



Beyond the Headlines
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Colum Lynch
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The UN's Role in Syria: What Options Remain?

Daniela Kaisth: Hello, everyone. I'm Daniela Kaisth, one of the vice presidents of the Institute of International Education. It's my pleasure to welcome the group. We have a terrific partnership with Patricia and her team and this wonderful organization. Thank you for being here. I just wanted to say a word or two about the institute before I turn it over to Patricia. The institute is a not-for-profit founded in 1919, so we're getting pretty old now. We're devoted really to a few things, and the biggest one is international exchange programs. You may have heard of us because we administer the Fulbright program on behalf of the US Department of State. I wanted to tell you a tiny bit about today, and I'm just going to take a minute. The institute has a long tradition of helping students and scholars in danger throughout the world, and Syria has actually been keeping us very busy. What we've done with Syria is that we've had a scholar rescue fund, which helps threatened and persecuted academics. We've had a few applications from Syrian scholars, and we've funded them in the past year, and it's getting to be a much hotter topic. And the other thing I wanted to tell you about very briefly is that we have an emergency student fund that helps international students in this country whose resources are affected by conflict in their home country. In February, we became very worried about Syrian students in the United States. There are about 500 of them, so it's not too many, but they were in terrible trouble because they couldn't access their funding for their education, or even for their rent or food. And so our emergency student fund opened up for Syrian students. We didn't have enough money to help everyone who applied, so we went to the Syrian-American community, and they actually rallied behind this and raised money, and we gave out about 50 grants of \$2,000 each on an emergency basis. After that the US government started to allow Syrian students to work. So that's our tiny piece of this story, and we're glad to help and play a part in it, and now we're really glad to hear from our guest.

Patricia Ellis: Thank you. Thanks so much, Daniela, for your very kind hospitality and for having us back again. It is a great partnership, and we love being here—it makes it possible for us to do all kinds of interesting programs particularly on hot issues in the news like our program today. It couldn't be more timely. I'm Patricia Ellis, president of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote women's voices and leadership on pressing international issues of the day. We also include men's voices because we're all partners. Our topic today is *The UN's Role in Syria: What Options Remain?* It's especially timely given the deteriorating situation on the ground and the calls for more action from so many different sides. And so much is happening—as recently as this morning, President Putin was in Berlin visiting Merkel and other Europeans. There's so much action going on, of course, at the UN and in many capitals. So it's a great pleasure—it's the first time we are having Colum Lynch as our speaker. He covers the UN for *The Washington Post* and also for *Foreign Policy's* Turtle Bay Blog, so I think you should all take a look at that, and he has been carefully covering all the deliberations on Syria. Before I say a few more words about him and before we turn it over to Colum, we have a few diplomats here with us today. And I'm just going to ask them to go around the room and just tell us which country they're from.

Ambassador Ritka Jolkkonen: My name is Ritva Jolkkonen. I'm the consul general of Finland. I'm here for just two months more. Then I will be going back home.

Sheila Nangoma Mweemba: I'm Sheila Mweemba, the DPR from the Mission of Zambia.

Sanja Zografaska-Krsteska: Sanja Zografaska-Krsteska, DPR of the Mission of Macedonia.

Bernadette Cavanagh: Bernadette Cavanagh, the DPR of the New Zealand Mission.

Dmitry Dolmatov: Dmitry Dolmatov of the Russian Mission.

Ms. Ellis: Did I miss anyone? Thank you all for being here. I think it's nice to know we have someone here from the US mission. [*Laughter.*] We are extremely lucky to have him with us today. As I said, he's been covering the UN, and in 2011, he won the National Magazine Award for his news reporting on digital media. He's also been involved in the team coverage of *The Washington Post* covering all kinds of crises, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Sudan, Somalia. He did a lot of work on the Iraq war. I'm not going to name everything that he covered, but he is the man to turn to to see crises from the UN perspective. So please join me in welcoming Colum Lynch. After he speaks, we are going to open it up for questions. I imagine that there are going to be a lot of questions, and that's what we like to spend a lot of time on. I'm just going to ask people to briefly identify themselves and keep their questions brief so we can have good conversation. Thanks so much for joining us.

