to spend on things such as this. Do you not feel that it is time for the Gulf states to play their part, more than they are doing?

Alistair Burt: Well, Mr Rosindell, it is sort of all our region, really. I mean, the north African countries are Europe’s back door, so they are as much our neighbours as they would be anybody else’s in that region. Gulf countries have played a significant part and continue to do so. Remember, in relation to Libya there was active Gulf involvement in the coalition campaign. And they are ready to put in financial support. The Gulf Cooperation Council, particularly in Yemen, was significant. The Friends of Yemen group, which will provide financial and economic support for Yemen as it completes its transition, has a strong Gulf component. It was the GCC who were very active in leading—assisting—that process towards a better democracy there, and they are committed to financial support, and the like.

Gulf countries will be involved. They take their responsibilities very seriously and I think they recognise again, that we all benefit from doing this. But I think it is better to work co-operatively rather than say it is their turn to chip in. Again, there is a recognition that we all benefit if we are able to support.

Dr Turner: Minister, may I just add that the Deauville partnership was specifically designed to try and bring in those other partners in the region in support of the three tracks—the economic track, the governance track and the trade and commercial track—to have those in the region supporting the transitions as well as us in Europe and the west?

Alistair Burt: I am reminded, if I may, prompted by a very good team behind me, not to neglect the work that the European Union is doing through its deep and comprehensive free-trade area agreement. It is not simply a question of the European Union transferring cash or funds to countries that are in transition; it is about opening up their markets so that these countries can have a better opportunity to trade directly with the European Union, because, again, that is more likely to help restructure their economies and be more long lasting than simply financial injections of cash. We have been leaders in the European Union to try and encourage a stronger European Neighbourhood Partnership set of activities to encourage just this.

Q164 Chair: Minister, can we turn now to the particular countries, starting with Egypt? While we were there we had a chance to meet the Egyptian Prime Minister and we met the army. But how would you compare Britain’s relationship with the existing government, as it stands at the moment, with how it was with the Mubarak regime? With the Mubarak regime, it was a long-standing, fairly solid relationship. Do we have the same sort of relationship with the new regime?

Alistair Burt: First and foremost, these are still early days. We do not yet have what will be the definitive government in Egypt. We are yet to see it. The process with the transitional government has been perfectly cordial and straightforward. Our ambassadors have
continued to have exceptional access and have been able to work effectively. Our representations in relation to, say, regional security, through the peace agreement with Egypt, have been well received and we have been well engaged.

I have no sense to indicate that there is a difficulty with our relationship because of previous relationships. Indeed, it was noticed how quickly the Prime Minister came and visited Egypt after the revolution. Support was recognised and it is clear, going round and speaking to those in Egypt—those in business and civil society, as well as those in the government—how effectively and properly received we are.

I do not sense anything that puts up any barrier towards our relationship, but understandably countries like to work with us on a straightforward basis, in terms of what is the offer we are making to them, in terms of friendship and support and what each side can benefit from through our engagement. Through our engagement at the UN, for example, in a number of other areas where we have regional interests, Egypt has been a supporter of resolutions that we have brought forward in a number of difficult regional conflicts and issues over the past 12 months—the same with Tunisia. Tunisia, of course, took a leading part in the Friends of Syria project—we might come on to Syria in a second. We have not noticed anything in relation to that country’s reaction to us that we would feel was adverse, and contacts with those likely to form major parts of the new government would appear to be on reasonable track as well.

Q165 Mr Roy: Minister, you just said that the Prime Minister was effectively and properly received by the politicians and everyone else when he visited Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood had an outstanding election. It got 50% of seats in the assembly and 58% of the seats in the upper house, but the Prime Minister did not meet it. Why did he not? Did he underestimate the strength of the Muslim Brotherhood?

Alistair Burt: Yes, no. Remember, even if the Prime Minister was not meeting the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim Brotherhood activity is well known to our officials and to our embassy in Egypt. I do not think that it was any misunderstanding of the strength of the Muslim Brotherhood. I think that most of us accept that it was not the Muslim Brotherhood vote in the Egyptian elections that was anything of a surprise, but the Salafist end of the 23% in the popular election.

We knew and understood the Muslim Brotherhood well while it was operating.

Q166 Mr Roy: So, why did the Prime Minister not meet it then if he knew and understood?

Alistair Burt: I think it was just an accident of time. The Prime Minister does not need to meet everyone on foreign trips.

Q167 Mr Roy: The potential winners of an election, Minister.

Alistair Burt: Well, if the Prime Minister spent his time meeting potential winners of elections all around the world, he would do nothing else. Christian probably has a better answer than I have.

Dr Turner: He visited on 21 February, to put the date in context.

Alistair Burt: He visited on 21 February last year, long before the election process and the like.

Chair: Minister, this is the anticipated vote. If there is one vote, we will return here at 5.30 pm, but if there are two we will return at 5.40 pm.

Q168 Mr Roy: Can the Minister come back at 5.40 pm?

Alistair Burt: I would love another session. If it is convenient to you I would love to come back, if that is all right.

Chair: If there is one vote, there is a quarter of an hour that we could usefully use.

Alistair Burt: That is fine. If there are more votes, I will not return and we will come back at another time.

Chair: Thank you.
Wednesday 18 April 2012

Members present:

Richard Ottaway (Chair)
Mr Bob Ainsworth
Mr John Baron
Ann Clwyd
Mike Gapes
Andrew Rosindell
Mr Frank Roy
Rory Stewart

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Alistair Burt MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East and North Africa, and Jon Davies, Additional Director of Middle East and North Africa Directorate (MENAD), Foreign & Commonwealth Office, gave evidence.

Q169 Chair: I welcome members of the public to this session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. This is our fifth and last evidence session in our inquiry into British foreign policy and the Arab Spring. We are pleased to welcome back Mr Burt, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for the Middle East and North Africa, and Jon Davies, who is the Additional Director of the Middle East and North Africa Directorate in the Foreign Office. Welcome to you both. Thank you very much, Minister, for finding the time to come back again, after democracy got in the way, with endless Divisions last time.

Alistair Burt: How appropriate to what we are discussing.

Q170 Chair: Exactly. If you remember, we had looked at the broader picture at the time. We want to focus today on three countries: Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. Could I start the ball rolling with Egypt? How do you see the democratisation process going in Egypt, particularly given that, as I am sure you are well aware, the electoral commission in Egypt has actually vetoed some of the presidential candidates? How do you think this is going to go over the next few weeks?

Alistair Burt: There is a clear track towards the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces giving up its power, under new arrangements, both to the Parliament and to a President. It does not strike me that this has been affected by the recent decision of the commission to ban certain candidates. Let me talk about that for a second. The process by which this was done was very open. The commission had declared that candidates would have to fulfil certain criteria, and if they breached them, they were liable to suspension. This has been followed in relation to a number of candidates. There was an appeal process, which was open. The appeals have been turned down, as we have learned to day.

Q171 Chair: That is news today, is it?

Alistair Burt: Yes; if you were not aware of it. We understand that the appeals have not been upheld in any of the cases. That has, effectively, curtailed the field of the candidates, but it has been done constitutionally, with due process, openly and transparently. Now Egypt has to get on with it and recognise what has been done.

I do not see that anything necessarily has been wrong in relation to the process. Good candidates are still left in the field who will give the public an opportunity to express their opinion about the presidency. While I was there recently, I met two of the major candidates, and one of the candidates who has now been disqualified. They have every intention of putting forward effective manifestos, explaining what they are standing for and why, and that process seems to be in full swing.

We must now wait and see. It has been very interesting watching things take place, but our sense is that, although it is difficult and conditions are not always comfortable, a definite process is being followed, and it is on track to produce presidential elections that we, at this stage, believe have every likelihood of being free and fair.

Q172 Chair: Let’s hope you are right. While we were there, a few days before you, we met some of the political parties. We met the Muslim Brotherhood and el-Nour—the Salafist party. Although we have not reached any conclusions, my personal impression was that the Muslim Brotherhood were people with whom we could do business, and that there is nothing to be frightened about. I asked the leader of the Salafists whether religion influenced his politics, and he said yes. There is no mystery in that; it is what we expect. Would it be difficult for the British Government to work with an Egyptian government that have Salafists as members?

Alistair Burt: On the face of it, the answer to that has to be no, provided that those engaged in government adhere to the sort of values that we have set out as the basis of our engagement with parties throughout the Middle East, regardless of their label or background. That is a commitment to democracy and democratic values, a commitment to human rights, and a respect for previous agreements that have been made. Those are the sorts of values that we will look for, certainly in terms of our own engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood, which has ramped up because of changed circumstances in the region. It was always there at an official level; it has been there for some time. I also met representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood at ministerial level, and we engaged with them on the basis of the values that I have outlined. I met the leader of the Salafists there, too.
We must recognise that in Egypt religion influences not just politics but life in a way that the majority of people in the United Kingdom do not necessarily recognise, because our society is very different. That it influences politics is obvious. However, it is a question of to what extent it influences, and whether it conflicts with the sort of values that we all hold to be valuable. The shorthand answer to your question is that, on the values espoused by the Salafists in government, they will have to reconcile their religious values and background with democratic values. If that test were met, I do not think that it would affect the engagement of the United Kingdom with the government with which the Salafists might be involved.

**Q173 Rory Stewart:** How does the principle that you engage only with people who respect human rights apply to your engagement with the governments of China or Saudi Arabia, or any number of governments that we deal with around the world on a routine basis through our embassies?

**Alistair Burt:** Perhaps I have to define engagement. Rory, and I might say that it is not the same as support. We have to be clear with this: engagement can cover a variety of different things. Engaging with Muslim Brotherhood or the Salafists, or governments in different parts of the world, never implies wholehearted support for every item that they might have in their manifesto, constitution or anything else. Clearly, we have engagement with countries whose respect for human rights and whose understanding of human rights values is in quite sharp conflict with our own, but so long as we can see a point in engaging, we do. That is the distinction. However, there might be a further distinction if you look at, say, the engagement—or non-engagement—with Hamas. If people publicly espouse violence as a way of achieving their objectives, that crosses a red line. Where that is not the case, even though the United Kingdom might find difficulties in dealing with some governments because of their position on certain things, that does not preclude engagement, hopefully, as a way of influencing them.

**Q174 Mr Roy:** Minister, while we were in Egypt, we heard Egyptians talk about the fact that the United Kingdom held funds that were Egyptian; about us not having an extradition agreement that would allow former ministers to be extradited to Egypt; and even about us covering up murders in this country of Egyptian citizens. Bearing in mind those thoughts—I was going to ask you why Egyptians have a low opinion of the United Kingdom, but I suppose that is self-evident—how is the Foreign Office tackling that type of perception?

**Alistair Burt:** First, what we try to do, in answering questions such as those raised with me by the media and others when I was there, is try to explain what the truth of the matter might be. We have robustly implemented EU sanctions in relation to assets and asset freezes. We moved very swiftly as soon as the appropriate measures were passed through the EU to make sure that our legislation conformed, so that we could freeze assets. The return of assets is a legal process, not an executive one. Due legal process has to be followed in Egypt in order to raise the case which enables the money to be returned. We are quite within our rights to insist that the legal process be followed; otherwise, we could be accused of handing back money to the wrong people at the wrong time, or anything else. There is proper process, and when that is followed, the money will flow back. Sometimes that is not fully understood in Egypt, where they assume it is an automatic process—that all the government have to do is ask for money back and it will come back. That is not the case, but if legal process is followed, there is absolutely no difficulty. We want the assets of the Egyptian people to be available to them. Extradition of individuals is slightly different, because it is of long standing that we do not comment on individual, personal cases. It is a matter for the Home Office. We neither confirm nor deny that we have received an extradition request in relation to a particular individual until such time as that individual is arrested in relation to the request. Again, once you explain that, people understand a little bit more. The way in which we counter a perception that we are not helpful is to indicate our widespread support for Egyptians across the board, in terms of the Arab Partnership and all the work that we do, and to say that in the legal matters they raise, we have exactly the same spirit as they do but, understandably, we have to follow proper process.

**Q175 Mr Roy:** But could that perception—in other words, if they do not trust us—undermine the type of support that we would like to offer in relation to the new democracy or whatever?

**Alistair Burt:** I think it would affect matters if we tried to be opaque or evasive about it, but if we are honest and transparent in what we say about our processes, which can be objectively checked by anyone in the Egyptian system, I do not think it harms our reputation for supporting Egypt and handling the other matters.

**Q176 Mr Roy:** But you accept that there is a problem?

**Alistair Burt:** I accept that, talking to the media there, it is clear that they have a perception, because it is a question that is raised frequently. Accordingly, we have to continue to do more. There is the question of whether it is raised for form’s sake, because they feel it is something that they should raise, but as for the overall perception that you hinted at to begin with, on how they feel about us, I am not sure I would necessarily accept that. I think people in Egypt do recognise the part that we have played and are playing. I did not get a perception of unpopularity or anything like that, which I think attaches to some other nations that it is not fair to name. I did not get that sense. They are interested in these legal matters—you are absolutely right—but I do not think it clouds everything else.

**Jon Davies:** On that last point, yes, there have been criticisms, and yes, there are ways in which public opinion is not always supportive of the UK. One of the strengths has been precisely rule of law. One of
the things that the UK has been admired for in Egypt is a system where rule of law is important. That brings us back to both aspects of the questions you raised: assets and extradition. It is right that we are standing by the rule of law in responding to those legitimate Egyptian aspirations to extradite people where there is a good case for extradition, and to have assets returned where there is a good legal case for that. On extradition, you are right that there is not a treaty present, but that does not prevent extradition. There can be, and have been in the past, specific-to-the-case extradition agreements. That can happen, even in the absence of an extradition treaty, and there are processes for that.

Q177 Rory Stewart: Minister, the failure to get a $5 billion loan to the Egyptian government last year was very dangerous, and it has had very damaging effects on the Egyptian economy. Do you think it is fair to put all the blame on the Egyptian government for the fact that the loan did not go through?

Alistair Burt: I have never thought about it quite in terms of blame. The Egyptian government have exhibited a very great pride in their own capabilities: in their sovereignty, and in their determination to do things without concession to outside support, if they felt that terms and conditions were being applied that would undermine that sense of sovereignty. All governments are entitled to do that. It then becomes a question of judgement as to what extent they insist upon it, if in fact the benefits that might flow from a loan and the conditions of a loan are actually to the benefit of the economy.

I think I would express frustration on behalf of the UK and the international community at the fact that what we believe were well-intentioned and good measures that would assist the Egyptian economy were not picked up at an earlier stage, because our assessment of the perils of the Egyptian economy, which I am sure would be shared by the Committee, is that it has been in a very bad way. It has been through a very bad year and key decisions that could have been made have not been made, partly because they are a transitional government and a new government is to come along, and perhaps they did not want to pre-empt decisions, and partly because of a lack of decision making.

I do not think I have ever had it in my mind to attribute pure blame. I believe it would have been better for Egypt had the negotiations on the loan succeeded, and succeeded sooner. They are still in play with the IMF. I think they are being seen in a different way now. I think it would have been better, but I am not blaming the Egyptian government wholly at this stage.

Q178 Rory Stewart: Given the sensitivities of the Egyptian government, do you think it was appropriate for the World Bank to demand transparency and governance conditionality on the loan?

Alistair Burt: Yes. Transparency and accountability are hugely important. It is important for those who are contributing to the resources that are going to economies in transition, and it is crucial for those economies that are receiving money to be able to demonstrate how they are handling it. Bearing in mind the difficulties that some of these countries have had in the past with financial affairs, and not least the amount that is off the balance sheet in the Egyptian economy, it is important. How that is discussed and pressed and the time scale are matters for negotiation between the respective parties, but the UK Government think it is important that there is some conditionality applied to international loans and support.

Q179 Rory Stewart: Minister, given the incredible importance of that loan to Egypt’s economy and the stability of the whole region, was that really the time to be pushing for transparency, which had not traditionally existed in the Egyptian system, at the cost of the Egyptian government turning down a $5 billion loan and potentially destabilising the region? Did we have our priorities right?

Alistair Burt: Well, time will tell. I would also say that the fact that the government are now engaged in serious discussions on that loan, and have moved their position, because of the resistance of the international community to making concessions on conditionality—or wholesale ones—probably proves the point. It is a very fine judgement. I think we all knew that the loss of foreign reserves in Egypt, the change in the nature of its reserves and the difference in its trade balance and budget deficit were of significant concern, but there is a point at which shovelling money with no conditions into such a situation actually does not do anyone any good. That is a fine judgement to be made, by both those giving and those receiving. As a matter of principle, I think that there should be an understanding in a country that is receiving a loan that some degree of economic reform or change is necessary. That is probably a pretty important principle to establish at an early instance. Then you leave it to those who are negotiating to make the fine judgements we have spoken of. I do not think that we should concede at this stage that a requirement for those conditions is necessarily a matter of blame for those in the donor position.

Jon Davies: One of the other things that the international financial institutions were rightly trying to do was make sure not only that those governing Egypt at that moment were content with the deal, but that those who were likely to be governing Egypt, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, were involved. Part of that shared aim of actually getting something that everyone could commit to and agree to was the need to involve other parts of the Egyptian system as well. As the Minister suggests, we now find ourselves in a position in which there is reasonable optimism that a deal will be agreed in the coming weeks with the IMF that will have sufficient buy-in from across the Egyptian spectrum to address those very strongly held public doubts about international loans, but that will have broader public acceptance, because it has broader acceptance across the political spectrum in Egypt. That is another argument to say that waiting was not wrong, as far as I can see.
Q180 Mike Gapes: International non-governmental organisations and many Egyptians have expressed concerns about human rights developments, saying that Mubarak may have gone, but that in some respects the human rights situation for some Egyptians has probably got worse in the past year. When we were there, we met some of the people—Egyptians—working for the international NGOs at the time of the threatened trial of the foreign NGOs. Can you update us on your assessment of what is happening there? What have the British Government actually done—what representations have been made—to do with those issues, not only for the international people, who I understand were allowed to leave, although the charges have not been dropped, but also for the Egyptians who still potentially face a difficult time because they are linked to those international NGOs?

Alistair Burt: In relation to the international NGOs and the trial process, we did make representations. Plainly, we regarded the pressure that those NGOs were being put under to be a misjudgement by the Egyptian authorities that could have profound consequences. We were very uncomfortable with the way in which this was handled; it looked to be an attempt to influence external NGOs, or to place unfair restrictions upon them. It is important for any international NGO to go through a proper process of registration in a host country—we all understand that—but something went wrong. The detentions, arrests and inability to travel were, in our view, a misjudgement, and we made representations to the Egyptian authorities in relation to that.

We continue to have concerns about human rights and the freedom of our NGOs to operate. We continue to urge the Egyptian authorities to put in place legislation on human rights and to give their own NGOs, as well as international NGOs, the ability to operate properly. I raised that matter when I was there, and I will continue to raise it. It is an unresolved issue, and we are right to express concern.

Q181 Mike Gapes: Did you also raise the case of Samira Ibrahim when you were in Egypt?

Alistair Burt: I do not think that I did, to be honest.

Q182 Mike Gapes: What about the continuing role of military trials of people who were involved in the protests? Did you raise that issue?

Alistair Burt: Yes. We have raised that on a number of occasions. We regard such trials as inappropriate; there should be civil trials, and we will continue to make that case. I will check about Samira Ibrahim, if I can.

Q183 Mike Gapes: Is there a more general problem, in that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and residual elements from the previous regime, including the Minister of Planning and International Co-operation, Faiza Abou el-Naga, are still in place, and that they are the people behind this repression? Do you expect that when a real transition takes place—whether to the Muslim Brotherhood or others—and there is a new President, the circumstances of human rights organisations and protesters will improve?

Alistair Burt: How can I phrase this? I think that you accurately describe a conflict that is going on within Egypt with regard to how it responds to everything that has happened over the past year or so and moves forward, and the conflict between values of the past and the future. It is not for the United Kingdom to say who should or should not be in place in particular government positions or anything like that. We have made our position very clear. We think that current human rights legislation is still deficient, and that more needs to be done. We are clear about the values that a new constitution and legislation should espouse, and we are certainly not blind to the fact that the view is not necessarily universally held by everyone in positions of authority in Egypt or the like. Ultimately, this is for the Egyptian people and the government to resolve, but it is obvious that there is a reluctance among some fully to embrace what we believe the changes have sparked and created. However, our determination in the direction that I am indicating is clear.

Q184 Mike Gapes: I have one final question. You said that you had not raised the issue of Samira Ibrahim. The fact that there were allegations about the way that the military behaved—that it had been involved in raping female demonstrators and virginity-testing them—is clearly a matter of concern.

Alistair Burt: We raised that.

Q185 Mike Gapes: Can I put it to you that there is a real concern about the erosion of women’s rights? There are very few female parliamentarians compared with before, and there is a real fear that the transition in Egypt could lead to a worse situation for women.

Alistair Burt: Let me be very clear. I do not recall raising an individual case, but we have raised cases in relation to virginity testing, women’s rights and the like. The Committee is absolutely right. This issue is very important to the United Kingdom, and we meet women activists and others.

If I may, I will offer one anecdote in relation to this. I spoke to some young women who were engaged in an NGO project about the role of women in society, and asked what they thought about the future. Their view was that they do not so much fear new legislation as much as they fear culture. It is not legislation in Egypt but culture that they fear might hold them back in the future. On specific issues such as virginity testing and the like, we have made our views very clear. It is unacceptable, and people have to pay due and proper attention to that in the future.

Q186 Ann Clwyd: But they didn’t, did they? I raised the issue on the Floor of the House, and some Foreign Office Minister—I am not sure whether it was you—said that he would follow it up. We met women while we were there—we have got lots of anecdotes—who are very concerned about the fact that the officer who was charged with examining women for virginity got off scot-free. Obviously, that is not satisfactory. That certainly does not look good for human rights in future. There is real concern about women’s rights, particularly in the writing of the constitution and with fewer women in Parliament. I do not know how many
women are on the constitutional committee, but I suspect very few. They are very afraid about the kind of laws that will emerge as a result of rewriting the constitution.

On the subject of the NGOs, the Americans waved the big stick and threatened to cut off aid. As a result, all the American NGOs were freed, but we are worried about all the other NGOs who are still on trial and behind bars. So, I think it is a bit more urgent.

Alistair Burt: I do not want to minimise in any way either the concern or the urgency in relation to this. We are actively engaged with women’s rights organisations and in helping the promotion of candidates at local and parliamentary elections in Egypt. We are engaging with those who are working towards more effective participation. These are areas in which our partnership programme is active and our post in Cairo are actively engaged and actively working. As I said, we ask about this and we are aware of the conflicts in Egyptian society itself. We are quite clear about where we stand in relation to this. We will continue to pursue that.

Q187 Ann Clwyd: It would be useful if you kept us updated on the progress of pressing for women’s rights, on the new constitution and on matters in general.

Alistair Burt: I will happily do so. I am hoping to brief colleagues more generally on my portfolio, possibly some time next week, and I will make sure that I have added a piece in relation to that. However, we do take it very seriously.

Q188 Mr Ainsworth: Since the changes started in Egypt, we have seen some changed positions with regard to Egypt’s neighbours. The government have been prepared to open the Rafah crossing, whereas Mubarak was happy to maintain the blockade. They have made certain changes in terms of whom they have facilitated negotiations between and our post in Cairo are actively engaged and working. As I said, we ask about this and we are aware of the conflicts in Egyptian society itself. We are quite clear about where we stand in relation to this. We will continue to pursue that.

Alistair Burt: I have not personally, no. I have not examined it personally. I am conscious that notification of legal proceedings has already been served in the case. We have notice please, you must ask any questions that you wish, but I am conscious that notification of legal proceedings has already been served in the case. We have notice of an action against the British Government and there are reports of action against a former Foreign Secretary.

Q191 Chair: So you are unaware of its contents.

Alistair Burt: I have not examined it personally. I am aware of the contents, but I am very limited as to what I can say in relation to the situation affecting Mr Belhadj, because of the ongoing legal process, which has now clearly started.

Q192 Chair: I have to confess that I have taken advice on this and, as I understand it, this is not sub judice at the moment, because charges have not currently been pressed against anybody and the civil proceedings have not started.

Alistair Burt: I’d like to proceed on the basis of please, you must ask any questions that you wish, but I am conscious that notification of legal proceedings has already been served in the case. We have notice of an action against the British Government and there are reports of action against a former Foreign Secretary.

Q193 Chair: As far as civil proceedings are concerned, the House rules say that sub judice only bites when the proceedings actually start, rather than when the proceedings are commenced.

Alistair Burt: Well, as I say, Chairman, you must ask any question that you wish. If my answers are inadequate for the Committee, because I think that there are legal proceedings, I have to stand by that. I will do my best to answer in general, but I won’t go into specifics in this case.
Q194 Chair: Is it accepted that the document is a Government document?
Alistair Burt: I don’t know.

Q195 Chair: You mean that you don’t know whether or not—
Alistair Burt: I don’t know.

Q196 Chair: It talks about conversations with No. 10.
Alistair Burt: I don’t know. I do not have any instructions in relation to that.

Q197 Chair: Mr Belhadj, we are advised, is now working for the Libyan government. Does the fact that he is making allegations of unlawful rendition against him hamper UK-Libya relations at the moment?
Alistair Burt: Okay, I am much more comfortable on this territory. He is not a member of the Libyan government in the first place. Secondly, the relationship is not hampered. The relationship that we have with Libya is very broad-based. It covers a whole variety of different areas, from civil and physical reconstruction to the political reconstruction and everything else. It is a good, strong relationship. It is not solely defined by issues relating to the past, whether that is in relation to the allegations that we are talking about or other legacy issues. Also, I would say that the present Government have made clear their determination for openness in relation to issues of the past, which is where the Gibson inquiry comes in and where there will be proper legal process as well. We have put in place processes which will allow some of the issues of the past to be properly explored in that particular environment. There is an acceptance therefore that the relationship with the British Government is warm and good, so, no, we do not consider at this stage that it would necessarily be hampered by any action that any individual would wish to take, because there is proper due process to deal with that.

Q198 Chair: What position does Mr Belhadj hold now?
Alistair Burt: Jon will correct me, but my understanding is that he is a local military commander, but I do not believe that he has a formal Libyan government position.

Jon Davies: That is right. It is part of the unresolved question which we might come on to subsequently about militias and their future within the country. That is the world in which he is still operating. He does not hold a formal position within the transitional government: that is right.

Chair: Thank you. I suspect we will return to this subject, Minister, but let us continue with our inquiries.

Q199 Ann Clwyd: If Libya fragments further, politically or as far as the internal security is concerned, does the FCO have any contingency plans to help in the situation? In particular, after the Council of Europe’s very critical report of all nations involved in Libya not having any plans to deal with migrants and refugees, given the numbers who perished on the boat in the Mediterranean, the dozens of migrants who were fleeing the violence in Libya, is that part of the contingency plan?
Alistair Burt: In relation to the fragmentation, if I can start briefly with that, plainly it is not the role of the United Kingdom Government to dictate the territorial integrity or whatever of any other state. The interesting thing is that, as we know, historically, Libya has three strong component parts. That there has always been a strong local identity related to that is obviously well known. Also, there have been issues in the east about their feeling that sense of identity very strongly. That is also well known, but at this stage I don’t think there is a real suggestion or a real expectation in the United Kingdom Government that this will develop rapidly into any form of fragmentation.

If there is due constitutional process about devolution of power or autonomy of anything else, as we see in the United Kingdom, this is nothing particularly new or unusual. The important thing is that there is a process for it: it is not new; it is not associated with violence; it is constitutional and the like. If that is to happen in Libya, that is a matter for Libya, and if it happens in that sort of manner, then I don’t think there can be any issue in relation to security or anything else.

One of the interesting things that we all now know about is that this can be freely discussed. For the last 40 years it was not an issue that could be discussed by the population of Libya at all. Now it can be. That has got to be essentially a good thing, and then people can make a judgement about whether it is a road down which they want to go, or whether territorial integrity, which plainly was the intention of the NTC during the course of the conflict, is something that matters more than any other identity. However, I do not think that the discussion of it is a matter for worry or concern to the United Kingdom.

In terms of security and militia, this is a matter in which we are engaged. We recognise the pressures between individual militias and between militia and the government. So far, although tensions are there, there is a process by which these issues are being handled. We wish to support a process by which the militia will form part of a national security force. Others will return to other occupations or go into other occupations. Again, that is a matter that we are working on, and working with, and it is being handled. Yes, there are tensions and difficulties, but so far it is under control.

As far as contingency for the future is concerned, I assume you mean if it all happens again. Well, I suppose the honest thing to say is that the UK Government are constantly aware of the fragility of the areas in which they are operating and make a security assessment on a regular basis about what may be happening at present. I don’t think we have a serious indication that there is likely to be a rapid collapse of government that would lead to the sort of concerns and the evacuation that has taken place in the past. We have looked at all our evacuation procedures as a result of what happened in the Arab Spring and, indeed, as a result of the investigations by your Committee some time ago. However, I don’t
think at this stage we have any immediate concerns in relation to that.

Q200 Ann Clwyd: So there are no contingency plans?
Alistair Burt: There are always contingency plans for any emergency. You would not expect anything else. Understandably, the priority allotted to them depends on the circumstances at the time. Although we would always want to know how we would deal with a sudden emergency and the procedures in place, the likelihood of that emergency is always, always calculated as you get on with your work. The fact that it is not our top priority today is because we don’t expect it, not because if it happened we wouldn’t be able to cope with it or be ready for it.

Q201 Ann Clwyd: I won’t press the Council of Europe report today because I hope we will return to it. In view of what happened and the criticisms made, there should be contingency plans to deal with migrants and refugees should the need occur.
Alistair Burt: I am sure that is right and I am happy to deal with that on another occasion.

Q202 Chair: Mr Davies, you briefly mentioned the militia a moment ago. Minister, what progress has been made in disarming the militia?
Alistair Burt: Slow, and very much related to local agreements being made between those who have the confidence of those in central government and those who do not. We are engaged in this process in providing support, assistance and practical guidance, but the honest truth is that it is slow and has to be done at their own pace.

To balance that, the concern people have expressed over the past few months that at any stage this may flare up into some form of confrontation has not been the case. Difficult though these negotiations are locally, there is a process and those involved are working through them. We continue to give support. It is a matter of urgency that this is dealt with, and the Libyan government know that.

Q203 Mr Ainsworth: You said in your statement after you returned that you were going to reach “a framework for co-operation” within which we could deal with the legacy issues of the Qadhafi era.
Alistair Burt: Yes.

Q204 Mr Ainsworth: What progress has been made with regard to the killers of WPC Yvonne Fletcher?
Alistair Burt: I am shortly to pay another visit to Libya. The resolution of what we term and know to be the legacy issues remains a matter of high priority for the UK, and the Libyan government are aware of that. They know it is a matter we will press on every occasion. There has to be a process for this. The most important thing in relation to WPC Fletcher is to get the Metropolitan Police back as quickly as possible and we are still working on a date for that with the Libyan authorities.

I have to say at this stage—it is important—that the capacity of the Libyan authorities at the moment is understandably limited because of the circumstances in which they are operating. Those of you who were there will know that very well. This is not a new Administration that has taken over from an administrative structure that was functional, that worked in anything like a manner that we understand. They were taking over from a dictatorship where effectively nothing worked without reference to the top and where civil administration is still incredibly poor. They are also going through a transitional process in relation to government as they create a new constitution and a new governmental process. They are also dealing with the security issues, not just internal but in relation to their borders. Accordingly, although these matters—and WPC Fletcher is at the top—are of the utmost importance to the UK to resolve, we have to recognise that there is a pace at which the Libyan authorities are able to work. Their commitment has been genuine. They do know from us and the British public how important these issues are. They recognise, in much the same way as they are looking for justice and answers to what happened in Abu Salim, and what happened to the people they don’t know who gave the orders to do whatever happened to them, that we would have exactly the same determination to find out who ordered what and why. Approaching the authorities in that way, and helping them to understand that is why the British public and the rest of us are so concerned, is the way to approach it. We have commitment but they are not in a position to follow through yet in the practical ways they need to do. We are urging them to get into that position as soon as possible.

Q205 Mr Ainsworth: You believe that the barriers are all practical, that there are grounds for patience and that there is no reticence to get to grips with these legacy issues, most particularly Yvonne Fletcher.
Alistair Burt: I do not think there is a reticence in relation to justice. I think there are one or two issues and some concern in some quarters—not in relation to WPC Fletcher, but other cases—that the matter is about reopening compensation or something like that. We are busy seeking to dissuade people that that is the case. It is fundamentally—

Q206 Mr Ainsworth: So it is on al-Megrahi.
Alistair Burt: That’s it. Correct. It is fundamentally the search for truth that is important. So no, I do not believe that there are institutional barriers to that, but there are other apprehensions together with that.

Q207 Mr Roy: In relation to al-Megrahi and the Pan Am Lockerbie bombing, are there still ongoing discussions on that particular subject?
Alistair Burt: We continue to make the case that Dumfries and Galloway police must have access and must be able to get on with that investigation. That is also a priority for us. As I said, there is an apprehension in some parts of the Libyan structure that this is about reopening compensation, which they believe was dealt with in the past; whereas we are keen to make the case, in support of those who are conducting the investigation, that it is about finding out the truth of the matter, which we understand from
all the families involved is principally what they want to know, and we press that case.

Q208 Mr Roy: Can I have the assurance then, that when al-Megrahi finally does pass away, that this is not going to be dropped and that this is not going to change anything at all in relation to the questions that we need to ask?
Alistair Burt: No, absolutely not. It is not related to his continued existence. As I say, I think the most understandable way for me to present it with those whom I am talking to is to look at the legacy of Abu Salim. When you read information about that—if you look at Lindsay Hilsum’s book, the impact that Abu Salim had on the Libyan people and how they want to uncover what happened after been so long denied international—how you would engage, how you would seek to effect change and the like. In hindsight, some of those can be recognised and fully taken onboard. Let us move this forward as regards Libya: we had a government who did not change tack, basically. The rapprochement took place, but they did not change tack in that human rights were still very much a secondary feature and it was very much a repressive regime. We knew that—we have had no shortage of commentators in front of us making this very point. Why then, if I may ask, did we change tack ourselves in turning on Qadhafi, knowing that he had this very repressive regime? The official line was to save the citizens of Benghazi, but we knew that there were alternatives to the West getting involved. The Egyptian air force remained intact—it was a largely peaceful revolution—and they themselves called for a sort of air cover over Benghazi. Why suddenly the change to what many viewed as a process of regime change to the very end?

Q210 Mr Baron: May I press you, Minister? You quite rightly—I think it is a valid point—make the point that if governments change tack, that needs to be recognised and fully taken onboard. As we press this forward as regards Libya: we had a government who did not change tack, basically. The rapprochement took place, but they did not change tack in that human rights were still very much a secondary feature and it was very much a repressive regime. We knew that—we have had no shortage of commentators in front of us making this very point. Why then, if I may ask, did we change tack ourselves in turning on Qadhafi, knowing that he had this very repressive regime? The official line was to save the citizens of Benghazi, but we knew that there were alternatives to the West getting involved. The Egyptian air force remained intact—it was a largely peaceful revolution—and they themselves called for a sort of air cover over Benghazi. Why suddenly the change to what many viewed as a process of regime change to the very end?

Alistair Burt: You are asking me some questions I cannot answer, because they involve judgements made by the previous Government that I am not privy to.

Q211 Mr Baron: But the charge was led by this Government as regards the regime change, when we had known all the time that this was a repressive regime.

Alistair Burt: I come back to a comment I made earlier, that there is engagement with governments of many different sorts in relation to their practices. There are a number of governments who have human rights records which concern us, and which we talk about and raise with them, but that does not necessarily mean disengagement. Broadly, this country works on the basis that, for the most part, engagement is usually the right process in order to effect change, though there are circumstances in which that engagement cannot continue and carry on. The situation was plainly reached with Qadhafi in that, in terms of his response to legitimate reform and the protest movement within his country, his form of repression went beyond the bounds that the United Kingdom could possibly countenance, hence the activity that we were engaged in last year. Until then, difficult individual judgements are made about how you would engage, how you would seek to effect change and the like. In hindsight, some of those can
be illustrated as poor but, equally, there are other cases in which that engagement may look to be worth while.

Q212 Mr Baron: May I press you, finally, on the extent to which the al-Megrahi revelations stung the coalition Government into action? I remember when we went over to the States and we had a meeting with the congressional foreign relations committee. I was certainly expecting an element of interest in Afghanistan and Iraq, where we were sharing the loss of life and certainly expense, but all they seemed to be interested in was disappointment that, in their eyes, there had been collusion between the governments in the release of al-Megrahi. To what extent did that—the American concern and outrage at recent revelations with regards to the al-Megrahi case and his release—sting the incoming coalition Government into perhaps changing tack on Libya?

Alistair Burt: I think the present Government made it very clear that the release of al-Megrahi was not a decision that they would have supported. Granted that it was not a decision for the United Kingdom Government, the Prime Minister made it very clear that it was a judgement that he would not have supported. Honestly, it is more likely that it was the then current activity of Qadhafi, the way in which he was responding to protest and his speech in relation to Benghazi that was far more influential than anything else. Maybe it built on what we knew about the regime, but I do not think we will be able to take that significant moment out of the calculations of how the coalition responded to Libya. I think that was more influential than the release of al-Megrahi.

Q213 Mike Gapes: It wasn’t as if it was just something that the UK could do or was doing in isolation.

Alistair Burt: It wasn’t as if it was just something that the UK could do or was doing in isolation. There was clearly a different atmosphere and relationship, but I didn’t get the sense that that was saying that what was being threatened against Benghazi was of a different order than anything that had come before. The same view was shared broadly through Europe and, more importantly perhaps, in the Arab League, which is what secured UN agreement. It wasn’t as if it was just something that the UK could do or was doing in isolation.

Q214 Mike Gapes: We were selling military equipment up until February 2011, both under this Government and under the previous Government. Did that never include any of the items of ordnance?

Alistair Burt: As far as we are aware, no.

Q215 Mike Gapes: Perhaps you could write to us if that is not the case.

Alistair Burt: Again, under the previous Government and this one, whatever was sent to Libya had to conform with strict arms exports licensing, as we know full well and have discussed before.

Q216 Mike Gapes: That is crowd control—pepper gas, irritation and ammunition. All kinds of things were sold.

Alistair Burt: But not ordnance.

Mike Gapes: Not ordnance, okay.

Q217 Mr Roy: I have a quick question. Could you give us an update on the establishment of a UK visa application centre in Tripoli?

Alistair Burt: I can: it is going well.

Jon Davies: Absolutely. The good news is that we have agreement now with Libyans. That process is able to start, which is extremely good news. That is something we have been pressing towards for some time to try to make the logistics of it happen. That will happen, and it will be set in train. One of the things we have been conscious of is that it is an obstacle to British business opportunities in Libya, which were otherwise going very well, and we are getting a lot of support. We in the Foreign Office have worked very closely with the UK Border Agency to make that happen, and it will happen.

Q218 Mr Roy: Is there a time scale for that?

Alistair Burt: I am hoping to pay a visit quite soon.

Chair: Turning now to Tunisia.

Q219 Mr Roy: Minister, is the UK building relations from a low base in Tunisia? What are you doing to ensure that potential benefits accruing from the UK’s hosting of Tunisian exiles are realised?

Alistair Burt: I do not think the base was too low. Certainly it has changed in relation to Tunisia. I had the benefit of being able both to visit the previous regime and to visit after the revolution. Certainly, relations with the previous regime were a bit more controlled and formal. There was clearly a different atmosphere and relationship, but I didn’t get the sense that relationships were particularly low. Now, having paid a visit in the past few weeks and met the Minister for Overseas Investment, there is a sense that they are looking to the United Kingdom much more than they did in the past. We are seeking to make the very most of that.

Q220 Mike Gapes: When we were in Tunisia, and I say this in the context of being very much more positive about the prospects in Tunisia than in some other countries, we picked up concerns among some of the secular political figures, not just in Parliament, but outside in the civil society, about the influence of conservative Sunni ideology coming from some of the
Gulf states—Qatar was mentioned in particular—and that there may be a more hard-line conservative agenda and a potential rise in Salafist groups, which do not seem to be very strong in Tunisia at this moment, and that the Al Khalifa party, instead of being moved to work with the secular side, might actually come under the influence of a more conservative side. Do you share that concern? Do you think it is real?

**Alistair Burt:** I would describe it as an ongoing debate in a society where, again, they are now free to have a conversation, which has been held for a long time, but probably more underground. I had a meal with a group of business people in the civil society in Sfax—away from the capital—and one of the things that they said, because we raised this question with them, was, "Remember that this conversation has been going on for a long time." This is nothing new about the relationship between religion and politics and political values. It has been under the surface for a while, but it is constantly considered and talked about.

Ultimately, an accommodation has to be reached between political parties themselves—those based on religion and those political and democracy— and it is not an accommodation between the people and the sort of political parties they wish to run them. At present, the evidence is that the majority party that won the election—Ennahda, which has an Islamist base—co-operates effectively with a secular party in government as a coalition, and, in the last couple of weeks, they have had to deal with some public protest where these issues have arisen to the surface and tested the authority quite severely in terms of how they deal with them and how that society itself resolves those difficulties. They have been able to do so. It has not been without some discomfort, but they have been able to do so.

The ongoing process of the relationship between those elements that would have a greater adherence to certain religious values than political values is still to be debated. Again, in a conversation with a professional woman in Tunisia, asking her about what she thought about the future, she said, "If they do what they say, then it is fine. If the political parties do not deliver what they are currently telling the people, it will be very difficult." The truth is that that debate and that concern are there, but they will gradually be resolved. The important thing for all of us is that it is now able to be resolved in an atmosphere of openness and discussion and that is very different to the past.

**Q221 Ann Clwyd:** There were some concerns among various groups that, under the Arab Partnership Fund, funds were being disbursed mainly to organisations that had built up a relationship with the EU under the old regime. The point that they were making was that civil society is still developing and that we should be careful not to give all the Arab Partnership money to the ones that are already established, but rather to be on the lookout for new ones. Is that what you are doing?

**Alistair Burt:** Yes, I think we are pretty alert to that, but Jon has some more detail.

**Jon Davies:** It is potentially a risk or difficulty that we are looking at in not just Tunisia, but Egypt and other places, where it has been difficult for organisations to flourish. We need to be able to work with organisations that can deliver quickly and early. There is a tension there with dealing with ones who have been oppressed or pushed down, but we are looking as we increase substantially the amount of money that we are talking about being able to spend through the Arab Partnership. That is precisely what we are trying to do. We will not necessarily throw aside those relationships that we have worked up through the years in those countries, but we will also look for new opportunities as well, whether that is directly funding them ourselves or through the British Council or by working with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the BBC, the Thomson Foundation or others. Whether it is us directly or through partners, we are trying to ensure that we go back to the Minister’s previous point—are engaging across this new spectrum, which is now there, but used not to be.

**Q222 Chair:** Finally, what is the prospect of Tunisia becoming a major foreign policy partner of the UK’s? I know that we are building up our relationship there to good effect. How do you see the long term playing out?

**Alistair Burt:** At the moment, it is very positive. One important aspect of this is Tunisia’s commitment to greater Maghreb integration. The UK has long held that to be an important objective in the area, because it will do so much to ease the socio-economic pressures. With Algeria and Morocco developing a closer relationship than they have had for some time, Tunisia’s commitment to this, and new opportunities in Libya—the Tunisian Foreign Minister has been very active; he has visited here, and we have had a lot of contact with him—I think we are seeing the world and the region in a similar way. They have been very active in relation to Syria, and we have been very supportive in relation to regional issues, so yes, we do see the prospects for developing a good, sound relationship on foreign policy with friends in Tunisia.

**Chair:** That is very welcome. As we have got a couple of minutes before we go, do you mind if we just turn to Bahrain?

**Alistair Burt:** Of course not.

**Chair:** Ann Clwyd has said that she wanted to ask some questions on this.

**Q223 Ann Clwyd:** The Amnesty International report on Bahrain, which came out yesterday, was very critical. It said: “The human rights crisis in Bahrain is not over. Despite the authorities’ claims to the contrary, state violence against those who oppose the Al Khalifa family rule continues, and in practice, not much has changed in the country since the brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters in February and March 2011.”

The most prominent human rights activist in Bahrain is presently on the 70th day of his hunger strike, and there is a lot of concern about him. I spoke to the Danish ambassador about the situation, and there is an argument apparently in the royal family over whether he should be released or not; some people argue he should be released. In addition, there have been activists in London demonstrating on the roof of the
Bahraini embassy, and there are nightly attacks, apparently, in some of the Shi’a villages in Bahrain. Do you really think that the Formula 1 race should continue in the light of that situation in Bahrain?

Alistair Burt: You wrap up about five different issues in your question, all entirely pertinent, and I will try as best I can to deal with each one—briefly, Chairman.

First, in relation to Mr al-Khawaja and the hunger strike, we share the concerns about this, and we have made representations in relation to this. I have spoken directly to authorities in Bahrain about it. We have been able to make a representation as a member of the EU because of the dual nationality in relation to Mr al-Khawaja, so on humanitarian grounds we have expressed our concern. We understandably hope that that is resolved by the authorities.

The Amnesty report is very new, and we are giving it examination, of course; it is a bit early to tell. It does not take into account, we can see, the National Commission’s report on progress in Bahrain, which was published on 20 March. Now, we may differ on this, but we see evidence of progress in relation to that. There is more to do in Bahrain. We make our position very clear, and we do make this clear to the Bahraini authorities: they know that the publication of the independent commission and its recommendations was not an end to the issue. The honest and frank assessment in that, unique to the area, was welcome and the right thing to do, but the implementation is crucial. There has been progress—

Q224 Ann Clwyd: It is too slow.

Alistair Burt: It has more to do, and the pace should pick up. The establishment of a police code of conduct, placement of cameras in interview rooms, the establishment of a media oversight body—these are not insignificant, and it is important that those things have been done, but we do make it clear that more progress should take place. There are clashes going on, but again we need to be clear about this.

The complexity of Bahrain and the reform process is that there are different groups with different expectations here. It is clear that in the middle, on both Shi’a and Sunni sides, there are those who recognise the dangers of the fragmentation of Bahrain—those who want Bahrainis to be Bahraini again and to see themselves as that, not divided. There is a strong body of moderate opinion in the middle. There are those on either side of that who are not necessarily committed to the same reform process, and while there are many people out on the streets with legitimate grievances—legitimate protest—wanting to urge the authorities to move forward, and with the genuine intent of reform, there are others who—

Q225 Ann Clwyd: Who represent the majority of the population.

Alistair Burt: Yes, but who wish to take forward reform in the manner that has been set out, and who wish to see progress in relation to that. There are also those on the street who do not share those objectives, and who are looking to provoke violence, which we condemn and which is wrong. As for the difficulties in responding to that, police tactics have changed over the past year. We would all acknowledge that. It was one of the failures that the Bahraini government made a mistake of in the commission of inquiry and have responded to, but it is clear that such things are still going on.

Q226 Ann Clwyd: And Formula 1?

Alistair Burt: I shall come to Formula 1 in a second. I am just getting there.

Travel advice is our responsibility, in terms of safety and security. I spoke to our ambassador yesterday. I keep in frequent contact with him. He has not seen any reason to change markedly our overall travel advice. We draw attention to the fact that such incidents occur but, in general, that is not sufficient to deem travel to Bahrain to be unsafe—that is our major commitment to visitors there. Formula 1 teams are already arriving. It is not the United Kingdom’s position to say whether or not a Formula 1 race should take place. That is a matter for the Formula 1 authorities to decide on, and they have done so. Our responsibility is the safety and security of UK visitors, and that is covered by our travel advice, which is clear and honest.

Q227 Ann Clwyd: I think that the travel advice is ambiguous. We got it off the net this morning.

Alistair Burt: I hope it isn’t.

Chair: Rory, you were trying to catch my eye earlier.

Q228 Rory Stewart: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

Finally, Minister, are there any lessons that we have learned from Libya with regard to our problems in getting enough staff in on the ground, and the fact that the ambassador’s staff in Tripoli was very small until even two months ago? We had to close our presence in Benghazi, and we faced problems with communications consistently over three months.

Alistair Burt: May I ask Jon to deal with this?

Jon Davies: Certainly. I share the view that we were slow to go in. In such circumstances, making sure that we could actually operate safely and securely was key. We were obviously keen to get in as fast as we could. We did that, and our ambassador was in there ahead of, as it were, most of the comparable countries that had withdrawn their embassies. We have a presence there now. As with the previous two heads of mission, we have had the senior Arabic-speaking ambassadors in there with considerable-sized staffs, both in Tripoli and in Benghazi.

We do maintain a presence in Benghazi. That will be locally run, but part of our operations will widen out, quite rightly, and we will rely not just on diplomatic staff based in the UK, but on locally hired staff as well. I do not think that is something that is wrong. It is going to be part of the structure—it has been for a long time and will continue to be so.

1 Note by witness: What I intended to say here was “I do not share the view that we were slow going in”. The ongoing paragraph, in which I state “we were obviously keen to get in as fast as we could”, demonstrates that my thoughts were that the FCO acted as speedily as possible.
Alistair Burt: Just to give an idea of the size of the embassy in Libya now, there are 20 UK-based staff from across Government; 60 locally engaged staff; a UKTI team of 10; a defence advisory team of 10; and six Arabic speakers in post. This is a significant embassy for us.

Q229 Rory Stewart: The entire UK-based political section in Tripoli at the time of our visit, doing political reporting, consisted of an ambassador, a DHM and a second secretary, who was covering press and public affairs and was running projects. It is a very small presence for a mission that the MOD probably spent $1.2 billion on, in the lead-up to that deployment.

Alistair Burt: We had to ramp it up, and we did, but understandably, conditions pertained that meant that we could not do that quickly or immediately.

Jon Davies: The political section of an embassy is not all that it is about. As the Minister said earlier, you have a broad relationship with a country, some of which is about politics, but you also have sections, as you well know, that look at defence, trade and investment, visas—we mentioned that earlier—and consular matters. The narrow political section is just one part of it. That is a mission that is delivering well. It is part of the key relationship that we have with the government, which the Minister described, and he is able to discharge that.

You mentioned communications. Briefly, there were difficulties; it is a difficult set-up to operate in. As with other parts of what happened in Libya, we are trying to learn from it about when we deploy, as we increasingly have to, in difficult and dangerous places at short notice.

Chair: Thank you both very much indeed. Minister, you have answered questions for more than two and a half hours. It is very much appreciated. It now falls to us to come up with some conclusions about where we are. No doubt we will return to this. The finishing line is not in sight at the moment—

Alistair Burt: Absolutely right.

Chair—but thank you for getting us round the first lap.
Written evidence

Written evidence from Dr Christian Turner, Director, Middle East and North Africa Directorate, Foreign & Commonwealth Office

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA EXPERTISE AND RESOURCING

At the informal briefing with FAC members on 18 May, you requested further information on our efforts to boost regional expertise in the Middle East and North Africa region, and how the FCO had organised to cope with the “Arab Spring” crisis.

THE MENA CADRE INITIATIVE

To achieve the Foreign Secretary’s vision of a distinctive British Foreign Policy, the FCO’s Diplomatic Excellence initiative aspires to pursue and reward excellent policy thinking, diplomacy, public service, leadership and management. As part of this effort, MENA Directorate (MENAD) launched its “MENA Cadre” initiative in November 2010. The Cadre initiative’s principal objective is to ensure that the FCO has the right linguistic and geographic expertise to operate in the MENA region in years to come. Its activities are organised under three strands: building expertise and knowledge, strategic workforce planning to ensure that we have the right officers for the right jobs, and promoting and building a community of MENA experts (see attachment).

A key part is a renewed effort on language skills, which the Foreign Secretary has prioritised. We have therefore:

— restored the length of training for Full Time Arabic Training to 18 months, and are working with external experts to improve the content and rigour of the Arabic programme;
— provided more opportunities and encouragement to staff in London to learn and maintain foreign languages, with weekly conversation classes for existing Arabic speakers, a 12-month beginners Arabic class (to which over 60 FCO staff have subscribed), and French classes, and
— reclassified approximately 20 existing jobs at MENA Posts overseas as speaker slots, as part of a wider FCO uplift in speaker slots. Once trained staff are in place, this will represent an approximate 40% increase in Arabic speaker capacity in the network compared to 2010 levels; there are now approximately 70 speaker slots in the overseas MENA network (out of over 155 UK based staff). In MENA Directorate in London, we have over 30 officers who speak Arabic, Farsi or French to operational standard (about a quarter of the directorate).

On regional expertise, the transfer of MENA Research Group from Research Analysts Department to MENAD in July 2010 further strengthened the quality of our policy advice. Research Analysts are an integral part of the policy-making process, with their all-source analysis, historical perspective and contacts with external expertise informing—and at times challenging—policy formulation. MENA Research Group also regularly hosts in-house seminars and roundtables with visiting scholars, the heads of academic and think-tank programmes, and retired Diplomatic Service staff. This year they are running heavily subscribed seminars on MENA history and politics for staff across the FCO.

CRISIS STAFFING

The “Arab Spring” has obviously put a significant strain on MENAD’s resources, in particular our crisis response to events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. Prior to January 2011 MENAD’s headcount was approximately 90. Since January, over 570 members of staff based in London and Milton Keynes volunteered to bolster the core staff available to Consular Directorate and MENAD to deal with the crises. For example, the Libya Political Crisis Unit had to staff up to 370 slots per week on a 24/7 basis on a three-shift pattern; and the Consular Crisis Management Department had to staff up to 720 slots per week on a 24/7 basis, with a shift pattern varying from a two- to three-shift pattern. Consular Crisis Management Department also deployed 16 Rapid Deployment Teams overseas, totalling 90 staff, in support of the consular response to the crises. Many others volunteered and over 50 deployed to Libya and Valetta to work alongside our Embassy teams.

These additional staff were drawn from existing crisis management structures (such as the Emergency Response Team, and the Rapid Deployment Team) as well as ad-hoc volunteers from across the FCO. Directors across the FCO were instructed by the PUS to identify areas of work that were less immediate priorities, and release staff—wherever possible with relevant experience—to work on the crises. In order to counter the effect of a smaller workforce, directorates were asked to reconsider their priorities, downgrading policy and representation work not related to our top prosperity and security goals, and were able to authorise overtime if necessary.

FUTURE STAFFING

In April 2011, the FCO Board decided to increase staffing in MENAD on a more permanent and sustainable footing. The Directorate was reorganised as five departments: Libya Unit, Near East and North Africa Department, Northern Gulf Department, Arabian Peninsula Department, and Arab Partnership Department. The
new Libya Unit has approximately 25 new slots. In the remainder of the Directorate, three slots were upgraded and approximately 15 new slots created, including an additional Director. The FCO Board also decided to wait until the long-term impact of the “Arab Spring” on our operational needs was clearer before making further changes to our network of posts in the region. We plan to consider that further in the Autumn.

7 July 2011

MENA CADRE SUMMARY

the MENA Cadre

“ensuring the Office has the right linguistic and regional expertise to operate in the MENA region in the coming decade, that we attract the best people to our jobs, and that we are enthused by living in and working on this part of the world”

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Written evidence from Rt Hon William Hague MP, First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Thank you for your letter of 4 August enclosing an article from The Guardian of 14 May, reporting disturbing claims that a boat of distressed migrants fleeing Libya was ignored by military vessels in the Mediterranean. My officials have discussed the alleged incident with colleagues from the Ministry of Defence and NATO. NATO has reviewed all relevant information available and can find no evidence whatsoever of any NATO ships being involved in the incident. Media reports include mention of a NATO aircraft carrier; the only such ship attached to the NATO mission was operating more than 100 nautical miles away from the possible location of the migrant vessel at the time in question. In addition, NATO units at sea neither saw nor heard any trace of distress calls from that area. I can reassure you that NATO vessels are fully aware of their responsibility in responding to those in distress. Since March, vessels under NATO command have contributed to saving the lives of more than 700 migrants.

I enclose a copy of a report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees which states that three of the survivors who were apprehended by Qadhafi forces later spoke with UNHCR. It reports that these three subsequently crossed into Tunisia and are now at a camp at Choucha, where UNHCR is providing them with assistance.

Unfortunately it is not possible to ascertain the fate of the other survivors. The large number of migrants fleeing Libya, more than 650,000 since the start of the conflict, means that it is not possible to track all the individuals involved. The UK has given both financial and practical assistance to migrants fleeing Libya to neighbouring countries to help minimise suffering and to reduce the pressure on individuals to make dangerous journeys to the EU. For example, the UK has funded repatriation flights for over 12,700 migrant workers trapped on the Egyptian and Tunisian borders, and donated thousands of tents and blankets to other trapped migrants.

The UK’s operations in Libya as part of NATO’s Operation Unified Protector are working towards a more open and democratic country. In the long term this will facilitate a sustainable reduction in risks for migration.

I enclose a note providing more information on the situation regarding migrants fleeing the Libyan crisis by sea, and the policies regarding such migrants which are being followed by the UK and NATO.

7 September 2011

Annex

NATO AND UK POLICY ON THE SITUATION REGARDING MIGRANTS FLEEING LIBYA BY SEA

Migration from and Through Libya

1. Libya is an important transit country for sub-Saharan migrants en route to Europe. At times, it has suited Qadhafi to encourage this flow. However, a migration cooperation agreement between Libya and Italy in 2008 held back an estimated 1.2 million illegal migrants from entering the EU before the Libya crisis. This control has lapsed due to the conflict in Libya.

2. According to the International Organisation of Migration, as of 9 August 654,267 non-Libyan nationals had fled Libya since the start of the crisis. The majority of these migrants crossed to Tunisia and Egypt, with Niger, Chad and Italy receiving most of the rest. Many of these were third country nationals working in Libya who have returned home. Since the beginning of 2011 approximately 57,000 migrants from North Africa have moved into southern Europe, around half of whom have travelled from Libya. The vast majority of these migrants have landed in Italy. As a result Italy is seeing very high numbers of asylum requests (45,000 requests from January—July). There is little evidence yet of any concerted attempt of migrants arriving in Italy moving to the UK. DfID report that the number of migrants leaving Libya across both sea and land borders is showing a long term downward trend, and that most third country nationals have already left the country. The UK has seen a rise in asylum claims from Libyan nationals, but they are mostly Libyans who are already in the UK and holding valid visas. Prior to the conflict, UK asylum claims from Libyans were very low.

NATO AND UK POLICY ON VESSELS IN DISTRESS

3. There is no migration-related element to NATO’s mission under Operation Unified Protector. It has no specific policy on dealing with migrants at sea or monitoring their routes.

4. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) include provisions concerning the rendering of assistance to vessels in distress. While NATO itself is not a party to either Convention, all NATO members are, and it is therefore a national rather than a NATO responsibility to comply with any obligations arising under these Conventions.Whilst warships and naval auxiliaries are expressly exempt from the SOLAS provisions concerning responding to distress situations, they are nevertheless encouraged to act in a manner consistent, so far as reasonable and practicable, with them. Article 98 of UNCLOS creates legal duties to render assistance to persons in distress at sea. States are obliged to require the masters of ships flying their flag to comply with these obligations. The Royal Navy treat Article

6 http://www.unhcr.org/4dcd3b009.html
98 as binding on its Commanding Officers, noting that in some situations operational factors can be taken into consideration when determining what response is reasonable. Other NATO members (such as the U.S) take a similar position. Indeed, during the night of 26 to 27 March, just a few days before the alleged event mentioned in the Guardian article, NATO units rescued more than 500 migrants in two distressed boats near Tripoli. More recently on 10 July, a NATO ship responded to a vessel in distress approximately 75 miles off the coast of Libya. The NATO vessel provided medical support and food, and offered mechanical assistance to the distressed migrants. In response to a deterioration of the humanitarian situation onboard, the migrants were transferred onto the NATO ship in accordance with the SOLAS protocol and delivered to safety in Tunisia.

5. NATO is working with the commercial shipping industry and with regional authorities to do its part to render assistance to these desperate people. In addition to monitoring maritime radio distress frequencies, ships maintain a constant lookout for vessels and if they see a vessel in trouble they will do what they can to render assistance.

**Impact of UK and EU Policy**

6. The UK stands ready to support EU Member States facing particular migration pressures. Frontex (the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders) has coordinated a number of joint operations in 2011 in response to the high numbers of irregular migrants crossing the Mediterranean, including a surveillance operation with Italy (Operation Hermes). The UK has supported Italy on a bilateral basis by deploying debriefing experts to gather intelligence on the routing and facilitation of migrants’ journeys.

7. Frontex also coordinate search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean in close cooperation with the host state of each operation, using the human and technical resources of the Member States and combining surveillance assets and a range of aircraft and vessels. It is estimated that Frontex operations have saved the lives of more than 6,000 people in the Mediterranean so far this year.

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**Written evidence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**SUMMARY**

The causes of the Arab Spring

1. The Arab Spring has brought an historic opportunity, created and led by the people of the region, to build more open, prosperous societies in the Middle East and North Africa. The MENA region matters to the UK’s security and prosperity. If the Arab Spring brings more open and democratic societies, it will be the greatest gain for human rights and freedom since the end of the Cold War. If it falters, it will risk dangerous instability on Europe’s doorstep, collapse back into more authoritarian regimes, conflict and terrorism. In any case it will be a difficult and long-lasting challenge and there will be no simple or ideal outcomes.

The FCO’s preparedness

2. The Arab Spring began with events in Tunisia in December 2010. But the underlying issues driving discontent in the region are long-term and well-documented, for example in reports of human development in the region since 2002. The FCO had introduced policies to respond to these challenges under the Labour government, as detailed in the FCO White Papers of 2003 and 2006, which acknowledged the need to support peaceful political, economic and social reform in the Middle East through the work of the Engaging with the Islamic World programme fund. In late 2009, the FCO undertook a policy project to draw together an evidence base and propose recommendations on what more we could do in partnership with international and regional partners to address the root causes. With the Foreign Secretary’s approval in July 2010, the FCO’s Director of Middle East and North Africa established a new team (now the Arab Partnership Department) in autumn 2010 to take this work forward.

3. The resulting approach—the UK’s Arab Partnership, announced in February 2011 and expanded in May 2011 to a joint FCO-DFID endeavour backed by a £110 million Fund—has placed the UK in a strong position to respond strategically and rapidly to the Arab Spring, both bilaterally (including with strategic partners such as the British Council) and through the multilateral mechanisms of the EU and G8. The FCO’s public diplomacy work in the region, including digital communications, which was already well advanced as the Arab Spring began, together with efforts to improve linguistic and geographic expertise, contributed to the response.

4. While we were aware of the fundamental underlying frustrations of people in the region, and were orientating our policies to address them, we did not predict that a spark in Tunisia in December 2010 would trigger such an outpouring of protest. No other international player, academic analyst, or opposition group within the region foresaw this either. Even those who had for many years been calling for radical change had no knowledge prior to the events of January that such change was in prospect. There was a recognition that where people are not free to express their concerns or opposition to the policies of their governments, there is a risk of frustrations bursting out suddenly and with potentially dramatic consequences.

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Key Elements of the Policy Response

5. A number of key principles have informed our policy response to the Arab Spring as it has manifested itself in different ways across countries of the region. Above all, as set out in the Prime Minister’s 22 February Kuwait speech we have taken a values-based approach, judging that the UK’s long-term national interests in security and prosperity in the region are best served if we are dealing with governments with legitimacy built on the consent and participation of their people.

6. This does not mean one form of democracy fits all. Each country is different and has the right to develop its own political model. And these are Arab revolutions. Change is being led by the people of the region and it is not for us to dictate the pace or nature of that change. However, the UK does have a role in being clear about our values and supporting reformers across the region. We are doing so bilaterally using our Arab Partnership Funds, and multilaterally through the EU and G8, supporting transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, but also more widely across the region.

7. The interim government in Tunisia has made steady progress towards a transition to democracy, and the authorities have been open to international assistance. Elections look set to go ahead on time although challenges remain.

8. There has been less consensus in Egypt than Tunisia on the post-revolution path, with further large-scale popular protests. The authorities, reflecting nationalist sentiment, have been less inclined to accept international support. The political process leading to elections in November faces uncertainties. The economies in both countries have suffered short-term, though not fatally. An extended transition period in either could increase popular discontent.

9. The UK is supporting transitions in both countries bilaterally through Arab Partnership activity, and multilaterally through the G8’s Deauville Partnership and the EU’s European Neighbourhood Policy.

Islamists

10. Popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere were the result of a diverse range of citizens demanding a better political and economic deal. They were not instigated by Islamist groups and did not target Islamist goals, although groups from across the political spectrum have sought to use events to advance their agenda. Islamist parties can be expected to play an important political role in transition countries. We will interact with parties which are committed to the democratic process, operate within the law of their country and reject violence.

Wider regional impact

11. The Foreign Affairs Committee’s inquiry has an initial focus on events in Egypt and Tunisia but will also consider implications for regional security and may also consider reform elsewhere in the region, including Libya. The full impact of the Arab Spring cannot yet be assessed but it is already clear that it has irrevocably changed political and social landscapes in the Arab world, impacting on UK policy in the wider region.

Consular and crisis management

12. The crises affected up to 6,000 British nationals in Tunisia and 40,000 in Tunisia and Egypt respectively. The FCO’s consular response involved the deployment of Rapid Deployment Teams, to help with the assisted departure operations, and the establishment of round the clock teams of volunteers working in the crisis centre in London. Following the evacuation of British nationals from Libya, the Foreign Secretary placed in the Library of the House an internal Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures.

13. Since January 2011, approximately 570 FCO members of staff have been required to bolster MENAD’s and Consular Directorate’s handling of the crises, with consequent re-prioritisation of other FCO work.

SECTION 1: THE CAUSES OF THE ARAB SPRING

14. From popular demonstrations beginning in Tunisia in December 2010, the Arab Spring has brought a historic opportunity, created and led by the people of the region to build more open, prosperous societies in the Middle East and North Africa.

15. The action of a Tunisian street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, setting himself on fire on 17 December 2010 in protest at his harassment and humiliation by a Tunisian official is credited as being the starting point of these demonstrations. But behind Bouazizi’s act of protest lie long-term issues affecting many countries of the MENA region.
16. The series of United Nations Development Programme’s Arab Human Development Reports since 2002 have set out these issues and challenges at length, with many MENA states considered security-based regimes, lacking accountable governance and with weak civil society and distorted economic performance.¹ There are some daunting statistics:

- Economic underperformance—GDP per capita growth of only 6.4% between 1980 and 2004 (less than 0.5% annually).
- Growing demographic pressures: 331 million population today, more than doubling since 1980 and due to rise to 395 million by 2015. 60% are under 25.
- Youth unemployment at 15% nearly double the world average; with a predicted 51 million new jobs required by 2020.
- Just 59% of children in Arab states enrolled in secondary schools.
- The highest ratio of “not free” countries of any region, at 88% (Freedom House).
- Seven million registered refugees, over 45% of the global total.
- 24% of the population living below the poverty line, with widening inequality.

17. This matters to the UK’s national security and prosperity interests for reasons of:
- conflict prevention: the MENA region is home to some of the most long-running, high profile and intractable foreign policy issues. It is far more cost-effective to invest in upstream prevention than to deal with the consequences;
- energy security: the region contains over $\frac{2}{3}$ of proven global oil reserves and $\frac{1}{2}$ global natural gas reserves;
- counter-radicalisation: almost half of the countries deemed critical to HMG’s counter-terrorism objectives are in the MENA region;
- defence interests and commitments: with the region accounting for over 50% of all UK defence sales by value in the past 10 years;
- commercial opportunity: bilateral trade with MENA is worth £35 billion annually;
- migration: annually 15% of asylum applications come from MENA nationals, and
- UK Expatriates: over 140,000 UK nationals live and work in the region, especially in the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

FCO analysis: Arab Human Development project

18. The challenges identified in the initial UNDP Arab Human Development Report in 2002 and in subsequent reports led to an increasing awareness of the need to address the long-term stability of the Middle East through political, social and economic reform. This approach was described by previous governments in the FCO White Papers of 2003 and 2006 and was implemented principally through the work of the Engaging with the Islamic World project fund (as set out in reports of the FCO’s Global Opportunities Fund and Strategic Programme Fund). The Conflict Pool, a tri-departmental (FCO, MOD and DFID) fund established by Parliament in 2001, was also used to support programmes focused on strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions in the MENA region. The main focus of activity was on Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but the Conflict Pool also supported work in the Gulf region and North Africa.

19. In response to the most recent UNDP report in late 2009, the Middle East and North Africa Directorate of the FCO (MENAD) commissioned the FCO’s Strategy Unit (now renamed as Policy Unit) to work on a project setting out analyses and recommendations on whether the UK should adopt “Arab Human Development” as a priority policy focus.

20. This stemmed from growing concern that human development issues—summed up as political, economic and social participation—continued to worsen through the region, and coupled with demographic factors, had the potential to impact badly on long-term stability and prosperity in the MENA region.

21. Recognising this critical challenge, MENAD’s leadership initiated this research process to explore options that would allow the UK to do more to address these issues in a coherent manner.

22. The Strategy Unit project used an evidence-based approach to analyse recent trends in the MENA region and their impact on the UK’s interests. It sought views from a wide range of stakeholders from within the FCO and our Embassies in the region, other Government Departments, international organisations, other governments (including those of Egypt and Jordan), think tanks and academics.

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¹ For the purposes of this study, the region is defined as the Gulf States, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, OPTS, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, Yemen and Iraq.

² As set out by UNDP, human development issues include: political participation; media freedom; women’s participation; minority rights; human rights; government accountability; transparency; combating corruption; rule of law; service delivery; education for employment; economic openness; equality of opportunity.
23. The project was completed in late spring 2010. It concluded that: a positive enabling environment for UK interests was best secured by an Arab world which was stable, well governed and prosperous. But a vicious circle had emerged in the Arab world, putting UK interests at risk:

- Deficits in service provision impact on daily lives and increase discontent
- Internal conflict and risk of internal strife used as an excuse not to act on service provision
- Security-based regimes with reduced emphasis on pluralism and democracy
- Government focused on patronage - no effective accountability structures or pressure for change
- UK objectives at risk

24. The project concluded that action on the human development agenda was a key part of breaking this cycle. Arab countries needed to promote better governance and participation. This included action on social participation (citizens educated and engaged), economic participation (greater access to jobs and opportunity) and political participation (more accountability and inclusivity). This is set out graphically in the slide below. Broad and multi-faced, this agenda was inherently difficult to act upon with measurable impact, even in the long term. But it was considered too important to UK interests to ignore.

25. The project concluded that a more strategic approach to human development in the region would enable the FCO to better co-ordinate with other Government departments and international partners, and perhaps allow the UK to take the lead in establishing an international consensus and drive this agenda within the EU.
26. The project’s policy recommendations in Spring 2010 were that the FCO should:

— have stronger central co-ordination and oversight, including tasking and evaluation of impact, where possible;
— set out more clearly why Arab Human development matters to UK interests in order to facilitate a shared vision and clear policy goals;
— use this more strategic approach in order to give the UK thought-leadership on Arab human development within the EU/UN and G8, to generate positive messaging on this agenda and to drive our cooperation with key bilateral partners, and
— once policy options and priorities had been identified, secure the resources to implement them.

Section 2: Preparedness for the Arab Spring

27. The development of the Arab Partnership initiative meant the FCO was well-placed to understand and respond to the evolving situation in the region. Political and economic reform was already a focus of FCO activity, and human rights issues were raised regularly. In Egypt in particular, internal tensions were apparent and reporting from Cairo during 2010 and in 2011 highlighted that it was imperative for the government to respond to the ambitions of Egyptian society to participate in the way the country was run. Nonetheless the timing of revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, by definition, took their governments and informed observers alike by surprise. Not even the local opposition movements who were most fervently pressing for change anticipated that it would happen when it did. Work on developing the FCO’s Middle Eastern skills through the Middle East and North Africa cadre work and on developing digital diplomacy in the region supported the FCO’s ability to respond.

Turning analysis into action

28. In July 2010 Director MENAD wrote to the Foreign Secretary setting out plans to set up a new 4-person Arab Human Development pilot team within the Directorate to focus on addressing the underlying political, social and economic drivers of discontent within the region, providing the central, coordinated oversight recommended by the Strategy Unit project.

29. The Team Leader was appointed in October 2010 and recruitment commenced for three other team members. Given the importance of governance issues to this agenda, a DFID governance adviser was recruited into the Deputy Team Leader slot on secondment, beginning work in early January.

30. Through initial analytical work during November-December 2010, drawing on UK Missions’ knowledge and experience of their host countries, the Team developed a country by country picture of the major economic, social and political drivers of discontent. Although there were variations between countries, the analysis revealed the six most powerful drivers to be:

— limited political participation;
— lack of public voice;
— high levels of corruption;
— insufficient rule of law and access to justice;
— inadequate youth employability, and
— a weak private sector which restricted job creation.

31. These findings, based on qualitative post assessments, mirrored secondary research conducted, drawing together data from UNDP Arab Human Development reports, the World Bank Institute, Freedom House, Transparency International, and other open sources.

32. In late December 2010 Director MENA wrote to the Foreign Secretary with recommendations on the shape and proposed activity of the Arab Human Development Team.

There would be three work-streams:

Policy: Crafting the Arab Human Development narrative, setting out why this agenda matters to UK interests and values. Identifying the principles underlying the UK approach: eg local ownership, avoiding the imposition of ideas from the outside. Conducting a rigorous analysis to identify priority themes and countries for UK action. The policy work-stream would cover all the Arab countries, encouraging them to put in place the building-blocks of more open and inclusive societies.

Partnerships: Reaching out to other partners with an interest in this agenda to leverage support and avoid duplication. In particular the team’s analysis had underlined the importance of using UK diplomacy to influence EU and G8 engagement on the regional reform agenda.

Programme: An Arab Human Development Programme Fund to demonstrate our commitment to this agenda and to back our words with action, funding well-targeted, impactful project work in MENA countries most requiring support.

33. The team made a case for programme funding to allow the UK to help address these deficits and the Foreign Secretary agreed in December 2010 to the establishment of the Arab Partnership Fund with an initial


£5 million of programme funding. This Fund, as part of the broader Arab Partnership initiative, was formally announced by the Foreign Secretary on a visit to post-revolution Tunisia on 8 February, less than four weeks after the fall of Ben Ali.

34. At the same time the team’s name was changed from Arab Human Development to “Arab Partnership.” This reflected advice that Arab Human Development could mistakenly suggest the sole focus of its work was socio-economic drivers (UNDP’s Human Development Index includes a composite of GDP, education and health indicators), excluding governance and accountability.

Expansion of the Arab Partnership initiative

35. With the Arab Partnership team in place, MENAD was well positioned to respond to the Arab Spring in a strategic, coherent manner. The Team had already developed:

— a policy response, based on agreed principles (see section 3 below);
— understanding of the importance of working in partnership with other key players, particularly the EU and the G8, to maximise our impact; and
— a programme to address the priority areas driving discontent in countries of the region.

36. However, as events in Tunisia affected other MENA countries beginning with Egypt, the UK Government needed to raise its response to the opportunities and challenges unfolding in the region. Working with other Government departments, particularly the Department for International Development, MENAD upgraded the Arab Partnership Team’s work, enlarging it to become a full FCO Department in May 2011, with Arab Partnership work becoming the top priority on the MENAD Directorate Business Plan. At the same time the Arab Partnership sought to develop closer relationships with strategic partners beyond DFID, including the British Council, BBC World Service (eg in the context of helping develop national media institutions in the region) and Westminster Foundation for Democracy, to help coordinate the UK’s response to events in the region. The Department also liaised closely with other complementary initiatives such as the FCO’s Gulf Initiative, and the appointment of the Defence Special Adviser to the Middle East Lt Gen Simon Mayall.

37. Following Whitehall discussions, the Prime Minister formally announced on 26 May on the eve of the G8’s Deauville Summit that the Arab Partnership was to become a joint FCO-DFID endeavour with an Arab Partnership Fund of £110 million over four years. This includes £40 million for the Arab Partnership Participation Fund (managed by the FCO), focusing primarily on the first five of the Arab Partnership priority areas (para 30 above), and £70 million (managed by DFID) for an Arab Partnership Economic Facility, focusing on economic reform issues (the sixth priority).

