



**2019-2020**

**Model Arab League  
BACKGROUND GUIDE  
Council on Political Affairs**

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**Original draft by *Brittlin Richardson*, Chair of the *Council on Political Affairs* at the 2020 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations.**

Honorable delegates,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 Model Arab League. My name is Brittlin Richardson and I am excited to serve as your chair for the Council on Political Affairs. I am currently a senior double majoring in Political Science and Anthropology at Texas State University in beautiful San Marcos, Texas. I also serve as a Senator-at-Large for the Texas State Student Government. This year will serve as my fourth and last year in Model Arab League. Through this program I have learned excellent public speaking, debate, and writing skills and met some of my greatest friends and mentors. I look forward to hearing and seeing the great research and solutions you bring to the table for this year's topics.

While this background guide will serve as a tool for you to begin your research, this is not where it stops. It is prudent that you deeply understand your country's position as well as others for each topic. In many cases where research is done last-minute or incorrectly, the issues in an idea can become glaringly obvious and could lead to a resolution or idea being discredited. Similarly, I understand everyone has their own opinion on various policies or beliefs but put those aside and represent your country accurately. While research is a must, it is unacceptable to bring any pre-written draft language as it is disrespectful to fellow delegates and the rules set forth by the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations.

I understand that many of these topics may be contentious amongst varying countries (and I do look forward to passionate debate) but always bear in mind your diplomatic duty. It is only natural that you have disagreements on policy, but I will always remain adamant that you treat your fellow delegates with respect.

Model Arab League is a great learning opportunity and I look forward to seeing what can be achieved and learning from every one of you.

Best,

Brittlin Richardson

## **Topic I: Evaluating the threat of election interference throughout the League and developing strategies to uphold the sanctity of elections.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### **A. General Background**

Western attitude towards the Middle East and North African countries has long involved advocating for the adoption of democratizing the political and election process. The push has caused a massive point of contention between world leaders as the majority of MENA region countries function as absolute monarchies, constitutional monarchies, federal republics, and vary on the scale of government power. While more countries have incorporated elections into their political system, such as The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 2005, the increasing prevalence of outside and inside influence upon elections have only weakened the trust involved in the election process.

In 2011, Syria was removed from the Arab League after its “violent response to opposition dissent, a move that failed to stem the bloodshed that spiraled from a civil war”.<sup>1</sup> Recent events suggest Syria will soon be readmitted back into the Arab League and Assad has since called upon Iran and Russia to end “the interference of some Western states in the political track and consolidating the establishment of a political process led by the Syrians themselves away from any form of external intervention”.<sup>2</sup> External western pushes for democratic elections include President Cavusoglu of Turkey who stated he would consider working with Assad if he won and it was a “democratic election, and if it is a credible one...”<sup>3</sup> after Assad won reelection in June 2014, “securing 88.7 percent support in a vote which the opposition derided as a charade, saying that he faced no credible rival candidate and that no poll held amid civil war could be credible”.<sup>4</sup>

#### **B. History in the Arab World**

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<sup>1</sup> Chulov, Martin, and Bethan McKernan. “Arab League Set to Readmit Syria Eight Years after Expulsion.” The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 26 Dec. 2018, [www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/26/arab-league-set-to-readmit-syria-eight-years-after-expulsion](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/26/arab-league-set-to-readmit-syria-eight-years-after-expulsion).

<sup>2</sup> “PressTV.” Assad Asks Iran, Russia to Stop Western 'Interference', [www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/12/17/583155/Syria-Iran-Assad-meddling-Western-countries-Ansari](http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/12/17/583155/Syria-Iran-Assad-meddling-Western-countries-Ansari).

<sup>3</sup> Zdhannikov, Dmitry, and Maher Chmaytelli. “Turkey Would Consider Working With Assad If He Won a Democratic Syrian Election.” U.S. News & World Report, U.S. News & World Report, 16 Dec. 2018, [www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-12-16/turkey-would-consider-working-with-syrias-assad-if-he-won-a-democratic-election](http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-12-16/turkey-would-consider-working-with-syrias-assad-if-he-won-a-democratic-election).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Zdhannikov 2018.