Colum Lynch: Well, thanks for that invitation and thank you all for coming. I'm sort of shocked that I can get so many people here into this place on a work day. But in any event, I haven't prepared a statement or anything, but essentially I'll just give you a sense of the state of play. In Syria, it's been a big week: a horrific massacre in Houla over the weekend has sort of, I think, focused everybody's attention back on the issue of Syria and what the next steps are. Sadly there seems to be a real shortage of ideas on what sort of next steps can be taken, but why don't I just sort of give you a sense of the scene over the last couple of days and try not to go on for too long. I'd much prefer to take questions and do most of it that way, but, essentially, you have this awful episode in Houla. There's a lot of confusion about what happened. There's a lot of dispute about what happened, but there seems to be a pretty broad consensus within the UN reporting community, the head of UN peacekeeping, UN leadership, that the Syrian government was involved in some form of this operation that led to the killing of 180 people, mostly women and children. There is evidence that some of the bodies had signs of wounds from artillery fire, mortar fire, and that there were fresh battle tank tracks in the town and the residential areas where some of the shelling occurred. According to the UN, only the Syrian government has the wherewithal to use these kind of heavy weapons. A little less certainty over a large number of the killings at short range—a lot of them with gunfire to the head, very close range execution style. Herve Ladsous, who is the head of peacekeeping, has sort of suggested that it is probably the Shabiha, which is the pro-Syrian militia, which has been quite active in the conflict over the past year and some months. So when that happened—usually the way that diplomacy takes place at the UN is that everything kind of just rambles along, everybody waits. When are the UN monitors going to be the full force, is there going to be a review to see if what they're doing is sort of helping to promote the effort to bring peace there, or not? So an event like this sort of crystallizes everybody's thinking and makes them return to the table and make some hard decisions. The strategy—you know, the way it was kind of responded—Kofi Annan described as a tipping point, the British Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant described it as a game-changer and the West started rallying an effort to build up—to use this as a vehicle to build up pressure in the Council to do things, impose sanctions, to maybe strengthen the mandate and give the monitors stronger teeth. But they run into the traditional problem on this, which is that Russia doesn't support the escalation of pressure, wants to pursue this as a sort of equal mediation between warring parties, and has made it fairly clear that it's not going to embrace this escalation. So these signals from Ambassador Churkin make you realize pretty quickly the limits of what can be done to pursue a more aggressive strategy in the Security Council.

So what else do you do? If you can't go down that route, everyone has Libya in mind. Is there a military strategy? Can you arm the opposition? Are they sufficiently unified? Who would do it? It's a much more

unified political system, a much fiercer and better organized military. There isn't the kind of willingness of the British and the French to take the lead. The Americans are quite cautious about committing to any military role. If there were any other countries, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Libyans, who were perhaps able to provide arms, the Americans would be willing to provide some non-lethal assistance, and kind of hinting that maybe they would provide more support, but they haven't said anything about providing lethal support. So you go down this path of possibly looking at military options—you don't have the big powers with the wherewithal to act decisively, and you imagine the involvement of countries that are there in the region, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and they have other interests of their own in the region that are not just doing it for humanitarian purposes—that they see this as part of a larger strategic battle against Iran.