Policy in Tunisia

38. The UK’s bilateral relationship with Tunisia prior to 2011 was limited. Although the Foreign Secretary had identified North Africa as a priority, the Ben Ali regime was not open to discussion on Tunisian internal politics, nor to effective co-operation in other areas. Security co-operation was limited to some joint work in the field of aviation security, primarily aimed to address the potential threat to UK tourists in Tunisia.

39. The presence in the UK of Rachid Ghannouchi, a leading Tunisian opposition figure (see para 117), was an important factor in the attitude of the Tunisian government. Our policy of contact with opposition parties and human rights groups in Tunisia also triggered negative reactions from the former regime. But we maintained this policy and have subsequently been applauded for having done so by Tunisian commentators. We were also aware of a worrying deterioration in the human rights situation in Tunisia and of growing public frustration with economic hardships, especially youth unemployment. Despite limited contact, we did take action to raise these issues with the Tunisian government, often in co-ordination with EU partners in order to maximise the effectiveness of the message. This included lobbying on human rights defender cases and changes to the Tunisian Penal Code. We also lobbied hard in the EU to ensure that the Tunisian proposal for “Advanced Status” with the EU was linked to specific and measurable steps on human rights to deliver real reform in Tunisia.

40. We nonetheless worked to pursue UK interests in Tunisia where possible. Our access to decision-makers on trade and investment issues was generally good. Overall UK presence in the market was relatively low (UK exports to Tunisia totalled £202 million in 2010, approximately 1% of Tunisian imports), but the UK was prominent in the energy sector, where we were (and continue to be) the market leader. There was significant appetite for English language co-operation and the British Council were supporting a comprehensive overhaul of English teaching in all Tunisian secondary schools with a view to influencing the coming generation and opening up the country to wider UK influence. We were able to maintain this activity without compromising our approach to contact with opposition figures in Tunisia. Policy was not therefore dominated by concerns over regional stability or counter-terrorism.

41. We, like others, did not predict the fall of Ben Ali. Nor did the opposition leaders we spoke to or our wide range of youth contacts, including people who, in the event, took an active part in the revolution. In the Tunisian case, even as the days passed in December and January, the objectives of the protesters changed very quickly, from expressing frustration at economic hardships, to voicing anger at the actions of the security authorities, to demanding the end of corruption, to calling for the departure of Ben Ali.
42. In any regime where people are not free to express their concerns or opposition to the policies of their governments, there is a risk of frustrations bursting out suddenly and with potentially dramatic consequences. No amount of intelligence effort or further consultation with oppositionists or youth groups could have forewarned us or others of the actual outcome. It has always been our view that countries who do not allow free expression are potentially vulnerable in this way and are therefore fundamentally less stable than democracies. The events of the Arab spring have vividly proven this to be true.

Policy in Egypt

43. The UK’s relationship with Egypt has been central to a number of our foreign policy goals. Egypt has been a key partner on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), Sudan and Iran and in working towards establishing a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. As the most populous country in the Arab world, housing a significant proportion of the pan-Arab media and hosting a leading religious authority at Al Azhar, Egypt has acted as a powerful counterweight to radical forces in the region and has been a valuable partner in countering extremism. The UK has significant commercial interests in Egypt. We continue to be the largest foreign direct investor, with over $20 billion invested. Almost 1.5 million British tourists visited Egypt in 2010.

44. In contrast to Tunisia, internal tensions had been visible in Egypt for some time and there were a number of events during 2010, which brought them into sharp focus. These included:

— The return of Mohamed El Baradei to Egypt in February 2010, with his call for greater democracy and respect for human rights.
— The illness of President Mubarak during March 2010, which increased the focus on a possible successor, with intense debate about the possible succession of Gamal Mubarak.
— The death of Khaled Said in the hands of the Egyptian police on 6 June 2010 and subsequent public outrage against such abuses (the UK led the EU response in drafting and issuing a local EU statement expressing concern over the circumstances of Khaled Said’s death and the outcome of the second autopsy).
— Parliamentary elections in November 2010, which resulted in a significantly less representative Parliament, which in turn would have had important ramifications for the Presidential elections expected in November 2011.

45. The growing size of the subsidy bill and skills gap also indicated a need for fundamental economic and educational reform to address the demands of the population. Prior to events in Tunisia, it was unclear how a challenge to the regime might manifest itself and it seemed most likely that the handover of power from President Mubarak to a possible successor would be the focus of popular opposition. But there was no doubt growing internal dissatisfaction with the Egyptian regime carried strong risks.

46. We judged that the absence of a strong secular opposition, limited political space and repression of dissent carried short and long-term risks to our policy in Egypt. The high likelihood of instability had implications for British business and carried a risk that Egypt would follow a more populist foreign policy, particularly in relation to Israel, as a way of distracting attention from internal concerns. Continued repression also carried risks for radicalisation. Reform in Egypt would support regional stability and British interests.

47. In light of the growing risks, we took action to:

— Widen our range of contacts and deepen our relationships in a way that would allow an improved understanding of the challenges facing Egypt.
— Increase dialogue on succession issues. The Foreign Secretary visited Egypt on 4–5 November 2010. During his meeting with Gamal Mubarak, he stressed the importance of a strong secular opposition in ensuring stability, sustainable growth and a modern, outward looking economy.
— Broaden our efforts to deliver what the Egyptians wanted in a number of fields, including in education and skills for employability, economic reform and service delivery, civil service reform, and trade and investment. These were important drivers of unrest and were also important in developing a greater level of trust, which was needed if Egypt was to accept our support in addressing more politically sensitive human rights issues.

48. The November 2010 elections were an obvious trigger point for internal unrest. In advance of the elections, we supported, with EU partners, the development of civil society capacity to participate in and monitor elections. We also pressed the Egyptian authorities to ensure elections were free and fair and to allow international observers. When the ruling National Democratic Party took over 90% of the seats, we raised concerns about the credibility of the results with our Egyptian interlocutors and stressed the importance of Presidential elections due to be held in 2011 being transparent, free and fair.

49. We also worked to ensure that the EU’s relationship with Egypt encouraged reform, strongly supporting the EU’s position that the EU-Egypt Action Plan must be implemented before “Advanced Status” could be considered in the face of opposition from many EU States. We regularly stressed the importance of lifting the State of Emergency and had offered technical support to develop a new counter-terrorism law to enable this to happen more rapidly. We also raised concerns about sectarian tensions and freedom of religion.
Social media and digital communications

50. Internet penetration and the uptake of social media in MENA was growing at an astounding rate prior to the Arab Spring. Across the region, internet penetration grew 2,400% between 2000 and 2010, increasing access to the web in communities beyond the educated, English-speaking elite. This was six times more than the average for the rest of the world. The growth of social media in the last two years was an even more striking phenomenon with young, tech savvy groups using it to exchange information, chat and organise themselves. Egypt was a particular centre for regional blogging.

51. The FCO was well aware of the phenomenon and had responded with a strategic communications programme launched in June 2009, known internally as “Partners for Progress” (P4P) and with a five year timeline. Yearly objectives and the identification of target audiences are devolved to posts and tied to Country Business Plans. However, the overarching campaign objectives are:
   — To increase awareness, understanding and positive recognition of UK policies in the region.
   — To be seen as a partner of choice for business, education, sport and government relations.
   — To improve trust and positive perception of UK.

52. By the end of 2010, the leaders of the Middle East communications team had achieved unprecedented reach and impact—founded on training and mentoring a network of 30 regional press officers in strategic communications. The result was a trebling of outputs in terms of interviews, articles and creative public diplomacy projects, backed by astute media handling. The legacies of Iraq and Afghanistan have not undermined UK objectives. Instead our intentions have been underpinned by a compelling narrative and proactive stance. Attempts by Qadhafi to characterise UK action as a grab for oil and by the Syrian regime to label it colonialism have found no purchase in once fertile ground.

53. By the time the Arab Spring arrived, every post had an English and Arabic website and a Facebook site with several thousand fans. Some, including in Egypt and Tunisia, had twitter accounts with strong followings. Five Ambassadors were writing blogs, of which HMA Cairo's was most successful in being picked up by a wide range of traditional and digital media outlets (among other plaudits he was nominated as one of Islam Online's Stars of 2009). These digital tools proved essential in getting out the UK’s political message during and after the crisis. They were also invaluable for our consular assistance to British Nationals. Traffic to the “UK in Tunisia” and “UK in Egypt” pages increased by several hundred percent during the crisis.

54. Staff had been trained in social media monitoring for political insight and in November 2010 all MENA posts had been commissioned to report formally on the development of their local digital landscapes. These investigations did not pick up any indication of what was about to happen, but nevertheless our ground work proved to be prescient. In July 2011, Clinton’s Advisor for Innovation Ben Scott described how “when the Arab Spring broke, and the role of social media came into focus, we had to pedal very hard just to get close to where the Brits were”.

Language skills and regional expertise

55. In November 2010, MENAD launched its “MENA Cadre” initiative. This was part of the Diplomatic Excellence initiative which the FCO launched to achieve the Foreign Secretary’s vision of a distinctive British Foreign Policy.

56. As MENA Director, Dr Christian Turner, outlined in his June 2011 letter to the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Cadre initiative’s principal objective is to ensure that the FCO has the right linguistic and geographic expertise to operate in the MENA region in years to come. Its activities are organised under three strands: building expertise and knowledge, strategic workforce planning to ensure that we have the right and geographic expertise to operate in the MENA region in years to come. Its activities are organised under three strands: building expertise and knowledge, strategic workforce planning to ensure that we have the right officers for the right jobs, and promoting and building a community of MENA experts within the FCO.

57. A key part of the initiative is a renewed effort on language skills, which the Foreign Secretary has prioritised. We have therefore:
   — restored the length of initial full time Arabic training to 18 months and are working with external experts to improve the content and rigour of the Arabic programme;
   — provided more opportunities and encouragement to staff in London to learn and maintain foreign languages, with weekly conversation classes for existing Arabic speakers, a 12-month beginners Arabic class (to which over 60 FCO staff have subscribed), and French classes, and
   — reclassified approximately 20 existing jobs at MENA posts overseas as speaker slots, as part of a wider FCO uplift in speaker slots. Once trained staff are in place, this will represent an approximate 40% increase in Arabic speaker capacity in the network compared to 2010 levels; there are now approximately 70 speaker slots in the overseas MENA network (compared to a total of approximately 155 UK-based staff). In MENAD in London, we have over 30 officers who speak Arabic, Farsi or French to operational standard (about a quarter of the Directorate).

58. The transfer of the MENA Research Group from Research Analysts Department to MENAD in July 2010 further strengthened the quality of our policy advice. Research Analysts are an integral part of the policy-making process, with their all-source analysis, historical perspective and contacts with external expertise
informing—and at times challenging—risk analysis, scenario planning and policy formulation. MENAD has also worked closely with the FCO’s Legal Advisers to ensure that policy-making is fully informed by the international and domestic legal framework.

59. MENA Research Group regularly hosts in-house seminars and roundtables with visiting scholars, the heads of academic and think-tank programmes, and retired Diplomatic Service staff. These expert inputs proved particularly useful during the “Arab Spring”, as not only Whitehall policy-makers but also the wider expert world were obliged to change their assumptions about politics in the MENA region. For example, in February FCO Minister Alistair Burt hosted a roundtable with a small group of academic experts to discuss the change in Tunisia and Egypt; in June, MENA Directorate hosted the latest of a series of biannual discussions with heads of Middle East programmes in UK universities and think tanks; and at the end of June, the FCO hosted a panel discussion on “the Arab Spring as viewed from the Foreign Office” at the annual conference of the British Society for Middle East Studies in Exeter. Throughout the “Arab Spring”, MENA Research Group has also produced a monthly digest of the best external analysis of developments in the region.

60. The MENA Cadre initiative also extends to consolidating the regional expertise of FCO policy officers. This year, MENA Research Group has been running heavily subscribed seminars on MENA history and politics for staff across the FCO. In the second half of FY 2011/12, several of our Embassies and MENAD teams in London will run teach-ins on various aspects of MENA politics and society, drawing on the Expertise Fund.

SECTION 3: POLITICAL RESPONSE TO THE ARAB SPRING

UK policy in the MENA region

61. In his speech to the National Assembly in Kuwait on 22 February 2011, the Prime Minister set out the parameters of the UK’s Arab Partnership approach to the Arab Spring—an approach based on upholding universal values, rights and freedoms, with respect for the different cultures, histories and traditions of the countries in the region.

62. As outlined in the FCO’s 2010 Human Rights and Democracy report, prior to the Arab Spring, the Government had raised concerns at violations of fundamental human rights principles in Iran, Iraq, Israel and the OPTs, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.

63. However, in his speech the Prime Minister acknowledged that in the past, the UK may not have always been consistent in this approach. He noted that it was clear that the tension between promoting the UK’s interests and values now presented “a false choice”.

64. The Arab Spring has dramatically borne this out, demonstrating that our interests are best served by maintaining consistency in this approach. This does not mean that our policy response should be the same in each country—each country is different and our response varies accordingly. However, we should remain consistent in our approach that political and economic reform—not repression—is the only guarantor of security and prosperity in the MENA region. That is why in Libya we acted swiftly to prevent the massacre of citizens there. In Bahrain, following the unrest, the government entered into a dialogue with opposition parties, the King announced the end of the state of emergency in June and proposed reforms. We condemned the violence and are strongly urging Bahrain’s leaders to see through credible and meaningful reforms, and end ongoing human rights abuses. An Independent Commission of Inquiry has been set up to do this. It is expected to report in October and we look forward to seeing its findings. And in Syria, the EU has adopted additional sanctions on those responsible for, or associated with, the unacceptable and brutal repression.

65. The Arab Spring is still unfolding, and its full implications will not be known for many years. However, in reappraising our policy approach towards the region there are already certain Arab Partnership principles and lessons we are adopting:

— These are Arab revolutions. It is not for us to dictate the pace or nature of change—the Arab Spring has been led by people of the region.

— The Arab Spring has shown that demands for political and economic freedom will spread more widely and by themselves, not because western nations advocate these things, but because they are the natural aspirations of all people everywhere. Respect for human rights and dignity, including freedom of expression and equality of women, are universal values that must underlie all political systems—there are no justified exceptions.

— This does not mean one form of democracy fits all. Each country is different and has the right to develop its own political model.

— However there is an important role for the UK to play: to be clear about our values (including when election results do not favour our immediate interests) and support reformers in the region.

— We should ensure that there are sufficient resources to support political and economic reform opportunities in the MENA region.

— And develop a joined-up approach across HMG in our response to the Arab Spring. We are working to ensure a consistent narrative in our approach to the Arab Spring.
— Work with a range of regional and international partners, including governments, civil society, the media, judiciary, youth organisations, political parties and parliaments to promote and support inclusive political and economic development.

Response to events in Tunisia

66. Demonstrations in Tunisia began during December 2010 and reached a level unprecedented during Ben Ali’s rule in early January. Initial UK interventions were focused on respect for human rights, stressing the need to allow demonstrations to proceed and to avoid repression. Ministers publically urged the Ben Ali government to respect the rights of the demonstrators. The Tunisian Ambassador was called in to see Director MENAD, and we joined EU partners in making a number of interventions in Tunis, including a meeting with the Foreign Minister. There was some evidence as protests continued that Ben Ali understood that fundamental political change was required. The reform package he offered on 14 January made immediate commitments on human rights and on a democratic transition by 2014. But the offer was too little, too late.

67. Following the establishment of an initial national unity government, we made early contact at a senior level to encourage the development of a broad-based government, which would involve Tunisians from across the political spectrum in the transition process and establish a clear plan for moving the country towards free and fair elections. The Foreign Secretary was the first foreign minister to visit Tunisia after the interim government was established. The swiftness of this response has been widely recognised in Tunisia as putting the UK at the forefront of those supporting the transition. As protests about the composition of the government continued we continued to emphasise core principles, stressing that we believed the government should be broad-based and inclusive, but its composition was a matter for the Tunisian people to decide.

68. We also took action to ensure the international community offered the right assistance, both to build political capacity and expertise in Tunisia and to ensure that the economy remained stable. We lobbied hard within the EU to ensure a rapid decision on freezing of assets belonging to Ben Ali and his family and an EU package of support. And we worked closely with the IFIs on a package of economic support.

69. A more detailed account of events and HMG activity in Tunisia is at Annex A.

The Transition Period

70. The interim government in Tunisia has made steady progress towards a transition to democracy. Although there have been a number of strikes and regular protests during the transitional period, there has been a relatively high degree of consensus on the overall handling of the transition. A wide range of interest groups have been represented on the “High Authority for Achievement of the Objectives of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition”, which functions as a pseudo-Parliament. The interim government itself has been made up of technocrats, a range of civil society and opposition figures. Members of the government are required to resign if they wish to stand in the elections. We have developed good contacts with key ministers in the transition government including the prime minister. The authorities have been open to international assistance, while avoiding making commitments that extend beyond the elections in October.

71. The delay in the election date to 23 October, taken in consultation with political parties, has given more time for preparation. Although only 55% of those eligible to vote had registered by the deadline on 14 August (there is an extended deadline for those who became eligible after 14 August), people will be able to vote with ID cards which identify them as living in their home constituency or with passports if resident abroad. Women represent 45% of registered voters.

72. Over 100 political parties have now registered to participate and there are signs of coalitions forming among party groups. We have developed contacts with the most prominent parties while adhering strictly to our policy of non-interference. The ambitious requirement for gender parity in candidate nominations is a strong indication of Tunisia’s commitment to ensuring women’s views are reflected in the political process. It is expected to lead to a level of female representation in the Constituent Assembly which is unprecedented in any MENA country.

73. Managing the impact of the unrest in Libya has been a major challenge. Both the humanitarian effort and the increased need for border security measures have placed a strain on the Tunisian authorities over and above the transition itself. The return of the Tunisian diaspora from Libya and sharp fall in cross border trade has also had a major economic impact. Continued support from the international community is essential to ease the pressure.

Risks to the Transition

74. It looks increasingly likely that elections will go ahead on time. However, there remains a risk that elections will be seen as flawed, leading to a return to the streets. Key risks following the elections include:

— potential difficulty in forming a new coalition government. The transitional government has made clear that it does not expect to continue in power beyond October, but coalition negotiations are new for Tunisia and may take time, and
Response to events in Egypt

76. When demonstrations demanding the end of Mubarak’s rule in Egypt began on 25 January, it was already clear that stability in Egypt required a process of political change (see paras 45–47). Our assessment was that Mubarak did not intend to step down immediately. But we believed that what was required was an orderly transition to a more democratic system, through creation of a broad-based government including opposition figures. It was also essential in the short-term to avoid violent repression (more than 500 demonstrators had been arrested in the first two days of demonstrations) and lift restrictions on freedom of expression.

77. There was sustained UK engagement with all our Egyptian interlocutors on these points, as well as with key figures in the international community. In addition to lobbying by embassy staff and senior officials in London, this included at least 20 contacts by Cabinet Ministers in a three week period. Again, there was some change in the position of the Egyptian government, which announced a dialogue with opposition groups on 2 February, but this was not sufficient to assuage the demands of protestors.

78. Following Mubarak’s resignation, decision-making power passed to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The SCAF made a number of commitments, including to transfer power to a new civilian and democratically elected government and to uphold international and regional treaty obligations, including with Israel. Our view of what was required in Egypt was similar to our position in Tunisia: the Egyptian authorities needed to put in place a clear programme for moving the country towards elections and engage with the opposition and activists as part of that process. We supported work in the EU on asset freezing, including by freezing more than £40 million of assets in the UK. We met a range of Egyptian figures to discuss the economic situation and worked with the EU, the US and IFIs to ensure that support was available if requested by Egypt.

The Transition Period

79. There has been less consensus in Egypt than in Tunisia and the transition period has been marked by continued large-scale protests by a range of opposition groups. These have related both to the SCAF’s handling of the transition, for example the timing of elections and the trial of former regime figures, and to the overall vision of the state Egypt should become. There have been continued sectarian tensions between Christians and Muslims as well as strong disagreements between different Muslim groups about what the final constitutional settlement should look like.

80. The FCO’s overarching priority is to see Egypt continue as an effective commercial and political partner of the UK, contributing to peace and stability in the region and representing an example of successful reform. We have continued to press the Egyptian authorities on human rights concerns, for example the continued use of military courts to try civilians, and to stress the dangers of extremism and sectarianism. We have put in place a range of programmes to support the development of the building blocks of democracy and have continued to offer support, although the Egyptian authorities remain cautious about being seen to accept international assistance.

81. A more detailed account of events and HMG activity in Egypt is at Annex B.

Risks to the Transition

82. The political process, leading to Parliamentary elections in November, a Constitution ratified by referendum and Presidential elections, still faces a number of uncertainties including:

— disagreements between the centrists and Islamists over the nature of the Egyptian State as defined in the future Constitution;

— challenges to the authority of the Supreme Military Council which oversees the transition, including over the question of the Army’s role under a future Constitution, and

— potential security and organisational difficulties in holding the elections, with the risk of the results not being accepted as bestowing legitimacy of the future political order.

83. The authorities have declined offers of international support to deliver the elections, due to a strong attachment to national independence and rejection of perceived interference in Egyptian affairs.
84. The Egyptian economy has already suffered from a downturn in activity, caused in part by a fall in tourism revenues and exacerbated by a loss of investor confidence and an outflow of funds, in the wake of the revolution. An extended transition period and a lack of progress in delivering economic benefits could increase popular discontent. Government since the revolution has already made a number of public spending commitments and may be unable to make further concessions in the future. Delays to the implementation of difficult long-term structural reform policies would reduce the government’s ability to rein in public spending and store up problems for the future.

85. Law and order has declined to some extent since the revolution. The police and security forces are being rebuilt and adapted to the new national context in which the rule of law and the rights of citizens are held to be paramount. But challenges remain. An important current security challenge is in North Sinai, where largely local armed elements, some of whom have Islamist agendas, have taken advantage of the drop in security cover since the revolution to assert a degree of control. There are also small groups with jihadist agendas and with links to similar groups in the Gaza Strip. By agreement with Israel, Egypt had already increased by over 2,000 troops its presence in the border zone (governed by the Camp David Accords). However, a serious violent incident took place on 18–19 August when an armed group entered Israel from the Sinai and attacked civilian traffic on the road from Eilat. The group were all killed shortly after by the combined action of Israeli forces and Egyptian border guards. We understand that during this action a number of Egyptian border guards were killed. Prime Minister Netanyahu issued an apology, but there was significant anti-Israeli sentiment. Nevertheless, the Egyptian security authorities made clear their determination to continue security co-operation along the common border with Israel.

86. On 9 September, protestors attacked the Israeli Embassy in Cairo, resulting in Israel evacuating most of its diplomatic staff. The Prime Minister issued a statement condemning the attack on the Embassy, urging the Egyptian authorities to meet their responsibilities under the Vienna Convention to protect diplomatic property and personnel, and encouraging both countries to work together to resolve tensions and enhance regional stability. The Egyptian authorities have re-affirmed Egypt’s commitment to the 1979 Peace Treaty with Israel and the protection of diplomatic missions.

87. It is difficult to predict the direction of Egyptian foreign policy in the medium-term. It seems unlikely to change significantly during the transitional period, although there have been some examples of Egypt taking a more active role in regional affairs. Indications that there might be a thaw in Egypt’s relations with Iran have not yet resulted in the restoration of diplomatic relations. Egypt remains the only Arab country not to have relations with Iran.

Supporting transitions in Egypt and Tunisia through the Arab Partnership Fund

88. To support political transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, this financial year we have allocated from the APPF just under £1 million and £1.05 million respectively. This support is complemented by MENA regional projects covering Egypt and Tunisia to strengthen public voice and anti-corruption efforts (eg BBC Arabic Question Time programming) and substantial support (exact allocations to be determined in October 2011) from the Economic Facility.

89. We are ready to increase these allocations as further opportunities arise to support transitions—as for instance the elections in Egypt. However, on the political side, we believe this approximate level of resources is well pitched—the problem is not a lack of funding but lack of recipient capacity. Also a significant up-lift would risk duplicating existing donor efforts (eg USAID have spent $250 million p.a. on Economic Governance for at least 10 years, and have shifted significant funding to their Egyptian Government and Democracy Fund) and exacerbate existing tensions about international interference.

90. In both Egypt and Tunisia, our bilateral programmes work with a diverse range of actors including government, political parties, parliament, the judiciary, media and civil society. We are delivering through both strategic HMG partners including BBC World Service Trust (BBC WST) and the British Council, and local partners. We are working with BBC-WST in Egypt and Tunisia to provide technical expertise for state-broadcasters’ reform programmes, and in partnership with BBC Arabic, to develop media programming enabling open, constructive political and social dialogue. We are also working with the British Council in Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco and Algeria on a range of projects drawing on their wide local networks and expertise in areas such as the promotion of youth employability through vocational training (including English for employability), and youth engagement in political debate.

91. In Egypt, to date the Arab Partnership is providing just under £1 million of targeted bilateral support for the political transition. This is likely to be complemented with another £400,000 of support to be finalised in the next month, including for BBC-WST to provide advice and technical assistance on reform of the Egyptian state broadcaster, and additional assistance in the run-up to elections.

Individual projects from the Arab Partnership Participation Fund include:
Political Participation and public voice:

— Support for Westminster Foundation for Democracy work to strengthen parliamentary and party systems (£158,000). Post-elections, WFD will focus on party-to-party training and mentoring to strengthen governance structures in Egyptian political parties, including youth and women representation.

— A project led by Global Partners to develop consensus among political parties on the role of parliament as an oversight body, and to provide advice and support on parliamentary reform post-elections (£123,000).

— A series of workshops and round-tables led by Chatham House to facilitate inclusive political debates on critical transition issues (£135,000). The most recent event, in late June, included a discussion with representatives of the major political parties on democratic transitions and a workshop for media representatives on the role of the media, particularly during elections. The next event, scheduled for late September, is on economic policy, and will involve government figures as well as political parties and civil society.

Rule of law, anti-corruption:

— Two projects—one led by the OECD and the other by Global Partners—working with government and civil society to improve access to information and increase transparency (value £176,000 and £106,000 respectively).

— A pilot project led by an Egyptian NGO (Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights), in co-operation with the Interior Ministry, to establish human rights units in places of detention (£50,000).

Youth employability:

— A project to establish a Centre of Excellence for English language teaching, led by British Council (£150,000 in 2011/12).

92. Our support for the political transition in Egypt will be complemented by support through the Arab Partnership Economic Facility (APEF). The APEF will focus in the transitional period on what can be done to lay the ground work for future economic reforms once elections have taken place and a new government formed. We will continue to closely monitor the economic risks and outlook and other donors’ assistance to ensure APEF funding is well targeted and does not duplicate efforts.

93. An APEF scoping team visited Cairo in July and identified a number of areas for further exploration. These include:

— Public financial management—the Ministry of Finance has made a direct request for support on PFM. Without critical and timely information, Egypt will continue to struggle to manage its finances. PFM is an area where DFID has expertise. We will follow up this request with DFID, drawing on their expertise. The Ministry has also requested assistance on its communications work. We will follow up with HMT drawing on their experience in this area. Building on this transparency agenda, we will also consider how the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative could be positioned so that following parliamentary elections, it is on the new Government’s agenda.

— Small and medium-sized enterprise development—the Egyptian authorities have requested DFID assistance to build the capacity of business development service providers and to increase SME access to finance. We are also discussing with the World Bank their plans to provide technical assistance on expanding access to finance.

— Research and advocacy—we will look at opportunities to support national researchers and practitioners to identify and disseminate solutions to key national socio-economic problems and to use the findings to inform policy formulation and programme implementation.

94. An uplift in human resources in Cairo is supporting the implementation of the UK’s Transition Strategy for Egypt, including through managing the Arab Partnership programme.

95. We have also increased resources at the Embassy in Tunis to implement a range of projects supporting the transition there.

96. Through the Human Rights and Democracy Fund we provided rapid expert support in March to the Tunisian electoral preparations. The AP programme in Tunisia provides technical assistance to the government, media and civil society in the run-up to elections, enhancing the space for—and quality of—political participation and public voice, and promoting greater transparency and accountability. We are also providing micro-credit support for vulnerable returnees from Libya—here our contribution of under £150,000 has unlocked other donor funding over £1 million. The AP Participation Fund is supporting 11 projects in Tunisia worth £1.1 million, including:
Political participation and public voice:

— Voter outreach and education ahead of elections, focusing on women and youth in rural areas, led by Electoral Reform International Services (£133,000—unlocking a matching amount from the Belgian government).

— Support for the development of a media code of conduct to ensure balanced and accurate election coverage, led by the Thompson Foundation (£20,000).

— An Article 19 project to strengthen legislative protection for freedom of expression in the constitution and national laws (£152,000).

— Westminster Foundation for Democracy work to support nascent political parties and parliamentary structures (£145,000)—delivered in the post-election phase through party to party training, and working with selected committees in the Constituent Assembly to strengthen their capacity for evidence-based, inclusive debate.

— Cooperation with a local research organisation to develop national polling capacity (providing an evidence base for policy development) (£30,000). Our contribution is helping unlock US funding equivalent to £95,000.

— A BBC World Service Trust project to provide technical assistance and advice to restructure and reform the Tunisian state broadcaster (Tunisian TV) (£147,000).

Rule of law and anti-corruption:

— Work by the OECD to strengthen the government’s corruption prevention capacities, working with the newly formed National Anti-Corruption Commission (£86,000).

— Technical assistance from the International Centre for Transitional Justice to develop greater accountability and transparency in the security and justice sector through piloting new vetting procedures for staff (£90,000).

97. Tunisia is also a priority country for early support from the AP Economic Facility. Following a mission to Tunis in June, we are exploring a number of proposals for immediate assistance.

98. We are considering proposals with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to:

— Boost entrepreneurship—to provide seed funding to support and mentor innovative young entrepreneurs and non-profit civil society organizations, as well as creating a platform for knowledge sharing.

— Improve public financial management—the Tunisian authorities have requested assistance to strengthen the quality and performance of the public procurement system. In spite of the progress made with the national procurement system so far, significant and important weaknesses still persist that affect the principles of efficiency and transparency.

99. In addition to country specific activities, we are also discussing with the Multilateral Development Banks a number of multi-country proposals. These include discussions with the EBRD on the geographic expansion of the operations to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and with the IBRD on their Arab World Initiative for Food Security. In addition to the AfDB, we will also explore opportunities to work with other regional institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank.

100. The Arab Partnership has also approved two projects covering both Egypt and Tunisia: to tackle corruption in both countries (£83,000); and a British Council project to engage government, the private sector and education providers in developing a strategy for improving youth employability (£97,000).

101. Additionally, Egypt and Tunisia are central to several multi-country projects aimed at strengthening public voice and encouraging a culture of debate. These include a joint Anna Lindh Foundation/British Council project to encourage debate and exchange among young people in the region (£190,000 in 2011/12); the Cairo and Tunis debates programme, based on Tim Sebastian’s popular Doha Debates series (joint funded with the Swedish Development Agency—UK contribution around £350,000); and a BBC Arabic version of Question Time (£700,000).

Supporting transitional countries through a multilateral approach: EU and G8

G8 Action

102. We are working through the G8 to coordinate a comprehensive international response to the Arab Spring. The “Deauville Partnership,” which was announced at the G8 summit on 27 May will support and encourage MENA countries to put in place economic and social reforms, and act as an umbrella for reform-related assistance in the MENA region by G8 Partners. The Partnership has two pillars: an economic framework (run by Finance Ministers) to promote sustainable, inclusive growth; and a political process (run by Foreign Ministers) to support democratic transition and foster governance reforms.
103. On the Finance Minister’s track, the Deauville Partnership highlighted over $20 billion of available support for Egypt and Tunisia from the multilateral development banks, including the European Investment Bank, as well as willingness on the part of other G8 countries to raise their bilateral aid. Under the Finance Ministers’ process, the Deauville Partners (Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco) are drawing up economic reform plans which will showcase how they are going to support their transitions with sound economic policies and prioritise the areas where they are seeking assistance. This will allow the IFIs and other donors to coordinate their activity making the international response more coherent and effective. The Finance Ministers will also lead on supporting greater trade integration, both within the MENA region, and between the MENA region and other markets.

104. The Foreign Ministers’ track supports the Deauville Partners to put in place the building blocks of democracy, by encouraging governance reforms, in particular: strengthening of the rule of law, the fight against corruption and the public voice; supporting civil society; developing education and vocational training and providing political support for the Finance Ministers’ efforts on trade.

105. The Deauville Partnership was targeted initially at Egypt and Tunisia (who met G8 leaders at Deauville) but is open to other MENA countries willing to move towards more open and inclusive societies. The UK pushed strongly for this more open approach arguing that Deauville should recognise those MENA countries who are undertaking reform efforts without undergoing the upheaval of regime-change. As a result, Morocco and Jordan are now also included as Deauville Partners.

**EU Action**

106. The EU responded quickly to events in the Southern Mediterranean. On 8 March the European Commission and the High Representative issued a joint Communication “A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean”. This clearly stated the EU’s support for the popular call for change, and for more democratic and open societies. This Communication outlined an incentive-based approach (“more for more”) to assist political, economic and social reforms in the countries of the region.

107. The Joint Communication on the year-long review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) “A new Response to a Changing Neighbourhood” adopted on 25 May provided additional direction on the EU response. The review presented an ambitious offer to the EU’s reforming neighbours: a new partnership with the EU based on greater economic integration, trade and increased funding for the Southern Neighbourhood. It makes a clear link between levels of EU support and progress on political and economic reform. We were broadly happy with the review since the UK, in concert with like-minded Partners such as the Germans, had argued strongly for the EU to make a bold and ambitious offer to the southern neighbours, especially on trade, coupled with clearer conditionality. The ENP review was endorsed at the June European Council.

108. The Commission services and the EEAS have moved ahead with the preparatory work on implementation of the ENP review, specifically:

(a) **Screening and refocusing of ongoing EU aid programmes in the Southern Mediterranean countries**

109. The Commission services and the EEAS conducted a screening and refocusing of National Indicative Programmes 2011–13 and Annual Action Plans 2011 with partner Governments with the aim of strengthening areas such as governance, employment and youth. A major package of financing proposals, totalling over €600 million, received a favourable opinion from the Member States on 12 July. Following Commission Decisions, Financing Agreements should be signed with partner countries in the early autumn. A further package of measures, with a combined budget of €125 million, has been prepared. This constant screening and adjustment will continue. Specifically on Egypt and Tunisia:

- **Tunisia**: the EU has allocated €50 million of additional funds to a new programme for impoverished areas (€20 million) and to beef up an existing programme of reform support through the budget to re-launch the economy (total budget now €90 million).
- **Egypt**: the EU has replaced two planned programmes for de-mining and “family empowerment” with one for SME development in rural areas (€22 million).
- **Support to Tunisia and Egypt through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and Non-state Actors (NSA) programmes has been strengthened.**

(b) **Provision of additional funds for Southern Mediterranean Countries**

In Cairo on 14 July, the President of the European Commission announced the new SPRING (Support for Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth) umbrella programme. In this framework, additional funds will, pending agreement of the budgetary authority be made available (€343 million for 2011/12 combined) on a more for more basis to those countries showing progress in reforms. Additional funds will be focused on democratisation and institution building as well as on inclusive growth.

(c) **Increase in participation of the young from Southern Mediterranean Countries in Youth Exchange Programmes**

In 2011, the EU will provide an additional €20 million for Erasmus Mundus so as to allow for increased participation of students from Southern Mediterranean and Eastern European Countries. Preparations are under
way to ensure that this could allow up to 750 student scholarships in the 2011–12 academic year. In addition, £29 million has been earmarked for a Youth in Action programme for 2012.

(d) The new approach on partnership for migration, mobility and security

Following endorsement by the European Council of the European Commission’s proposals on mobility, the Commission has launched exploratory technical talks with Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia, with the possibility of this being extended to other countries, such as Jordan. It is hoped that an agreement on the content of proposed mobility partnerships can be reached and signed by Commission, Member States and the partner countries by the end of 2011 in the case of Morocco and mid-2012 in the case of Egypt and Tunisia.

(e) Enhancing trade and investment with Southern Mediterranean neighbours

Following the European Council’s endorsement, the European Commission has reviewed on-going negotiations with a view to accelerate them, and is preparing negotiating mandates for the negotiation of deep and comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with Morocco, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia so as to submit them to Member States after the summer.

(f) Enhanced political dialogue

At the suggestion of the High Representative, the Council has appointed a Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Mediterranean. The main role of the EUSR is to enhance the EU’s political dialogue, contributing to the partnership and broader relationship with the countries of the Southern Mediterranean region.

(g) Increase in European Investment Bank (EIB) lending to the region by an additional EUR 1 billion

The Council agreed on 18 July that the ceiling for EIB operations for Mediterranean countries undertaking political reform should be increased by €1 billion. This should be implemented by November this year.

Policy towards Islamist movements

110. Popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in the region were the result of a diverse range of citizens demanding a better political and economic deal. They were not instigated by Islamist groups and did not target Islamist goals. However, groups from across the political spectrum have sought to use the events to increase their public presence and advance their agenda. This is most apparent in Tunisia and Egypt where the former governments’ ability to manage and manipulate society was disrupted. Among these newly activist groups are some we feel less comfortable with, including some Islamist political parties and extremist groups and individuals. It is important to make clear that these are widely diverse actors and not necessarily linked.

111. It is also important to underline that these manifestations are not particularly new. For many years, the MENA region has seen a diverse range of Islamist political parties. Some participate in parliamentary politics, as in Kuwait; others are banned, as in the Tunisian Ennahada party prior to the fall of Ben Ali. Others occupy a more ambiguous position, as for example was the case for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood prior to the fall of Mubarak. Some are involved in violence, as in the case of Hizballah in Lebanon.

112. While these are not new phenomena, the “Arab Spring” has changed the dynamics. With the fall of Ben Ali and Mubarak, Islamist political parties are working to advance their political message. These parties can now operate legally, some exiled leaders have returned, and it is likely that some will make gains in elections. However, these parties are also having to adapt to the new environment, there are frequently tensions between the leadership and younger members and they have yet to demonstrate to the electorate that they can deliver through public office.

113. Islamist parties can be expected to play an important political role in Egypt, Tunisia and other transition countries and may well participate in government. FCO policy has been to engage with Islamist groups which are committed to the democratic process, operate within the law of their country, reject violence as a means of achieving political change and agree to respect international agreements. We will interact with such parties in government if that it is the will of the people. It is wrong to assume that such parties will always be hostile to UK interests. In Turkey, for example, we have developed a successful partnership with a government which has Islamist roots. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that a failure to support reform on the basis that it may lead to governments less well disposed towards the UK will only exacerbate existing problems in the region and damage our long-term interests.

Extremism

114. Separate to the activity of Islamist political parties, the MENA region has seen other trends in recent years that contribute to extremism:

— A growth in Salafism, a train of thought within Sunni Islam which aspires to return to the purity of early Islam (from “salaf” meaning predecessors). Whilst Salafism should not be equated with extremism, the extremely orthodox interpretation lends itself to extremist ideologies.
— Increased Sunni-Shi’a tensions in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula.
— Sectarianism in the Levant.
— Al-Qa’ida continuing to present a threat in and from the region, but failing to broaden its support.
115. In many countries, the “Arab Spring” has made the local environment more permissive for extremist preachers and groups who harass their fellow citizens. For example, in Egypt, the security situation in the North Sinai has allowed local armed groups to assert a degree of control (see para 85). In the Arabian Peninsula, Sunni-Shia tensions have been aggravated by events in Bahrain. In the Levant, the uprising in Syria has also heightened sectarian tension; the Syrian government has mobilised loyalist gangs and is stoking minority fears of a Sunni uprising. The “Arab Spring” presents a fundamental challenge to Al-Qa’ida’s narrative that violence is necessary to achieve political change. However it is possible that in the short term at least, some local counter-terrorism capabilities have been distracted by unrest, and conflict in Yemen and the Maghreb might yet revive Al-Qa’ida’s fortunes.

116. It remains to be seen whether Islamist political parties will present a challenge to the development of democratic states and improved human rights (including of women and minorities), and if extremist groups will also gain a wider following. Much will depend on whether political reform in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere leads to more inclusive, transparent, accountable and effective institutions. Citizen confidence in the political process, political parties being held to account for what they deliver, growing economic opportunity and serious measures to tackle corruption will all help to counter the extremist narrative. In the wider region, political progress in Libya, Bahrain and Syria in particular would reduce the likelihood of further polarisation. And it remains necessary to continue to work for progress on the Middle East Peace Process.

Islamism in Tunisia

117. The leading Tunisian Islamist movement, Ennahda, was founded during the 1980s in response to the secularist policies of President Bourguiba. It was later banned by President Ben Ali after it won 17% of the vote in parliamentary elections in 1989. In the subsequent crack-down on political Islam in Tunisia, the co-founder and head of the party, Rachid Ghannouchi, was tried and convicted in absentia on two counts of carrying out terrorist activities. The judicial proceedings were widely condemned as unfair and Ghannouchi was subsequently granted asylum in the UK in 1993. By January 2011, there had been no visible presence of the party in Tunisia for 20 years. The presence of Rachid Ghannouchi in the UK was also a major factor affecting our relations with Tunisia. FCO officials had had no recent contact with the movement.

118. The interim government’s decision at the end of January to implement an amnesty for political exiles saw Ghannouchi’s return to Tunisia and the Ennahda party was legalised on 1 March. Although there are other Islamist groups in post-revolution Tunisia, including Hizb Ettahrir and a number of smaller and more extreme groups, Ennahda is unique in gaining legal status as a political party. The party is well-organised and present across Tunisia with a large number of activists and significant financial means. Party leaders have made clear their support for the democratic process and willingness to accept its restrictions, including the requirement for gender parity in candidate nominations.

119. There are accusations that Ennahda’s statements to international and domestic audiences are not always consistent and that their policy is presented differently to the Tunisian media than it is in the mosques. For example, it is alleged that Ennahda members have told more religiously conservative voters that “Islam is a package and you have to take the whole package”. We assess that, despite the ambiguity over the exact programme the party intends to follow, Ennahda’s commitment to the democratic process and rejection of violence is sincere. We have therefore met Ennahda representatives at official level in London and Tunisia. We have not ruled out Ministerial contact. However, given the very high number of parties established since the revolution (more than 100), we have undertaken all contact at official level to avoid being seen to favour any one group.

Islamism in Egypt

120. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is the most prominent of the Islamist groupings. It has existed as a social force in Egypt since the 1920s. Under the Mubarak regime, it was officially banned and subject to widespread harassment and arrests from the security services, although individuals competed in Parliamentary elections. Since the fall of Mubarak it has had more political space to develop its social justice narrative and as domestic and international donations roll in, it has opened new, expensive headquarters and strengthened its already powerful grassroots base across the country.

121. Prior to the revolution, our Embassy in Cairo maintained low-level contacts with “independent” Parliamentarians representing the MB and with some MB officials. This was consistent with our contact with Egyptian Parliamentarians from other parties and was justified on the basis of the MB’s peaceful political engagement and in recognition of their transformation into the largest and most effective opposition group. In the flawed elections in November/December 2010 the MB withdrew their independent candidates from the second round due to allegations of widespread irregularities and called on their sole successful representative to abandon his seat. However, the MB continued to abstain from violence and remained the main opposition force in Egypt, over licensed opposition parties.

122. MB members were not among the initial activists who sparked the revolution, but they quickly became involved as the revolution gathered pace. The MB (eg in statements by Deputy Chairman Rashad al-Bayoumi) made clear that it supported the revolution and called for new elections, the release of all political prisoners and a transitional government that included representatives from all opposition groups. It also indicated that it
did not want the revolution to be portrayed as an Islamic one, that it had not called for violence and would not do so. On 2 February the Egyptian Government announced that it planned to involve the MB in its dialogue with opposition groups and on 4 February, the MB publicly acknowledged it would join this.

123. It was clear that the MB was likely to be influential in political discussions about the progress of the revolution, a view that was reinforced by our discussions with Egyptian secular opposition groups. Given this, we took action to extend the range of our MB contacts at official level to include any members who were likely to become part of the dialogue, providing they were willing to reject violence as a means of achieving political change, support constitutional principles and accept international agreements agreed by the previous regime, including those agreed with Israel. The Foreign Secretary met a member of the Muslim Brotherhood during his visit to Egypt on 2 May.

124. Salafist movements became increasingly visible in Egypt during the summer of 2011. Salafists groups are less coherent than the MB, which has a long history of organised political activity, but we have seen a steady Salafi advance into the political and religious space through speeches, statements and activity in mosques.

125. On 29 July, a range of Salafist organisations, the MB, and the Gamaa Islamiya held a large protest in Cairo and other cities. The messages included calls for an Islamic state, anti-Semitic and anti-US chants, and support for the SCAF. The ability of Salafi movements to mobilise supporters, fund and tightly organise their activity was higher than observers had previously assessed. The display of Salafi strength has changed the dynamics of the relationships between the Salafi groups, the MB, Sufi groups and the secular/liberal parties, which are now re-evaluating their political tactics.

126. The UK has not sought formal contact with Salafist groups in Egypt, given the lack of an overtly political role by the Salafis under Mubarak and the association of some groups with the use of violence to obtain their goals. However, we continue to review appropriate contact with all political players in Egypt.

**Impact of the Arab Spring on regional foreign policy**

127. The Foreign Affairs Committee’s inquiry has an initial focus on events in Egypt and Tunisia, but will also consider the implications for regional security and reform elsewhere in the Arab World. While the full impact of the Arab Spring cannot yet be assessed—we are arguably still at its beginning—it is already clear that it has irrevocably changed political and social landscapes in the Arab world.

128. The following factors can also be highlighted as impacting on countries of the region (albeit at different paces and in different ways):

- **New-found confidence amongst citizens to demand their legitimate rights and freedoms:** an immediate impact of successful revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia was to lift the “fear factor” amongst citizens across the region. Even highly conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia did not wholly escape domestic protests—though they were contained in nature. These demands have been principally articulated as national demands for economic opportunities and political representation rather than appealing to pan-Islamic or pan-Arab values.

- **Increase in subsidies and state benefits across the region:** Alongside announcements of reform, many countries have introduced increased subsidies and citizen benefits in an attempt to quell discontent. For instance, in Oman, in response to calls for change in February/March, as well as ordering a Cabinet reshuffle on 8 March, the Sultan announced a number of reforms, including economic measures, focussing on tackling unemployment, the establishment of 50,000 new jobs for Omanis, and an increase in job seekers’ allowance and the statutory minimum wage. In Egypt, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has announced a 15% increase in wages and pensions for civil servants. Although these changes have offered temporary respite for governments, they are in effect simply storing up economic problems for the future.

- **Increase in brutal repression:** While some countries have responded to citizen demands for change with announcements of political and economic reform, others, including governments in Libya, Syria and Yemen responded with brutal repression (although these governments’ willingness to deploy violent tactics against their citizens was not new).

- **Increased prominence of Gulf states as donors:** Prior to the Arab Spring, wealthy Gulf states were already increasing their profile as active donors in the region. During the Arab Spring, they have pledged substantial amounts of funding for neighbouring countries. This has included Gulf Cooperation Council funds of $20 billion for Oman and Bahrain, at least $1 billion of Saudi funding for Jordan, and promises of $4 billion of emergency Saudi lending for Egypt, and Qatari offers of up to $20 billion to support the Egyptian economy. Some of this funding has not yet been delivered. Nevertheless, Western bilateral and multilateral donors, including the G8 and EU, cannot match Gulf resources—raising questions about how we can effectively apply conditionality to our funding when alternative sources of financial support (with no criteria linked to reform) are available. The rejection by the Egyptian government of the IMF’s offer of a $3 billion stand-by facility is a case in point: the (very limited) conditionality that the IMF attached to that funding stream—requesting more transparency of government funding—was one of the reasons cited for the rejection of the funding.
Arms Export Controls

129. Events in the Middle East and North Africa since December underlined the importance of ensuring that exports of British military equipment continued to be subject to careful scrutiny. The Foreign Secretary told the Foreign Affairs Committee on 16 March that he would commission a review of HMG’s export controls policy to examine our existing strategic export control system and to determine whether improvements could be made, particularly for equipment that might be used for internal repression. The review found no evidence that any of the major naval, air or land-based military platforms misused by governments in the MENA region were supplied from the UK. No substantiated evidence that controlled military goods exported from the UK were used in a manner inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria (the guidance governing strategic export controls). Nevertheless, the review concluded that export controls can and should be strengthened, not only to manage risk more effectively but also to allow HMG to respond in a timelier manner to sudden and unexpected changes. The Foreign Secretary provided an interim report on the review to Parliament on 18 July with a Written Ministerial Statement. The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills has responsibility for our export licensing operations. He and the Foreign Secretary are now looking at proposals to improve certain aspects of our export control procedures. The Foreign Secretary will report more fully to Parliament about these in due course.

Reforming Countries

130. As a result of increased domestic pressure and higher perceived costs of inaction, a number of governments in the region have announced ambitious political reform processes in response to the Arab Spring. Although it is still too early to assess whether declared reform programmes will deliver tangible change, substantial changes have already started to take shape in some countries. We are supporting countries across the region as they implement reforms, both through our bilateral Arab Partnership and through multilateral institutions, including the EU and G8.

131. In Morocco, King Mohammed VI moved quickly to respond to protests, announcing a programme of political reforms. This process resulted in a new constitution approved by referendum on 1 July. The constitution will strengthen the power of Parliament vis-a-vis the King, including by providing for a Prime Minister to be selected from the largest party in Parliament after elections and enshrining the independence of the judiciary. It also contains additional protections for minority rights and human rights institutions.

132. Under the new constitution, the King is described as the “supreme arbiter” of political and institutional life. He will remain as head of the Ministerial Council and retains the power to dismiss Ministers. While the reforms will not immediately lead to a European-style constitutional monarchy, they are nevertheless an important step. The next key date is that of the elections, set for 25 November.

133. In Algeria, President Bouteflika has lifted the 19-year State of Emergency and embarked on a process of political and social reforms. The Consultative Commission on Political Reforms has presented its interim report to the President. The government has also published new draft laws on political parties and associations, elections and information which will be debated by Parliament in its autumn session in 2011.

134. In Jordan, King Abdullah has also responded to the protests announcing reform. The King has publicly stated his willingness to relinquish some of his own authority, notably a move away from his power to appoint Cabinets towards having elected ones. He has also spoken out on corruption, demanding accountability.

135. On 14 July the King announced details of proposed changes to the Constitution, setting out his vision of a reform process based on the principles of a Parliamentary democracy. Once passed by Parliament, this will represent the most significant change to the Constitution since it was introduced in 1952, nevertheless, there has still been criticism from some quarters as the King retains the right to dissolve parliament at will and appoint Prime Ministers.

136. The proposed changes to the Constitution have been submitted to Parliament, and are expected to be approved without significant amendment. In the mean time, the greatest challenges facing Jordan continue to be the economy and allegations of corruption.

The Middle East Peace Process

137. Formal negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have remained stalled throughout the Arab Spring period. However, we assess that the Arab Spring makes the need for a durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict all the more pressing, and the UK has been encouraging both sides to engage to move the peace process forward. The inability of Palestinians to live their lives in a sovereign and democratic state, with the freedom to govern themselves, will jar increasingly with more positive developments in the region, which risks increasing frustration and fostering radicalisation.

138. Whilst the Arab Spring has so far not radically affected the fundamentals of the Middle East Peace Process, the changes in the regional environment have had real implications for Israel and the Palestinians.

139. The revolution in Egypt has lead to a significant reassessment of Israel’s security arrangements. Since the fall of Mubarak, Israel has been concerned specifically about less robust security control in the Sinai region of Egypt, which directly borders Israel, and about the Arab Spring and changing attitudes towards Israel more
generally, As Israel recalibrates the state of its relations with Arab Spring countries, including Egypt, this could have implications for Israel’s defence budget, which in real terms has shrunk from 30% of GDP in 1974 to 7% in 2010.

140. Although some groups in Egypt have called for Egypt to abrogate from its obligations under its peace treaty with Israel, many in Egypt still recognise the value of peace with Israel, not least the economic benefits. The Egyptian economy depends on a number of factors directly or indirectly associated with Israel, among them tourism; export of natural gas; revenue from the Suez Canal; and American economic and military assistance ($1.3 billion a year).

141. Israel would also be very concerned about instability in Jordan, which would require Israel to allocate more resources to its defence along its border. So far protests in Jordan have not focussed on the Israel/Palestine issue but rather domestic and economic grievances. However, with 60% of Jordan’s population of Palestinian origin, the potential for domestic protest to expand to cover these areas exists.

142. Developments in Syria are a cause for concern for Israel, since instability in Syria could cause the Syrian government to divert attention from its domestic crisis through confrontation with Israel. This could include encouraging more protests in the Golan heights (as seen in the Nakba demonstrations in May 2011) and through proxy attacks via Hizballah in Lebanon.

143. Iran remains Israel’s primary security concern, outranking the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel would be particularly concerned about the expansion of the Iranian influence in the region as a consequence of the Arab Spring. A Shia uprising in Bahrain would therefore have indirect ramifications for Israel.

144. The effect of the Arab Spring on internal Palestinian dynamics has been seen most clearly in the Hamas/Fatah reconciliation agreement of May 2011; a recent poll of Palestinians listed unity as the thing that was most important to them. It is likely that the changes in Syria and Egypt encouraged calls by youth movements for change and a unified Palestinian leadership, harnessing social media. However beyond the initial agreement between the two sides, progress has been limited due to significant underlying differences between the two sides.

Iran

145. Iran has responded to the Arab Spring with hypocrisy, attempting to characterise protests in Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain as an “Islamic Awakening” in the mould of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. At the same time, the authorities violently suppressed protests in Iran between February and June and have detained two of Iran’s reformist opposition leaders since February.

146. In addition to the crackdown on its own people that has continued unrelenting since the disputed Presidential elections of 2009, Iran is now providing support to help the Assad regime brutally crush protest in Syria. Iran is clearly unnerved by the potential impact of unrest on its only allied government in the Arab world and fearful of losing its main conduit for support to militant groups in the region, including Hizballah and Hamas. Credible reports show that Iran is providing equipment and technical support from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on how to quash dissent, exporting the same techniques that its authorities have used to create a climate of fear at home.

147. Such Iranian support to Syria is unacceptable. We have called on Iran to desist, and allow protestors in Syria to express their legitimate aspirations and peacefully to call for change without fear of brutal repression. We have also targeted Iran’s help to the Syrian regime under EU sanctions on Syria, most recently designating the IRGC Qods Force for its role in supporting suppression.

148. In addition to Iran’s role in Syria, we continue to have serious concerns about Iran’s wider role in the region. This includes Iran’s well-documented support for militant groups such as the Taleban, Hizballah and Hamas. This is not the behaviour of a responsible neighbour, and amplifies our concern that an Iran emboldened by a nuclear weapons capability would have even greater confidence to meddle in the affairs of the region.

149. We must remain wary of any Iranian efforts to exploit the unrest earlier in the year in Bahrain. We will continue to make clear that any Iranian interference in Bahrain, including attempts to promote sectarian divides, would be unacceptable. As in all countries across the region, it is important that the people of Bahrain are allowed to decide their future themselves.

150. The Arab Spring has shown that governments in the region need to respond with reform and not repression if they are to enhance the long-term stability and prosperity of their countries. So far we have seen no signs that Iran has learnt any of these lessons. We call on the Iranian authorities to seize this opportunity and allow the same rights for those in Iran as it claims to support in other countries in the region.

Syria

151. Following continued violence in Syria, especially during Ramadan (August 2011) many Arab states have recalled Ambassadors and recognised that the Assad regime has no serious plans for reform or for securing a peaceful transition. Events in Libya have mobilised public opinion both within Syria and in the rest of the Arab world even further. However, unrest in Syria has worried regional states and has left them exposed to
political, social and economic repercussions with many of them fearing post-Assad chaos and that the end of the regime would embolden those agitating for change in other Arab countries, Saudi Arabia—with strong relationships within the Lebanese political system and close ties to neighbouring Jordan—remains concerned.

152. Turkey’s initial approach was to push the regime to reform, fearing the potential for a refugee crisis on its border, but a lack of any serious effort by Assad to calm the situation has led them to reassess this approach. Iran remains Syria’s staunchest ally in the region and has continued to provide support for the Assad regime (see above). Israel remains wary, fearful of increasing Iranian influence in Damascus and the potential for an unpredictable response from Hizballah.

153. Within Lebanon existing sectarian tensions and anxieties are concerned: the fall of Assad could particularly impact on Hizballah funding and pro-Syrian Christian groupings. In the Palestinian territories, some see tensions between Hamas and Assad as having led the former to conclude a reconciliation agreement with Fatah and to seek alternative patronage and hospitality. The longer-term could see rejectionist groups such as Hizballah and Hamas weakened though other dynamics may come in to play and it is too early to predict what the Syria regime’s longer-term policies towards Israel and the Middle East Peace Process may be.

The Gulf Initiative

154. In summer 2010 the Foreign Secretary launched the Gulf Initiative to reinvigorate our engagement with the GCC states, aiming to re-establish ourselves as key strategic partners to the region. This involves engagement across HMG. Almost a year since its launch, the Gulf Initiative is delivering clear results for the UK. We are now better placed politically and commercially than we have been for some time, evidenced most recently by Gulf support on Libya and demonstrable progress across the range of our security, defence and commercial interests. Increased UK engagement has been noticed and welcomed by our key contacts in the region at the highest levels.

155. The game-changing events of the Arab Spring have been the key strategic development since the launch of the Initiative. We have therefore adjusted the HMG approach to reflect lessons so far, with emphasis on supporting long-term political and economic reform across Gulf states, in line with our Arab Partnership Initiative. This strategy is ambitious, and will require continued engagement from Ministers across government. We need to achieve success consistent with our values and in line with our national interests, including UK prosperity and our support for international peace and security.

156. None of the GCC countries suffer from the same economic and social pressures that exist in North Africa and the Near East, notably due to oil wealth. Pressure to reform political systems has nonetheless increased in all states, except arguably Kuwait and Qatar where reform already exists or is underway. There were disturbances in Oman, but these were alleviated following an announcement of economic assistance from neighbouring states and a series of reforms announced by the Sultan. Progress on these will be essential in coming months.

157. Bahrain is the Gulf country where the impact of the Arab Spring has been clearest. Between February and April 2011 there were serious disturbances and violent clashes between the security forces and opposition activists. There were similarities with unrest elsewhere in the Arab world: the opposition were calling for a greater say, more freedoms and occupied a central square in the capital. However, the underlying reason for the unrest was sectarian. The ruling elite, including the royal Al-Khalifa family are all Sunni Muslims. The majority of the population are Shia, many of whom feel marginalised and oppressed. The sectarian angle led some in the region, particularly Saudi Arabia, to accuse Iran of stirring up trouble. Whilst the Iranians would not have been sorry to see unrest in the Gulf States, there was no evidence of direct involvement. The Arab Spring was a catalyst for citizens, notably Bahraini Shia, to rise up and demand more political, economic and social rights.

158. Unrest was forcefully put down by the security forces. The subsequent sentencing of opposition figures, the reports of deaths in custody, the allegations of torture, the denial of medical treatment and the censorship of the media are all extremely troubling. We have delivered firm messages to the Bahraini Government that the civil rights of peaceful opposition figures, the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly must be respected. We also expect Bahrain to meet all its international obligations, by ensuring its citizens can exercise the universal human rights and freedoms to which they are entitled. We were pleased to see the release on bail of all the medical personnel arrested.

159. Following such firm messages from ourselves and other friends of Bahrain, both sides entered into a ‘National Dialogue’ and the King agreed to allow an International Commission to investigate possible human rights abuses during the unrest. Since then, and since the lifting of a state of emergency at the beginning of June the situation in Bahrain has been calmer. The International Commission is due to report in October, and local elections to take place in September. The outcome of these events, and the government’s reaction to them (especially the Commission) will determine whether or not Bahrain is going in the right direction. In the interim, we will continue to press for urgent and concrete political reform, building on the outcome of the National Dialogue.
Libya

160. The events unfolding in Libya will be of fundamental importance for the future of the Arab Spring. Had the international community not acted in February and March this year, Qadhafi would have had a free hand to implement his threat to hunt down his own people like rats, and the message for others in the region would have been very clear.

161. Faced with this situation, the Government believed it was essential to act to support and protect ordinary Libyans. Firstly, because for Britain to stand by as Qadhafi slaughtered his people would contradict our own values. And secondly, because we believed, in the context of the Arab Spring, that supporting those values for others would strengthen longer-term regional stability and our own security.

162. As the Prime Minister has said, we believe our action was necessary, legal and just. The Libyan opposition and the Arab League both called for the protection of the civilian population. The Arab League’s support was critical in securing UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. NATO’s action had a clear legal mandate.

163. Today, the Libyan people have the prospect of freedom and democracy, for which they have fought so bravely for throughout the Arab Spring. Transition in Libya will not be a quick or smooth process, although the early signs are much more encouraging than many anticipated. We have stressed from the beginning that decisions on how to achieve stabilisation will be taken by Libyans themselves. The task of the international community now is to provide co-ordinated support to them as they build that future.

164. During the Arab Spring, some warned, as Qadhafi himself did, that the Libyan people could not be trusted with freedom, that without Qadhafi there would be chaos. What is emerging now, despite years of repression, and the trauma of recent months, is impressive and encouraging. In a far-reaching road map and constitutional declaration, the new authorities have set out a clear vision and a process for a new democratic Libya. This is not being imposed from above; it is being shaped by the Libyan people.

165. The UK, having convened the London Conference on Libya in March and co-chaired the Paris Conference this month, will remain at the forefront of international efforts to ensure that Libya becomes a model for the aspirations of the Arab Spring.

Section 4: Crisis Response

Context

166. At the beginning of 2011, Tunis was one of the smallest sovereign posts in the MENA region, with approximately 65 staff in total. Cairo was one of the largest posts in the region, accommodating staff from a number of Whitehall departments and serving as a regional hub. The FCO and other departments employed approximately 150 in Cairo and approximately 20 at the Consulate-General in Alexandria. These numbers include UK-based civil servants and staff engaged locally. For operational and security reasons we cannot provide a more detailed breakdown.

167. Our consular operation in Egypt consisted of a small team of staff based in the Embassy in Cairo, the Consulate-General in Alexandria and Honorary Consulates in Sharm el Sheik, Luxor, Suez and Hurghada. In Tunisia consular work was handled from the Embassy in Tunis.

168. The resident British community in Tunisia was estimated to be around 1,000 including dependants. These were located mainly in and around Tunis with small communities in Hammamet, Sousse and Sfax. Approximately 5,000 British visitors were also in the country when the revolution took place, mainly in the tourist resorts on the Mediterranean coast.

169. The resident British community in Egypt was estimated to be around 15,000 including dependants. These were concentrated mainly in and around Cairo with other residents located in Hurghada, Luxor and South Sinai. Approximately 1,450,000 British nationals visit Egypt each year. Prior to the Arab Spring, we estimated there were up to 120,000 British Nationals visiting Egypt each month, with around 20–25,000 in country at any one time, with the majority located in the resorts on the Red Sea coast (particularly Sharm el-Sheikh).

170. In both countries we had extensive contingency plans for handling unexpected crises, including those relating to public disorder. In response to the developing political situation, the FCO’s consular response in each country comprised the following main elements:

Pre-crisis:
— Use of travel advice to inform residents and visitors of risks.
— Increased liaison with ABTA.
— Activation of Crisis Team in London (Egypt).

During crisis:
— Activation of Crisis Team in London (Tunisia).
— Deployment of Rapid Deployment Teams and Regional Resilience (UK-Based and Locally Engaged consular officers from neighbouring countries).
— Assisted departure operation.

Consular response in Tunisia

Travel Advice

171. The timeline in Annex A sets out the escalation in the travel advice for Tunisia. On 13 January, the FCO moved to advise against all but essential travel to Tunisia; the UK was the first country to change our travel advice but was quickly followed by others. The advice was strengthened the following day. On 15 January the FCO advised British nationals to leave. This advice was relaxed on 4 February.

Assisted Departure

172. The majority of British nationals in Tunisia were visitors, many of whom had travelled with tour companies. On 13 January Crisis Group briefed ABTA and tour operators on the current situation and the change in travel advice to avoid all but essential travel. In line with the travel advice, tour operators cancelled flights and holidays into the country with effect from 14 January. They subsequently arranged additional flights to repatriate customers. Crisis Group worked closely with ABTA and tour operators to inform them of developments and changes in the travel advice, to help with arrangements for additional flights and to provide consular assistance to British nationals in country. As a result more than 3,000 British nationals were able to leave within 48 hours and this prompt action by tour operators played a key role in reducing the number of British nationals in country. The FCO continued to advise independent travellers to leave by commercial means but it was not necessary to supplement the available commercial capacity through additional charter arrangements.

173. Nine additional consular staff were deployed to Tunisia to support the Embassy, including a Rapid Deployment Team, staff from the region and from the MOD. We also deployed additional security and IT specialists. The first staff deployed from Algiers arrived in Tunis on 14 January, with reinforcements from Rabat arriving on 15 January following the re-opening of Tunisian airspace.

Consular response in Egypt

Travel Advice

174. The timeline in Annex B sets out the escalation in the travel advice for Egypt. On 28 January, the FCO moved to advise against all but essential travel to Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor and Suez. The following day we advised British nationals without a pressing need to be in Cairo, Alexandria or Suez to leave by commercial means. On 15 February, the FCO lifted the advice against all but essential travel to Luxor, and removed the advice that British nationals should leave Cairo, Alexandria and Suez. The advice against all but essential travel to Cairo, Alexandria and Suez was lifted on 21 February.

175. Throughout the Egypt crisis, the FCO kept under very close review the issue of whether or not to advise against travel to the resorts of Sinai and the Red Sea. Almost all EU countries advised against all travel to the whole of Egypt, with a few, such as Sweden, France and Germany, advising against all but essential travel to the whole country. Similarly the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand advised against all travel to the whole of Egypt. However, the FCO assessed that while travellers should exercise caution throughout Egypt, the risk to British nationals in the tourist resorts was significantly lower than that in the major cities. This assessment was reviewed on a daily basis in close consultation with staff throughout the Egypt network and additional consular staff were deployed to Sharm el Sheikh to support the Honorary Consul. This approach of differentiating between different parts of the country to reflect the reality on the ground was commended by ABTA who stressed in their public statements that the Red Sea resorts were a very considerable distance from the affected areas and that these resorts had remained calm. It has also reaped wider benefits, with the Egyptian Government and UK tour operators each welcoming on several occasions since the crisis our approach of limiting advice against travel to the affected areas and positive feedback from British nationals who were able to go ahead with their holidays.

Assisted Departure

176. The FCO chartered two planes to facilitate the departure of British nationals from Cairo. These departed on 3 and 5 February. Passengers were charged £300 for an adult fare and a total of 200 British nationals and dependants left Egypt on these charters.

177. In total 62 additional staff were deployed to Egypt to support the consular response. This included four Rapid Deployment Teams (including staff from the Red Cross), staff from the region, an Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team from the MOD and staff from UKBA.
Wider crisis staffing

178. The Tunisia Crisis Team was activated on 12 January. Events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, accompanied by major earthquakes in Japan and New Zealand, meant that the FCO remained on a crisis footing until April.

179. Since January, over 570 members of staff based in London and Milton Keynes have been deployed to bolster the core staff available to Consular Directorate and MENAD to deal with the crises. For example, the Libya Political Crisis Unit had to staff up to 370 slots per week to allow us to operate on a 24/7 basis on a three-shift pattern; and the Consular Crisis Management Department had to staff up to 720 slots per week, varying between a two- and three-shift pattern. Consular Crisis Management Department deployed 13 Rapid Deployment Teams overseas, totalling 75 staff, in support of the consular response to the crises of the Arab Spring. Over 50 staff deployed to Tripoli and Valletta from Rapid Deployment Teams and within the region to work alongside our Embassy teams. During February to April Crisis Management Department also dealt with major earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan and the crisis in Cote d’Ivoire.

180. These additional staff were drawn from existing crisis management structures (such as the Emergency Response Team and the Rapid Deployment Team) as well as ad-hoc volunteers. Directors across the FCO were instructed by the PUS to identify areas of work that were less immediate priorities and to release staff—wherever possible with relevant experience—to work on the crises. In order to counter the effect of a smaller workforce, Directorates were asked to reconsider their priorities, downgrading policy and representation work not related to our top prosperity and security goals, and were able to authorise overtime if necessary.

181. Other Whitehall departments have also had to adjust resources in response to the Arab Spring. MOD has put in place a complete Operations team for Libya, as well as providing additional staffing for crisis efforts in Egypt and Tunisia. In light of its commitment to the £110m Arab Partnership programme, DFID has expanded its MENA regional team, with additional professional advisory capacity on economics and private sector development; new advisor posts on social development, humanitarian issues, governance and programme evaluation; and additional generalist staff. DFID will also second a staff member to the Islamic Development Bank. DFID does not plan to open new country offices in the region, but is funding additional programme management slots in Cairo and Tunis, and will work with FCO to monitor the need for further reinforcement in this area.

Business continuity during the crisis period

Security Situation

182. There was widespread unrest in Tunisia in the period immediately before the departure of Ben Ali. The situation deteriorated following his departure until the establishment of a stable interim government. In Egypt there was a sharp deterioration in the security situation before the departure of President Mubarak. Movement within and between cities during the unrest was difficult, with increasingly restrictive curfew hours and use of military checkpoints and militia roadblocks to try to impose order in the streets. Embassy hours had to be cut short, often with no prior notice given to members of the public, to ensure staff were able to reach home before curfew fell or travel became unsafe.

183. Following the looting of homes in expatriate areas where UK-based staff were resident in Tunis and Cairo, staff working in both countries were moved to the residence or a hotel close to their place of work. This increased their security and allowed us to extend working hours beyond what would otherwise have been possible.

184. We continued to operate out of Embassy buildings in Cairo and Tunis throughout the crisis period. Additional host nation security support was requested and provided in both countries. Given the proximity of the Cairo Embassy to Tahrir Square, plans were in place for a complete evacuation in case the Embassy was over-run. The Consulate-General building in Alexandria was closed for three days because of a particularly difficult security situation. Many of the police stations in Alexandria had been ransacked, weapons had been stolen and there were no police on the streets. A small number of staff continued to deliver consular assistance for British nationals from an alternative location.

Evacuation of Dependents and Non-essential Staff

185. In January and early February, we evacuated approximately 10 dependents and members of staff from Tunis and approximately 70 dependents and 20 staff members from Cairo. The decision to evacuate was taken by the Permanent Under-Secretary in consultation with the Departments and Posts concerned. Decisions to evacuate are taken in line with our Travel Advice. In both Tunisia and Egypt British nationals without a pressing need to remain had been advised to leave by commercial means. Some British Council staff were also evacuated.

186. In Cairo, both the visa and the commercial sections of the Embassy had been closed by the beginning of February. This, together with the high number of specialist consular and crisis staff deployed on a temporary basis, meant that there were sufficient staff to carry out the core functions of the Embassy despite the
evacuation. Lower staffing levels in Tunis meant that all UK-based staff, who were able to work, were needed to maintain the Embassy’s crisis functions.

187. The FCO makes some financial provision for evacuated officers and their dependants whilst they are in the UK, to help cover any additional costs they may incur e.g. accommodation costs. The evacuation of both posts lasted around a month and all those evacuated subsequently returned to Post. Political, UKTI staff and Arabic language students evacuated from Egypt were re-deployed in the crisis centre in London, where their local expertise continued to inform policy.

Communications

188. In Egypt, mobile phone and internet networks were blocked by the authorities on 27 January as part of efforts to limit the size of demonstrations and were not fully restored until 29 January. This meant that contact with staff working outside the office, political contacts and key British community figures such as wardens was extremely limited. Our ability to communicate with British nationals was also heavily restricted. Communications between London and Egypt remained functional. In addition to landline telephones, the Embassy had access to satellite phones and radios when mobile networks failed.

Loss of Locally-engaged Staff

189. Locally-engaged staff were particularly badly affected by movement restrictions, with many unable to travel to work and others obliged to leave early to avoid curfew times or demonstrations. For example, on 14 January approximately 40% of locally-engaged staff managed to reach work in Tunis. Where possible, staff worked from home, but restrictions on the mobile phone network and internet access made this particularly hard in Egypt. Difficulty in communicating with many of our locally-engaged staff meant the loss of valuable expertise for both the political and consular operations. The loss of manpower also presented problems for rostering and adequately resting staff.

Lack of Essential Supplies

190. In Tunis, the looting and destruction of supermarkets and the closure of cafes and restaurants near the embassy meant that securing adequate food and water supplies was key to our continued operation. We obtained additional contingency supplies on 14 January and provided food for all staff who made it to work. We also stored fuel in Tunis following rumours of a proposed 3-day strike at petrol stations. Availability of essential supplies was less of a problem in Cairo, where large parts of the city were functioning normally.

Lessons learned

191. On 23 February, in the light of subsequent experience of evacuating British nationals from Libya, the Foreign Secretary commissioned an internal FCO Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures. The Review was deposited in the Library of the House on 4 July (ref no. DEP2011–1114). This Review gives a detailed account of the FCO’s systems for crisis preparedness and response, and contains a number of recommendations for improving these, in particular:

— extending the range of suppliers who we can call on to provide charter flights to support any assisted departure or evacuation;
— increasing staffing in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Crisis Management Department;
— enhancing crisis training and exercising across the FCO network;
— making ever greater use of both traditional and digital channels to communicate with British Nationals in a crisis, and
— developing a better crisis management command and control structure within the FCO.

192. In response to the Review, the Crisis Management Department of the FCO’s Consular Directorate established a Crisis Project team. The Foreign Secretary has instructed that the Review’s recommendations should be implemented by the end of 2011. Many of them have already been implemented.

12 September 2011

Annex A

THE TRANSITION IN TUNISIA

BEFORE THE ARAB SPRING

193. Following the Presidential elections in 2009 there was a worrying deterioration in the human rights situation. A number of significant cases came to the attention of the EU involving journalists and human rights defenders and the incidents appeared to be increasing during 2010. One development which was of particular concern was the introduction by the government of an addition to the Penal Code which made it illegal for Tunisian nationals to lobby international bodies to act in ways that might harm the country’s economic interests, widely seen as a way of stopping activists discussing cases with the EU and UN. EU missions in Tunis co-ordinated lobbying on this issue, which was also raised on a bilateral basis by FCO Minister Alistair Burt. The
Tunisian response was that the legislation was being misinterpreted and was needed to protect against those who wished to damage the Tunisian economy.

194. In March 2010, Tunisia submitted a proposal for “Advanced Status” to the EU. The concept of “Advanced Status” (Statut Avancé, sometimes translated as “enhanced relations”) is ambiguous, but the term is generally used to refer to a relationship with the EU which is of a higher level to that set out in an existing Action Plan. The term was first used in relation to Morocco, which agreed an “Advanced Status roadmap” during the French Presidency of the EU in 2008. The Tunisian proposal was based on the Moroccan text.

195. Given the difficulties we faced in engaging with Tunisia on political issues, we judged that it was important to take this opportunity to tie Tunisia into concrete commitments on political and economic reform, as well as access, and agreed that the Commission should begin discussions on that basis. However, EU Member States were divided on the degree to which they wished to press Tunisia. With a small number of like-minded EU states, we argued for specific and measurable commitments in the text, to which we could hold Tunisia. The proposed EU text as it stood at the end of the year was strong on governance and human rights commitments and we had managed to secure wording in the proposed Action Plan highlighting the need for diplomatic access. It is unclear how the Tunisian authorities would have responded to these proposals, as negotiations on the text had not been completed by the time of the revolution.

