

Libya

The crisis

Will the West end in the “Dustbin of History” or is Gaddafi heading to landfill?

The recent wave of political unrest in the Middle East has caused great swathes of protests which have claimed the lives of many.

It all began on the 15th of February, as a series of protests (possibly caused by the earlier uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt). This uprising quickly spread across Libya. Gaddafi, the leader of Libya who overthrew the short-lived constitutional monarchy and became a dictator in 1969, responded with military action.

The casualties of these events are not simply civilians or soldiers; even mighty bastions of political influence are being eroded by the changing desert winds. Mubarak is perhaps the most high profile casualty of latent political fury from the populace but perhaps this titanic desert storm is claiming its next victim, Muammar Gaddafi.

Gaddafi has been accused of breaching human rights by the U.N. Yet, despite the tide of hatred towards him, the Colonel is rallying support from the populace and has vowed “never to surrender”. French President Nicholas Sarkozy said recently that Gaddafi was “a leader losing friends at home and abroad”. The U.N. has imposed a no-fly zone above Libya, and French, U.S. and U.K. planes have flown over Libya enforcing this, and firing missiles at pro-Gaddafi forces.

Tom M and Richard

Crisis Beckoning in Middle East as Troops Kills Ten Protestors

Syrian Troops open fire on ‘mosque protestors’ as Middle Eastern unrest continues.

At least ten anti-government protestors were killed as government troops open fired on a crowd of protestors gathered around the Omari Mosque. These protests were due to the recent deaths of other anti-government protestors in Deraa, who were killed as they marched on the city.

Reports suggest that the Syrian Police fired live rounds into the crowd of protestors trying to enter the city centre. Hundreds of young protestors were shot and there have been 37 confirmed deaths.

The violence began on Wednesday, and the use of tear gas, live ammunition and the cutting of power lines to protestors’ homes have followed since then.

This latest protest movement comes at a time where such action is becoming more common, with recent protests in Egypt, Bahrain and most recently – Libya. So why is it that the Middle East has been hit so hard by anti-government protests?

Currently, the world’s superpowers are under a lot of pressure to deal with the problems in the Middle East. Coalition forces are bombarding government bases across Libya and refuse to admit the personal targeting of Colonel Gaddafi. It is clear that the unrest in Libya has been caused by Gaddafi’s ruthless and violent reign over Libya. His tactics of brute force has given way to an uprising of anti-government rebels taking hold of important towns such as Benghazi.

Jack

Should We Invade Libya?

Should British boots be put on the ground in Libya so that we can stop the dictatorial leader, Colonel Gaddafi, or should we leave him alone, save the money and put it to use in our own country?

This is a debate that has been ongoing in the House of Commons, in the UN and all over the world. In Libya, Gaddafi's regime prohibits the organisations of political parties; trade unions; and student movements, with anyone involved being imprisoned, tortured or even killed. The rebels in Libya were inspired by the people of both Egypt and Tunisia, who managed to overthrow their pro-imperialist dictators Mubarak and Ben Ali.

So far fighter planes and submarines from nine countries have bombed Tripoli and destroyed many of the air defences and enemy barracks of the Libyan army. This has enabled the planes to enforce a no-fly zone over the major areas of fighting, in order to stop Gaddafi bombing his own civilians and killing innocent people.

The Libyan army should not be underestimated as they have a well equipped and trained army of over 35000 ground personnel which would put up a fierce fight against our own soldiers and, as Gaddafi has said "it would be a long and bloody fight, but we will not back down." This is very worrying as Britain is contemplating sending in our British lads to a fight which isn't ours to fight. On the other hand the Libyan air force has been wiped out and is no longer as much of a threat.

The reasons for invading area are obvious: to rid the country of a cruel and unjust regime, as well as protecting its people.

However many people could be against the invasion because of the war in Iraq. There have been many accusations of oil being the cause of this invasion. Libya exports around \$44billion of oil each year and this could be a major issue surrounding Britain's action.

The question we need to ask ourselves is whether we would want to risk British lives or leave them to fight their own battles without support.

Max H

Libya: The Repercussions of War

Seventy-five jets. Ten ships. Four nuclear submarines. Twenty aircraft. Hundreds of missiles. But is this all necessary? The UN's suffocating blanket of 'mandatory action', is not only crippling the Libyan forces and the will of the people, but is affecting global economics and relations.

