



2014 - 2015

Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Summit of Arab Heads of State

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National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations



Topic I: Determining effective preservation and protection methods for national monuments and treasures during periods of unrest as well as recovering historical artifacts currently held in foreign lands

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

Cultural sites and national monuments and landmarks are extraordinarily susceptible to damage during times of conflict. Antiquities are looted from museums and historical sites by profiteers and as has been seen in Egypt, Iraq and Syria in recent years. Yet more have been destroyed in the crossfire of regional conflicts or deliberately destroyed by extremist groups.¹ Delegates should focus on the areas and member states that are most at risk of unrest, and particularly those with the most culturally and historically significant sites and artifacts.

Several pieces of the topic wording are left to be interpreted by the delegates. The first part of the topic states “determining... methods,” which is a passive way of saying that the Heads of State may focus on creating solutions but need not implement them, necessarily. What it means to effectively preserve and protect is left to the Summit’s discretion, as well as what falls into the categories of “national” monuments and treasures – archaeological sites, physical artifacts, natural wonders, historic buildings, art, whole cities part-and-parcel, or even cultural heritage including music, poetry, literature, oral histories, or food. Whatever the delegates decide to include, they should be sure to limit discussion to areas of conflict, specifically places where the monuments and treasured are obviously threatened.²

The second part of the topic is related, but is an issue distinct from the first in many ways. While the language does not explicitly state from whom artifacts should be recovered, it can largely be interpreted to mean Western countries and former colonial powers. The issue of plundered artifacts, whether obtained through theft, war, or colonial exploitation, being repatriated is messy and has a long history.³ Many European countries have plundered the historical treasures of the lands they colonized and museums, governments, and private collectors retain a great deal of them today.⁴

¹ Al Qassemi, Sultan Sooud. “Regional Strive Destroying Historical Arab Treasures.” Al Monitor. 25 January 2014. Web. 24 September 2014. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/arab-world-heritage-museums-destruction.html>

² Fisk, Robert. “Robert Fisk: Syria’s ancient treasures pulverized.” The Independent. 5 August 2012. Web. 18 September 2014. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-syrias-ancient-treasures-pulverised-8007768.html>

³ “Misplaced Treasures: Unplundering Art.” The Economist. 18 December 1997. Web. 18 September 2014. <http://www.economist.com/node/456084>

⁴ Goode, James F. Negotiating for the Past: Achaeology, Nationalism, and Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1919-1941. University of Texas Press. 2007.

B. History of Topic in the Arab World

Since the League's creation, it has taken steps to ensure that treasures and monuments that are of historical significance are protected, both as a source of cultural pride and as a source of revenue from tourism. Recently, the League has faced challenges preserving and protecting monuments from destruction in the face of widespread regional unrest.⁵ Many states and NGO's have been making attempts to preserve monuments, and to put in place protocols that would protect them in case of an emergency.⁶ Even in areas where monuments remain intact, tourism has decreased substantially because travelers fear they will be harmed in volatile regions.⁷

Additionally, ownership of certain art and artifacts has been disputed variously by the nation of origin, culture of origin, discover, and current owner. These battles can go back centuries and involve legal issues over past transactions – legal, illegal, or of dubious legal standing – resulting in mixed or indistinct ownership claims.⁸ Disputes over cultural ownership of items range the globe, and delegates will have many examples to use in the debate, both in the Arab world and beyond.⁹ There is also debate over what is designated as artwork or an artifact, including whether modern cultural artifacts should be protected.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The problems described above are varied, although they center on the main topic of protecting monuments and artwork. You must try to address the individual issues as they affect your government, as well as the other states in the League, while attempting to achieve the overarching goal of protecting and preserving monuments and treasures.

Delegates must consider what measures to enact to most effectively protect and retrieve items of national significance. Would it be prudent to create a body of historic preservation experts and engineers to travel to areas with items at risk of damage? How would such a body be funded? How would it be deployed and under what circumstances? Should initiatives focus on proactive or reactive measures? In addition, all resolutions must fall in line with previous Arab League resolutions and agreements on sovereignty and national antiquities.