There are real concerns that if you go down this military route, it sort of inflames a lot of the regional sectarian divisions in the place, and that there are real risks of that possibly changing the military balance. And that doesn't seem likely, but there is real high probability of it inflaming the region. That's not so great, and I wanted to read you one thing because I think the US Ambassador [Susan E. Rice] sort of summed up how the US sort of sees the options. She says: "Either we could see the Syrians going along with the Annan plan and moving towards political talks, abiding by the cease fire, releasing prisoners, undertaking all the steps that are under the six party plan that they haven't complied with." She thinks that's unlikely, the other one is the pressure scenario in the Security Council, which I described earlier, and that seems unlikely, so she has this line about what she thinks is the probably scenario. So I'll read it to you: she said that "The violence escalates, the conflict spreads and intensifies, it reaches a higher degree of severity and involves countries in the region. It takes on increasingly sectarian forms, and we have a major crisis not only in Syria, but in the region. The Council's unity has exploded, the UN is dead, and this becomes a proxy conflict with arms flowing in from all sides, and members of this Council and members of the international community are left with the option of only having to consider whether they are prepared to take action outside of the plan and the authority of this Council." So I think what she's doing in a way is trying to spook the Russians and say, "You say your strategy is about maintaining stability at all costs, but your strategy is actually doing the opposite and Houla demonstrates that." So they're trying to, you know, create this doomsday scenario, but this doomsday scenario is not that farfetched, and it's a way to build pressure on Russia.

The game in the Council right now is to build pressure on Russia, to change its position, and to pursue a tougher line. So far Russia has signaled that it's not going to play that game, and I think the west is quite limited in what it can do to raise the stakes. I think that the Americans, after talking very tough—the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was saying that it's possible, if the atrocities continue, that there may be some kind of military intervention. But you saw top American officials kind of backtracking, saying that's not what we're talking about. The French are saying that if we do some kind of military intervention it has to be through the Security Council, and you know what happens in the Security Council is that the Russians block. And so it's kind of everybody is stuck, and there's really no great options at least certainly that I have, and what we're seeing now is, essentially, a lot of half measures which might be useful. I mean, today they're in the Human Rights Council in Geneva, there's going to be an effort to increase pressure on Syria through another resolution, condemning Syria, calling for a fact-finding mission in Houla, and so more and more of this kind of pressure and effort to focus on issues of accountability, which states like to do when nobody has the wherewithal to act decisively to alter the events on the ground. They talked about ensuring that at least those responsible are held accountable. So why don't I leave it with that, and open the floor for questions.

Ms. Ellis: Thank you so much. [*Applause.*] I'm going to pick up on a couple of things that you said. For example, this morning there was the headline in the Reuters wire story: "Syria on the brink of sectarian civil war." This is what you keep hearing, and this is probably, whether it's an excuse or a rationale, most people agree that there are so many divisions in Syria that it makes it very complicated in terms of those who are calling for aiding the opposition, and the Middle East is lining up. You have Saudi Arabia, Libya, Qatar, they're supporting the opposition. The Russians, the Iranians, you know, are supporting other sides. You know, so as this continues to build, and it's not going away, I mean, how long can

something like this go on without any further action? And the Europeans are now talking about stiffer sanctions. I mean, do you see this ultimately going to military action, even if it's unilateral?

Mr. Lynch: I mean, I don't see anybody who's willing, who has the wherewithal, to act unilaterally and intervene in Syria. I just don't see it. I mean, you'll see piecemeal support, sending some arms in, you know, the Saudis, Qataris, Libyans have been doing it, but not something that's going to be sufficient to entirely tip the balance. The other problem is that the Syrian opposition is extremely divided. They're confronting—this is not Libya—this is a much fearsome military establishment, much more loyal to the central power. I mean there have been defections at a fairly low level, but you know, in the early stages of the Libyan conflict, almost the entire diplomatic world was turning on Qaddafi, and you're not seeing that. There have been a couple of defections, you know, there's been a guy in Washington who went into the private sector and kind of hinted at a resignation in protest but didn't really do it. I think there's probably a lot of fear about what would happen to their families if they did it, but I also think people are making a cold calculation that Assad will survive, and that they're going to throw in their lot with him. So I don't see that as very likely, but I can see that when you hear the West saying: "okay, let's strengthen their mandate," which is an expression of commitment to stay there in some form, but not to do something that's decisive. So I mean, what that does is that sort of leads to a scenario that would probably drag things out over a longer period. I mean the problem of ending this whole thing is that there's no plan B. You know, everybody, the US, Susan Rice the other day was saying that the wheels are almost coming off the track, or something like that, in terms of the plan, but they don't have anything on the table to replace it, and so that's probably why it's likely to continue, because none of the key players have anything else.

