



Arizona Model United Nations 65
NATO Intervention in Libya
Short Research Guide

Introduction

In February 2011, protests against Muammar Gaddafi's government in Libya were met with violent repression, prompting international concern and action. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1970 on February 26, including an arms embargo, and Resolution 1973 on March 17, which authorized member states to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack. The resolution also established a no-fly zone and strengthened measures to enforce the arms embargo. NATO subsequently assumed command of the international military operation under Operation Unified Protector.

NATO's operation had three principal components: enforcing the arms embargo, enforcing the no-fly zone, and conducting air and naval operations to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas from attack or the threat of attack. NATO stated that its actions were to remain within the UN mandate while coordinating with the United Nations, League of Arab States, European Union, and other partners. As the Gaddafi government lost control of territory, NATO also had to consider when and how its military role should end and what role, if any, it should play in supporting Libya's post-conflict transition. Operation Unified Protector ended on October 31, 2011.

Topic I: Defining the scope and objectives of intervention

Before and during the intervention, NATO members had to translate the UN mandate into concrete military and political objectives. The mandate centered on protecting civilians, enforcing the no-fly zone, and enforcing the arms embargo, while NATO emphasized that Libya's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity remained important considerations.

Ministers also identified conditions including the end of attacks on civilians, the withdrawal of regime forces from populated areas, and humanitarian access. Delegates should consider how broad NATO's objectives should be and how to prevent mission creep beyond the UN authorization.

Questions to consider:

1. What specific objectives should NATO adopt for its intervention, and how should success be defined?
2. How should NATO balance civilian protection with respect for Libyan sovereignty and the limits of the UN mandate?
3. What conditions should NATO require before expanding, maintaining, or ending its intervention?

Topic II: Conduct and limitations of military operations

NATO's military campaign involved air and naval operations, including enforcement of the no-fly zone and arms embargo and strikes against forces attacking or threatening civilians. The Alliance emphasized precision, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, as well as minimizing civilian casualties and collateral damage.

The arms embargo also required NATO to distinguish prohibited military shipments from humanitarian and commercial traffic. Delegates must determine what military actions are necessary to accomplish the mission while establishing limits on targeting, use of force, maritime interdiction, and operational escalation.

Questions to consider:

1. What types of targets and military actions should NATO authorize in order to protect civilians?
2. What limitations should NATO place on airstrikes, naval interdictions, and the use of force?
3. How should NATO minimize civilian casualties and preserve humanitarian access while conducting military operations?

Topic III: Post-war planning

As the Gaddafi government lost territory and the conflict approached its conclusion, NATO had to consider the transition from military intervention to a post-conflict political and security environment. NATO stated that the Libyan people should determine their own future and that post-conflict efforts should be initiated through the UN and other international partners.

After Operation Unified Protector ended, NATO indicated that it could assist Libyan authorities with areas such as defence and security-sector reform if requested. Delegates should consider the appropriate division of responsibilities among NATO, the UN, regional organizations, and

Libyan authorities, as well as how to address security vacuums and political transition without creating an open-ended NATO occupation.

Questions to consider:

1. What should NATO's role be after major combat operations end?
2. How should NATO coordinate with the UN, regional organizations, and emerging Libyan authorities during the transition?
3. What security, political, and humanitarian priorities should be addressed to prevent renewed conflict?