In 2011, the Arab Spring enveloped numerous Arab League nations in a pushback from citizens supporting democratization and cultural freedom.<sup>5</sup> The revolts and civil wars that were produced from this movement were partly to encourage greater political participation through elections. For many Arab League countries, elections are not a major part of the political process. However, for many of those elections, internal interference can play a major issue.

During the 2018 Egyptian election, numerous serious candidates in opposition of President Abdelfattah al-Sisi were arrested and convicted on various charges. One Armed Forces Colonel Ahmed Konsowa was arrested and convicted to six years in prison for violating military rules by expressing political views and announcing his plan to run for President on Facebook.<sup>6</sup> Three other candidates were similarly arrested, detained, or convicted. In December of 2015, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held their third elections in which women were granted both the right to vote and run for office, where 21 female candidates were elected in municipal county races.<sup>7</sup> It was reported that “government minders often watch over the candidates at their events”.<sup>8</sup>

The United States, largely known for a past in election meddling, has been a key advocate for democratizing MENA countries. In 1983, the USA created the National Endowment for Democracy which, “makes direct grants to hundreds of nongovernmental organizations worldwide working to advance democratic goals and strengthen democratic institutions”.<sup>9</sup> It was reported also that, “in his memoir, the former Defense Secretary Robert Gates accuses Richard Holbrooke, the Obama administration’s special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, of “doing his best to bring about the defeat of [Hamid] Karzai” in the Afghan elections of 2009”.<sup>10</sup> The implications of external election meddling within the MENA region not only disallow sovereignty but also integrity.

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

In the 1945 Charter of the Arab League Article II states, “The League has as its purpose the strengthening of the relations between the member-states, the coordination of their policies in order to achieve co-operation between them and to safeguard their independence and

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<sup>5</sup> Editors, History.com. “Arab Spring.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 10 Jan. 2018, [www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring](http://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring).

<sup>6</sup> “Egypt: Authorities Must Cease Interference in Upcoming Election and Set Guarantees for Free Candidacy.” *Amnesty International*, 24 Jan. 2018, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/egypt-authorities-must-cease-interference-in-upcoming-election-and-set-guarantees-for-free-candidacy/?fbclid=IwAR1czl-kMLUczTHe0fJM1C5xz8pD078zhFbJo\\_ERc7gUgxy24hLv9TkJRkU](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/egypt-authorities-must-cease-interference-in-upcoming-election-and-set-guarantees-for-free-candidacy/?fbclid=IwAR1czl-kMLUczTHe0fJM1C5xz8pD078zhFbJo_ERc7gUgxy24hLv9TkJRkU).

<sup>7</sup> Staff, NPR. “After Historic Elections In Saudi Arabia, What’s The Future For Women?” NPR, NPR, 19 Dec. 2015, [www.npr.org/2015/12/19/459491653/after-historic-elections-in-saudi-arabia-whats-the-future-for-women?fbclid=IwAR3kq\\_XtNOuGptGRLOGMBPss2MQRPTxhO0m1bXgqh88uOYpp4l\\_F02S-2RE](http://www.npr.org/2015/12/19/459491653/after-historic-elections-in-saudi-arabia-whats-the-future-for-women?fbclid=IwAR3kq_XtNOuGptGRLOGMBPss2MQRPTxhO0m1bXgqh88uOYpp4l_F02S-2RE).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> “Apply for a Grant.” NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY, <https://www.ned.org/apply-for-grant/en/>

<sup>10</sup> Beinart, Peter. “The U.S. Needs to Face Up to Its Long History of Election Meddling.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 4 Sept. 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/07/the-us-has-a-long-history-of-election-meddling/565538/>.

sovereignty; and a general concern with the affairs and interests of the Arab countries”.<sup>11</sup> Following this lead, everyone within the Arab League has the duty to proactively defend against election interference within the region and the growing concerns over the various players who conduct it. From concerns over interference in Syria or the internal interference in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, it is imperative to utilize the lessons taught by the Arab Spring to inform current decisions.