Ms. Ellis: But just to follow up and then we're going to open it up in a moment. But just a couple of things: number one, one of the key rebel leaders, you know, has called on Kofi Annan just to admit that his plan and his work is a failure. And I wonder where you see that going, number one, and also, just this morning, in a meeting between Russia and Germany, they called for—they reiterated their support for—political situation. Now, with no further details, but I mean everybody says they support a political solution, but how are they going to get there? I mean, the only other thing you hear about besides more peacekeepers is more sanctions, and I don't know if you think more sanctions are going to make a difference. And then we'll open it up.

Mr. Lynch: Okay, one of the problems with the opposition is that they're not interested either in talking with the governments, so that's a problem as well, even if you could consider them unified enough to really truly represent the full the Syrian opposition and they have been calling as you said for everybody to ditch the Annan plan. I mean Annan is certainly not going to respond on the basis of one of the key party's demands so he's not going to accept that. And also my suspicion is that Annan doesn't have any faith in the military strategy. He's been very down on it the whole time. He's been criticizing indirectly the Saudis and the Qataris and others for arming the situation. I think he has a deep, dark—I mean, not deep, dark—but deep-seated, long-standing lack of confidence in this kind of—I mean I'm not talking about the West in this case—but the Western approach to resolving conflicts through military means and economic pressure. It goes back to Iraq. I think he sees Syria, to some degree, through this prism and is quite skeptical about the Western approach. And that would include this notion of doing something to back the rebels. And I think Kofi is very keen on stability, even if it includes making unsavory moral compromises with the regime. What he fears is a scenario more like Iraq, where you have a total collapse of institutions, spreading throughout the region, all, sort of, total mayhem. It kind of comes through in a lot of his statements. So I don't see him—you know, he may decide at some point that this is damaging his reputation so much and it's pointless, so he will pull the plug, but I don't see it yet.

Question: Lucy Webster, Center for War/Peace Studies. I'm interested in going further with assertive action in a way that doesn't precipitate real civil war. I would have thought the peace observer mission of the UN could have its mandate expanded a bit and could have it include something like corridors for the International Red Cross to get in and look out for people who have been bombed. Could you give

us a bit more of an idea of what the sectarian groups are and whether there's any possibility of moving forward from a responsibility to protect perspective, just to protect the citizens of Syria?

Mr. Lynch: I'm not a Syria expert, but I do know a bit about the discussion that's going on about corridors. So there—going back to last year—there have been discussions—under Sarkozy, by the French, by the Turks, about enforcing some sort of borders. I mean the borders, either along Jordan or Turkey or others—you know, you would hear the Turks signaling that they might be willing to do that. And you'd realize, well no, nobody's really committed to doing this sort of thing. And the French—Sarkozy—well no, the foreign minister—was very forward leaning about this, but then the foreign minister was kind of backing off on this before the end of the news cycle. So there are these ideas, that, in principle, are out there, and maybe there's some use for them, but you get back to this issue of who has the wherewithal to do it, and are they willing to do it, and I don't see that yet. So I think that's kind of problematic. And, you know, you may get to a point where that discussion gets revived. But I also don't see much chance of that unless it comes through a Security Council mandate and also with the consent of Syria. If Syria doesn't go along with it, it's not going to get a Security Council endorsement—well, it's highly unlikely that Russia would approve it. And also, we have unarmed observers in Syria. I don't think anyone is committed to sending it international staff in a non-permissive environment. So I don't think there's much reason to believe that Syria's going to allow troops defending corridors in its borders.

Ms. Ellis: What's your assessment of how the peacekeepers have performed so far?