In fact, you are even connected to this war through the portal of your petrol pump. In one week, petrol has risen dramatically, partly due to the shortage of Libyan oil.

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's air power has been wiped out, yet dozens of multi-national jets are still enforcing the no-fly zone. This could be seen as the UN's over eagerness to demonstrate their display of maturity and effectiveness at dealing with such crises, so Libya has been smothered in firepower from nine countries.

Unfortunately this is not an isolated occurrence, as the power is shifting in Africa and the Middle East. Piracy in Somalia, tyranny in Zimbabwe, genocide in Rwanda: what will happen next? The western world may have supplied these leaders with weapons and arms, potentially making billions in sales.

In actual fact the amount of money that we have gained by selling firearms is dwarfed by the amount of aid (for example a third of the Somalian population rely on food aid to survive) that we provide. There are so many other countries in a very similar situation which do not have the support of coalition forces. The UN needs to make a choice, help no one or help all.

Charles and Nick

Radiation Levels in Water a Danger to Infants

Contamination of water supplies in Japan's Quake – stricken capital, Tokyo, has led to it now being considered unsafe for consumption by infants.

210 becquerels per litre of radiation was found to be emitted in tests of tap water, conducted by government scientists.

'Under government guidelines, water containing a radioactive substance of more than 100 becquerels should not be used for milk for babies,' a government spokesman said this morning, making the levels of Iodine-131 over twice as much as what is usually permitted'. The water is still considered safe for adults to drink.

He went on to say that 'this is without doubt, an effect of the Fukushima Daiichi Plant.'

The problems caused by the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, which was severely damaged in last Friday's Earthquake, has also led to the evacuation of civilians inhabiting the 12 miles surrounding the reactor.

Etsuko Nomara, a Tokyo resident and parent of two, described the situation as a 'viscous negative spiral from the nuclear disaster'. We have contaminated milk and vegetables, and now tap water in Tokyo, and I'm wondering what's next.'

This is just the latest development in Japan's nuclear crisis. It will no doubt require a continuation of the current international effort far into the future, in order to overcome this problem.

David

The World Water Crisis - Why should we be bothered?

Did you know that yesterday was World Water Day?

World Water Day has not got the coverage it deserved so you probably had no idea. The theme this year was Thirsty Cities concentrating on the lack of water in the developing world.

95% of urban population growth happens within the developing world, forcing cities which already have little water into providing water for over a billion new people. There are renewable water resources such as rainwater but the amount garnered from these are relatively small compared with non-renewable sources such as groundwater. The rate of water removal from pores is many times higher than it is replaced naturally, drying out and causing subsidence and sinkholes which are more dangerous than the lack of water in the first place.

Developing cities need the knowledge and money to invest in renewable clean water sources to continue developing. A large amount of progress could be also made in improving the convenience of water; women and girls are often seen as water carriers, devoting much time to providing for their village when they could be attending school or working for the family.

To sustain their families these girls have to work or get an education, but also need to collect water. The distance these girls walk is so large because clean water is so hard to find, the health issues of dirty water are huge. Diseases like cholera are found in the water and cause the affected person to drink even more, making them even more ill.

World Water Day is trying to show the problems facing water-short countries to those with ample water. Here, water is often taken for granted and can be wasted and abused. If we tried to save water, and spend our money instead on providing it for the developing world we could build pumps and wells, letting women have education and villages have clean water.

Conserve your water, reduce your utilities bill and donate the saved money to world water day.

Ed L

National Archives and the MoD release classified files

The Access to Information Act 2005 states that government information must be accessible to the public upon request. In accordance with this, in a joint operation between the Ministry of Defence and the National Archives, 200 files of reported Unidentified Flying Object sightings are being released. These previously classified files go from extreme to extreme, from badly drawn sketches to convening photographs, and everything in between, including a photograph, claiming to show an "UFO", now actually proven as just a reflection of lamps in the window.

Many strange cases have been included in the released files, such as a 'near miss' from an unidentified object that was reported by the pilots of a 727 plane landing at Manchester Airport, and an attempted alien abduction from the middle of London.