⁵ Almutawa, Shatha. "Creating and Preserving Cultural Heritage in the Arab World." *Creating and Preserving Cultural Heritage in the Arab World*. American Historical Association, Apr. 2014. Web. 08 Sept. 2014. <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2014/creating-and-preserving-cultural-heritage-in-the-arab-world>

⁶ Teiggeler, René. "Preserving Cultural Heritage in times of Conflict." *Preservation Management for Libraries, Archives, and Museums* (2006): *Preserving Cultural Heritage in times of Conflict*. Facet Publishing. Web. 08 Sept. 2014. <http://www.culture-and-development.info/issues/conflict.htm>

⁷ "Arab Spring Costs Region \$ 15 Bln in Lost Tourism." *The North Africa Post*. 30 May 2013. Web. 08 Sept. 2014. <http://northafricapost.com/3744-arab-spring-costs-region-15-bln-in-lost-tourism.html>.

⁸ Leff, Lisa. "Iraqi Jewish Treasures Displayed in D.C. Before Being Shipped Back to ... Iraq." *Tablemag.com*. Tablet, 7 Oct. 2013. Web. 08 Sept. 2014. <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/147736/iraqi-jewish-treasures/2>.

⁹ Giang, Vivian. "10 Ancient Artifacts that Countries are Still Fighting Over." *Business Insider*. 14 July 2011. Web. 24 September 2014. <http://www.businessinsider.com/disputed-ancient-artifacts-2011-7?op=1>

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Has your country already lost valuable art or artifacts? Through theft? Destruction? Poor maintenance?
- How much does your country's economy rely on tourism? Is the preservation of monuments critical to your economy?
- What steps has your country already taken to preserve their monuments and treasures?
- Does your country have a definition of art?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Can there be emergency protocols put in place to protect monuments and artifacts of significance?
- How does the league define what is considered an artifact, or what is considered art?
- How should ownership of art, artifacts, and monuments be defined? Should there be a league-wide approach at all? Or should it be left up to individual nations?

IV. Resources to Review

World Bank Country Tourism Database

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL>

Middle East tourism data

<http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/ST.INT.ARVL/map/middle-east>

World Travel and Tourism Council's Middle East Travel and Tourism report

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=9&ved=0CEoQFjAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wttc.org%2F~%2Fmedia%2Ffiles%2Freports%2Feconomic%2520impact%2520research%2Fregional%2520reports%2Fmiddle_east2014.ashx&ei=yN0NVLLvO4SvyAScyoDgAw&usg=AFQjCNHkri7ywrWHa3roOuekFUdPHz9E4w&bvm=bv.74649129,d.aWw

Culture and the State

http://www.merip.org/mer/mer263/culture-state-revolution?ip_login_no_cache=a784f1f86d1294272297397edd2a60f0

The Gulf's Cultural Development

<http://www.aawsat.net/2013/07/article55311208>

Topic 2: Exploring the context and role of foreign non-governmental organizations in the overall framework and policy of Arab League resolutions and establishing guidelines for their behavior to protect the individual sovereignty of Arab League members

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

The United Nations broadly defines a non-governmental organization (NGO), otherwise known as a civil society organization (CSO), as a “not-for-profit group, principally independent from government, which is organized on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good.”¹⁰ This definition might include humanitarian groups, political and non-political advocacy groups, religious funds and entities, and many more. While NGOs contribute to the basis for a strong civil society, they can be viewed with suspicion by government entities, particularly so if their funding, staff, and mission are controlled by foreign interests.¹¹

This topic, while certainly about the controversial topic of foreign NGOs operating in the region, is actually more focused. Avoiding a typical value judgment about NGOs – their motives, their funding, their relationship with foreign powers – the topic instead asks for the Summit’s opinion on NGOs’ roles in Arab League decisions and operations, not in individual nations.

The second part of the topic, however, opens the door slightly for direct action on the issue of NGOs. Each country handles these organizations differently, and even discussing the issue in this body may be seen as an infringement on national sovereignty by some. Nevertheless, the Summit is asked to establish guidelines, or perhaps better words would be suggestions or recommendations, for member states’ relationships with NGOs. The Summit may choose to focus on foreign NGOs based in other member states, an approach which reduces the topic to a more manageable scope, on foreign NGOs from non-member states like the West, or both.