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What elections, if any, occur within my country?
- What is my country’s relationship with nations outside the Arab League who have demonstrated a vested interest in the on goings of my country?
- What does my country have currently implemented to ensure the sanctity of elections and safeguard against interference?
- How was my country impacted by the Arab Spring and how might it directly involve election sanctity?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are proven avenues for improvement in election safety or investigating election interference?
- How will the League, in conjunction with Article II of the Charter of the Arab League, prevent election interference?
- What parameters must be set to maintain individual sovereignty of each nation?
- How do League members with differing styles of governance reconcile their differences in coming to a consensus on how to handle election sanctity?

## IV. Additional Resources

- [Charter of the Arab League](#)  
*Adopted in March of 1945, the Charter is exceedingly important to understand each individual country’s duty to one another and their unique interconnectedness and obligations.*
- [Elections in the Middle East \(YouTube\)](#)  
*Video by the Stanford University Hoover Institution in Washington, DC which features numerous panel speakers who talk upon the recent elections throughout various countries in the Middle East and their efficacy.*
- [Egypt’s Electoral Shakeup](#)

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<sup>11</sup> The Charter of the Arab League

*A YouTube video by Al Jazeera English looking into the Egyptian Presidential election after many arrests and convictions of those attempting to run in opposition of the current President.*

- [Inside Story: Is Egypt's Sisi Scared of Electoral Competition?](#)

**Topic II: Formulating diplomatic strategies of interaction between governments outside of the League in times of both peace and conflict to ensure stability both within the region and the international community.**

## **I. Introduction to the Topic**

### **A. General Background**

With the interconnectedness of politics, economics, and protection of human rights within the world, interaction between all countries is necessary for individual survival. Many wars and deaths have occurred due to disagreements between countries since the beginning of time. It is the mission of the League to unite and ensure the longevity and stability of the region as a whole, in accordance with Article II of the Charter of the League of Arab States. It is also stated in Article I of the 1950 Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Between the States of the Arab League that, “the Contracting States, in an effort to maintain and stabilize peace and security, hereby confirm their desire to settle their international disputes by peaceful means, whether such disputes concern relations among themselves or with other Powers”.<sup>12</sup>

The MENA region has long been embroiled in both regional and international conflict and the ongoing implications of not creating avenues of diplomatic resolution are potentially disastrous. Many chartered international diplomatic organizations, such as the United Nations, have avenues to achieve peace in the face of conflict between member states. As an organization pre-dating the United Nations, diplomatic avenues of interaction are necessary and mandated by the Arab League itself to ensure peace and avoid conflicts within the region and abroad. However, the Arab League has not yet created a universal strategy of diplomacy for ensuring the peace in accordance with the Treaty and Charter.

### **B. History in the Arab World**

For most of the MENA region’s history, countries have been involved in conflict to varying degrees. As diplomatic relations have formed individually, individual needs have led to tensions between member states. Following the 1967 war between Israel and numerous Arab League countries, Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights from Syria in 1981 is largely considered illegal under international law and the UN Security Council Resolution 242 and the Charter of

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<sup>12</sup> Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Between the States of the Arab League, June 17, 1950.