The Fall of Ben Ali

196. The events which led to the fall of Ben Ali began on 17 December 2010 when a 26-year old university graduate committed suicide by self immolation in protest against a municipal guard who had assaulted him and confiscated vegetables he was selling without a licence. The incident sparked nightly clashes between protestors and police in Sidi Bouzid and neighbouring towns. During the remainder of December there were a number of demonstrations, most of which were peaceful. A few became violent, with reports of casualties amongst both protestors and police.

197. By the end of the first week of January the protests had spread to other parts of the country. The level of unrest was unprecedented during Ben Ali’s 23 years in power; protests against rising unemployment in Gafsa three years before had not spread. The focus of the protests had also shifted from purely economic demands to wider political concerns including corruption, lack of government accountability and constraints on freedom of expression.

198. At this point, there was no reason to believe that the unrest would represent a serious challenge to the survival of the Ben Ali regime. The main focus of FCO activity was therefore the deterioration in the human rights situation. Both the Foreign Secretary and FCO Minister Alistair Burt made statements, the Tunisian Ambassador in London was called in to see Director MENAD and we pushed out human rights messages using social networking tools, including twitter and HMA Tunis’ blog. Given our constrained bilateral relationship with the Tunisian regime at the time, we worked with the EU, both in Brussels and on the ground in Tunis, to reinforce this message.

199. In response to growing protests, Ben Ali had announced a package of measures to tackle unemployment on 10 January, which had little impact. As demonstrations escalated the regime appeared to understand the need for political concessions and Ben Ali gave an address to the country on 13 January promising to tackle key grievances. He guaranteed freedom of expression, complete removal of all internet censorship, full rights to peaceful protest, no use of live ammunition on the streets, independent investigations into violations during the protests and into corruption, and a rapid transition to full democracy in advance of the 2014 presidential elections. He also undertook not to run for another presidential term. There were initial signs that some of these commitments had been implemented, for example, more internet sites could be accessed in Tunisia. However, clashes between police and protestors continued and Ben Ali departed Tunisia in the afternoon of 14 January.

200. Following some initial uncertainty, the Parliamentary Speaker Mbazza took over as interim President on 15 January, in line with the Constitution, and asked Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi to form a government of national unity. The government included leaders of opposition parties, members of civil society and union representatives. However, the reaction in Tunisia was mixed, with public opinion divided between those who saw the interim government as good enough to take the country through to elections and those who opposed the participation of any members of the previous government.

201. The interim government moved quickly to demonstrate that it was different from the previous regime. An amnesty for all political prisoners and legalisation of banned political parties were among its first decisions. It set up independent commissions to investigate corruption and human rights abuses under the previous regime and to oversee political reform. It also undertook to sign a number of human rights protocols and to pursue the assets of Ben Ali, his wife and members of their extended family (the EU agreed an asset freeze on 4 February). Although the violence on the streets was significantly reduced, protests continued and calm was not restored until all of the remaining members of the Ben Ali regime had been removed from the national unity government. Mohamed Ghannouchi resigned as Prime Minister on 27 February and was replaced by Beji Caid Sebsi.
202. The UK established contact at a senior political level shortly after the national unity government had been established. The Foreign Secretary spoke to both the Tunisian President and Foreign Minister and was the first foreign minister to visit Tunisia after the revolution. There was regular official and Ministerial contact with EU partners and Director MENAD hosted a QUINT meeting in the FCO where Tunisia was discussed. There were two main areas of activity: firstly, to encourage the new Government to fulfil their commitment to an orderly move towards free and fair elections and to involve a broad cross-section of Tunisian society in the transition process; and secondly, to ensure that there was a substantial package of assistance available to support Tunisia in their preparations for elections and build political capacity and expertise. We drew a clear distinction between our support for these principles and support for any particular political group. We made clear throughout the process that the composition of the interim administration and any future government was a matter for the Tunisian people to decide.
## TUNISIA: THE ARAB SPRING—TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS AND UK ACTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key Events in country</th>
<th>UK/EU Action</th>
<th>Travel Advice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2010</td>
<td>17 December — Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself on fire.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The FCO Travel Advice for Tunisia was updated 22 times between 05 January and 04 February, when the advice against all but essential travel was relaxed. The curfew in the Greater Tunis area continued until 15 February was re-imposed on 7 May and lifted again on 18 May. The State of Emergency continues. The more significant updates are noted below.</td>
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<td>18 December — Riots in Sidi Bouzid (central Tunisia).</td>
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<td>18–21 December — Nightly clashes between protesters and police in Sidi Bouzid, protests in nearby towns.</td>
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<td>22 December — Full report from BE Tunis on unrest in Sidi Bouzid.</td>
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<td>— Regular updates follow on situation.</td>
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<td>Jan 2011</td>
<td>3 January — Protesters set fire to ruling party’s offices in Tala (Kasserine province).</td>
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<td>4 January — Mohamed Bouazizi dies of his injuries.</td>
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<td>5 January — More than 5000 people attend burial of Mohamed Bouazizi. Heavy police presence. — Protesters reportedly set fire to ruling party’s (RCD) offices &amp; police station in Tala. — Spate of attempted self immolations across the country.</td>
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<td>6 January — 95% of Tunisia’s lawyers go on strike.</td>
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<td>7 January — First formal note sent to Ministers on situation in Tunisia.</td>
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<td>8 January — Army troops deployed around government buildings in Kasserine.</td>
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<td>24 December — 18-year old protester killed and several others injured when National Guard open fire near Sidi Bouzid.</td>
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</table>
| 10 January| Ben Ali gives televised address, promising 300,000 new jobs in 2011–12 and national forum to discuss employment problems. | 10 January  
FS comments on situation in Tunisia on twitter.  
Alistair Burt issues statement. | 11 January  
Country-wide curfew from 20:00 to 05:30 on 13 January. |
| 11 January| More than 50 protesters shot dead by security forces in Kasserine between 9–11 January. | 11 January  
Submission to Ministers on next steps.  
FS issues statement condemning violence and calling for a peaceful resolution. | |
| 12 January| PM sacks Interior Minister and Head of Army.  
Widespread strikes. | 12 January  
Review of possible scenarios in Tunisia. | |
| 13 January| Ben Ali makes speech promising reforms.  
8 protestors shot dead in Tunis. | 13 January  
HMA Tunis blogs condemning violence and updates on consular activity.  
Update sent to Ministers & PM.  
HMA Tunis and EU Ambassadors meet Tunisian FM Morjane to express concerns at escalating violence.  
Director MENAD meets Tunisian Ambassador to express concern over recent violence and loss of life. Flags consular concerns and possible change of TA. | 13 January  
Advice against all but essential travel to Tunisia. Country-wide curfew lifted but curfew imposed in Greater Tunis. |
PM Ghannouchi takes over briefly as acting President.  
Parliament dissolved and State of Emergency declared.  
Airspace closed.  
Parliamentary Speaker takes over as interim President. PM remains in control of the government. | 14 January  
FS statement condemning violence.  
Tunis visa section closed.  
First member of staff from Algiers arrives in Tunis.  
London begins twice daily phone/teleconferences with Tunis.  
Update sent to Ministers & PM.  
Work begun on implications for other countries in the region. | 14 January  
British nationals advised to consider their need to remain in Tunisia. Reports of looting in some residential areas. State of Emergency declared—illegal for more than 3 people to congregate in a public place. Significant looting in Tunis overnight. |
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<tr>
<td>15 January</td>
<td>— Elections announced for 60 days time.</td>
<td>— FS issues statement urging restraint from all sides and reiterating travel advice.</td>
<td>— Advice to leave Tunisia for those without a pressing reason to remain.</td>
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<td>— Airports re-open.</td>
<td>— First member of staff from Rabat arrives in Tunis.</td>
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<td>— Prison riots and break outs.</td>
<td>— Work begun on options for evacuation if required.</td>
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<td>— BG residential compound in Guebiba approached by escaped prisoners intent on looting—45–50 BNs inside.</td>
<td>— Dependents of FCO staff, British Council and non-essential staff leave Tunisia.</td>
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<td>— Alistair Burt—Tunisian Ambassador phone call re attack on BG compound.</td>
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<td>— Informal discussions about EU assistance begin in Brussels.</td>
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<td>16 January</td>
<td>— Dependents of FCO staff, British Council and non-essential staff leave Tunisia.</td>
<td>— FS—French FM phone call.</td>
<td>— Possibility of curfews being imposed in other parts of the country.</td>
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<td>17 January</td>
<td>— Interim national unity government of 23 Ministers announced.</td>
<td>— RDF arrives in Tunis.</td>
<td>— Clashes between military and those loyal to ex-President. Gunfire in residential areas of Tunis.</td>
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<td>— Significant conflict between military and armed groups loyal to Ben Ali in La Goulette.</td>
<td>— Baroness Ashton statement.</td>
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<td>18 January</td>
<td>— Security situation improves but demonstrations continue.</td>
<td>— Director MENAD—Tunisian Ambassador phone call re BE security.</td>
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<td>— UGTT union members resign from government on union instructions—Includes 2 Ministers and 1 Secretary of State.</td>
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<td>20 January</td>
<td>— All government ministers resign from RCD party.</td>
<td>— Regional consular resilience departs Tunis.</td>
<td>— Situation calmer but demonstrations expected to continue.</td>
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<td>— Political prisoners released.</td>
<td>— Political prisoners released.</td>
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<td>— Reports of 33 Ben Ali relatives arrested.</td>
<td>— Interim President Mbazza speech commits to reforms and law and order.</td>
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<td>— First Cabinet meeting takes place.</td>
<td>— Start of legislative process to legalise all political parties.</td>
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<td>— Around 500 people ‘sit-in’ outside the Ministry of Interior, demanding government resigns.</td>
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<td>22 January</td>
<td>— PM Ghannouchi commits to retiring after transition.</td>
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<td>24 January</td>
<td>— FS—Tunisian President Mbazaa phone call.</td>
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<td>25 January</td>
<td>— FS—Tunisian FM Morjane phone call.</td>
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<td>26 January</td>
<td>— EU HoMs meet Tunisian FM.</td>
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<td>— HMG formally revokes Ben Ali’s entry clearance to UK.</td>
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<td>26 January</td>
<td>— Government reshuffled, all regime ministers except PM sacked.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>— Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi returns to Tunisia from UK.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 January</td>
<td>— EU freezes assets of Ben Ali and his wife.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 January</td>
<td>— FS—French FM meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>— Director MENAD—QUINT meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 February</td>
<td>— EU freezes assets of further 46 allies and relatives of Ben Ali.</td>
<td></td>
<td>No longer advise against all but essential travel to Tunisia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 February</td>
<td>— Police shoot dead 2 protestors in Kef.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 February</td>
<td>— RCD meetings and activity banned.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>— Senate widens Presidential powers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— HMT Issued Financial Sanctions Notice in support of EU Council Regulation concerning restrictive measures against 48 Tunisian nationals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in country</td>
<td>UK/EU Action</td>
<td>Travel Advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 February</td>
<td>- FS visit to Tunis.</td>
<td>- NSC MENA discussion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 February</td>
<td>- Thousands of migrants flee Tunisia for Italian island of Lampedusa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 February</td>
<td>- Tunisia seeks extradition of Ben Ali from Saudi Arabia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 February</td>
<td>- PM speech in Kuwait.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23 February</td>
<td>- Transition Strategy drawn up for Ministers.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25 February</td>
<td>- Large demonstration in Tunis calling for resignation of PM.</td>
<td>- NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>- Tunisian PM Ghannouchi resigns—replaced by Beji Caid Essebsi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 February</td>
<td>- NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 March</td>
<td>- NSC MENA discussion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 March</td>
<td>- DFID SoS visit to Libya/Tunisia border.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 March</td>
<td>- NSC MENA discussion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 March</td>
<td>- Alistair Burt speaks to Tunisian Ambassador.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>- Court dissolves RCD party.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 March</td>
<td>- Extraordinary European Council.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in country</td>
<td>UK/EU Action</td>
<td>Travel Advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 March</td>
<td>— G8 Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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</table>
THE TRANSITION IN EGYPT

Policy before the Arab Spring

Internal Context

203. Political tensions in Egypt had been growing for some time, as dissatisfaction with the Mubarak regime increased. By early 2010, it was clear that the absence of a strong secular opposition, limited political space and repression of dissent carried short and long term risks. A number of key developments brought this into focus:

— The return of Mohamed El Baradei to Egypt in February 2010, with his call for greater democracy and respect for human rights.
— The illness of President Mubarak during March 2010, which increased the focus on a possible successor, with intense debate about the possible succession of Gamal Mubarak.
— The death of Khaled Said in the hands of the Egyptian police on 6 June 2010 and subsequent public outrage against such abuses (the UK led the EU response in drafting and issuing a local EU statement expressing concern over the circumstances of Khaled Said’s death and over the outcome of the second autopsy).
— Parliamentary elections in November 2010, which resulted in a significantly less representative Parliament, which in turn would have had important ramifications for the Presidential elections expected in November 2011.

204. On the economic front, Egypt’s growth figures were impressive. But Egypt’s growth was capital intensive and did not create the jobs needed to accommodate the rapidly growing workforce. The increasing size of its subsidy bill in relation to GDP, inefficient production systems, the absence of instruments for long term investment and gap in skill sets were also indicative of the need for deeper economic reform to fulfill the aspirations of a growing population. A build up of social tensions in Spring 2008 had led to a general strike on 6 April that year, as a result of low wages and rising food costs. The momentum for the strike led to the creation of the “6 April” Facebook group, who also played a significant role in the 2011 Revolution.

205. These indications of internal tension led to a growing FCO focus on Egyptian politics. We believed that improvements in governance, human rights, rule of law and economic reform were needed to ensure economic stability in the longer term. It was important that any successor to Mubarak must take over with legitimacy, as this would give him the mandate to carry out needed democratic and economic reforms. Our scope for an effective partnership with Egypt, in areas such as education, skills, investment and commercial development would greatly increase if there was demonstrable progress on reform. We took action to:

— Widen our range of contacts and deepen our relationships in a way that would allow an improved understanding of the challenges facing Egypt.
— Increase dialogue on succession issues. The Foreign Secretary visited Egypt on 4–5 November 2010. During his meeting with Gamal Mubarak, he stressed the importance of a strong secular opposition in ensuring stability, sustainable growth and a modern, outward looking economy.
— Broaden our efforts to deliver what the Egyptians wanted in a number of fields, including in education and skills for employability, economic reform and service delivery, civil service reform, and trade and investment. These were important drivers of unrest and were also important in developing a greater level of trust, which was needed if Egypt was to accept our support in addressing more politically sensitive human rights issues.

2010 Parliamentary Elections

206. The November 2010 elections were an obvious trigger point for potential unrest and demonstrations did take place, although the efforts of the authorities to limit dissent meant that these were not on the same scale as January 2011. Ahead of the elections, we called on the Egyptian government to amend legislation to ensure full compatibility with Egypt’s international obligations in this regard and to extend an invitation to international observers. We expressed our hope that the elections would be transparent and fair.

207. The EU supported a coalition of Egyptian civil society organisations to monitor the parliamentary elections. These NGOs also worked to raise Egyptian voter awareness about their political rights, and to improve media coverage of electoral campaigns along internationally recognised professional standards. The UK supported a number of smaller projects with Egyptian civil society to assist their capacity building for the electoral process.

208. The ruling National Democratic Party won Egypt’s Parliamentary elections of 28 November and 5 December by a landslide, taking over 90% of the seats. Organised opposition groupings won 16 seats between them. The elections were marred by reports of widespread fraud which called into question the legitimacy of the results.

209. The UK worked closely with Baroness Ashton’s Office to release a prompt statement after the second round, expressing concern at the reports of irregularities, restricted access for independent observers and
candidate representatives into polling stations, media restrictions and arrests of opposition activists. FCO Minister Alistair Burt telephoned the Egyptian Ambassador to voice his concerns about the credibility of the results. He highlighted that Egypt’s long term interests, including as a force for real influence in the region, would be best served by progress towards democratisation and good governance. The issue was also raised with the Egyptian authorities by a number of UK senior officials, including during the UK-Egypt Strategic Dialogue in January 2011. We also stressed to the Egyptian authorities the importance of securing the Presidential mandate through transparent, free and fair elections, and encouraged Egypt to accept international monitors to visit during election periods.

**EU-Egypt Relations**

210. The EU-Egypt Association Agreement came into force in June 2004 and an Action Plan for political dialogue and sectoral cooperation, with a lifespan of 3–5 years, has been in place since March 2007. The Action Plan covers EU-Egypt co-operation in a number of fields, including trade liberalisation, promotion of human rights, rule of law and democratisation.

211. Egypt requested “Advanced Status” in May 2008 and this was endorsed by the EU at the April 2009 Association Council. However, with our support, the EU had made clear that completion of the existing Action Plan remained the basis for enhancing relations (there had been little progress against the political elements of the Action Plan). At the EU-Egypt Association Committee on 14 December 2010, Egypt declared that discussion of enhancement would end if the EU insisted on full compliance.

**Human Rights and Sectarian Tensions**

212. Egypt imposed a State of Emergency in 1981 and extended a more limited version of it in May 2010 for a further two years. The State of Emergency was a key element in many of the human rights problems in Egypt, including detention without trial, torture and mistreatment, trial of civilians in military courts and restrictions on freedom of expression. It remains key to improving the human rights situation. During 2010, we continued to call on the Egyptian Government to honour its commitment to end the State of Emergency and ensure that any new anti-terrorism legislation complied with international human rights law. We also offered technical support to help Egypt develop a modern counter-terrorism law which addressed their security needs while respecting core human rights principles. This would have removed the justification for maintaining the State of Emergency.

213. Egypt underwent a Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council in February 2010. This was a key opportunity to discuss the need for human rights reform with Egypt. We were encouraged by Egypt’s acceptance of 119 out of the 165 recommendations made during its Universal Periodic Review. But it is unclear how many of these would have been implemented under the Mubarak regime.

214. Tensions between Muslim and Christian groups also surfaced a number of times during 2010, most notably during the attack on Naga Hammadi on 7 January. Following the bombing of a church in Alexandria on 1 January 2011, FCO Minister Alistair Burt issued a statement stressing the importance of promoting tolerance in the face of the attack. We assessed that tensions in Egyptian society had reached a critical point in the aftermath of the attack, heightened by a growing resentment towards the regime.

215. Our response sought to reconcile communities and avoid feeding into the rhetoric of extremists who claimed that the UK was inherently anti-Muslim. We believed that we should be prepared to have a frank dialogue with the government about the challenges of ensuring greater inclusion and tolerance for all religious groups. This included addressing the ambitions of Egyptian society for greater social, economic and political participation.

**The Fall of Mubarak**

25 January–11 February

216. Protests in Cairo demanding the end of President Mubarak’s rule of almost 30 years began on 25 January. Thousands clashed with riot police, and a government ban was imposed on public gatherings. However, protests continued and three protesters and one policeman were killed on 26 January. Security forces arrested about 500 demonstrators in those first two days. Violence escalated outside Cairo. On 27 January the Egyptian authorities attempted to interrupt internet and mobile networks in an attempt to hamper protest organisers. The British Government called on the Egyptian authorities to lift these restrictions urgently.

217. The FCO assessed that in the face of these huge demonstrations, which were organised by a diverse range of opposition and interest groups, Mubarak did not intend to step down. While it was not for the UK to decide who governed Egypt, it was clear that stability in Egypt required a process of political change. We believed this should include an orderly transition to a more democratic system, through creation of broad-based Government, including opposition figures, which would produce real political change. This position was made clear in our public and private messaging, and there was sustained high-level British Government engagement with the Egyptian authorities. The Ambassador and British Embassy staff in Cairo and other parts of Egypt closely monitored developments on the ground throughout the revolution period, including assessments of events and contacts with those taking part in the protests, opposition and other senior political figures.
218. On 28 January the Army was deployed on the streets for the first time in the protests, and it fired tear gas and live ammunition as thousands of protesters defied a curfew. On 29 January Mubarak made changes to his government, appointing Omar Suleiman as his first Vice-President and Ahmed Shafiq as the new Prime Minister. The Army took over security in Cairo.

219. British engagement continued to stress the need to avoid violent repression and rapidly advance political reform. The Prime Minister spoke to Mubarak by telephone on 28 January and on 30 January the Foreign Secretary spoke to Vice President Suleiman and Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, to set out the UK’s views. The Foreign Secretary later discussed the situation with the US Secretary of State and EU High Representative Baroness Ashton. He also discussed the situation in Egypt at the Foreign Affairs Council on 31 January. The Council issued Conclusions which called on all sides to show restraint, and called for genuine democratic reform.

220. On 1 February up to a million people protested on the streets of Cairo. Mubarak responded by promising to resign at the next election and pave the way for a new leader, but protesters were angry that he had not stood down with immediate effect. There was renewed violence the next day in Tahrir Square when pro-government protesters swarmed into the area where thousands of anti-Mubarak demonstrators were keeping a vigil.

221. The Prime Minister discussed the situation with the UN Secretary-General on 1 February and held a joint press conference, in which he expressed grave concern at the continuing violence in Egypt and stated that if the regime had sponsored the violence it would be unacceptable. He stressed the need for rapid political reform. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Gamal Mubarak on 2 February to express his concern about the violence, stressing that reform plans must be accelerated. British officials lobbied EU and regional partners to press for an orderly transition to a broad-based government in Egypt, leading to free and fair elections.

222. By 4 February there had been no real change in the situation and our lobbying continued. The Prime Minister attended the European Council and ensured there was a clear European statement that the Egyptian authorities should meet the aspirations of the Egyptian people with reform and not repression, and that the transition to a broad-based government should start immediately. The Deputy Head of Mission in Cairo spoke to Omar Suleiman the same day. On 5 February the Foreign Secretary spoke again to Aboul Gheit and stressed the UK’s concerns about human rights abuses. He also spoke to the then Secretary-General of Arab League, Amr Moussa, to exchange views on the best way forward. The Prime Minister called Omar Suleiman on 7 February to urge him to take bold and credible steps to show that the transition in Egypt was irreversible, and to set out a clear roadmap with an urgent timetable, including constitutional change and elections. FCO Minister Alistair Burt met the Egyptian Ambassador on 9 February and repeated our concerns about human rights abuses, and the need for a roadmap.

223. On 11 February Vice President Suleiman announced that Mubarak had decided to give up the office of President of the Republic and instructed the SCAF to manage the affairs of the country. Several hundred thousand protesters massed in Tahrir Square to celebrate. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary both issued statements highlighting that Egypt had a precious moment of opportunity and that the UK stood ready to help in any way that we could. Both statements stressed the importance of the new government putting in place the building blocks of an open, free and democratic society; those running Egypt had a duty to reflect the wishes of the Egyptian people.

12 February–21 February

224. Following Mubarak’s resignation, the civilian government remained in place, but decision-making power was passed to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The SCAF made a series of statements setting out their intentions for the transition period and the principles to which they would adhere. These included a commitment to transferring power to a new democratically elected government and to upholding Egypt’s international and regional treaty obligations, including those with Israel. The British Government’s view of what was required remained the same: the Egyptian authorities needed to set out a clear timetable and roadmap of reforms, and to engage with the opposition and activists as part of that process. We continued to make these points to all our Egyptian interlocutors.

225. On 13 February the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Egyptian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. He encouraged the Egyptian Government to accommodate the views of opposition figures. He explained that he would like to see a clear timetable for free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections, and a genuinely inclusive dialogue about the country’s future. On 15 February, the Prime Minister spoke to Field Marshal Tantawi by telephone to underline the UK’s support for the transition, and discussed the need for a clear timetable, inclusion of opposition figures in the process, and the ending of the state of emergency. On the same day FCO Minister Alistair Burt spoke to the Egyptian Ambassador. They discussed the economic situation in Egypt, and how the British government could help, including through promoting investment. Our Ambassador in Cairo also met the Egyptian Finance Minister to discuss the economic situation.

226. An increasing amount of activity was focused on ensuring that the international community was offering the right technical and financial support to support the transition. On 12 February the Prime Minister discussed Egypt with President Obama and on 13 February the Foreign Secretary spoke to the US Secretary of State to discuss how best to support Egypt. Following a request from the Egyptian Government to freeze the assets of
several former Egyptian officials, the Chancellor of the Exchequer discussed possible freezing measures and economic support for the Egyptian economy with EU Finance Ministers on 13–14 February in Brussels. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Baroness Ashton on 16 February. They agreed that this was an important opportunity to use the ENP more effectively and with more conditionality to transform Europe’s neighbourhood and demonstrate the EU’s positive role.

227. On 21 February the Prime Minister visited Egypt. He met Field Marshal Tantawi, Prime Minister Shafiq and Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit. He urged the authorities to show leadership on the transition and highlighted the UK’s economic contribution through the EU. He also met democratic activists who had played a role in Tahrir Square to hear their views on the transition process.

The Transition Period

228. The transition process in Egypt has moved at a similar pace to that in Tunisia. However, Egypt is a more diverse society and there is significantly less consensus between political and religious groups about how the transition should progress.

229. The FCO’s overarching priority is to see Egypt continue as an effective commercial and political partner of the UK, contributing to peace and stability in the region and representing an example of successful reform. We have welcomed the Egyptian authorities’ commitment to a transition to a civilian democratic government and have urged them to build trust with opposition groups, and involve them in a genuinely broad-based dialogue as reform plans are developed.

230. In the period following the revolution the FCO identified its priorities for work with Egypt as: promoting political participation through work with NGOs and political groups, promoting the rule of law and reducing corruption; and assistance with electoral preparations. We also looked to promote economic development, coordinating closely with the IFIs as they offer assistance to address the short-term risks to the Egyptian economy and the longer-term structural challenges, as well as promoting bilateral business links and investment, boosting vocational education the British Council and the private sector.

231. Throughout the revolution, we expressed our strong concerns to the authorities about the mistreatment of protesters, journalists and human rights defenders. We continued to monitor the human rights situation closely as the transition period moved forward. British Ministers and the staff in the Embassy in Cairo took appropriate opportunities to raise our concerns.

232. Essam Sharaf was appointed as the new Prime Minister on 7 March, following Ahmed Shafiq’s resignation four days earlier. The Prime Minister called Sharaf on 8 March to reiterate the UK’s desire to help Egypt, and urged progress on an election timetable and reorganisation of the state security organisation, which had been discredited by the people. The Prime Minister attended the Special European Council on 11 March which met specifically to discuss Europe’s role in supporting the Arab people in North Africa and across the Middle East in realising their aspirations for a more open and democratic form of government.

233. FCO Minister Alistair Burt visited Cairo from 9–11 March. He met the Prime Minister, Foreign and Interior Ministers. He encouraged the government to set out a credible timetable for elections which would allow sufficient time for the development of effective political parties. He also met a range of Egyptian activists, members of opposition parties, senior representatives of British companies in Egypt and discussed regional issues with the Secretary General of the Arab League.

234. A constitutional committee in Egypt submitted proposed amendments to the constitution on 26 February to the SCAF. On 19 March a referendum was held to consider these proposals, which included those articles of the constitution which were the focus of the protesters’ demands. The proposals limited the presidential term to four years and created a two-term limit, significantly expanded the pool of eligible presidential candidates, restored judicial supervision of elections, paved the way for a new constitution after elections, and restricted the ability to declare and renew a state of emergency. The turnout in the referendum was 42% with 77% voting in favour of the proposed amendments. This compares to a turnout of 25% in the first round in 2010, according to official figures, or 5–15% by civil society estimates. The FCO assessed that the referendum itself was a more credible exercise than previous elections. There was public confidence in the results, which were seen as reflecting the political will of the Egyptian people, and they were not seriously challenged by observers.

235. On 25 March the Egyptian Finance Minister, Samar Radwan visited the UK. He met FCO Minister Alistair Burt and senior officials. We were able to seek a better understanding of the economic situation in Egypt, the Egyptian government’s plans for handling the challenges it presented, and the help they were seeking.

236. On 30 March the SCAF issued a Constitutional Declaration. It retained much of the old Constitution. It specified that the SCAF assumed all presidential powers, but these would be transferred to the President upon election. The Declaration assumed some clarity on the transitional process, but some activists and legal experts expressed concern that there should be sufficient time for all political parties to be ready to take a full part in free and fair elections. One of the UK’s key messages in the following months to the Egyptian authorities was to allow sufficient time for new political parties to develop and establish themselves ahead of parliamentary elections.
237. During April, protests in Tahrir Square grew once again. Two key demands of protestors were to preserve the demands of the revolution and demand prosecution of former members of the regime. The authorities responded with the arrest of Mubarak and his sons, plus former Ministers. In a widely welcomed move, the former ruling National Democratic Party was banned. These political moves were accompanied by the prospect of growing budget and balance of payment deficits, and Egypt’s growth forecasts and credit rating were revised down. There was also a worrying return of sectarianism, triggered by the appointment of a Coptic Christian Governor in Southern Egypt, and Islamist extremists became more vocal.

238. In response to this, the Foreign Secretary visited Egypt in April, to reinforce the UK’s support for the transition process, and in particular the promotion of a more open and democratic society, which met the aspirations of the Egyptian people. He set out our concerns about the dangers of extremism and sectarianism, sought increased commitment by the Egyptian government to tackle the domestic economic challenge with sustainable measures and underlined our shared long-term goals in a stable region. He met Field Marshal Tantawi, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. He also met representatives of Egyptian activists, including a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.

239. In May, sectarian tensions escalated and there were significant incidents of violence between some Muslims and Christians. In a Parliamentary Statement on 16 May the Foreign Secretary condemned the clashes and called on both sides to find a peaceful resolution to their differences. More widely there was a sense of continuing political and security volatility in Egypt.

240. FCO Minister Alistair Burt made a further visit to Cairo on 27 and 28 July where he discussed the transition in Egypt and regional issues with the Foreign Minister and activists in Tahrir Square and religious issues with the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar.

241. FCO monitoring of events in Egypt has included the rise of Salafist activity and the risk of increased radicalisation of parts of Egyptian society. There is an additional threat from Egyptian extremist ideologies in terms of their radical ideology influencing some British Muslims. The trend of a stronger Islamist voice and presence continued through June. On 29 July the Islamist groups organised large protests across the country (over two million). This highlighted the ability of Salafists to mobilise supporters and organise their activity which was greater than had previously been anticipated. The messages of Islamist groups included support for the SCAF and stability and demands for an Islamic State and Shari’ah law. The growing Salafist voice presented challenges for the Muslim Brotherhood, Sufi groups and secularist Egyptians.

242. During the summer there was also increasing pressure from the secularist parties and activists to delay the elections and in July the SCAF announced the elections would be postponed to November. This has caused concern among Islamist political groupings who stood to gain from earlier elections due to their more advanced organisation. Political debate in August has focussed on the issue of the SCAF’s proposed Constitutional Principles. As these have been issued ahead of the parliamentary elections they could limit the role of the committee tasked with drawing up the new Constitution. Some see this as an attempt by the SCAF to limit the extent of influence of Islamic principles within the Constitution.
EGYPT: THE ARAB SPRING—TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS AND UK ACTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key Events in country</th>
<th>UK/EU Action</th>
<th>Travel Advice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<td>In total the Travel Advice for Egypt was updated 26 times between 26 January and 21 February and a further 3 times between 19 and 26 April. The more significant updates are noted below.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>Thousands clash with riot police in the centre of Cairo to demand the end of Mubarak’s Presidency.</td>
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<td>26 January</td>
<td>Security forces arrest about 500 demonstrators over two days.</td>
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<td>Three protesters and one policeman killed as protestors defy a ban on public gatherings.</td>
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<td>Violence escalates outside Cairo—in the north Sinai, several hundred bedouins and police exchange gunfire. Youth killed.</td>
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<td>Internet and mobile networks shut down.</td>
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<td>27 January</td>
<td>Mohamed ElBaradei, returns to Egypt.</td>
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<td>Social network sites are interrupted in what is seen as a bid to hamper protest organisers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 January</td>
<td>Government dismissed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Army deployed on streets for the first time, tear gas and live ammunition fired by government troops.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tanks surround the British and American embassies.</td>
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<td>Mubarak addresses nation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thousands defy the curfew.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 January updates x 2</td>
<td>Advice to avoid demonstrations and political gatherings &amp; respect advice and instruction from local authorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 January</td>
<td>Baroness Ashton statement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 January</td>
<td>FS statement calling for end to violence.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PM interview with CNN calling for reform.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 January</td>
<td>Nationwide curfew imposed from 18:00-07:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2nd update: Advice against all but essential travel to Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor and Suez. Transit through Cairo airport not affected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in country</td>
<td>UK/EU Action</td>
<td>Travel Advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 January</td>
<td>President Mubarak phone call.</td>
<td>PM—President Mubarak phone call.</td>
<td>Curfew 16:00-08:00. Advice to remain indoors where possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 January</td>
<td>PM/Sarkozy/Merkel joint statement.</td>
<td>PM/Sarkozy/Merkel joint statement.</td>
<td>2nd update: Recommend that British nationals without a pressing need to be in Cairo, Alexandria or Suez leave by commercial means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 January</td>
<td>FS statement calling for Mubarak to reform.</td>
<td>FS statement calling for Mubarak to reform.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 January</td>
<td>London begins twice daily video conferences with Cairo.</td>
<td>London begins twice daily video conferences with Cairo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 January</td>
<td>Submission to Ministers on FS calls.</td>
<td>Submission to Ministers on FS calls.</td>
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<td>29 January</td>
<td>Submission to Ministers on UK action on political situation.</td>
<td>Submission to Ministers on UK action on political situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>— PM—US President phone call.</td>
<td>PM—US President phone call.</td>
<td>Advice against all but essential travel to Cairo includes all four governorates of Cairo, Giza, Helwan and 6 October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>— PM—King of Jordan phone call.</td>
<td>PM—King of Jordan phone call.</td>
<td>2nd update: nationwide curfew extended from 15:00-08:00 local time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>— FS—Egyptian Vice President phone call.</td>
<td>FS—Egyptian Vice President phone call.</td>
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<td>30 January</td>
<td>— FS—Egyptian FM phone call.</td>
<td>FS—Egyptian FM phone call.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>— RDT arrives in Egypt.</td>
<td>RDT arrives in Egypt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 January</td>
<td>— Second RDT arrives in Cairo.</td>
<td>Second RDT arrives in Cairo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 January</td>
<td>— MOD planning team arrives in Cairo.</td>
<td>MOD planning team arrives in Cairo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>— up to a million people mass on the streets.</td>
<td>up to a million people mass on the streets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>— In a TV address Mubarak makes several concessions including vowing to quit at the next election.</td>
<td>In a TV address Mubarak makes several concessions including vowing to quit at the next election.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>— Submission to Ministers on UK action on political situation.</td>
<td>Submission to Ministers on UK action on political situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>— Violence in Tahrir Square when pro-govt protesters clash with anti-govt demonstrators.</td>
<td>Violence in Tahrir Square when pro-govt protesters clash with anti-govt demonstrators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>— Mubarak refused to step down.</td>
<td>Mubarak refused to step down.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>— PM—UNSG bilateral.</td>
<td>PM—UNSG bilateral.</td>
<td>Curfew changed to 17:00-08:00 local time</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>— PM—Gamal Mubarak phone call.</td>
<td>PM—Gamal Mubarak phone call.</td>
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<td>2 February</td>
<td>— DPM—US Vice President phone call.</td>
<td>DPM—US Vice President phone call.</td>
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<td>2 February</td>
<td>— FS—UNSG meeting.</td>
<td>FS—UNSG meeting.</td>
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<td>2 February</td>
<td>— Nationwide curfew extended to 13:00-08:00 local time.</td>
<td>Nationwide curfew extended to 13:00-08:00 local time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>— 2nd &amp; 3rd updates: To supplement the commercial flight capacity provided by British airlines, FCO charters aircraft scheduled to leave Cairo Thursday 3 February. Contact details and advice on cost given. 24-hour assistance by BE staff at Cairo airport Terminals 1 &amp; 3.</td>
<td>2nd &amp; 3rd updates: To supplement the commercial flight capacity provided by British airlines, FCO charters aircraft scheduled to leave Cairo Thursday 3 February. Contact details and advice on cost given. 24-hour assistance by BE staff at Cairo airport Terminals 1 &amp; 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 February</td>
<td>Joint statement by UK, France, Germany, Spain &amp; Italy.</td>
<td>— Reference to boarding passes in TA.</td>
<td>3 February x 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FS statement on harassment of journalists.</td>
<td>— 2nd update: 2nd plane chartered by FCO scheduled to leave Cairo on 5 February.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Baroness Ashton statement.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BE Cairo draw down non-core staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 February</td>
<td>M statement on path to transition.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 February x 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>European Council Declaration on Egypt.</td>
<td>— Advice on further demonstrations &amp; general strike called for 6 February.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alistair Burt statement on intimidation of lawyers, journalist and human rights defenders.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PM—Erdogan phone call.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 February</td>
<td>Reports of foreigners including journalists being harassed/attacked/interrogated; unofficial checkpoints; thefts and attacks on cars.</td>
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<td>5 February</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FS—Vice President phone call.</td>
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<td>6 February</td>
<td>FS—then Egyptian FM phone call.</td>
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<td>FS—Head Arab League phone call.</td>
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<td>FS—Andrew Marr interview.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 February</td>
<td>PM—Vice President phone call.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PM updates Parliament on European Council.</td>
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<td>Submission on contact with the MB.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 February</td>
<td>NSC on “Change in the MENA region”.</td>
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<td>9 February</td>
<td>FS—then Egyptian FM phone call.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alistair Burt meeting with Egyptian Ambassador and press release.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10 February
— Mubarak announces on state TV that he is transferring power to vice president, but will not leave the country.

11 February
— Mubarak resigns as president and hands control to the military.

12 February
— PM—US President phone call.

13 February
— SCAF dissolves Parliament and suspends the constitution stating it will hold power for 6 months or until elections.

13–28 February
— Egyptian Embassy submit asset freezing evidence to the FCO for former President Mubarak, his spouse and family, former Ministers, officials and nationals.

14 February
— FCO consular press release.
— Submission recommending support for EU-wide assets freeze on named individuals.
— Phone call with Turkish Ambassador.

15 February
— PM—Tantawi phone call.
— Chancellor raises assets freeze at ECOFIN.
— Alistair Burt—Egyptian Ambassador phone call.
— Phone call with Saudi DPM.

10 February
— FS statement following Mubarak statement.
— No 10 PS for Foreign Affairs meeting with Egyptian Ambassador.
— Alistair Burt—Turkish FM phone call.
— Alistair Burt statement on Hisham Morsi.

11 February
— PM statement on resignation of Mubarak.
— FS statements.
— Suez Canal operating normally.
— Advice re possibility of large crowds forming in major cities following resignation of Mubarak.

11–28 February
— Submission recommending support for EU-wide assets freeze on named individuals.
— Phone call with Turkish Ambassador.
— Advice re possibility of large crowds forming in major cities following resignation of Mubarak.

14 February
— No longer advise against non-essential travel to Luxor. Recommendation that British nationals without a pressing need to be in Cairo, Alexandria and Suez leave by commercial means removed.
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<td>17 February</td>
<td>— PM meeting with EU Commission President.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— Alistair Burt—Turkish FM phone call.</td>
<td></td>
<td>— All advice against non-essential travel lifted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 February</td>
<td>— PM visit to Cairo. Met Field Marshal Tantawi, and PM Shafiq.</td>
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<td>22 February</td>
<td>— PM speech in Kuwait.</td>
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<td>25 February</td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<td>28 February</td>
<td>— UN Human Rights Council.</td>
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<td>25 February</td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<td>1 March</td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<td>21 March</td>
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<td>2 March</td>
<td>— DPM EU/North Africa speech.</td>
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<td>— Alistair Burt statement following</td>
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<td></td>
<td>constitutional referendum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 March</td>
<td>— Ahmed Shafik steps down as PM, replaced by Essam Sharaf.</td>
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<td>4 March</td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 March</td>
<td>— PM—Egyptian PM phone call.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9–11 March</td>
<td>— Alistair Burt visits Cairo—meetings with PM, FM, Interior Minister.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>— Parliamentary debate on MENA.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 March</td>
<td>— Constitutional referendum passes with 77% of the vote.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 March</td>
<td>— Alistair Burt statement following constitutional referendum.</td>
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<td>Key Events in country</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>— Alistair Burt statement on EU assets freezing decision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>— NSC MENA discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 2011</td>
<td>19 April</td>
<td>Following protests, some violent, in the city of Qena, FCO advises against all but essential travel to Qena.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>FS updates Parliament.</td>
<td>26 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Advice against all but essential travel to Qena relaxed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>1–2 May</td>
<td>FS visits Cairo. Meets Tantawi, PM Sharaf, FM El-Araby.</td>
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</table>
Written evidence from Robin Lamb, Director General, Libyan British Business Council (LBBC) and Executive Director, Egyptian British Business Council (EBBC)

I am grateful for the invitation to give oral evidence and hope I can assist the Select Committee. But it should be noted that although my current positions in relation to Egypt and Libya have given me the occasion and opportunity to follow developments in the two countries, my oral evidence will be given on my own account and will not represent the views of either organisation or in particular of their corporate members.

The Select Committee’s Announcement of its Inquiry on 18 July 2011 quoted the Prime Minister’s comments in Kuwait in February 2011 about potential conflict between British interests and values. This is clearly a key issue in public debate on foreign policy.
I am clear that British policy should always focus on the country’s interests. But in a world of mass communication and governments increasingly responsive to public opinion which may be swayed as much by values as by interests, our values must also be counted among our interests.

Short term economic or security policies may turn out to be against our longer term interests if a failure to uphold our values forfeits trust in our subsequent policies (as with accusations of “double standards” in the Middle East).

We do not therefore face a conflict between interests and values so much as a need to consider both our material and moral interests in arriving at a policy decision.

Such decisions may be consistent with a long-term strategy but will have to address both the predictable and the unexpected in international affairs; and the weighting of material and moral interests must adapt to the demands of each situation.

But to get the weighting right, we first need to establish our philosophy on Britain’s role in the world and our route from that philosophy to policy and then to practice and performance.

Our values are an essential element in our national identity. We must practice them at home, will share them with like-minded nations abroad and should explain them to nations with different political systems and cultures. We should promote them internationally but recognise that promotion needs to be sensitive to local systems and cultures. We cannot impose them: attempts to do so rarely succeed but are likely to breed a negative reaction.

At the same time, we need to be clear on our dependence on the world; on the resources we can bring to bear on international issues; on the impact we can therefore have; and on the sacrifices a government can ask of the British people to deliver that impact.

As the sixth largest trading nation in the world, we have a national interest in the prosperity and stability of overseas markets, the reliability and security of trade routes, access to key commodities and the health of the international political, economic and financial systems.

We are dependent on imports of essential commodities, especially energy. We therefore carry a sizeable current account deficit. The successful export of goods and services to overseas markets is vital to restraining the deficit and the other economic penalties it brings.

Exports contribute almost 30% of the UK’s GDP and are therefore vital to the country’s prosperity. They also support about six million jobs in the UK or the livelihoods of 20% of the working population. The companies and individuals involved contribute significantly to the government’s tax revenue.

Great care should therefore be taken to support exports and not to imperil the state’s and the citizen’s interests by undermining them.

We entered the 21st century as the sixth largest economy in the world. We are not going to leave the century in the same position. Our global political predominance and military strength are also in relative decline, along with that of our European partners. International issues will increasingly be influenced by nations who do not share our political or ethical culture and history. Conflicts between our material and moral interests are likely to increase as our ability to project power and influence decline.

Reversing President Theodore Roosevelt’s dictum, we have tried to compensate for our material decline by speaking more loudly. But when Lord Hurd spoke of Britain “punching above its weight” he effectively drew attention to the emperor’s absent clothing. Lacking the military and financial resources to back an aggressive foreign policy, we will need to be careful not to get ourselves into situations we cannot afford or escape.

I submit that it will generally be possible to uphold both our values and our material interests. But when there is a perceived potential conflict between them, the government’s responsibility to its people will require a public interest test around whether giving our moral interests superior weight would cause significant damage to our material interests. The latter should prevail.

29 November 2011

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5 Recalling that a government’s key responsibilities to its citizens are the provision of safety (defence, rule of law, health), food and shelter.
Further written evidence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

1. This memorandum provides further information on recent events in Libya and the response of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) following the extension of the Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry into the “Arab Spring” to include Libya. It should be read in conjunction with the Memorandum submitted by the FCO on 12 September entitled ‘British Foreign Policy and the ‘Arab Spring’: the Transition to Democracy’, which covers the wider context for the Arab Spring and the FCO’s response, and compliments the information provided in the FCO Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures, published in the Library of the House on 4 July (ref no. DEP2011–1114) and the Libya Crisis: National Security Adviser’s Review of Central Coordination and Lessons Learned placed in the Library of the House on 1 December (ref no. DEP2011–1947).

CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION IN LIBYA

2. The arrest of Fathi Terbil on 15 February is widely credited as the trigger for the protests that led to the Libyan revolution. Terbil, now the Minister of Youth and Sports, is a lawyer who represented families of victims of the 1996 Abu Selim prison massacre. This group was almost the only campaigning non-governmental organisation allowed to operate in Muammar Qadhafi’s Libya.

3. The underlying causes of Libya’s revolution shared many characteristics with events across the Arab world as set out in the UN’s Arab Human Development Report. The Libyan system under the Qadhafi regime provided a relatively good standard of education (the literacy rate was 89% and young people spent on average 16 years in education). However many other factors served to undermine Qadhafi’s support in Libya over a long period, for example:
   - Libya was rated “Not Free” by Freedom House’s 2011 rankings, receiving the bottom rank for both political rights and civil liberties;
   - Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index for 2010 rated Libya 146 out of 178 countries;
   - the benefits of Libya’s hydrocarbon wealth were not shared by the majority of the population. An International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on the Maghreb in 2011 estimated an unemployment rate in Libya of 30%, and
   - the same ILO report put 33% of Libyans as living below the poverty line.

4. The Qadhafi era also saw a catalogue of human rights violations including torture and serious mistreatment of detainees, restrictions on freedom of association and expression, continued incidences of arbitrary detention and shortcomings in Libya’s respect for the rights of migrants, all of which contributed to popular discontent.

5. As elsewhere in the region, the lack of improvement in human development issues was also a risk to the long-term stability and prosperity of Libya. This was reflected in the FCO’s wider work in developing the Arab Partnership initiative, as described in the FCO memorandum of 12 September. Libya did have the advantage of oil wealth which made it one of the richest countries in Africa. However economic growth was not distributed evenly, either between different social classes or geographically. This highlighted the corruption mentioned above, and raised Libyan expectations for what might be possible with a different system of government. There was a strong feeling that Qadhafi’s system was unfair.

6. There was no organised opposition to Qadhafi. Qadhafi did not allow any political opposition in Libya; political parties were banned and elections deemed inherently undemocratic. Nor were there any independent media or civil society organisations, save that representing the Abu Selim families. Punishment for dissent could be brutal and carried out on a collective level: memories of public hangings at universities in the 90s would still be fresh; Qadhafi appeared to block any investment in the town of Derna for many years because it was the source of an assassination attempt. The Libyan opposition overseas, including those based in the UK, lacked a clear manifesto and appeared to have few links back to Libya.

7. The overthrow of the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes in January influenced both the emerging opposition in Libya and Qadhafi’s reaction to it. Libyans disillusioned with Qadhafi’s regime were given hope that they could effect change (at first, often understood as reform rather than revolution). Qadhafi was highly critical of Ben Ali for leaving Tunisia. He appeared to reach the conclusion that he could only hang on to absolute power through the use of overwhelming force against the demonstrators. In his speech of 22 February, Qadhafi urged his supporters to go out and attack the “cockroaches” demonstrating against his rule, referred to the protesters as rats and mercenaries, and said he would “cleanse Libya house by house”. This, combined with Qadhafi’s previous suppression of opposition, encouraged demonstrators, many of whom may have initially been seeking reform rather than revolution, to continue fighting. The decision of army units to join the revolutionaries, particularly in the East, allowed a series of protests that might otherwise have been containable to become a revolution. Nevertheless it required external intervention on a serious scale to avoid Qadhafi crushing the voices of change.

6 Figures from UNDP human development report 2011.
8. In 2010 and early 2011, the UK’s relationship with Libya was limited. The UK had restored diplomatic relations with Libya in 1999, after Abdulbaset al-Megrahi and Al Amín Fhimah were handed over to be tried for involvement in the Lockerbie bombing and Libya made a statement accepting responsibility for the shooting of WPC Yvonne Fletcher. Qadhafi’s renunciation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programmes in December 2003 enabled some progress in the bilateral relationship. British officials and experts, along with counterparts from the US, worked closely with Libya to oversee the dismantlement of Libya’s WMD programmes.

9. From 2004 onwards, both the UK Government and Libya made efforts to step up bilateral engagement in a variety of fields, including on economic and administrative reform, defence and security co-operation, international affairs and the commercial relationship. A very limited space was opened up in which the Embassy could work on human development and human rights issues, including work on prison reform, through which we developed a relationship with Mustafa Abdul Jalil during his tenure as Justice Minister, and playing a leading role in EU efforts to secure the release of the Bulgarian nurses accused of infecting children in Benghazi with HIV. The UK engaged with Libya on Sudan, where Qadhafi had influence with Darfuri groups, and over Libya’s role on the UN Security Council in 2008–10 and as African Union Chair in 2010. HMG facilitated access for the Metropolitan Police’s investigation into WPC Fletcher’s killing and, from 2009, provided logistical support to campaigns for Libya-Northern Ireland reconciliation. Following Abdulbaset al-Megrahi’s diagnosis with cancer in 2008, the Libyan Government’s top objective in its relations with the UK became securing his return to Libya before he died. Libyan concerns over Mr Megrahi’s deteriorating health posed a number of risks to the UK’s bilateral relations with Libya.

10. The British Council ran a large and very successful programme in Libya and gained a reputation in the country for providing high quality English language training and capacity building in higher, secondary and vocational education. In addition to its own teaching centre, the British Council provided English language teaching in Libyan universities on behalf of the Ministry of Higher Education, built up a group of around 300 ‘Changemakers’ among young Libyans and supported mentoring and networking for women entrepreneurs.

11. Commercial relations with Libya were improving before the conflict, most notably in the oil and gas sector. Overall trade figures were not large—in 2009 UK exports were £689 million up 62% from 2007, but with Government advocacy, a number of British businesses won high-value contracts in Libya. As well as oil and gas, education, training and healthcare provided opportunities for the UK, with more than 5,000 Libyans studying in the UK at 93 universities and 4,000 Libyan doctors were either working or undergoing medical training in the UK. However, British companies faced serious difficulties doing business in Libya as a result of major corruption, slow payments, and a lack of transparency in the tendering of projects.

12. The few Libyans who were able to speak out about reform generally did so under the protection of Saif al-Islam Qadhafi. Embassy officials maintained contacts with these individuals, including former NTC Prime Minister Mahmud Jibril, and encouraged them to pursue their objectives in improving civil rights, reforming the public administration and commercial legal system. We judged that reform in Libya would benefit the UK’s political and commercial objectives. However, the impact of such efforts was limited by the need for those involved to operate under the auspices of the Qadhafi family. Less well-connected individuals were often reluctant to draw the attention of the Libyan intelligence agencies by engaging in contacts with a foreign Embassy.

13. Academic and expert opinion did not predict the fall of Qadhafi. Even as the Arab Spring began in Tunisia, there was no real sign of a Libyan opposition organising inside the country. Subsequent discussions with those involved in the early demonstrations in Benghazi have shown that they did not begin with the objective of overthrowing Qadhafi’s regime and even many of those involved were surprised by the momentum that quickly built behind their demands for change. It is worth noting that the Libyan uprising, like all of the main Arab Spring uprisings, was not initiated by organised civil society or political opposition—ie people who could reasonably be identified in advance. The FCO is open to engagement with youth movements and non-governmental opinion and is constantly seeking to find ways of doing so effectively and in ways that are representative of wider trends. We have been a leader among Foreign Ministries in the use of digital channels to engage groups who might not normally want to speak to us. However such tools will only ever reach a certain section of any society, and this section is usually self-selecting.

14. It was the FCO’s view that the “stability” of Qadhafi’s regime was highly dependent on him personally and that the Jamahiriya system would be very unlikely to survive the end of his rule—however that came about. In the absence of any prominent opposition figures, contingency planning tended to focus on alternative figures within the Qadhafi family and upper echelons of the military. Qadhafi was setting up his children to succeed him, though he deliberately avoided nominating a successor, and the rest of the revolutionary system was comfortable with a Qadhafi fronting the system while allowing corruption and personal business interests to continue. Therefore prospects of reform did appear to depend on the attitudes of close family. HMG focused on Saif al-Islam as the son most open to talking about reform and as a family member with strong links to the UK.
Response to Events in Libya

15. The protests which led to the revolution in Libya began in Benghazi on 15 February, and spread to neighbouring towns over the following few days. Demonstrations in Tripoli began on 19 February. In response to deteriorating civil order and the end of commercial flight services, the United Kingdom evacuated 800 British nationals. The United Kingdom also provided humanitarian support to repatriate 12,700 people from the borders and evacuate 4,800 people from Misrata. Many other third countries carried out similar evacuations. Shortly after this, the Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) was established on 5 March, and, on 6 March, the Qadhafi regime began military action against the demonstrators and the NTC.

Political Response

16. The United Kingdom took an active role in leading the international response to the crisis from its earliest stages, including through consultations with partner countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and in early multilateral discussions. The United Kingdom co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 1970 of 26 February, which called for an immediate end to violence, imposed an arms embargo and travel ban and referred the situation in Libya since 15 February to the International Criminal Court (ICC). It was the first unanimous Security Council referral of a situation to the ICC.

17. In response to continuing military action against unarmed civilians by the Qadhafi regime, on 12 March the Arab League requested that the UN Security Council impose a no-fly zone on Libya. In direct response to this request, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 on 17 March, establishing a no fly zone, mandating “all necessary measures” for the protection of civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in Libya, and extending the sanctions measures. The UN remained actively engaged on Libya throughout the conflict, with regular Security Council discussion of the situation on the ground. The UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Libya, Abdel-Elah al-Khatib, worked alongside others, including the African Union, to try to find a political solution, while the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy on Post-Conflict Planning for Libya, Ian Martin, coordinated the UN’s pre deployment and stabilisation planning.

18. Beyond the United Nations, the United Kingdom was also active in convening wider international support for action to protect the civilian population of Libya. We convened the London Conference of more than forty countries with interests in the resolution of the conflict in Libya on 29 March, and co-chaired the first meeting of the UK-conceived Contact Group with Qatar in Doha on 13 April. The London Conference and Contact Groups presented a unified international voice on Libya. This was re-enforced in a joint opinion editorial by the Prime Minister with President Obama and President Sarkozy on 15 April, which set out the essential demands made of the Qadhafi regime. The United Kingdom also continued to take action bilaterally with both the Qadhafi regime and the emerging NTC, applying pressure to the Qadhafi regime, and offering support to the NTC.

19. The conflict between the Qadhafi regime and the people of Libya turned decisively in August, as pro-Qadhafi forces began to cede control of areas in western Libya. On 22 August, NTC forces took control of Tripoli and the remaining elements of the Qadhafi regime fell back to Sirte and a handful of other remaining strongholds. The United Kingdom responded by emphasising its support of the NTC, including through its active participation in the Paris Conference on 1 September, and through the visit of the Prime Minister jointly with President Sarkozy of France to Tripoli and Benghazi on 15 September. On 16 September, the UK sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 2009 which established the UN Support Mission in Libya to support stabilisation in Libya, modified the asset freeze on four key listed state entities, provided for a new exemption to unfreeze their assets and mandated the Sanctions Committee to lift the remaining freeze as soon as practical (in consultation with the Libyan authorities). Lord Green visited Tripoli on 26 September to emphasise UK support for the revival of the Libyan economy through trading links.

20. Following the fall of Sirte, the last remaining stronghold of support for Qadhafi, and the capture of Qadhafi himself on 20 October, the NTC made its Declaration of Liberation on 23 October. In response, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2016, which ended the mandate for the use of all necessary measures to protect the civilian population of Libya, and lifted the no-fly zone, on 31 October.

UK Engagement with Libya

21. British Embassy operations in Tripoli were suspended on 26 February following the evacuation of UK nationals. On their return to the UK, Richard Northern, the Ambassador, and other members of the Embassy were incorporated into the FCO’s Libya Unit, where they played an important role in providing expert knowledge to both the FCO and Whitehall, delivering messages to those elements of the Libyan government in contact with the international community, and liaising with the developing opposition, both inside Libya and abroad.

22. The FCO first sought to re-establish a presence in Libya in March. As the Foreign Secretary informed the House on 7 March a small British diplomatic team travelled to eastern Libya to build on initial contacts and to assess the scope for closer diplomatic dialogue. The team was withdrawn after a serious misunderstanding about its role. We established relations with the NTC through the establishment of a British diplomatic mission in Benghazi headed by an experienced Arabic-speaking diplomat, Christopher Prentice, on 28 March. Sir John Jenkins, most recently Ambassador to Baghdad, took over the leadership of the Mission
and a UK office was established in Tripoli on 5 September. Operating out of temporary offices at a commercial hotel, the FCO established a cross-Whitehall team of political, commercial and assistance officers to liaise with the new Libyan authorities there. This included political staff, a UK-based commercial officer and representatives of DFID and the Stabilisation Unit. The Foreign Secretary formally re-opened the Embassy in Tripoli on 17 October, and Dominic Asquith, formerly Ambassador to Cairo, took over as the UK Ambassador to Tripoli in mid-November.

23. Following the attack on the British Embassy on 30 April, the Foreign Secretary expelled the Libyan Ambassador to the United Kingdom (an appointee of the Qadhafi regime). The Prime Minister received Chairman Abdul Jalil of the NTC in London on 12 May, and the Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State for International Development visited Benghazi on 4 June. In July, the NTC published their Constitutional Declaration, which made clear their plans for a new, inclusive and democratic government for Libya. On 27 July, the United Kingdom announced that it had decided to recognise the NTC as the sole governmental authority in Libya.

MILITARY RESPONSE

24. UN Security Council Resolution 1973 of 17 March authorised the use of all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in Libya, enforcement of the no-fly zone, and measures to enforce the arms embargo. This was the basis for the use of force to do so. The North Atlantic Council began planning immediately to enforce the arms embargo. Under US command, the US, UK and France took action from 19 March to ensure the UN-mandated no fly zone. NATO ships began operating in the Central Mediterranean to ensure the flow of weapons to Libya by sea was cut off on 23 March. On 24 March, NATO took over enforcement of the no-fly zone. On 27 March, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen announced that NATO Allies would implement “all aspects” of the UN Security Council Resolution through Operation Unified Protector. Every mission was planned with precision and care taken to avoid civilian casualties. NATO operations achieved a high record of accuracy. Altogether, between the commencement of NATO air operations on 31 March, and the end of Operation Unified Protector on 31 October, 26,400 sorties were flown over Libya, of which approximately 18,000 were fast jet sorties. Seventeen nations provided aircraft or maritime assets, and 34 nations either provided or offered support, including military, allowing overflights, logistical or financial support and humanitarian relief.

25. The House of Commons voted on 21 March, 557 to 13 in favour of military action to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1973. United Kingdom forces played an important role in these NATO operations. UK aircraft and attack helicopters conducted approximately 3,000 sorties. Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Army Air Corps strikes damaged or destroyed over 1,300 former regime targets that represented a threat to the Libyan people. UK warships have helped to enforce the arms embargo, brought aid to those in need and conducted maritime demining activities. At its peak, some 2,300 British service men and women were deployed on related operations with 36 aircraft, including 16 Tornados (plus four available from the UK), six Typhoons, five attack helicopters, refuelling tankers, specialist surveillance aircraft and helicopters, supported over the course of the conflict by 13 vessels (five destroyers and frigates, two mine counter measure vessels, one helicopter carrier, three RFA supply ships and two submarines).

ECONOMIC RESPONSE

26. The United Kingdom’s economic response to events in Libya was designed, firstly, to restrict the Qadhafi regime’s access to funds in order to undermine its ability to sustain attacks on civilians and, secondly, to help the NTC meet urgent financing needs.

27. The UK proposed that UNSCR 1970 should impose an asset freeze on Qadhafi, members of his regime and key Libyan entities which provided finance for the regime’s war effort. The freeze was implemented in the UK by an Order in Council ensuring that it came into effect over the course of a weekend, and EU implementing and autonomous measures followed a week after the UN listings. The UK worked to ensure that the sanctions were progressively tightened with new listings at the UN and EU and to maximise impact, the FCO network was used to press for robust enforcement of the sanctions by member states. The ban on providing any economic resources to the listed individuals and entities had a particularly significant impact on cutting the availability of oil to the Qadhafi war effort.

28. As the NTC’s financing need became critical and it was clear that there was no possibility of sustainable income from oil and gas in the short term, the UK led international thinking on establishing a mechanism to provide funds for the NTC. At the Contact Group in Doha, it was agreed that a Temporary Financing Mechanism (TFM) should be created. The UK provided the funding to prepare the TFM and to establish operating procedures that would provide confidence that there was transparent and independent oversight of the funds, and that they would be used in accordance with the relevant UNSCRs. The TFM has been used to provide a range of critical financial support, including the import of refined fuel, the treatment of injured Libyans, and family support payments to Libyans who had depended on government welfare payments.

29. The UK also worked to make available Libyan frozen assets. After the fall of Tripoli, the UK secured agreement from the UN Sanctions Committee to release around £1 billion worth of Libyan bank notes that had been printed in the UK prior to the crisis and frozen in accordance with the asset freeze. The first tranche of
bank notes were flown into Benghazi by the RAF on 31 August and were the first unfrozen Libyan physical assets to reach Libya, providing an essential injection of cash into the economy. Work then shifted to plan for a new UNSCR to set a framework for a broader unfreezing of assets. The UK led discussions in New York to negotiate UNSCR 2009 that immediately lifted the sanctions against oil companies so that there was no block to resuming oil trade. The resolution also modified the freeze against key state entities in order that they could engage in transactions. This approach ensured there was the necessary flexibility to meet financing needs whilst managing the risks posed by wholesale unfreezing of significant state assets whilst a new government was being formed.

Consular Response

30. FCO posts must hold a Post Emergency Plan, which covers potential consular disasters that the post may need to handle. Due to its risk rating, the Embassy in Libya also held a Civil Contingency Plan to cover evacuations. HMG evacuated British nationals from Libya between 23 February and 1 March. The Embassy had discussed these plans with Consular Crisis Department on 17 February 2011.

31. Libya was the most complex FCO-led evacuation in recent years, involving combined commercial charter and military operations. Over 800 British nationals were evacuated by the UK, and over 1,000 nationals from over 50 countries. The Foreign Secretary commissioned an internal FCO Review of Consular Evacuation Procedures on 23 February, which included the Libyan evacuation. The Review was deposited in the Library of the House on 4 July (ref no. DEP2011–1114). This Review gives a detailed account of the evacuation from Libya and the FCO’s systems for crisis preparedness and response, and contains a number of recommendations for improving these. The Foreign Secretary has instructed that the Review’s recommendations should be implemented by the end of 2011 and the Crisis Management Department of the FCO’s Consular Directorate has established a Crisis Project team to take this work forward.

Transition

32. Libya’s National Transitional Council (NTC) made clear its plan for a transition to democracy in its Constitutional Declaration published in July. This transition began on 23 October with the Declaration of Liberation by the NTC following the fall of Sirte and the capture of Qadhafi. It provided for the following key milestones:
   — the appointment of a Transitional Government within 30 days of the Declaration of Liberation;
   — elections to a National Congress within eight months of the Declaration of Liberation which will draft a new constitution, and
   — democratic elections for a new government within 20 months of the Declaration of Liberation.

33. The first of these milestones was achieved with the appointment of Abdurrahim al-Kib as Prime Minister of the Transitional Government on 31 October, and of the full Transitional Government on 22 November.

34. The NTC said from the outset that they wanted to build a new Libya based on respect for human rights and to make a clean break from the horrors of the former Qadhafi regime. The Constitutional Declaration laid out their commitment to human rights and their desire to form an inclusive government. Prime Minister Abdurrahim al-Kib reiterated this following his appointment, stating that the new Libya would be built on human rights and the rule of law. The formation of the Transitional Government on 22 November provides the Libyan authorities with the opportunity to convert their promises into clear action in support of human rights.

35. Reviving economic life in Libya and sustaining living standards will be central to the Transitional Government’s ability to maintain the goodwill dividend from the revolution and to secure a stable and peaceful transition. Estimates suggest that before the crisis Libya had built up reserves of $152 billion much of which was invested overseas and then frozen as a result of UN and EU sanctions. Releasing these assets to Libya in a measured, transparent and accountable way will provide a short term injection of funds to facilitate normal economic activity. However, 90% of the pre-crisis government revenue derived from hydrocarbons. Returning oil and gas production to previous levels will provide the most sustainable source of revenue for Libya. In the longer term, the extent to which the Libyan government is able to reform the corrupt, unequal and state-dirigiste system of the Qadhafi regime, will be an important factor in sustaining growth and securing a stable transition in which all Libyans have a stake.

36. The NTC have throughout their existence been firm that the transition must be a Libyan-led process. We agree that it must be for the Libyan people to decide their own future, and especially their own political future. But that is not to say that there is not assistance we can usefully provide at the grassroots level in a country which has not had political parties or elections before.

Policy towards Islamists

37. Islamist groups will play an important role in the new Libya. Extremists however will likely be a minority within these groupings. Libya is implementing a democratic system and as such Islamists may well gain a voice. Islam in Libya in general is moderate, and the Libyan people pious. Extremism and extremist views have not gained much traction previously. It will be important to ensure the distinction between political Islam and extremism is not confused.
38. The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and the main Islamists who hold (or held) more extreme views and links with extremist groups including the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group have all publicly committed to a democratic process, rule of law, inclusivity and human rights. They are absent from the Transitional Government. But it is likely we will see them play a role as a political party in the coming months. As elsewhere in the region, HMG will judge its engagement with such groups and parties in accordance with their respect for these principles.

UK ASSISTANCE TO THE TRANSITION

39. The Libyan authorities’ stabilisation planning set clear priorities. These included elections, security, and public financial management. They have emphasised their desire for technical assistance from the international community, not aid. Early planning by the UK-led International Stabilisation Response Team (ISRT) fed into a National Transitional Council (NTC) “Stabilisation Plan”.

40. UK support is delivered in response to Libyan led requests; in coordination with the UN, in sectors where the UK can add value and expertise and in coordination with other international partners. In the short term, the UK is assisting the Transitional Government and the multilateral agencies with addressing immediate needs, including in policing. The UK Senior Police Adviser has been providing strategic advice and support to the Ministry of Interior and the UN Support Mission in Libya.

41. HMG has committed to make funds available to support the transition from two funds: the Conflict Pool and the Arab Partnership Fund. The former is a tri-lateral (MOD/FCO/DFID) fund that focuses on core conflict issues and the latter focuses on longer term political and economic reform programmes. Libya has the potential for a viable and strong economy relatively quickly, and we anticipate that our funding will provide short-term focused programmes where we can add the most value to government and civil society. As part of this, we have already part funded a National Women’s Conference.

42. UN Security Council Resolution 2017 was adopted on 31 October, expressing concern at the proliferation of arms and related material, in particular man-portable surface-to-air missiles (MANPADs), and calling on the Libyan authorities to take steps to counter proliferation, to continue their close coordination with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), with the aim of destroying chemical weapons stockpiles. Programmes for which the UK has offered immediate assistance include action to locate and disable the MANPADS that the Qadhafi regime dispersed across Libya; financial assistance to UN de-mining work in Libya; and assistance to the OPCW. From the onset, the United Kingdom took a leadership role in responding to the crisis through its role in the UN and in leading the humanitarian response with the US, Australia and the EU. The UK was one of the first to respond and support the ICRC and other specialised agencies such as IMC, UNICEF and the WHO. This included support for the provision of doctors, medical supplies, medical equipment and food. The Prime Minister announced during his September visit to Tripoli that facilities would be made available in the UK for the treatment of 50 severely injured casualties of the conflict. The Foreign Secretary followed this up in his October visit with an offer to make available facilities for up to 50 more amputee casualties of the conflict to receive specialist and prosthetic treatment in the UK.

STRENGTHENING THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND RESOLVING BILATERAL ISSUES

43. During Alistair Burt’s visit to Libya on 6–8 December, the UK and Libya discussed taking forward a strengthened bilateral relationship. Importantly, this will provide a framework for co-operation in resolving bilateral issues dating from the Qadhafi era including the ongoing police investigations into the killing of WPC Yvonne Fletcher and the Lockerbie bombing and Qadhafi’s support to the IRA. Whilst recognising that the Transitional Government needs time to establish itself, Mr Burt emphasised the importance of making early progress on these issues. As soon as the situation stabilises, we will be agreeing the structure through which to take bilateral engagement forward, including through further Ministerial engagement in the new year. In the meantime we are working on issues of interest to both sides including support for stabilisation, trade and commercial relations, the formation of democratic political institutions, the protection of human rights and promotion of reconciliation, education, reform of the justice sector, and security, defence and foreign policy cooperation.

MULTILATERAL ASSISTANCE TO THE TRANSITION

44. The UK has and will continue to work closely with international organisations to support the Libyan people in achieving their ambitions for a free, democratic State. International organisations have played a key role on Libya since the start.

45. The London Conference on Libya in March established the UN at the forefront of the international stabilisation agenda. This was reiterated at the Libya Contact Group meeting in Paris in September when the UN, EU, IMF and World Bank agreed to share the technical elements of assessing the stabilisation needs in Libya under an overall UN coordinated approach. Following the fall of Tripoli, UN Security Council Resolution 2009 of 16 September provided for the establishment of a UN mission to support the post-conflict stabilisation of Libya and requested the IMF and World Bank work with the Libyan authorities on assessing the Libyan public financial management framework. UN Security Council Resolution 2022 of 2 December extended the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya until 16 March 2012.
46. The UK will continue to work alongside the UN, EU, IMF, World Bank, Arab League, ICC and others to provide technical expertise and to support Libya’s efforts in areas such as restoring public security and promoting the rule of law, establishing inclusive political dialogue and electoral processes, initiating economic recovery and protecting human rights.

Risks to the Transition

47. Libya has emerged from a forty-two year period of dictatorship and its emergent democracy will face many challenges as a result. Developing a stable, multi-party democracy will take time, given that there were no pre-existing political parties, electoral processes or an inclusive parliamentary system. Our assessment is, however, that there is strong political will to make this transition. Success will depend on a number of factors:

- keeping to the timetable of the Constitutional Declaration, including the drafting of an election law, National Congress elections, the drafting of a new Constitution and its approval in a referendum, leading to legislative elections and the inaugural Parliament. The timetable is ambitious. Drafting the “new constitution” will also need to be an inclusive process, including participation of minorities and other voices in society such as women and youth;

- the effectiveness of the Transitional Government, which is newly appointed and includes many technocrats. It will be the lynch pin of the move from Revolution to post conflict stabilisation and democracy. Their challenge is to maintain the momentum of the Constitutional Declaration and crucially put in place the governmental infrastructures to restore normal daily life;

- access to funds, including through unfreezing assets and re-starting the economy. This will be a key factor in the Transitional Government’s continued popular support, and a key indicator of its effectiveness;

- providing security, including through disarming the militias and restructuring the security apparatus. This will be an immediate goal for the Transitional Government. It will be important to show the young revolutionaries they will have a role and voice in the new Libya, and

- progress on human rights. During the eight month conflict, international NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documented cases of arbitrary arrest, mistreatment of prisoners and minorities, and the discovery of mass graves, attributed to both pro- and anti-Qadhafi forces. During the conflict, the NTC published and distributed the Geneva Conventions to the armed revolutionaries so that they could familiarise themselves with the laws of war.

48. The killing of General Younis at the beginning of the conflict and the perceived delay in announcing the findings of the investigation into his death has been the source of criticism of the NTC. This will need to be resolved rapidly the potential to cause ongoing tension. It will be essential for the credibility of the new Libyan authorities that a full and transparent investigation is carried out: one former NTC Minister now faces criminal charges in relation to the killing. There are also concerns about the treatment of vulnerable minorities and in particular sub-Saharan Africans, with reports of arbitrary detention and score settling. We have urged the Libyan authorities to ensure that minorities are adequately protected.

49. Many suspected pro-Qadhafi forces remain in detention without due process. Many detainees were released but Amnesty estimate there are still around 7,000 people in detention. We have raised this with the Libyan authorities and pressed for the establishment of a robust judicial process to deal with those detained and that those accused must receive a fair trial and have access to adequate legal representation.

50. The 42 year history of repression under the Qadhafi regime means there is a lack of experience of human rights norms in Libya. Embedding these principles in Libyan society will take time. Reports of reprisals and the unclear circumstances of Qadhafi’s death should be viewed in this light. The UK has raised concerns over human rights issues and the Libyan authorities have made clear that they intend to take concrete steps to investigate alleged abuses and prevent any further abuses taking place. The way in which the Libyan authorities have dealt with the capture of Saif al-Islam, focussing on the need to ensure he receives a fair trial in line with international standards and co-operating with the ICC, as well as their continued public commitment to upholding human rights, is an encouraging signal that the Libyan government intends to adhere to international human rights standards in the future. The Transitional Government will require international support on the practical steps that can be taken to embed respect for human rights throughout the judicial and political process. The return of Libya to the Human Rights Council provides the framework to enable this to happen. Libya’s co-operation with the UN Commission of Inquiry is a further signal of their intent to deal with the outstanding human rights issues and commit to upholding human rights in the future.

Looking Forward

51. The Prime Minister has said on several occasions, our intervention in Libya was necessary, legal and right. Qadhafi’s violence against his own civilians necessitated international action to protect them. The UK played a key part in shaping the international response and providing the resources to ensure that the multifaceted response was effective. HMG remains committed to supporting the Libyan people in realising their aspirations. There remains much to do to ensure that the new government is able to ensure its monopoly of security, and to take forward political transition and economic generation.
52. Keeping up the momentum and developing a new partnership between Libya and the UK is in our mutual interest. For the Libyans there is much to gain through the establishment of democratic rule and respect for human rights, addressing the damage done through decades of misrule. For the wider region, Libya can serve as a model for reform and play a constructive role in the Arab League and African Union. And, for the UK, a new partnership has much to deliver in achieving reconciliation over Libya’s historic support for terrorism in Northern Ireland and ongoing co-operation in a number of key fields including education, health, security, migration and trade.