Mr. Lynch: Well, there hasn't been a lot of detailed information and reporting coming out, so I have a hard time making a really sharp assessment of how effective they're being. At the same time, I think the only reason we're having this debate about Houla is that you had an independent, impartial force there that was able to provide some basic understanding of what happened there on the ground. I don't think we'd be having this discussion at this level if the monitors weren't there. So I think some of the expectations are unreasonable, I mean, there were reports comparing them to the peacekeepers in Bosnia, they were close to Houla and they didn't do anything. And maybe there is something they could do. But they're unarmed and I think there are real limitations on what they can do. But I mean they're reporting, they're putting pressure on the government, trying to get their air assets—they're not allowed to bring helicopters to take them to and from sites quite quickly. I think if you look really closely at what they're doing—I might have a different opinion because I don't know how competent or how incompetent they have been. But in this case, this has been the best example of how they're adding value to the diplomatic piece.

Question: Ellen Gorman from the Women's City Club of New York. I have two questions. One, is there anything in international law that could provide guidance as to what to do in this situation? And if there isn't, could there be and what might it be? And second, where's China in all of this?

Mr. Lynch: Okay, well I guess, as always, international law has guidelines on proper conduct. You aren't supposed to massacre people, and there are all sorts of laws for humanitarian international law, which should be governing interaction. The problem is that nobody abides by it in the conflict—often doesn't abide by it in the conflict. The question is: what do you do? And what you do requires—or may require—slow diplomacy, or it may not. Or it may involve decisive military action. And that would be helped by a Security Council endorsement. So I don't know how relevant the question of international law is as a guidepost in a situation like this where you have an entity that is so clearly violating all of the basic tenants of international humanitarian law. And on China—well, China's been interesting. They have been very quiet. Someone was giving me a readout in the Council of the briefing over the weekend and, sort of, Russia's point of view. And I kept asking, "What is China saying?" And he said, "Ugh, I can't remember." And somebody else said that. Which, to me, suggests that what they probably said is that we want to negotiate its peaceful settlement—they go back to their talking points. They have not been openly promoting—they have not been out on the lead. The way that the Council generally works is that, in terms of initiatives that are important to Russia and China, on some issues, like North Korea, China is in the lead. And then on an issue like Syria, where Russia has a very, very

important interest, it takes the lead. And that the Chinese and the Russians, on these critical strategic issues, they tend to back each other. And so China has joined Russia on vetoing two resolutions calling for condemnation of Syria and threatening future possible measures, like sanctions and that sort of thing. But I think that it's been very difficult politically for China—they've gotten an earful from Arab countries who've supported the tough approach in the Council, and even the Ambassador Li Baodong went to the region to try to explain to countries in the Arab League why they had taken the decision that they had taken. But I think that that experience and what they heard has not been a very popular position in the region, so since then they've kind of kept their heads down, you know, they're backing the Russians—I think they always will on an issue of this importance—but they'll probably want to keep a low profile.

Question: They just voted against the Human Rights Council?

Mr. Lynch: They did.

Question: China, Russia and Cuba. 42 and 41 in favor.

Question: Judith O'Neill, CEO of Nakhota, LLC. The last question evoked a broader concern about the United Nations. International law is very limited because it's totally ineffective unless you have enforcements to begin with, and that is always what I have thought since I was a child, that the United Nations was all about soft law. It has the human rights enforcement capability. And in this particular situation—there have been a lot of situations where it's been a question of what the United Nations can do—but in this particular situation, the scenario being made very clear to the world is that the United Nations in fact does not have the ability to stop heads of state from slaughtering their people if the head of state simply has an army big enough. And doesn't that incentivize all heads of state who want to keep their job to want to keep their armies big enough to slaughter their people? Because what they're saying is that there's absolutely no ability for any one of us to act, certainly for the United Nations to act.