the United Nations Chapter VII.<sup>13</sup> The annexation still holds today, with United States President Donald Trump formally recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. In response to this, Arab leaders in summit rejected President Trump's recognition as illegal, and recognized the land as rightfully Syria's and called upon foreign ministers to increase bilateral and multilateral talks throughout the world in support of their position.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, many disputes between countries outside the League such as between Iran and Russia, which have since signed a military defense pact in 2015, make the fallout of the Nuclear Deal even more troubling for nations within the League as they struggle with continued interference from Iran.<sup>15</sup> Many other countries have become increasingly involved in strengthening their diplomatic relations with League members, such as China. China's approach to the Middle East has been through partnership diplomacy as, "China does not develop alliance relationships with other states, considering them overly costly and risky. Instead, it uses a somewhat vaguely defined set of strategic partnerships, with each level indicating the relative importance Beijing places on the relationship with that particular state. The highest is the comprehensive strategic partnership, which involves multifaceted cooperation across bilateral, regional and international affairs and is reserved for states that China considers major diplomatic and economic partners."<sup>16</sup> China has since signed similar agreements on a comprehensive strategic partnership with UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran.

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

Outside influence within the Middle East from western nations has always been a concern to cultural, social and political establishments. These examples of outside involvement showcase the necessity of the Arab League in creating diplomatic framework to use not only in times of conflict, but in times of peace to ensure the prosperity and future stability of the region. Arab leader's diplomatic reaction to President Trump's Golan Heights recognition in favor of Israel showcases the necessary type of reliability and accountability necessary under the Arab League.

In accordance with Article II of the Treat of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Between States of the Arab League which states, "The Contracting States consider any [act of] armed aggression made against any one or more of them or their armed forces, to be directed against

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<sup>13</sup> Board, Editorial. "Trump's Golan Heights Reversal Will Damage U.S. Diplomacy in the Middle East and Beyond." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 23 Mar. 2019, [www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/trumps-golan-heights-reversal-will-damage-us-diplomacy-in-the-middle-east-and-beyond/2019/03/23/90919f96-4cb6-11e9-9663-00ac73f49662\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.05bdd76eca06](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/trumps-golan-heights-reversal-will-damage-us-diplomacy-in-the-middle-east-and-beyond/2019/03/23/90919f96-4cb6-11e9-9663-00ac73f49662_story.html?utm_term=.05bdd76eca06).

<sup>14</sup> Rahman, Azly. "Arab League To Use Diplomacy To Fight US Decision On Golan – OpEd." *Eurasia Review*, 4 Apr. 2019, [www.eurasiareview.com/04042019-arab-league-to-use-diplomacy-to-fight-us-decision-on-golan-oped/](https://www.eurasiareview.com/04042019-arab-league-to-use-diplomacy-to-fight-us-decision-on-golan-oped/).

<sup>15</sup> Peterson, Nolan. "Iran Is Using Russian 'Gray Zone' Tactics, in Echoes of Ukraine War." *The Daily Signal*, The Daily Signal, 12 July 2019, [www.dailysignal.com/2019/07/14/iran-is-using-russian-gray-zone-tactics-in-echoes-of-ukraine-war/](https://www.dailysignal.com/2019/07/14/iran-is-using-russian-gray-zone-tactics-in-echoes-of-ukraine-war/).

<sup>16</sup> Fulton, Jonathan. "China's Power in the Middle East Is Rising." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 9 Aug. 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/08/09/chinas-rise-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on>.

them all”<sup>17</sup> this would indeed make diplomacy a matter for all League members, not just the individual. The region is stronger together than apart.

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What are the current relations of your country with other predominant world nations?
- How important is diplomacy to your nation in relation to countries outside the League?
- What significant disputes does my country have, if at all, that may prevent a diplomatic outcome?
- What obligations does your country share to others, either under the UN Charter or other treaties?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What is a necessary diplomatic reaction to aggression in times of peace and war to a nation within the Arab League?
- How does the Arab League maintain a united front in the face of varying opinions over a conflict?
- How would protocols for diplomacy in times of peace differ from that in times of war or aggression?
- What form would a unilateral diplomatic decision look like in practice? What is the Council on Political Affairs involvement in overseeing this process?