13 December 2011
## Libya: The Arab Spring—Timeline of Key Events and UK Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key Events in Country</th>
<th>International Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 February</td>
<td>Start of uprising in Benghazi. Arrest of Fathi Terbil widely credited as trigger for protests that led to Libyan revolution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16–17 February</td>
<td>Demonstrations spread to other towns in Libya.</td>
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<td>19 February</td>
<td>First demonstrations in Tripoli.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 February</td>
<td>General Younis defects. Became commander of NTC forces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 February</td>
<td>Gadhafi’s televised speech to nation. Urges his supporters to go out and attack the “cockroaches” demonstrating against his rule.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 February</td>
<td>Travel advice changed to recommend against all but essential travel to Libya (except Tripoli).</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 February</td>
<td>Travel advice amended to recommend against all but essential travel to all Libya. British Nationals (BNs) advised to leave by commercial means if safe to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 February</td>
<td>FCO moves quickly to establish Libya Crisis Unit, drawing in over 50 FCO officials, ensuring adequate staffing 24 hours a day.</td>
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<td>UK leads push for special session of Human Rights Council and subsequent resolution condemning Libyan regime’s actions and an independent international commission of inquiry for Libya. Calls on General Assembly to consider Libyan suspension from the HRC.</td>
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<td>Foreign Secretary (FS) at GAC/FAC—discussed Libya.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 February</td>
<td>Prime Minister (PM) calls COBR. COBR meets, chaired by FS.</td>
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<td>Stabilisation Unit tasked by MOD and Cabinet Office to facilitate early scenario planning, which later formed the basis for much of the subsequent post-conflict stabilisation and recovery planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 February</td>
<td>In constant touch with EU partners and allies over all arrangements.</td>
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<td>UN Human Rights Council votes to suspend Libya’s membership because of gross human rights violations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 February</td>
<td>UK-drafted UNSCR 1970 unanimously adopted.</td>
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<td>FS speaks to Musa Kusa about closure of Embassy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>UK Embassy closes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>Special Privy Council session held to approve freezing of Qadhafi assets, five of his family members, people acting for them or on their behalf, and entities owned or controlled by them.</td>
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<td>Treasury/HMRC block shipment of £900 million in banknotes destined for Libya.</td>
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<td>Government revokes Qadhafi’s immunity as a Head of State so neither he nor his family may freely enter UK any more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 February</td>
<td>UN estimates more than 100,000 people have fled across the Tunisian and Egyptian borders.</td>
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<td>28 February</td>
<td>PM delivers first statement on Libya to House of Commons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EU adopts Council Decision imposing visa ban, asset freeze, including wider group of individuals, banning them from entering EU. Wider arms embargo on Libyan regime imposed, including equipment for internal repression.</td>
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<td>FS attends Geneva Human Rights Council to press for Libya’s UN suspension from HRC ahead of a 1 March vote.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 March</td>
<td>EU Regulation agreed. Quickest ever delivery of a full EU sanctions package.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EU Political and Security Committee discuss Libya situation, including humanitarian support and upping pressure on Qadhafi.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Libya suspended from Human Rights Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 March</td>
<td>NAC met to discuss Libya.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 March</td>
<td>NAC tasking on Libya produced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 March</td>
<td>NTC established and convenes first meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>Qadhafi counteroffensive, retaking Ras Lanuf and Brega. Pushing towards Ajdabiya and Benghazi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 March</td>
<td>Small British diplomatic team travelled to eastern Libya to build on initial contacts and to assess the scope for closer diplomatic dialogue. Team withdrawn after serious misunderstanding about its role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 March</td>
<td>NATO steps up Central Mediterranean surveillance operations.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>- NAC Initiating Directive (NID) on Libya supporting Humanitarian Assistance (HA)</td>
<td>- NAC Initiating Directive (NID) on Libya supporting Humanitarian Assistance (HA) and enforcement of the Arms Embargo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March</td>
<td>- NAC Defence Ministers meet in Brussels and approve NIDs on Libya (HA and Embargo)</td>
<td>- NAC Defence Ministers meet in Brussels and approve NIDs on Libya (HA and Embargo).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 March</td>
<td>- AU Peace and Security Council meet in Addis, establish AU ad hoc Committee on Libya.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 March</td>
<td>- Arab League requests UNSC to impose a No Fly Zone.</td>
<td>- Arab League requests UNSC to impose a No Fly Zone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>- NATO Secretary General calls for an immediate cease-fire.</td>
<td>- NATO Secretary General calls for an immediate cease-fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 March</td>
<td>- CONOPS on Arms Embargo produced; NAC tasked conclusion of all planning (NFZ and</td>
<td>- CONOPS on Arms Embargo produced; NAC tasked conclusion of all planning (NFZ and Embargo).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- PM delivers second statement on Libya to House of Commons.</td>
<td>- NATO ships and aircraft began operating in Central Mediterranean to implement arms embargo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 March</td>
<td>- Qadhafi’s forces enter outskirts of Benghazi with tanks from west and south.</td>
<td>- NATO ships and aircraft began operating in Central Mediterranean to implement arms embargo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 March</td>
<td>- UK MPs vote 557 to 13 in favour of military action to implement UNSCR 1973.</td>
<td>- UK MPs vote 557 to 13 in favour of military action to implement UNSCR 1973.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 March</td>
<td>- NAC approved NAC Implementing Directive (NID) on Arms Embargo, launching operation</td>
<td>- NAC approved NAC Implementing Directive (NID) on Arms Embargo, launching operation to enforce arms embargo against Libya. OPLAN on NFZ approved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 March</td>
<td>- NATO ships and aircraft began operating in Central Mediterranean to implement arms</td>
<td>- NATO ships and aircraft began operating in Central Mediterranean to implement arms embargo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>- NATO decides to enforce UN-mandated no-fly zone over Libya.</td>
<td>- NATO decides to enforce UN-mandated no-fly zone over Libya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 March</td>
<td>- NATO Secretary General Rasmussen announced NATO Allies would implement all aspects</td>
<td>- NATO Secretary General Rasmussen announced NATO Allies would implement all aspects of UN resolution—“nothing more, nothing less” to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under attack or threat of attack from Qadhafi regime.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in Country</td>
<td>International Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 March</td>
<td>British diplomatic mission established in Benghazi, led by Christopher Prentice.</td>
<td>29 March[2][3][4] London Conference on Libya. Over 40 countries attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 March[2][3][4] Musa Kusa (Libyan Foreign Minister) defects. Arrives in UK.</td>
<td>30 March[2][3][4] FS announces expulsion of five diplomats from Libyan Embassy.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 March[2][3][4] NATO takes command of Coalition air operations in Libya. Subsequent operations carried out as part of Op Unified Protector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10–11 April</td>
<td>AU ad hoc Committee visit Tripoli and Benghazi.</td>
<td>10–11 April[2][3][4] AU ad hoc Committee visit Tripoli and Benghazi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 April</td>
<td>First meeting of Libya Contact Group in Doha. UK/Qatar co-chair.</td>
<td>13 April[2][3][4] First meeting of Libya Contact Group in Doha. UK/Qatar co-chair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April</td>
<td>First meeting of Cairo Group of International Organizations (UN, EU, Arab League, AU and OIC).</td>
<td>14 April[2][3][4] First meeting of Cairo Group of International Organizations (UN, EU, Arab League, AU and OIC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April</td>
<td>Foreign ministers from NATO Allies and non-NATO contributors meet in Berlin.</td>
<td>15 April[2][3][4] Foreign ministers from NATO Allies and non-NATO contributors meet in Berlin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 April</td>
<td>Joint article in the Times, le Monde and International Herald Tribune from PM, President Sarkozy and President Obama underlines their joint commitment that Qadhafi must “go and go for good.”</td>
<td>19 April[2][3][4] Joint article in the Times, le Monde and International Herald Tribune from PM, President Sarkozy and President Obama underlines their joint commitment that Qadhafi must “go and go for good.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 April</td>
<td>Subsequent attacks on British and other Embassies.</td>
<td>30 April[2][3][4] Subsequent attacks on British and other Embassies.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UN pulls out Tripoli staff.</td>
<td>30 April[2][3][4] UN pulls out Tripoli staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 May[2][3][4] FS announces decision to expel the Libyan Ambassador following attack on British Embassy premises in Tripoli.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 May[2][3][4] FS orders expulsion of two more diplomats from the Libyan Embassy in London.</td>
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<td>5 May[2][3][4] Libya Contact Group meets in Rome. Qatar and Italy co-chair.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in Country</td>
<td>International Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 May</td>
<td></td>
<td>NTC Chairman Abdul Jalil visits London. PM calls NTC “the legitimate political interlocutor in Libya and Britain’s primary partner there.” Invites NTC to establish an office in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 May</td>
<td></td>
<td>Following Libya Contact Group meets in Rome, the UK co-ordinated and provided the operating platform for an International Stabilisation Response Team, which was deployed to Benghazi from 20 May to 9 June.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 May</td>
<td></td>
<td>NATO warplanes bomb more than 20 targets in Tripoli. Described as heaviest attack on city since campaign began.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2011</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 June</td>
<td></td>
<td>FS and Development Secretary visit Benghazi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 June</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 July</td>
<td></td>
<td>UK provides uniforms and high-visibility vests to NTC in Benghazi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 July</td>
<td></td>
<td>General Younis killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 June</td>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights Council “welcomes the statements made by the Libyan National Transitional Council on its commitment to uphold international human rights law”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23–30 June</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27 June</td>
<td></td>
<td>International Criminal Court (ICC) issues arrest warrant for Qadhafi, his son Saif al-Islam and Head of Intelligence Abdullah Senussi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 July</td>
<td></td>
<td>Libya Contact Group meets in Istanbul. Recognises NTC as the “legitimate governing authority in Libya”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in Country</td>
<td>International Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 July</td>
<td></td>
<td>UK announces decision to recognise NTC as legitimate governmental authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 July</td>
<td></td>
<td>UK provide communications equipment for NTC police.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 July</td>
<td></td>
<td>NTC announce investigation into death of General Younis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2011</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>UK deliver body armour and uniforms to NTC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13–14 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-Qadhafi forces make gains in the West, taking Ghariyan and much of Zawiya, cutting supply routes to pro-Qadhafi forces and pressuring Tripoli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tripoli falls to NTC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>NTC seize Qadhafi’s compound in Bab al-Azizia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Istanbul Contact Group Meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>At Foreign Minister’s Arab League meeting, NTC take Libyan seat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qadhafi’s wife Safia Farkash, sons Muhammed and Hannibal, daughter Aisha and her family cross into Algeria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>RAF fly first bank notes (280 million dinars) to Benghazi. First physical unfrozen Libyan assets to reach Libya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 2011</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paris Conference on Libya. Co-chaired by PM and President Sarkozy. NTC Chairman Abdul Jalil and over 60 countries attend, alongside international organisations. Agree Operation Unified Protector would continue for as long as necessary, but not a moment longer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in Country</td>
<td>International Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 September</td>
<td>UK Special Representative establishes offices in Tripoli.</td>
<td>5 September PM delivers fourth statement on Libya to House of Commons. He notes “the future of Libya belongs to its people”;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 September</td>
<td>PM and Sarkozy visit Tripoli and Benghazi.</td>
<td>15 September Travel advice updated, against all but essential travel to some areas, including Benghazi. Against travel everywhere else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 September</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 September UNSCR 2009 agreed by consensus. Establishes UN mission in Libya and creates mechanism for unfreezing assets. Leaves mandate to protect civilians in place. UNGA vote in favour of NTC taking up Libyan seat at UN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 September</td>
<td>Lord Green visits Tripoli to discuss UK’s role in rebuilding Libya.</td>
<td>21 September NATO extended Op Unified Protector for up to 90 days, noting its intention to regularly review the necessity for sustained operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2011</td>
<td>FS visits Tripoli and formally re-opens UK Embassy.</td>
<td>22 September First Libyan casualty for treatment arrives in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 October</td>
<td>Col Qadhafi is captured and dies.</td>
<td>27 September UKTI host conference in London on investment opportunities in Libya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 October</td>
<td>NTC declares Libya officially “Liberated”, and announces plans to hold elections within 8 months.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October</td>
<td>Appointment of Abdurrahim al-Kib as Prime Minister of the Transitional Government.</td>
<td>24 October PM delivers fifth statement on Libya to House of Commons.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27 October UNSCR 2016 decides no fly zone and authorisation for all necessary measures to protect Libyan civilians shall terminate 31 October.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 October NATO declares Operation Unified Protector officially over.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 October UNSCR 2017 calls on the Libyan authorities, with international assistance, to take steps to prevent the proliferation of weapons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key Events in Country</td>
<td>International Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>21 November</td>
<td>2 November</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>— Saif al-Islam, Qadhafi’s second son and an ICC indictee is captured.</td>
<td>— Last NSC (L) meeting. FCO assume Whitehall coordination lead.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Appointment of full Transitional Government.</td>
<td>— Dominic Asquith appointed as UK Ambassador to Libya.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Libya rejoins Human Rights Commission.</td>
<td>— Minister Burt arrives in Tripoli on the first visit to Libya by a UK Minister since the formation of the Transitional Government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6 December</td>
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</table>
Supplementary written evidence from Dr Eugene Rogan, Director, Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford

Many thanks for your kind letter of 6 December. I was honoured to be invited to give evidence to your committee and found the experience entirely rewarding.

There is so much more we could have discussed on the events of the past year in the Arab world. Given your inquiry’s investigation into the relative balance between British interests and values in the policies pursued during the Arab Spring, there is one question I would have raised had time permitted:

**Will the British Government, and the governments of other countries that took part in the NATO-led intervention in Libya, request payment from the new government of Libya for the expenses they incurred between 19 March and the conclusion of Operation Unified Protector on 31 October 2011?**

You may recall that, in the aftermath of the Desert Storm Gulf War to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi invasion, coalition forces recovered the expenses of that war from the governments of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Also, in the aftermath of that war, the US, Britain and other countries that took a leading part in Desert Storm secured important contracts for major sales of civilian and military hardware to their Gulf allies (eg President Clinton’s personal lobbying to sell Boeing aircraft to the Saudi national airline).

With tens of billions of dollars in frozen Libyan assets held in the United States and Europe, it would seem entirely reasonable for the cash-strapped governments of those who contributed to Operation Unified Protector to recoup their expenses from the new government of Libya. Given the expenses Britain and America in particular have incurred in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the need to recover their outlays in Libya seem all the more reasonable. Yet the implications of such a request for your investigation into the balance between British interests and values would be quite significant.

If Britain, France, the US and their allies intervened in Libya expecting to recover their expenses, it might suggest that they intervened in Libya not just for humanitarian reasons, but because they believed they could do so at no cost to their governments. This might help explain why the Western powers have no intention of pursuing a no-fly zone in Syria, which lacks the resources to cover the very high expense of such an intervention.

If Britain, France, the US and their allies intervened in Libya in the expectation of being reimbursed, it might explain why a mission originally authorized as a no-fly zone to protect civilians evolved into a sustained attack on Qadhafi’s forces to assist in bringing about regime change—for surely the Qadhafi regime, had it survived, would never have agreed to pay the NATO powers for having assisted those who attempted his overthrow.

If Britain, France, the US and their allies seek preferential access to civil and military contracts in Libya in the aftermath of Operation Unified Protector, it will lead many in the Arab world to see the intervention in Libya as having been motivated by commercial interests rather than just humanitarian values.

I have asked these questions of a number of journalists and government figures over the past six months, and they all seemed surprised by the question. Yet given the historic precedent of the liberation of Kuwait, another oil-rich state, I would have thought it a natural question to ask.

That said, the NATO-led intervention in Libya was in every sense exceptional. We all will benefit from a complete understanding of the reasons for the West’s active support for the overthrow of the Qadhafi regime. Your inquiry seems a natural forum for addressing these issues.

I look forward to hearing more about your Committee’s investigations, and to reading your report in due course.

13 December 2011

Supplementary written evidence from Robin Lamb, Director General of the Libyan British Business Council and Executive Director of the Egyptian British Business Council

This supplementary note addresses two issues not fully covered by my evidence to the Committee. They address my understanding of the role of government as the basis of my view of the balance between the UK’s material and moral interests; and the role oil plays in the determination of policy.

**Role of Government**

The balance to be struck in the pursuit of the UK’s foreign policy should take account of the Government’s fundamental responsibility to secure the well-being of the British people by ensuring an adequate and affordable supply of food, fuel, shelter and their derivatives. This implies the maintenance of the political and economic conditions which allow the provision of education, health, housing, employment, welfare, external and internal security and protection of the person. These are the UK’s material interests. The Government should also

7 On 6 December 2011
pursue the UK’s moral interests overseas but should take the greatest care to ensure that it does not do so at the expense of its fundamental duties to the British people.

**The Role of Oil in Policy Formation**

It has been suggested during the Inquiry that UK, and presumably other international, intervention in the Libyan revolution was “all about oil”. This was raised during my appearance before the Inquiry and I do not believe I provided a sufficient reply. I therefore submit the following supplementary observations.

The suggestion that UK policy in the Middle East is determined by oil requires further definition. There is a spectrum of definition ranging from the proposition that the UK is seeking direct control of oil resources to the suggestion that it includes security of oil and other energy supplies in consideration of its policy. The suggestion that policy is determined solely by considerations of the UK’s oil requirements also implies that its broader economic and political interests are outweighed by, and may be risked in pursuit of, a single, key commodity.

The “imperialist” end of the spectrum can be easily dismissed. Contemporary suggestions that UK policy in other international crises in the Middle East was determined by a drive for direct control of oil resources have been shown to be a canard. It entirely ignored fundamental changes in the international system, and the structure of the international oil market, during the 20th century. The national oil resources of Kuwait and Iraq remain under the ownership and control of the sovereign Kuwaiti and Iraqi governments. It could not have been supposed otherwise and neither should it be credible in the case of Libya.

Another interpretation is that the UK and other NATO countries took action in support of the international oil industry or particular companies. If they had, they would have done so in spite of the experience of military action in Kuwait (1991) and Iraq (2003), neither of which have enhanced the position of an individual or group of international oil companies (IOCs) in either market. Hydrocarbons are the key natural resource of oil and gas exporting countries and since 1974 at least, a sovereign government has always been able to ensure that it, rather than the IOCs, controls these assets and their exploitation.

The involvement of IOCs in oil producing countries is today governed by commercial agreements negotiated by governments with individual companies. Any suggestion that these negotiations could be influenced by military action or the fundamental interests of an incoming government subordinated to some dependence on or gratitude for external support ignores several realities: these include the point that united military pressure or threat would need to be sustained throughout and beyond the negotiation of commercial agreements with a series of IOCs supported by disparate national governments; and that the internal political demands on an incoming government will outweigh its external relationships, except when its continued survival depends on external military support. Although a case may be made for this having been true in Iraq, it has been shown to be unsustainable there and it does not apply in Libya.

The suggestion that the UK took military action in Libya in order to obtain access to Libyan oil reserves also ignores other realities. Fifty IOCs, including BP and Shell, already operated in Libya under the Qadhafi regime. They did not need or look for military action to open a closed market.

Libya possesses the largest oil reserves in Africa, is the continent’s second largest producer and its oil is light, low in sulphur and commands a premium price. Many IOCs therefore bid for exploration and development agreements in the last licensing round (EPSA 4) in 2005. But many have since been disappointed by unsuccessful exploration and a number, including BG Group, have withdrawn from Libya as a result. Although there may yet be new oil and gas to be found in Libya, the prospects are less compelling than they seemed before 2005.

The UK is not dependent on Libyan oil. Although it imports oil from Libya, the value of these imports varies from year to year depending on the market and the volume of Libyan-sourced oil is only a fraction of total UK supplies. The price of oil is a much more significant factor for the UK economy and the price increase precipitated by the withdrawal of Libyan oil from the international market during 2011 was a negative effect of military action. Since policy makers will have recognized that a change in regime in Libya would not effect the UK supplies. The price of oil is a much more significant factor for the UK economy and the price increase precipitated by the withdrawal of Libyan oil from the international market during 2011 was a negative effect of military action. Since policy makers will have recognized that a change in regime in Libya would not effect the UK's oil requirements, including the supply of oil and gas, should justifiably be a factor, among others, in assessing our national response to an overseas challenge to their security. For example, a threat to the security of oil supplies from the Gulf, given its major share in international trade in oil, is a legitimate concern for the UK and the rest of the international community. This does not imply that a military response is appropriate but that a threat should receive a high degree of attention from policy makers who should identify steps to moderate or remove it. The more acute the threat, the more intense will be the policy responses considered.

Although I see no justification for the allegation that the UK’s oil interests dictate its foreign policy, our energy requirements, including the supply of oil and gas, should justifiably be a factor, among others, in assessing our national response to an overseas challenge to their security. For example, a threat to the security of oil supplies from the Gulf, given its major share in international trade in oil, is a legitimate concern for the UK and the rest of the international community. This does not imply that a military response is appropriate but that a threat should receive a high degree of attention from policy makers who should identify steps to moderate or remove it. The more acute the threat, the more intense will be the policy responses considered.

Against this background, I would expect the attention policy makers give to Gulf countries to be greater than that given to other territories, except when other considerations apply. But in view of the modest contribution

8 Afghanistan does not, of course, possess known oil resources and international action there demonstrates that other motivations than energy can lie behind foreign policy decisions. The same was true in Bosnia.
Libya makes to international oil supply (although not to price), I would not expect energy security to loom as large in consideration of policy towards Libya as it does towards the Gulf.

*1 February 2011*

Supplementary written evidence from Alistair Burt MP, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Foreign & Commonwealth Office

During my 18 April evidence session to the Foreign Affairs Committee, I agreed to write to Committee members with further information in three areas.

The Right Honourable Member for Cynon Valley Ann Clywd asked that I keep the Committee updated on progress in Egypt in pressing for women’s rights and on the new constitution.

**Women’s Rights in Egypt, and Samira Ibrahim**

We are aware that the Egyptian Army doctor accused of carrying out an examination of Samira Ibrahim was acquitted in March 2012 and I share your concerns about the incidents of virginity testing. Samira Ibrahim has stated that she will pursue the case through the international legal system. We have not raised her specific case, but we raise women’s rights issues as part of our wider dialogue on human rights with the Egyptian authorities. During my visit to Cairo from 11–13 March I emphasised that women’s participation is key to supporting transitions and building stability. I underlined to many of my interlocutors the importance of enshrining respect for human rights within the new constitution.

To address some of the causes of women’s under-representation in Egyptian politics, the Arab Partnership will provide support to female candidates running for election in the nationwide municipal elections at the end of 2012. This support will aim to provide women candidates and their campaigners with the skills they need to run effective campaigns. The support will continue in the form of mentoring for those women who are successful and become councillors. We hope that increasing representation at the local level can be used by Egyptian women as a springboard to greater national political participation, a key theme of the Arab Partnership. We have worked with project partners to ensure that gender issues are taken into account, for example, by ensuring that visits by political activists to the UK have gender-balanced participation.

Another project under the Arab Partnership aims to help civil society advocate and lobby for changes in the law and its implementation to allow more women to participate in the workforce, improve their working conditions, and reduce sexual harassment. The project includes pilot schemes to enable women to exercise more control over income and assets in the household through micro-credit, conditional cash transfers and promoting entrepreneurship. The results of this applied research will then be fed in to UN, Government and other donor programmes.

**The Egyptian Constituent Assembly**

The Constituent Assembly (CA) was elected on 24 March, but many of the liberal and secular parties walked out in protest at what they regarded as Islamist domination of the process and the nominees. On 10 April the Administrative Court suspended the CA following a lawsuit filed by activists and liberals. Negotiations are taking place among political parties to seek agreement over new criteria for selecting assembly members. The CA included a 6% female representation. The National Council for Women and several local women coalitions have requested an increase in female representation, and for it to be at least 30%.

**Arms Exports to Libya**

The Honourable Member for Ilford South, Mike Gapes asked if any of the large quantities of unexploded ordnance in and around conflict zones in Libya was sold to the previous Libyan regime by our Government.

FCO officials requested information from BIS on all licences approved for Libya between 2008–11 for military goods. No licences were approved for ordnance such as bombs, artillery shells, mines or missiles. Licences were approved for small arms ammunition and crowd control ammunition. Licences were also approved for ammunition for wall and door breaching projectile launchers but these projectiles are inert. Therefore my response to the Committee was accurate.

You may also be interested in HMG’s wider efforts to deal with the problem of unexploded ordnance in Libya. We see this as a priority because it poses a serious risk to millions of men, women and children across Libya and have committed £2.25 million to this task. The UK is supporting the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to help identify and dispose of unexploded material. UNMAS is working with the Libyan authorities’ mines clearance and risk awareness efforts, coordinating oversight of both the needs on the ground and those organisations working on this issue. This work will help protect over one million people in Libya from the dangers of these devices. In addition, we have worked with the government of the United States to destroy hundreds of Man Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) to improve security throughout Libya and the broader region.
8 May 2012

Letter from the Chair of the Committee to Rt Hon William Hague MP, First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

ALLEGATIONS OF BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN LIBYAN EXTRAORDINARY RENDITIONS

Last week, the Committee discussed the allegations made by the Libyan former rebel commander Abdul Hakim Belhadj. It is our understanding that Mr Belhadj has accused British government organisations and individuals of being complicit in his alleged extraordinary rendition to Libya, where he was allegedly imprisoned and tortured between 2004 and 2010. Another Libyan, Sami al-Saadi, has made similar allegations.

As you will know, the Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into British foreign policy and the “Arab Spring”, the focus of which includes Libya. You may also be aware that our predecessor committees have also considered the matter of rendition in a number of their human rights reports and other reports since 2004–05.

The Committee took the opportunity to ask Alistair Burt about the allegations when he appeared before us on Wednesday 18 April. I attach extracts from the transcript. Mr Burt professed himself to be limited as to what he could say on the matter. However, under the terms of the House’s sub judice resolution of 15 November 2001, “Civil proceedings are active when arrangements for the hearing, such as setting down a case for trial, have been made […]”. It is my understanding that no such arrangements have yet been made.

The Committee therefore asks:

— Could you please provide us with the information that you have concerning Mr Belhadj’s case, including a comment on the fax allegedly sent by Sir Mark Allen to Moussa Koussa, if necessary on a classified basis?
— Is the Government aware of any information to suggest that the UK Government has at any time consented to, or been a party to, the rendition of the individuals concerned?

I suggest a deadline of 14 May for a response—please let me know if you foresee difficulties in meeting this.

24 April 2012

Written evidence from Rt Hon William Hague MP, First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Thank you for your letter of 24 April relating to allegations of British involvement in Libyan extraordinary renditions and referring to the Committee’s evidence session with Alastair Burt on 18 April.

This is a very important issue and I have considered your request carefully. You will be aware that the Metropolitan Police is currently investigating the allegations which you raise in your letter. Pre-Action Letters have also been issued to the Government in relation to civil claims arising from these allegations. In the light of these ongoing processes, I regret that it would not be appropriate for my department to provide the information requested. Doing so might risk prejudicing either the investigation or the civil cases by sharing or commenting on information which could be central to them.

10 May 2012

Further written evidence from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office

MEMORANDUM IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO ITS ARAB SPRING INQUIRY

1. The FCO’s submission states that four members of staff were recruited to the Arab Human Development pilot team (later re-named the Arab Partnership) when it was established in late 2010. Please provide the months in which each of the four members of the team took up their posts.

— The Team Leader, appointed in October 2010, and the Deputy Team leader (the adviser referred to, on secondment from DFID), in January 2011, were joined also in January 2011 by a Programme Manager to lead the Arab Partnership Fund and a Programme Officer to administer the Fund.

9 See Qs 190–198
2. The FCO’s submission states that Arab Partnership work became a “top priority on the MENAD Directorate Business Plan” in May 2011. Did this change to the FCO's business plan apply to the 2011–12 financial year, or until 2015?

— “Responding to the Arab Spring and Promoting the Arab Partnership” became a top policy priority in MENAD’s Business Plan 2011–15, which applies up until 2015, though with annual rolling revision of the Business Plan.

3. The FCO’s submission refers to “an uplift in human resources in Cairo” and “increased resources at the Embassy in Tunis”. Please provide the number of UK-based and locally engaged staff that have been added to each post.

— In each of Tunis and Cairo: an additional UK staff post was created to lead Arab Partnership work at 1st Secretary level, and two additional Locally Engaged staff were recruited in each Post as project officer and project assistant.

21 June 2012

Further written evidence from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office

ARAB PARTNERSHIP FUND

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The onset of the Arab Spring in early 2011 saw fast-moving, unpredictable and tumultuous events in the MENA region. Against this background the Arab Partnership Fund was announced in Tunis on 8 February 2011, launched formally as a £5 million FCO programme at the end of March, and expanded in May 2011 to become a four-year, £110 million joint FCO-DFID programme.

Based on analysis conducted in 2010, but also reflecting developments in early 2011, the initial FCO Arab Partnership programme covered six thematic areas: political participation, public voice, tackling corruption, strengthening the rule of law, youth employability and supporting private sector development.

The expansion in May 2011 and creation of the £70 million DFID-led AP Economic Facility (APEF), allowed us to reconfigure our thematic priorities as follows:

— An FCO managed £40 million Arab Partnership Participation Fund supporting strengthened political participation, public voice, tackling corruption, strengthening the rule of law, anti-corruption, transparency and integrity, and
— A DFID managed £70 million Arab Partnership Economic Facility supporting inclusive and sustainable economic development, enterprise growth, job creation, regional and global trade integration, and effective and accountable institutions.

This note covers the Arab Partnership Participation Fund. A separate note on the Economic Facility is attached.

BACKGROUND

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) has made a significant contribution in its first year to HMG’s Arab Partnership objective to support the building blocks of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa region, with greater social, economic and political participation of its people.

Fully spending its 2011/12 £5 million allocation, the APPF has delivered UK impact in reach, institutional change, and enabling and energising others, both regional reformers and other international donors.

FINANCIAL STATUS

The final spend in 2011/12 was £5.27 million, against an original allocation of £5 million. The overspend reflects the need to respond to new funding opportunities, notably in Libya and Bahrain, towards the end of the financial year. For 2012/13, the APPF has an allocation of £5 million from FCO funds, as well as up to £8 million worth of DFID funding.

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund provides funding in three ways:

Country programmes: country programmes are designed and led by the Embassies in the relevant countries, based on our analysis of need and UK ability to have an impact and in line with country business plans as well as the Arab Partnership strategy.10

Embassies are responsible for outreach and relations with implementing partners, managing bidding windows, project selection, and effective management of their project portfolio. In 2011/12, the APPF supported country programmes worth over £1 million in Egypt and Tunisia, and smaller programmes worth £350–500,000 in Algeria, Morocco and Jordan. In 2012/13, we will expand the

country programmes in these five countries, and develop new country programmes for Libya and Syria, political and security circumstances permitting.

**Support for individual projects:** we also provide support for individual projects in other countries, such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Iraq and Lebanon. APPF funded projects in these countries are in line with Arab Partnership objectives and complement much larger programmes of work led by DFID (where applicable) and/or other HMG programmes, such as the Conflict Pool.

**Regional and multi-country projects:** the APPF also supports multi-country projects. These projects are led and managed by the APPF Programme Team, supported by Posts, and complement projects at the country and individual level. In 2011/12 there were four such projects (see below) worth just over £1 million: we aim to increase the size and value of the regional projects portfolio in 2012/13.

**Process**

Funding opportunities, timelines and details of the bidding and selection process are all available on the FCO website in both Arabic and English. Embassies that run country programmes also publish information about their country programmes on the Embassy websites and social media sites. Some Embassies also hold outreach sessions for implementers and/or advertise through the print media.

The **selection criteria** for projects, whether at the regional, country, or individual level include:

- Relevance to overarching AP objectives.
- Clear rationale, based on country analysis.
- Value for money.
- Evidence of local demand/need.
- Project viability, including capacity of implementing organisation(s).
- Project design, including clear, achievable objectives and outputs.
- Consideration of inclusivity in approach (including gender, youth and human rights).
- Sustainability.

All project proposals will be sifted by project officers in Embassies, with at least two pairs of eyes for each proposal, in the first instance (or by a London-based sift panel for regional projects). Projects which make it through the initial sift must then be approved by the Embassy Programme Board, typically chaired by the Deputy Head of Mission. Project bids which are approved by Embassy Programme Boards are then sent to the APPF Programme Board (or APEF Board) in London for final approval.

In 2011/12, the Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) supported 46 projects in the following countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Algeria, Iraq, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Oman, Libya, and Bahrain. Further details in the country brief section below. A full list of APPF-funded projects can be found on the FCO’s website: [http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/global-issues/mena/uk-arab-partnership-project-list](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/global-issues/mena/uk-arab-partnership-project-list).

**Impact**

In its first year the APF has had impact in terms of reach, institutional change, and enabling and energising others.

(a) **Reach:** demonstrated by the regional public voice package, worth just over £1 million (2011/12). This includes a joint BBC Arabic Service and Media Action project to co-produce programmes based on Question Time—known as *Sa’at Hesab*—with local broadcasters in Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, and Libya; *New Arab Debates*, a series of televised and non-television debates, training sessions and outreach events in Tunisia and Egypt led by the BBC’s Tim Sebastian; and the British Council and Anna Lindh Foundation’s *Young Arab Voices (YAV)* project aimed at embedding the culture of debating in schools and universities in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan. Together, these projects have reached millions of people across the region, and through the local adoption of their models are providing new opportunities for young people to make their voices heard, fostering a culture of participation, engaged citizenship and productive debate.

**Case Study 1: Developing Youth Debate**

On 30 April, the Secretary-General of the Arab League hosted a first-of-its-kind debate with youth from across the region, carried out in the framework of the APPF-funded Young Arab Voices’ programme (YAV). The event brought together YAV representatives from Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco and Palestine, as well as pre-recorded inputs from youth in Algeria, Yemen and Kuwait.

The debate, which focused on strengthening the role of the Arab League in the new regional context, was broadcast live across the Middle East and North Africa in partnership with BBC Arabic, reaching an estimated audience of 24 million, as well as 960,000 unique users on social media platforms. The event was also widely covered in the regional print media, generating over 50 articles. Arab League Chief Dr Nabil El Araby is quoted as saying “My ambition is to convince the Arab League member states to introduce the reforms we need to revitalise the League and pan-Arab cooperation. In
this regard, young people have a central role to play in debating about the next generation of regional institutions.”

(b) Institutional change: demonstrated through media development in Tunisia. After decades of tight state control of the media, key priorities were developing a legal framework for a free press and nurturing independent, ethical and professional working practices amongst journalists. With APPF support, Article 19 facilitated the establishment of a new legal and regulatory framework for Freedom of Expression, and contributed to building new democratic regulatory institutions like the Tunisian National Committee of Information and Communication Reform. Article 19’s guidelines for media coverage of elections were acknowledged as having made a significant contribution to the professional attitude of the media during the electoral process in 2011. Article 19 also played a key role providing expertise on the drafting of the legal framework regulating the attribution of broadcasting licenses for the operation of private radio stations. Private radios are now flourishing in Tunisia.

CASE STUDY 2: INSPIRING MEDIA INNOVATION

Under the APPF-funded BBC Arabic and Media Action programme Sa’at Hesab, BBC Arabic co-produced 10 programmes with local broadcasters in Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan and Libya, which enabled almost 1,000 citizens to engage directly with senior officials and decision-makers on live television, watched by over 33 million people across the region on television and on line.

In Tunisia and Libya such programmes were ground-breaking: this was Libya TV’s first ever co-production with an international broadcaster, and in Tunisia, audiences had never before had the opportunity to engage in such open debate on live TV. The feedback from panelists was positive too: following the broadcast of Sa’at Hesab in Egypt, Al Hayat channel was contacted by MPs who expressed their interest in participating in the programme and interacting with a studio audience on the next Sa’at Hesab programme in Egypt.

Local partner stations and other local media stakeholders were positive about the training and knowledge-sharing aspects of the programmes, and the innovative format, describing it as a “lesson on air” and a “live trial” of officials. The widely read Tunisian daily Al Chorouk, for example, described Sa’at Hesab as “…a possible solution to save a media that was worn out by dictatorship”.

(c) Enabling and energising others: demonstrated through our support to regional reformers and ability to unlock other donor funds. With APPF support, the John Smith Memorial Trust launched a pilot Fellowship scheme, based on a model from Eastern Europe, to provide training, advice and mentoring to reformers from Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan to help them deliver reform in their home countries. Among the 2011/12 “Fellows” was Suzann Al Hajj, Lebanon’s first female police officer. With support from JSMT, Suzann has drafted a plan to mainstream her RED agenda—Rights, Equality and Diversity—within Lebanon’s Internal Security Force (ISF), and has been appointed to a new position training the first cohort of 1,200 female ISF recruits. We have also worked closely with other donors, including co-funding projects. For example, the New Arab Debates series was jointly designed and co-funded with the Swedish Development Agency, SIDA. We have also provided rapid seed funding for projects that were later adopted and scaled up by other larger donors, eg in Jordan, where an APPF-funded civil mediation project paved the way for a larger project funded by the EU.

CASE STUDY 3: JOINTLY PROMOTING FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS

Through our support for UNDP and Electoral Reform International Service (ERIS), we contributed to Tunisia’s first ever multi-party election, which was a major benchmark in the democratic transition. The work led by UNDP helped to build the capacity of the new independent election body to administer elections independently and effectively. Working through ERIS, we provided training for civic educators and supported four voter education “caravans” that aimed to engage and inform citizens living in remote and rural areas about the way democratic institutions work and what democracy means for them. In Egypt, the UK’s early support for the Carter Center helped unlock funding from other donors to support Carter Center’s high-profile elections witnessing mission, which generated a great deal of press coverage and interest locally, and resulted in some key recommendations for the Egyptian authorities on strengthening the process.

As of 13 June 2012, for 2012/13, 49 projects with a total value of £9.73 million have been approved. These are in the following countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, and Jordan as well as multi-country projects, which also include countries such as Yemen, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Iraq. We have also approved small pilot projects in UAE and Bahrain. It is anticipated that further projects will be identified in some of these countries as well as other MENA countries like Mauritania and Oman through the course of the year, raising our spend to over £10 million.

COUNTRY BRIEFS

Egypt

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) country programme for Egypt in 2011/12 comprised 10 projects, worth around £1.4 million. In terms of value and ambition, the Egypt programme was the largest and most challenging. The objective of the programme was to support Egypt’s transition, with a particular focus on helping to ensure a free and fair elections process.
The country portfolio included five projects under the theme of political participation:

- Support for the Carter Center’s mission of experts to witness parliamentary elections and present recommendations to the Egyptian authorities;
- Support for observation of Shura Council elections by African election experts;
- A series of four workshops and policy dialogues led by Chatham House to strengthen political dialogue;
- Work led by UK parliamentary experts Global Partners in conjunction with a local NGO to facilitate cross-party dialogue on the role of parliament, and its procedures;
- A Westminster Foundation for Democracy programme to support party-to-party and cross-party dialogue and capacity-building, including an induction course for new MPs.

The APPF also supported two media projects linked to the parliamentary elections:

- Aswat Masriya, a project led by Thomson Reuters, to support professional, unbiased and accurate elections coverage by providing training for journalists and establishing a web-based resource providing factual information about the elections as well as commentary and reporting;
- Work by the BBC World Service Trust (now Media Action) with the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), the state broadcaster, to improve its elections coverage, as part of a longer-term reform programme. Together, these two projects made a real contribution to the increased professionalism of the Egyptian media in covering elections, and increasing its focus on reporting from outside the capital.

In 2011/12, the APPF in Egypt also focused on countering corruption and promoting transparency and integrity. There were two projects in this area:

- Support for work by the OECD to develop business integrity codes, enforcement frameworks and in-company compliance procedures;
- Creation of an open government task force and laying the foundations for better access to information, led by Global Partners.

We also supported a series of smaller initiatives, including visits to the UK by a Ministry of Interior delegation responsible for elections, an inward visit by senior UK judges and the Ministry of Justice to explore possibilities for judicial co-operation, and the provision of UK advice on minorities/anti-discrimination law. We have also funded work led by the British Council to support English language reform but progress has been slow, due to changes in focus and priority on the Egyptian side.

The Embassy in Cairo has developed an ambitious APPF country programme for 2012/13, worth over £2.5 million. The focus will continue to be on political participation, including assistance linked to the upcoming presidential elections, media reform and enhancing transparency.

Tunisia

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) country programme for Tunisia in 2011/12 comprised 12 projects and was worth just over £1.2 million. This is more than 80 times the amount of FCO funding allocated to Tunisia in 2010, when the bilateral programme budget was £15,000. As in Egypt, the main objective was to support Tunisia’s transition to democracy, with a particular focus on strengthening political participation and helping ensure a free and fair election process.

There were four projects under the APPF theme of political participation, with an initial focus on electoral assistance for the legislative elections in 2011:

- Support for Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS) to work with CSOs to enhance voter outreach and education, particularly targeting marginalised communities and women, and building longer-term civic education capacity;
- Work led by UNDP to provide technical assistance support to the Tunisian Electoral Commission, as well as voter education awareness with the public, with a particular focus on creative methods to engage the youth. The project continues to support preparation for the next electoral cycle;
- Support for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)’s multi-party democracy project which has enabled party-party training sessions with members of the Constituent Assembly, as well as the development of reference materials for MPs;
- Supporting the Middle East Research Centre (MERC) to boost Tunisia’s public polling capacity to ensure greater awareness and baselines of public opinion, in order to effectively influence reforms.
Under the APPF theme of public voice, we support three projects focusing initially on developing a code of media ethics for the elections, but also building greater media capacity and freedom of expression beyond the electoral period:

— Work led by the Thomson Foundation to build consensus and recommendations for developing a national code of practice with the media for the next electoral cycle;
— Support for Article 19, who successfully facilitated the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework for freedom of expression, and contributed to building democratic regulatory institutions such as the Tunisian National Committee of Information and Communication Reform. Article 19’s “Guidelines for Media Coverage of Elections” was acknowledged as one of the self-regulatory tools which contributed to the broadly professional attitude of the media during the electoral process in 2011. Article 19 also played a key role providing expertise on the drafting of the legal framework regulating the attribution of broadcasting licenses for the operation of private radio stations. Private radios are now flourishing in Tunisia.
— Technical assistance and support for the process of transforming Tunisian Television from a state institution to a public service broadcaster drawing on BBC Media Action’s considerable experience in this field. BBC advised and trained national Tunisian TV journalists and decision makers on how to deliver fair, balanced and impartial media report, including of the elections. Long term support is needed in order to consolidate what was achieved during the first year after the revolution and the UK will continue working with our partners to consolidate democratic progress.

Through the APPF, we also supported two projects on countering corruption and promoting transparency and integrity under the APPF theme of good governance:

— Work by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) to strengthen rule of law and accountability in Tunisia by promoting transitional justice reform with government, media, and CSOs;
— Support for the OECD’s work to ensure effective anti-corruption mechanisms in Tunisia by establishing an integrity strategy and a national action plan for implementation.

The APPF also started three early economic reform initiatives:

— Supporting the British Council to teach English skills for employability in the vocational sector;
— Supporting the micro-credit agency Inter-Arabe Institution de Microfinance to provide loans to Tunisian expatriate workers fleeing Libyan conflict;
— Support to Mercycorps to conduct a market assessment in some of the poorest parts of the country to scope opportunities for enhancing income-earning and self employment opportunities for unemployed youth.

Looking ahead to 2012/13, the Embassy has developed a project portfolio that will take forward many of the successful gains made in enhancing political participation, including further support to the electoral process, supporting media reform and public voice, as well as some work in transparency and anti-corruption. The APPF Tunisia country programme for 2012/13 is likely to be worth over £2 million.

Morocco

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) country programme for Morocco in 2011/12 comprised 5 projects and was worth approximately £420,000. The focus was on supporting efforts to strengthen political participation and tackle corruption.

There were three projects under the APPF theme of political participation, with a focus on strengthening the legislative framework for political participation, and the inclusion and capacity building of youth to advocate for greater participation:

— Supporting British Council and Chatham House to build the capacity of young people in Morocco to influence government policy through the pilot creation of a regional Young Arab Analyst Network International (YAANI);
— Supporting Collectif Democratie et Modernite (CDM) to develop legislation that will safeguard the right to freedom of thought, conscience and expression, as well as engage young people and human rights groups to lobby for these amendments;
— Supporting Forum Des Alternatives Maroc (FMAS) to build the capacity of young people to lobby for the introduction of new legislation on citizens’ right to direct participation.

The APPF also supported two projects under the theme of good governance, working with the government to counter corruption and promote transparency and integrity:

— Work led by an international NGO, Search for Common Ground, to strengthen the Moroccan Ombudsperson’s Office;
Support for work with the Moroccan government led by UNDP to build a national anti-corruption and integrity strategy to help Morocco meet its obligations under the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

The Embassy in Rabat has developed a new portfolio of projects for 2012/13, which will take forward many of the successful gains made in supporting the government’s commitments on the fight against corruption and to further political participation, particularly with civil society, women, youth, and the media. The allocation for Morocco this year has doubled, to around £1 million.

Jordan

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) country programme for Jordan in 2011/12 comprised seven projects, worth around £350,000. The main focus was support for private sector development, specifically entrepreneurship, through four projects:

- Two separate projects run by Oasis500 to train IT entrepreneurs in Amman and Irbid, and provide them with opportunities to access finance, including by introducing them to angel investors. Through these projects, Oasis500 has trained 196 entrepreneurs in Amman, and invested in 9 of them. In Irbid, one of Jordan’s northern governorates, 27 entrepreneurs received training and 20 completed the full course. Of the 14 Oasis500 companies who have pitched at angel network events, 11 have secured follow-on funding amounting to nearly $6 million. Oasis500 has also developed a mentor network which now consists of over 240 mentors.
- A programme led by the Mowgli Foundation, a UK organisation, to support Jordanian entrepreneurs through mentoring;
- A partnership between a local NGO, INJAZ and Mosaic, a UK charity, to introduce an on-line game—the Enterprise Challenge—to strengthen business skills and promote entrepreneurship in Jordanian schools.

The Jordan programme also included two projects on the APPF themes of participation and public voice:

- Support for the Thomson Foundation’s Inquirer Award, a competition that aims to strengthen investigative journalism across the region, with a particular focus on Jordan;
- Active Citizens, a British Council-led project in the city of Ma’an that aims to empower young people to engage effectively in their communities, including by establishing a community radio station.

The Arab Partnership also supported work led by the UK Ministry of Justice in partnership with the Jordanian judiciary to strengthen civil mediation services, paving the way for a larger project funded by the EU.

Looking ahead to 2012/13, the APPF country programme in Jordan is expected to expand to around £1 million, and will work with both government and civil society to strengthen political participation. Support for economic reform and private sector development work will expand under the DFID-led Arab Partnership Economic Facility.

Algeria

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund (APPF) country programme for Algeria in 2011/12 comprised five projects worth around £400,000. The country programme aimed to build on existing work to strengthen the rule of law and help build civil society capacity.

Under the APPF theme of rule of law and good governance, the Algeria country portfolio included two projects to strengthen the Algerian prison and court systems:

- Work led by the International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS) in providing assistance to the Government of Algeria to reform its prison system in line with international human rights & security standards;
- Support for work by an Algerian NGO, Reseau Algerien pour La Defense Des Droits De L’Enfant (NADA), to strengthen the juvenile justice system and provide support for young offenders in Algerian courts.

Through the APPF, we also supported two projects to build networks and strengthen the capacity of Algerian civil society, linked to the theme of political participation:

- Support for a partnership between the British Council and the Muslim Scouts to strengthen the capacity of young Algerians to contribute to positive change, through training youth leaders and community activists;
- Work led by Handicap International to protect the social, economic and political rights of persons with disabilities in Algeria.

Under the APPF theme of youth employability, we worked through a local NGO (ANEJ) to support young Algerians seeking to start their own businesses, including by helping to improve their access to Algerian government micro-credit financing schemes.
Under the Arab Partnership, the value of FCO programme funds allocated to Algeria has increased almost 10-fold. Looking ahead, the Embassy in Algiers is developing a country programme focusing on youth employability, media reform and the rule of law, which is expected to be worth around £1 million in 2012/13.

**Libya**

Earlier this year, the APPF supported a pilot project in Libya working with a local television station to develop “Question Time” style programmes broadcast from Tripoli and Benghazi. This pilot was part of a regional project led by BBC Arabic Service and BBC Media Action to encourage state and independent local broadcasters in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Jordan to produce participatory programming and provide opportunities for audiences to interact directly on live TV with officials and decision makers.

The Embassy in Tripoli is developing a full APPF country programme for 2012/13, with an expected value of around £2 million in the first year. This newly approved portfolio will support the APPF’s political participation theme, with a particular focus on providing electoral assistance, as well as support to civil society engagement focusing on women, youth empowerment, and voter education. Projects may also support the APPF’s public voice theme, building on the success of the BBC project last year, and supporting further capacity building with state media, particularly in the run up to elections.

**Lebanon**

In Lebanon, the APPF supported a Lebanese NGO, Adyan, to prepare the development of a national educational strategy project to promote co-existence in the framework of an inclusive citizenship. Funding to expand this work in 2012/13 has been approved.

**Iraq**

The APPF supported two projects in Iraq in 2011/12, both of which were designed to complement work undertaken by the much larger DFID and Conflict Pool programmes. These included support for the Finance Committee in the Iraqi Council of Representatives, in their organisation and planning, financial oversight and establishment of links with external oversight bodies and other committees within the Council of Representatives; and a project led by the International Research & Exchanges Bureau (IREX) to provide support and capacity-building to the Iraqi national public service broadcaster.

**Palestinian Territories**

In the Palestinian Territories, complementing DFID’s country programme and Conflict Pool funding, the APPF worked with the UK Ministry of Justice to support the drafting and implementation of a Palestinian Community Penal Code, including through exchange visits and discussions with the Palestinian authorities and a wide range of NGOs on what the code should include. The APPF also supported NGO-led projects to strengthen public voice using social and online media, with a particular focus on women.

**Gulf**

The Arab Partnership Participation Fund was initially subject to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) restrictions, which meant that programme funds could not be spent in MENA countries which are not ODA-eligible, namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, ie all six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. This restriction was revised in late 2011 to allow us to spend up to £50,000 in non-ODA eligible countries by March 2012, and up to £250,000 in FY 2012/13. In 2011/12, the APPF supported a scoping visit by the Bar Council’s Human Rights Committee to Oman in preparation for a future programme of judicial co-operation and capacity building, and bespoke human rights training for officials from the Bahraini Ministries of Justice and Social Development.

**Regional Projects**

The APPF also supported a package of regional projects strengthening skills and opportunities for debate across the region, with a particular focus on Egypt and Tunis.

The regional public voice package comprises three complementary projects: a joint BBC Arabic Service and Media Action project to co-produce programmes based on Question Time with local broadcasters; New Arab Debates, a series of televised and non-televised debates, training sessions and outreach events led by the BBC’s Tim Sebastian; and the British Council and Anna Lindh Foundation’s Young Arab Voices project aimed at embedding the culture of debating in schools and universities. Together, these projects are expected to reach millions of people across the region, and are already having impact in terms of the way the models are being adopted locally. In Jordan, for example, as a result of the Young Arab Voices project, the Ministry of Education is considering including debating in the national curriculum in secondary schools.

We also supported the John Smith Memorial Trust to launch a pilot Fellowship scheme, based on a model from Eastern Europe, to provide training, advice and mentoring to reformers from Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan to help them deliver reform in their home countries. Among the 2011/12 “Fellows” was Suzann Al Hajj,
Lebanon’s first female police officer. With support from JSMT, Suzann has drafted a plan to mainstream her RED agenda—Rights, Equality and Diversity—within Lebanon’s Internal Security Force (ISF), and has been appointed to a new position training the first cohort of 1,200 female ISF recruits.

19 June 2012

Further written evidence from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office

ARAB PARTNERSHIP ECONOMIC FACILITY

The APEF places a strong emphasis on working with international financial institutions (IFIs) to assist countries in the region with their economic transition priorities. The IFIs can mobilise large amounts of funding, bring specialist expertise, support innovation, and play pivotal leadership roles with other donors. UK support for the IFIs will help ensure that they provide an effective response to the challenges in the region, both in the short and longer term.

Towards the end of 2011/12, the first round of new APEF programmes was approved and comprised five programmes totalling just over £13 million. A summary of these projects is provided below and more detailed one-page project notes attached at Annex A.

Regional

1. Support to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development’s (EBRD) Multi-Donor Account for Technical Cooperation in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (£5 million). This will enable EBRD to provide direct advice, support and training to public and private sector clients principally in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. EBRD will focus its support on small and medium enterprise development, agricultural sector improvement, municipal level financing, and strengthening legal and policy environments for private sector development. The programme is expected to help lever age up to £500 million of annual EBRD investments in the region by 2014, and the creation of 4,250 new jobs.

2. Support to the World Bank and International Finance Corporation’s new technical assistance facility to improve access to finance for micro, small and medium sized enterprises in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Libya and Lebanon (£6.8 million). The Facility will: help improve legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks for enterprise finance; support banks and other financial institutions to better service enterprises; and assist enterprises through mentoring, incubator services and business networks. The facility is expected to benefit more than 250,000 enterprises and contribute to the disbursement of more than $2 billion of enterprise loans.

3. Support to the African Development Bank (AfDB) to establish a Private Sector Development coordination partnership to ensure the work of international financial institutions on private sector led-growth in MENA is better coordinated and delivering results (£205,000). The partnership will help: facilitate information sharing and mutual understanding to avoid duplication and redundancy; identify and facilitate joint investments; coordinate monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the G8 Deauville Partnership; and identify, conceptualise and implement joint technical assistance.

Egypt

4. Support to the Egyptian Network for Integrated Development (ENID)—a network of Egyptian academics, think-tanks and practitioners (£700,000). The network includes researchers from the Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies, Social Research Centres and Cairo University’s Economics Department. The network will: provide evidence to strengthen political processes, including the drafting of a new constitution; support pilot projects that could be scaled up by policy makers; and help develop the capacity of development of Egyptian researchers. This is expected to include 10 pilot project initiatives, 10 high quality analytical products, 20 case studies demonstrating the impact of ENID research on policy making, and 40 media stories covering the Network’s policy recommendations.

Tunisia

5. Support to an AfDB pilot to support Tunisian social entrepreneurs (£400,000). The pilot will: provide seed grants to enterprises under a competitive process; provide mentoring assistance to enterprises, either by the AfDB, aid agencies or experts from the private sector; facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities for enterprises, development organisations and the Government of Tunisia; and guide the most promising enterprises to a level of maturity where they can secure further support from commercial banks, business incubators, government, or donors. The project will directly benefit an estimated 100 enterprises, helping to build business capacity and competitiveness, and stimulating job creation.

More recently, in April/May 2012 the following three new programmes totalling £14.8 million were approved (see Annex A for project summary notes).
6. £800,000 to the International Monetary Fund to fund a Resident Adviser to work with the Libyan Ministry of Finance for two years on public financial management reforms. The project will help the Ministry of Finance to manage its revenues in a more transparent and accountable way, and support more effective budget processes.

Regional

7. £7 million for a Country Impact Fund which will fund small-scale economic projects generated by Posts, and which offers the flexibility to support a wider range of partners including government, the private sector and civil society. The Country Impact Fund will support: strengthened workplace skills that increase employability; enterprise innovation which promotes more inclusive and fairer growth; a stronger economic and social evidence base to inform national policy debates; and improved knowledge sharing and more effective development coordination mechanisms. Activities will primarily focus on Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Libya. The Fund is expected to increase employability and create jobs. It will also strengthen the economic/social evidence base to inform national policy dialogue debate, and support at least 10 specific knowledge sharing and coordination activities.

8. £7 million for a package of technical assistance, comprising £5 million to the World Bank’s new MENA Multi-donor Trust Fund, and £2 million to the African Development Bank’s new Trust Fund for Transition. These funds will focus on economic and social inclusion, job creation, private sector development, better governance, and trade and integration. The Trust Funds will enable the Banks to provide policy advice, training, and seed funding for innovation. They will also help the Banks to carry out catalytic activities to improve the effectiveness of their operations. By making significant and early contributions to these Trust Funds, the UK will be in a strong position to work more closely with the Banks (alongside its position as shareholder and board member) to help strengthen their approaches to the region.

19 June 2012

Annex A

ARAB PARTNERSHIP ECONOMIC FACILITY (APEF)

Project Summary Notes

1. Support to European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to provide technical cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region

Objective: UK funding will help enable the EBRD to provide direct advice, support and training to public and private sector clients in focus MENA countries to promote private sector development and job creation. Areas of work include: strengthening business management and access to finance of small and medium sized enterprises; improving the productivity and market links of agricultural businesses; and promoting financing arrangements for local infrastructure development.

Headline result/s: The facility is expected to lead to the creation of 4,250 new quality jobs.

Key facts

Funding: £5 million (likely around 15% of total donor funding to Multi-Donor Account)
Start / end date: March 2012 / March 2015
Focus countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan
Implementing partners: European Bank of Reconstruction and Development

Context and rationale

The Arab Uprisings highlighted a number of underlying economic, political and social problems. Although the MENA region generated GDP growth of almost 5% a year over the decade 2000–10, many countries were less successful in providing widespread economic opportunities for their people. Unemployment rates are high at between 12–18% in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan, compared to a global average unemployment rate of around 6%. At a regional average of 24%, unemployment is especially high among young people.

Broad-based private sector development can play an important role in combatting chronic growth and unemployment issues. The EBRD plays a vital specialist role in channelling finance (often large investments) and technical support to developing the private sector in countries in which it operates. It has accrued significant experience in stimulating private sector development in Central and Eastern European transition countries.

The EBRD is in the process of expanding its mandate to include the MENA region but full ratification will take up to two years. This funding can enable the EBRD to kickstart its engagement in the region, providing technical cooperation to “Arab Spring” countries immediately in key reform areas.
Progress
— Cooperation Arrangement between UK and EBRD signed (March).
— First payment of £2 million (from total of £5 million) made to EBRD’s Multi-Donor Account for TC (March).
— First meeting of donors to Multi-Donor Account held (February).
— Seven projects (worth euro 6m) approved for implementation.
— Agreement between UK and EBRD to work together to strengthen EBRD results focus.

2. Support to World Bank/International Finance Corporation technical assistance to expand access to Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (MSME) finance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Objective: to increase access to enterprise finance by:
(i) improving legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks for enterprise finance;
(ii) supporting banks and other financial institutions to better service enterprises; and
(iii) assisting enterprises through mentoring, incubator services and business networks.

Headline result/s: the Facility is expected to benefit more than 250,000 enterprises and contribute to the disbursement of more than $2 billion of enterprise loans.

Key facts
Funding: £6.811 million
Start / end date: March 2012 / March 2015
Focus countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Libya and Lebanon
Implementing partners: World Bank; International Finance Corporation

Context and rationale
The majority of enterprises in MENA are MSMEs. MSMEs can drive economic development by providing jobs and income, and broadening the tax base. But a major constraint to increased MSME productivity is access to finance. Enterprise-level indicators show that only 20% of SMEs in MENA have a loan or a line of credit, lower than all other regions except Africa.

MENA ranked last in the legal rights index for Getting Credit in the Doing Business, 2011 report. This is due to a number of factors, including weak regulatory environments, insufficient capacity of financial institutions to lend, poor MSME management skills, and a lack of creditworthiness.

The reluctance of MENA banks to lend to MSMEs does not reflect a lack of interest. A recent World Bank/Union of Arab Banks survey of over 130 MENA banks indicates that banks have an average SME lending target of 21% of their loan portfolio, as compared to an actual rate of 8%.

The Facility is a response to priorities set out in the socio-economic plans presented by the governments of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia in September 2011. Particular focus will be placed on financial inclusion for marginalized groups, including women. The Facility will complement financial investments from the World Bank, IFC and other International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and African Development Bank.

Progress
— DFID’s first payment of £2.2 million was made in March 2011.
— Projects under approval/about to begin include support for:
  — Egypt—Commercial International Bank & Oryx Leasing.
  — Tunisia—Amen Bank, ENDA microfinance and an SME banking conference.
  — Morocco—FONDEP microfinance & Al Amana microfinance.
  — Jordan—Ahli Bank United & Taweeelcom microfinance.
— IFC mission to Libya planned for June 2012.

3. Support to African Development Bank to establish a Secretariat for a Private Sector Development Coordination Partnership for the Middle East and North Africa

Objective: To facilitate improved coordination and development impacts of the IFI response in Arab Spring countries. The Partnership will:
(i) Facilitate information sharing and mutual understanding to avoid duplication and redundancy;
(ii) Identify and facilitate joint investments;
(iii) Coordinate monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the G8 Deauville partnership; and
(iv) Identify, conceptualise and implement joint technical assistance.

**Headline result/s:** Six joint investment transactions and 12 technical assistance projects with one of more IFI partners approved by 2014.

**Key facts**
- **Funding:** £205,000
- **Start / end date:** December 2011- March 2014
- **Focus countries:** Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Libya (with the option to include other MENA transition countries)
- **Implementing partners:** African Development Bank

**Context and rationale**
The IFIs have a critical role to play in supporting economic transition in the MENA region. Together they can mobilise large-scale funding, bring specialist expertise, support innovation, and play pivotal leadership roles with other donors. The UK has been at the forefront of calling for a coordinated and effective IFI response to the Arab Spring.

At the G8 Finance Ministers meeting in Marseille in September 2011, 10 IFIs agreed to establish a Coordination Platform. Under this umbrella Platform, sits a Partnership to specifically coordinate support for private sector development. The PSD Partnership has been organised around eight thematic areas: i) investment projects; ii) guarantees; iii) liquidity and trade facilitation; iv) development of local currency and capital markets; v) facilitation of public private partnerships; vi) capacity building; vii) business climate policy and analysis; and viii) skills upgrading and vocational training. Individual IFIs have agreed to lead/co-lead participate in each of the modules.

The participating institutions are—The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the World Bank, the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

**Progress**
- First DFID payment of £157k made in December 2011.
- Positive progress has been recorded on coordination and initiatives have been launched and coordinated between the IFI and the partner countries.

4. **Support to the Egyptian Integrated Development Network to research on Inclusive Economic Policies**

**Objective:** Provide solutions to Egypt’s economic and social challenges for politicians and officials.
- Provide evidence to strengthen political process, including the drafting of a new constitution.
- Undertake pilot projects that could be scaled up by policy makers.
- Support capability development of Egyptian researchers.

**Headline result/s:** 10 pilot project initiatives, 10 high quality analytical products, 20 case studies demonstrating impact of ENID research on policy making, 40 media stories referencing ENID products.

**Key facts**
- **Funding:** £700,000
- **Start / end date:** February 2012–March 2014
- **Focus countries:** Egypt
- **Implementing partners:** ENID is a network of Egypt’s leading academics and think tanks and includes researchers from the Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies, Social Research Centres and Cairo University’s Economics Department.

**Context and rationale**
Since the uprisings, solutions to Egypt’s economic challenges—the budget deficit, subsidy reform, business regulation and rising unemployment—have been lacking from public debate. Regional disparities and exclusion of women and young people are contributing to worsening poverty trends.
This programme will provide policy pilots that deliver in the following areas:
- Improve access to SME financing for Egypt’s 20 million young people trying to get their first jobs.
- Increase the number of jobs in productive sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture.
- Address the perverse incentives that inhibit businesses from trading formally.
- Create jobs and address poverty among marginalised communities.

Egypt’s think tanks and academics could play a greater role in providing politicians and Government Ministers with the solutions to these challenges. ENID is the most viable vehicle through which DFID can provide this support in Egypt.

5. Support to the African Development Bank (AfDB) to Pilot Social Entrepreneurship in Tunisia (the project is known locally as Souk Attamnia meaning Development Market)

**Objective:** To support innovative Tunisian social entrepreneurs through:

(i) Provision of seed grants to enterprises under a competitive process;
(ii) Mentoring enterprises, either by the AfDB, aid agencies or experts from the private sector;
(iii) Facilitating networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities for enterprises, development organisations and the Government of Tunisia; and
(iv) Guiding the most promising enterprises to a level of maturity where they can secure further support from commercial banks, business incubators, government, or donors.

**Headline result/s:** Up to 100 enterprises benefiting from grant and/or mentoring support.

**Key facts**

| Funding:       | £400,000 |
| Start / end date: | December 2011–March 2014 |
| Focus countries: | Tunisia |
| Implementing partners: | African Development Bank |

**Context and rationale**

In Tunisia, unemployment for the educated youth increased by a factor of 10 over the last two decades and reached 20% in 2010 compared to an overall rate of about 14%. Given high-levels of unemployment and limited opportunities elsewhere, entrepreneurship represents an appealing prospect for many young Tunisians. Social enterprises could play a powerful role in the overall growth and prosperity of Tunisia, offering a more accountable and sustainable business model. But starting a new business is a risky venture and securing external finance, along with basic business know-how, is a major barrier to converting nascent enterprises into start-ups. Social entrepreneurship in particular—the use of business methods to achieve a positive and sustained social impact—provides an opportunity to help create jobs whilst devising innovative development solutions. This could help inspire young people to act as citizens who are both economically productive, whilst building on the momentum of the social engagement of young people in the Tunisian Arab Spring.

**Progress**

- First DFID payment of £48k made in December 2011.
- DFID funding has already helped leverage support from five UN agencies, two Tunisian financial institutions and one international energy company.
- The pilot will be officially launched in October 2012.

6. Support to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide technical cooperation in Libya

**Objective:** To build core economic management capacity in Libya by providing an expert IMF Resident Adviser to work in the Libyan Ministry of Finance (MoF) for up to 24 months.

**Headline result/s:** The project will build Libyan capacity to manage public finances and support implementation of a public financial management (PFM) action plan agreed with the Libyan government.
Key facts

Funding: £800,000
Start / end date: June 2012/September 2014
Focus countries: Libya
Implementing partners: International Monetary Fund; MoF

Context and rationale

The Libyan economy is fundamentally based on oil and is one of the least diversified in the region. Since the Transitional Government (TG) was formed (22 November 2011) Libya has regained access to the bulk of its financial resources, previously frozen under UN sanctions, and succeeded in ramping up oil exports to former levels. Libya is not therefore in need of long term financial aid but needs technical and advisory support to create capacity and reform core economic institutions. A joint assessment by the IMF and World Bank in January 2012 identified as a top priority the need to strengthen the Public Financial Management system, to help account for returned frozen assets and manage oil revenues transparently, and strengthen the fiscal framework to help ensure Libya’s future economic stability. Placement of an expert in the MoF will address a significant gap in current IMF/World Bank plans to provide short term Technical Assistance and reflects positive experience in Libya of embedding expert advisers in key ministries.

The Libya Adviser is part of an existing DFID funded, IMF programme to build core economic capacity and institutions in fragile and conflict affected states. The programme also funds experts in Afghanistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Yemen, Iraq and Sudan.

Progress

— Financial approval: April 2012.
— Post advertised: June 2012.
— Expected start date September 2012 (subject to recruitment).

7. Country Impact Fund (CIF)

Objective: To support, through a competitive grant making process: i) strengthened workplace skills that increase employability; ii) economic governance reforms including those dealing with public financial management, taxation, budget transparency, anti corruption and economic policy; iii) enterprise innovation which promotes more inclusive and fairer growth; iv) a stronger economic and social evidence base to inform national policy debates; and v) improved knowledge sharing and more effective development coordination mechanisms.

Headline result/s: The fund will deliver a wide range of results responding flexibly to need. This is expected to include increased employability for up to 2,000 people by providing them with relevant skills, an estimated 1,500 jobs created by supporting enterprise innovation, and improved economic policy making.

Key facts

Funding: £7 million (funded fully by DFID)
Start / end date: May 2012 / March 2015
Focus countries: Primarily Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Libya. Up to £1 million will be available to support activities in other ODA-eligible Arab Partnership countries.

Context and rationale: The Arab Spring highlighted underlying economic, political and social problems in the MENA region, including unequal distribution of economic growth benefits, high unemployment, poverty and narrow political structures. To help address these challenges, the DFID-led £70 million Arab Partnership Economic Facility (APEF) was established. APEF primarily supports technical assistance and prioritises partnerships with the International and Regional Financial Institutions to leverage their technical assistance, know-how and investment and to strengthen their position as longer-term providers of assistance in the region.

The CIF was established as a window of the APEF to complement these larger, macro-level programmes by supporting country-level interventions working with a wider range of partners including NGOs, think-tanks, the private sector, government, international organisations and civil society groups.

CIF is a flexible, responsive fund which provides a more visible and tangible demonstration of UK support to the Arab Spring. CIF projects also contribute to the overall APEF goal of supporting inclusive and sustainable growth in the MENA region. The fund provides annual grants of between £50,000 and £500,000 to projects identified through a competitive bidding process managed at Post, and approved by the APEF Programme Board (DFID/FCO/HMT) in London.
Four projects (representing approximately £2 million of funding) were approved in May. These are:

(i) Egypt—Mercy Corps: market development for agricultural inputs, financial and extension services, benefitting 60 entrepreneurs.
(ii) Egypt—World Bank support to 100 young entrepreneurs and innovators in rural Egypt with seed funding, mentoring and a platform for sharing ideas.
(iii) Tunisia—Mercy Corps support for business development services and vocational skills training benefiting more than 5,000 young people.
(iv) Jordan—Shell Foundation assistance to 600 SMEs benefiting from skills support, access to finance and improved market access.

8a. Support to the World Bank Multi Donor Trust Fund for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region

Objective: UK funding will help enable the World Bank to provide technical assistance, undertake analysis and prepare investment projects that: i) strengthen governance; ii) foster social and economic inclusion; iii) create jobs; iv) stimulate private sector development and entrepreneurship; and v) support regional and global integration.

Headline result/s: World Bank portfolio with increased focus on economic and social inclusion, and based on improved analysis of local conditions, dialogue with stakeholders, gender perspectives, and formulation of robust results frameworks.

The World Bank will develop a full results framework for the Trust Fund by September 2012.

Key facts

Funding: £5 million (towards a total indicative budget of $20 million over five years)
Start / end date: March 2012 / March 2015
Focus countries: Primarily Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia
Implementing partners: World Bank

Context and rationale

The World Bank is a global development institution with considerable expertise to offer countries in a range of technical and reform areas in the region. The Bank operates in 20 countries in MENA and in 2011 provided over $2.1 billion in loans. The World Bank’s Regional Update for MENA 2012—the Bank’s framework for engagement in the region—highlights the changes taking place in the region and the need for the Bank to “do things differently”. It prioritises work on four pillars that are important for the region: strengthening governance; ensuring economic and social inclusion; creating jobs; and accelerating sustainable growth. As part of its aim to “do things differently”, the Bank also recognises the need for greater outreach and dialogue with non traditional stakeholders and engagement in public debate, more timely policy advice/action plans for new governments with limited capacity, and greater decentralization of key sector staff.

The UK’s support for the Trust Fund, and closer working with the World Bank, will help the Bank “do things differently”. It will enable the Bank to focus its assistance more in areas that address head-on the underlying social and economic challenges in transition countries that partly led to the Arab Spring.

Support to the Trust Fund will give the UK a seat on the Trust Fund Board in addition to our existing position on the World Bank Board where we are able to influence general policy.

Progress

— The Multi Donor Trust Fund has just become operational.
— DFID’s first tranche of funding will be disbursed by the end of June 2012.

8b. Support to the African Development Bank’s Trust Fund for Transition (North Africa)

Objective: UK funding will help enable the AfDB to provide technical assistance, undertake analysis and prepare investment projects that: i) strengthen governance; ii) foster social and economic inclusion; iii) create jobs; iv) stimulate private sector development and entrepreneurship; and v) support regional and global integration.

Headline result/s: AfDB portfolio with increased focus on economic and social inclusion, and based on improved analysis of local conditions, dialogue with stakeholders, gender perspectives, and formulation of robust results frameworks.

AfDB will develop a full results framework for the Trust Fund by July 2012.
Key facts

- **Funding:** £2 million (approximately 50% of total donor funding)
- **Start / end date:** March 2012 / March 2015
- **Focus countries:** Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Libya
- **Implementing partners:** African Development Bank

Context and rationale

The AfDB has an important role to play in supporting economic reforms in the region. The Bank is a strong and credible partner in North Africa, currently headquartered in the region itself. As of December 2010, the Bank Group’s portfolio in North Africa represented a commitment of approximately £4 billion. The Bank can mobilise large amounts of funding, bring specialist expertise, support innovation, and play a pivotal leadership role with other donors. The Bank is undergoing reforms to deepen its analytical capacity, build partnerships, and to use this knowledge to strengthen its operational and development effectiveness. AfDB has also been the driving force behind efforts to improve international financial institution coordination following the Arab Spring.

However, there is significant scope, and an immediate need, to enhance the relevance, speed, scale and effectiveness of support provided by AfDB to transition countries. This includes a greater focus on reforms to support economic inclusion and governance, and more effective operations through analysis of local conditions, dialogue, lesson learning, and strengthened attention to results.

Given its regional importance in North Africa and the role it is aiming to play, the AfDB is a good partner for delivering UK development objectives in the region. The UK’s contribution to the Trust Fund will provide significant opportunities for the UK to work more closely with the AfDB (beyond its role as shareholder and board member), further enabling the Bank to respond as effectively as possible to reform challenges and opportunities.

Progress

- The Trust Fund will be presented to the AfDB Board on 4 July after which it will be formally established.
- DFID's first tranche of funding will be disbursed once the Trust Fund is operational, a results framework agreed and our Agreement signed. This is expected by August 2012.
- Denmark has approved a US$1.5 million contribution to the Trust Fund.
Additional written evidence

Written evidence from Professor Caroline Rooney, University of Kent

**Summary**

— The long held British and American position was that the repressive Mubarak government provided stability, but the Egyptian revolution came about because the experience of the Egyptian people was that the ineffectuality of the Egyptian government brought chaos, not stability.

— There is evidence to show that it was possible to foresee the Egyptian revolution.

— The reason the FCO did not anticipate the revolution seems to have been because of the prevalent ideological fixation on extremism, at the expense of attention to broader cultural and social factors, and because of insufficient differentiation between extremism and radicalism.

— The forces driving the Arab Spring are also largely supportive of justice for Palestine, and regional stability is best assured by a one state solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict.

**Factual Evidence**

Filmed and/or recorded interviews conducted with writers in Cairo between November 2009 and April 2010. Please see appendix for exceptions.¹

**Introduction/Area of Expertise**

Professor Rooney is currently a RCUK research fellow on the “Global Uncertainties” scheme with a project entitled “Radical Distrust”. This project examines both how extremism is fueled by distrust, together with forms of paranoia, and how policies aimed at countering extremism are themselves prone to engendering distrust. The first phase of this project, beginning in 2009, has entailed a study of global youth culture especially as regards the politics and culture of hip hop, the blogosphere and Facebook. Another strand of it has entailed a study of the ways in which Egyptian literary culture was actively engaged in imagining the transition to democracy in the run up to the uprising. Professor Rooney was based in Cairo from November 2009 to April 2010, working with Egyptian writers, activists and intellectuals, also staging in Cairo a hip hop theatre show on terror and civil rights. She has further research expertise on the 1982 Siege of Beirut and its aftermath and on cultural aspects of the Israel/Palestine conflict.

**Responses to Specific Questions**

1. **What forces are driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Egypt?**

   1.1 In Egypt, according to Egyptian writers and intellectuals (source: interviews),² people across all sections of society had reached breaking point with respect to the extreme ineffectuality of Mubarak’s government, a government which chaotically left people to fend for themselves in hopeless conditions that encouraged widespread corruption from top to bottom.

   1.2 In addition, the government was seen to use repressive violence in the absence of effective policies and Mubarak was seen to be a cynical puppet of, as well as manipulator of, American support for Israel. Writers claimed that Mubarak exaggerated the extremist threat to keep himself in power, while also stoking political Islamism through allowing it media outlets, as his excuse to cling on. It was also claimed this excuse suited America and Israel since by funding Mubarak they assured his compliance with Israel.

   1.3 The drastic loss of faith in government resulted in “a nothing left to lose” attitude. The activism was mobilized by a combination of a) workers’ protests taking the form of a series of strikes and demonstrations in the run up to January 2011 and b) youth media (especially blogs, hip hop and Facebook). The latter enabled people to project imaginatively the viability of a revolution. The blogosphere took off in Egypt as an indirect response to the Iraq war (source: interview with blogger Rehab Bassam).³

2. **Could the FCO realistically have done more to anticipate the “Arab Spring”?**

   2.1 Yes, certainly. In 2009, I met with artists, intellectuals and journalists who said they were “plotting to overthrow Mubarak”: large demonstrations were being planned. In March/April 2010, I interviewed (on film) writers who state that they are optimistic about the capacity of the people to effect a pro-democracy change of government. It is an historical misrepresentation to maintain that the revolution appeared out of nowhere and that the FCO could not have anticipated it. Egyptians I spoke to affirmed that something momentous was likely to happen; they just did not know what the specific trigger would be and were waiting to make use of a tipping point.

   2.2 When I presented my research in 2010 to area studies specialists who inform the FCO, they were skeptical because they ascribed to the position of America and Mubarak: namely, that the extremists were

¹ Not printed.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
3. What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive their economies?

3.1 Financial aid should not be conditional on support for Israel for this would re-open the lack of trust in ruling elites. It should also not be pre-pledged to the military industry but to the reform of the socio-economic infrastructure. Egypt should be allowed to regain its agricultural self-sufficiency and empowered to stop Israeli exploitation of its resources such as gas and Nile land and water.

3.2 Aid should also be provided through offering professional expertise to the Egyptian civil service and other institutions in the areas of health, education, business, tourism and urban planning (depending on needs assessments by the new government).