The soon-to-be-cut department in the MoD said the unit had received thousands of reports, although none had proved that extra-terrestrials exist, or are any security threat to the UK.

So, whether extra-terrestrials exist or not, there is one thing of which we can be sure: people will always be interested in aliens, and whenever an Unidentified Flying Object is seen, the first conclusion people come to will forever be our interstellar neighbours.

Edward N

Port Vale FC: an Overview

AT THE START of the 2010/11 football season, Port Vale were flying high in League Two, but in the three months since manager Micky Adams' controversial departure to Championship side Sheffield United, there has been some turbulent times at Vale Park.

Micky Adams came to Burslem in the summer of 2009 from Brighton and Hove Albion after the sacking of Dean Glover. Adams promised to stabilise the club, bring in the players who fitted his own style, and then he said his aim would be to gain promotion and establish Port Vale as a Championship side.

The start of the 09/10 season was really a chance for Adams to get to know the club, take a good look at his players and then in January, he could bring in new blood, and players that played in the style he liked to see.

Adams soon became the fans' favourite, bringing in influential players, an experienced set of backroom staff, as well as employing Geoff Horsfield as his assistant. He loved to play a very

aggressive style, and these tactics worked on the dogged pitches of the lowest tier in English football.

The end of his first season saw the Valiants pushing for a promotion place, but after a poor final three games, the whites finished a respectable eighth.

The fans, whilst disappointed, saw great potential in Adams and his team, and the players he brought in never seemed to put in a bad performance, but with good managers come an interest from bigger manager-less clubs and after Sheffield United parted company with Gary Speed, the manager's job at Adams' boyhood club became vacant.

There was great speculation about whether Adams would take the post, and sure enough, the offer came, and reluctantly, Adams was let go. The fans were left downhearted after seeing the saviour of their side leave for a bigger club, but all of the fans knew that the event was coming.

Then, Chairman Bill Bratt was left with the dilemma of choosing a new manager, and quickly instated Jim Gannon as the new coach. He promised a complete revolution, bringing 'fluid football' to the club, but he was a man who bemused most fans. He seemed to bring in good players, but not use them, and play formations never before tried, and always avoided answering questions when asked.

It came to the point where reporters couldn't work out what he was doing; he played people out of position when it wasn't necessary, and left players who were being scouted by Championship sides out of the squad altogether. People wondered why. But what good is a club who are not unified?

There was speculation as to how the club could go on. The manager's relationship was soured on the trip to Aldershot, where Gannon had a 'bust up' with assistant Geoff Horsfield, (someone who has publicly stated how he did not get along with the manager), and this event was made public through social network site T'witter', with Stuart Tomlinson 'tweeting' 'Awesome events on team bus' where Gannon stormed off the coach at a midlands service station.

After a disciplinary hearing, it was decided no action would be taken against either party, but it was clear the club could not work, so last week, after seeing the team lose 3 – 0 to Accrington Stanley, the board decided to part company with Gannon, immediately unifying the club, stealing a draw from a very strong Hereford side the following day. Nobody now knows what will happen with the club, but all associated want Port Vale to achieve promotion to the leagues where fans know the club belongs.

Isaac

Hey, big spender

As the big money moves that engulfed The Premier League start to settle into their respective clubs, we take a look at how the January transfer market has affected European football as a whole.

Recent record signing, Fernando Torres, who joined the current Premier League champions and Champions League quarter finalists, Chelsea, for fifty million pounds on deadline day hasn't been an instant hit and hasn't scored for his new team in his seven appearances. Was he really worth it? Will he join the select group of players who've joined the Premier League for extremely inflated prices and been a complete flop?

The day after Torres' record move from Liverpool, the Premier League released a statement that insisted that there is no alternative to the transfer window despite the recent record spending.

80% of the money spent in January was by Chelsea; Manchester City; Liverpool and Aston Villa. Compared to the last four years, The Premier League has never spent so much money; the previous record was recorded in 2008 and that was for £175 million, surpassed by £50 million this year. This means that English football has made a loss of £80 million. That's an astonishing amount of money, considering we're still in the middle of an economic crisis.

With £225 million spent throughout The Premier League in just one month, critics and pundits alike will continue to question whether the January transfer window is a good idea.

Raoul and James