Mr. Lynch: Well, I mean, in these discussions you always have to overlay the reality of the P-5 [the US, UK, Russia, China and France]. And so all of these things are important, have meaning, and when the Council is united or at least not as divided as it is now, it can do quite assertive things. It was involved in the overthrow—wait, not the overthrow—bringing Laurent Gbagbo to the Hague, it was involved in quite extraordinary military operations in Libya, which I didn't think was possible, that the Council could adopt such a resolution after Iraq. And I think it was only possible because you had this extraordinary situation where you had the top two Libyan diplomats turning on Qaddafi, and you had an extraordinary kind of arrangement of the stars in a way that you're not likely to see again. So that's stuff that happened, but even if one of the P-5 has a dog in the fight and they're willing to use their veto, then it stops everything. So, I mean, there have been precedents in Kosovo, where states have gone outside the Security Council and cited Russia's refusal as a cause for having to go outside of the Council, so that's possible, but states—and particularly after the Iraq War—are very keen, including the United States, which you would think would be the least willing to condition action on the Security Council endorsement, but a Security Council endorsement is probably more important now than it was even before the Iraq War. So there are precedents such as the Korean War, going through the General Assembly, there have been honoring missions set up by the General Assembly, but I don't expect that's going to happen here, but who knows. So I think the P-5 is like—all bets are off when it's the P-5.

Ms. Kaisth: I have a question about the use of social media in Syria and what role that has played in all of this. We've had some visitors from Syria here recently, who have said, "I'm here on an official trip, but I'm blogging on the side." Maybe you could talk a little bit about that.

Mr. Lynch: You know, it's interesting because for me, Egypt was really the place where you saw social media, particularly Twitter, having an impact—basically it became the place to find everything about what was going on, and it also like completely changed the way that I started covering the conflict. And so it's becoming a central part of the whole narrative – every day there are YouTube videos coming out

from all the towns, which are informing the debate. For me, my frame of reference is the Council, and so it's a little bit behind the times, but even here, social media is becoming much more—Syria has really become the turning point in terms of building up numbers of followers but also in the way that diplomacy is done. I mean, I think that governments like the US, Britain, France, Germany, have been quite active using Twitter as a megaphone, and I think they've used it to great effect, and I think some of the other members of the Council—Russia, India, China—have not, and I think it's to their detriment that they're not. I noticed that the Russian Foreign Ministry has finally started setting up a Twitter account, for brief quotes in English from Sergey Lavrov [Foreign Minister of Russia], and I know they're on it here, but basically they're mostly followed—they're not using it in a proactive way to sort of amplify their message, and to use it that way. Now stuff is coming out of closed-door Security Council meetings on Twitter, I mean, the diplomats are tweeting it, but stuff makes its way onto Twitter accounts when Council meetings are going on, and I think it infuriates the Council members to no end. So stuff happens much more quickly—there are things like, two years ago you would follow a story in the press and you'd never see the underlying documents if there were confidential documents—I mean we're all now fighting each other to get documents on our websites first. So in that sense, everybody gets to see all of the primary documents in a way they wouldn't see them before. So it's been, it's been very useful—I think that in a lot of ways, before, everyone—people were interested in the UN, if I'm just writing a newspaper story a couple times a week or something, you don't have this kind of intensive relationship with a fairly elite following of people who are both diplomats and decision-makers in the media and stuff like that, so I think it's channeled a lot of the issues coming out of the UN. It's had more of an impact in getting the message out really quickly and instantly to decision-makers, to people of influence. So it's not decisively going to change the way the big powers are going to rule on issues, but it's making a difference in its own way.

Question: I'm Warren Hoge of the International Peace Institute, and I was a colleague at *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*, with Colum, covering the UN for three years, and have recently interviewed him for our website, which I want to get to in the end. But first of all, your question about social media: Colum now has 8,000, last time I checked, Twitter followers.

Mr. Lynch: Something like that.