3.3 Literacy campaigns and training schemes that would enable under-resourced Egyptians to participate more in the tourist industry could be set up. There is a lot of scope for improving local, independent initiatives in the tourism domain and much scope for making Cairo more tourist-friendly (with Morocco as one source of inspiration). Resources should be put into redeveloping central Cairo itself to counter the ways in which major institutions such as AUC and the Egyptian Museum seek to avoid the problems of Downtown Cairo through re-locating to the desert peripheries leaving central areas to degenerate into shums. In addition, corporate hotels and gated communities operate according to separatist policies that do not aid urban regeneration. Here, a major problem is that of the chaos of Cairo’s traffic congestion (also a source of considerable pollution affecting health). Solving this would require alternative employment for the surplus of taxi drivers. Cairo is potentially an easily walkable city and if this potential were realized, it would greatly benefit not only local tourism but other attendant local businesses.

4. What are the prospects for establishing stable multi-party democracy and a human rights culture in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere?

Speaking of Egypt, the chances of such would be improved if it were possible to separate politics from religion: however, this seems unrealistic. Instead, it will be necessary to ensure a greater distribution of power. There are certain current initiatives towards this end. One is the attempt to distinguish between different strands of Islamism, both generationally and ideologically. Another is the forging of alliances between Sufis and Copts as a means of counterbalancing the power of the Muslim Brotherhood. The middle class instigators of the democracy movement generally favour secularism, and the path to such is likely to depend on economic reform and improvements in literacy and education. The current education system encourages conformism, and literacy campaigns and training schemes that would enable under-resourced Egyptians to participate more in the tourist industry could be set up. There is a lot of scope for improving local, independent initiatives in the tourism domain and much scope for making Cairo more tourist-friendly (with Morocco as one source of inspiration). Resources should be put into redeveloping central Cairo itself to counter the ways in which major institutions such as AUC and the Egyptian Museum seek to avoid the problems of Downtown Cairo through re-locating to the desert peripheries leaving central areas to degenerate into shums. In addition, corporate hotels and gated communities operate according to separatist policies that do not aid urban regeneration. Here, a major problem is that of the chaos of Cairo’s traffic congestion (also a source of considerable pollution affecting health). Solving this would require alternative employment for the surplus of taxi drivers. Cairo is potentially an easily walkable city and if this potential were realized, it would greatly benefit not only local tourism but other attendant local businesses.

5. What will be the future role of Islamist movements in the region and what should be the British Government’s stance towards them?

The example of Turkey could be relevant as regards uneven secularization. In Egypt, the Salafists are currently being positioned as the fringe extremists. The British Government should engage more with local perspectives on extremism, particularly those of intellectuals, and acknowledge that pockets of extremism are potentially a problem within all societies even democratic ones (as the recent terror attack by Breivik shows). A comparative approach, as opposed to one that constantly presumes the moral high ground, would encourage more of a common front against extremism. In addition, the British Government (following American neo-conservative precedents) has tended to lump extremism and (revolutionary) radicalism together: there needs to be a much greater awareness of the different constituencies here.

6. What are the implications of the “Arab Spring” for Egyptian/Israeli relations and regional security?

The vast majority of Egyptians support justice for Palestine, and there is also quite widespread anti-American feeling in Egypt. In regional terms, America is not seen as representing democracy but rather as having had a destabilizing effect in the prioritizing of Israeli interests (countenancing not only Mubarak’s dictatorship but the devastating Israeli attacks on Lebanon). The biggest contribution to regional security would be through a resolution of the Israel/Palestine conflict and the best way to effect this is through the one state solution. The one state initiative is poorly understood, and therefore feared, but it offers by far the best chances for lasting stability. Israel as a Jewish state runs counter to the movements for secular multi-cultural democracy in the Middle East, and Palestinians both within Israel and the Occupied Territories suffer in terms of civil rights.
There is more support than ever before for granting Palestinians access to a democratic state. The one state solution is better than the two state solution because with the latter security fears will not be adequately resolved, while the fate of Palestinians within Israel will be even worse. Also the current settlement of the West Bank makes a two state solution impossible. Allowing the deadlock to continue only fuels fanaticism and extremism on both sides.

7. Do recent events in Egypt and Tunisia, and in the “Arab Spring” generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa (bearing in mind the Prime Minister’s comments in Kuwait in February 2011 about potential conflict between British “interests” and “values”)?

Yes, a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa is necessary. Strengthening the pro-democracy movements will reduce the extremist alternatives, and if the UK is to be considered sincere in the promotion of global justice it needs to ally itself with civil societies in the Middle East, including Palestinian movements, that seek reform. There should not be complicity with Netanyahu’s attempts to link “the war on terror” with Zionist settler colonial agendas. The National Security Strategy should reformulate the way in which it promotes democratic values as owned by the West, for instance, in the oft-repeated phrase of “our values”. Democratic values need to be promoted as universal, as opposed to selectively allowed, ring-fenced for elites, or patented by the West, against the previous rhetoric of Arab countries not being “ready” for democracy.

22 August 2011

Written evidence from Roger Higginson

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE “ARAB SPRING” FOR EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI RELATIONS AND REGIONAL SECURITY

SUMMARY

1. The “Arab Spring” is essentially a popular movement driven by a desire for better living conditions, freedom of expression, and more active participation in civil society and government.

2. In Egypt it is likely to lead to a re-evaluation of relations with Israel, with more open criticism of Israel’s foreign and defence policy, as well as its domestic treatment of the Palestinian minority.

3. As a result, Israel’s relations with Egypt need to be more carefully calibrated, if it is to avoid repeating the process of estrangement it has experienced with Turkey over the past year.

4. If the “Arab Spring” achieves its potential, and in particular the Assad regime in Syria is replaced with a more democratic and stable regime, then regional security is more likely to be maintained by a greater emphasis on mutual respect between neighbouring states, rather than an exclusive reliance on the balance of military power.

THE SUBMITTER

5. Is a private individual who has developed a close personal interest in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) over the past few years, and is a member of the board of the executive committee of the Council for the Advancement for Arab-British Understanding (CAABU). This note is however submitted in a personal capacity.

BACKGROUND

The Israel-Egypt peace treaty was signed in March 1979, and marked the end of hostilities which had culminated six years earlier in the Yom Kippur War of October 1973.4

6. That war was somewhat different from the numerous other wars fought by Israel since 1948, in that its opponents achieved a degree of military success, and were able to negotiate peace from a position of relative strength.

7. What followed however was not a normalisation of relations, but rather the absence of military hostilities, with the two countries effectively separated by a de-militarised Sinai peninsula.

8. Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which was to run intermittently until its ultimate withdrawal in May 2000 made it politically very difficult for any Egyptian government to achieve any real rapprochement with a country which undertook such an aggressive military profile in territories contiguous with its borders. In the case of Southern Lebanon and the neighbouring Golan Heights and Shebaa Farms areas, this was made more difficult by a refusal to define exactly where those borders were.

9. The situation was exacerbated by the second Lebanon war in the summer of 2006, and the subsequent operation “Cast Lead” in the Gaza Strip at the end of 2008.

4 The chronology of events is set out in “Israel and Palestine, Reappraisals, Revisions, and Refutations” by Professor Avi Shlaim of St. Anthony’s College, Oxford, published by Verso in 2009.
10. Current developments have seen no improvement: indeed the recent events involving an attack on an Israeli bus near the Egyptian border close to Eilat, followed by “hot pursuit” over the border and the subsequent deaths of five Egyptian police have only served to chill relations between the two countries even further.

**ARGUMENT**

11. Relations with Egypt matter in the Middle East. It is by far its most populous country, with some 77 million inhabitants. Considered strategically important by both the USA and the EU, it has a fair claim to have been the leader of the Arab world, and in particular of secular pan-Arab nationalism, during the second half of the twentieth century.

12. During that period there have been four wars with Israel: the Suez War of 1956, the six-day war of 1967, the so-called “war of attrition” of 1969–70, and the Yom Kippur war of 1973.

13. The past 38 years have been characterised by a frosty, but essentially stable peace. Issues relating to Gaza, in particular following Israel’s withdrawal from that territory and subsequent military blockade following the election of Hamas in 2006 have been an irritant, but not a decisive factor: with both sides sharing an antipathy towards political movements with links to the Muslim Brotherhood.

14. In different circumstances, this “cold peace” between the two countries might have been regrettable, but not necessarily entailing any serious consequences.

15. It is otherwise because of the steadily deteriorating relations between Israel and its other regional neighbours, and the growing isolation which is the inevitable result.

16. In Jordan concerns have been growing in Amman over the past few years primarily because of two issues. One is the result of Israeli excavations around and under the Al Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock in the old city of Jerusalem, which not only inflame passions across the Muslim world, but also cause great concern to the Jordanians, given their close historical connections as “guarantors” of the status quo as far as Jerusalem’s holy sites are concerned.

17. Of possibly greater importance is a growing fear that as Israeli politics continues in its rightward drift, there may be serious attempts to transfer (some of) the Palestinian population in the West Bank from Israel to Jordan. This derives from the “Jordan is Palestine” thesis originally developed by Ariel Sharon and more recently brought back into vogue by some of Israel’s right wing supporters in Europe.

18. In Lebanon, the inevitable hostility created by Israel’s invasion of Southern Lebanon in the summer of 2006 has been accompanied by a progressive weakening of political influence of its only allies there (the Christian Maronite community) and a corresponding rise to power of the Shia Muslims represented by Hassan Nasrallah.

19. The possible demise of his Syrian patron, President Bashar Assad, is unlikely to render Lebanon’s political orientation any more sympathetic to a country which has occupied parts of its territory for around 20 of the past 30 years: and is now in the process of disputing its maritime border following the discovery of significant natural gas deposits beneath the sea-bed.

20. Finally, and possibly of greatest future significance is the steady degradation of Israel’s relations with Turkey, which have been so widely reported as not to require further detail here. Suffice it to say that Turkey’s reaction to the killing of nine of its citizens, shot at close range by Israeli commandoes following their boarding of the “Mavi Marmara” in June 2010 has met only with a stubborn refusal by the Israeli government to offer even the smallest of olive branches to make amends. This bodes ill in a region where Turkish influence is once again on the ascent, and that of Israel’s natural supporters amongst the Western powers in relative decline.

**CONCLUSIONS**

21. We are witnessing a period of general deterioration between Israel and its neighbours, which is reflected within the territory under its control by a steadily more adversarial relationship between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority: which is both significant and growing.

22. Although not directly connected, the two feed on and exacerbate each other, as the Palestinians are viewed by an increasing number of Israel’s political class as a fifth column alienated from, and hostile to “the Jewish state”. Restrictions on housing, land ownership, and participation in the organs of government serve only to make a bad situation worse.

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7 Ibid, p.193.
9 “Oil and Gas discoveries produce potential Israel-Lebanon flash points”: article by Nicholas Blanford published in “Christian Science Monitor” on 1 November 2010.
23. In terms of its international relations with neighbouring states, Israel’s primary concern has always been to maintain its security; unsurprisingly given the circumstances of its creation following the end of the British mandate period in 1948.

24. Regrettably that concern has almost always been manifest by the use of overwhelming military force which has paradoxically served to heighten security concerns rather than allay them: and the often ascerbic and hostile comments made by Avigdor Lieberman since his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 2009 have only served to inflame the suspicions and resentments aroused by his country’s periodical showings of military strength.

**Recommendations**

25. British foreign policy towards Israel has traditionally focussed on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) since the 1991 Madrid accords. With hindsight, this may have been mistaken. The partition of historical Palestine via a so-called “two state solution” has no political support within Israel, and does not address the problems of the 1.5 million Palestinians who constitute over 20% of its population.

26. Our influence—to the extent it exists—would be better focussed on setting out how Israel’s penchant for force and control is steadily leading to increased regional and international isolation, and a dangerous increase in polarisation between the different communities living within its territory.

27. Specifically concerning its relations with Egypt, we need to urge constraint in its dealings with one of the pivotal countries in the Middle East; give the developments of the “Arab Spring” the benefit of the doubt for the time-being, and refrain from any actions in the short term which could jeopardise its relations with the new government which will emerge following their planned elections post-Mubarak.

28. In the meantime the case should be firmly set out to both countries that it is in neither of their interests to see a continuation of the long-running blockade of Gaza which has served only to isolate and embitter the population confined within that strip of territory; has created the conditions for militancy and violence, and turned Hamas towards external sponsors with little interest in peace as far as Israel is concerned.

6 September 2011

**Written evidence from Christian Aid**

1. **Introduction**

1.1 Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. We work globally in over 40 countries for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.

1.2 Christian Aid has worked in the Middle East for over 50 years, and works with over 30 local partner organisations in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. We have three programmes in the region: Economic Justice, Secure Livelihoods, and Israel/occupied Palestinian territory Rights for All. Through these programmes we work to expose the scandal of poverty, tackle its symptoms and work to change its structural causes. In our responses below, we base our evidence primarily from our work and experience in Egypt, but also draw on our regional approach, informed by analysis from the other countries where we work.

1.3 We welcome the opportunity to provide written evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on the “Arab Spring”. We have focused this submission primarily on questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9 and our responses are structured in this order. In preparing this submission, we have engaged our local partner organisations in the Middle East to articulate shared concerns. We are happy to provide further written and/or oral evidence on any of the subjects covered in this submission.

2. **Question 1**

*What forces are driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Egypt and Tunisia, and to what extent are they paralleled elsewhere in the Arab world (for instance in other North African countries such as Morocco)?*

2.1 Political exclusion and economic injustice helped spur the “Arab Spring”: As Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator highlighted in April, “a combination of economic and political exclusion and injustice has brought millions of people in the Arab States region on to the streets to demand change”.

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10 Christian Aid and our partner in Egypt are also implementing an ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance emergency programme in Egypt in response to the Libyan crisis leading to migrant workers returning home to Egypt.

11 Helen Clark (6.4.2011) Jobs, Equity and Voice: Why Both Economic and Political Inclusion Matter
and political corruption, repressive laws such as Egypt’s Emergency Law, long-term authoritarian leaders and apparent dynasties and manipulation by those in power of political and state processes amplified the underlying economic and social inequalities and powerlessness to create the contexts in which “Arab Spring” events have unfolded.

2.2 Economically, GDP growth in countries such as Egypt mask the reality for many people of rising prices, falling real wages and unemployment with poor provision of state services, failing to meet basic needs. High unemployment, rising prices and income inequality have led to many people becoming poorer absolutely and relatively. Many people in the Middle East are economically disengaged and politically disenfranchised.

2.3 Socially, several groups are excluded from social and political rights in countries such as Egypt and across the region. For example, workers in the informal sector cannot access many public services available to public sector and some private sector employees. Women may be excluded from some professions and lack social and political power. In Egypt, and many other Arab countries, there have been stifling political systems which have effectively disenfranchised citizens from exercising any power to choose governments, hold them to account and engage with state institutions on the basis of clear rights.

2.4 Christian Aid highlighted particular economic problems related to other crises in a June 2009 joint report with our partner organisation the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND). We cited a “crisis of multiple dimensions and the threat of explosive vulnerabilities and increasing insecurities”. In our Facing Challenges of Poverty, Unemployment, and Inequalities in the Arab Region report we concluded that: “The deficiency in the area of social policies is in part a reflection of lacking satisfactory levels of participation in the processes of developing policy responses or rescue schemes, including for various social partners and civil society stakeholders.”

2.5 Some protests and upheavals have led to policy changes; other outcomes are unclear. The changes being witnessed in Egypt and Tunisia have been echoed to some extent in other countries in the region, even though contexts are different and outcomes are quite varied. For example, there has been formal reconciliation between Palestinian factions, although the impact of this is yet to be seen. Meanwhile, Israel has witnessed its biggest protests, with mass calls for greater prioritisation on social needs and for reducing inequality.

3. Question 2
Could the FCO realistically have done more to anticipate the “Arab Spring”?

3.1 Deeper FCO engagement in the Middle East enhances UK effectiveness. FCO staff in the Middle East could have prioritised travel to areas outside the capital city, especially to engage with civil society organisations to deepen their analysis of the context in the region. Given the brittle nature of state institutions and limited scope of the private sectors in many Middle East countries, it is even more important that FCO staff engages with civil society actors. The welcome Arab Partnership Programme was established before the upheaval in Tunisia, but it was a rather isolated case of the FCO making efforts to engage in addressing long-term issues of poor governance and accountability in the region.

4. Question 4
What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive their economies? How can the British Government best work with allies and through international institutions to support reform in Egypt and Tunisia?

4.1 Coherent policy engagement is more significant than direct assistance. The UK Government can further the building of democratic institutions and help revive economies by prioritising more support to civil society. We recommend that the UK Government integrates a three-pronged approach:
— Broadening its engagement with civil society to build their capacity to hold governments to account;
— Working with governments to ensure space for civil society action is enhanced, by promoting appropriate legal and political frameworks, and
— Supporting the emerging governments in the articulation of policies and practices which promote poverty reduction and tackle inequality.

A stronger, more vibrant civil society raises the likelihood of a civil state in countries such as Egypt; the civil state framework is actively promoted by some Christian Aid partners.

4.2 UK engagement should be premised on shared commitments to human rights, equality before the law and freedom of expression.

4.3 The UK Government should prioritise economic policies and engagement with countries such as Egypt which will benefit employment, trade, domestic resource mobilisation and spending on social priorities. Whilst the UK Government can do some of this through specific technical assistance to government as well as a diversity of actors within the Egyptian political system parts and to civil society organisations in Egypt, it should also work to ensure that its role in multilateral institutions enables economic policies which prioritise

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Egyptian needs. We recommend that the UK Government integrate the following into its economic engagement in the region:

- base bilateral and multilateral economic policies with poorer countries on a “do no harm” basis, using impact assessments;
- ensuring that specific projects funded using UK resources are not undermined or counteracted by wider economic (including trade) policies at bilateral or multilateral levels, and
- leveraging support for sustainable economic policies within Middle East countries which target support for increasing employment, more inclusive social policy provision or similar poverty-reducing instruments.

High levels of unemployment in Egypt and elsewhere in the region are symptomatic of development policies which do not benefit poor and marginalised groups. Supporting more inclusive development through employment-centred social policies is vital to reviving the Egyptian and similar economies.

4.4 The European Union’s policy towards countries in the region should be assessed from the basis of positive impacts for poor people in those countries rather than only benefits for narrowly defined EU interests. The Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of the Euro-Med Free Trade Area commissioned by the EU Commission has shown that for the short and medium terms, Southern Mediterranean Partner countries will be negatively impacted with regards to employment, average wages, and government spending on social services, among others. For example, the EU-commissioned SIA Study of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area noted that “there will be increased incentives for commercial farms to expand their land use, reducing that available for traditional farming. This leads to risks of higher rural unemployment and higher poverty levels, with significant gender impacts”.

4.5 Multilateral engagement should be predicated on the basis of need and demand by recipient countries. The UK must ensure that all such policies, frameworks and mechanisms start from the premise of furthering commonly agreed development objectives, rather than narrow macroeconomic performance on fiscal indicators. As late as September 2010, the IMF was lauding Tunisia’s “sound macroeconomic management and structural reforms over the last decade” and even calling for more of the same by “contain(ing) public spending on wages and food and fuel subsidies”. The UK should use its membership of such multilateral organisations to ensure a greater focus on development objectives, rather than economic policies which can undermine the achievement of such objectives. There should be more transparent and inclusive processes for arriving at the frameworks and mechanisms which instrumentise policy objectives, through participation of civil society organisations within the region, and accountability processes which check progress independently of EU mechanisms, using development indicators such as increased employment within impact assessments.

4.6 Regional and international institutions should engage more with civil society in the Middle East and North Africa. In all its engagement through multilateral institutions, the UK Government should recognise how such organisations are perceived in Egypt and similar countries, and work to strengthen the role such institutions can play to support effective transitions. The United Nations is viewed as having greater legitimacy within the region than for example, International Financial Institutions or the EU has. The G8 and G20 have also stressed the need to engage with regards to employment, average wages, and government spending on social services, among others. For example, the EU-commissioned SIA Study of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area noted that “there will be increased incentives for commercial farms to expand their land use, reducing that available for traditional farming. This leads to risks of higher rural unemployment and higher poverty levels, with significant gender impacts”.

5. Question 5

What are the prospects for establishing stable multi-party democracy and a human rights culture in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere?

5.1 Strengthening civil society is intrinsic to sustaining democratic transitions. The prospects for establishing stable multi-party democracy and better enforcement of human rights in Egypt will be increased if civil society organisations are supported to play a central role in holding reformed state institutions to account, and a role in enabling a pluralistic political culture to develop.

5.2 Civil society organisations can play a central role by working to establish deeper human rights awareness and holding duty bearers to account for exercising their responsibilities in a fair and accountable way. Civil society organisations at the local level can hold state officials to account for the delivery of basic services. At the national level they can play important roles in ensuring that the judicial process is fair to all citizens, and that social priorities are reflected in the allocation of government expenditure. Civil society organisations can also work to ensure that marginalised groups (such as women, migrants or domestic workers) have their human rights upheld, whether they are civil rights, social rights or labour rights. Christian Aid partners have demonstrated that through education on human rights, and engagement with officials, better human rights standards can be established. For example, our partner Al-Haq has implemented training programmes in

15 Declaration of the G8 on the Arab Spring (27.5.2011) http://www.g20-g8.com/g8-g20/g8/english/live/news/declaration-of-the-g8-on-the-arab-springs.1316.html
occupied Palestinian territory, helping to bring about better human rights standards in Palestinian legislation and policy.

5.3 The UK Government can provide technical assistance to NGOs, unions and cooperatives around political participation and claiming rights. Christian Aid partners such as the Better Life Association for Comprehensive Development (BLACD) works with poor and marginalised groups in Middle Egypt to organise groups to have dialogue with officials, based on rights training and supporting campaigns for services such as portable water and rights such as housing. BLACD worked with other NGOs to identify their needs for rights training and developed what is thought to be the first rights-based approach manual for development work in Arabic in Egypt. Using these techniques promotes more participatory poverty eradication strategies to be developed and implemented.

5.4 It is vital that progress in enforcing human rights encompasses social and economic rights in order for it to be sustainable. Working to ensure better fulfilment of human rights in Egypt is a more sustainable and inclusive way of aiming to ensure a positive transition than focussing on benchmarks such as elections.

5.5 The UK should engage with political actors which adhere to agreed political rules and processes. This will enhance the credibility of the UK as a legitimate interlocutor and place primacy on the process and principles rather than specific parties. Overall, the UK should ensure its engagement does not help to replicate the very structures and processes that drove protests in the first place. This means prioritising broader decision-making, greater consultation and embedded accountability in the new developing processes in general, and in projects funded by the UK in particular. The UK should be setting an example in its engagement.

6. Question 7

What are the implications of the “Arab Spring” for Egyptian/Israeli relations and regional security?

6.1 The interim Egyptian government has attempted to maintain the commitment to regional security. However, across the Middle East, including in Israel, respective civil societies are demanding greater accountability, transparency and calling for political and economic rights to be respected. Therefore, future Egyptian governments are likely to be under greater pressure to respond to public opinion on Israel and to demonstrate to their public that they are taking a pro-active stance on seeking to end Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territory.

6.2 Egypt has played a key role both in Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab affairs in the past bilaterally and as a significant voice within the Arab League. Egypt has helped to broker Hamas-Fatah reconciliation as part of Palestinian aspirations towards statehood as well as hosting talks to negotiate the release of Gilad Shalit.

6.3 Israel is likely to fear distancing of relations with Egypt in the future. There is a danger that increased political distance between Israel and Egypt could translate into confrontation between the two countries, especially if there are increased Egyptian ties with Gaza which are perceived by Israel as threatening.

6.4 Uncertainty and changing relations underscore the urgency of making real progress towards a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The international community needs to be seen to take a strong stance on ensuring clearer steps are being taken to demonstrate that the rule of law guides conflict resolution, and that there are concrete improvements in the Palestinian situation including an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza.

7. Question 9

Do recent events in Egypt and Tunisia, and in the “Arab Spring” generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa (bearing in mind the Prime Minister’s comments in Kuwait in February 2011 about potential conflict between British “interests” and “values”)?

7.1 Living our values makes the most of UK influence. We welcome the increased interest and engagement that the UK Government has had in the region over the last year, particularly seeking engagement with a wide variety of civil society organisations in the region, and working in partnership with other countries in multilateral institutions.

7.2 UK foreign policy should be founded on the principles of human rights and wider values based on enabling individuals, communities and countries to flourish alongside each other. When we consider how best to assure our long-term interests, we can do so most effectively by consistently aiming to uphold our values. Furthermore, the UK Government can enhance its position as having a comparative advantage for rights-based and development-centred foreign policy. In the context of a more fragmented world in terms of power, making it harder for UK influence to cut through, the Government needs to be “more responsible about understanding our knowledge is limited, our power is limited, our legitimacy is limited” as Rory Stewart MP recently observed.17

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17 BBC Any Questions (5.8.2011): http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b012x136/Any_Questions_05_08_2011/
7.3 The UK should prioritise economic and social reforms that tackle poverty. The UK can build on its comparative advantage in having a development-centred foreign policy by supporting economic and social reforms which will reduce poverty. Doing so will help make the changes of the “Arab Spring” more sustainable, more positive for poor people and better ensure that the UK underpins progress across fundamental human rights.

7.4 The UK should recognise the often limited options available for action. The UK should seek to act where there is leverage in partnership with others. This approach should minimise the potential gaps between values-based policy raising expectations and being able to act to implement those values given inherent limitations of being a single actor within dynamics contexts. Christian Aid’s partners emphasise that the UK Government is increasingly being perceived globally as being more apt at engaging in hard action rather than softer diplomacy. This perception can undermine the impact of the real support to humanitarian and other needs by the UK Government.

7.5 UK foreign policy should work in a co-ordinated way through multilateral means. This means working within legitimate and inclusive processes internationally and regionally to further ends which uphold international law (including international human rights law and international humanitarian law).

7.6 The UK should push for a concerted regional effort in the region for a comprehensive peace ushering a new start in relations between countries and peoples. In our recently published report Locked Out we echoed William Hague’s comments that “it cannot be in anyone’s interests if the new order of the region is determined at a time of minimum hope in the peace process”, by stating that “Palestinians and Israelis must be part of this regional quest for justice, accountability and security in order not to remain relics of a bitter and bloody past”. Achieving comprehensive peace should enable the underlying causes of conflict and instability within countries (as well as between them) to be better tackled. For instance, regional peace would enable more resources to be directed to social spending across the region such as Israel, to tackle inequality perpetuating current tensions.19

September 2011

Written evidence from the British Council

Summary
 — What role can the British Council play responding to the Arab Spring?
 — Crisis Team response in Egypt and Tunisia
 — Programme response:
   — English
   — Education and Skills
   — Youth and Networks
   — Arts

What Role can the British Council Play Responding to the Arab Spring?

1. The British Council has been working and making a difference in MENA since the 1930s; our existing networks of influencers, including 570 young leaders in our Global Changemakers programme (see paragraph 26), ensure that the legacy of trust we have built during this time will be crucial for the UK’s engagement with the region in the future.

2. Our work is highly valued by new and existing governments in the region. Our immediate priorities are Egypt and Tunisia, where the new authorities have sought our help in assisting them with the social, educational (including English language teaching) and economic reform they wish to undertake. In Tunisia, we will shortly be signing a high level agreement with the Ministry of Employment to become adviser to government on English language policy and strategy (see paragraph 16). We will engage in similar efforts to work with the new administration in Libya when it is safe to do so and endeavour to resume our work in Tripoli and elsewhere when the situation is considered secure for both our staff and customers.

3. British Council Egypt is our oldest overseas operation where we have been present since 1938. We have been in Tunisia for nearly half a century, opening our Tunis office in 1962. Our operation in the Middle East and North Africa region remains a priority for the organisation, where last year we engaged face to face with 0.8 million people and reached another 6.5 million people through our exhibitions, media and online audience.

4. Today, we operate in all 17 countries in the region, working, as we have for decades, in English language, education and skills, youth leadership and networks—addressing the underlying issues currently exposed in the Arab Spring. We are responding to governance developments and rising public expectations in Middle East


18 See, for instance, Indignant in Israel (Financial Times 12.8.2011): http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/51d9fb8e-c40d-11e0-b302-00144feab01d.html#axzz1UoZzQzO.
and North Africa with a series of new projects, many funded by the Arab Partnership initiative, which build on our existing work and significantly increase our impact and enhance UK interests in the region.

**Crisis Team Response to the Arab Spring**

5. The most pressing response to the protests in Egypt and Tunisia was to guarantee the safety of our staff and their dependents as the security situation deteriorated in both countries. We balanced this decision with our commitment to maintain a presence on the ground around the world in good times and bad. In both countries a senior team remained in country throughout and ensured we were quick to get our staff back and resume our work when the situation improved.

**Egypt**

6. In response to the instability of the protest period in Egypt we organised a phased evacuation of 90 UK appointed staff and their families, with a senior team remaining in Cairo. This helped to ensure the safety of staff, but also enabled us to ensure the continued operation of key programmes. On 11 February, the same day as Hosni Mubarak stood down as President, our exams team delivered IELTS tests to 200 Egyptian students, with a further 200 the following day.

**Tunisia**

7. Following the 14 January revolution in Tunisia we evacuated all non-essential UK staff. A senior team remained in country. Within a week of the overthrow of President Ben Ali our office in Tunis reopened and activity resumed.

**Programme Response**

8. Like our work across the MENA network, we have focussed our efforts on areas where we know there is endless demand: in English language, education and skills, youth leadership and arts—addressing, as we have done for some time, many of the underlying issues presently highlighted in the Arab Spring. Opportunities are emerging for us from the Arab Spring to increase engagement and the emerging leadership and influencers throughout the region are asking us to do more.

**English**

9. The demand for English language skills across the region is already vast; over 54 million people in the Middle East and North Africa are estimated to be studying English in the formal education sector. Coupled with this, the region’s population is getting bigger and younger: 70% of the population is under 35, but within this segment nearly 40% are unemployed. One of the issues highlighted in UNESCO’s Arab Human Development report is the failure of educational structures in the region to equip young people with the skills they need to find employment to ensure economic development and social stability.

10. Our large-scale *English for the Future* programme is already established across the region, providing support to developing national policies for English language teaching and support to teacher training, reaching 5.7 million people last year and on target to grow to 8 million this year. In Tunisia this has involved assisting the Ministry of Education to prepare a plan for the complete reform of the English language curriculum focussed specifically on language skills for employability. (See annex, para 1.1.)

11. With 20 Teaching Centres across 18 cities in 13 countries in the region, last year we taught more than 100,000 students directly. Our teaching centre in Tunisia teaches around 2,500 learners every year and, despite recent uncertainties, demand remains high amongst young people and the corporate sector. (See annex, para 1.2.)

12. Along with our partners, we delivered more than 125,000 IELTS English exams in the region last year. Demand is high because these qualifications are prized.

13. Responding to the events of the Arab Spring we are launching new projects to extend the impact of our work. A number of these initiatives have been funded by the Arab Partnership Initiative and are designed to focus on skills development, ELT and youth engagement work that will help young people in the region take advantage of the new opportunities emerging in their countries.

New projects include:

*English for Employability for Vocational Education—Tunisia*

14. The British Council has received investment for a new English language project in Tunisia via the Arab Partnership Initiative. Public debate in Tunisia is focussing in on youth and employment as the key areas to be addressed by the post-revolutionary government. The investment will enable the British Council to address an area of immediate concern: the teaching of English in vocational centres. (See annex, para 1.3.)
Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training

15. In Tunisia our work with government has given us a unique insight into the issues relating to the teaching and learning of English to prepare young people for the world of work. In addition to the advisory role we are due to begin with the Tunisian government mentioned earlier in the report, we expect to sign a contract with the Ministry of Employment at the end of September to assist in developing the English language skills of 10,000 unemployed graduates over the next three years.

Improving Language Skills Training for Young People in Egypt

16. The British Council has also received investment under the Arab Partnership Initiative to set up a centre for English education reform which will be the driver of reform and quality English language training in Egypt. The new project in Egypt is making a significant contribution to the Government of Egypt’s Education Development Fund objective of training and developing 60,000 English language teachers in Egypt in the next four to six years.

17. With English language training at all levels of the education system underperforming due to the quality decreasing as the quantity of provision has increased, the Egyptian Educational Development Fund have approached the British Council for help. The Centre for English Education Reform which the British Council has proposed to address this issue, will primarily deliver master trainer training programmes focussed on the primary, secondary and tertiary/vocational levels. (See annex, para 1.4.)

Kids Read—A British Council and HSBC partnership

18. In March, the British Council and HSBC signed a partnership agreement to launch Kids Read—a new programme aimed at English language and literacy. Kids Read is sponsored exclusively by HSBC and aims to encourage reading for pleasure in English both inside and outside the classroom in 11 countries across the region, including Egypt. Our total reach will be approximately 25,000 students and 300 teachers in 78 schools as well as 250 HSBC volunteers. (See annex, para 1.5.)

Education & Skills

19. Reform of education at all levels is essential to provide young people across the region with the skills that they need to find and create work and to support economic, social and political development.

20. Higher education in particular has a major role to play in supporting national reform agendas and where international links have major potential for engagement. We are expanding such links, for curriculum reform, quality assurance, institutional management and research collaboration, as well as helping student-to-student links. We are already working to support reform and quality assurance in eight countries across the region and we are expanding our work in this area across North Africa this financial year.

21. Vocational Education, providing work skills for young people directly linked to local industry and business needs is essential to helping economic growth and increased employment. Our Skills for Employability programme is active and expanding across the region, supporting policy development, curricular reform, quality assurance, business and industry links and institutional links with UK colleges. This is a priority policy area for all new or reforming administrations across the region.

22. School level reform is also critical. Current governments have been wary of international links because of worries about external influence on young people. This may change with new, more outward-looking, reformist governments. We currently have links with ministries and schools through our Connecting Classrooms programme which links over 70,000 students in 700 schools in the region with schools in the UK.

23. We can expand on this to develop new school programmes with new reforming governments.

New work includes:

Widening Opportunities for Youth Employability—Tunisia and Egypt

24. Building on Skills for Employability, we have secured investment from the Arab Partnership Initiative to expand vocational training for young people in Egypt and Tunisia. The project aims to train 10,000 young people directly, engage with a further 60,000 via social media, and 12 million through a skills radio programme over the course of two years. (See annex, para 2.1.)

Youth & Networks

Young people launched the leaderless uprisings of the Arab Spring and will play a defining role in the formation of new governments and in holding them to account.

25. We have an established network of young people across the region, connected to the UK and globally through our Global Changemakers programme for exceptional 18–25 year old social activists and social entrepreneurs. Across the Middle East, the network directly engages some 570 members who, in turn, reach thousands more through their projects. These networks are real assets: they straddle the entire region and they
include rising stars that are proven influencers amongst their generation, acting as “multipliers” for civil society engagement. Members were directly involved in the revolution in Tunisia and in the Tahrir Square protests in Egypt. In the post-revolutionary period the British Council is still trusted and wanted. Our value to these young leaders was confirmed recently when we supported a group of young activists involved in the programme to visit London and to meet with the Deputy Prime Minister to give their perspective on current events and prospects for the future. This further solidified the value they attach to our “convening power”, our non-prescriptive approach (compared to other western organisations) and the role we play in facilitating dialogue and social action.

26. The role that women have played in demonstrations across the region has been striking, in dramatic contrast to their normal exclusion from opportunity and the patriarchal nature of many of the societies and autocratic regimes. Support to women’s empowerment will make a major contribution to overall reform. 

*Springboard*, the British Council’s global women’s empowerment programme, adapted with local partners to Middle Eastern culture, has been active in the Gulf for the last two years providing personal development opportunities and links to UK networks for over 8,500 women over the last two years. We expect to expand this programme to North Africa and the Levant and use the networks of women established to develop further activity. We are also working with lawyers, academics, young leaders and organisations in the region to increase and secure women’s rights particularly in those countries where constitutional reform is underway.

27. The British Council’s long established networks, capability on the ground and global experience of delivering programmes in these areas makes us a valuable delivery partner for programmes that support media, justice and civil society reform.

New work includes:

**Next Generation Research—Egypt**

28. The British Council has demonstrated an expertise in engaging with youth to produce new research on the attitudes, behaviours and knowledge of the “next generation” with its seminal reports on Pakistan, Nigeria and Bangladesh. In response to the Arab Spring, we will bring this model of research to further understand youth issues in Egypt and the wider region. (See annex, para 3.1.)

**Young Arab Research Network in Morocco (with participants from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan)**

29. Noticing the very low presence of young policy analysts able to give youth focussed analysis of current social and political issues, in March the British Council convened a meeting of the Young Arab Research Network, a regional sub-group of the *Global Changemakers* programme, with representatives from Chatham House. The objective was to bring youth-led research to the forefront of debate across the countries of North Africa. The product of this meeting is a programme in partnership with Chatham House which will support 150 young researchers/journalists/political activists 18–30 years from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan. (See annex, para 3.2.)

**International Inspiration—Egypt and the Gulf**

30. International Inspiration is the international legacy project for London 2012. It aims to enrich the lives of 12 million young people in 20 countries, through high quality and inclusive sport. We are working with a range of partners to bring this project to Egypt, where it will make a strong contribution to wider efforts to engage young people in public life. Building on a strong base in Egypt, we will explore opportunities to share some of the learning with other countries in the region, including in the Gulf.

**Arts**

31. The arts in North Africa and the Middle East have a high profile in this tide of change. During the uprising in Egypt, independent artists and art organisations were actively present in Tahrir Square. Where free speech has been limited across the region, it has often been independent artists who have kept the voice of youth and civil society alive. The arts now have a crucial role to play in helping societies make their voice heard and rebuild their sense of identity.

32. A comment frequently heard in Cairo since the fall of the Mubarak regime is “Now everyone is an artist.” There is a strong movement to reclaim the streets in Egypt with all forms of personal and political expression including cartoons, spontaneous song, music and dance. As a result, arts organisations are overwhelmed with activity.

33. Using our extensive networks and on the ground cultural relations expertise, the British Council is making every effort to support new voices from across the region. The culture of creativity, invention and innovation amongst young people needs to be reinvigorated after decades of neglect. Engagement with ideas and the wider world through the arts will help to extend limited world views and promote dialogue in civil society. The British Council’s arts programme across MENA focuses on supporting artists and independent institutions through opportunities for collaboration with the UK and training and award schemes. It provides support to developing a growing cadre of professionals in arts management.
New work includes:

Democracy Loading

34. The Democracy...Loading project explores the aspirations of young people in Tunisia following the Arab Spring. The film makers are all young Tunisians who were active protestors during the revolution and have been mentored by UK documentary counterparts. The films also inspire discussion and debate within Tunisia, supporting the development of freedom of speech in a country where it has almost been impossible for more than two decades. (See annex, para 4.1.)

Art and Social Change Research

35. Responding to the flourishing of the region’s artistic community brought on by the Arab Spring, the British Council is commissioning research to investigate the relationship between the arts and recent political activity in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. The research will examine the cultural and political changes that are occurring within and across the four case study countries, as documented, expressed and communicated through art in different forms.

Macbeth: Leila and Ben—A Bloody History

36. Relationships established through the British Council project New Work New Audiences have led to the commissioning of a production by Tunisian director Lotfi Achour which will have its world premier at the World Shakespeare Festival in London in July 2012. The British Council will support the production and the performances in the UK. Macbeth: Leila and Ben—a Bloody History is likely to be a sensation in Tunisia where theatre has a very strong tradition and a very loyal and active young audience.

Conclusion

The British Council continues to deepen the relationship it has had with the people of the Middle East and North Africa for more than 70 years: giving them the tools to become more active and informed members and leaders of their own societies through English Language training, vocational education and cultural exchange. It is a response that will bring enormous future benefits to both countries and economies and support UK security and prosperity now and in the future.

16 September 2011

Annex

(MAIN TEXT REFERS)

ENGLISH

1.1 Implementation of reform can begin very quickly once current upheaval in the Ministry of Education has calmed. The plan may also serve as a model for other countries in the region.

Crucially, the programme gives direct support to learners of English, through a range of means including online language training and TV, radio and newspaper learning resources. In 2010 over 2.25 million learners accessed this material including around 35,000 a day through our social media provision; the appetite for English—and as a result, British culture—is enormous. The British Council’s English language Facebook page has 300,000 subscribers with over 100,000 subscribers from Egypt alone.

1.2 The majority of our English language learners in the region, however, do not have access to quality learning opportunities. Many of the region’s estimated 300,000 teachers are insufficiently trained, do not have access to good teaching materials and many themselves have poor English language skills so a real opportunity exists to expand our work in this area.

1.3 Working with our partner, the Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training, we have already completed stage one: 44 teachers from vocational centres followed a course led by British Council trainers, and shared their views on what improvements were needed in the system for teaching English in vocational centres. A number of these teachers will go on to form a network of master teachers who will undertake further training for their peers and lead on later stages in the project.

1.4 A cadre of master trainers can then scale the learning more broadly to teachers across the country. The centre will also house a resource library with English language training materials from UK publishers, and support online training for teachers in geographically remote areas.

1.5 Six government primary schools in each country will receive approximately 50 authentic fiction books with accompanying lesson plans and activities. Three to four English language teachers in each school will receive training in storytelling and extensive reading with involvement from 18–20 HSBC volunteers in each country throughout the pilot.
**Education & Skills**

2.1 The **Widening Opportunities for Youth Employability** initiative will focus on three areas in each country:
1) entrepreneurship and work-based skills development for young people through national apprenticeship strategies, resources for small business development, training for young people and national enterprise award competitions; 2) raising awareness of the need and opportunities to address the gap in skills through social networking, radio and policy dialogue, and 3) building employer engagement in the skills agenda with partnerships between bodies in Egypt and Tunisia, and the UK Sector Skills Councils and the European Training Foundation.

**Youth & Networks**

3.1 Key elements of the **Next Generation** research approach include: exploring local, national and global themes in relation to youth; involving key national figures in the steering of the project; involving youth to make sense of the research to produce a narrative on key findings and the needs and expectations that categorise the “next generation”.

3.2 Chatham House and the British Council will co-host a conference during which the researchers will be able to present their policy papers and get exposure to a wider UK audience.

**Arts**

4.1 The package of documentary films inspired by the Tunisian revolution will be shown to UK cinema clubs, university groups and film festivals.

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**Written evidence from the Redress Trust (REDRESS)**

**Summary of Submissions**

— Torture is a striking feature of what the previous regimes in the Middle East used and an integral part of what the uprisings were and are seeking to end; UK foreign policy should reflect a principled understanding of this in the context of the UK’s international anti-torture obligations.

— The UK’s foreign policy should be based on scrupulous adherence to international human rights standards; it must avoid in any way condoning or being seen to condone torture by breaching its non-refoulement obligations, by being complicit in torture, or by allowing the UK to be a safe-haven for torture suspects.

— Particular attention must be paid to protecting UK nationals and others who can claim UK-protection from torture abroad; there should be a clear policy to protect such persons from torture and the risk of torture and to assist victims in obtaining reparation, both in the context of counter-terrorism and in all other circumstances.

— The UK should play a constructive role to assist states in the process of addressing legacies of torture in times of transition by supporting civil society and helping institutions to function within states’ clear obligations contained in the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).

**Introduction**

1. The Redress Trust (REDRESS) is an international human rights organisation whose mandate is to seek justice for torture survivors. REDRESS’ work has included making written submissions to United Kingdom parliamentary committees, including recently20 to the Foreign Affairs Committee (the Committee) for the Committee’s July 2011 report21 on **Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report,**22 on matters concerning torture.

2. REDRESS has an ongoing interest in seeing, in the states and region under review, the effective strengthening of the absolute prohibition against torture, the prevention of torture, its proper investigation when it occurs, accountability for perpetrators, and reparations for victims.

3. The UK has clear obligations, particularly under UNCAT, which should inform its foreign policy towards Arab Spring states. Its foreign policy should be principled and coherent. It should avoid engaging in practices that may be incompatible with its international obligations and undermine the UK’s legitimacy as a state seen to be committed to human rights and the rule of law.


4. Torture is a striking feature of the uprisings in the Middle East, and reflects a close causal relationship between torture and the demand for change. Torture had become a symbol of repression and humiliation whose exposure acted as a rallying cry for protestors. Responses to the uprisings were in most countries characterised by the reported use of excessive force and widespread torture. This increased people’s determination to demand real changes, and to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to achieve them.

5. The UK’s foreign policy should include effective support for these brave individuals, communities and populations. To this end, it should reflect UK values of respect for human rights and the rule of law and should be based on principles consistently applied and not compromised because of counter-terrorism and/or other policies, so that “Britain speaks clearly and acts effectively against torture, and on behalf of its victims, wherever they are in the world.”

6. The submission is made under three headings or themes set out in paragraphs 7 to 18 below, and we make conclusions and recommendations at paragraph 19. It covers the following questions raised by the Committee:

   — What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive their economies?
   — How can the British Government best work with allies and through international institutions to support reform in Egypt and Tunisia?
   — Was policy overly dominated by considerations of regional stability and counter-terrorist cooperation?
   — How well did the FCO perform in providing consular assistance to British citizens at the time of the political upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia?
   — Do recent events in Egypt and Tunisia, and in the “Arab Spring” generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa (bearing in mind the Prime Minister’s comments in Kuwait in February 2011 about potential conflict between British “interests” and “values”)?

SUBMISSION

A. The UK’s obligations not to condone torture, and the importance of the UK not being perceived to be in any way doing so

7. Torture is absolutely prohibited at all times and in all circumstances, and for more than two decades it has been a specific crime under UK domestic law, irrespective of where the torture took place. In formulating and implementing its foreign policy on torture and human rights in the Middle East it is imperative for the UK to be consistent in abiding by its obligations both at home and abroad, so that its foreign policy and the effect of this policy in other states does not conflict with international standards.

8. One such area of concern is the use of “Deportations With Assurances” (DWAs), to deport terrorist suspects to states where the individuals face a real risk of torture, which breaches the UK’s non-refoulement


26 This was most succinctly put by a young poet, Ayat Al Khurmsi, who was detained and tortured in Bahrain earlier this year.

27 See in this context Concurring Opinion of Judge Bonello of the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR), who said: “I am unwilling to endorse à la carte respect for human rights. I think poorly of an esteem for human rights that turns casual and approximate depending on geographical coordinates. Any State that worships fundamental rights on its own territory but then feels free to make a mockery of them anywhere else does not, as far as I am concerned, belong to that comity of nations for which the supremacy of human rights is both mission and clarion call”—Case of Al Skeini and Others v The United Kingdom (Application no. 55721/07), Judgment of the Grand Chamber, 7 July 2011, para 18 available at http://www.unhchr.org/refworld/pdfid/4e2545502.pdf.

28 Also known as “Diplomatic Assurances” or “Memoranda of Understanding”. 


24 This was most succinctly put by a young poet, Ayat Al Khurmsi, who was detained and tortured in Bahrain earlier this year, who said on her release: “I went inside and I was in opposition and I came out and I was more serious in opposition. More of an opponent”—see transcript dated 25 August 2011 of meeting chaired by Lord Eric Avebury on 23 August in the House of Lords, available at http://www.vob.org/en/index.php?show=news&action=article&id=797.


26 The UK ratified the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 8 December 1988; torture is a crime under UK law pursuant to section 134 of the Criminal Justice Act, 1988.

27 See in this context Concurring Opinion of Judge Bonello of the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR), who said: “I am unwilling to endorse à la carte respect for human rights. I think poorly of an esteem for human rights that turns casual and approximate depending on geographical coordinates. Any State that worships fundamental rights on its own territory but then feels free to make a mockery of them anywhere else does not, as far as I am concerned, belong to that comity of nations for which the supremacy of human rights is both mission and clarion call”—Case of Al Skeini and Others v The United Kingdom (Application no. 55721/07), Judgment of the Grand Chamber, 7 July 2011, para 18 available at http://www.unhchr.org/refworld/pdfid/4e2545502.pdf.
obligations. The UK currently has DWA arrangements with five countries—Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and Ethiopia—and the FCO has said that "the Government is committed to concluding such arrangements with more countries in 2011".

9. Egypt is a clear example of a country where persons who have been sent from European states, such as Sweden, have suffered torture. REDRESS is pleased to note that the Committee recently recognised the need for the Government to be more transparent on this whole issue of DWAs. A review of the UK’s foreign policy in the region must consider the adverse impact that DWAs have, both for the individuals concerned and for perceptions of the UK’s position on human rights.

10. Another key area of concern is allegations of complicity in torture; this has included two cases relating to Egypt and the role of the UK’s security services with UK men allegedly detained and tortured there. There have also been allegations coming out of Libya very recently on the close collaboration between the UK’s security services and the Gaddafi regime—this is an unfolding story and there are possibly going to be more revelations from the region. There is a growing body of evidence that the UK condoned torture in these and other states with which the Committee is concerned. This is clearly contrary to UNCAT’s objective "to make more effective the struggle against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment throughout the world".

11. A further issue is the UK’s obligation to investigate and then either prosecute or extradite torture suspects who come within the UK’s jurisdiction, which ought to be an integral principle and part of a coherent anti-torture policy. Here it is significant, for example, that Gaddafi’s former intelligence chief, Musa Kusa, defected to the UK in March 2011 but was then allowed to leave, apparently for Doha, where he remains. There is a reasonable suspicion that he may have come from states where Gaddafi's rule will come within the UK’s jurisdiction in the foreseeable future: if so, the UK needs to apply section 134 of the Criminal Justice Act which mirrors the obligation to extradite or prosecute torture suspects, set out in UNCAT.

12. The UK cannot become a safe haven, or simply allow such individuals to enter and then leave for other safe havens; this is clearly incompatible with the Government’s obligations. Impeding legislative changes to what are termed private arrest warrants will not be conducive to strengthening the prospect for such

30 The current Government intends to expand the use of DWAs, following a report made to Parliament in January 2011 by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which recommended that the Government should “actively pursue deportation arrangements with more countries, prioritising those whose nationals have engaged in terrorist related activity here or are judged most likely to do so in future”—see HM Government Review of Counter-Terrorism and Security Powers: Review Findings and Recommendations, Cm 8004, presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, January 2011, at page 35, paragraph 17. s. available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/review-of-ct-security-powers/review-findings-and-rec?view=Binary.
33 See the well-documented cases of Ahmed Hussein Mustafa Kamil Agiza and Mohammed Alzery, available at http://www.redress.org/case-docket/ahmed-hussein-mustafa-kamil-agiza—mohammed-alzery. Although no persons facing the real risk of torture have been deported to Egypt from the UK there was an attempt by the Government to do so in 1999, which didn’t reach the UK courts because the Government abandoned its attempt. This emerged in Hany El Sayed Sadaei Youssef, v The Home Office, [2004] EWHC 1884 (QB); a full discussion of the case can be found at REDRESS, The United Kingdom, torture and anti-terrorism: Where the problems lie, December 2008, at pages 52-54, available at http://www.redress.org/downloads/publications/Where%20the%20Problems%20lie%20%20Dec%202008A4.pdf.
35 Azhar Khan was detained in July 2008 on arrival (he said that he had informed both the FCO and UK security officers of his plan to travel to Egypt) and later allegedly questioned under torture only about friends, associates and events in the UK; he said that the questions were based on information “that must have been supplied by the UK authorities”—Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), 4 August 2009, Allegations of UK Complicity in Torture, Evidence page 51, Supplementary memorandum submitted by Ian Cobain, Guardian newspaper; the report is available at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200809/jtselect/jtrights/152/152.pdf. In answer to a subsequent parliamentary question the FCO said that “we have no records of any British Nationals being detained on suspicion of terrorist offences in Egypt over this period”—Ibid, Evidence 52. However, the FCO later told a UK newspaper that “we are aware that a British citizen was detained in Egypt on 9 July 2008 on suspicion of links with extremist activities”, leading the newspaper to report that the FCO “went through a series of twists and turns when asked about the allegations made by Azhar Khan…”—Guardian,16 March 2009. Under pressure: the FCO explanation, available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/mar/16/foreign-office-explanation-allegations. The same Guardian report also referred to another UK man as follows: “[…] MBS had an interest in another person who was in detention in Egypt at the same time as Khan, and that the security service knew that there was every possibility that this individual would be tortured”—JCHR, loc cit Evidence 54.
prosecutions, and illustrate the lack of a concerted approach aimed at effectively ending impunity for suspects of international crimes located in the UK.37

B. Steps the UK should take in relation to UK nationals facing, experiencing or alleging torture in countries of the “Arab Spring” region

13. UK nationals have suffered torture in countries such as Saudi Arabia,38 Bahrain39 and Egypt,40 prior to and after the Arab Spring. Our concern is that the UK’s response to these kinds of cases has not been adequate.41 The FCO needs to have a clear and explicit policy that the UK will not accept the torture of its nationals abroad, nor torture of those non-nationals who can legitimately claim UK protection; that if the real risk of torture exists, the FCO will act with timely, vigorous and effective steps for it to end; and that in all cases of torture of such persons it will espouse their claims for reparations.

14. In the absence of such a clear policy and effective action, there remains a serious deficiency in the UK’s anti-torture programme in an area where it ought to be most obvious that something can and should be done: the protection of UK nationals and the non-nationals described. The UK’s policy and practice of exercising consular assistance and diplomatic protection in torture cases should therefore be articulated and developed, with the aim of leaving other states in no doubt that they cannot torture UK nationals with impunity. In all cases where they have been tortured abroad and have been unable to obtain reparation through local remedies, diplomatic protection should be more than a theoretical avenue for justice.42

C. Steps the UK should take to strengthen institutions and systems, to assist with reforms and to monitor developments

15. The states concerned are (or will in due course hopefully be) in the process of what is termed “transitional justice”.43 These will be periods during which strenuous efforts will need to be made so that the many victims of serious human rights violations are not marginalised, that suspects are held accountable and that torture survivors and other victims of human rights abuses receive reparations. The UK needs to have a clear strategy on how to support these processes, both bi-laterally and within international institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union.

16. Organs such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have already begun to analyse priorities such as the importance of fair trials and ending military court trials of civilians in Egypt.44 Concerns relating to the trial of civilians by the military have been made in relation to Tunisia too.45 Fair trial concerns also relate to those involved with the previous regimes.46 Specifically in relation to torture, the aim in each of these states should also be: the eradication through publically-stated policies by leaders that the use of torture and ill treatment will not be tolerated; prosecuting all suspects against whom there is credible evidence after independent investigation of all allegations; reviewing the definition of torture in national law to ensure consistency with the definition provided in the UNCAT; the establishment of independent monitoring of prisons and all places of detention; ensuring the availability of complaints mechanisms and effective remedies for torture victims.


40 REDRESS is currently assisting a UK woman allegedly raped in Egypt by a soldier at a check-point in May 2011; she has raised serious concerns about the failure of the FCO to deal with the matter properly, both while she was still in Egypt at the time immediately following the alleged rape and after she left that country.

41 There does not appear to be a clear and consistent policy in practice.

42 REDRESS made several requests to the FCO under the Freedom of Information Act during the period 2008–2010, and also met with FCO officials, in an attempt to ascertain the number of torture cases which the UK has espoused since 8 December 1988, the date when the UK ratified UNCAT. In answer to whether “the Government has received compensation from foreign governments following allegations of torture of British citizens, including details of the foreign governments and amounts involved in each case since December 1988”, the answer was “as far as we’re aware the FCO has not received any such payments”. It also emerged that the UK does not have centralised records concerning espousal before 2005. At a meeting it was said that the FCO had raised concerns of mistreatment of detainees in 183 cases since 2005. In answer to the question “How many claims of torture has the British government espoused since 2005 to the best of your recollection”, the answer was “To the best of our recollection, since 2005 we have espoused no claims of torture”.


46 For example, on whether the health concerns relating to former Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak preclude a fair trial, and whether the trial in absentia of former Tunisian leader Ben Ali complied with international standards.
17. Domestic state institutions, including the judiciary, will need to be reformed, and human-rights-compliant legislation implemented. The UK should work with state organs and civil society bodies to help with human and financial resources to achieve these changes. As far as torture is concerned, implementation of the obligations under the UNCAT which both Egypt and Tunisia have ratified, should be the firm framework within which these tasks are approached.

18. The UK, which has played a commendable and leading role in the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) which it ratified in December 2003, should seek to encourage Egypt to ratify the OPCAT.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

19. The United Kingdom has an important part to play in the states where processes have unfolded as a result of the Arab Spring. These processes provide numerous opportunities for the UK’s critical and constructive engagement based on clear and principled policies. To this end the UK should:

- Revisit with a view to abandoning its reliance on Deportations With Assurances in its counter-terrorism policies.
- Cease any activities in its counter-terrorism strategies which may result in it being complicit, or being seen to be complicit, in torture.
- Properly investigate and where there is evidence prosecute torture suspects who come within its jurisdiction.
- Actively protect its nationals and others who can claim its protection from torture abroad, within a firm, well-publicised and effectively implemented policy of consular assistance and diplomatic protection.
- Work bi-laterally and with other states and international and regional bodies to furnish material support and expertise in human rights to state institutions and civil society in the “Arab Spring” states to help them prohibit, prevent and investigate torture, and to provide reparation for victims and survivors.

14 September 2011

Written evidence from Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre (BICOM)

BRITAIN, ISRAEL AND THE ARAB SPRING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. It is in Britain’s interest that political transition within Arab states is orderly, sustainable and produces a stable outcome for the region. Such stability will be underpinned by maintaining and promoting Israel’s relations with the Arab world, in particular the Israel-Egypt peace treaty.

2. In a period of heightened instability, Israel’s value to Britain as a bilateral partner which is stable and democratic is greater than ever. Britain and Israel share common interests in regional stability, the advancement of liberal values and a negotiated two-state solution.

3. Israel faces significant security challenges that are heightened by regional change.

4. The chances for a successful Israeli-Palestinian peace process are greater if the states surrounding Israel and the Palestinian Territories are politically stable, and have leaderships committed to peace and the security of both parties.

47 Such as the Cairo Institute for Human Rights, which recently made an important submission to the Human Rights Council; see Written statement* submitted by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status, A/HRC/17/NGO/44, 24 May 2011, available at http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/135/03/PDF/G11113503.pdf?OpenElement. An example of a concern raised by CIHRS (at page 3) is as follows: “...[T]here are various reports of torture and ill-treatment inside military detention centers, which has included the use of electric batons, severe beatings, and conducting virginity tests for over 70 female protesters. Despite previous official declaration from SCAF [Supreme Council of the Armed Forces] stating that an investigation will be opened into these cases, no investigations have been conducted to date.”


50 International treaty and/or customary international law must be incorporated into the domestic legal orders in Egypt and Tunisia, to criminalise torture, prevent torture and refoulement, prohibit the use of evidence obtained by torture, ensure investigations of torture, and make reparations to victims—see REDRESS, Bringing the international prohibition of torture home: national implementation guide for the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, January 2006, available at http://www.redress.org/downloads/publications/CAT%20Implementation%20paper%20%2013%20Feb%202006%203.pdf.

5. British efforts to shape the Arab Spring should promote a regional environment conducive to peace and which addresses Israel’s security concerns.

6. The threat of radical forces using regional instability to advance an anti-Western and anti-peace agenda must be met. It is important to empower moderate forces and to avoid steps that legitimise extremism and opposition to the peace process.

ABOUT BICOM

7. BICOM is an independent British organisation dedicated to creating a more supportive environment for Israel in Britain. We believe in the right of the State of Israel to live in peace and security, just as we believe in the rights of the Palestinians to statehood. We support a close relationship between Britain and Israel, based on shared values and interests.

8. BICOM works to promote a more complete understanding of Israel and its situation. We provide expert analysis and news summary, as well as in-depth research, on events in Israel and the region through our online publications. We take British opinion formers and policymakers to Israel and the Palestinian Territories to learn about the issues first-hand, and bring experts from the region to Britain. We promote a balanced discourse about Israel in the British media by creating opportunities for a wide range of voices to be heard.

9. BICOM has a research team in London and Jerusalem specialising in Israeli politics, the peace process, Israel’s place in the region and the UK-Israel relationship. In July 2011, a BICOM delegation conducted a study tour in Egypt, Jordan and Qatar to consider the impact of the Arab Spring for Israel and the UK.

10. This paper draws on previous BICOM publications, which the committee may wish to consult, including:
   (ii) **What Can Britain Do? Principles and Proposals for a British Contribution to Israeli-Palestinian Peace**, produced by BICOM in consultation with former senior officials involved in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, following a series of events and meetings with current and former British officials in London. (December 2010)

THE SCOPE OF THIS SUBMISSION

11. This document assesses the implications of the Arab Spring for Israel’s strategic interests in the region, and the related implications for UK interests. The contents are of particular relevance to three of the specific questions raised by the inquiry:
   (i) What are the implications of the “Arab Spring” for Egyptian/Israeli relations and regional security?
   (ii) Do recent events in Egypt and Tunisia, and in the “Arab Spring” generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa?
   (iii) What will be the future role of Islamist movements in the region and what should be the British Government’s stance towards them?

BRITAIN AND ISRAEL’S SHARED INTERESTS

12. Britain and Israel share common interests in the Middle East, including the promotion of stability, the advance of democratic and liberal values and support for a negotiated two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

13. Israel is Britain’s most reliable strategic ally in the region, and an important partner in meeting UK national security challenges. These include countering violent extremism and preventing the proliferation of WMD, particularly Iran’s nuclear programme.

14. Israel is one of Britain’s most valuable trading partners in the region. According to UK Trade and Investment, bilateral trade is expected to reach £3 billion by 2015. Israel is also a valuable research and development partner, particularly in hi-tech and medical technology.

15. Israel’s strategic value goes beyond security or economic concerns. It rests on Israel’s deep-rooted character as a democratic country which embraces Western values. Israel’s public, not just its leaders, see Western countries as Israel’s natural allies.

16. Whilst the spread of democratic norms in the region carries great potential for progress in the long term, the process carries many dangers for Britain and Israel’s shared interests. The rise of grass-roots protest movements has destabilised pro-Western countries in North Africa and the Gulf. The opportunity created for Islamists hostile to the West is of serious concern, as is the weakening of state control, and in some cases state failure, creating opportunities for violent extremists to expand their activities. In addition, southern European states in particular fear refugee crises in North Africa which could bring new waves of migrants to its borders, spreading in some cases extremist ideologies and individuals with violent intentions.
17. In the background lies Iran, which has proven adept at exploiting divisions within weak states and territories to spread instability, as it has in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories.

**How the Arab Spring is Viewed in Israel**

18. Israel has almost no influence over events taking place within Arab societies. Its policymakers are forced to react to processes which have extremely uncertain outcomes.

19. Israel prides itself on its democratic institutions, and attaches value to the spread of democracy in the Arab world. As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has told Al Arabiya, “If there’s genuine democracy in the Arab world, in the Arab countries, then there will be genuine peace. Because a genuine democracy reflects the desires of the people, and most people—Arabs, Jews, anyone—they don’t want their sons and daughters dying on battlefields. They want peace.”52 Israeli President Shimon Peres has written in the Guardian, “Israel welcomes the wind of change, and sees a window of opportunity. Democratic and science-based economies by nature desire peace. Israel does not want to be an island of affluence in an ocean of poverty. Improvements in our neighbours’ lives mean improvements to the neighbourhood in which we live.”53

20. In the short to medium term, however, the Arab political turmoil looks set to negatively impact on Israel’s strategic position. Israeli policymakers have been forced to question traditional cornerstones of Israel’s national security doctrine, including:

   (i) the durability of the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan;
   (ii) the chances for reaching peace agreements with Israel’s other neighbours;
   (iii) the ability to counter threats from radical forces through de facto alliances with moderate regional powers;
   (iv) the effectiveness of Israel’s deterrence and qualitative military edge in the face of emerging non-conventional and sub-conventional threats, and
   (v) the strength of the American role in the region.

21. Furthermore, whilst the Arab street’s political energy is currently focused inwards, it could easily be directed externally against Israel. This was illustrated by attempts by protestors to breach Israel’s borders from Lebanon and Syria in May and June 2011, and by violent protests against the Israeli embassy in Cairo in August and September 2011. The Cairo protests were sparked after five Egyptian security personnel were killed accidentally by Israeli forces pursuing a terror group which entered Israel from the Sinai Peninsula in August 2011, killing eight Israelis in a series of well-coordinated attacks.

**The Implications of the Arab Spring for Israel-Egypt Relations**

22. The ousting of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak has greatly complicated the Israel-Egypt relationship. After coming to power in 1981, Mubarak adhered to the Israel-Egypt peace treaty and maintained strategic cooperation with Israel. Though this was a “cold peace”, it was a pivotal strategic asset for Israel. In recent years, Israel has enjoyed cooperation from Egypt in containing Hamas and other armed groups in the Gaza Strip.

23. However, the relationship was maintained only at the very top levels of the Egyptian government. Over the last 30 years, Egypt has not promoted the full normalisation of relations between the two societies. Decades of anti-Israel and antisemitic propaganda in Egyptian state media have allowed hatred of Israel to fester among large sections of the population, who associate peace with Israel with the hated Mubarak regime.

24. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), comprising Mubarak-era figures, is interested in maintaining the status quo. It does not want to see chaos in the Sinai or increased tensions with Israel. However, the SCAF has limited legitimacy and fears taking controversial steps that bring mass protest back to the streets. Given the extreme hostility to Israel among the public, this makes the SCAF wary of overt cooperation with Israel and of actions seen as against Palestinian interests.

25. At the same time, the instability in Egypt has negatively impacted on security in the Sinai. The gas pipelines providing Egyptian gas to Israel and Jordan have been repeatedly sabotaged. Arms smuggling to Hamas and other groups in Gaza has increased, as has the flow of illegal migrants and refugees into Israel. On 18 August 2011, terrorists infiltrated Israel from the Sinai and attacked civilians on an Israeli highway, killing eight. The increased threat has led Israel to allow the deployment of additional Egyptian soldiers in the Sinai, exceeding the terms of the 1979 peace treaty. Israel has also accelerated the construction of a new fence along its 150-mile border with Egypt.

26. Israel has significant concerns about who will hold power in the future in Egypt. In forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, all candidates are likely to play up their hostility to Israel for the sake of political populism.

27. It seems certain that Islamist parties will have a significant presence in the next Egyptian parliament. These groups are generally hostile to the West, ideologically opposed to Israel’s existence and the peace

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52 Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s interview with Al Arabiya, 21/7/2011, Israeli Prime Minister’s Office.
process, and sympathetic to Hamas. The Muslim Brotherhood has called for the Israel-Egypt peace treaty to be “reviewed”.

28. Most presidential candidates say they would not abrogate the peace treaty, recognising that the cost to Egypt’s relations with the West would be too high. The peace treaty led to generous US aid to both parties. However, there is a growing call in Egypt to renegotiate the military annex to the treaty, which limits Egypt’s military presence in the Sinai. This creates a major dilemma for Israel. The power vacuum in the Sinai has given freer rein to terrorists and criminals. However, the demilitarisation of the Sinai has been a key pillar which has sustained the peace, and Israel is reluctant to abandon it.

29. The rise of parties in Egypt opposed to the normalisation of relations with Israel threatens to undermine the credibility of those in the region committed to non-violence and willing to explore a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

30. However Egyptian internal politics develop, Israel-Egypt bilateral relations look set to worsen, and cooperation to decrease. This would be to the detriment of Western interests in maintaining stability, promoting peace and tackling extremism.

WIDER REGIONAL CONCERNS

31. With Mubarak’s departure and some of the Gulf monarchies under pressure, the integrity of the pro-Western camp has been challenged.

32. The situation has been made worse by the drift in Turkey, under the AKP, towards an increasingly illiberal model of democracy, setting an unhelpful tone for emerging Arab democracies. Turkey’s ambition for regional dominance has also led it to take populist anti-Israeli positions, which improve its standing in Arab public opinion.

33. The regional balance will be strongly influenced by developments in Syria. The preoccupation of the Assad regime with its internal revolt has reduced the chance of direct conflict with Israel. However, it also quashes any hopes that Israel might reach a peace deal with Assad. More positively, the revolt against Assad’s regime represents a setback for their Iranian allies, and for Hamas and Hezbollah, whom they support.

34. At the same time, with world attention on the Arab Spring, Iran has had the opportunity to advance its nuclear programme under the radar. They have increased the number of centrifuges enriching uranium and installed new centrifuges at the Qom facility. Israel attaches high importance to the international community not losing sight of the Iranian nuclear programme and keeping all options on the table.

35. Saudi concern over Iranian meddling in its own backyard, most notably in Bahrain, has prompted Saudi Arabia to step up its anti-Iranian activities. It has sent troops to Bahrain, embraced the idea of Jordan and Morocco joining the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), offered $1.4 billion in aid to Jordan, and conditioned a $4bn aid package to Egypt on Cairo not mending fences with Iran.

36. However, it is very difficult for Israeli policymakers to predict how this struggle for the new balance of power in the region will play out.

THE ARAB SPRING AND THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

37. The Arab protest movements are concerned primarily with domestic grievances, rather than anything to do with Israel or the Palestinians. Nonetheless, Foreign Secretary William Hague has rightly argued that “It cannot be in anyone’s interests if the new order of the region is determined at a time of minimum hope in the peace process.”

38. At the same time, the uncertainty about who will hold power in states neighbouring Israel in the future, heightens the risk for Israel in the peace process. The stability of Jordan and Egypt in particular, and Israel’s peace agreements with them, are crucial considerations as Israel considers handing sovereignty over the Palestinian Territories to a future Palestinian state.

39. Even before the recent unrest, Israeli leaders argued that a peace deal must address the threat of weapons and terrorists moving west across the Jordan Valley into the West Bank. Israeli planners have also been asking what would happen if the Hamas takeover of Gaza was to be repeated in the West Bank. These concerns are all the more real now.

40. Given these concerns, clear and consistent commitment to Israel’s security on the part of Britain and other EU countries is extremely important in promoting an international environment conducive to a successful peace process.

41. Given the increased importance of Arab public opinion, there may be a growing temptation for some world leaders to seek favour with Arab publics by distancing themselves from Israel, or from US policy in the region. Succumbing to such temptations would be short-sighted. There is no shortcut to achieving peace by pressurising only Israel to concede, whilst sidelining Israel’s concerns and the difficult decisions that Palestinians and the wider Arab world must take.

54 Foreign Secretary William Hague’s speech on Sixty Years of British-Israeli diplomatic relations, 30/3/2011, Chatham House.
42. In the past, Britain has retained trust on both sides, avoided unbalanced positions and earned a reputation for putting the interests of peace ahead of its own prestige. These assets remain equally valuable even amidst heightened regional uncertainty. Israel tolerates criticism and listens to advice more readily from those it regards as understanding its concerns, particularly with regard to security.

43. Also important is the need to avoid violent confrontations between Israel and the Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority’s decision to abandon negotiations and seek to advance their goals through international forums both lowers the prospects for progress on the ground and raises the potential for frustration among the Palestinian public. The impetus for Palestinians to take to the streets is greater as a result of the Arab Spring. Whilst large-scale Palestinian protests may begin with peaceful intentions, past experience shows the capacity for things to quickly turn violent and spiral out of control. An escalation in violence between Israel and the Palestinians could quickly divert grass-roots political energy elsewhere in the Arab world against Israel.

**Recommendations**

44. Whilst welcoming the potential for positive change in the Middle East, Britain should be aware of the risks inherent in the current situation, both for the strategic regional balance and for the relationship between Israel and its regional neighbours. Britain, along with its allies, should use its political and economic leverage to help guide transition, wherever possible, towards sustainable democracy and regional stability. To that end, we have three key recommendations:

45. Britain should work to uphold existing peace and security agreements between Israel and its regional neighbours and to secure conditions for new ones.

   (i) This should include working to maintain Israel’s peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, its diplomatic relations with Turkey, and its *de facto* cooperation with other pro-Western states in the region.

46. Britain should maintain the legitimacy of a negotiated two-state solution in the region.

   (i) In engaging with emerging political forces in the region, Britain should be mindful to maintain support for a framework for peace between Israel and the Palestinians based on two states for two peoples. Britain should deny support for actors who reject this approach. It is vital to create a regional political environment which legitimises Palestinian moderates who wish to make peace with Israel.

   (ii) Britain should encourage emerging Arab governments and political actors to express their support for a negotiated two-state solution and the principles of the Arab Peace Initiative.

   (iii) It is particularly important to deny international legitimacy and standing to extremist groups, which those groups would exploit to undercut the position of pragmatic actors seeking peace.

   (iv) Britain should continue to send clear and consistent messages to the region that it is committed to its relationship with Israel and its security, alongside its commitment to a negotiated two-state solution.

   (v) It is vital to maintain pressure on Iran, and its radical allies and proxies. First and foremost, this means continued unwavering efforts to deny Iran a nuclear weapons capacity and constrain its role as the leading state supporter of anti-Western radicalism in the region.

   (vi) Britain, in concert with its EU partners and the US, should enhance its efforts to work with Israel and other states to limit weapons smuggling to groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

47. Britain should promote a return to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations by working to prevent violence on the ground and to avert appeals to international forums which sidestep talks.

   (i) Britain should work to prevent flashpoints that could both trigger confrontations between Israel and the Palestinians and direct political energy on the Arab street against Israel.

   (ii) It should encourage the Palestinians to advance their goals through negotiations with Israel, as opposed to at the UN or other international forums. It should discourage the Palestinians and other parties from taking steps which would sideline negotiations for an indefinite period, such as pursuing legal action against Israel at the ICC.

   (iii) Britain should also emphasise to the Palestinians the importance of containing grass-roots protests in the West Bank and avoiding violence against Israeli security forces.

   (iv) In support of this goal, Britain should continue its support for the work of the United States Security Coordinator mission through the British Support Team, Ramallah, and its support for the EUPOL-COPPS police mission. The development of credible Palestinian security forces has been critical for establishing law and order in the West Bank, which has also been a keystone for economic progress.

*19 September 2011*
Amnesty International UK

1. Amnesty International UK is a national section of a global movement of over three million supporters, members and activists. We represent over 230,000 supporters in the United Kingdom. Collectively, our vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. Our mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion.

Introduction

2. Amnesty International UK welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the work of the FAC Committee (“the Committee”) in its scrutiny of British foreign policy and the Arab Spring. The Committee plays an important role through its examination of British foreign policy and practice and the recommendations that it makes for its improvement. That it continues to undertake this work is vital to the continued accountability of the UK Government.

3. This submission addresses questions asked by the Committee on the announcement of this inquiry and is guided by the word limit set. As such, it does not include all of Amnesty International UK’s observations and recommendations regarding the work of the UK Government in the MENA region. Amnesty International UK would be happy to submit additional information to the Committee if requested.

Summary

Forces driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Egypt, Tunisia and in the MENA region generally

4. Amnesty International believes that human rights abuses have combined to play a major role in fuelling the eruption of the protests and drive for reform in the MENA region. Detention without trial, torture, deaths in custody and curbs on freedom of expression and restrictions on assembly and association are common; long term poverty exacerbates the situation further. Amnesty International is concerned that the UK Government has not done enough previously to support human rights in the region and must reassess its approach by not over-looking human rights and repression in future.

Domination of British foreign policy by considerations of regional stability, counter-terrorist co-operation and commercial concerns

5. Amnesty International has long been concerned that a focus on security as a key part of the UK Government’s bilateral relations with governments in the MENA region has been at the expense of diplomatic action in relation to ongoing human rights violations. The priority given to counter-terrorism co-operation over human rights is demonstrated by the pursuance of the policy of “deportations with assurances”. Amnesty International calls on the UK Government to abandon this policy and instead work with and provide technical assistance to MENA countries to ensure the eradication of torture in line with their international obligations.

6. Amnesty International believes that the UK Government’s focus on arms sales to the MENA region both now and in recent years is completely at odds with its stated aim of upholding human rights. In our view the perceived commercial, economic, political and strategic importance of such sales appears to have unduly influenced export licensing decisions at the expense of adequate consideration of the human rights impacts of such sales. In particular, we believe that successive UK Governments, including the current UK Government, have not used adequate risk assessment methodology when granting export licences; we do not believe that the review of export licensing currently underway is satisfactory and hope that moving forward, a much wider and deeper review of export licensing policy and its implementation will take place.