B. History in the Arab World

NGO’s are at times viewed with suspicion throughout the Arab world, often portrayed as an instrument of foreign governments and intelligence agencies to subvert state control, or alternatively, as government “yes men” that only serve to legitimize restrictive governments.¹² Many international NGOs face regulations and laws from the nations where they operate which

¹⁰ United Nations Rule of Law. “Non-governmental organizations.” Web. 18 September 2014.

http://www.unrol.org/article.aspx?article_id=23

¹¹ Abodo, Nahla. “Imperialism, the State, and NGO’s: Middle Eastern Contexts and Contestations.” Duke University Press, 2010. Web. 24 September 2014.

<http://cssaame.dukejournals.org/content/30/2/238.abstract>

¹² Walton, Oliver. “Everything is Politics: Understanding the Political Dimensions of NGO Legitimacy in Conflict-Affected Regions and Transnational Contexts.” University of Bath, May 2013. Web. 24 September 2014.

http://www.academia.edu/4142557/Everything_is_Politics_understanding_the_political_dimensions_of_NGO_legitimacy_in_conflict-affected_regions

limit their actions, control their access to funding, and threaten them with closure at any time, and for a variety of reasons¹³. In this environment, NGO's are caught between satisfying all legal requirements of the host country and legitimately fulfilling their goals which often include anti-corruption action and building social coalitions that may threaten the status quo of power.

Capacity for criticism of the state or specific leaders may be limited in order for NGO's to operate, but limits must also exist for these organizations to prevent undue foreign influence in politics and civil society. Events like the 2012 imprisonment of NGO workers in Egypt over the suspicion of illegal funding illustrate the tensions of NGO operation in member state countries.¹⁴

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

NGOs can act as important tools of social and political improvement in communities. However, many countries seek to contain the influence and constrain the activities of NGOs. This generally leads to two outcomes: NGOs being shut down by the government or NGOs becoming ineffective at producing the change that they advocate.

When considering this topic, delegates should analyze the role of NGOs in their respective countries and the desired level and fields of activity. NGOs can help improve the quality of life of citizens across the many areas in which they are active such as health, civic society, and education. However, NGOs must remain conscious of the cultural and social traditions in the areas that they serve and act within the laws and policies of member states. NGOs do not act outside of the state but rather within the state, ideally working hand in hand with governments and citizens. Regulations or suggestions may be considered across the Arab League in order to cement the role and purview of NGOs, however such policies should be in accordance with existing laws and agreements, noting that excessive or restrictive regulations may stifle the potential good that emanates. Achieving balanced policies which allow NGOs to improve citizens' quality of life without risking NGOs encroaching upon sovereignty and rule of law within member states is thus the task of the Summit.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What laws does my country have regarding NGO activity and operation?
- What NGOs operate in Arab League states and what roles do they play in each country?
- What policies do other countries have regarding NGOs?
- What legacy do foreign NGO's have in my country?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What services should NGOs be allowed to offer in member states?

¹³ Hamid, Shadi. "Civil Society in the Arab World and the Dilemma of Funding." *The Brookings Institution*. Brookings Institution, Oct. 2010. Web. 24 Sept. 2014.

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2010/10/middle-east-hamid>

¹⁴ Amnesty International. "Egypt Must Overturn Jail Sentence for NGO Workers." Amnesty International. 5 June 2013. Web. 24 September 2014. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/egypt-must-overturn-jail-sentence-ngo-workers-2013-06-05>

- Should the Arab League create standards for NGO operations?
- What level of transparency is necessary for NGOs with regards to funding and operations?
- What clearance and/or accreditation program should NGOs go through in order to operate?

IV. Resources to Review

UNESCO: NGOs, Governance and Development in the Arab World

<http://www.unesco.org/most/nefissae.htm>

Civil Society in the Arab World

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2010/10/middle-east-hamid>

Raids on NGOs in Egypt

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/29/egypt-raids-ngo-crackdown>

Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World

<http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~spath/351/Readings/Yom%20-%20Civil%20Society%20and%20Democratization%20in%20Arab%20World.pdf>

NGOs shut down in UAE

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/31/world/meast/uae-organizations/>

Topic III: Promoting transparency and reducing official misconduct between League members in order to demonstrate Arab League commitment to the international rule of law to the global community

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

In so many words, this topic is essentially a discussion of government corruption in member states. The members of the League now have several years' hindsight with which to evaluate the causes and effects of the 'Arab Spring' and its ongoing effects and conflicts, and it is clear that official corruption is one of the key misgivings of Arabs across the region, real and perceived.¹⁵

Although many nations may be hostile to debating this topic, delegates should consider that nearly all heads of state pay lip service to reducing corruption and increasing transparency, at the very least. Many have taken concrete steps to reduce corruption, as well. The topic language further offers wary delegates somewhat of a loophole in the discussion, using the preposition "between" rather than alternatives such as "within" to qualify said official misconduct. Left to the delegates' interpretation, this may signal a more international focus rather than opening the door to discussing the internal, national-level practices of individual states.