Question: It was three weeks, it was 8,000. So social media's benefiting his life and his ability to get the word out. Today in Beirut, Kofi Annan gave a press conference, and he was beaten up, as the UN is being beaten up these days, on a number of issues, but one of them was the claim that the only thing the Annan plan is doing is giving Assad and his government, his regime, a chance to keep killing people. You've heard that said in this country also, particularly by Republicans. And the United Nations is once again part of our national election debate that's going on right now. Kofi's answer was sort of interesting, I mean, it was about the best you could do under those circumstances. He said to the questioner: "Do you mean to say that if we weren't here, the killing would stop?" So it gave them pause. But about three weeks or four weeks ago, on a website publication we have at the International Peace Institute, I interviewed Colum, basically about how he covers the UN, what he thinks about the things he covers, and we touched upon Syria at one point, and this is three or four weeks ago, before it had reached the state it's reached right now, and Colum gave a really good analysis of why Kofi Annan, because of who he is, what his background is, a UN lifer, basically, his belief in—you've already said this—in talking to the bad guys, his belief in building consensus before you act, which is right now being assailed by outsiders. By the way, outsiders who don't offer any better solution to the problem, but still it's being assailed. I would love it if you could remember what you said would be very interesting for this group, because you said what Kofi is doing is sort of pure, old fashioned UN kind of activity, the consensus-building part of it, the talk-to-the-bad-guys part of it, and then I want to ask you a question: is this another lose-lose situation for the United Nations?

Mr. Lynch: The issue of Kofi brings me back to what I was saying about the P-5. And that is that I think that—I've always thought that Kofi kind of embodies everything that's kind of noble, and great about the UN, and he also reflects the reality of it, with all that means, in terms of unsavory compromise and for

me, if you're the secretary general, the main thing, the most important thing for you, is if you want things to move forward, is you've got to have P-5 consensus. The discussion that was taking before the Anna plan was very much focused on Assad needs to go. And the whole Arab League diplomacy was structured and built upon this notion of providing a pathway for him out. They didn't explicitly say he was going to go out. And so the whole international debate was about throw the bum out. And so, then you got—the Annan plan comes in, and throughout this whole thing, Russia's portrayed as the bad guy, blocking, blocking, blocking, in the council. And then Annan comes in, and Annan's strategy reflects, on the one hand, this kind of, this belief that if you want to have progress you've got to have harmony among the five, and so he goes to great lengths in building that. And if you look at the mediation structure, it's much closer to the path that had been laid out by Russia than had been laid out by the Arab League or by the West. It was a consensual agreement through the parties that would not pre-decide what the outcome was going to be. And so, you have—Assad is in a stronger military position, is going to be part of the solution. So I think that Annan sees that he probably doesn't have a lot of—I'm just guessing—probably doesn't have a lot of confidence in the Western strategy—that it hasn't been thought through, that it's going to lead to total mayhem, and that he needs to do something to bring everybody together, so now what we're seeing is that, and then a Houla then, all of a sudden, is a sufficient enough crisis that it gets everybody—the one nice thing for states about the Annan plan is it takes it all off their plate for a while, and they can all say that they—and they don't have to do anything, they don't have to make any hard decisions about their obligations or responsibilities. And this goes back to the question where, is he responsible for giving Syria more time to consolidate its power. I mean, in a sense diplomacy is all about giving people more time, and they often, if they're not committed to a negotiation, they use that time to strengthen their position militarily, and you'll see that it's happening with the opposition, and it's happening with the government, though there are real costs to doing things, and everything has consequences, but it's hard to unravel it, because we don't know what would happen. But it probably would have been—there probably would have been a more focused debate on military strategy had there not been the Annan plan. And now, we're starting to kind of veer towards—back towards—that.

Ms. Ellis: What about the other members of the Security Council? I mean, there are some very active members. At this point in the year, South Africa—I mean, I don't know where they stand on this issue. And could you talk a little bit about the Arab League? I know they're kind of—during Libya they were very big initially and then they were backing off. I'm just wondering—the neighborhood is most concerned—Turkey, Lebanon, all these countries. So where do they stand in terms of pushing for solutions?