7. The UK Government’s strong emphasis on trade promotion, and the FCO’s enhanced role in serving as a vehicle for the promotion of UK trade and investment overseas, carries considerable implications for human rights in the MENA region. While there is no reason in principle why trade promotion and human rights promotion should not co-exist as important functions of the FCO, Amnesty International does not believe that this can be achieved if the two policies are pursued in parallel to each other, without an understanding of the interactions between them. We are also of the view that there is a need for joined-up thinking on business and human rights across Government departments, without which positive steps taken by the FCO in pursuit of human rights can be undermined.

Recommendations for British Government assistance to Egypt, Tunisia and other countries of the MENA region

8. Amnesty International believes that the reality of changing decades—even centuries—of autocratic and discriminatory rule in the MENA region requires commitment to the rule of international human rights law. Building accountable and transparent institutions of power will be vital, thus establishing a framework within which there will be no impunity for breaches of international justice and human rights. Amnesty International
urges the UK Government to call for the revocation of all states of emergency and concomitant abuses of state power therefore; condemn all arbitrary detentions, torture and unfair trials; request that the judiciary be independent; and ask that state authorities consider establishing inquiries to investigate past abuses of human rights.

9. Of paramount importance in the process of change are the people of the MENA region themselves; their voices must be heard and not repressed. To ensure that this takes place, enabling people’s participation in political processes—through freedom of expression, association, assembly and information—is vital. Amnesty International urges the UK Government to call for the reform of all security apparatus and justice systems therefore to ensure that they are no longer used by state authorities to crush dissent and silence critics; insist that all states guarantee that security forces do not use excessive force when policing demonstrations; demand that peaceful protesters are not arbitrarily arrested and detained or tortured or ill-treated and insist upon the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information.

10. Finally, the role of women in the region is an essential component of the political agenda. Without change in the status of women in these countries, the peace, stability and development that are sought for everyone will be much harder to achieve. Challenges to women’s rights vary significantly by country as does the extent and degree of discrimination that women suffer. There are some very specific steps that the UK Government can take to address the situation of women in the MENA region, however, including; urging states to take the necessary steps to respect the rights of women as equal partners in shaping the future of their countries; insisting that all proposals for change are built on the principles of equality and non-discrimination; ensuring that there is a clear gender component to the Arab Partnership Initiative and requiring that women are not discriminated against in the provision of development assistance and in the process of economic reform.

**Committee Questions**

1. What forces are driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Egypt and Tunisia and to what extent are they paralleled elsewhere in the Arab world?

11. The speed and extent of popular demands for change across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region appeared to take the UK Government and the rest of the international community by surprise. Yet Amnesty International has documented serious and extensive human rights violations across this region for many decades. Whilst exact circumstances differ in each MENA country, Amnesty International believes that these human rights abuses, including poverty-driven human rights violations, and unaccountable state power as well as rampant corruption have combined to play a major role in fuelling the eruption of the protests and the drive for reform we continue to see. We are concerned that if repression and the denial of human rights are allowed to continue, the prospect for these societies remains bleak.

1.1 Detention without trial, torture, deaths in custody

12. Detention without charge or trial, often in the name of state security, torture and other ill-treatment and deaths in custody, have long been an abiding feature of many of the MENA region regimes. Victims are often political activists who are detained, often at undisclosed locations, where they are subject to torture and held incommunicado for weeks—or often longer—at a time.

13. In Egypt, a 30-year national state of emergency equipped security forces with extraordinary powers of arrest and detention which they used to suppress legitimate political activities and freedom of expression. Police violence was endemic, torture and other ill-treatment was systematic and international fair trial standards routinely ignored. Emergency and military courts were often used to try civilians.

14. In Tunisia, the authorities arrested and detained thousands of people, many of whom were tried and sentenced in their absence in trials that failed to meet international fair trial standards. Defendants alleged that they had been forced to “confess” under torture or other duress while held incommunicado.

1.2 Curbs on freedom of expression, restrictions on assembly and association

15. Freedom of expression has long been curtailed by governments everywhere across the region. So too have been the closely related rights to freedom of association and assembly, with state authorities impeding the development of human rights NGOs and an active civil society and seeking often to prevent public expressions of dissent.

16. In Tunisia, the authorities maintained a tight control over the media and internet. Those who openly criticised the government or exposed its human rights violations were harassed, placed under intensive surveillance, unjustly prosecuted, and physically assaulted. Many former political prisoners had their freedom of movement restricted within Tunisia and were denied passports—most independent human rights organisations were denied official registration.

17. In Egypt, the authorities maintained curbs on freedom of expression and the media; government critics faced prosecution on criminal defamation charges; independent TV channels and programmes that criticised the authorities were taken off the air or suspended; and books and foreign newspapers were censored if they commented on issues that the authorities considered sensitive or threatening to national security. The authorities...
also maintained legal restrictions and other controls on political parties, NGOs, professional associations and trade unions.

1.3 Denial of economic rights, housing and livelihoods

18. The MENA region, like all others in the world, has not remained immune from the effects of global recession. Exacerbated by lack of infrastructure, corruption and misgovernment have bitten deep and led to a deeply unequal distribution of wealth. Severe impoverishment is common in many communities throughout the MENA region, with women often bearing the brunt of this hardship. Female unemployment figures are higher than those for men and in employment itself, women have suffered both wage and non-wage discrimination.

19. In Tunisia, high rates of unemployment and poverty, especially among the young, fuelled a sense of marginalisation and a demand for change. Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation on 17 December 2010 in protest at his economic situation and subsequent treatment by the authorities was the ultimate protest in this regard. Previous protests at corruption and unemployment in the Gafsa region in 2008 were brutally suppressed by the authorities.

20. In Egypt, rising living costs, poor wages and poor working conditions, alongside an often ostentatious display of wealth by what is perceived as a corrupt elite, provoked many—including an information-literate middle class and workers in the public and private sectors—to protest. An acute shortage of affordable housing has meant that over 12 million people are living in slums, half of them in the Greater Cairo region, many of them in areas even the authorities have designated as “unsafe”. Thousands in Cairo have faced forced eviction from these areas, many of which are reportedly earmarked for development and gentrification. Women are also discriminated against in the allocation of alternative housing.

21. Recommendation: the eruption of protests in Tunisia, Egypt and many of the countries of the Middle East have, in Amnesty International’s view, been fuelled by years of repression and human rights abuse. The UK Government has not done enough previously to support the eradication of human rights abuses in the region and must re-assess its approach by not over-looking human rights and repression in future. We recommend that the Committee put this concern to the UK Government and request it to set out how it proposes to support human rights in the region in the future.

2. Was British foreign policy overly dominated by considerations of regional stability and counter-terrorist co-operation in the region rather than tracking popular opinion?

22. In a speech to the British Council in London on 22 August 2011, the British Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, spoke about the Arab Spring. “The UK stands shoulder to shoulder with the millions of citizens across the Arab world, who are looking to open up their societies, looking for a better life”. Amnesty International disagrees that this has always been the case. In our view, the UK Government’s foreign policy has indeed been led by strategic considerations regarding regional stability and counter-terrorist co-operation—but would add also commercial considerations, particularly regarding arms sales and other business and trade opportunities generally. Of course, British foreign policy in the region has not been monolithic and has varied in some cases from country to country, but we do believe that it is possible to highlight these general themes.

2.1 Co-operation on security and counter-terrorism

23. Over the past decade, several countries within the MENA region assumed an increasingly important position within the UK’s strategic approach to national security and counter-terrorism. Amnesty International has long been concerned that this focus on security as a key part of the UK Government’s bilateral relations in the region has been at the expense of diplomatic action in relation to ongoing human rights violations—and has led to policies and practices which have undermined human rights. We believe that the UK Government’s failure to be more outspoken about human rights violations in countries which were seen as strategically important for counter-terrorism operations was an error of judgement which has been borne out in the popular uprisings of the “Arab Spring”. A consequence is that the credibility of the UK Government is now damaged in the eyes of many people who have deposed leaders previously supported by the UK Government.

24. The priority given to counter-terrorism co-operation over human rights is keenly demonstrated by the pursuance of the policy of “deportations with assurances” and in the recent revelations of the UK Government’s direct involvement in renditions to Libya. In order to deport individuals perceived to be threats to national security to countries where they would face a real risk of serious human rights violations, including torture, the UK has sought “diplomatic assurances” which seek to guarantee that the person deported will not face torture on return. In this respect, the previous UK Government negotiated “Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)” with Lebanon, Libya, Ethiopia and Jordan and an “exchange of letters” with Algeria which would allow assurances to be negotiated on a case by case basis. Assurances have been sought but not relied upon in relation to deportation to Egypt. The current UK Government intends to continue this policy and is actively seeking to negotiate new “MOUs”.

25. Amnesty International considers that the “deportations with assurances policy” is used as a means of circumventing the UK’s obligation under international law not to return individuals to a real risk of torture or
other ill-treatment. We believe that no system of post-return monitoring of individuals will make unenforceable diplomatic assurances an acceptable alternative to rigorous respect for the absolute ban on such returns. The UK Government’s position ignores the experience and concerns of international human rights organisations and ignores the context in which torture occurs in countries where it is systematic or widespread. The climate of secrecy, impunity and deniability in such situations as well as collusion up to the highest levels, means that assurances cannot reliably mitigate against the risk of torture and ill-treatment.

26. Recommendation: the continuation and extension of the policy of Deportations with Assurances undermines the UK Government’s claim to have human rights at the centre of their MENA foreign policy. Amnesty International repeats its call on the UK Government to abandon this policy and instead work with and provide technical assistance to MENA countries to ensure the eradication of torture in line with their international obligations. In addition, the forthcoming Detainee Inquiry must fully examine allegations of UK involvement in renditions to Libya in a manner which complies with international human rights law.

2.2 Arms Sales

27. Amnesty International believes that the UK Government’s focus on arms sales both now and in recent years to the MENA region is completely at odds with its stated aim of upholding human rights. All too often, perceived commercial, economic, political or strategic importance of such sales appears to have unduly influenced export licensing decisions at the expense of adequate consideration of the human rights and other humanitarian impacts of such sales.

28. Equipment and components licensed for sale in the MENA region—including to Bahrain, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Egypt in recent years—including small arms and ammunition, artillery, tear gas and crowd control ammunition, aircraft and helicopters, vehicles, weapons sights, night vision equipment and communications equipment. These are all types of equipment that are likely to have been used in serious human rights violations against civilians in these countries. This UK Government policy had a direct negative impact on the lives of those in the MENA region. We notice, for example, that the UK Government has repeatedly claimed that there is no evidence of UK equipment being used in Libya, yet we draw the Committee’s attention to the video footage and photographs documented by Amnesty international showing distinctive armoured crowd control vehicles being used to crush protests in Libya in February 2011, crowd control vehicles licensed for sale by the previous government. We believe this is clear evidence of the use of British equipment against civilians in Libya. Amnesty drew the government’s attention to this material in February 2011—we are unclear on what basis this has been dismissed.

29. We also reject the basis on which the government appears to be justifying licensing policy. The system is not an evidence-based system, it is a risk-based system. The actual criteria used to grant licences stipulates that risk can be assessed by looking at the use of the equipment or similar equipment as one in a whole list of other relevant factors. Evidence of the misuse of actual UK-supplied equipment is therefore not the threshold by which the arms sales should be judged but yet is repeatedly claimed by the government to justify its policy. We also point out that identifying items like ammunition, components and sub systems is clearly nearly impossible and that the assumption must therefore be that this equipment was used in the brutal suppression of human rights in the region that we have seen and continue to see.

30. Recommendation: in our view, successive UK Governments, including the current UK Government, have not used adequate risk assessment methodology when granting export licences. We believe that is fundamental not only to look at evidence of misuse, but also to critically examine the capacity of the recipient to use and manage equipment lawfully and proportionally and to demonstrate its ability to implement international legal obligations and relevant standards related to the use of force. It short, it is crucial to act in line with the actual criteria used to grant licences and move from “evidence of previous misuse” to “risk and likelihood” in its risk analysis process, ensure that the context within which arms may be used is included in such analysis, take a longer-term and broader attitude to risk, better utilise external expertise and reduce scope for licensing decisions to give undue weight to political, strategic or economic factors.

31. We would also assert that we do not believe that the current review of export licensing has been conducted in an open, thorough and transparent way. Nor, in our view, has it involved adequate consultation with all relevant stakeholders in the process, including civil society, industry and parliamentarians. We conclude that to date, the review process has been deeply unsatisfactory—and hope that moving forward, a much wider and deeper review of export licensing policy and its implementation will take place.

2.3 Business and trade

32. The UK Government’s strong emphasis on trade promotion, and the FCO’s enhanced role in serving as a vehicle for the promotion of UK trade and investment overseas, carries considerable implications for human rights in the MENA region. UK companies’ operations in the MENA region may have impacts that contribute to human rights abuses or that contribute to the protection of human rights.

33. For example, telecommunication companies such as Vodafone have been associated with attempts of the Egyptian Government to undermine freedom of expression. Mobile phone and internet technologies have created new frontiers for human rights. They provide a means for individuals and communities to participate
in a free flow of information and ideas. However, in situations where governments in the MENA region are trying to suppress dissent, these technologies can be used for purposes of control and to restrict human rights.

34. Oil companies operating in the region are also at risk of contributing to human rights violations through their relationships with state security forces and private military and security contractors that offer protection services to company assets and employees.

35. In our view, the FCO should be providing guidance to UK companies operating in the MENA region that is much more specific to the human rights context of their operations. The material currently available, such as the “Business and Human Rights Toolkit: How UK overseas missions can promote good conduct by UK companies” published in 2009, is, in our view inadequate.

36. While there is no reason in principle why trade promotion and human rights promotion should not co-exist as important functions of the FCO, Amnesty International does not believe that this can be achieved if the two policies are pursued in parallel to each other, without an understanding of the interactions between them. We are also of the view that there is a need for joined-up thinking on business and human rights across Government departments, without which positive steps taken by the FCO could be undermined by activities undertaken by bodies such as the Export Credits Guarantee Department or UKTI. The UK Government’s over-reliance on the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, a non-binding instrument that is lacking in country-specific or sector-specific guidance, does not provide an adequate response to the human rights challenges facing UK companies operating in the MENA region.

37. Recommendation: UK companies operating within the MENA region, and delegations promoting trade to the region, should be made more aware by the FCO of the human rights contexts of particular aspects of trade and investment in countries of concern. This would require country desk officers and staff within missions to develop a strong understanding of how trade/investment and human rights intersect with each other. At the same time, the UK Government should consider and implement a wider range of measures to hold UK companies accountable for human rights abuses abroad.

3. What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive their economies? How can the British Government best work with allies and through international institutions to support reform in Egypt and Tunisia?

38. The reality of changing decades—in some cases centuries—of autocratic and discriminatory rule in the MENA region will not happen over the course of months or even years. Hard work, determination and commitment to the rule of law by all concerned parties is what is now required to ensure that this happens.

39. Of paramount importance to this process are the people of the MENA region themselves. Their voices must be heard and not repressed. Only with their active participation can the right choices be made, country by country, as to how to proceed. Only by freely exercising their own expertise and skills will the societies that are now struggling to reform be both viable and sustainable.

40. Nonetheless, there are very specific steps that the UK Government can take to assist. It is within its power—operating both unilaterally and multilaterally—to do much to give the people of Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries the support they need. With this support the prospects for establishing free and fair societies in which human rights flourish are much improved. Above, we have outlined what changes need to be made in the very specific areas of British foreign policy relating to counter-terrorism co-operation, arms sales and business and trade. Below we focus on the broader, big-picture changes that the UK Government can now do much to support in the countries of the MENA region.

3.1 Building accountable and transparent institutions of power—no impunity for breaches of international human rights

41. In both Tunisia and Egypt caretaker governments have taken over from former regimes—and preparations for elections are under way. Amnesty International believes that real change requires that there is a clear break with the abuses of the previous regimes, however. In Tunisia, for example, an independent, thorough and impartial inquiry into human rights abuses committed under the rule of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has not been called. In Egypt, the Emergency Law gives the security forces sweeping powers of arrest and detention and its recent extension further erodes the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly as well as the right to strike.

42. The situation is even more complex in Libya where NATO-led military intervention has assisted a total take-over of the state by armed opposition groups. Here, it is vital that the justice system is rebuilt so that those suspected of human rights abuses in the country can be charged and tried. An independent commission of inquiry to investigate past crimes and human rights violations may provide appropriate access to justice for victims of crimes—reprisal attacks and arbitrary arrests under the current regime must also stop and be investigated. Women also must be included in the post conflict reconstruction process in Libya according to UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
43. **Recommendation**: Amnesty International urges the UK Government to do the following—unilaterally and bilaterally—to ensure that abuses of human rights are not allowed to continue unchecked in the MENA region:

- Call for the revocation of all states of emergency and concomitant abuses of state power, including by operations of state security apparatus.
- Condemn all arbitrary detentions, torture and unfair trials and urge state or opposition authorities to halt their practice as a matter of urgency.
- Request that the judiciary in each country be independent, that judges are not subject to arbitrary disciplinary measures or have their judicial immunity revoked for their activities as judges; and also that women can serve in the role.
- Ask that all appropriate criminal or administrative measures against officials who fail to comply with safeguards against human rights abuses are taken.
- Urge implementation of recommendations on human rights by UN treaty bodies and special procedures.
- Urge that standing invitations are issued to all UN human rights experts and their visits facilitated as a matter of urgency.
- Where not already done, urge state authorities to sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- Ask that state authorities consider establishing inquiries to investigate past abuses of human rights.

3.2 **Enabling people’s participation in political processes—freedom of expression, association, assembly and information**

44. The elections that are soon to take place in Tunisia and Egypt as well as Libya in the near future are crucial steps in the process of ending the years of abuse that have taken place in the MENA region. Yet individuals and groups in both countries still experience restrictions on their freedom of expression and association. In August for example, 111 protesters who participated in a sit-in in Tahrir Square, Cairo, were arrested and detained for four days in custody by the military. Also in August, four men were arrested following protests in Tunisia and risked facing trials before military courts.

45. The situation is even more dire in other parts of the MENA region where there has been no change in authority. One of many examples from Bahrain, was the arrest of two Bahraini MPs jailed during anti-government protests who may now be facing criminal charges for their actions. In the UAE, five activists were detained after calling online for democratic reforms. Their arrest comes as part of a wider clampdown on dissent in the country, where people can be jailed simply for the peaceful expression of their views. Yet more critical and on a truly shocking scale is the extent of political repression in Syria, where the situation continues to be dire. The attacks on and arrests of those taking part in peaceful protests against repression in the country are documented by Amnesty International and others; we have recently reported how 88 people have died in custody from apparent torture and ill-treatment in the wake of sweeping arrests of protesters since April 2011 alone.55

46. **Recommendation**: Amnesty International urges the UK Government to do the following—unilaterally and bilaterally—to support people’s participation in the process of political change in the MENA region:

- Urge reforms of all security apparatus and justice systems to ensure that they are no longer used by state authorities to crush dissent and silence critics.
- Insist that all states guarantee that all security forces, including the army, do not use excessive force when policing demonstrations and comply fully with international law in this regard.
- Demand that peaceful protesters are not arbitrarily arrested and detained, or tortured or ill-treated.
- Ask for the repeal or amendment, with a view to bringing into conformity with international law, provisions of any penal codes or laws that criminalise or infringe freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedoms regarding the flow of information.
- Insist upon the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of all frontiers and through any media; and by refraining from imposing undue restrictions on internet and mobile telecommunications services.
- Demand that laws restricting or impeding or criminalising the functioning of non-governmental organisations be repealed or amended appropriately.
- Request an end to the harassment and intimidation of human rights activists and government critics, as well as arbitrary measures against individuals and associations who defend human rights, the rule of law, or the independence of their professions.

3.3 Furthing women’s human rights—peace, stability and development

47. The role and status of women in the MENA region is often considered an extremely sensitive issue—outside the remit of international diplomacy and intra-governmental relations. Indeed, there are those who suggest that women’s rights are also outside the remit of international organisations. And yet, the human rights of women—the world over—are based on international obligations, signed and ratified by many states. Not only are women’s rights binding legal obligations, they are also vital components of the political agenda. Without them, the peace, stability and development that are sought for everyone in the region will be much harder to achieve.

48. The problems that women in the region face are not all the result of oppressive interpretations of religious teachings. Challenges to women’s rights vary significantly and also relate to factors such as their ethnicity, religious affiliation and economic circumstances, as well as prevailing social and cultural attitudes. The extent and degree of discrimination against women in both law and practice also varies significantly from country to country. In both Tunisia and Egypt, women were actually equal partners with men in the uprisings; out on the streets, protesting and demonstrating, being beaten, arrested and killed.

49. Whilst in Tunisia however, half the candidates standing in the upcoming elections have to be women, in Egypt, little or nothing has been done to ensure that women are able to play a role in reforming the Egyptian state. Women have been excluded from the Committee appointed to amend the Constitution and government measures that have been put in place are inadequate in ensuring the equal political participation of women. Both women and men marking International Women’s Day on 8 March were subject to verbal and physical attack from onlookers. Female protesters arrested on 9 March when armed forces forcibly cleared protesters from Tahrir Square were subsequently subjected to “virginity tests”. In addition, some fundamentalist groups are starting to question the rights that women already have, with women being told that now is not the time to focus on women’s rights and that they are in any event expressions of a foreign or western agenda.

50. Recommendation: Amnesty International urges the UK Government to do the following to support women’s rights in the MENA region—and hence overall reform:

   — Urge all states to take the necessary steps to respect the rights of women as equal partners in shaping the future of their countries.
   — Insist that all proposals for change are built on the principles of equality and non-discrimination.
   — Raise women’s human rights as part of their package of Asks vis a vis political reform.
   — Ensure that there is a clear gender component to the Arab Partnership Initiative.
   — Fulfil its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 regarding the involvement and treatment of women in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.
   — Support Women’s human rights defenders throughout the region.
   — Require that women are not discriminated against in the provision of development assistance and in the process of economic reform.

Conclusion: from “INTERESTS” to “VALUES”

51. There is no doubt that events in the MENA region represent the greatest foreign policy challenge of this Government to date, but also offer huge opportunities for the UK. Through the course of 2011, patterns of protest have emerged. The outcome of these protests is not in any sense uniform; in three countries, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, dramatic change has taken place, whilst other countries, like Jordan, have seen smaller levels of incremental change. In Syria and Bahrain, repression by state authorities has led to deaths and incarceration—and, we would argue, very little change by the respective authorities.

52. Amnesty International appreciates that UK Government policy in the MENA region seeks to enhance both Britain’s security and prosperity interests. We hear also the UK Government’s assertion that human rights are essential to and indivisible from these foreign policy objectives. The UK Government’s approach to the MENA region is that such values and interests are mutually reinforcing—in our view, however, this will not always be the case and clearly has not, always been the case. There are occasions when in their diplomatic and other relationships the UK Government will have to make choices—occasions where “values”, Amnesty International argues, must and do come first.

53. Amnesty International also suggests that ensuring that UK Government policy in the region is genuinely effective requires that it engage not only with state and other authorities, but also with civil society. In some countries of the region there are long established and sophisticated networks of action and dissent. In others, the protests that we have seen gave voice for the first time to the voiceless—women, minorities, migrants—and the unemployed. The political and economic reform that the UK Government argues is the only guarantor of security and prosperity in the region cannot be achieved—and will not be sustainable—unless all these sectors of civil society play a role in and benefit from this reform.
54. It is also imperative that the UK Government takes a consistent approach to human rights across the region. Of course, we hope that Egypt and Tunisia—and now also Libya—will serve as role models for reform and human rights in the Arab world. But the task of those who seek this change will be made easier with the support of foreign governments and institutions who also put values above interests. This will require a radical reappraisal of UK foreign policy and practice towards the region. We have outlined above what we believe this entails.

September 2011

Written evidence from the Local Government Association (LGA)

KEY POINTS

— The Local Government Association (LGA) supports, promotes and improves local government. We fight local government’s corner and support them through challenging times by making the case for greater devolution, helping tackle their challenges and assisting them to deliver better value for money services.

— Representing over 400 local authorities in England and Wales, we have access to a sector covering 200 professions and 20,000 locally elected leaders, delivering over 700 services locally from economic development, housing, urban and rural planning, and waste management to social care, energy efficiency.

— We use this managerial, technical, operational and political knowledge and expertise to assist the capacity of local authorities in countries overseas. Our international work is focused, extensive, well respected and has coverage in many regions: sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South Asia, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and EU accession countries, the Middle East and Latin America.

— We welcome this inquiry, have existing experience and networks working with countries involved in the Arab Spring, and are in discussion with Whitehall on how we can assist British Government efforts with hands-on local government involvement.

— The LGA offer is to assist in potential capacity building projects by tapping into the sector’s existing knowledge and expertise across a range of disciplines to stabilise local institutions, develop local leadership, economic and community development, and improve service delivery.

— Our work is demand led. We provide a gateway to manage the demand for UK local government practitioners to support developing local government abroad. We promote the use of practitioners to deliver aid programmes to ensure value-for-money from the EU and UK aid budgets.

The LGA welcomes this inquiry. Our response responds to the fourth point of your inquiry relating to the British Government’s role to build the institutions of democracy and civil society in Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries.

The LGA is in discussions with the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) to discuss the unique role we and the local government sector can play to enhance the Coalition Government’s:

— ambition to play an important role in the region to assist the building blocks of democratic societies, institutions, political pluralism, free media, economic fairness and opportunity, and

— commitment to use the aid budget to “support the development of local democratic institutions”.

WHAT WE DO

The LGA is internationally recognised as a leading association of local government in the development field. We are demand led. We provide a gateway to manage the growing demand for UK local government practitioners to support developing local government abroad. Indeed we promote the use of practitioners to deliver aid programmes to ensure value-for-money from the EU and UK aid budgets. We work with aid organisations and the private sector to secure extra funding to ensure councils have additional resources to undertake this work.

We are leading members of United Cities & Local Government (UCLG), the global organisation representing the interests of municipal government at UN level. We have strong links with the UCLG Africa. Through the UCLG Middle East and West Asia (MIWA) office, and our track record of programme delivery, we have links with local institutions across North Africa and Palestine, the Arab Mayors of Israel, Turkey and Jordan. We are also active members of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF).

We provide expertise and advice in supporting communities abroad by working with local government in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South Asia, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and EU accession countries, Middle East and Latin America. Examples of where we have worked, and what we have achieved are given below.
The LGA's Offer

Working directly with local institutions and the communities they serve, the LGA contribution is cost effective, complimentary to other sub-national programmes, and African/Arab led; the LGA assists rather than leads. Much of our international work is carried out in countries recovering from violent conflict. We can assist British efforts with Arab countries in the following ways.

Stabilising local institutions

We are involved with the Government’s Stabilisation Unit. This is important as it recognises the importance of local stability in supporting fragile states and countries emerging from conflict by using civilian and military expertise to prevent violence, protect people and key institutions, promote political processes, and prepare for long term non-violent politics and development.

We are part of the Stabilisation Volunteer Network (SVN), pulling together NGOs, consultancies and businesses active in post-conflict countries where the UK has a presence. We bring to the table local government skills and expertise in pre-deployment training and post-deployment recovery and adaptation.

Developing local leadership

The LGA is committed to ensuring local government has both good management (to tackle complex demands and deliver outputs), and creative leadership. We provide leadership and management interventions designed to bring about change and work with chief executives, senior managers and politicians.

Improving local service delivery

Through peer to peer learning, we enable local government to identify and share best practice and innovation in service delivery across the sector. Known as the Beacon scheme, it supports partnerships which can demonstrate innovative services, ideas and ways of working that bring real benefits to citizens.

Building a spirit of local community development

Local government is much more than running an organisation and delivering services. Managers and politicians must focus on the total place they serve, and have a vision on a far wider range of actions to improve the lives of the communities they serve. We work with community leaders and politicians who day in day out pull together partnerships with other public sector leaders such as health and police at local, regional and national levels to consider ways to work together in towns, cities and rural areas, and designing cost effective value for money services.

Local economic development and public-private partnerships

Stabilisation and democratisation processes will never be sustainable if not accompanied by economic recovery. The most effective way to build entrepreneurial spirit in post conflict environments is if governing structures understand and enable local businesses to grow. This is particularly enhanced if local governing structures cooperate and include businesses in development of communities in genuine and mutually agreeable partnerships. The LGA has been supporting development of public-private initiatives in numerous countries overseas and has considerable experience in introducing different models of income generation, creating PPP (public private partnerships) which cover transport, environment, schools, hospitals, street-lighting among other areas.

Workforce issues and HR management

The LGA has a team supporting councils to improve human resources management, including developing and implementing pay and grading structures and conditions for employment; managing organisational redesign and shared services, and introducing and implementing workforce strategies (reward strategies, workforce planning).

Examples Of LGA International Work

The LGA has many examples of how we have translated the local government sector’s knowledge and expertise to assist other countries and regions.

Arab Local Authorities in Israel

This FCO funded capacity building project developed through our LGA’s well established track record of work in the Balkans and South East Europe. The project addressed the existing gap in capacity building of marginalised Arab-led local authorities in Israel to improve their services. This project provided a range of skills and expertise including: capacity building needs assessment; training in public-private partnerships, and training to create multi-area agreements local authorities work together.
Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H)

The LGA, working with the Council of Europe and the OSCE, successfully established the British “Beacon Scheme” in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). This scheme recognised best practice, rewarding municipalities across entire territory, and consequently helped increase the overall quality of services where intervention was most needed. Following the three year long internationally funded project, the project has now been successfully transferred to local institutions in the territory. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Beacon Scheme is now self funded and is going strong in its sixth year. The project has been seen as exemplary in the UCLG’s Position paper on Aid Effectiveness.56

Kosovo

The LGA has been involved in two European Agency for Reconstruction funded capacity building consortia to build a robust Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AMK) since 2004. This work involved a range of other international partners. The main objective was to raise the administrative capacity of the Association, raise its profile, help develop inter-municipal cooperation and formalise their status. The LGA has been recognised in Kosovo as a professional, reliable and highly competent partner. Currently, the LGA is a key member of a DFID funded capacity building consortium to help social services in Kosovo.

Pakistan

Following a three year DFID-sponsored capacity building project with the Local Councils Association of Punjab (LCAP), there has been continued demand for UK local government to support calls for the reinstatement of democratically elected local government in Pakistan. Our work has supported the leadership of the LCAP and more recently the newly created associations in Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkwa during considerable insecurity and political uncertainty in the country. Attention is moving to the international community to engage diaspora groups and key institutions in Britain with Pakistani connections to support the country’s democratic journey.

South Africa

As a result of the LGA delivering the first international local government association peer review with the South African Local Government Association, the LGA was requested by United Cities & Local Governments Africa to pilot a pan-African local government peer review programme which will be rolled out across all five regions of the continent throughout 2012 with funding from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Zimbabwe

Despite ongoing political uncertainties in Zimbabwe there is continued demand for our active support for Zimbabwean local government and this has led to us coordinating European and North American LGAs active in Zimbabwe, as well as coordinating a donor conference in Harare focussing on the needs of municipalities. Our EU-funded work to support the leadership and organisational capacity building of the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe will be continuing until early 2013 in partnership with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

The LGA would be delighted to expand on the contents of our submission.

25 October 2011

Written evidence from the Middle East Monitor (MEMO)

Introduction

1. The Middle East Monitor (MEMO) is an independent media research institution founded to foster fair and accurate coverage of Middle Eastern issues in the media.

2. MEMO provides research briefings and reports focusing on the ever-evolving situation in the Middle East and Palestine, specifically to MPs and Peers who have a keen interest in the Middle East.

3. MEMO has facilitated a number of important events for MPs, including delegations to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and round-table seminars with Palestinian parliamentarians in Israel and Palestine, and representatives from the United Nations.

Background

4. The 2011 uprisings across the Middle East mark an important turning point in the history of the region. Often referred to as the “Arab Spring”, these uprisings reflect a departure from the static order that had prevailed for more than 50 years.

5. In Tunisia, Egypt and Libya popular revolutions have overturned entrenched dictatorships, surprising everyone, including the very people who have exercised untold patience with their tyrannical rulers.

6. Throughout their post-colonial history the Arabs’ aspirations for democracy have never been fulfilled. That was because governance was imposed from above. The region’s people have never had ownership of their countries’ wealth or their own political destiny. Today, they are on the threshold of change because the centre of power has shifted from the palaces to the streets.

7. As guarantors of “stability” and dedicated opponents of “Islamic fundamentalism”, the totalitarian regimes were accepted in and by the West. They were hailed in some quarters as models of “modernisation” and success. With their demise, the model of “stability” based on repression can no longer be defended or propagated.

8. The uprisings bear the seeds of a new order based on freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Their response was to overthrow systematic repression and indignity practiced against not only the Islamic movements, but also entire nations.

9. One of the main slogans of the “Arab Spring” is “change or be changed”. The people of the region expect a change of trajectory from Britain and its international partners, one that does not stifle democracy in order to provide “stability”.

**Substantive Response**

10. In all the countries where autocratic regimes have been toppled, corruption and oppression were rampant. The uprisings were an attempt to regain freedom and independence.

11. Although poverty and unemployment have led to widespread disaffection they were not the only causes of the uprisings. The plunder and squandering of national wealth and denial of basic freedoms have been, and remain, equally important. In Egypt, a popular slogan was written and chanted everywhere: “Raise your head, you’re an Egyptian”. This only came about because of a visceral sense of national humiliation and lack of self-esteem.

12. Ostensibly, the “Arab Spring” is not about a simple change of faces and personalities in high office. More importantly, it seeks a change in the system of governance from autocracy to participatory democracy. Public declarations of support for such aspirations could backfire if they are not backed by action and achieved.

13. The uprisings caught almost everyone by surprise, the rulers as well as the political elite. A contributory factor has been the constricted approach of viewing the region exclusively through the secular-religious prism. For many decades Western governments favoured stable military dictatorships over democratically-elected civilian rule.

14. Consequently, Islamic parties were either debarred from the political process altogether or denied the fruits of their election victories, as was the case in Algeria (1992) and Palestine (2006).

15. The overarching justification for this approach has been the claim that Islam is intrinsically opposed to progress and modernity and that these societies are not ready for democracy.

16. MEMO asserts that a political decision must be taken to support genuine democracy throughout the region and not attempt to turn the clocks back. It is necessary, therefore, to entrench two basic ideas long absent from the regional discourse: real citizenship and the rule of law. Whenever these take root, societies tend to enjoy security and prosperity.

17. The Islamic movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are set to play an important role in the transition to democracy, especially across North Africa from Morocco to Egypt. Their role may not only be confined to the states where there have been uprisings, but also to all others where free and fair elections are held; the case of Morocco is a striking example. If free and fair elections are held in Yemen, the Islamist-led Congregation for Reform is also likely to win by a significant majority.

18. In all the countries where free democratic elections have been held thus far, the Islamic parties have won convincingly. However, even after emerging victorious, these parties have offered to form coalition governments; in Palestine (2006), Tunisia and Morocco, for example. In Egypt, the Freedom and Justice Party has limited its candidacy in order to ensure a national coalition government.

19. This formula, which has been a hallmark of the “Arab Spring”, is based on an acknowledgement that the respective countries belong to all of their citizens; no faction can lead on its own. Moreover, such an inclusive approach enhances the prospects of achieving the elusive stability needed for nation-building and productivity.

20. Contrary to the ominous commentaries abounding in the Western media, a public opinion poll conducted by Al Jazeera on 22 November 2011 revealed that 80.4% of the Arab people believe that the emergence of the Islamic parties does not pose a threat to their well-being; only 19.6% believe otherwise.

21. The rise of political Islam is not confined to a single group or movement. It has a presence on the streets and is articulated and supported by civil society. Throughout the Middle East people are naturally inclined to Islam; it is part of their identity and culture. They believe it is the right of the majority to base their system on...
their values and sources of reference, without harm to minorities where such communities exist. To try to
negate this reality would be self-defeating. Let the people choose who they trust.

22. In Egypt, the well-known Christian intellectual, Dr Rafiq Habib, who has long-standing ties with the
Muslim Brotherhood, was appointed vice-chair of the Freedom and Justice Party by the Islamic movement.

23. At the time of its registration, the party had almost 9,000 founding members, including just under a
thousand women and 93 Christians. Secretary General Dr Saad El-Katatni has stressed, “The presence of Copts
among the party’s founders shows that the Muslim Brotherhood does what it says it will do, and that our Coptic
brothers are partners in the nation.”

24. The Muslim Brotherhood made many sacrifices in opposing corruption and tyranny in Egypt. People
support the movement because of its honesty, integrity and expertise.

25. The “Arab Spring” offers a unique opportunity to correct past errors and commence meaningful
engagement with political Islam. It must, however, be inclusive and transparent, with Islamists being treated
as citizens and equals in the building of their nations.

26. The US has had a head-start on its allies by already opening talks with the Muslim Brotherhood. Speaking
in Budapest in June 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton confirmed that Washington had pursued a policy
of “limited contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood” on and off for five or six years. She also announced that
the US would welcome a more open dialogue. Similar contacts have been made with Tunisia’s Al-Nahda Party,
whose leader, Rashid Ghannouchi, has visited Washington DC after years of being on the US “no-fly” list.

27. In October 2011, the Secretary General of Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party received Mr Prem G.
Kumar, Director of the Egypt Desk at the US National Security Organisation, and Amy Destefano, First
Secretary of the US Embassy in Cairo at the party’s headquarters.

28. Although he was the first Western leader to visit Egypt after the downfall of the Mubarak regime, our
Prime Minister David Cameron refused to meet with the Muslim Brotherhood. When asked about his decision,
Mr Cameron said he wanted young people to see there was an alternative to “extreme” Islamist opposition.

29. To many observers, this was a missed opportunity to reach out to the forces that currently lead the
process of democratic change in Egypt. Whether we like it or not, the Muslim Brotherhood remains one of the
most influential political bodies in Egypt and the wider region.

30. British diplomacy is renowned for its pragmatism. It is rooted in the 19th century dictum: “Nations have
no permanent friends and no permanent enemies, only permanent interests.” The complexities of the Middle
East require the best of such pragmatism that eschews ideological prejudices and preferences.

31. To the same degree that it has courted Turkey’s Justice and Development Party, Britain must engage
the Islamic movements in the Middle East if our country is to retain and develop any credible influence in
the region.

32. The Islamic movements are the product of their society. They are born out of their experience and their
aspirations. There is a common view in the West that Islam should be a matter of private concern and should
have no influence on public affairs, governance, propriety, transparency and accountability. This view has no
resonance in the Middle East.

33. British concerns about Islamist politics have been addressed on many occasions. When asked about the
Muslim Brotherhood’s position on the fate of the peace treaty with Israel when a new government is in place,
Dr Muhammad Mursi of the Freedom and Justice Party stressed that Egypt is a mature state with its own
institutions and parliament. When parliament is elected by the will of the people, he said, the government can
be expected to define its foreign policies in accordance with the mandate given by the electorate. The strategic
interests of the Egyptian government will be taken into consideration.

34. Dr Mursi also took that opportunity to point out, with all due respect, that while Western governments
express concerns about Egypt’s future relations with Israel the same governments refuse to challenge robustly
their Israeli counterparts over the treatment of the Palestinian people living under Israel’s military occupation
of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

35. Western support for democratic change in the Middle East will be judged by what happens in Palestine;
not by the amount of money pledged by the US and EU, but by their respect for the rights and will of the
Palestinian people.

Conclusion

36. The British government must understand that there is a historical opportunity available in the Arab
world. By supporting the efforts to free the region from tyranny and oppression, Britain can be an agent for
real reform. The engine for change must, however, be the people within the Arab world. The people of the
Middle East are well capable of making their own democratic choices.
37. If Britain is to enhance its position in the MENA region and be a true champion of democracy, it must respect the rights and choices of the people and not rely on the reactionary forces of despots who subjugate their own citizens.

38. After the “Arab Spring” the protection and enhancement of Britain’s strategic interests will be guaranteed to the extent that it responds to the popular will and assists the ordinary people to build democratic societies characterised by transparency, accountability and peaceful changes of government.

39. Britain can no longer delay its review of its strategic alliances in the region. The democratic changes taking place in the Middle East have brought to the fore a generation that is prepared to exercise their collective will to attain and secure independence, freedom and prosperity. Britain can either benefit from those changes or lose out; the choice is clear.

1 December 2011

Written evidence from the Barnabas Fund

1. This evidence is submitted by Barnabas Fund an international charity which seeks to support Christians where they are in a minority and suffer discrimination, oppression and persecution as a consequence of their faith. Barnabas Fund works to strengthen Christian individuals, churches and their communities by providing material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders. The Christian communities of the Middle East form a key focus for its work. Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, international director of Barnabas Fund, received his PhD in Islamic Studies from SOAS and is a leading expert on religious freedom, radicalisation and political Islam, advising governments around the globe.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

— The protests sweeping across the Arab World have shaken the established order and raised hopes for a new and prosperous democratic future.
— The removal of dictators does not necessarily produce democracy. The underlying political systems have not been overthrown and Islamists are stepping into the political vacuum leading to fears of an Islamist Sunni Crescent of power and influence in the Arab World, led by the Muslim Brotherhood.
— The political upheaval witnessed further exacerbates the vulnerabilities experienced by minority groups in the Middle East.
— The much longed for transition to democratic government in the Middle East will only be realised if western governments engage significantly in the process of political reform and work to ensure the enjoyment of human rights becomes a living reality for all citizens of the Middle East rather than constitutional window dressing for the benefit of the international community.
— Future British foreign policy should respond to the hopes for a new and prosperous Middle East by prioritising the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and religious freedom in particular by all citizens of the Middle East, without distinction.

INTRODUCTION

2. The protests sweeping across the Arab World have shaken the established order and raised hopes for a new and prosperous democratic future. Established leaders like Ben Ali, Mubarak and Qaddafi have been removed from power. Others like Saleh and Assad face increased pressures to go. There are hopes among citizens that oppression, corruption, tyranny and injustice will be replaced by freedom, equality, accountability, the rule of law and civil liberties.57

3. However, getting rid of dictators does not necessarily produce democracy. The wish for reform and freedom from tyranny is not a guarantee of a democratic future. Old leaders have left, but the underlying political systems have not been overthrown.58 Islamists are stepping into the political vacuum and some observers are now calling this era “the Muslim Brotherhood Spring” rather than the Arab Spring.59 They see the dangers of a rising Islamist Sunni Crescent, led by the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates and stretching from Tunisia through Libya, Egypt and Palestine to Syria, replacing the fears of an Iranian led Shia Crescent.60

4. Western experts now accept that Islamist parties will play an important role in the political landscape of Arab countries. This is seen as an inevitable result of fair and free elections given the reality on the ground.55 All over the Arab world, liberal and secular movements are small, marginal and repressed. There is also a deep

61 Maha Azzam, “Islamism: extremists or democrats?” in Conservative Middle East Council, The Arab Spring: Implications for British Policy, pp. 44-48
dichotomy between the real wish of the Arab masses for freedom and their devotion to Islam and shari’a. However, real freedom and justice for all can never be achieved as long as the separation of religion from the state is opposed and as long as shari’a is seen as the main source of law and the main legitimiser of government.

5. An often overlooked factor is that Middle Eastern societies are segmented into ethnic/religious communities, along which fault lines they fissure in times of stress when primordial group loyalties rise to the surface. Recent sectarian violence in Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia seem to prove this premise. Western intervention in the Arab Revolutions has helped opened the door for Islamists in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Like in the tragic developments in Iraq, Britain and the West might be enabling Islamists to gain power, in the process unleashing a wave of violence against all identified enemies such as Alawis, Bahais, Christians and Shia as well as marginalising liberal Muslims, women and other minority groups.

THE ISLAMIST RESURGENCE

6. The opening up of the political system has allowed Islamists, previously repressed by the dictatorships, free space to operate in. Assertive Islamist parties now anticipate the real possibility of achieving power democratically.65 The Arab Spring is facing an “Islamist tsunami” displacing the liberal youth who started the upheavals.63 While playing the democratic game, the core aims of all Islamist movements are inherently anti-democratic and any implementation of shari’a will always be discriminatory for non-Muslim religious minorities (Bah’i, Christians and Mandaeans), for women and other minority groups and for Muslim “heretical” communities (like Alawis, Ismailis and Druze in Syria) and individuals accused of blasphemy or apostasy.64

7. In Tunisia’s recent elections, the Islamist Ennahda party won 40% of the vote and will therefore be the main force in any coalition government.64 The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is even better organised and structured than Ennahda, and is likely to gain a similar percentage of the votes if not more. Many fear that the Muslim Brotherhood’s idea of democracy is utilitarian, simply a necessary stage along the road to an Islamic state under shari’a.65 Affiliated parties and Salafists will further augment the Islamist bloc, most likely giving it an overwhelming majority.

8. Such Islamist-led governments, might begin as advocates of democracy, but will have the inherent tendency to gravitate to the repression of all views considered un-Islamic or contrary to shari’a. There will be an inherent trend to discrimination against women, non-Muslims and dissident Muslims. Minority groups therefore such as Christians, may find themselves more discriminated against in such a new “democracy” than under the former “dictatorial” regimes.

9. In Libya, Islamist leaders of terror groups like Ali Belhaj of the Libyan Group for Jihad rose to prominence in the fighting against Qaddafi. Along with other Islamists, they are seeking to fill the political void and gain a prominent place in the seats of power.66 The chairman of the National Transitional Council, Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, announced that shari’a will be the “basic source” of legislation and that any existing laws contradicting the teachings of Islam would be nullified.67 In Yemen, the Islah [Reform] party, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Shi’a Huthi rebels are all Islamist groups involved in the struggle to determine Yemen’s political future.68

IMPACT ON MINORITIES

10. The upheavals are exacerbating the dangers of sectarianism, including the Sunni-Shi’a and the Muslim-Christian divides among others.69 In the chaos of protests and demonstrations, law and order are weakened and minorities are often left without any protection against attacks by hostile groups. In Egypt, while Christians enthusiastically participated in the initial protests in Tahrir square, they are now being marginalised as well as perceived as the targets of increased violence by Salafis and the army. The dream many Egyptian Christians had enthusiastically participated in the initial protests in Tahrir square, they are now being marginalised as well as minorities are often left without any protection against attacks by hostile groups. In Egypt, while Christians communities (like Alawis, Ismailis and Druze in Syria) and individuals accused of blasphemy or apostasy.

11. There are worries that women’s rights will be curtailed with the rising strength of Islamist parties. In Tunisia, cases of verbal abuse of women for wearing Western style clothes have increased since the revolution.62 Ahmed Charai and Joseph Braude, “The Islamist Bloc?” Foreign Policy, 9 November 2011
64 Robin Wright, “The Islamists Are Coming”, Foreign Policy, 9 November 2011
65 Dialika Krabe, “The Muslim Sisterhood: Visions of Female Identity in the New Egypt”, Der Spiegel, 1 April 2011
66 Robin Wright, “The Islamists Are Coming”, Foreign Policy, 9 November 2011
67 “Mahmoud Jibril says legislation will be based on Islamic Sharia law”, The Daily Mail, 25 October 2011; Con Coughlin,“The Arab Spring is becoming an Islamist takeover”, The Telegraph, 31 October 2011
69 “Is this an Arab spring?” Le Monde diplomatique, English edition, April 2011
70 Ramez Atallah, “Revolution Hijacked?”, The Bible Society of Egypt, 25 March 2011
Egyptian women fear that the temporary military government and the Islamists are intent on limiting women’s freedoms as reports emerge of a backlash against female political participation by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and of forced humiliating virginity tests on women detainees. Libyan women have also expressed similar concerns as the NTC announce that Sharia will form the minimum standards for all legislation rather than international human rights law.

EGYPT

12. Attacks against young Christian girls have increased. Attacks include attempts by Muslim boys to disfigure their faces by throwing acid at them. The motive? To prevent marriages between Christians and therefore restrict future Christian generations.

13. Minority groups fear the consequences if the Muslim Brotherhood become the ruling party in Egypt. All agree that life will become extremely difficult for Christians and other minority groups under the emerging Egyptian regime. A consequence of the development of political relations between the Army and the Muslim Brotherhood is the assumption of a security function by the Brotherhood similar to that assumed by Hizbollah in Lebanon, triggering concerns about impunity for atrocities.

14. Securing democracy and human rights in Egypt will not happen without significant engagement from the international community. This is the only way that all citizens of Egypt may enjoy the most fundamental human rights.

SYRIA

15. In Syria, as the unrest turns to civil war following the regime killing of over 3,500 people, the Sunni Islamist animosity against the minority Alawi Assad regime may well lead to Iraqi-style violence against Alawis and other minorities who benefitted from their rule, including Syrian Christians and the many Iraqi Christian refugees living in Syria. In Homs recently, insurgents kidnapped Alawis some of whom were killed. Many Alawis have fled the city heading for their original mountain villages.

16. The crisis engulfing Syria threatens the two million Christians living there. Since the armed conflict in Iraq, Syria has provided refuge for hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christian refugees, amongst others who fled to Syria after they were targeted by Islamist extremists in Iraq. While the Assad regime has undoubtedly been authoritarian and brutal in its treatment of its citizens, Syria has traditionally protected its religious minorities more so than any other country in the Middle East. Should Syria become consumed by civil war, many fear that the Christian population will be targeted to a similar scale and extent to that witnessed in Iraq. Syria’s Christians are in a frightening position. Their weakness and lack of protection could leave them as easy targets for religious extremists keen to exploit the political vacuum created by internal conflict.

17. Mindful of the tragic levels of civilian suffering brought about in Iraq by years of extensive sanctions we would invite caution against further sanctions being considered against Syria. Comprehensive sanctions would quickly decimate the Syrian civilian population and infrastructure which is significantly less developed than that of Iraq pre-sanctions. Instead there should be direct consultation between HM Government and representatives of all those affected by developments in Syria, particularly Christians. Consultation needs to translate into considered policies which seek to protect all civilians of Syria, particularly those that are most vulnerable should the country be destabilised by further military action.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18. According to the Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, the British government has viewed the Arab Spring as “a huge opportunity” in which the UK could play a leadership role in “embracing, not instructing” the revolutionary developments. Some in government realise that Islamists will be elected to governments, but insist that they should be judged by their actions, not their political labels. William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, warned that “the unleashing of sectarian divisions” was one of the biggest risks of the Arab Spring. He also acknowledges the possibility of a “collapse back into more authoritarian regimes, conflict and increased terrorism in North Africa on Europe’s very doorstep”.

72 “Mixed messages for Tunisian women”, and “For women, a troubled revolution in Egypt”, The International Herald Tribune, 21 November 2011
19. It would seem that the British government is aware of the lurking dangers in the Arab world yet feels it has an important role to play in supporting democratic values and the new reformers. It will press for non-violence and civil rights, and promises not to be silent when human rights are abused and lives are threatened.\(^78\) What practical steps does it propose to take in order to meet this promise?

20. The Opposition has also noted some of the negative developments. Labour’s Douglas Alexander stated: “The killing of 24 Coptic Christians in Cairo must be a cause for extreme concern amongst all the new Egypt’s friends, both because of what it says about religious tensions in Egypt and about the interim regime.”\(^79\)

21. Pragmatic arguments of Realpolitik may mean that Britain might have to arrive at accommodations with powerful Islamist parties. At the same time, it needs to become an advocate for those who are being marginalised, discriminated against and violently attacked. Whatever influence it still might have, it should use in monitoring and advocacy for them.

22. Britain intervened militarily in Libya to protect civilians from attack by the Qaddafi regime. Is Britain willing to engage at least in a detailed diplomatic initiative to protect innocent minority civilians from attack, discrimination or social alienation by Islamists and their allies throughout the Middle East?

23. Offering unconditional aid to regimes that are persecuting their minorities is wrong. Britain should require minimum guarantees of freedom of religion for Christians and other minorities linked to any aid it offers.\(^80\) Pressure ought to be put on Arab governments, new and old, to ensure that religious freedom is upheld in practice and that violence and persecution against any minority group is eliminated by consistently enforcing the rule of law and creating a culture in which equal treatment of all citizens is the priority.\(^81\)

24. Britain played a key role in securing consensus among western states regarding the need to intervene in Libya. How will the government respond to the call for freedom heard from many citizens throughout the Middle East and work to secure the most fundamental freedoms and basic human rights for all civilians throughout the Middle East particularly religious freedom which is recognised as one of the most fundamental rights?

25. Equality without distinction is at the core of international human rights standards and subsequently any society if it is to be truly democratic. The government must ensure that this principle is at the core of all its relations in the Middle East.

26. Education will play a fundamental role in defining the future character and value system of these states. The British government has identified education as a key mechanism for combating terrorism.\(^82\) What commitments will the government give to ensuring that any support provided to the new governments for educational reform initiatives will include the promotion and understanding of human rights and fundamental freedoms?

9 December 2011

Written evidence from PLATFORM

Summary

1. UK foreign policy on Libya focused excessively on improving relationships with the Gaddafi regime and promoting British business interests, at the expense of human rights and engaging with popular and oppositional opinion.

2. FCO activities and presentation of the Gaddafi regime as “reforming” strengthened a notoriously corrupt and repressive government.

3. Despite awareness of role of oil revenues in increasing repression, the FCO failed to provide sound human rights guidance to British corporations and backed their support for regime.

4. FCO allowed excessive influence on foreign policy by corporate interests, especially BP and Shell.

5. The Libyan British Business Council’s (LBBC’s) influence on foreign policy is questionable, given past lobbying and membership base.

6. The British government should allow Libya to develop and frame its oil and gas sector without trying to influence or shape any change.


\(^{80}\) “Connecting the dots: Education and Religious Discrimination in Pakistan”, US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), November 2011

\(^{81}\) “Pakistan aid is ‘anti-Christian’: Stinging attack on Government from church leader”, The Daily Mail, 15 March 2011

\(^{82}\) “Britain triples aid for Pakistan’s schools”, Daily Telegraph 5 April 2011, “Education should be Pakistan’s top priority”, The Guardian 6 April 2011
7. The UK private sector has undermined democracy, transparency and human rights in Libya. UK companies should not receive taxpayer support from the FCO and UKTI and should be subject to greater monitoring and regulation to prevent a repeat scenario.

BACKGROUND

1. PLATFORM is a London-based research organization that has monitored the impacts of the British oil industry for over 15 years, exploring the social, economic, environmental and human rights shifts that result from oil and gas exploration, extraction and transportation. Our work is regularly published and cited by governments, academia, media and corporations. We are consulted for expertise on specific contracts by human rights defenders, parliamentarians and journalists. We have deep knowledge of the interaction between British oil companies and Nigeria, Iraq, the Caspian and North Africa.

2. This submission has been produced by Mika Minio-Paluello, who has worked on conflict and human rights issues in the Middle East for over a decade. Since 2005, Minio-Paluello has focused on the impacts of oil around the Mediterranean and the Caspian. Minio-Paluello is based in Cairo.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Was there too much focus on contact with the previous regime rather than tracking popular, oppositional or youth opinion? Was policy overly dominated by considerations of regional stability and counter-terrorist co-operation?

3. Public statements indicate that UK foreign policy priorities on Libya since 2003 focused primarily on improving relationships with the Gaddafi regime and promoting British business interests, at the expense of human rights and engaging with popular and oppositional opinion. As a result, the FCO’s activities helped to entrench Gaddafi’s notoriously corrupt and repressive regime. The overthrow of Gaddafi has since exposed the UK’s disturbingly close ties with him and the short-sighted nature of policy which prioritised commercial interests over other considerations.

4. It is widely understood that undemocratic and repressive regimes regularly use their oil reserves, and involvement of foreign companies in exploiting these, to bolster both their ability to oppress their own people and to prevent democratization. This happened in Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Burma, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen and elsewhere.

5. Thus the Foreign Office should have been aware that its increasing engagement with the Libyan regime, especially on matters of oil investment and arms sales, enabled Gaddafi’s control over the country while boosting his respectability in the international community.

6. Moreover, by publically presenting and promoting his regime as “reforming”, both the British government and companies strengthened Gaddafi’s hand while effectively shunning democratic opposition movements and those subject to continued human rights violations.

7. For example, in 2004 FCO Minister Mike O’Brien announced in a speech: “I was encouraged by [Libyans’] enthusiastic welcome and their readiness to discuss issues important to us such as economic reform. Libya has come a long way.” His speech had headings including “Economic reform” and “Expanding trade and investment”, but no mention of human rights or political reform. The closest he came was announcing that ‘radical reform’ was unnecessary: “We have made it clear to the Libyans that having reliable systems in place will go a long way to increasing business confidence with relatively little need for radical reform.”

8. Similar promotion of Gaddafi’s regime was conducted by oil companies involved in Libya. BP published an eight-page gleaming colour celebration of Libya’s “progress”. “Libya Rising” presented a rosy image of Libya in 2007: women are free, the streets are safe, Westerners are loved, people are becoming richer, BP will go a long way to increasing business confidence with relatively little need for radical reform.”

9. Human rights issues were consistently sidelined when they should have been central to the FCO’s advice, guidance and warnings to UK companies operating in Libya.

FCO ENGAGEMENT WITH BRITISH CORPORATIONS ACTIVE IN LIBYA

9. Human rights issues were consistently sidelined when they should have been central to the FCO’s advice, guidance and warnings to UK companies operating in Libya.
10. A principled approach to human rights issues is in the UK’s best interests, and would benefit the promotion of long-term external relations. The FCO, for example, has recognized the practical importance of human rights, issuing guidelines for businesses and supporting the UN Framework on Business and Human Rights (or the “Ruggie framework”). In practice, the UK’s compliance with these guidelines in Libya has proved inadequate.

11. The Ruggie framework requires home states to set out clear expectations on business to respect human rights and to enforce relevant laws to ensure businesses are held accountable. It also imposes a duty on companies to act with “due diligence” in order to avoid actual or perceived complicity in human rights abuses.

12. A company may be complicit in human rights abuses by “knowingly providing practical assistance or encouragement that has a substantial effect on the commission of the crime”. Although presence in a country and paying government revenues are unlikely to be sufficient to establish legal liability, a company’s silence on human rights incidents may legitimize abuse and raise potential liabilities. Complicity may also arise where “practical assistance or encouragement” does not cause the actual abuse.

13. Oil extraction in undemocratic countries tends to contribute to increased human rights abuses because: (a) such strategically important resources are closely controlled by and linked to the regime; (b) sites of extraction are then militarised by forces already connected with human rights violations; (c) oil extraction provides vast revenues, which are comparatively easy to siphon off and steal; (d) even when used “legitimately” in the budget, revenues are directed towards entrenching regimes, through arming militaries, police forces and short-term patronage.

14. Paul Stevens, then BP Professor of Petroleum Policy at the Centre for Energy, Petroleum and Mineral Law and Policy in Dundee described how “The revenues support existing regimes simply because they allow low tax rates and large patronage. They also allow large spending on internal security further entrenching regimes. The revenues increase the potential for internal conflict and even civil war. Such countries also tend to be more heavily militarised.”

15. Libya’s oil sector is a salient example: the Gaddafi regime was heavily dependent on the oil industry for government revenues and collaboration between oil companies and government forces was routine. Despite these ‘red flags’, the FCO has consistently chosen to support the entry and expansion of British oil companies in Libya.

16. The FCO should have sought to prevent UK companies from becoming an important source of funding for Gaddafi’s regime and thereby complicit in its abuses. There was widespread awareness among the business and diplomatic community of the Gaddafi regimes’ poor human rights record, but the UK, like Nelson, turned a blind eye in order to further its short-term business interests. That the UK did not act alone is not a valid excuse. The UK bears responsibility for its actions and should have avoided a diplomatic ‘race to the bottom’.

**FOREIGN POLICY INFLUENCED AND SHAPED BY PRIVATE INTERESTS**

17. The high level of influence of British oil companies on British government policy is particularly concerning. The case of Abdelbaset al-Megrahi merits some scrutiny. Whatever the stated reasons of al-Megrahi’s early release, it is clear that BP influenced government decision-making on this issue through its persistent lobbying for his release. It is plainly inappropriate for a private UK oil company to intervene in a Prisoner Transfer Agreement between two states. This runs counter to the democratic accountability of government decision making and compromises the independence of the UK judiciary. This case demonstrates how Gaddafi successfully projected his interests and demands internationally, using BP and the FCO as conduits for his own influence. The impact of this decision substantially undermined relations with the US and damaged perception of the UK’s values and its reputation abroad.

18. Similarly, letters exchanged between Shell and Prime Minister Tony Blair reveal an inappropriate level of corporate influence over the UK’s interaction with the Libyan government. Government documents released by The Times revealed that Tony Blair lobbied Colonel Muammar Gaddafi on behalf of Shell while he was Prime Minister. The relevant letter from Number 10 was drafted first by the oil company and bears a striking resemblance to a briefing note by Royal Dutch Shell weeks earlier promoting a $500 million (£325 million) deal it was trying to clinch in Libya.
THE INFLUENCE OF THE LIBYAN BRITISH BUSINESS COUNCIL.

19. Commentators like the Libyan British Business Council (LBBC) have suggested that the FCO and UKTI could provide higher levels of support and subsidies to British companies operating or seeking to operate in Libya. The LBBC does not appear to have taken on board the extent to which the UK’s policy towards Gaddafi was misguided. The default position of the LBBC is that the UK’s interests should prevail over its values. In the post-Gaddafi era, this position should be regarded with most anxious scrutiny. In Platform’s view, continuing UK support for the private sector in Libya would re-enforce the negative impacts of the UK’s policy over the last decade.

20. Further questions were raised in the British media as to whether the LBBC was a responsible actor, highlighting the role of the LBBC in trying “to uphold the myth of a good Gaddafi”. Even well after the Libyan uprising began, the LBBC continued to publish positive images and praise in favor of Gaddafi on its website. This content was subsequently removed from the LBBC’s website after Gaddafi’s fall from power. Despite being sponsored in part by the FCO itself, the LBBC acts as a special interest group seeking to influence government policy in the interests of its members, which include companies whose interests do not necessarily align with the British government—as seen by BP’s lobbying on al-Megrahi’s release. Further, despite its name, LBBC’s members are not all UK-based companies. Council Members—the highest grade of membership—include Exxon Mobil, Consolidated Contractors Company (Greek—Lebanese) and Standard Bank (South Africa). While each of these companies may have an office or a subsidiary within the UK, the benefits that their operations in Libya would bring to the UK are questionable. The activities of these companies in Libya are even less scrutinized than their British equivalents. When the LBBC seeks to influence government policy, it is doing so on behalf of non-British private companies and acting in their interests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Libya build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive their economies?

21. The British government should allow Libya to develop its oil and gas sector without trying to influence or shape any change. This means that the British government should refrain from providing advisers on oil and gas policy to Libya. Libya has a well-developed domestic oil and gas industry, with the skills to rebuild and commission contractors where necessary.

22. Given the widespread and continued perception across the Middle East and North Africa that the British government prioritises the interests of British oil companies and its access to Middle Eastern oil and gas reserves over democracy and human rights—reinforced by its alliance with Gaddafi in Libya and Mubarak in Egypt—it would be best for Britain to refrain from making any interventions regarding oil or gas and to de-escalate and withdraw diplomatic resources which the private sector will demand as it seeks to expand and gain access to new contracts.

23. We can learn from British “engagement” in the Iraqi oil sector, where UK ‘advisers’, DfID reports and conferences undermined Iraqi domestic capacity to manage operations and rebuild export capacity, while increasing dependency on external companies. This has generated significant hostility and distrust of British government motives.

24. Similarly, any indication that Britain is trying to guide or influence Libyan governments towards certain contracts, investment agreements or structures will give the impression that the UK chose to commit armed forces to the overthrow of Gaddafi in part for the purpose of gaining access and control over Libyan oil.

How can the British Government best work with allies and through international institutions to support reform in Egypt and Tunisia?

25. It is too early to know what politics of the future Libya will be. To date, the UK private sector has not been a constructive force. Our government and businesses have strengthened a repressive elite whose corruption substantially deprived many Libyans of the benefits of our investment. In effect, the UK private sector has undermined democracy, transparency and human rights in Libya. UK companies should therefore not play a greater role in determining Libya’s future, nor receive further taxpayer subsidies from the FCO and UKTI.

26. Specifically, the British Government should avoid engaging in Libya through international institutions with a record of non-transparent dealings and history of supporting corruption. This includes the European Investment Bank, the EU’s house bank.

95 Robin Lamb, LBBC, UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL EVIDENCE To be published as HC 1672-ii, 6 Dec 2011, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmfaff/uc1672-ii/uc167201.htm
97 "Fuel on the Fire: Oil and Politics in Occupied Iraq", Greg Muttitt, 2011, Bodley Head
Written evidence from Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch welcomes the decision of the FAC to broaden its existing inquiry into “British foreign policy, the Arab Spring and the transition to democracy,” to include democratic transition issues in Libya.

SUMMARY

Within the context of a multilateral, UN-coordinated effort in support of democratic transition in Libya, the UK Government should press for and support action by the Libyan government on the following key issues:

— Developing a fair and effective criminal justice system. Of all the problems facing Libya, this is the most urgent. Many of the current human rights abuses in Libya—including the thousands of persons being held without charge—result from the weakness or absence of such a system. It will be impossible to obtain real security without one. The UK and other international partners should offer practical support, including technical advice and training, to help speedily develop this system and ensure it is consistent with international standards.

— Accounting for the past. Building a new Libya requires a proper accounting for past human rights abuses during the 42 years of Muammar Gaddafi’s rule, including the many cases of torture, extra-judicial executions and still-unresolved disappearances. Grave human rights violations in the past should be dealt with based on the rule of law, with all defendants granted due process. In terms of abuses committed during the armed conflict of 2011, which include possible crimes against humanity, it should be made clear to the Libyan government that to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1970 it must cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court (ICC), including by handing over persons indicted by the ICC. As part of this accountability process, the UK Government should also publicly account for its role in the rendition to Libya of terrorism suspects and the resulting complicity of UK security services in Libyan torture.

— Tackling insecurity and weapons proliferation. Libya is currently experiencing considerable insecurity, with armed militias wielding influence in some parts of the country. It is urgent to disband these militias or bring them under effective civilian control, as well as to encourage the surrender of the large quantities of heavy weaponry that are currently widely available across Libya.

— Defending and promoting women’s rights. The Libyan government should be strongly encouraged and supported to uphold and advance women’s rights during the interim phase and then to enshrine them in the new constitution. It should also be pressed to ensure that women play a full role in public life, in particular in the drafting of the new constitution.

— Protecting minorities. Both in the interim phase and in Libya’s new constitution, the UK should be pressing for effective safeguards for minority communities, including sub-Saharan Africans living in Libya, dark-skinned Libyans, Amazighs (Berbers) and other vulnerable groups, along with policies to ensure that minorities play a full role in Libyan public life.

INTRODUCTION

1. The newly formed Libyan government has stated its commitment to human rights, the rule of law and democracy after 42 years of dictatorship. While recognising that Libyans themselves should determine their future, the UK Government, in the context of a UN-coordinated multilateral effort, can and should play an active role, highlighting and calling for action on specific issues and offering practical support with elements of the Libyan transition process. In this submission, Human Rights Watch identifies a number of priority areas for attention and action.

DEVELOPING A FAIR AND EFFECTIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

2. The most urgent transition challenge facing the new Libya is the need to build a fair and effective criminal justice system that is respectful of international standards. This can help deal with past violations, but it is vital too for addressing current violations and deterring future ones. Without such a system to serve as a check on executive power, decision-making in the new Libya will likely remain arbitrary and potentially abusive. However, up until now, the creation of such a criminal justice system has not been a priority of the Libyan authorities or the UK and its other international supporters. There are still few, if any judges who have returned to work, even in Benghazi. Without a functioning criminal justice system, chaos and abuse are almost inevitable.

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3. The critical first steps will be to ensure that sufficient judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other professionals are back at work; that the existing criminal law, in particular the procedural code, is made widely available and is adhered to; and that the fundamental human right that every detainee should be brought promptly before a judge is applied in each case.

4. At the time of writing, more than 7,000 detainees are being held in prisons and makeshift detention centres. Some of these are under the control of armed militias or “revolutionary brigades” who have no legal authority to detain individuals. A significant number of the detainees are sub-Saharan Africans or dark-skinned Libyans. In many cases, those detained are accused or suspected of being Gaddafi-recruited mercenaries. Human Rights Watch has compiled evidence that some of those detained have been ill-treated and tortured. We have urged the Libyan government to release these detainees or charge them with recognizable criminal offenses before a legitimate legal authority and ensure they are brought before a judge. It is critical that the UK supports these steps and opposes any moves to perpetuate, and even legitimate, the “internment” of persons on vague grounds of “security” rather than on criminal charges, in particular given the end of the armed conflict. Such internment could easily become ingrained. All detention centres should also be under the control of the justice authorities.

5. Under Gaddafi’s rule, the justice system lacked independence from the ruling elite and failed to serve as a check on arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment of regime opponents and others. While responding to the needs identified by the Libyan government, the UK and the international community could provide support for a revamped Libyan criminal justice system, by assisting in the drafting of legislation that properly safeguards the independence of the judiciary and the legal profession, as well as training for judges and prosecutors, including during the time of transition. This should draw on experience from other countries in transition or after a civil war.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE PAST

6. While an inquiry focused on transition issues urges us to look forward, Libya’s future cannot so easily be disentangled from its past. Put another way, the chances of Libya securing a successful transition to democracy, the rule of law and human rights will be greatly assisted by a proper and lawful accounting for the terrible abuses committed during Gaddafi rule. The speedy establishment of an effective criminal justice system is critical to this, providing a mechanism for bringing prosecutions against officials responsible for authorising or carrying out abuses. It is important that a comprehensive approach is taken to setting up a justice system able to deal with historic and new crimes, and not one that only focuses on a few high profile cases.

7. But there are four other elements to this process of accountability where UK and wider international action and support are appropriate. Firstly, bringing effective prosecutions requires the preservation of official Gaddafi-era records relevant to particular rights violation cases. The new Libyan authorities should be encouraged and supported to protect these materials and other forms of evidence. Secondly, the new authorities may benefit from UK and international support to assist their National Commission for the Search and Identification of Missing Persons (the large number of people who have disappeared over the last few decades and whose fate remains unknown). Thirdly, in respect of the large-scale and egregious abuses committed since the start of the popular uprising in February, the Libyan government should cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court (ICC), for example by handing over ICC-indicted individuals to that court. UN Security Council Resolution 1970 obliges the government to do this. Fourthly, the Commission of Inquiry set up by NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdeljalil into the circumstances surrounding the apparent execution in custody of Muammar Gaddafi should be encouraged to act speedily and transparently and publish its findings quickly. Any evidence of individual responsibility for crimes should be handed over to the Libyan criminal justice system for prosecution.

8. In the broader context of accountability, the UK must scrutinize its own past policy towards Libya, especially in the early part of the last decade. In this period, the UK Government largely turned a blind eye to human rights abuses committed by the Gaddafi regime, apparently in the interest of business ties and cooperation against terrorism. Human Rights Watch has uncovered evidence showing that UK security services were complicit in abuse, through direct UK involvement in rendition to Libya of individuals who were then tortured by the Libyan authorities. Human Rights Watch calls for a proper public and independent inquiry into UK involvement in this and other cases, followed by the prosecution of anyone responsible for complicity in torture. We believe that the powers currently given to the Detainee Inquiry are inadequate and that it lacks genuine independence.

TACKLING INSECURITY AND WEAPONS PROLIFERATION

9. Decisive action is needed by the Libyan government to bring the various militia groups under control, either by disbanding them or by integrating them into a new security force, answerable to a legitimate civilian authority. The security situation remains fragile in many parts of Libya, and into December there have been fatal clashes between armed militias. The government has taken some steps to exercise more effective central control, with the creation of a Supreme Security Committee to address security concerns in Tripoli and elsewhere. In addition, in early December, the new interim Prime Minister, Abdurrahim el-Keib, announced that he was giving militias from outside the capital three weeks to leave Tripoli or disband. While this necessary
process must be driven largely by the Libyan government, the UK and other international partners should offer practical advice and assistance.

10. In the aftermath of the downfall of Gaddafi, it is mostly the armed militias rather than the Libyan police that have assumed responsibility for law and order, and—as already noted—they are doing this in a way that has led to human rights abuses, including at times torture and deaths in detention. There is an important role for international support, including by the UK, in helping to develop a professional and legitimate police force, able to deal with crime and public disorder. Support should include the provision of basic equipment, training and, where appropriate, assistance with the integration of some disbanded militia members into the police force, subject to the necessary checks to prevent the recruitment of anyone involved in human rights abuses.

11. Tackling insecurity also requires a concerted effort on the part of the Libyan government, supported by the UK and other international partners, to address the problem of heavy weapons proliferation and the extensive contamination of land by antipersonnel and anti-vehicle mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), which threaten civilians with death or injury. The Libyan government should be urged and supported to maintain effective control over weapon sites and to persuade Libyan militia groups to hand over heavy weapons as part of the disarmament and demobilisation process. The UK Government should also contribute resources for demining and for clearance of explosive remnants of war.

DEFENDING AND PROMOTING WOMEN’S RIGHTS

12. The Libyan government should be strongly encouraged by the UK and other international partners to defend and protect women’s rights, to combat sexual violence and to promote political participation by women. During the transition period the temporary constitution and the government itself should comply with international standards on equality and women’s rights.

13. Traditionally in Libya, sexual violence and abuse are rarely discussed publicly because of the shame that it brings on the women and families affected. Working with Libyan women’s rights activists, Human Rights Watch has been trying to expose the scale of this abuse, especially in the period since February. We have documented many cases of sexual violence committed against both women and men and called for the perpetrators to be held accountable. During this process of transition, we will continue to work to expose abuse and urge the Libyan government and international partners to hold abusers to account, ensure that those subjected to this abuse can access appropriate services, and press for stronger government policies to protect women from sexual violence.

14. In the period since the fall of the Gaddafi regime, a growing number of Libyan women have indicated their determination to participate in political life. At a women’s rights conference in Tripoli in November (partly funded by the UK government) and attended by the senior figures in Libya’s new government—including the NTC Chairman, the prime minister, the minister of justice and others—a group of Libyan women activists urged the country’s new leaders to back their ability to fully participate in public life. The UK and other international partners should press the Libyan government to respond positively to these demands, including for increased representation of women in the government. Recognising that women are likely to face particular challenges in running for elected office in Libya, the UK government should promote and support leadership programmes for women. They should undertake capacity building and training for women, paying specific attention to the needs of women living in rural areas, older women and disabled women.

15. It is critical that the new Libyan constitution ensure full equality for women, consistent with international standards. The UK government should also press the Libyan government to lift quickly its reservations to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

PROTECTING MINORITIES

16. Minority communities are particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse and discrimination. The residents of the town of Tawergha, who are generally darker skinned than other Libyans, have faced reprisals and collective punishment because of the role of some of them in attacks by Gaddafi forces on Misrata during the conflict. Sub-Saharan Africans and dark-skinned Libyans are heavily represented amongst those being held in detention by the government and various militias. The UK and other international partners should press the government to ensure full equality for all Libyans, regardless of nationality, language, religion, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, consistent with international human rights standards, in the transition period and then for these commitments to be set out in a new constitution and implemented by the new government.

CONCLUSION

17. After 42 years of dictatorship, Libya’s new leaders face an enormous challenge to build a country based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. UK Government influence and practical support, advanced through a multilateral support effort, can assist this process, and help give Libyans the chance to shape a more just and democratic future.
Human Rights Watch is able to provide the Committee with additional information about our work in Libya, in response to specific requests. We would also welcome the opportunity to provide oral evidence to the Committee.

12 December 2011

Further written evidence from the British Council

Summary

— Executive Summary.
— British Council focus in Libya.
— Crisis Team response in Libya.
— Programme response:
  — English.
  — Education and Skills.
  — Youth and Voice.

Executive Summary

The British Council has responded quickly and energetically to the new opportunities in Libya. With established networks and a strong reputation in the country, we have been approached by the Transitional National Council with requests to continue much of the work we were undertaking before the popular revolution, as well as to help them develop their ambitious agendas for education, skills development and English language.

