Title
Syria at a Crossroad: Political Change and Obstacles to Democracy

Abstract
The impact of the Arab Spring and its role in facilitating regime change in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya has heightened international interest in the region’s stability. Of particular interest for regional and international policy makers has been the unrest witnessed in Syria where a political and security breakdown would signify immediate geopolitical / geostrategic change across the region.

The past eight months of unrests has led to thousands of casualties as a result of the government’s use of force against demonstrators. The regime’s unwillingness to relinquish power, implement genuine reforms and the use of excessive force has further fuelled demonstrations. As defections and mutiny within the military increase, so has the influx of arms from neighbouring countries into Syria. As a result, the political and security situation in Syria is at crossroads. Either Syria will descend into armed conflict or the ruling elite will manage a transition with certain concessions to maintain the status-quo.

This presentation seeks to examine the current wave of unrest in Syria in light of the regional and international divide in dealing with the issue. It will analyse regional attitudes, particularly that of GCC Member states, towards the uprising and assess future directions in the region.

Speaker Details
Jamil Sawda is a PhD candidate examining relations between Lebanon and Syria post 2005. He has worked on the Iraq Desk at the United Nations Secretariat in New York and served at the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Canberra. He holds a Master of Diplomacy, Master of Middle East and Central Asian Studies and a Graduate Diploma in Strategic Affairs from the Australian National University.