Mr. Lynch: I'll start with the other council members. I mean, it's been really interesting how everybody's positioned themselves. So you have—after the Libya situation, there was a lot of frustration and anger among, sort of, the emerging powers, like India, South Africa, Brazil previously, who's not on the Council now—the notion that they had been misled. I mean, I think everyone knew there was a military strategy, but they didn't expect them to be going after family members and Qaddafi, and they claim they didn't anticipate it and they felt taken advantage of. So that is kind of hard, and their positions in the early stages when the eve of Syria came up, there was this underlying lack of confidence, trust in terms of the Western strategy. You know, the French had used the UN to get rid of Gbagbo in Ivory Coast. The South Africans, this is their sphere of influence. They don't like the French going in and taking care of problems. They were pushed diplomatically. They wanted a diplomatic role. In Libya, the West pushed them out. There were a lot of raw nerves. Eventually, it kind of put them in the camp of seeing Syria through a Libyan lens, and being quite skeptical about it. India, from a very early stage, was characterizing the conflict as kind of an armed conflict between equal armed camps. I mean, not saying that they had parity, but that morally, two equal armed camps and there were some protestors. And that was really contrasted with the UN's characterization, which was that it was primarily a repressive operation and then it morphed into something that involved armed conflict, and now we have sort of extremist, possibly outside elements, engaging in terrorist activities. So, you had a real division, and you had China and Russia with a broader group of people they could count on, who were sympathetic to their point of view. That pretty much ended with the shelling of Homs earlier in the year. And then by

February, you have a Security Council resolution condemning Syria, and for the first time you had—well, I can't remember if it was the first time—but you had 13 votes in favor of that resolution. South Africa, Pakistan, countries that might have been less inclined to support it supporting it. And you had China, Russia—China going along with Russia probably a little grudgingly because it really cares about its relations with the Arab League. And so the breakdown has changed. And on the one hand, it's made the Chinese and Russians a little bit isolated on the Council. But the flip side of that, as I was saying earlier, is that the diplomacy kind of reflects Russian strategies. So, in a way, they kind of looked isolated in February, but now they look like they're having much greater influence over the course of the mediation. And the Arab League—I don't know if I have anything to say there.

Question: I think civil society, the people in this room, and also the majority in the Security—the plurality, all the member states in the Security Council, and the two thirds majority in the general assembly should help Russia to do something creative, positive, but I'm not in favor of a military solution, which seems to be assumed to be the only thing you could do. You have to think of something else that will save Assad and save the Syrian state, but at the same time, Kofi Annan is one of the great initiators of the idea that human security is more important than state security and now he's being forced into not doing anything much about human security, so I'm thinking in the interior, I'm thinking that we have to get the general assembly to get the two thirds majority to come up with something that will help the Russian plan move forward instead of just blocking things.

Mr. Lynch: Well they're not blocking—Hodem blocked yet, and I think that this scenario with the membership working with the Russians, I think that's what we're seeing now, that everyone is on board and the council is still united. I think there wouldn't be much of an argument going to the GA in a scenario where you've got the 15 united, because they would be seen as having the lead on this issue, so I think we're seeing that scenario but the Houla massacre and what's been happening since it's all of sudden forcing people to recalculate their position about this, whether—is this course working? Do we need, will pressure have an impact? I don't have the exact number but there is one remarkable fact and that is, there was a piece by *Reuters* where there are people who do betting on futures, you know? And the bet for Assad's survival had doubled or something, it was over 60 after the Annan plan came into place. And I'm not an expert, I don't know how this is going to evolve, you could have a total implosion of the state, you could have something like Iraq's, but it looks less and less likely that he's leaving. I think that's become more and more clear after the Annan plan. They're gambling that that's the price for stability. And whether they're right or not—it doesn't look like it—but things can get a lot worse than they are.

Ms. Ellis: Anyone else? Any further comments, questions? On that optimistic note. [*Laughter.*] Thank you all so much for coming, and thank you Colum for taking the time and trying to shed light on what's going on there, the UN Security Council, on a very tough issue. So thanks a lot. [*Applause.*]