Our office in Tripoli, which thanks to the dedication of our Libyan staff was largely undamaged, reopened in September. Our UK country director has returned to Libya and Alistair Burt MP officially relaunched our operation in early December.

We are investing additional resource to rebuild our programme work and to respond to the new opportunities in schools, in further and in higher education. Through this we will help young Libyans to develop their vocational, professional and English language skills as they seek to enter employment and play their part in the development of their new, democratic society.

British Council in Pre-revolutionary Libya

After nearly 30 years of closure the British Council was re-established within the British Embassy in Tripoli in 2000. In 2003 a UK/Libya Cultural Agreement enabled the establishment of a presence independent of the British Embassy, with the official opening in 2006. The Cultural Agreement was renewed in 2008 for five years.

Prior to the popular revolution we had built excellent relationships in Libya, especially with those sections of the leadership that were working to improve the country’s educational infrastructure. Many have taken up new posts in the various ministries we work with; the credibility we have earned with them means we are well placed to resume our work quickly, effectively and with significant support from the government.

British Council focus in the new Libya

Those that participated in the revolution in Libya have painted a clear vision for the future of their country. They want access to employment, the chance to make positive contributions to their communities and opportunities to participate in the global society and economy. We have aligned our efforts to meet these demands and focussed on areas we are well equipped to deliver. These are:

— English language skills.
— Educational opportunities and skills.
— Giving a voice to and empowering young people.

We are increasing our financial commitment to Libya to £1 million this financial year, to ensure we respond quickly to the changes taking place in the country and that we operate on a scale that can deliver significant impact. Our discussions with the government and sector leaders centre on building programmes in partnership to guarantee that we deliver what Libya really needs both in the short and long term.

Crisis Team response to the revolution

In February 2011, due to escalating instability and the outbreak of violence, we were obliged to suspend services in Libya. As in Egypt and Tunisia, guaranteeing the safety of our staff was our first priority. A phased evacuation of UK appointed staff and their dependents was undertaken and all were returned safely to Britain. We ensured we also kept in frequent contact with nationally appointed staff for the duration of the revolution.
Our Emergency Incident Response team monitored the political and security environment throughout the unrest as rebel offensives continued in various parts of the country. While other buildings, such as the British Embassy suffered attacks and looting, the British Council office was undamaged, thanks in large part to the dedication of locally appointed staff. One staff member, Mr Abdullatif Zaidi, visited the premises on a daily basis, even when the streets were dangerous, to ensure its protection. Following their evacuation, he helped protect the belongings of 60 teachers and their dependents.

We reopened our office in Tripoli in September 2011, with a core staff of some 12 Libyan nationals managing a back office operation; this has now increased to 30. Our Country Director returned to Tripoli in early December and was present for the official relaunch by Alistair Burt MP of our Libyan operation. Further UK appointed staff will be returning as soon as the security situation permits in early 2012.

Programme Focus

While our programme work was interrupted by events in Libya, we made it our priority to listen and gain insights from both new and existing actors on how and in what areas we can most make a difference. Retaining the trust we have earned in Libya is essential for us, so facilitating, endorsing and honouring shared agendas features in all our plans. Our work was highly valued in Libya and the best endorsement we’ve had from partners, ministries and the interim government is that they are requesting the continuation of our pre-revolution approach.

English

Libyans want to learn English. Our acknowledged expertise in English Language Teaching is a means of access for us to Libya’s future leaders, communicators and social entrepreneurs.

We taught English to over 2,500 students a year in our centre in Tripoli and offsite through corporate contracts. We taught English to a further 500 health professionals per year in five centres across Libya, enabling them to undertake further training and participate in international forums. In addition to this over 2,000 students each year sat exams with us to gain English language qualifications.

In 2010–11 we had near completion of a large scale English language project (LETUP)\(^9\) developing English language teaching (ELT) capacity in 10 universities that provided over 7,000 graduates high quality English Language training.

The signing of a contract for a second, even more wide-reaching, ELT teacher training project (LETSS),\(^10\) to improve the teaching of English across all secondary schools in Libya was imminent earlier this year. We initiated the project with a series of highly successful ELT conferences for over 1,200 secondary school teachers in Tripoli, Benghazi, Misrata and Sebha in January 2011. Although the signing was postponed back in February, the current government has already expressed a strong desire to reinstate the LETSS project as soon as possible.

We will be working to formalise an agreement with the new Libyan government to commence the LETSS English Language teacher training project in secondary schools throughout Libya.

We will expand our English and Examinations services capacity to deliver high quality English language teaching to individuals, organisations and companies. Responding to requests from a number of government Ministries we will be take our direct teaching of English outside Tripoli through partnerships, offsite and online delivery; creating further opportunities for Libyans to gain internationally recognised UK qualifications.

The unrest in Libya meant we have been unable to hold classes in our teaching centres in recent months. However, we broadcast our Learn English Radio series to listeners in available areas of Libya to give people English language learning opportunities at times when people’s movement was restricted. Now the security situation has settled we are working with broadcasters to extend coverage of the programme across the whole of Libya.

Education and Skills

Equipping young people with the skills necessary to bolster their employment opportunities will be the key theme running through all our education work in Libya.

Reform of education at all levels of the system will be essential to help achieve this and necessary to provide young Libyans with the relevant skills to support economic, social and political development in the country.

Our success in the past has positioned us to be able quickly to re-establish relationships with the NTC. Meetings have already been held with the Ministries of Education, Health, Labour and Capacity Building to discuss the British Council’s role in providing support for their reform programmes. All have requested we resume and upscale our work in Libya as soon as possible.

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\(^9\) LETUP—Libyan English Teaching in Universities Project.

A major regional project we will resume and build on in Libya is **Skills for Employability**. The original project, run in partnership with the Ministry of Education, engaged a number of UK vocational education and training providers and UK organisations through a series of policy forums on vocational education and training. As we fully resume our work we will create from these initial policy discussions a programme of activity that will engage employers, create institutional partnerships and professional networks between the UK and Libya, raise the status of vocational education, and develop the entrepreneurial skills of 50,000 young Libyans over the five year life cycle of the project.

We are already setting up a new Advisory Board for Skills for Employability to include educators, employers and youth representatives, so that we are guided directly by Libya’s needs as we design our programme for 2012 and beyond.

**Higher education** has a major role to play in supporting national reform agendas and international links have major potential for engagement.

Developing opportunities for research and institutional links between universities in the UK and Libya is a top priority. Early next year we will bring four delegations with representatives from all Libya’s Universities to Britain to meet with their counterparts in the UK system. We will support the needs of Libyan authorities to establish universities as culturally active institutions supporting freedom of expression and the diversity of opinions their students are calling out for.

We have already restarted our *schools* work by providing IT training to 125 teachers from across the country, which positions their *schools* for international links, particularly with the UK.

**Youth & Voice**

Young people were among the main protagonists in the Libyan revolution, leading protests and serving as fighters in the conflict against the Qaddafi regime. They will play a defining role in the formation of Libya’s new government and in holding them to account. We know from Libyans that creating alternative power structures that strengthen civil society and empowers citizens is important, so we are investing £200k in a seed fund for NGO start ups in Libya.

The explosion in social capital produced by the revolution has given young people a platform to express themselves previously unimaginable. Our future programme work will incorporate components for youth-led dialogue and debate to help develop these skills in youth leaders.

We have an established network of young people across the region, connected to the UK and globally through our *Global Changemakers* programme for exceptional 18–25 year old social activists and social entrepreneurs. In Libya alone, we ran a network of 300 Changemakers, many of whom were actively involved in the revolution, who we will resume our work with.

The number of Libyan NGOs has risen dramatically since the fall of the Qaddafi regime and the National Transitional Council is establishing a mechanism to identify, register and fund this nascent sector. Through our *Active Citizens* programme we are supporting the development of civil society groups by providing training opportunities in NGO management, fundraising, communications and advocacy.

We believe support for women’s empowerment will make a major contribution to strengthening civil society in the region and Libya in particular. The changes that have taken place are providing an unprecedented opportunity to improve women’s rights in society. To assist this we sent 8 Libyan women to a conference we ran in the UK for female lawyers and professionals from the Middle East and North Africa to examine how women’s rights can be better incorporated at a constitutional level. These and other groups of women are already working on action planning, facilitated by the British Council, to ensure that women’s rights are embedded in the Libyan constitution.

Our work on women’s issues is well established in Libya. We will be looking to recommence our successful *Women in Business* programme mentoring and supporting the development of female entrepreneurs that we have been running in recent years.

The arts played an essential role in fostering public debate in Libya throughout the revolution and will be an equally important source of expression in a democratic Libya. We are responding to this groundswell of creative expression through support of young artists and creative entrepreneurs, linking them with the UK sector and giving grants for study visits to Britain.

We are partnering with local arts organisations in Libya to create a series of cultural events to mark the first anniversary of the Libyan revolution in both Tripoli and Benghazi. This collaboration with the Libyan arts sector includes developing musical pieces between UK and Libyan musicians and training local producers to put on a cultural programme of this nature.
Conclusion

The British Council’s long established networks, capability on the ground and global experience of delivering highly valued programmes makes us a valuable delivery partner for future programmes. In this period of rapid change, our commitment to the country, solidarity and trust building work is positioning the UK as a partner of choice for the new Libya.

12 December 2011

Written evidence from The Henry Jackson Society

The enclosed document sets out the analysis of George Grant, The Henry Jackson Society’s lead on Libya operations, on British foreign policy following the “Arab Spring”, with a specific focus on developments in Libya. This submission deals with three of the points of interest raised by the Committee: first, the question of what specific assistance the British Government can give to help Libya build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive its economy; second, the likely future role of Islamist movements in Libya, and what the stance of the British Government should be towards them; and third, whether the events in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and in the “Arab Spring” generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa.

Since February 2011, Mr Grant has authored several strategic briefings on Libya, providing policymakers with detailed assessments on the ground. He has also provided frequent analysis to mainstream print and broadcast media outlets throughout the conflict, including Al Jazeera, the BBC, Channel 4 News, Sky News, the Daily Telegraph, the Wall Street Journal Europe and the Defence Management Journal.

Mr Grant is currently working with Libya’s National Transitional Council (NTC) to send a high-profile delegation of experts to Libya in early 2012 to participate in a series of workshops aimed at fostering democracy and developing civil society.

The Henry Jackson Society is a cross-partisan, British-based think-tank. Our founders and supporters are united by a common interest in fostering a strong British and European commitment towards freedom, liberty, constitutional democracy, human rights, governmental and institutional reform and a robust foreign, security and defence policy and transatlantic alliance.

I hope the Committee will consider our contribution of interest. If so desired, we would of course be happy to make senior staff available to answer any further questions Members may have.

Executive Summary

Specific assistance that the British Government can give to help Libya build the Institutions of Democracy and Civil Society, and revive its economy

The Economy

— The two primary sources of revenue for Libya’s transitional government will be unfrozen assets and revenues from the oil industry. The most important role for the British Government and the international community in this sphere will be helping the Libyan authorities to develop the transparency and accountability mechanisms necessary to ensure that public finances in Libya are properly spent.

— Another priority going forwards will be the development of Libya’s economy beyond its oil industry. In addition to generating employment, economic diversification is important for improving democratic accountability that comes when a government cannot draw solely on revenues from natural resources for its income, but must also rely on the enterprise of its citizens.

Security

— Although the security situation in Libya remains uncertain it is improving. Rival militias continue to operate beyond the control of the National Transitional Council (NTC), including in the capital Tripoli. However, the inclusive nature of the new transitional cabinet has gone some way towards ameliorating the concerns of militia that their community/area be adequately represented at the decision-making table. The NTC’s stated objective of incorporating militia into state security forces is also the right one, achieving as it does the twin objectives of providing militiamen with employment and bolstering the country’s underdeveloped security capabilities.

— The potential role for the British Government and the international community in Libya’s security arena is twofold. First, assisting in the equipping and training of Libyan security and police forces, although the NTC remains reticent to involve outsiders in its security affairs at present. Second, assisting the Libyan authorities to secure the large numbers of weapons, including chemical weapons, which remain unsecured at present.
Political Reconciliation

— In the absence of a properly functioning police and judiciary, several thousand prisoners accused of supporting Gaddafi during the revolution are currently detained with no access to due process. Many have been abused, in particular sub-Saharan Africans, accused of being mercenaries. Supporting the NTC to rectify this situation must be a priority, both in developing the mechanisms necessary to hold and try such individuals within the law, and also to prosecute those accused of engaging in mistreatment. A particular reconciliation failure in need of urgent attention relates to the plight of Libya’s Tawerghan community.

Civil Society and the Democratic Process

— The EU has been given the lead responsibility for developing Libyan civil society, and the British Government has declared its intention to direct its efforts accordingly. Given the scale of the need, however, the Government should identify worthwhile non-governmental initiatives. Assistance is needed at both the practical and theoretical level. Explaining the concept of why a free press matters in a democratic society is as important as training journalists in effective news gathering.

What will be the future role of Islamist movements in Libya, and what should be the British Government’s stance towards them?

Future Role of Islamist movements in Libya

— A greater role for Islam in Libya’s public and political life is highly likely. However, the desire for democracy in Libya is genuine and very few Libyans wish to see the emergence of a theocratic state. Support for al-Qaeda and Wahhabist doctrine is limited.

— As a statement of intent, Libya’s draft constitution offers an intriguing guide. On one level the document is avowedly Islamist, stipulating that Shari’a should be the primary source of Libyan law. However, it also stipulates that Libya should be a democratic state based on a multi-party system, and commits the country to upholding international human rights law. The aspiration, in other words, is a democracy wherein laws and social norms are based upon Islamic precepts.

The appropriate stance for the British Government to take towards Islamist movements in Libya

— If an Islamist government is elected in democratic elections next year, and a constitution specifying Islam as the principal source of jurisprudence is ratified in a referendum thereafter, then the British Government will be obliged to respect that.

— The British Government should be far less tolerant of Islamist groups that seek to achieve power outside of the democratic process, or who attempt to subvert and go beyond the parameters of the constitution having been elected.

— In such circumstances as an Islamist government is democratically elected and governs accordingly, the British Government should still be ready to promote its values in Libya wherever possible, but in a manner that respects Libyan sovereignty. The British Government should use its influence to encourage any future Libyan Government to adhere to international human rights statutes to which it is a signatory.

Do recent events in the MENA region call for a reappraisal of the UK’s Foreign Policy?

— The “Arab Spring” revolutions have exposed the need for a fundamental reappraisal of British foreign policy. The belief that the UK can choose either to advance its values in the Arab world or protect its interests is a false dichotomy. Often, our interests lie in upholding our values.

— Clearly, however, finite resources demand prioritisation of effort. As important as what the UK chooses to do, however, must be what it chooses not to do. The UK should not be in the business of providing unconditional aid to undemocratic or oppressive regimes, for instance. The Government should also fundamentally recalibrate how and when it provides assistance to such regimes, whether material or intelligence.

— Support for undemocratic and oppressive regimes in the Muslim world has been a major recruiting sergeant for al-Qaeda and other militant Islamist movements in recent decades. The UK must recognise that though its short-term strategic interests may be served by propping up authoritarian governments, such regimes cannot be reliable strategic partners in the long-term.

Main Submission

What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Libya build the institutions of democracy and civil society, revive its economy?

Improving the Economic Situation in Libya

1. After 42 years of Colonel Gaddafi’s “Jamahiriya” philosophy of government the institutions of the Libyan state are inevitably underdeveloped and corrupt. The country ranked 168 of 182 in Transparency International’s 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index, alongside Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and specific
support to build capacity and enhance transparency in the state’s economic affairs must be considered a priority.103

2. On 16 December 2011, the United Nations (UN) Security Council responded to repeated calls by Libya’s National Transition Council (NTC) to unfreeze frozen Gaddafi assets, valued at more than $150 billion, by releasing the assets of the Central Bank of Libya and its subsidiary, the Libyan Foreign Bank.102 Commenting on the decision, the British Foreign Secretary, William Hague, declared that “Libya’s government will now have significant funds needed to help rebuild the country, to underpin stability and to ensure that Libyans can make the transactions that are essential to everyday life.”103 He added that London would now free some $6.5 billion ($10 billion) held in the United Kingdom (UK).104

3. On one level the decision is the right one. The NTC has been badly short of funds since taking charge of Libya four months ago, and ensuring that salaries can be paid and infrastructure rebuilt is a priority. However, it is worth recalling the warning issued by the NTC’s former interim oil minister, Ali Tarhouni, back in November: “We don’t want this wholesale unblocking or unfreezing of assets. We cannot control and monitor these assets... So, what we want to do is to have a targeted type of unblocking based on the identified needs that we have.”105

4. A priority for the UK and others seeking to facilitate Libya’s transition to democratic rule must therefore be to assist the NTC in developing the mechanisms needed to ensure that these assets, and public finances generally, are handled accountably.

5. The NTC has signalled its commitment to fiscal transparency and accountability through the establishment of an independent audit authority, in accordance with its Constitutional Declaration of 3 August 2011.106 It is envisaged that this will serve as the main body responsible for addressing corruption and ensuring transparency in government. Encouragingly, officials of the audit authority have expressed an interest in international assistance in order to successfully execute its remit, and the UK, working together with both multilateral bodies such as the UN and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as relevant private-sector service providers, should be responding to this call. The importance of international assistance in this field is underpinned by the comparative lack of experience suffered by many now serving in the Libyan authorities, combined with the underdeveloped state of Libyan institutions left by Muammar Gaddafi.

6. Nowhere will transparency and accountability mechanisms be more needed than in the real driving force of the Libyan economy, its oil industry. Hitherto the largest in all Africa, Libya’s oil industry was shut down and badly damaged by the conflict, leaving a major gap in the NTC’s finances, hence the urgency of their calls for the international community to unfreeze assets in the interim. Under Gaddafi, Libya’s oil industry accounted for some 95% of export earnings, 25% of GDP, and 80% of government revenue.107 Since the fall of Tripoli in August 2011, output has been recovering fairly rapidly and is expected to reach 800,000 barrels per day (bpd) by the end of this year. It is forecast that oil output will reach full pre-war levels of 1.6m bpd by the end of 2012.108

7. Although this recovery is to be welcomed, two obvious concerns will be first that the tendering process for new contracts is open and transparent, and second that revenues are used for the benefit of Libyan society as a whole and not just its elites. The independent audit authority will exercise oversight of the former, and the British Government should offer support through that avenue. With regards to the latter problem, that of ensuring that oil revenues are equitably spent, the key to success will be the overall success of Libya’s transition to democracy. On that measure, the UK needs to recognise that a successful recovery of Libya’s oil industry, if not matched by development of the broader economy, could be as much of a hindrance as a help.

8. Past experience in both Libya and elsewhere has demonstrated that where a government does not need to rely on the enterprise of its citizens for its income, but can instead draw on natural resources that it controls, accountability and good governance can be dramatically reduced. To that end, the British Government should certainly be supporting efforts to develop Libya’s private sector. A strong private sector in Libya will not only be to the benefit of the Libyan people in terms of greater employment and prosperity, but also in terms of necessitating greater government accountability.

9. The potential for a strong and successful Libyan private sector certainly exists. Libyan society is comparatively well educated, and many Libyans possess skills in sectors such as engineering, shipping and construction. Literacy amongst men exceeds 92%, and in women stands at 72%. Under Gaddafi, more than 60% of the workforce was employed by the state and 30% of Libyans were estimated to be unemployed. There is consequently significant capacity within the Libyan economy for an expansion of the private sector from which Libyans would benefit. There is only so much that governments can do to expand private sector growth; by far the most effective vehicle being the free market. The British Government could seek a role by advising the NTC on business regulations and educational initiatives, but such endeavours must be accompanied by concomitant efforts to help restore security and law and order.

Improving the Security Situation

10. By most accounts, the security situation in Libya is improving. Although an unspecified number of independent militias, or “brigades”, still operate, the majority of militias have now come together under the umbrellas of various Military Councils, established city by city. For instance, there is a Tripoli Military Council, comprising the bulk of hitherto-independent militias operating in and around Tripoli; a Benghazi Military Council and so forth. In an effort to unify these military councils, and to bring them in line with the NTC, each council is now supposed to send representatives to a Supreme Military Council, although the precise nature or extent of its constitution currently remains unclear.

11. Although many of these militias have declared their allegiance to the NTC, they are not, for the most part, controlled by them. Militias from the towns of Misurata and Zintan continue to prove particularly problematic for the NTC. Both retain an armed presence inside Tripoli, and control various key assets, including, in the case of Zintan, the airport. Power struggles continue, and occasionally manifest themselves in open, albeit limited conflict. On 11 December, the convoy of Libya’s army chief, Khalifa Haftar, came under fire when it failed to stop at a checkpoint controlled by non-Tripoli militia.

12. Tripoli’s authorities are making concerted efforts to get the situation in the capital under control, and on 6 December, the Tripoli city council issued an ultimatum to these brigades, insisting that they had until 20 December to leave. A source inside the country confirmed that such an ultimatum had indeed been issued, in conjunction with the Tripoli Military Council, adding that the city’s streets would be locked down if the external militias had not complied by then. On 8 December, the NTC’s interim prime minister, Abdulrahim El-Keib, contradicted the councils, insisting that confrontation was not the right way forwards. On the same day, however, El Keib announced that a major group of “freedom fighters” from outside Tripoli had agreed to leave the city, although he declined to reveal the identity of the group. Most recently, Libya’s interim defence minister, Osama al-Juwali, said he believed the militias could be persuaded to disarm or leave the capital “within a month and a half, approximately”, although he insisted this was not a concrete deadline.

13. Whether or not the situation is resolved within that period, the nature of negotiations taking place between the NTC and the militias nonetheless underlines the fact that outright confrontation with the Libyan government is not on the latter’s agenda at present. The vast majority of militiamen took up arms for the purpose of supporting the revolution and deposing Gaddafi, and do not seek to perpetuate conflict in this post-Gaddafi environment. There is also significant social pressure amongst Libyans across the country to see this revolution succeed, and the influence of such pressure on would-be maverick militias should not be underestimated.

14. There appear to be three primary motivations for militiamen retaining their arms at present. First, a desire to ensure that their community/area is adequately represented at the decision-making table; second, a desire to find jobs for themselves; and third, genuine security concerns.

15. The NTC appears to be seized of all these concerns and is acting accordingly. When announcing his cabinet on 22 November, El-Keib made a point of insisting that members had been appointed on the basis of competence and experience, not politics, but he also insisted that all regions of Libya would be represented.

16. Technocrats such as the new deputy prime minister Dr Mustafa Abushagur, a founding president of the US international college RIT Dubai, and oil minister Abdulrahman Ben Yezza, previously an executive at Italian oil firm Ene, sit alongside significant regional appointees such as defence minister al-Juwali and minister of the interior Fawzi Abdelali. Immediately prior to his appointment al-Juwali was leading the Zintan Brigade

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115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
responsible for the capture of Saif Gaddafi, whilst Abdelali hails from Misurata, also a major regional powerbase.

17. The composition of the cabinet has certainly gone some way towards assuaging regional concerns about exclusion from power in post-Gaddafi Libya, although localised protests have been seen, for instance by the country’s Berber minority, who complained of not being represented in the cabinet. The NTC has responded by pointing out that a Berber has been selected as the country’s top judge.117

18. What has been particularly notable about the cabinet’s makeup, however, has been its comparatively secular character. Prior to its creation, a number of observers had predicted that the country’s most prominent Islamist leader, Abdul Hakim Belhadj, who heads the Tripoli Military Council, would be given a prominent place in the cabinet, most likely as minister of defence. Belhadj, however, insisted he was not interested in a position in the cabinet, although he has declared his full support for Prime Minister El-Keib and his efforts to form a strong cabinet. “I want to serve my nation with all the power and ability I can offer”, he said in an interview in mid-November, “but to choose where and how. It is too early to talk about this now.”118 Given that members of the transitional cabinet are excluded from standing in the general elections taking place next year, many predict that Islamists such as Belhadj are biding their time until then.

19. Although the majority of major power-brokers appear to be satisfied by the NTC’s diplomatic manoeuvrings for now, meeting the needs and aspirations of rank-and-file militiamen is also a priority. On 24 October, NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil announced plans for the establishment of a commission charged with reintegrating fighters, providing support to the wounded and the families of martyrs, and collecting weapons. The commission was established by decree on 29 October.119 Ensuring that wounded fighters and the families of those killed during the revolution have access to proper support is widely agreed as being amongst the most urgent priorities for the NTC to get right.

20. In terms of finding employment for militiamen that will bring them inside the state’s ambit, the NTC is primarily focusing on their integration into state security forces at present. The objective here is to kill two birds with one stone; at once providing militiamen with a regular source of employment whilst bolstering the country’s security forces, which by most accounts are weak bordering on ineffective. On 1 December, Interior Minister Abdelali announced plans to integrate 50,000 fighters into the defence and interior ministries’ security forces, although no time-frame was given. Ultimately, the NTC plans to integrate 200,000 fighters into the security forces.120

21. Just how effective this process will be remains to be seen. In the meantime, the NTC has resorted to paying militias to provide security in order to exert at least some influence over them. The key to the success of this strategy, and the key to the strategy of integrating them into the security forces beyond that, will be ensuring that these fighters get paid, and paid on time. Libya cannot afford a repeat of what happened in October when the NTC, either for administrative reasons or lack of funds, failed to pay the TMC. In addition to the obvious problems such a failure generates, it also sends a very negative image to the Libyan people about the NTC’s competence during this critical transitional phase.

22. The two primary sources of funding for these salaries at present will be unfrozen assets and oil revenues. As mentioned, both oil production and oil exports are increasing at a healthy rate, and the unfreezing of assets should happen at a rate consistent with the NTC’s capacity to ensure that they are not misappropriated. The role the British Government can play in facilitating both of these areas has been addressed in the previous section.

23. If the NTC can ensure that militiamen’s salaries are regularly paid, and this is combined with a consolidation of its early progress in reconciling regional divides, as well as secular-Islamist divides, then the prospects for further improvements in Libya’s security environment look positive. This in turn should set in motion a self-reinforcing cycle that will ameliorate the third reason for militias failing to disband, namely genuine security concerns. In practical terms, there is little that the British Government can do to constructively influence such developments, beyond offering advice or mediation if called for.

24. This is not, however, the end of the story. Also important must be enhancing the competence of Libya’s security forces, and ensuring that their actions fall squarely within the rule of law. Here, in theory at least, the British Government could have a much more positive role to play. For understandable reasons, however, the NTC is reticent about publicly accepting international assistance in this particular area of responsibility. During the uprising against Colonel Gaddafi, the NTC repeatedly ruled-out hiring Private Military Companies (PMCs), although there is evidence to suggest that PMCs were in fact active at this time, though to what extent precisely remains unclear.121 The provision of armed mercenary personnel by any state was prohibited by UN Security Council Resolution 1970.122

117 http://af.reuters.com/article/ArticleCSP/idAFL6E7NJ3M0201111219
121 Kerr, Simon, Libyan rebels to form oil protection force, Financial Times, 7 August 2011, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c23c9314-c0f5-11e0-b8c2-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1gLJQk3rI (last accessed 12 December 2011).
25. In this transitional phase, however, Libya’s security forces will need external assistance, which the British Government is in a position to help provide. In terms of both training and properly equipping Libya’s underdeveloped security forces for the many diverse responsibilities they will now be expected to undertake, the experience of UK training missions and support teams garnered in theatres from Afghanistan, to Bosnia, to Iraq, to Northern Ireland could certainly be brought to bear in Libya now.

26. One further area in which the British Government could be of use in improving the security situation in Libya would be through helping to secure the large number of arms and related materials that remain beyond the NTC’s control, and to manage stockpiles effectively. In addition to small arms, a significant concern at present is existing and newly-discovered stockpiles of chemical weapons and man-portable surface-to-air missiles. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2017 has reiterated this concern, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has begun work to secure known stockpiles of chemical weapons. The British Government should stand ready to assist these efforts as required, but also to offer its assistance in securing non-chemical weapons stocks, which arguably pose a more imminent threat to the security situation inside Libya.

Reconciliation Efforts

27. From the very early days of the revolution in Libya, it was clear that success against Gaddafi would not be brought about through force of arms, but through facilitating the collapse of the regime from within. NATO airstrikes, combined with covert Western and Qatari operations, were invaluable in neutralising regime communications and weapons systems, but they alone did not bring about the fall of regime-controlled towns and cities. The strategy adopted by the NTC was the right one, and involved quietly recruiting members of the Gaddafi regime to the rebel cause, as well as encouraging uprisings in towns and cities as rebel forces approached. Recognising both the need of their services in any post-Gaddafi environment, and the near-impossibility of rebel success in open conflict against regime forces, both the NTC and the UK were absolutely right in assuring pro-regime forces and officials that they would be afforded a place in any post-Gaddafi Libya. The success of this strategy was demonstrated by the speed in which a number of major towns and cities fell to rebel forces in August, not least Tripoli itself, with very few shots fired.

28. The limited capabilities of rebel forces when confronted with determined resistance was demonstrated during an assault on an oil refinery in Zawiya in mid-August, when a single regime sniper was able to hold up the entire rebel advance for more than a day. A still clearer example of this was the slow, indiscriminate and extremely destructive assault on Gaddafi’s hometown of Sirte, which did not fall until mid-October precisely because the occupants had little to no confidence that their future would be secure in a post-Gaddafi Libya.

29. Since the end of hostilities, the NTC has successfully integrated a number of former regime civil servants and security personnel, consistent with the “Blueprint” drawn-up by the NTC during the conflict. That this process both continues and deepens is absolutely vital if Libya is to succeed in making the transition from conflict to lasting stability.

30. In spite of these positive developments, however, very significant concerns exist with regards to the capacity of the NTC to handle several thousand detainees accused of committing crimes as part of pro-Gaddafi forces during the revolution. According to the UN, “whilst political prisoners held by the Gaddafi regime have been released, an estimated 7,000 detainees are currently held in prisons and makeshift detention centres, most of which are under the control of revolutionary brigades, with no access to due process in the absence of a functioning police and judiciary.” There have been reports of torture and ill-treatment of some of these detainees, a large number of whom are of sub-Saharan African origin, accused of being foreign mercenaries and allegedly targeted on account of the colour of their skin.

31. It is to be hoped that as NTC control across Libya replaces that of the militias, and the structures of the state continue to be rebuilt, that situations of this nature will reduce in both scope and severity. In the interim, the NTC must be relentless in exercising what levers of influence it does possess over the militias holding detainees to either hand them over to the NTC, or to take tangible steps to ameliorate the conditions of their confinement. At the very least, mistreatment and torture must stop immediately, with the threat that those accused and found guilty of such behaviour will be held accountable.

32. The efforts to which the NTC went to assure the world that Saif Gaddafi would be afforded a fair trial inside Libya, signalling their readiness to work with the International Criminal Court (ICC) to that end, demonstrates how conscious Libya’s new rulers are of their international reputation. They should be aware that the UN Secretary General’s report documenting the detention of the 7,000 detainees was written up on more than 10,000 news sites in the English speaking world alone.

33. In order to demonstrate its commitment to resolving this situation, the NTC should announce the establishment of an investigative committee, comprised of both Libyan and international specialists, to

126 Ibid.
investigate and document the condition of former Gaddafi loyalists and mercenaries now held in custody. The British Government, working together with the UN and other concerned states if possible, should be forthcoming on this point.

34. More broadly, the lack of a functioning judiciary and police in Libya only re-emphasises the urgent need for international assistance in developing these institutions, both through direct training and assistance to low-level personnel, and through “training the trainers”.

35. Perhaps the biggest cause for concern in terms of reconciliation failures, however, is the plight of the Tawerghan community. Tawergha is a town situated approximately 25 miles south of Misurata, whose inhabitants were primarily descended from black African slaves. Prior to this year’s revolution, Tawerghans were allegedly treated as second-class citizens by native Libyans, and relations with nearby Misurata were poor. During the revolution, Gaddafi played on this resentment, arming the Tawerghans and encouraging them to join the assault on Misurata, which remained besieged by Gaddafi forces from the outset of the revolution in February to the middle of May. During this period, Tawerghans are accused of committing a series of crimes against Misuratans, including rape, looting and indiscriminate killing.

36. With the conflict over, Misuratans have allegedly been merciless in their retaliation. According to Human Rights Watch, there have been credible accounts of Misuratans shooting unarmed Tawerghans, and of arbitrary arrests and beatings of Tawerghan detainees. By the end of October, the entire town of 30,000 people had been abandoned, and it remains deserted.127 According to one informed source inside the country, the mood amongst Misuratans is that Tawerghans should be driven into the Libyan desert and not come back.

37. Both for moral and reputational reasons, the NTC must consider a resolution of this crisis an urgent priority. The best placed figure to effect a reconciliation is the NTC’s Chairman Mustafa Jalil. As the recognised leader of the Libyan revolution from almost the very outset, Jalil commands enormous respect amongst Libyans across all divides. He is the only senior revolutionary leader who has commanded the respect of every Libyan the author of this paper has spoken to over the past six months. Public admonitions of Misuratan behaviour are likely to achieve little, however. Instead, Jalil must sit down in private with the key power-brokers in Misurata, not least his new minister of the interior, the Misuratan Fawzi Abdelali, to broker a settlement. The conditions of that settlement must be down to the Libyans themselves, but all sides must be aware, as they surely are, of the repercussions that this situation will have if not resolved, both internally and in terms of Libya’s international standing.

Fostering Democracy and Developing Libyan Civil Society

38. Unless they contravene agreed international standards, or prove demonstrably unable or unwilling to act in the best interests of their citizens, it is not the place of the international community to try and hold sovereign national governments to account. By far the most effective and appropriate vehicle through which such influence can and should be exercised is an empowered citizenry.

39. Generally, citizens are most empowered when they are both educated and prosperous. Generating the conditions in which a free market can flourish is the key to the latter, whilst the former depends upon good schools and an effective civil society. Inevitably, the two are themselves closely interlinked. After 42 years of Jamahiriya, Libya’s civil society remains extremely underdeveloped. Although a number of NGOs have been established in recent months, for the most part these are under-resourced, ill-coordinated and primarily focused on communal issues. Several hundred newspapers have also been established, but they too lack expertise and resources.

40. In helping to develop Libyan civil society, the international community, especially countries such as the UK with very effective civil societies, have a pivotal role to play. To date, however, very little has been achieved by the international community in this area, although there are aspirations to that end. At the governmental/multilateral level, the EU has been given the lead in helping to develop Libyan civil society. Beyond that, however, non-governmental efforts are also being undertaken. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) recently awarded a multimillion dollar contract to the development consultancy Chemonics International, although it remains unclear how far efforts have come since that time, or what precisely those efforts are.

41. The British Government’s current stance is to support the development of civil society in Libya, but preferably through official channels, in this case the EU. Given the scale of the need, however, the British Government should also be ready to support credible non-governmental initiatives to develop Libyan civil society and help foster the institutions of democracy. In terms of specific kinds of assistance, these can be broken down by area. The Libyan media, for instance, requires training in basic areas such as the principles of effective news gathering; how to structure a news story; and in the case of editors, how to run a commercial media outlet. Aspiring politicians and political activists require assistance in everything from how to establish a political party; how to write a press-release; how to campaign effectively; and the importance of not wearing sun-glasses on camera. This form of training can be provided either on the ground in the relevant areas, or else through workshops specifically designed for the purpose.

42. Finally, the UK should not underestimate the importance of theoretical, as well as practical knowledge. With very little prior experience of democracy, many Libyans need to better understand some of the basic principles of democracy and the democratic process. Issues such as "What are political parties?"; "Why a free press matters?"; "Why free markets matter"; and "the Rule of Law"; are concepts that many Libyans will only be encountering for the first time in their lives. Perhaps the most effective way to disseminate this kind of knowledge will be through workshops, on a "train the trainer" basis, as well as the dissemination of relevant materials, both in hard form and online.

Criticisms of the UK Government’s Current Approach

43. It may also be helpful to identify some of the things the British Government already is doing, but could arguably be doing better. According to well-placed sources inside Libya, one serious criticism of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) both during the conflict and post-Gaddafi has been its comparatively lack of proactiveness. Although there are clearly very legitimate concerns with regards to respecting Libyan sovereignty and ownership of development efforts, an over-reliance on meetings and assessments over more proactive engagement efforts has potentially limited the FCO’s overall impact in Libya.

44. This is particularly unfortunate given the high-levels of goodwill that exist across a broad cross-section of Libyan society precisely on account of the British Government’s forward approach in confronting Colonel Gaddafi both in the run-up to UNSCR 1973 and beyond. In the words of one source, “In Libya, if you don’t ask, you don’t get. The FCO needs to get out of the Mehari Hotel and onto the ground more”.

45. This same criticism has also been applied to the Department for International Development (DFID)’s modus operandi. DFID has declared its intention to follow the UN’s lead when it comes to redevelopment efforts, and whilst it is obviously necessary to involve duplication of effort and to coordinate resources as effectively as possible, the bureaucratic impediments constraining DFID’s approach have represented a cause for concern. Other development agencies such as USAID and Mercy Corps have perhaps been engaging more effectively on awareness and capacity building at the local level, although even this has been largely focused on elites.

46. All this being said, the British Government is right to be mindful of past experience, which has demonstrated that reserves of goodwill in a host country can be depleted quickly if international actors do not conduct themselves in an intelligent and considered manner.

What will be the future role of Islamist Movements in Libya, and what should be the British Government’s stance towards them?

The Future Role of Islamist Movements in Libya

47. Like its neighbours in Egypt and Tunisia, Libya finds itself in unchartered waters where the future is extremely difficult to predict. Neither Libya nor its two North African neighbours has ever had a chance at transitioning towards democracy before now, and how each country will manage that transition, and what sort of society will ultimately emerge, remains uncertain. What is certain is that Libya is a deeply conservative country, in which religious observance remains high. Some 97% of Libyans are officially categorised as Sunni Muslim, with the remaining 3% being classified as adhering to other faiths or none.128 What is also clear is that Colonel Gaddafi, like President Ben Ali in Tunisia, and President Mubarak in Egypt, were brutal, but they were also relatively secular. Having been afforded the opportunity to exercise greater religious freedom, therefore, it is highly likely that Libyans will seek a greater role for Islam in public and political life.

48. What remains to be seen is how Libya’s new rulers will balance this aspiration with the more secular aspirations for democracy and universal human rights that also underpinned this year’s revolution against Gaddafi. The evidence of the past few months suggests that the NTC is seeking to lay the groundwork of a state that can deliver on these latter aspirations, although whether the resulting edifice will be stable and secure remains to be seen.

49. The NTC’s “Draft Constitutional Charter for the Transitional Stage” is, superficially, an avowedly Islamist document. Article 1 states unequivocally that “Islam is the Religion of the State and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Shari’a)”. However, Article 4 asserts that, “The State shall

129 National Transitional Council, Draft Constitutional Charter for the Transitional Stage—The Constitutional Declaration, August 2011, http://portal.clmcenter.illinois.edu/REPOSITORY/CACHE/114/w1R3bTIKElG95H3MH5nvrSxchm9QLb8T6EK87RZQqPf6sC4py47Da7b07LA742IFN5d70VnaOYvew767gWX4s3XVJXMM8n18U9Wi8vA0O7_24166.pdf
seek to establish a political democratic regime to be based upon the political multitude and multi party system in a view of achieving peaceful and democratic circulation of power. Article 6 asserts that all Libyans "shall be equal before the law... shall enjoy equal civil and political rights [and] shall have the same opportunities", whilst Article 7 commits Libya to joining "international and regional declarations and charters which protect such rights and freedoms."

50. What is envisaged by the draft constitution, in other words, is a democracy wherein laws and social norms are based upon Islamic precepts. What is not envisaged is the outright subversion of the democratic structures of the state and their replacement with a government based solely upon clerical interpretation of the Quran. Quite if, and indeed how, such a democracy can be sustainably established remains to be seen. However, if the permanent constitution reflects the content and tone of this draft constitution, and if that constitution is subsequently ratified by popular referendum, as it is due to be in 2012, then that will represent a significant statement of aspiration and intent by both the Libyan government and its citizens.

51. By most accounts, very few Libyans wish to see their country transformed into a theocratic state. Sources inside the country report that overt support for al-Qaeda and Wahabbist doctrine is extremely limited. The desire for democracy is genuine. Although there is always the possibility that support for democracy amongst Islamists is merely a means to an undemocratic end, it would be premature to arrive at that conclusion without further evidence.

52. In terms of assessing the balance of power between Libyan Islamists and secularists, this too is fraught with difficulties. Analysts of the Islamist situation in Libya must also be wary of the tendency of competing groups to brand one another by certain labels in order to wield influence and achieve power. For instance, Libyan secularists such as Aref Nayed, Ambassador to the UAE, and Mahmoud Jibril, the NTC’s former interim Prime Minister, have criticised the Islamist Abdul Belhaj for taking weapons from Sudan (where Belhaj’s father-in-law has influence) during the revolution, whilst Ali Selabi, another leading Islamist, has been frequently criticised for being too closely supported by Qatar.

53. This being said, the role of influential Islamists such as Belhaj in Libya’s future is likely to be prominent. As mentioned earlier in this report, the comparatively secular nature of the NTC’s interim cabinet should not belie the fact that a number of Islamists may have chosen to wait until next year’s general elections before seeking to achieve power. Members of the NTC are prohibited from standing in the elections explicitly to prevent them from using that platform to unduly obtain permanent positions of influence going forwards.

What the Stance of the British Government Towards them should be

54. The question of what stance the British Government should take towards Islamists in Libya depends both on the manner of their influence, and the kind of policies they seek to advance. If an Islamist government is elected in democratic elections next year, and a constitution specifying Islam as the principal source of jurisprudence is ratified in a referendum thereafter, then the British Government will be obliged to respect that. Likewise, opposition parties that seek to achieve power through a democratic process that is free and fair, and respect the limits of a constitution that has been ratified by the Libyan people, must be permitted to operate freely.

55. The British Government should be far less tolerant of Islamist groups that seek to achieve power outside of the democratic process, or who attempt to subvert and go beyond the parameters of the constitution having been elected. The enshrinement of minority rights and the respect for fundamental human rights is paramount to any functioning democracy. If Islamist groups or parties take themselves outside the process designed to ensure that governments are representative of the people, they consequently forfeit the legitimacy to govern that is bestowed by a mandate from the people. In such circumstances, the British Government should consider working with allies inside and outside Libya to limit the influence of such groups and to restore the democratic process in Libya, including the sovereignty of the rule of law.

56. In seeking to promote democratic values in Libya, the British Government should work closely with civil society organisations whilst also engaging the Libyan Government itself. Internationally agreed human rights covenants must also be respected, whatever the composition of a democratically elected government.

Do recent events in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and in the “Arab Spring” generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK Policy towards the Middle East and North Africa?

57. In his speech delivered in Kuwait on 22 February, the Prime Minister identified a view that has prevailed for many decades across a significant cross-section of the UK’s political establishment, namely that stability in the Arab world “required highly controlling regimes, and that reform and openness would put that stability at risk”. Given that British strategic interests demand stability in the Arab world, the corollary of this view was clear: either the UK can choose to advance its values, or it can choose to protect its interests. It cannot do both. Mr Cameron was absolutely right to argue that often “our interests lie in upholding our values”.

50-53 National Transitional Council, Draft Constitutional Charter for the Transitional Stage—The Constitutional Declaration, August 2011, http://portal.clinecenter.illinois.edu/REPOSITORYCACHE/114/w1r36TKEIC9593HMH5vrSxcm9QL8bT6EK87RZQ0pfC4-pv47Da0r07/1A32F5370v9m01uyeww67gwXE3XVJhM8n18U9W86vAoO7_24166.pdf
58. There can be no denying the fact that when it comes to the promotion of democracy and human rights, the UK has a lot to learn. Democracies do not come about overnight, and regime change followed by elections does not, in itself, constitute a transition to democracy. The experiences of both Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention the Gaza Strip, make this clear. It is equally true, however, that autocracies generally do not make sound strategic partners, and nor are they the surest guarantors of UK interests, particularly over the long-term.

59. If the UK wants examples of stable and reliable sources for its oil supplies, it would do better to look to Canada and Norway, not Gaddafi’s Libya or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s Iran. There is a very good reason for this, namely that the former two countries are democratic, and the latter two are (or in Libya’s case until recently was) authoritarian. By their very nature, democratic governments are accountable to their citizens and consequently much more likely to serve their interests, thus reducing levels of popular discontent. When a democratic government does fail, citizens possess an invaluable safety valve: the capacity to replace that government by peaceful means through the ballot box. By contrast, not only are authoritarian governments less likely to serve the best interests of their citizens by virtue of not being accountable to them, it is also generally impossible for the citizenry to replace such a government save through recourse to extra-legal methods, and usually violence.

60. It is certainly no coincidence that today, 18 of the world’s most prosperous states are democracies, the exceptions being Singapore and Hong Kong. As importantly, so are 19 of the world’s most peaceful states. Not only that, but democracies, on account of their respect for shared values, tend to make the best allies. Though technically a part of China, Hong Kong is frequently listed separately on international indices measuring levels of social, economic and political development.

61. As a globalised, trading nation, dependent upon stability and good relations abroad for its continued prosperity, the UK therefore has a clear strategic interest in promoting democracy. This should be the foundational principle on which all British foreign policy is built. Having accepted this as a first principle, and many still do not, the question is how to go about conducting such a foreign policy in practice.

62. When it comes to pursuing a values-led foreign policy in practice, there are inevitably a number of constraining factors. First, finite resources will always limit what the UK can and should seek to achieve in its foreign policy. Although there can be principles which the UK should seek to stick to in every case, when it comes to the application of resources, it is evident that the UK must be selective and intelligent in its prioritisation of effort.

63. Second, as events in the MENA region have demonstrated, it is very difficult to legitimise proactive intervention, in particular where the application of force is concerned, unless a major event combines with persistent calls for external assistance from within the country in question beforehand. Colonel Gaddafi was no less abhorrent in December 2010 than he was in March 2011, but it was the demands of the Libyan people, and Gaddafi’s response to that, which made external intervention a legitimate prospect.

64. Third, without sanction from the international community, the application of coercive pressure on oppressive regimes becomes extremely difficult, for both practical reasons and reasons of legitimisation. Clearly, therefore, the UK must always be diplomatic in its relations with other countries, even if many of those states pursue policies contrary to the UK’s own values. As the Arab League’s decision to sanction intervention in Libya demonstrates, the motives of states are often complex, and the UK must maximise its capacity to take advantage of situations where the interests of other states align with its own.

65. All this being said, however, the UK should maintain “red lines”, informed by its values, over which it will not cross, other than in exceptional circumstances. Although there are always limits to what the UK can do, equally important is what it chooses not to do. For instance, the UK should fundamentally recalibrate the conditions under which it provides aid to countries governed by authoritarian and oppressive regimes. This is not to say that aid should not be provided to such countries in every circumstance, but it is to say that closer attention should be paid to how that aid is ultimately used, and that the UK’s default position should be to attach conditions to the aid it does provide, whilst standing ready to withdraw assistance if these conditions are ignored.

66. Likewise, the UK should fundamentally reappraise its policy of selling arms to undemocratic regimes, recognising how quickly situations can develop where those arms are used not to deter foreign aggression but to quell internal dissent. The UK should also consider carefully the relationships of its security services with those of undemocratic regimes. Although the UK’s short-term strategic interests may sometimes be advanced by providing covert assistance to authoritarian governments, ultimately such policies only bolster regimes that can never be reliable strategic partners over the long-term, and also increase resentment directed at the UK by those adversely affected.

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131 Prosperity here being measured according to the material well-being and prospects of all a nation’s citizens, not just its gross GDP.

132 Though technically a part of China, Hong Kong is frequently listed separately on international indices measuring levels of social, economic and political development.

67. One of al-Qaeda’s most effective recruiting sergeants has been to highlight the support that Western governments have given to authoritarian secular regimes in the MENA region in recent decades. The claims of Islamist movements to political legitimacy tend only to increase in the face of oppression by secular governments, and where such groups do profit in the wake of the latter’s collapse, the West must recognise that this is in part a phenomenon of its own making. Indeed, given the tendency of authoritarian regimes to fracture after a time, too-close an alignment with them can only put the UK in a weaker position with their successors, be they democratic or not. For both moral and strategic reasons, the UK needs to reshape its foreign policy in recognition of the fact that British values often do align with British interests.

21 December 2011

Written evidence from the Royal African Society and Libya-Analysis.com

SUBMISSION 1: THE STATE OF THE TRANSITION AND BRITAIN’S ROLE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission presents the issues discussed at a Royal African Society/Africa APPG and Libya-Analysis.com closed briefing held in the House of Commons on 29 November entitled: “The State of the ‘Transition’ and Britain’s role”. The audience consisted of members of the UK Parliament and the speakers included: an authority on British businesses’ involvement in Libya, a preeminent analyst of Islamist movements in North Africa, and a leading academic of Libyan politics. While it does not conclude with specific recommendations, we believe the meeting raised a number of key questions of relevance to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee’s inquiry on British foreign policy and the “Arab Spring”: the transition to democracy, and we therefore urge the Committee to take these issues into account.

It was agreed that the central struggle facing the Libyan interim authorities is the creation of a functioning government mechanism that can steward Libya through the “Transition” process. Appointment of the cabinet on 22 November was certainly an inflection point, and indications are good that many potentially divisive regional interests have been appeased. The UK can help in these processes through reconstruction and job creation efforts. Opinions vary as to whether the private or the public sector should lead the way.

The primary threat to establishing a functioning government is the local militias. Just as there is a struggle for dominance between the militias and the government, there are also indications of a struggle for dominance between President Mustafa Abdul-Jalil and PM Aburahim al-Keib. Abdul-Jalil appears more lenient towards the Islamists and militias while Al-Keib is seen as less influenced by them and more technocratic and Western-leaning. Strengthening the central authority is key to laying the foundations for change, but it is unclear via what levers this strengthening can take place.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Royal African Society is Britain’s prime Africa organisation. Now more than 100 years old, its in-depth, long-term knowledge of the continent and its peoples makes the Society the first stop for anyone wishing to know more.

— We foster a better understanding of Africa in the UK and throughout the world—its history, politics, culture, problems and potential.
— We disseminate knowledge and insight to make a positive difference to Africa’s development.
— We celebrate the diversity and depth of African culture.

In Parliament, the Royal African Society provides the administration for the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), which was established in January 2003 by Hugh Bayley MP and Lord Lea of Crondall. With a membership of over 80 MPs and Peers, the group is one of the largest APPGs.

In addition to holding regular meetings, the Africa APPG has published a number of reports, most recently a submission to the Strategic Defence Review entitled Security and Africa and an inquiry into the impact of the Bilateral Aid Review on Africa due to be published during December 2011. The Government has responded to each of the Group’s reports in broadly the same way that Ministers respond to Select Committee reports, and important changes in UK Government policy have resulted from this—for instance a quadrupling of our aid for people with HIV/AIDS in Africa, a new Bribery Act and funding for Parliamentary capacity building in Africa.

Libya-Analysis.com specialises in helping British and American companies, politicians, and policy makers navigate the history, politics, and business climate of the new Libya. Its President, Jason Pack, is a researcher of Libyan History at Cambridge University. He writes about Libya domestic and international politics for the Wall St. Journal, the Guardian, and Foreign Policy. In September, he led a fact-finding mission to Libya to investigate the relationship between the militias and the central government.

The Africa APPG and Libya-Analysis.com co-hosted a series of parliamentary events entitled Libya in Transition: Implications and Opportunities for Britain during November and December 2011. This
This submission discusses the issues addressed in the first roundtable briefing of the series, entitled The State of the “Transition” and Britain’s Role, which took place on 29 November 2011. While it does not conclude with specific recommendations, we believe the meeting raised a number of key questions of relevance to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee’s inquiry on British foreign policy and the “Arab Spring”: the transition to democracy, and we therefore urge the Committee to take these issues into account. In particular, the discussions are relevant to the following specific questions which are part of the Select Committee’s inquiry:

- What forces are driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Libya?
- What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Libya build the institutions of democracy and civil society, and revive its economy? How can the British Government best work with its allies and through international institutions to support reform in Libya?
- What will be the future role of Islamist movements in the region and what should be the British Government’s stance towards them?

The opinions expressed in this submission do not reflect an official policy position of either the Royal African Society or Libya-Analysis.com, but rather the submission should be considered a discussion of relevant issues.

3. Key Issues

The following issues were raised by participants at the briefing.

3.1 The Appointment of the Cabinet/Interim Government

November saw the rise of tensions between the various militias that helped oust Gaddafi. One month after the declaration of Liberation on 23 October, Prime Minister Al-Keib announced the formation of a government of 24 members considered largely secular, technocratic, and Tripolitanian in outlook. Cabinet appointments were used to appease local interests, and potentially divisive personalities were avoided. The head of the Zintani militia, Col Osama Juwail, was awarded the Ministry of Defence and a high-level Misratan, Fawzi Abdul Aa’al-L, was granted the Ministry of the Interior. These appointments can be understood as rewards/patronage for the capturing of Saif al-Islam and Mu’ammar Gaddafi respectively. Despite the exclusion of Islamists from high position in the cabinet, Libya’s most prominent Islamist militia leader, Abdel-Hakim Bilhajj has publically pledged his loyalty to the cabinet. These developments signal that key militia and Islamist figures may have been successfully integrated/co-opted to work with the central authorities.

3.2 British involvement thus far

All participants cited the good relations maintained between the NTC and the international community throughout the fighting and in its aftermath. Britain, Qatar, the USA, and France have led international assistance for the new government, with each focused on different sectors. The British role has been largely organized around “stabilisation”. Britain is not currently focused on preparing the ground for elections. Rather, UK technical experts including a police advisor, public finance management team, civil society experts and a military advisory team are in place. There is important advisory work to be done relating to de-mobilising militias and helping to generate the financial and administrative structure for a new national army. The US appears to be taking a lead role in both issues.

At the moment, the Libyan economy is facing a steep month-to-month deficit, as it has $1 billion of revenue and $3 billion of expenditure. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sent a team in September to assess the readiness of the interim government to have access to the frozen funds, which reportedly total over 10 billion in Britain and 150 billion worldwide. The British treasury are waiting for UN, IMF, and Libyan advice as to when to release the frozen funds to the temporary financing mechanism. The frozen funds are needed for three main things: Reconstruction of the country from war damage, development which was neglected under Gaddafi, and employment to disband militias and create an army.

Participants urged that UK policy makers should use their influence very cautiously, as all processes must be genuinely Libyan-led to be successful. On the private sector side, it is important that British business does not make the same mistake as other European countries which tried to get involved before it was appropriate, aggravating the Libyans who had other priorities such as concluding the fighting and building a government. There is the possibility of a UK business mission in January. Clearly, the wisdom of such a mission depends on future developments, and has already been postponed twice.

The British private sector can help the UK government in creating jobs in Libya. Currently, the only sector with jobs is security; it is certainly the only sector able to pay salaries on time. Under Gaddafi, about 80% of Libyans were employed by the state, and the question arose whether it would be appropriate to continue paying these citizens—even for doing no work—to prevent a larger crisis of unemployment and anti-government grievances.
3.3 Benefits of public vs. private sector involvement

One speaker asserted that it is desirable for British reconstruction efforts to be government-led, as there is no coordination amongst the many actors in the private sector. Only the FCO has the capacity to devise a master plan for matchmaking between relevant British businesses, NGOs and IGOs, and the appropriate Libyan governmental officials who could benefit from their expertise. Furthermore, only the FCO has the political contacts to coordinate such multi-pronged engagement.

Another speaker expressed doubt regarding the desirability of a grand UK government-led scheme, preferring a privatised approach. He asserted that only the business community with historical experience of working in Libya has a clear idea of what Libya needs in terms of education, infrastructure, etc. UK Trade and Investment (UKTI), a government organization focused on promoting international and national trade opportunities overseas and in the UK, is looking into taking several missions to Libya. The most immediate needs are in healthcare and in repairing oil infrastructure. Large-scale HMG support of British businesses to incentivize their participation is not politically feasible at this time. Conversely, the private sector has more time, resources, and on the ground know-how so they appear more prepared to lead the relationship. In summation, coordination between the activities of the government and those of the private sector is a critical issue relative to British involvement in Libya.

3.4 Elections

The UN, USAid and the EU have provided voluntary electoral advice. Lacking an electoral law and electoral districts, the best case scenario is that the upcoming elections would not only be overseen but actually run by the United Nations. The NTC stated in its road map in April 2011 that the elections would be run by the UN. Whether promises made back then will now be honoured is impossible to tell. If all goes as promised, UN experts should be able to set up a reasonable system in Libya as the country is a clean slate electorally. This is an advantage as the necessary infrastructure, jurisdictions, and structures can be invented, unlike in Egypt where old systems and structures are impeding the creation of new ones.

What structures are appropriate for Libya remains unclear. The population distribution in Libya presents a problem for future elections, as 95% of the Libyan population live on 5% of the land. For this reason, people from desert areas want federalism so that their regions would be better represented than they would be on a purely proportional system. This is reminiscent of debates about the structure of the new Libyan state between 1949 and 1951. If any complex electoral system or federal system comes into being, gerrymandering could be an issue and inhabitants from Cyrenaica and from the desert will have an incentive to collude to deprive Tripolitania—with 70% of the nation’s population—their fair (ie demographic) share of representation. Most Libyans wish for a united Libya and do not seek to introduce the destabilizing and centrifugal forces of federalism.

3.5 Impact of militias

Militias remain one of the most prominent issues regarding stability in Libya, as local military councils have overtaken many public sector services including hospitals and media networks. Militias are successfully controlling travel in and out of the country. For example, militiamen in Suq Juma blocked the departure of an Air Tunisia flight from Tripoli, while the Zawaran militias control the Ras Djeir border crossing with Tunisia. Fostering jobs in Libya is a crucial UK interest but the international community is working against the clock, as the militias are increasingly shutting down economic activity and public services in their neighbourhoods to make political demands.

It was suggested by one participant that the traditional paradigm of incorporating militias into the army was flawed. He suggested launching a propaganda campaign against the most potentially destabilizing militias rather than co-opting them. This argumentation suggests that the only way to rein in the militias is to divide and conquer. This was a contentious point as opponents of this view thought that at worst it could lead to immediate civil war or at best it would create an oppositional climate between the militias and the central government.

The analyst who favoured a propaganda campaign against the militias asserted that it is vital to prevent the militias from becoming deeply rooted in society. This means that the interim government could act with outside support while the militias are still vulnerable, before they have taken over the various local political scenes.

A novel approach could be to highlight the human rights abuses of the militias—a form of a PR campaign against them. The analyst suggested that this approach could be remarkably effective in the Libyan context—consider the reaction of the Libyan people and the international community to the human rights abuses carried out by Gaddafi. He pointed out that the recent UN report on the militias highlights their shameful behaviour, including the 7,000 detainees unlawfully arrested by militias with no official accusations against them. Opponents to this approach countered that PR campaigns against the militias would likely make them more secretive and less likely to work with international actors or the central Libyan authorities. Additionally, dealing with the militias is an internal Libyan matter. Outside actors wishing to throw their hats in the ring must act with extreme caution.
According to the proponent of the interventionist approach, the interim government, the ICC and the international community could work together in discrediting the worst of the militias, combined with direct western diplomacy to reach out to the liberal Libyans and make clear to them the ways in which the West may support them in their contest for power against the militias. This could be part of a British policy of aiding aspiring democrats throughout the Arab Spring countries. Strangely, President Abdul-Jalil has appeared to be “soft” on the militias and is known to have placed Islamists in key positions within the emerging defence hierarchies. It is speculated that he does so at the bidding of Qatar.

3.6 Implications of Islamist participation

The struggle for power is one of the main issues facing Libya today, and the involvement of Islamist groups in politics is simultaneously unavoidable, but also fraught with peril. The primary lesson for Western policy makers that emerged from the session is that the Islamists are here to stay in Libya and that the West and the UK must engage with them. Libyan Islamists come in all shapes and sizes. It is critical to understand the vast differences between the more moderate political Islamists and the more hard line anti-political Salafists.

3.7 Qatari connections

The Islamic fighting groups are heavily funded by Qatar. It was agreed that the Qatars are active in Libya and other Arab spring countries to project power back into the Gulf, especially in Qatar’s competition with Saudi Arabia. They have exhibited a broad policy of building close relationships with Islamist groups in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere, and by making these groups and thus these governments unwilling to engage diplomatically with infidels, forcing them to take the expertise and diplomatic support of Qatar.

3.8 Managing central and local government structures

The Libyan uprising was dominated by the “periphery”—initially Benghazi and now Jabal Nafusa and Misrata, etc., rather than a Tripoli-based revolt. It was comprised of a series of local uprisings as opposed to one singular anti-Gaddafi revolution. In order for strong institutions to be laid in Libya, the centre (the authorities in Benghazi and Tripoli) must be stronger than the periphery (the militias), which is not currently the case. The interim authorities can work to extend their authority by instigating massive patronage programs, providing Gaddafi-style subsidies and opportunities for employment. Even if these measures are taken it is unclear if the “victorious” peripheral elements will wish for centralisation of authority or will continue to push for devolution of power to the local level.

The losers of the revolution—the Warfalla of Beni Walid, and the Gadadfa and Megarha of Sirte and Sebha—have a poor relationship with the new government and they are in their own ways on the verge of pushing for federalism or more devolution of power to the local level. It was suggested that the government should incorporate them with extensive patronage networks of money and jobs, and let them run local government themselves.

Until now, no international NGOs have gone to the most benighted parts of the Libyan periphery, such as Sabha or Kufra. It is in these places where it is most urgent to create the same dense international linkages and capacity-building programs as are underway in Tripoli. Tensions in these regions must be assuaged now before political pressure points will grow to create unfixable problems later. To fill the vacuum in the periphery international actors should focus on state-building and stabilisation in Libya.

Furthermore if the West, especially the US and UK, can reach out to the Libyan periphery, that could simultaneously assuage local tensions and be good PR for the West’s role in the new Libya.

7 December 2011

SUBMISSION 2: BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRITISH COMPANIES

1. Executive Summary

This submission presents the issues discussed at a Royal African Society/Africa APPG and Libya-Analysis.com closed briefing held in the House of Commons on 7 December 2011 entitled: “Business Opportunities for British Companies”. The audience comprised Members of the UK Parliament and the speakers included: a former British ambassador to Libya with particular knowledge of the Libyan business climate, a leading authority on banking in Libya and an expert on British investments in North Africa. While it does not conclude with specific recommendations, we believe the meeting raised a number of key issues of relevance to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee’s inquiry on British foreign policy and the “Arab Spring”: the transition to democracy, in particular those related to the revival of the Libyan economy, and we therefore urge the Committee to take these issues into account.

It was agreed that there is great long-term potential for British business involvement in Libya, yet in the short term there are few opportunities and much uncertainty. During the transition period the Libyans must address immediate political needs and only later, under an elected government, will massive project spending begin. In the short term, the health and reconstruction sectors are paramount, yet in the medium term the new regime will require similar areas of expertise to those sought by Gaddafi.
There is surprising continuity in the current Libyan economic picture from the situation immediately before the crisis.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Royal African Society is Britain’s prime Africa organisation. Now more than 100 years old, its in-depth, long-term knowledge of the continent and its peoples makes the Society the first stop for anyone wishing to know more.

- We foster a better understanding of Africa in the UK and throughout the world—its history, politics, culture, problems and potential.
- We disseminate knowledge and insight to make a positive difference to Africa’s development.
- We celebrate the diversity and depth of African culture.

In Parliament, the Royal African Society provides the administration for the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), which was established in January 2003 by Hugh Bayley MP and Lord Lea of Crondall. With a membership of over 80 MPs and Peers, the group is one of the largest APPGs.

In addition to holding regular meetings, the Africa APPG has published a number of reports, most recently a submission to the Strategic Defence Review entitled Security and Africa and an inquiry into the impact of the Bilateral Aid Review on Africa due to be published during December 2011. The Government has responded to each of the Group’s reports in broadly the same way that Ministers respond to Select Committee reports, and important changes in UK Government policy have resulted from this—for instance a quadrupling of aid for people with HIV/AIDS in Africa, a new Bribery Act and funding for Parliamentary capacity building in Africa.

Libya-Analysis.com specialises in helping British and American companies, politicians, and policy makers navigate the history, politics, and business climate of the new Libya. Its President, Jason Pack, is a researcher of Libyan History at Cambridge University. He writes about Libyan domestic and international politics for the Wall St. Journal, the Guardian, and Foreign Policy. In September, he led a fact-finding mission to Libya to investigate the relationship between the militias and the central government.

The Africa APPG and Libya-Analysis.com co-hosted a series of parliamentary events entitled Libya in Transition: Implications and Opportunities for Britain during November and December 2011. This collaboration has benefitted from the Africa APPG’s experience of Parliament and Libya-Analysis.com’s expertise on Libya.

This submission discusses the issues addressed in the second roundtable briefing of the series, entitled Business Opportunities for British Companies, which took place on 7 December 2011. While it does not conclude with specific recommendations, we believe the meeting raised a number of key issues of relevance to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee’s inquiry on British foreign policy and the “Arab Spring”: the transition to democracy, in particular those related to the revival of the Libyan economy, and we therefore urge the Committee to take these issues into account. In particular, the discussions are relevant to the following specific questions which are part of the Select Committee’s inquiry:

- What forces are driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Libya?
- What specific assistance can the British Government give to help Libya revive its economy?
- How can the British Government best work with its allies and through international institutions to support reform in Libya?

The opinions expressed in this submission do not reflect an official policy position of either the Royal African Society or Libya-Analysis.com, but rather the submission should be considered a discussion of relevant issues.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 Frozen funds

The current situation in Libya has generated by far the largest amount of UN frozen assets in history, which have been extremely difficult to administer. The Libyans have not yet demonstrated to the IMF or to Alistair Burt, the UK Minister for Middle East and North Africa, that they are ready to absorb the unfrozen funds. Even when the Libyans improve their central financial system, it may prove difficult to convince the international community’s lawyers that the interim Libyan government has installed the necessary safeguards to ensure transparency and prevent corruption.

The best solution to this impasse was presented as a partial release of funds in a Know Your Customer (KYC) compliant agreement with the Central Bank of Libya. The UK Financial Services Authority (FSA) would support this action. If the UK were to release half or a quarter of the Libyan funds frozen in Britain, this would allow the interim government to begin investing in the Libyan future. While certain Libyan Treasury officials and ambassadors have spoken against funds being unlocked at this stage, former NTC representative to Britain, Guma al-Gamati, has highlighted the urgent need for money in the country. It cannot be disputed that at present the interim authorities can barely pay salaries, and do not possess sufficient funds for medical care, for tackling the unexploded ordnance problem, or reconstruction.
The current mechanism for regulating the uses of unfrozen funds, the Temporary Financing Mechanism (TFM), is seen as fostering corruption within the NTC. There is speculation that Libyans in the financial sector do not wish for the unfrozen funds to be released into the hands of the TFM Advisory Committee which consists in the most part of the Finance, Oil, Economy and Health Ministers of the Interim Government and that it is wise to wait until Libya has an elected government before the majority of funds are released.

3.2 Conducting business during the transition period

No one should doubt the long-term prospects inherent in the Libyan market: the capital expenditure plans for infrastructure under Gaddafi were approximately $240 billion for the years 2008–13, and the need for infrastructure is no less great now, with spending particularly needed to get oil fields functioning. Months ago former NTC PM Mahmoud Gibril spoke about $400 billion in project spending from 2012–17.

However the new administration is not in a position to sign long-term contracts, as Libyan cabinet ministers do not want to commit their successors or enter contracts that might be undone by the future administration. Companies planning missions to Libya in January must be aware that there is little scope for new business interests to become settled at such an uncertain time politically.

The key immediate Libyan infrastructure investment needs, crucial for Libya’s economic recovery, are power, water, housing and transport. However the medical sector remains the interim government’s top priority for political reasons. There have been protests for medical aid and pensions for fighters, and the government is likely to address these before turning to repairing damaged infrastructure.

At the moment, British businesses dealing with the interim authorities are focused on the medical, de-mining and reconstruction sectors. The Libyan authorities see the involvement of other sectors as a nuisance. Indeed other European countries prematurely sent missions to Libya, which adversely affected their relationship with the new cabinet. Britain has been patient, for example the oil and gas mission arranged for January 2012 has been postponed.

The temporary nature of the interim authorities means that many of the Ministers that British companies would meet during missions to Libya at the moment will not be in power next year. It was argued that the existence of the interim authorities only postpones discussions about the distribution of power by either seven months or two years. An example of the ways in which the authorities will change is that there are no overt Islamists in the current ministerial list, other than the Minister for Religion. Many aspiring politicians are not yet involved. The Islamists will presumably bide their time and enter the political process at the most opportune moment.

Currently the role of the Embassy, in terms of business, is to present British business interests, connecting with middle management and mapping out the situation ready for businesses to move in later. The work that the UKTI is doing in Benghazi involves fending off horizontal missions when highly-focused vertical missions are more useful. Despite the changing of the political guard, it is worth establishing contacts now as middle management technocrats are unlikely to change.

3.3 Nature of the private sector in Libya (foreign and domestic)

The British private sector should be able to flourish under the new Government although entirely foreign-run businesses will not be allowed. Employment of local staff and joint ventures will be the norm for British companies, similar to the old Libyan business climate. Historically, companies have seen Libya as a long-term market and have entered it seeking to build relationships first and profit further down the line. However, the UK and US private sectors are more risk averse since the economic downturn and few corporate boards are willing to use this approach in Libya at this time. Therefore, it was argued that Libyan companies will need to pass tests of trust before British companies will agree to work with them.

The nature of the Libyan private sector is also an issue, as many private sector companies are still essentially state run. Ostensibly private companies are often owned by the old Libyan business families, for example the mogul Hosni Bey—owner of the largest private holding company in Libya HB Group—also controls the al-Sayara Trade and Investment Bank even if it appears that it has other ownership. Often examining the so-called nascent private sector reveals essentially state-run companies or companies controlled by the same few tycoons connected to the old regime.

3.4 Banking

It was argued that most of the business available in the banking sphere will remain in the public sector—Islamic banking and trade finance. Sharia finance will certainly grow in Libya although it will not necessarily be compulsory for international banks, despite President Abdel-Jalil’s prior pronouncements. Recent events have made Libyan trade opportunities seem more risky to UK banks. As a high-risk environment, the premiums to be made in Libya by foreign banks are higher than in lower risk countries like Tunisia. At present Libyan banks are not issuing credit, one reason the economic recovery is so sluggish.

Many Libyan bankers have been well trained by banks such as Barclays and HSBC, and their systems are generally respectable, for example they have an optical fibre clearing system. There is therefore little need for
international consultants; rather there is a risk that an influx of international banks causes unemployment amongst qualified Libyan professionals. Banks will encounter challenges as money comes in, and manoeuvrability will be limited by public ownership. Tajara li-Tamnia is the biggest private bank in Benghazi, and others will follow its lead by diversifying as they accumulate services.

The Libyan government is looking for assistance with asset management for the Central Bank (CBL). It was proposed that the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA) is likely to continue its old investment patterns in Britain and elsewhere until a confusion over which institution has the authority to control the money is resolved. The CBL sees the Libyan Investment Authority as an arm of itself, which is contested by the finance ministry under Hasan Zaghlam and the LIA's old leadership. The CBL's claim to authority comes from its position as the original source of the investment capital, but the law establishing the LIA states that it is not under the Central Bank's control. Al-Sadiq Omar al-Kabir is currently the head of CBL but it is unclear how much longer he will hold this post. Internationally respected former CBL head Farhat Omar Ben Gdara is unlikely to make a comeback as he is too closely connected to the old regime. To date no one knows how the interim authorities are planning to reconstitute the LIA, who it will be accountable to, and what investment strategy it is likely to pursue.

A 2005 McKinsey study led to the appointment of Rothschilds as over-seer to the opening of banks with foreign capital of at least $50 million. Only Unicredit of Italy succeeded in doing this; HSBC was never granted a license, perhaps because they lacked “proximity” to the Gaddafi family. In May 2007, HSBC opened and worked with the authorities until Tim Gray, the Canadian manager on the ground, had to leave during the revolution.

Experts familiar with the Libyan banking system feel that it has not fundamentally changed, nor will it until an elected government comes into office.

3.5 Oil

Libya has few prospects of revenue except from hydrocarbons and the investment profits from its sovereign wealth funds. For example the agriculture sector is in a state of disarray, as Gaddafi’s ideological aim to make Libya self-sufficient in terms of food led to massive inefficient project spending.

Gaddafi did not destroy the oil fields during the months of battle as he appears to have believed he would win the conflicts and regain the support of the Libyan people. Zawaya is an example of a town which is in ruins while its oil refineries and pipelines remain intact. All efforts are being made to restore production levels, with impressive success so far—certain sources report nearly 800,000 barrels a day as a production figure, which is almost half of the previously recorded level of 1.7 million barrels under Gaddafi. The proposed target of 3 million a day, the level reached during the 1970s, is unobtainable in the medium term however, as such a target will take at least three years of political stability and enormous foreign investment.

Expectations for production rates vary considerably—the BBC World Service reported that the Zawara oil complex is highly functional and could get the country ready to produce two million barrels a day in the first quarter of next year, but such rapid progress is not necessarily taken seriously by oil analysts, despite the fact that post-Gaddafi Libya has so far exceeded all expectations. The oil companies working under Gaddafi are now trying to address shortages and damaged infrastructure. This can be seen as a practical demonstration of business relationships enduring throughout the turmoil. It is quite apparent with ENI.

In summation, there is remarkable continuity between the current Libyan economic picture with that before the crisis. In the short term, the health and reconstruction sectors are paramount, while in the medium term the new regime will require similar areas of expertise as those sought by Gaddafi.

3.6 Potential destabilising influences

A number of potentially destabilising influences were discussed.

It was noted that the reforms implemented during the so-called “reform process” of 2003–10 to stimulate economic progress are now derelict. The few functional or semi-functional institutions created by the reform process—such as the Economic Development Board and Libyan Investment Authority—are now without staff and in a state of administrative limbo. Ministers have no staff or ministerial machines—the old Gaddafian adage “lijan fi kuli makan” (Committees everywhere) is applicable—and decisions are taken by committees and stake holders—ie wealthy and powerful Libyans, many with ties to the old system.

To help prevent inefficiency and corruption, the commercial law sector was suggested as an area where the UK could become more involved, as previous British work in this sphere has successfully influenced Libyan legislation.

It could be argued that the Libyan economy has reverted to a stage of scarcity, barter, and personal networks. Moreover, Libya’s economic recovery could be impeded by “the fifth column” elements of Gaddafi supporters and family members abroad who have access to many assets previously hidden away. These vast monies and control of many of Libya’s quasi-state business could be used to sabotage the Libyan economy and enrich the old elites. There is a concern that if the wrong people who were technocrats under the old regime are allowed to remain influential corruption and nepotism will continue.
Unexploded ordnance is a grave safety concern. Britain and Scandinavian countries in particular are needed to assume their historic roles in demining in Libya.

4. Summary

The primary difference between before and after the revolution from a business point of view is the increased goodwill that exists between Libyans and the members of the NATO-Alliance countries. To capitalize on this goodwill, the experts recommend a light touch. Britain’s approach should now be reactive not proactive. British government officials should listen very carefully to the Libyans and relay their stated needs to appropriate members of the private sector. Despite short term difficulties, there are many reasons for optimism.

In many Arab Spring affected countries, a crony-capitalist system has been brought down. In contradistinction, in Libya Gaddafi’s quasi-socialist model has failed. This leaves the possibility of wide spread support for the emergence of an Islamic-capitalist system.

12 December 2011

Written evidence from Bell Pottinger Public Advocacy

About the Author and Bell Pottinger Public Advocacy

Harry Wynne-Williams is a Director and communications consultant at Bell Pottinger Public Advocacy and has been with the firm since 2006.

Bell Pottinger Public Advocacy has over seven years’ experience of designing, implementing and evaluating strategic communications campaigns in complex environments including the MENA region to support stabilisation and positive social change processes, in particular democratic transition, social reconciliation and political settlement. BPPA’s first venture into this field was in promoting Iraq’s first national elections in 2005 for the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq. Current work includes support for the UN AMISOM mission in Somalia.