B. History in the Arab World

Political corruption is broadly understood as the use of government powers for illegal or illegitimate private gain; this ranges from abuse of national funds to nepotism. Though each national experience is nuanced and unique, the trend of corrupt governments like those of Ben Ali in Tunisia, Qaddafi in Libya, and Mubarak in Egypt signal the potential of long term corruption while in high office and a lack of transparency to a country's citizens, as well as a cautionary tale for the frustrations of a people who feel disenfranchised or delegitimized due to unfair political systems.¹⁶ The Arab Awakening was partially motivated by such corruption, and demonstrates the importance of member states moving toward more transparent government.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In approaching resolutions for this topic, delegates should focus on feasibility as well as the narrow direction of the wording; the topic is not about eliminating corruption at large, but rather specifically addressing corruption between member states. This framework limits the debate to interactions between member state governments and does not require or invite proposals for national, internal issues involving transparency. Furthermore, the last phrase "in order to demonstrate Arab League commitment to the international rule of law to the global community" emphasizes the symbolic importance of such action; the efforts made at mitigating corruption

¹⁵ Gallup World. "Tunisia: Analyzing the Dawn of the Arab Spring." Web. 24 September 2014. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157049/tunisia-analyzing-dawn-arab-spring.aspx>

¹⁶ Al Maeena, Tariq. "Cancer of Corruption Led to the Arab Spring." Gulf News. 7 September 2013. Web. 26 September 2014. <http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/cancer-of-corruption-led-to-arab-spring-1.1228396>

between member countries are made on an international level and the international community is therefore important to consider in formulating strategies.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What is the international reputation of my country?
- What characterizes my relationship with other Arab League states?
- What, if any, movements against corruption have appeared in my country (IE Arab Awakening)?
- What level of transparency does my government currently operate under?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Should the Arab League have a standardized anti-corruption policy?
- How can the Arab League address international corruption?
- What role should the Arab League play in addressing corruption between member states?
- How can the Arab League improve transparency and demonstrate this commitment to the international community?

IV. Resources to Review

Corruption Trends in the Middle East and North Africa
<file:///C:/Users/NCUSAR/Downloads/302.pdf>

Corruption and Transparency Rating by Country
<http://www.transparency.org/country>

Arab Convention to Fight Corruption
<http://blog.transparency.org/2012/08/21/a-glance-at-the-arab-convention-to-fight-corruption/>

Arab States: Corruption and Reform
<http://carnegieendowment.org/2008/08/23/arab-states-corruption-and-reform/b1wi>

Integrity in the Interface Between the Public and Private Sectors in the Arab Countries
<http://www.undp-aciac.org/resources/ac/details.aspx?aid=394>

Topic IV: Taking steps towards establishing the Arab Common Market by 2020 in order to increase integration and have free movement of labor, capital, and goods between Arab nations

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

In 2009, the Arab League created a Committee on Arab Customs Union (CACU) at the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Kuwait with a goal of achieving a pan-Arab customs union by 2015 and a common market by 2020. This lofty goal has been set into motion in 2014, as the CACU began logistical discussion on the topic.¹⁷ While this real-world development takes place, the Summit of Arab Heads of State is tasked with a parallel goal: to take concrete steps to facilitate this lofty aim.

A customs union is “a trade agreement by which a group of countries charges a common set of tariffs to the rest of the world while granting free trade among themselves.”¹⁸ An easy way to conceptualize a customs union is as a free trade zone with the addition of a common tariff; it is considered a form of integration that offers an intermediate step between a free trade zone and a full common market, as is the Arab League’s plan. A common market takes economic integration a step further, additionally allowing for the unrestricted movement of both capital and labor between countries, but stops short of an economic union or a monetary union.¹⁹

B. History in the Arab World

Attempts at increasing economic cooperation and unity for greater regional success have been made between member states in the past. One successful example is the Gulf Cooperation Council, which functions on an economic level as well as a political one. The GCC launched a common free market in 2008, and has expanded to examine a potential shared currency through its monetary council.²⁰ The role of the GCC has expanded to regional goals of stability and has thusly become more political since its inception.