Our comment and recommendations below address those questions we felt qualified to answer.

Executive Summary of Recommendations

— Understand regional forces for reform in terms of sociological and psychological human dynamics and effectively influence them through communications.
— Recognise the different responses demanded by each country’s circumstances, whether brittle regime (eg Morocco), struggling democracy (eg Egypt) or failed state prospect (eg Syria).
— Build and sustain demand for universal democratic values by channelling and amplifying popular Arab opinion, discourse and democratic behaviours through mass media.
— Acknowledge that actions and communications attributed to HMG and affiliates will be viewed with scepticism by many in the MENA region. Greater effect can be driven by communications which resonate with local audiences through being developed and implemented by third parties with local capabilities.
— Do not demonise Islamists. Understand their appeal and support efforts to fold political Islam into the new plural political constructs and processes.
— Maintain this approach to marginalise violent extremist narratives and to counter malign Iranian influence.

Responses to Questions Posed by the Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry

What forces are driving the movement for reform and reconstruction in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and to what extent are they paralleled elsewhere in the Arab world (for instance in other North African countries such as Morocco)?

1. As communications consultants who have conducted strategic communications/influence campaigns for Arabic audiences we have done a good deal of research and analysis over the last few years to understand the underlying narratives, networks, identities and interests at play in the region and how to influence them. The key forces behind these human dynamics are generally best understood in sociological and psychological terms.

2. At the sociological level:
   (a) In general terms, globalisation is driving mass urbanisation, leading to the break-up of traditional social structures and the erosion of traditional values and stable identities. The spread of ideas through a globalised information network has magnified the sense of injustice among local populations, and created social networks, perceptions of interest, and identity constructs which transcend national boundaries.
   (b) While the upheavals that occurred in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya have had specific local aspects, they also share simultaneous regional and global characteristics—what happens at the local
level now has a regional and global impact and vice versa. Cross-border conversations through social media platforms, and images on pan-Arab satellite television of fellow Arabs fighting or protesting against the shared grievance of autocratic leadership, has given rise to a new regional Arab public consciousness.

(c) “The Youth Bulge.” The rapidly expanding youth population (the percentage of population below 25 years old in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya being 52%, 47% and 42% respectively) is a key driver of social change. The growing ranks of frustrated unemployed and underemployed youth, acutely aware of their relative deprivation in an increasingly interconnected world, will ultimately determine what sort of social and political orders will emerge over the long term. The youth have been at the vanguard of the protests that have swept across the region. Shared grievances however are not matched by a robust consensus on the solutions that need to be pursued. The liberalisation of information flows has produced a paradox: pro-democracy youth who are shaping a new Arab identity that offers the promise of long term stability, and their religiously conservative peers who are adopting pan-Islamist identities defined (to varying degrees) by anti-Western narratives and a rejection of plural democracy as a system of government.

3. At the psychological level:

(a) Denial of dignity and justice. Decades of living under the yoke of repressive regimes defined by poor governance standards, venal elites, state-sponsored violence and contempt for popular demands for political reform, has led to the emergence of social movements fighting for the establishment of basic rights under the rule of law or the establishment of an Islamic state. This experience provides the fundamental psychological dynamics driving these protests: while external conditions provide a catalyst for social mobilisation, it is fundamentally emotions connected with feelings of a lack of dignity, disenfranchisement and disrespect, which has enabled and driven individual participation.

4. Two competing identities, anchored in Arab nationalist sentiment and inspired by narratives at the global level have therefore resulted—one which focuses on universal democratic values (albeit with a discernable Arab flavour) and one which takes its cue from the language of global Islamism.

5. On the side of universal democratic values, the Arab public sphere is giving rise to a new regional consciousness and a collective identity that embraces rather than rejects modernity, particularly among 18–35 year-olds in urban areas. Nurturing the growth and influence of this key constituency offers a number of strategic opportunities—in particular, to diminish the credibility of the violent jihadist narrative, and build a potent buffer against the spread of Iranian influence. (See further comment on a recommended stance towards Islamist movements below at paragraphs 15–17.)

6. As for parallels with Morocco, our assessment would be that the same underlying forces and drivers of human response apply, but that the political situation in Morocco is that of a brittle regime rather than a struggling democracy, demanding a different approach by HMG. In Egypt and Tunisia, and now Libya, the effort should be to sustain positive momentum, build a political centre based on accommodation of interests, prevent polarisation and deny the process being hijacked by hardline Salafists or violent extremists. In Morocco, it seems that popular demand is for reform within the existing system rather than a revolution. The UK should support this more limited reform in the interests of avoiding a wider breakdown of social structures that could lead to conflict, displacement and opportunities for extremists. The effort would therefore be to help renew the social contract in Morocco between the King, his ruling elite and the wider population, fostering a shift from “ruler” asserting authority to “leader”, with authority grounded in a just and respectful relationship with the population. Developing civil society structures and organisations, developing mechanisms for consultation and voice, and fostering a culture of respect for individuals would all support this effort.

Does the FCO have the right resources in place to deliver its objectives in the region? What role can the BBC World Service and the British Council play? How can the British Government best work with allies and through international institutions to support reform in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya?

7. The notable theme building in Arab public consciousness is the emphasis on justice, human dignity and the value of individual rights and agency. Previously, narratives of individual sacrifice for the national good and of the absolute supremacy of stability over reform have often been exploited by the propaganda machines of the former regimes. Conversely, amid the comparative chaos of a post-regime society and deregulated media, a new focus on individual rights, responsibilities and agency requires behavioural examples drawn from these populations and reflected back to them, if individuals are to learn from their contemporaries and opinion leaders the skills and habits to act as citizens rather than subjects. Additionally, it is the growth of public witness, scrutiny and demand for justice and reform through deregulated media that maintains pressure on the political leadership networks to reform and be held accountable.

8. Thus the best method of building and sustaining demand for and participation in democracy and civil society is that through the same media platforms that drove the original surges of protest, and through which the “contest of the narratives” plays on as the new Arab public consciousness develops. If HMG wishes to
achieve the given strategic effects of conflict prevention, democratic transition and promotion of universal values, this is the primary space for intervention and influence.

9. However, diplomacy and public affairs communications by the FCO, cultural activity by the FCO-affiliated British Council and news and comment from the FCO-funded BBC World Service will not in themselves suffice. While there is much to do to build a narrative of the UK being a trusted partner in the region’s reform processes, all communications attributed by the local audience to the British Government will be viewed with a significant degree of scepticism or indifference by the majority. Regional responses to the Prime Minister’s keynote Kuwait speech and to most HMG-attributed comment since consistently display this scepticism. The legacy of Iraq, where Britain was widely seen to join the US in an exploitative venture to impose Western-style democracy still looms and thus “universal” democratic values advocated by UK voices are too often perceived to be “Western” values. In short, it should not be about us, or us and them: it should be about them—them and them, to be exact. Too often, strategic communications for national strategy is still regarded by many in HMG as a combination of “megaphone diplomacy” towards foreign audiences and a public relations exercise for the home front.

10. Real success lies in providing ordinary Egyptians, Tunisians and Libyans the opportunity to express themselves and their interests and to engage in political discourse, so that democracy comes to be embraced as an act and a process rather than an idea or an event. To briefly illustrate how the production and dissemination of media content can support this effort, consider how a series of street level events such as a series of street corner café-based debates or reconciliation events can be convened to catalyse the kind of behaviours sought. Then consider the subjects introduced, the conversations facilitated during the event and the production and editing treatment applied to create compelling TV/video content, to shape the discussions and capture them for a wider audience, before using media dissemination to amplify the effect of the original event by exposing it to mass audiences (the TV model) or driving viral distribution (online and social media).

11. In a case such as Libya, where the entire democratic process must compete with the legacy of a brief but bloody civil war and a remaining zero sum gun culture, Disarming, Demobilising and Reintegrating the militias requires an integrated communications programme as an urgent priority. The campaign must build the popular demand and support for disarmament that must precede a series of more localised negotiated DDR efforts tied to reconciliation, alternative livelihoods, security force structures and the rule of law. To do so it must be designed to resonate with a series of related target audiences to achieve the intended cumulative effects, as illustrated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Desired Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Civilian Population (Pro revolution)</td>
<td>— Popular rejection of rebel groups engaging in violence — Fully informed about DDR — Supportive of DDR and recognize the need to reconcile and integrate former Gaddafi loyalists into new security structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Civilian Population (Gaddafi Loyalists)</td>
<td>— Address concerns that they will be marginalized under the new order — Mitigate fears that DDR is about retribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ex-Combatants (Rebel militias)</td>
<td>— Influence calculations about disarmament/engaging in violence — Undercut concerns over loss of status and sow doubt about the “benefits” of resisting DDR — Inculcate a belief that DDR is critical to safeguarding the gains of the revolution — Generate recognition Libya cannot progress if DDR fails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gaddafi Security Forces (Army, Rep. Guard, People’s Militia, civilian militias)</td>
<td>— Individualized, not collective guilt — Build confidence in the DDR process — Mitigate concerns over retribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Influential Stakeholders (Elders/sheiks, business leaders, civil society orgs)</td>
<td>— Galvanize and encourage active participation in the DDR process, especially reintegration at the community level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Cumulative Effects
(a) Transform narrative structures and emotional states that justify continued use of violence.
(b) Build and shape a public narrative about DDR which begins to stigmatize the illegal use of weapons and increases community pressure on those opposing the DDR process.
(c) Frame the choice—pro a stable, peaceful, inclusive Libya or risk being an outcast, hunted down like a common criminal.
12. Such work relies on professional campaign development and implementation that draws on and builds local capabilities to successfully engage local audiences. In our experience this process cannot be managed effectively by HMG or other international political actors directly if the content is to be engaging and authentic to its local audience, as well as meeting a number of other criteria to stay within the “electric fence” of proving acceptable, engaging and authentic for dissemination in its local context.

13. However HMG can play a central role by recognising the value of this discrete lever of influence, implementing its own campaigns while also helping to broker the instigation of others to fill the communications vacuum by working with partner institutions and funding entities, such as the UN and local authorities.

**What are the prospects for establishing stable multi-party democracy and a human rights culture in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and elsewhere?**

14. The prospects are fair, but only if supported by a concerted media-led effort to maintain popular demand for the same.

**What will be the future role of Islamist movements in the region and what should be the British Government’s stance towards them?**

15. Following recent successes by Islamist movements in the Tunisian and Egyptian elections many Western commentators worry that the Islamist movements will simply use the democratic process in these countries as a transitory means of imposing an anti-democratic, anti-Western agenda. By this reasoning, in the contest among Arabs between the desire for universal democratic values on one hand and for global Islamism on the other, the Islamist agenda is already emerging as the victor and our chance to foster democratic transition is lost.

16. However, this is to over-simplify the phenomenon. As well summarised in this week’s Economist (“And the winner is…” 10 December edition), the Islamist cause is in reality a disparate series of groups, spanning violent nihilist extremists such Al Qaeda and its affiliates, Salafist adherents such as Egypt’s Nour party and those such as Egypt’s Freedom & Justice Party (Muslim Brotherhood) seeking to apply a political Islam to the demands of modern Arab life. In response, UK policy should be to accommodate political Islamist within MENA, building the precedent of political Islam operating within, and respecting the rules of, a plural political system rather than presenting an alternative system.

17. To do so means acknowledging that Islamism has become one inherent aspect of Arab public consciousness, its popular appeal stemming from the Islamists’ hatred of corruption, their promotion of justice and dignity and their success in some cases in providing welfare and basic services to the poor and disadvantaged. All those virtues and competencies can and should be absorbed into the plural political culture. In brief, a communications stance towards Islamist elements should be thus:

(a) Al Qaeda and associates have already been shown to be irrelevant to the popular consciousness driving the Arab political reform—all HMG efforts must protect and harden that legacy without in any way reviving the narrative that “Islam is under attack from the West”.

(b) The Salafists hold views that are incompatible with inclusive democracy and, as in Egypt, seem unwilling to enter into coalitions with others who do not share their views. Their self-imposed limitations in providing governance and prosperity (rather than charity) should be exposed and the “bully pulpit” of Saudi-sponsored TV preachers should be countered by sponsoring alternative TV content that connects Islamic cultural traditions with workable plural democracy. The story of Iran, where a popular movement to remove a dictator was usurped by a totalitarian Islamist regime that has itself brutally repressed its people and instigated bloodshed among its Muslim neighbours as a diversion, should be regularly told as a salutary warning.

(c) Regarding the Muslim Brotherhood and affiliates, the modernising impulse that has prompted undertakings to uphold the rights of women and religious minorities and to respect the plural political process should be fostered and amplified.

(d) The example of attempts to influence the political actions and behaviour of the Sadrist movement in Iraq, can be referred to for the right and wrong way to influence events. Demonising Sadr only strengthened his appeal to his support base. Exposing the predatory behaviours of his militias and giving previously oppressed Shia Iraqis a political voice within a political discourse (one centred on security for all, reconciliation, accommodation and governance rather than moral superiority or dogma) coerced him into working more within the political fold.

**Do recent events in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and in the “Arab Spring” generally, necessitate a radical reappraisal of UK policy towards the Middle East and North Africa?**

18. The policy direction is clear and fully valid. As Prime Minister Cameron said in his speech in Kuwait in February, “The security and prosperity of this region will come hand-in-hand with development towards more open, fair and inclusive societies.” William Hague’s July speech on “Foreign Policy in a networked world” bore this view out when he spoke of an “enlightened national interest … that is inspired by and seeks
to inspire others with our values of political freedom and economic liberalism”. Consequently the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defense and Security Review, with their emphasis on conflict prevention and the promotion of universal values, develop this policy framework for protecting UK interests and projecting its influence abroad.

19. It is the application of strategy—focusing on the ways and means—that should be reviewed, specifically how strategic communications can be employed in the MENA region in order to promote more stable societies and diminish the threat of extremism.

13 December 2011

Further written evidence from Christian Aid

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. We work globally in over 40 countries for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.

1.2 Christian Aid has worked in the Middle East for over 50 years, and works with over 30 local partner organisations in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. We have three programmes in the region: Economic Justice, Secure Livelihoods, and Israeli/occupied Palestinian territory Rights for All. Through these programmes, we work to expose the scandal of poverty, tackle its symptoms and work to change its structural causes. In our responses below, we base our evidence primarily from our work and experience in Egypt, but also draw on our regional approach, informed by analysis from the other countries where we work.

1.3 We welcome the opportunity to provide written evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on the “Arab Spring”. Christian Aid is happy to provide this supplementary note in response to the widening of the FASC inquiry into the “Arab Spring”. Please refer to our original submission of 12 September for our full evidence and recommendations. We are happy to provide further written and/or oral evidence on any of the subjects covered in this submission.

2. UNREST IN LIBYA AND EGYPT

In April 2011, Egypt was in the grip of the worst economic stagnation and political instability in many decades. On 25 January, mass protests erupted in cities all over Egypt from the South to the North, with Cairo as a focal point for what would become the revolution.

3. IMPACT OF LIBYA CRISIS ON MIGRANT WORKERS

During this period of unrest in Egypt, in which many had lost their livelihoods and their lives, the neighbouring state of Libya was also undergoing a civil struggle which was met by force and eventually resulting in full armed conflict and civil war. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that it assisted the return of 143,514 Egyptian nationals to Egypt from Libya and Tunisia fleeing the conflict, with more crossing directly over to the Egyptian borders on their own. It is estimated that 1.5 million Egyptian migrants were working in Libya before the conflict. With the loss of remittances from migrant labour in Libya, a large return of labour to an economically stagnant and instable country, and many providers of income losing their lives in the struggles ensuing in Egypt and Libya, household incomes plummeted and the ability of families to care for themselves diminished, with many resorting to destructive coping strategies.

4. CASH FOR WORK PROGRAMME

Christian Aid and its partners undertook an assessment of households across Egypt conducting focus group discussions and interviewing 450 individual households in Cairo, Beni Suef, Sohag, Assut, Al minia, Bahara, Banha and Kalwobia governorates to determine acute needs; these were a need for income and a need for psycho-social support. Based on the assessment findings, Christian Aid partners in Egypt implemented a Cash for Work programme and a psycho-social programme to assist families. In the Cash for Work programme, skilled and unskilled labour was selected against a vulnerability criteria to work for 10 or 15 days at a rate just under the local average wages. Widows who had lost all their household incomes when their husbands were killed in Libya or Egypt were employed in unskilled positions and paid the same amount as the unskilled men. This programme also made use of the reversed labour migration to small and isolated rural communities from urban centres, allowing impoverished communities to benefit from public works. The programme constituted 100% of beneficiary incomes for the period, with many being the sole providers of income for their children and elderly parents. Psycho-social training was also given to the national implementing partners who continue to work on community group counselling, individual support and support days for children.

134 Christian Aid and our partner in Egypt are also implementing an ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance emergency programme in Egypt in response to the Libyan crisis leading to migrant workers returning home to Egypt.
5. Programme Impacts

By November 2011, the Christian Aid Emergency Programme has employed 3,051 men and women, with the programme continuing to employ more people in more communities across Egypt until January 2012. This programme has benefited 9,645 direct beneficiaries in the households provided with an income, and has 207,220 indirect beneficiaries of communities who benefited from renovated schools, rebuilt roads, covered sewage and irrigation canals, renovating local police stations, and putting plumbing and electricity into schools.

6. Lessons from Intervention

Christian Aid’s advantage during the response was implementing the programme through national Egyptian partners. The relationships between the implementing partners and the communities meant that the assessment was efficient and the programme activity implementation was effective. Further to this, partners were able to mobilise these communities to leverage in-kind assistance, materials and expertise from the government and from local businesses adding thousands of pounds to the programme value and utilising local resources and capacities. Christian Aid recommends that the UK government prioritises support to furthering economic and social rights in Egypt in particular, as well as support for political and civil rights in countries like Libya and Egypt.

14 December 2011

Further written evidence from Amnesty International UK

Introduction

1. The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee has extended its recent Inquiry into British Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring to include reference to the specific circumstances of Libya.

2. In its previous submission to the Inquiry, Amnesty International UK made reference to the situation of Libya as part of its comments on British Foreign Policy in the region, particularly in relation to security policy, policy towards arms sales and policy relating to trade and business. Recommendations were also made with regard to the need for accountability, participation by all sectors of society in the change that is currently taking place and the condition of women.

3. In this addendum, Amnesty International UK makes a number of additional comments about UK security policy and policy towards arms sales and also makes recommendations as to the role of the National Transitional Council in Libya and the British Government’s relationship with the same.

1. UK Government Relations with the Libyan Authorities

4. As Amnesty International UK suggested in its previous submission to the Committee, the reality of changing decades of autocratic and discriminatory rule in the MENA region will require hard work, determination and commitment to the rule of law by all concerned parties. Of paramount importance to this process are the people of the MENA region themselves.

5. In Libya, a NATO-led military intervention has assisted a total take-over of the state by a National Transitional Council (NTC) that appointed a new interim government in November. The NTC has proclaimed that the state to which it aspires will respect “human rights, rules and principles of citizenship and the rights of minorities and those most vulnerable”.

6. In order to achieve this, the leadership of Libya will need to take both immediate and specific steps to ensure respect for the rule of law and the end to human rights abuses taking place in the country and ensure a comprehensive overhaul of the laws and practices that facilitated the systematic perpetration over decades of human rights abuses in a climate of total impunity.

7. The UK Government is providing practical and material support to the Libyan authorities and has welcomed the NTC’s public commitment to building a state based on human rights. Amnesty International urges the UK Government therefore to put human rights and accountability at the core of the agenda in discussions with the Libyan leadership and assist in developing and implementing an overarching programme of human rights reform in the country.

1.1 The Libyan authorities must restore the rule of law and reform the justice and security system

8. Serious human rights violations—civil, political, economic, social and cultural—were a hallmark of Colonel Al-Gaddafi’s rule. These were among the reasons, protesters and other opposition sources say, that triggered calls for reform.

9. Colonel Al-Gaddafi’s rule was also characterised by repressive legislation outlawing political parties and independent organisations and heavy-handed reprisals against anyone who criticised the authorities or organised anti-government protests. The space for civil society and independent media was virtually non-existent and
neither political parties nor independent human rights organisations were allowed. Public meetings and demonstrations were generally tolerated only when the participants were supporting the government.

10. Colonel Al-Gaddafi relied on severe reprisals against any perceived opponents, through political killing—including of Libyans in exile—imprisonment, torture and other ill-treatment, harassment and intimidation, not only of perceived critics, but also of their families. Certain groups were particularly targeted, including individuals seen as critics of the authorities, those deemed to be a security threat; and foreign nationals in an irregular situation, particularly from Sub-Saharan Africa.

11. The new Libyan authorities face the challenge of re-establishing law and order, and breaking with the legacy of total impunity. The challenge is compounded by the widespread availability of weapons and the authorities’ lack of control over revolutionary brigades and other armed groups, including those who commit abuses with impunity.

1.2 The Libyan authorities must guarantee the safety and rights of detainees

12. Amnesty International remains concerned about the fate of thousands of detainees who continue to be held in Libya without fundamental rights guaranteed under Libyan and international law, including the right to be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for their arrest, the right to be promptly informed of any charges against them and the right to challenge the lawfulness of their detention.

13. In August and September Amnesty International delegates interviewed more than 300 detainees and found that they were almost always held without legal orders, but by local councils, local military council or armed brigades—and not under the oversight of the Ministry of Justice.135

14. Amnesty International has also found evidence of a pattern of beatings and ill-treatment of these detainees. In some cases, there is clear evidence of torture in order to extract confessions or as a punishment. At least two guards in detention centres admitted to Amnesty International delegates that they beat detainees. The most frequently reported methods of torture included beatings all over the body with belts, sticks, rifle butts and rubber hoses; punching, kicking and deaths threats.136

15. A report by the UN Secretary-General to the UN Security Council, released on 28 November 2011, found that “an estimated 7,000 detainees are currently held in prisons and makeshift detention centers, most of which are under the control of revolutionary brigades.” The report also found that prisoners had “no access to due process in the absence of a functioning police and judiciary”.

16. Most detainees have no or only restricted access to visits by relatives. The vast majority of detainees have no access to a lawyer. Some relatives have reported that detainees are held incommunicado, including cases where authorities or armed brigades refuse to acknowledge the detention although there is evidence—in some cases publicly available video footage—of that person held in captivity and alive.

17. There continue to be conflicting reports about the status of Abdallah al-Senussi, the former head of intelligence who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), and Amnesty International fears that he may be held incommunicado. Reports of his detention in November were never confirmed by the Libyan government, but the head of the Tripoli Revolutionary Council claimed in early December that Abdullah al-Senussi continued to be questioned at a secret location. If he is held by forces in Libya, he should also be granted immediate access to international observers, like the ICRC.

1.3 The Libyan authorities must fight impunity and investigate abuses of all sides

18. While in power Colonel Mu’ammar al-Gaddafi ruled with an iron fist, stifling any form of political dissent and freedoms. His opponents faced harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and extrajudicial execution in Libya and abroad. Libyans have also suffered greatly during the conflict from February until October 2011. They have faced human rights abuses committed by both sides, in some cases pointing to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

19. Amnesty International found evidence that during the conflict al-Gaddafi forces committed war crimes and abuses which may amount to crimes against humanity, including indiscriminate attacks, mass killing of prisoners, torture, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests. In most cases it was civilians who bore the brunt of these violations.

20. Amnesty International has also documented a brutal “settling of scores” after the conflict by some forces opposed to al-Gaddafi, particularly when al-Gaddafi forces were ejected from eastern Libya, including lynchings of al-Gaddafi soldiers after capture.

Dozens of people suspected of being former security agents, al-Gaddafi loyalists or mercenaries have been killed after capture since February in Libya.137

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135 Detention Abuses Staining the New Libya, Amnesty International Briefing, MDE 19/036/2011.
136 Ibid.
1. Incidents of reported extra-judicial executions by forces opposed to al-Gaddafi include: Abdul Fatah Younes al-Obeidi, former Secretary of the General People’s Committee for Public Security (equivalent to Minister of Interior) under al-Gaddafi’s government who defected to the opposition in February, and his two aides, Mohamed Khamis and Nasser Mathkur, died from gunshot wounds in July; Mu’ammar al-Gaddafi and his son Mu’tassim al-Gaddafi were killed in unclear circumstances on 20 October in Sirte, after being captured alive; and the reported killing of 53 apparent al-Gaddafi loyalists found on 23 October at the Mahari Hotel in Sirte.

1.4 The Libyan authorities are asked to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC)

22. Earlier this year, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague was tasked by the UN Security Council to investigate the situation in Libya. Pursuant to this instruction, the ICC issued arrest warrants for both Colonel al-Gaddafi, his son, Saif al-Islam Al-Gaddafi and Abdallah al-Senussi, the former head of intelligence. In November, Saif al-Islam Al-Gaddafi was captured alive. The Libyan authorities have stated their intention to try him under Libyan legislation, rather than to transfer him to the jurisdiction of the ICC. In early December the ICC requested the Libyan authority to clarify whether or not they intend to surrender Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi to the ICC.

1.5 The Libyan authorities must protect rights of and prevent discrimination of vulnerable groups and minorities

23. Foreigners from African countries continue to be particularly at risk. In September, between a third and a half of all those in detention centres in Tripoli and al-Zawiya were foreign nationals. Amnesty International believes that most of these were migrant workers not fighters, but Libyan officials have done little to correct false assumptions that sub-Saharan Africans are mercenaries. Black Libyans—particularly from the Tawargha region, which was a base for al-Gaddafi forces in their efforts to regain control of Misratah—are also particularly vulnerable.

24. Importantly, the NTC has called on its supporters to avoid revenge attacks and treat detainees with dignity. However, more needs to be done to address racism and xenophobia and to counter notions that all Sub-Saharan Africans, people from Tawargha and other groups are “mercenaries” or loyalists of Colonel al-Gaddafi. It should also speak out against and prevent the collective punishment of Tawarghas and other groups seen as loyal to Colonel al-Gaddafi.

25. National minorities—like the Amazigh and Tabu were discriminated under the rule of Colonel al-Gaddafi including regarding the choice of their names or use of language. Members of minority communities protested that they were not represented in the new government formed in November.

1.6 The Libyan authorities must protect rights of and prevent discrimination of women and girls

26. Women and girls have been targeted during the armed conflict by both sides. Al-Gaddafi forces arrested women during the conflict and held several of them incommunicado at unrecognized places of detention. Some were beaten, threatened with rape and otherwise ill-treated. Women also contributed to efforts to send humanitarian aid to areas affected by fighting, prepared supplies and food for fighters, participated in demonstrations, distributed leaflets, and took great risks in sharing information about human rights violations with the outside world. Allegations of rape by al-Gaddafi forces were widely reported by NTC supporters, and some women detained by pro-NTC forces in al-Zawiya, Tripoli and Misratah alleged they had been sexually abused.

27. The new Libyan authorities have an opportunity to promote women’s rights and participation, but so far they have been poorly represented in influential political institutions: only one of its 33 members is a woman. Its executive bureau also only includes one woman.

28. Libyan legislation discriminates against women, including Law No. 10 of 1984 on Marriage, Divorce and their Consequences. Further, the Libyan Penal criminalizes sexual relations between consenting adults, if not married to each other (Article 407 and 408) and provides for reduced sentence of men killing or injuring a female relative on the account she committed adultery (Article 375). Libya retains reservations on certain Articles of CEDAW. In October, the NTC leader expressed his support for polygamy which is allowed under Law No. 10 of 1984.

1.7 The Libyan authorities must respect socio-economic rights

29. Finally, despite Libya’s relative economic security compared to other countries of the MENA region, corruption was rife and the country’s wealth under Colonel Al-Gaddafi was distributed to his supporters. As a result, many have told Amnesty International delegates, “the country is rich, but its people are poor”. Unemployment and inequality were high and the poor state of the country’s infrastructure, education and health services stood in stark contrast to its oil wealth.
Ad 1.1 Recommendations

The Libyan authorities must make human rights the cornerstone of political transition in Libya and part of the overall programme of institutional reform. The UK Government must put human rights at the top of its agenda likewise in its relations with the National Transitional Council.

The security and law enforcement sector must be reformed to ensure that their policies, procedures and practices comply with international law and standards, including the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. The Internal Security Agency and other security agencies that have perpetrated systematic human rights abuses in the past must be dismantled.

A process of disarmament, including of small arms, must be implemented and members of revolutionary brigades and other armed groups must be disarmed or integrated into the armed forces of security forces. The criminal justice system must be overhauled. The independence of the judiciary must be guaranteed, as must the right to a fair trial and of civilians to be tried exclusively by ordinary courts.

Libya’s new Constitution and other laws should enshrine the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly, permitting only such limitations as are necessary and proportionate for a legitimate purposes as set out in international human rights law.

Ad 1.2 Recommendations

All those arbitrarily detained must be released and no one should be deprived of their liberty except in accordance with procedures and on grounds prescribed by Libyan law, in compliance with international law and standards.

End the practice of prolonged incommunicado detention: ensure that detainees have prompt access to their family, independent medical attention and to a lawyer of their choice.

End torture and other ill-treatment: Such practice must be publicly condemned and security and law enforcement agencies must be clear that such abuses will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all allegations of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment must be carried out.

Ad 1.3 Recommendations

Effective, independent mechanisms to establish the truth regarding human rights violations committed since September 1969 need to be set up. Such mechanisms should have powers of search and seizure and subpoena and access to archives and all necessary documents and resources to carry out their work effectively.

All human rights abuses must be investigated and where sufficient admissible evidence is found, trials must be opened in proceedings that meet international standards for fair trial and without recourse of death.

Ad 1.4 Recommendations

Where necessary, the Libyan authorities should seek international assistance and advice. Should the ICC judges decide that it is the ICC that should try Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi and Abdallah al-Senussi, possibilities to hold the trial proceedings in Libya should be examined, subject to effective guarantees of the safety of victims, witnesses and others connected to the proceedings.

Ad 1.5 Recommendations

Measures to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination must be taken and all laws that discriminate must be reviewed, amended or abolished. All people must be treated equally regardless of their background or beliefs. Laws and practices that discriminate against minorities must be abolished.

Ad 1.6 Recommendations

Women must have equal access to truth, justice and reparation—and specific strategies to address gender-based obstacles must be established. All laws that discriminate must be reviewed, amended or abolished. Women must be able to participate fully and meaningfully in all political processes in line with UNSC Resolution 1325; and have equal access to the means of economic productivity.

Ad 1.7 Recommendation

The whole population must be ensured minimum essential levels of economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to food, water, sanitation, healthcare and housing. There must be no discrimination in access to essential public services. Workers must be allowed to organise freely and form independent trade unions.

2. UK Government and Libyan Co-operation on Security and Counter-terrorism and Arms Sales

30. In our previous submission, Amnesty International UK raised its concern that the UK Government’s foreign policy towards the countries of the MENA region has been led not by concerns for human rights but
by strategic considerations regarding counter-terrorist co-operation, arms sales and other business and trade opportunities generally. We would like to highlight further developments regarding counter-terrorist co-operation and arms sales since the time of making our submission.

2.1 Co-operation on security and counter-terrorism

31. As we have stated, over the past decade, several countries in the MENA region assumed an increasingly important position within the UK’s strategic approach to national security and counter-terrorism. Documents discovered by Human Rights Watch in Tripoli in early September, if genuine, serve to underline the seriousness of UK Government action. They indicate that the UK Government was involved in the unlawful transfer to Libya of two individuals suspected of terrorism-related activity: (Sami Mustafa Al-Saadi (also known as Abu Al-Munthir Al-Saadi) and Abdel Hakim Belhaj (also known as Abdullah al-Sadiq)), despite the real risk of torture and other ill-treatment. In both cases it is alleged that UK authorities assisted in the transfer of the individuals to Libya from abroad; both have alleged that they were held in custody and tortured; and that they were visited by UK intelligence agents whilst in detention.

32. Alongside these two specific cases, it has also been reported that British intelligence agencies provided intelligence reports on individuals of interest to Tripoli, allegedly in exchange for information from Libyan officials about individuals suspected of terrorism-related activity—including information from individuals who were being detained by Libyan authorities. This cooperation took place despite Libya’s extensive and widely known record of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees.

33. Amnesty International cannot verify the authenticity of the documents which are the source of these serious allegations. However, they are consistent with other information known about these cases, and the UK Government itself has recognised that these are “significant accusations”. They therefore raise serious concerns about the UK’s relationship with Libya during a period when it was known that Libyan intelligence services frequently tortured and otherwise ill-treated detainees.

34. The documents discovered in Tripoli in September also raise a further serious concern for Amnesty International with respect to the UK’s continuing reliance on diplomatic assurances to facilitate the return of individuals to states where they would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. In both of these cases mentioned above it has been reported that assurances were sought from Libya that the men would not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated upon return. That both Abdel Hakim Belhaj and Sami Mustafa al-Saadi claim that they were tortured and/or ill-treated whilst in detention in Libya serves as a stark reminder that unenforceable bilateral diplomatic assurances cannot be considered a reliable safeguard against torture and other ill-treatment.

Recommendation

The continuation and extension of the policy of Deportations with Assurances with Libya would undermine any attempts by the UK Government to ensure that the National Transitional Council in Libya puts human rights at the heart of the new state that it is building. Amnesty International repeats its call on the UK Government to abandon this policy and instead work with and provide technical assistance to Libya to ensure the eradication of torture in line with their international obligations. In addition, Amnesty International calls on the UK Government to ensure that allegations of UK involvement in the alleged mistreatment of individuals detained abroad by foreign intelligence services are investigated.

2.2 Arms Sales

35. Alongside these two specific cases, it has also been reported that British intelligence agencies provided intelligence reports on individuals of interest to Tripoli, allegedly in exchange for information from Libyan officials about individuals suspected of terrorism-related activity—including information from individuals who were being detained by Libyan authorities. This cooperation took place despite Libya’s extensive and widely known record of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees.

36. In our previous submission to this Inquiry, Amnesty International raised its very serious concerns about UK arms transfer policy and government promotion of arms exports to the MENA region, including to Libya.

37. Two particular exports demonstrated how UK equipment could be used to facilitate human rights violations. UK company NMS International sold 10 armoured vehicles to Libya having first obtained an UK export licence. It is not known when these vehicles were exported, but some of these vehicles were identified on the streets of Libya in February 2011 during a Government crackdown against protesters in video footage and photographs documented by Amnesty International. And in January 2011, the UK arm of US-based General Dynamics were fulfilling a contract to upgrade communications systems for tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers (although the upgrade was not completed before the company pulled out of the contract). These vehicles were for the Khamis Brigade, which was among those elements of the Libyan security services directly involved in putting down the Libyan uprising.

38. We are also concerned over the UK Government’s stated wish to promote arms exports that this may trump human rights concerns. In 2010, at the Libyan arms exhibition LIBDEX, the UK pavilion was co-sponsored by the UKTI DSO and NMS International. At least 50 UK companies exhibited, including those that sell sniper rifles, crowd-control ammunition, armoured vehicles and electrified razor wire. This, and other examples of high-level UK Government promotion of arms exports, leads us to be concerned that such support could corrupt the export licensing process, as officials are clearly placed in a difficult position if they are to refuse licenses for deals that have been promoted in this way.
39. Amnesty International has made previous recommendations to the UK Government regarding its arms licensing and arms promotion policy and practices. It has also urged upon it the need to ensure that the review of export licensing that it is currently conducting is done so in such a way as to ensure that it properly grapples with the issues that we, and others, have raised. In our view, the continuation and extension of the current system of arms licensing for arms export to Libya would seriously undermine the UK Government’s avowed intention to support the NTC in building a state that respects, protects and fulfils human rights.

RECOMMENDATION

Proper management and control of UK arms exports to Libya is essential at this stage of the development of the new state. Amnesty International believes that essential to this is the need to adjust UK arms licensing policy to shift the focus to a “risk and likelihood of use”. The UK Government must also provide details of what evidential standards it utilises when checking end-use issues relating to UK arms transfers. It must also improve the quality of the information it provides in its reporting. Overall, the UK Government should immediately update its arms export licensing criteria to accurately reflect its obligations under the 2008 EU Common Position, which contains much stronger commitments on transfer licensing than those currently employed.

CONCLUSION

40. The end of the al-Gaddafi regime offers the Libyan people a huge opportunity to build a strong and sustainable society that both capitalises on its advantages whilst also ensuring the well-being and freedom of all within it. For this opportunity to be grasped, however, the dramatic events of the past ten months must now be followed by a careful and considered period of stabilisation. During this time, the Libyan authorities have a golden opportunity to establish the norms by which the new Libya will operate and to strengthen its institutions according to these norms. Essential to this effort, will be to fight impunity and to investigate reported human rights abuses, including possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed by all sides; to cooperate with the ICC in the prosecution of its suspects and ensure that human rights abuses are not carried out by revolutionary brigades or other armed groups.

41. The UK Government, as part of NATO, played a significant role in bringing an end to the al-Gaddafi regime and in bringing the NTC to power. As a result, it also bears a significant responsibility for doing its utmost to ensure that the new regime abides by its international obligations, obligations which include those to uphold and abide by the rule of law and to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. UK Government pressure must be brought to bear on the new Libyan authorities to ensure not only that any current abuses of human rights taking place must be brought to an end, but that human rights form the cornerstone of political transition in Libya and part of the overall programme of institutional reform. The UK Government must also back up this position with the material and practical assistance the Libyan authorities will require to ensure that institutional reform is indeed successful.

42. In our previous submission to the Committee, we raised our very real concern that UK Government policy towards the MENA region as a whole has, for many years, been dictated by Britain’s national interests, particularly relating to security and prosperity. We have provided further details above of where these concerns lie and strong domestic constituencies will argue no doubt for the prevalence of such interests over the interests of the Libyan people. It is precisely at this time, however, that the UK Government must stand by the Libyan government to ensure that it is able to take the steps that it now needs to take. Amnesty International believes that such “standing by” requires the UK Government to put human rights values above other national interests, if reform is to be successful however, and a new Libya which will respect “human rights, rules and principles of citizenship and the rights of minorities and those most vulnerable” is to emerge. It is only through the creation of such a state that stability—perhaps the most valuable of all interests to the UK—will prevail. The continued unrest in other parts of the MENA region bears clear testament to this fact.

18 December 2011

Written evidence from BBC World Service and Global News

INTRODUCTION

This submission aims to update the Committee on recent media developments in the Middle East and North Africa (drawing on BBC Monitoring expertise), as well as reporting on the impact and role of the BBC’s Global News services, including BBC World Service and the BBC World Service Trust, since the start of the Arab Spring.

The BBC is better placed than any other international broadcaster to provide informed, impartial, responsible and in-depth coverage of the crisis in the Arab world.

— BBC World Service radio is available throughout the Middle East and North Africa in English and Arabic, on short wave, medium wave and numerous FM frequencies and online. BBC Arabic TV, launched in 2008, is also available free to air throughout the region, as well as BBC World News television in English.
— BBC Newsgathering maintains a hub-bureau for the Middle East in Jerusalem, as well as smaller bureaux across the region. In addition, the Arabic service has a multiplatform production centre in Cairo and BBC Monitoring maintains its key regional office in Cairo.

— BBC Monitoring provides summaries of all media activity as well as valuable in-depth analysis of media changes in the region.

— The BBC World Service Trust (BBC WST), the BBC’s international charity, trains journalists and encourages local independent and responsible media outputs across the region.

The Arab Spring took place in a complex and fast-evolving media environment—the way that populations interacted with media had a crucial bearing on real world outcomes. The use of social media by demonstrators played a pivotal role in developments. In addition, there were huge changes in the media landscape across the region as the drive for reform and reconstruction continued, as described below in the “Changes and Challenges for ME Media” section based on BBC Monitoring analysis. Drawing from their experiences with social media during the 2009 Iran protests, BBC journalists captured the mood of the people and explained the implications of what was happening, bringing in a wide range of voices and opinions while maintaining the BBC’s impartiality and editorial values.

The Arab uprisings coincided with a fundamental restructuring at the World Service, following the cuts announced in the Government’s Spending Review in autumn 2010. Some additional funds were subsequently allocated to the World Service following a review of the SR settlement carried out by the FCO—details of how this has benefited BBC Arabic are included in the section “BBC World Service in the ME and N Africa”.

Outstanding reporting and programming around events in the Middle East and North Africa was maintained, despite the internal changes that were taking place. The impact of BBC programming in the region was highlighted by reports of crowds gathering around huge screens in Tahrir Square in Egypt, and other major cities in the region, showing BBC Arabic TV, and by the pictures the BBC received showing demonstrators in Syria waving a banner which read simply “Thank you BBC”.

Summary

— Seismic changes have taken place across the media landscape in the region.

— There is uncertainty around the future role of state-owned broadcasters in Tunisia and Egypt, and the possibility of transforming to public service broadcasters.

— The role of social media in the reporting of events in the region was significant.

— BBC WS is available via TV, radio and online 24 hours a day, seven days a week across the region. BBC Arabic offered uninterrupted rolling news coverage during the height of protests and reaches an audience of 22 million.

— BBC Arabic online audiences grew by 300% during the height of the protests in Egypt, and traffic to mobile sites grew by 274%.

— The BBC has led the way in establishing systems and checks in the use of social media and user-generated content in its reporting.

— Protesters in Cairo and Bahrain erected makeshift TV projections so that they could watch BBC Arabic TV and photographs from Syria depicted demonstrators holding a banner saying “Thank you BBC”.

— Additional funding made available in June 2011 has allowed investment in BBC Arabic programming and jobs, including flexibility to change the schedule at any time to react to events.

— Government Conflict Pool funding has enabled the World Service to extend its availability in Libya with the addition of new FM transmitters in Benghazi and Misrata.

— BBC World Service is seeking to further strengthen its presence in the region through new partnerships, developing discussion programmes and pursuing other opportunities in Libya, including the possibility of a transmitter in Tripoli.

— BBC Monitoring has provided valuable in-depth analysis of media changes in the region.

— BBC WST is well-established in the region where its programmes have set in train changes in skills and attitudes to journalism, and whetted the appetite for change.

— The FCO has approved Arab Partnership Programme funding (APPF) for a BBC WST project aimed at transforming national Tunisian TV into a public service broadcaster.

— BBC WS and the BBC WST could—with further support from APPF—make a bigger and more specific contribution to the availability of reliable information and analysis of events for people in the region.

— BBC WS must continue to adjust to changing listening/viewing patterns to remain competitive.
Changes and Challenges for Middle East Media

Based on media features supplied by BBC Monitoring

Six months into the Arab uprisings, the media in the Middle East faced a series of challenges and changes.

Post-revolutionary states

In Tunisia and Egypt, the sudden departure of Presidents Ben Ali and Mubarak saw an immediate change in the attitude of state television channels. Broadcasters apologized to viewers for the lies they had broadcast in the past and opposition figures and political activists suddenly began appearing on air, often for the first time. There was much condemnation of the repression and corruption of the past and discussion of the options for the future, including the role of public broadcasters.

There was also a strongly nationalistic feel to the broadcasts, with much flag-waving and patriotic songs.

But even in this heady atmosphere, there were some voices cautioning that these changes could still be reversed and that many figures from the old regime remained in place. It was also noticeable that in Egypt, at least initially, allegations of corruption were not levelled at Mubarak as directly and personally as they had been at his Tunisian counterpart.

So, the question is, can these state broadcasters be turned into public service broadcasters after the European model, or will the future powers-that-be want them to stick to their old role as the government’s propaganda voice? How easy is it to throw off the legacy of decades of bureaucratic control, over-staffing, inertia and self-censorship?

It is possible, as has happened in India and Pakistan, that state television becomes increasingly irrelevant in the face of a fast-growing private broadcast sector.

But therein lies another challenge. The experience of those countries in the last decade shows that a liberalized media environment throws up problems of its own as commercial and competitive pressures are piled on a workforce that is for the most part under-paid and poorly trained.

This can result in an emphasis on sensationalism at the expense of serious debate and investigation, leading to cases of insensitive or irresponsible reporting.

Rebel media in Libya

There has been some similarity in the coverage of their respective internal problems by Libyan TV and Yemen TV. Both have acted as unashamed apologists for their governments, ignoring growing protests for as long as possible.

Both started from the position of reporting extensively on pro-government, or pro-leader, demonstrations without explaining why all their supporters were out on the streets.

As time went on, Libyan TV continued with a strong pro-Qadhafi line, while gradually reporting some incidents of vandalism, attributed to foreign agencies. Only on 20 February, with the speech by Sayf-al-Islam al-Qadhafi, did it acknowledge the seriousness of the crisis.

Libya subsequently saw a steady growth in media operating in those parts of the country that had fallen out of the hands of pro-Qadhafi forces. The rebels first gained control of government AM radio stations in several towns in the east, and after National Transitional Council (NTC) forces took Tripoli on 22 August, an official end to Al-Qadhafi’s control of the media was declared with the shutdown of his TV and radio outlets.

However, the current abundance of outlets in Libya has not yet reflected a pluralism of opinion, particularly when most of these outlets are focused on a common enemy. One positive sign can be seen in one of the main articles in the NTC provisional constitution. The article says that “the state guarantees the freedom of opinion, expression, press and peaceful protest”.

At the same time, there have been innovative uses of new media. For example, young rebel supporters produced a live video feed streamed on the internet from Benghazi while others posted daily video updates from Misrata. Facebook has been used by anti-Qadhafi groups since February to give updates on local news and to share anti-Qadhafi material such as cartoons. Since the fall of Tripoli these Facebook pages, which tend to focus on a specific town or region in Libya, appear to have started using social media as a means to promote themselves as groups and foster a sense of community spirit.

Syrian counter-attack

In Syria, and to a lesser extent Yemen, the authorities are portraying the situation in terms of a media war between domestic and external forces.

News bulletins on state-run Syrian TV have usually offered an objective, five-minute wrap-up of regional developments. This is placed after the lead reports on the president’s activities and before the almost obligatory report on the latest actions of “the Zionist entity” in the Palestinian territories. Criticism of the president and
his family is banned and the domestic and foreign press are censored. Journalists practice self-censorship and foreign reporters rarely get accreditation.

By denying access to most foreign media, Syria has forced them to rely on telephone reports supplied by purported eye-witnesses and video posted on the internet.

Such material is, by its very nature, hard to verify and the Syrian state media has been very pro-active in its attempts to counter or disprove these reports and thereby dent the credibility of the foreign media.

Syria has also sanctioned the creation of an Electronic Army, to wage a form of cyber-warfare against reform activists.

This takes the form of look-alike Facebook pages, the blocking and hacking of websites and the automated sending of torrents of Twitter spam. Similar techniques have been employed by the authorities in Bahrain.

**Bahrain**

The attitude of Bahrain TV has been only slightly more balanced, acknowledging that there have been protests but giving minimal airtime to the protestors.

However, two of the biggest media winners and losers have been other television channels.

According to the Financial Times, a recent official survey revealed high audience levels for the Iranian government’s Arabic news channel Al-Alam.

The channel was watched by over 90% of the Shi’i community, which forms the bulk of the opposition. But it was also being watched by nearly as many from the largely pro-government Sunni community.

One of the reasons for this is likely to be the lack of coverage of developments in Bahrain by Qatari-funded Al-Jazeera, which despite a reputation for being outspoken on subjects deemed sensitive in the Arab world, has continued to avoid criticism of Qatar and its Gulf allies.

**BBC WORLD SERVICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

The Arabic Service is both the largest and the oldest of the World Service’s language sections other than English. It was founded in 1938 and today it is a leading global broadcaster in the Middle East. The service is available via TV, radio and online 24 hours a day seven days a week, and also delivers content to mobile phones and other mobile devices. It offers news and information and a wide range of political, social and other content, as well as discussions and interactive programmes which expose Arab audiences to a unique range of views on current topics and debates. Here is a selection of some of the programmes BBC Arabic offers:

- **Question Time**—An opportunity for audiences in the region to put their questions directly to their leaders.
- **The Unsaid**—A documentary strand which explores the political, social and cultural issues that other stations in the region are not able to.
- **Talking Point**—Our multiplatform interactive programme, which allows audiences from across the region to discuss the topics that matter to them.
- **Open Agenda**—Our main current affairs strand which brings together specialists to debate the issues of the day.
- **Interview**—Questioning prominent figures from the Arab world.

Combining its online, television and radio audiences BBC Arabic reaches 22 million weekly—which shows that across markets surveyed 13% of adults consume BBC Arabic TV or radio. BBC Arabic TV increased its audience by 2m in 2011 taking it to 13.5m viewers.

**BBC impact since the start of the protests in the Middle East**

Britain has an exceptional advantage in the strength of the BBC’s reputation, built up over many years. That reputation is well established in the region and particularly admired by the USA. And particularly at times of crisis audiences turn to the BBC for its uniquely thorough, balanced and independent perspective:

- bbc-arabic.com has been offering a constantly updated service including live TV streaming. In February, during the height of Egyptian protests visitors to the website grew by 300%138 to 1.6 million.
- Mobile sites showed an equally impressive growth with a 274%139 increase for BBC Arabic.
- In February 2011 there were 8.4 million requests for the BBC Arabic live TV stream and 6.1m requests for video-on-demand content which represents an incredible increase of 955% and 565% respectively, compared to an average month in 2010.
- Radio and TV offered uninterrupted rolling news coverage during the height of the protests.

138 Based on week commencing 14 Feb 2011 vs. average weekly reach in 2010.
139 Ibid.
BBC Arabic’s interactive TV programme *Nuqtat Hewar (Talking Point)* was extended from three times a week to daily. This and other programmes on the English network, such as *World Have Your Say* carried on conversations across the Arab world which sought to make sense of the crisis, bringing insight and context, and challenging opinions.

Landmark interviews with key players were broadcast around the world and shared across the BBC.

In Tahrir Square in Cairo protesters erected a makeshift TV projection to watch BBC Arabic TV. Similar scenes were witnessed in the main square in Bahrain.

*Newsnight* showed shots of people watching BBC Arabic in Eastern Libya. The line was that they were desperate for information and this was one of the few sources of independent information they could get.

The BBC was sent pictures of demonstrators in Syria holding a banner which read “Thank You BBC”.

Journalists operating in unpredictable and hostile situations have often been at risk and some, like our correspondent in Yemen, have been physically assaulted.

The BBC’s coverage in English and other languages received widespread attention across the region. BBC Arabic television was jammed from time to time in Libya and Egypt.

In addition, the Iranian authorities recommenced jamming of Persian TV, probably through fear of a ripple effect on the population. WS has protested at the jamming.

Confidential documents recently recovered from Tripoli’s internal security and intelligence headquarters blame the “Shiite Muslim control” over Al-Jazeera television and the BBC’s broadcasts in Arabic for the popular revolt against the regime.

The BBC’s widespread network of stringers and reporters has been feeding coverage in Arabic and English. Arabic correspondents appear regularly on English output, both for international and UK domestic audiences, adding local knowledge competitors lack.

**BBC Arabic and its use of social media during the Arab uprisings**

Large amounts of user-generated content (UGC) distributed through social media platforms were used by news organisations in their coverage, and broadcast around the world during the Arab Uprisings. Commentators were quick to recognise that social and digital media played an important role in the protests, and by extension could become a catalyst for political change, and ultimately democratic renewal.

BBC World Service has led the way in recognising the significance of social media in newsgathering and in introducing systems to manage the huge amounts of UGC available. It is currently carrying out a study in conjunction with the LSE into how news areas have adapted to this change in newsgathering methods, looking back to the 2009 protests in Iran, as well as more recent events in the Arab world. Interviews were carried out with BBC Persian and BBC Arabic staff, amongst others.

Here is a summary of some of the issues arising from the study:

For many broadcasters covering both the protests in Iran in 2009 and the recent Arab uprisings there were no alternatives to using UGC—Iranian and Syrian authorities, for instance, attempted to instate an effective news blackout. Lack of access to events as they unfolded on the ground meant that the broadcast media had effectively become reliant on social media—news making was no longer the exclusive domain of professional journalists and their newsrooms. Typically UGC had been used as a supplement, sometimes as a source of soft-news stories, but almost never as a means, let alone an exclusive means of covering hard-news events. Now social and broadcast media were converging, UGC was playing a more central role, marking an important change in its role in the news process.

Initially the use of UGC at the World Service was *ad hoc*, but by the time the Tunisian revolution happened, it had become institutionalized, with improved procedures and routines around processing and verification. The widespread adoption of the UGC hub (a team of journalists dedicated to processing and authentication of UGC using software available organisation-wide that acts as a giant inbox for the collection of material) marked an initial change in the newsroom.

While journalists now feel far more at ease with UGC, they remain clear that there are editorial limits to its influence on the news. UGC was routinely described in the study as a useful tool, a great source, often the most important wellspring of stories, yet having it move through the “checks and balances” of the BBC remained crucial. No one relied entirely on UGC—despite journalists being far more comfortable in their use of it, many still see it as a poor alternative to having reporters on the ground. Nonetheless, journalists have reported that their output has changed markedly, and UGC has become far more prominent.

The practices of UGC providers have also changed—in 2009 people uploaded content to social media platforms and submitted it to the BBC using every available route, ie emails, personal websites, phoning in. While they were keen to share content, they were not quite sure how to do so to best effect. Moving forward to 2011, the BBC now advertises across its platforms to invite people to submit content, giving advice on the type of material that journalists are looking for. During the Arab Spring a special BBC Arabic video promo
showed examples of the kind of material they would find useful, explained how it should be sent in, and where it would appear.

Finally, the study observes that, while an authoritarian government can shut down a mobile phone network, or jam a satellite signal, a video shot on a phone, uploaded to YouTube, shared across Facebook and Twitter, and harvested by the BBC to then be ingested into a news story broadcast on TV and radio, streamed on the internet and posted to its website, presents more of a problem. The news ecology is in this sense networked; it has no single head or hierarchy.

**Additional funding**

The Government announced in June 2011 that it would make an additional £2.2 million per annum available to the World Service over the next three years, following the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the Implications of the World Service cuts, and the subsequent FCO review of the 16% cuts which were announced as part of the Government’s Spending Review.

Together with the £9 million reallocation of existing funding over three years approved by the BBC Trust at the same time, this additional resource is helping provide support for several key services, including BBC Arabic, as well as being used for investment in new platforms and markets.

In Arabic, the majority of the additional funding will be invested in programming in order to best serve the audience and sustain a rich mix of news, debate, current affairs programming and interactive discussions. In addition, BBC Arabic TV is moving from being a rolling news station to one which provides its audiences with a wider agenda which addresses the interests of the younger generation in the Arab world.

Importantly this funding, together with the new rota patterns being introduced, will allow the BBC to retain the flexibility to change the schedule at any time to react to events. World Service will also be able to invest more in bilingual newsgathering in Arabic and English. Consequently, there has been investment in jobs at BBC Arabic and a number of notices of redundancy have been withdrawn.

However, as the Committee is aware, NUJ members working at the Arabic Service held a 6-day strike in August 2011, following a dispute over working conditions and the implementation of the new rota system. These proposals were announced by the BBC in June 2010 with the aim of driving efficiencies to allow more investment on programming. The proposals are comparable with staff working on other news outlets in the BBC. The BBC continues to engage in regular dialogue with the NUJ in an attempt to avert further strikes—a meeting at Acas has taken place.

**Conflict Pool funding for new transmitters in Libya**

BBC Arabic has an established audience in Libya on TV as well as SW and MW radio, but in order to extend its availability to FM radio, BBC World Service applied to the Government’s Conflict Pool for funding for new FM transmitters in Benghazi and Misrata. The Conflict Pool has agreed to fund these for the first year, and the BBC announced on 11 August 2011 that both FM transmitters were operational, broadcasting news and current affairs in Arabic; and an edition of *Newshour* in English. We are exploring the possibility of research to evaluate the reach and impact of these transmissions.

**BBC Monitoring’s Role during the Arab Spring**

Since the start of the Arab Spring BBC Monitoring (BBCM) has been analysing how the pan-Arab and Arab state media covered the unrest sweeping the Middle East and North Africa, and the impact of the unrest on the media themselves—which media changed and how, and which remain as before.

BBCM has looked at how coverage of the unrest by the Arab world’s most-viewed news channel, Al-Jazeera, has impacted the channel’s own credibility, turning what seemed to have been a good start to the year thanks to its coverage of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings into a crisis of credibility, due to the way it handled developments in Bahrain and Syria.

It also evaluated the longer-term effects of a freer Arab media, particularly in Egypt, and the growing use of social media on traditional media in the region, especially the possibility that the centre of influence may shift back to Cairo from the Gulf states.

BBCM has charted the way state television channels across the Middle East and North Africa have adopted a variety of stances towards the unrest and demands for change that have swept the region—those that have already undergone change; those that are attempting to adjust to and incorporate the demands for change; those that are reporting the demands but giving the impression that their own countries are not affected; and those that are ignoring developments, sometimes to the point of being in a state of denial.

The “Challenges for Middle East Media” section above demonstrates the range of media features and analyses BBC Monitoring has provided to stakeholders.
BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST PROJECTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

The BBC World Service Trust has worked in the Middle East and North Africa over a number of years spanning many areas of media output, including radio, television, print and online. The focus is on encouraging local media professionals and their organisations to produce responsible, accurate and relevant content for their audiences. This includes mentoring, training, organising media events and networking opportunities, technical support and infrastructure development.

As discussed earlier, the fundamentals of the news business are shifting in the region, and access to modern technology will ultimately contribute to redefining the relationship between the State and citizens.

Ministries of Information in the Arab world are acutely aware of the challenges of an environment in which the individual is gaining command over the information he/she wants to consume. State broadcasters are increasingly losing their ability to constrain their citizens to their messages.

Following events in Tunisia earlier this year, Tunisian TV expressed their strong interest in the BBC World Service Trust’s expertise in supporting the transition of former state broadcasters to public service broadcasters (PSB), and consequently the FCO’s Arab Partnership Programme Fund has agreed to fund the WS Trust project Transforming National Tunisian Television into a Public Service Broadcaster. This is a two-year project which aims at building the capacity of the Tunisian TV to provide citizens with impartial and professional media coverage, thus enabling them to participate fully in the democratic transition.

The immediate priorities of the project are to establish the statutory and editorial frameworks, as well as the financial and human resources structures, without which Tunisian TV will be unable to function as a PSB. The first year of the project will focus on these issues; with targeted editorial and technical training interventions delivered in collaboration with other media organisations in order to support the coverage of the October 2011 elections. The second year will focus on editorial and programme-making activities to enable the first year’s reforms to take root.

Promoting change in media standards and practice is a long-term process. However, WST programmes in the Middle East have set in train a number of significant changes in skills and attitudes to journalism in the Arab world and whetted the appetite for change.

Socially Responsible Media Platforms in the Arab World is a notable multi-platform WST initiative across the region, aiming to develop lasting media platforms through which vulnerable, marginalised and disenfranchised groups in the Arabic-speaking world can access diverse viewpoints, air their concerns and learn from comparable experience.

The project began in October 2008 and concludes in October this year, after an extension following the Egyptian revolution. It has sought to reach different audiences through the relevant media, working in a number of countries,

- It supported the production of a large-scale, mainstream television drama series in Egypt, portraying issues such as poverty and the socio-economic divide, police corruption, religious co-existence and how individuals can take control over their lives and make their own choices. The drama is reaching many millions of viewers in Egypt and the Arab world generally and received a very favourable reception from critics. A second drama, produced in Jordan, will soon launch and further work in Egypt is currently under development for next July. Through this involvement, the WS Trust leaves the capacity within the all-important Egyptian drama production industry to produce works that contain socially-responsible content within key mass entertainment media outputs. Material and themes developed before the revolution remained highly pertinent. The messages were noted for their particular importance for the encouragement of civil participation in Egypt post-revolution.

- It improved the capacity of local radio to deliver programming strands which facilitate community participation and support improved local governance. The project collaborated with regional radio stations in Yemen and Jordan to introduce discussion-based programmes focusing on the provision of local services.

- It encouraged the growth of online communities, offering users a more proactive space for opinion exchange. A first of its kind web drama was produced in Lebanon, highlighting issues that are often taboo in the national non-digital media and encouraging discussion. The drama won an international digital EMMY award for its innovative approach.

- It strengthened the ability of bloggers and web journalists in Syria to represent the views of young people on the Internet. An online training platform worked to enhance writing skills, showcase multi-media outputs and encourage a debate around key issues.

Designed to bring together journalists from across the Arab World, the Media Dialogue Programme organised a series of symposia in Beirut, Damascus, Cairo and Rabat. Some of the region’s most well-known media personalities, as well as government and oppositional representatives, human rights activists, NGOs and journalists, came together to debate issues around the role of the media in the Arab world, media and democracy and the ideal of a free press.
The WST also ran workshops with editors and journalists to produce some of the first formal Style and Editorial Guidelines for media organisations in the region, including Al-Rai, the leading daily newspaper in Jordan, and ERTU in Egypt.

**Future Plans**

The BBC’s role during the Arab uprisings has been significant. The World Service’s strong reputation meant that audiences turned to the BBC for accurate news and information they could trust during the upheavals. BBC Monitoring played a crucial role in providing in-depth reports and analysis to government officials, and the BBC WST, already established in the region, is well placed to offer its services in relation to media development as individual countries make the transition to democracy. Its unrivalled reputation means it is frequently able to work in contexts, and with partners, where no other media development organization is welcomed.

The Government’s Building Stability Overseas Strategy document published in July 2011 states that: “Soft power will play a significant role in support of our efforts. … The BBC World Service provides access to news which can be trusted by people in fragile countries. The work of the BBC World Service Trust and other institutions which help to build the capacity of in-country news services is vital.”

The World Service will seek to strengthen its presence in the region, by:

- pursuing partnerships with local broadcasters in Egypt, Tunisia & Libya;
- exploring new discussion programming opportunities across the region, and
- pursuing further discussions with the FCO regarding Conflict Pool funding for a new FM transmitter in Tripoli when the political situation allows, following the recent installation of transmitters in Benghazi and Misrata.

In addition, BBC World Service, together with the BBC World Service Trust, could, subject to the availability of further supplementary funding via the FCO’s Arab Partnership Programme Fund (APPF), make a bigger and more specific contribution to the availability of reliable information and analysis of events for people in the region. As described in the BBC WST section above, the fund is already supporting a BBC WST project to aid the transformation of Tunisian TV into a genuine public service TV broadcaster that is editorially and financially independent of government and facilitates democratisation. Constructive discussions are taking place about other potential projects within the criteria required by the APPF—BBC WST is currently looking at how it can support development in terms of public service broadcasting in Egypt. It is also exploring opportunities to support independent broadcasting in Libya. We would be happy to update the Committee on these projects when there are further developments to report.

At a time of huge unrest and volatility across the Arab world, the BBC World Service is committed to covering one of the biggest news stories of the 21st century for all its audiences around the world. However, within the current financial limitations, it is crucial that the World Service continues to adjust to changing listening patterns and distributes its services to its audience on the most appropriate and most easily accessible platforms, in order to remain competitive.

14 September 2011

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**Written evidence from David Wardrop, Chair of the UK Friends of the Alexandria Library and the International Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina**

1. **Scope**

I refer only to the Committee’s question, *Could the FCO realistically have done more to anticipate the “Arab Spring”?*

2. **Summary**

I support the view that the UK in Egypt has become too Cairo-centric. This led to intelligence gathered from regional cities being filtered through the Cairo prism which is opaque, akin to the city’s polluted atmosphere. In mitigation, this same error was made by the Egyptian presidency and the international media.

3. **Background**

I chair both the UK Friends of the Alexandria Library and the International Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina which comprises 35 Chapters in 20 countries, all set up to support and promote the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA). Since its inauguration in 2002, we meet at the BA annually. Over the years, I have met those in academe, medicine, industry, business, tourism, museums, government and education, from governors, university presidents and admirals to student leaders, activists and shopkeepers. In 2009, I set up and organised the city’s first cultural festival.
4. THE EGYPTIAN PSYCHE AND ITS IMPACT ON ASSESSING NEWS

(a) The Egyptian psyche. This remains essentially pharaonic and prefers that only leaders take decisions. This generates suspicion at the top and cowardice further down. By extension, Cairo distrusts its regional cities, especially Alexandria which for Cairenes is but a beach resort.

(b) Alexandria where? With its expanding suburbs, it is Africa’s fourth largest city but it is also the world’s largest without its own newspaper. None of Cairo’s 13 newspapers retain a correspondent in the city so understandably, it generates little news. The state TV’s Channel 5, dedicated to the city, has only two cameras. Few watch it, probably none in Cairo.

(c) The Cairo media. Its indifference towards news from Egypt’s many faceless industrial cities hampers diplomats in their intelligence gathering. The city’s many think-tanks are no help as they think like the media.

(d) The source of the Arab Spring. It follows that as the Arab Spring started in the regional cities of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, few in Cairo were equipped to analyse it. It is now an Egyptian commonplace that without support from regional cities, especially Alexandria and Suez, there would have been no Tahrir Square whose protesters would have been kettled and dispatched but for the growing groundswell of change nationally. News of this groundswell came through social media which in part explains why even the Presidency and the media could neither believe nor comprehend it.

(e) Diplomats and the media. With no reliable regional informants, they and the international media had to depend on the Cairo media who were no better placed. Thus the world watched the Arab Spring through the Cairo bubble.

(f) Conclusion. The UK must always ensure its in-country information strategies include unfiltered regional input.

13 January 2012

Appendix 1

THE BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA—AN OVERVIEW

The decision to build the BA was an extraordinary departure from Egyptian traditional thinking. A landmark presidential decree (2000) shielded it from the excesses of Egyptian political in-fighting and from religious interfering. From its inauguration in 2002, it has addressed national and international issues with a degree of creativity and freedom envied by others in the Arab world through the fortune of the patronage of its Chairman Mrs Mubarak. The BA comprises:

- 6 specialised libraries
- 4 museums
- 1 planetarium
- 15 permanent exhibitions
- 4 art galleries
- 8 academic research centres
- an international standard conference centre
- the only mirror-site of the Internet Archive

It organises about 500 academic, cultural and educational events annually. It runs a chamber orchestra. In 2010, it was visited by one and a half million visitors. It leads in Middle East Arabic digitisation programmes and invited to join the exclusive Digital Library Federation before Oxford University. In 2004, the BA hosted the Arab Reform Forum which debated and agreed the remarkable Alexandria Declaration which espoused social and political values never seen before in the Arab world.

Appendix 2

THE UK AND THE NEW BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA; AN OPPORTUNITY LOST

(a) Its Genesis

This UNESCO-sponsored project gained momentum during the period when the UK had withdrawn its membership of UNESCO. Being out of the UNESCO loop, the UK failed to join with others in comprehending what this extraordinarily different project set out to achieve. A former UK Consul-General blamed this on poor coordination between the FCO and the then Departments of Trade & Industry and National Heritage.

(b) Its inauguration

In terse correspondence with our ambassador at the time who acknowledged that “the monetary value of (UK contributions to the BA) may not equate to the notional sums that other countries put on their contributions”, I gathered the UK view was that the project was a white elephant, not the radically different observatory of Egyptian opinion that others quickly recognised. Millions of its visitors will have now seen prominent plaques on the BA entrance which name those countries which supported it. The UK did not qualify for inclusion.

(c) Playing catch-up

Other European countries and the USA retain strong links in Alexandria but I can confirm that the status of the UK Consul-General’s office and the British Council has declined. In 2009, I organised the city’s first
cultural festival which featured energy and input from many consulates and cultural missions but not alas from my own.

(d) Comment on FCO and British Council submissions

From my privileged position as a regular visitor to Alexandria, I can assess how countries have utilised the unique opportunities which the BA offered them to explore the Egyptian psyche and to strengthen links in this large and important city. While HMG may claim otherwise, the BA’s excellent annual report shows that the UK remains “behind the curve”. I am not yet convinced it wishes to play “catch up”.

Written evidence from ABTA—The Travel Association

INTRODUCTION

1. This response is submitted on behalf of ABTA—The Travel Association. ABTA was founded in 1950—and is the largest travel trade association in the UK, with over 1,200 members and over 5,000 retail outlets and offices. Our Members range from small, specialist tour operators and independent travel agencies through to publicly listed companies and household names, from call centres to internet booking services to high street shops. This submission is influenced by a diverse cross-section of the ABTA Membership.

2. ABTA welcomes the Foreign Affairs Committee’s inquiry into British Foreign Policy and the “Arab Spring” and we welcome this opportunity to contribute our views.

3. The evidence contained within this submission is limited to the impact (where relevant) of the UK Government’s foreign policy response to the “Arab Spring” on the technical operations of ABTA Members operating holiday programmes within affected countries—namely Egypt and Tunisia. This submission reserves any comment on the underlying causes of the political protests, and does not seek to offer comment on the Government’s overall policy response to the “Arab Spring”.

4. It is worth noting that ABTA’s tour operator Members who sell package holidays are obliged by law to provide a high level of care for their passengers. Under the Package Travel Directive (PTD), proper execution of the contract between the package provider and the consumer includes the safe departure and return of a passenger, as well as their health and safety while in destination. Travel providers that have sold holiday arrangements that are not packages are not bound to the same obligations as those providing package holidays. As relates to the Arab Spring, PTD obligations generally ensured that British passengers travelling with ABTA Members on package holidays were taken care of, and evacuated as and when was necessary with little difficulty, and at no expense to the passenger.

5. ABTA has a dedicated and specialist Destinations Services team whose primary role in crisis management situations involves liaising with key contacts in the UK Government, Tourist Offices, destination Governments and other industry stakeholders (such as airport managers) to establish the severity of a crisis or incident and to ensure an appropriately robust and joined-up response. Furthermore, ABTA’s Destinations Services team is responsible for:
   — Coordinating the crisis response of ABTA Members;
   — Providing information regarding the crisis to the wider ABTA membership, through bulletins, websites and SMS;
   — Providing the ABTA Communications team with sufficient information regarding the crisis and actions being taken. They in turn act as the channel to communicate to the media and other interested parties the policies on behalf of the industry and act as a media voice for Members where appropriate and reasonable to do so.

6. ABTA maintains a very close working relationship with the FCO’s Consular Services Directorate, and communications throughout the key crisis period are accurately described as strong, effective, and constructive.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

7. ABTA Members greatly appreciated the cooperative working between Consular Services and ABTA throughout the period of sustained volatility in Tunisia and Egypt. Through constant and regular dialogue from sources on the ground, Consular Services implemented balanced advice based on well-informed decisions. The high-standard of communication from the FCO ensured that information flowed in a timely manner, enabling decisions to be made before tour operators’ key flying programmes, maximising the impact of the advice. This cooperation provided ABTA Members with the confidence to allow the FCO and ABTA to maintain a dialogue, and this helped to ensure that Consular Services was not overburdened by an excess of additional calls.

FCO CONSULAR SUPPORT FOR BRITISH CITIZENS DURING THE UNREST

8. Whilst ABTA was in regular and frequent contact with the UK FCO Consular Services, ABTA Members largely focussed their attention and efforts on their customers on the ground. As a result, we have not acquired first-hand evidence on the support available by Consular Services in the destination. Anecdotal feedback
indicates clearly that Consular Services appeared to be doing an effective job for British citizens. Initially, one concern to arise was regarding visibility of consulate staff at airports. We understand that this issue was addressed promptly and this made it significantly easier for citizens to identify personnel from the Consulate.

9. The FCO was proactive and prominent in its communication regarding the actions they were taking and the consular support they could provide during the unrest. They communicated their decisions promptly. An example of where the Government could have harnessed industry expertise more effectively however was in relation to the chartering of rescue aircrafts for Egypt. ABTA was in a position to suggest less expensive chartered options; however the Government did not consult the industry on this specific matter, and chose a more expensive alternative.

10. Given that Tunisia and Egypt are large volume package and charter flight markets, the majority of ABTA Member customers did not require seats on these rescue aircrafts. We fully support the FCO decision whereby British Nationals who required seats on a rescue aircraft were charged.

11. The need for accurate and timely travel advice is critical to the industry, as level changes are the trigger for the industry to take action. In general, the feedback on travel advice was positive in relation to Egypt, however the travel advice issued in relation to Tunisia had caused some confusion which resulted in an evacuation of British nationals in destination that was unnecessary at that point. The administrative error in relation to Tunisia served as a learning experience in the way advice was issued for Egypt later. Members expressed that the FCO was responsive to concerns about over-caution, particularly in the Red Sea resorts. These resorts were very far-removed from the political unrest in large Egyptian urban centres (Cairo and Alexandria) and the importance of recognising these geographical differences in Egypt ensured orderly evacuations where necessary and the prevention of general panic amongst UK nationals.

12. ABTA would strongly support the continued informed approach that the FCO has adopted in relation to travel advice. Had advice regarding Egypt been issued hastily and impulsively, whereby a full travel ban was implemented, the Red Sea resorts would have to have been evacuated. The implications of this would have been much more significant as the number of British citizens holidaying in these areas was significantly higher in comparison with other parts of Egypt. Take one example of a flight day that saw 14 flights from the UK. If there were a need to evacuate in the future, it is critical to liaise on timing of change of advice to ensure that customers imminently due to travel to the embargoed area could be provided with alternative holiday choices so that the aircraft to be used for evacuations has the capacity to do so.

13. Tourism is of vital importance to the MENA countries. Working towards increasing tourism in these countries will help bring stability to the economies of these affected countries. Egypt and Tunisia had seen sustained growth in tourism arrivals prior to the uprising. Since the events of the Arab Spring, those numbers have sharply declined. Both destinations have seen sharp declines (in excess of 20%) compared to the tourism arrivals they enjoyed in 2010. Both of these countries had been popular and growing package market destinations and while the package market has seen an overall, though slight increase in sales in 2011, the market in Tunisia and Egypt continues to be in decline.

14. One significant factor that could assist in the recovery of tourism to Egypt is to change the APD banding system. While Egypt is competing in the short haul market, APD charged on flights to Egypt is charged at the same long-haul rate as destinations such as Canada, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates—though all three destinations are significantly further afield and constitute a very different type of holiday (reduced rate APD for Egypt is £60 while APD on a flight to Greece is at £12). This anomaly ensures that Egypt is placed at a significant disadvantage to its competitors, making it an artificially more expensive choice for price sensitive consumers. Ensuring that APD charged on flights to Egypt was in line with the lower rate APD charged for other destinations in the region would be a significant and impactful step to assist Egypt and boost consumer demand.

15. Should the political unrest experienced in Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab countries spread to further countries where UK nationals have a strong presence, such as Morocco for example, then certain challenges will be faced in respect to managing evacuations and rescue services. This is likely as the majority of British Nationals who would be in the destination are not likely to be travelling on a package holiday, and as such, there would be no obligation on the airline or travel provider to organise repatriation support.

16. Tourism can be a major economic driver for countries affected by events such as these. Specifically, UK Government policy on APD can make a significant difference to Egypt.
RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Tourism can contribute to cross-cultural awareness and understanding between tourists and the host countries. It is vital to continue to provide conditions that enable this and continue to support the destinations in the way that has been carried out so far.

18. ABTA strongly supports the continued informed approach that the FCO has adopted in relation to travel advice.

19. Creating a level playing field for Egypt to compete with short-haul destinations would have a very potent impact in the promotion of tourism to Egypt, and the inflow of tourist investment that would follow. The UK Government can significantly contribute to this objective by treating Egypt as a short-haul destination for APD, and ensuring that the rate applied is at the same level as comparative destinations.

20. ABTA strongly supports the continuation of the excellent links between the FCO and ABTA to ensure industry expertise and on-the-ground knowledge is taken into consideration to assist decision making and provide expert assistance on numbers of passengers, which locations they are in, flying programmes and days that would have significant impact and real time information from the destination.

21. While package operators have a legal obligation to the duty of care for their passengers, there is no equivalent obligation on airlines or travel providers, and this could prove problematic in future. Should political unrest of this nature spread to other Arab countries with large levels of UK nationals visiting, but not as part of a package holiday—Morocco is an example of this—ABTA would advocate that detailed contingency plans were put in place to ensure that potential challenges in respect to managing evacuations and rescue services were put in place.

19 January 2012