In addition, the Greater Arab Free Trade Area was proposed by the Arab League in 1997.²¹ GAFTA has been expanded through incremental elimination of trade barriers like tariffs, and

¹⁷ “Plan in Motion to Create Arab Common Market by 2020.” Al Arabiyya News. 2 September 2014. Web. 24 September 2014. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/markets/2014/09/02/Plan-in-motion-to-create-Arab-Common-Market-by-2020.html>

¹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Customs Union.” Web. 24 September 2014. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/147445/customs-union>

¹⁹ Suranovic, Steven M. “Economic Integration: Overview.” The International Economics Study Center. 1 April 1998. Web. 24 September 2014. <http://internationalecon.com/Trade/Tch110/T110-2.php>

²⁰ Bowman, Dylan. “GCC Common Market Comes into Effect.” Arabian Business. 1 January 2008. Web. 26 September 2014. <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/gcc-common-market-comes-into-effect-122387.html>

²¹ “Bilaterals: GAFTA.” Bilaterals: Everything That’s Not Happening in the WTO. May 2012. Web. 26 September 2014. <http://www.bilaterals.org/?-GAFTA->

focuses on reducing customs on Arab products, applying the locality of Arab products, incorporating the private sector, and easing communication between members.²²

On the other end of the spectrum, the Arab-Maghreb union was proposed in 1989 when Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania signed a founding document for the countries “with similar regional institutions... [to] take part in the enrichment of the international dialogue... [to] reinforce the independence of the member states and... [to] safeguard... their assets.”²³ These goals were soon halted due to deep divisions between members, particularly Morocco and Algeria and the status of the Western Sahara.²⁴ As a result, the Union has seen alternating periods of inactivity and revival. Recent efforts include the launch of an investment bank for infrastructure development in the Maghreb.²⁵

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In approaching the topic, delegates should be realistic about proposals; while the benefits of a common market are great, there are significant challenges in achieving this goal. League wide support and commitment are necessary foundations, and consideration of the economic strengths and statuses in each country is pivotal. In navigating these potential barriers, the council should examine strategies which have yielded cooperative economic success in the Arab World (GCC, elements of the GAFTA) and beyond. Creating incentives for countries with less initial inclination to join may be helpful. Preservation of sovereign control of economics and trade organization is a natural consideration for member states, but structuring resolutions to provide for this concern while also yielding greater regional and economic success through cooperation is possible. Delegates can focus on balancing national level concerns with potential League wide benefits.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Is my country currently in existing economic councils/organizations?
- What could my country benefit from a common market?
- What trade barriers currently exist in my country?
- What products/industries in my country would gain from the establishment of a common market?
- Is my country an economic leader?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What specific steps must be taken for the establishment of a common market?

²² Ibid.

²³ “Arab Maghreb Union: Founding Document.” Riks Platform Databases. Web. 26 September 2014.
<http://www.cris.unu.edu/riks/web/arrangement/show?id=4>

²⁴ “Arab Maghreb Union.” Al Jazeera. 8 May 2005. Web. 26 September 2014.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/05/200849163725895251.html>

²⁵ “Arab Maghreb Union Launches Investment Bank.” Al Jazeera. 10 January 2013. Web. 26 September 2014.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/01/2013110101120697531.html>

- What hindrances currently exist to this system and how can a League wide solution address this?
- How can a common market include and mutually benefit the diverse economies of member states

IV. Resources to Review

UMA-Arab Maghreb Union

<http://www.uneca.org/oria/pages/uma-arab-maghreb-union-0>

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

<http://www.escwa.un.org/>

GCC Common Market Becomes Reality

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/307252>

Trading Blocs, Common Markets, and Economic Unions

<http://financetrain.com/trading-blocs-common-markets-and-economic-unions/>

Bilaterals: GAFTA

<http://www.bilaterals.org/?-GAFTA->