## IV. Additional Resources

- [Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Between the States of the Arab League, June 17, 1950](#)  
*Although the title may suggest the Treaty has nothing to do with political affairs, the obligations made by League countries to one another are an important aspect of understanding where the collective response is necessary in the face of peace and conflict.*
- [Counting the Cost: Iran's Rising Influence](#)  
*A YouTube video by Al Jazeera English as an example of external relations with extreme pertinence to the entire MENA region and beyond, which is suspected to be an identifiable diplomatic issue for Arab leaders within the parameters of this topic.*
- [Charter of the United Nations](#)  
*In Chapter VII, the Articles tell of the United Nation's obligation to ensure international peace within nations in the face of aggression which most Arab League members are*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 1950.



*party to. It will be helpful in further understanding your country's obligation to others in an international and binding context.*

- [Inside Story: Does Saudi Arabia Have Support to Face Iran?](#)

*A YouTube video by Al Jazeera English showcasing the three summits hosted by Saudi Arabia in an effort to conclude action against Iran.*

### **Topic III: Developing a framework to address political turmoil within the League caused by blockades, with special consideration to the Gulf Crisis, and assess actions to prevent further escalation in the future.**

#### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

##### **A. General Background**

In June 2017, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE severed diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposed land, sea and air embargoes on the gulf country. The reasoning behind this unprecedented blockade, “claimed that Qatar worked to support ‘terrorism’, maintained too close relations with Iran and meddled in the internal affairs of their countries”.<sup>18</sup> The countries imposing the blockade presented Qatar with a list of thirteen demands, all of which Qatar has denied. All the blockading countries, with exception to Egypt, are party to the Gulf Cooperation Council established in 1981. The goal of the GCC is to “promote economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the six states,”<sup>19</sup> which also includes Qatar. The six countries who are party to the GCC control up to half of the entire world’s oil reserves, making the partnership effective in maintaining strong economic power. While Qatar remains a part of the GCC, the strain of the blockade upon it has led to many countries questioning the efficacy of this regional organization.

##### **B. History in the Arab World**

The 2013/2014 Riyadh Agreement, the first signed by Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani between Saudi Arabia and mediated by Kuwait, this agreement later included the King of Bahrain, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Prime Minister of the UAE.<sup>20</sup> Among the many agreements, Qatar agreed to stop its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, not harbor anyone with ill intentions towards the GCC, and not to hire any media professionals or outlets who are

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<sup>18</sup> Chughtai, Alia. “Understanding the Blockade against Qatar.” Qatar | Al Jazeera, [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2018/05/understanding-blockade-qatar-180530122209237.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2018/05/understanding-blockade-qatar-180530122209237.html).

<sup>19</sup> Al Jazeera. “What Is the GCC?” News | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, 4 Dec. 2017, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/gcc-171204094537378.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/gcc-171204094537378.html).

<sup>20</sup> Al Arabiya English. “EXCLUSIVE: Documents Prove Qatar Failed to Comply with GCC Agreements.” *Al Arabiya English*, [english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/07/10/Al-Arabiya-publishes-the-Riyadh-Agreements-of-2013-2014-signed-by-Qatar.html](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/07/10/Al-Arabiya-publishes-the-Riyadh-Agreements-of-2013-2014-signed-by-Qatar.html).

deemed to have an anti-GCC agenda.<sup>21</sup> Qatar is in a unique position of funding and partly controlling the major news outlet Al Jazeera, stationed in Doha, Qatar. In 2017, documents were released suggesting Qatar had failed to uphold their end of the bargain, allowing the signing parties of the document to utilize the clause within the document as agreed to by Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad himself stating “in the event of non-compliance by any state, it is the right of other States to take what it deems appropriate to protect its security and stability”.<sup>22</sup> It is suggested the failure of Qatar to comply with these documents and make the changes they agreed to directly resulted in the current Qatar-Gulf crisis.

While the Middle East and North African region has long been marked by conflict with one another, a blockade as an effort to obtain a desired reaction from a country has not been a tactic commonly seen within the region. The blockade had numerous reaching impacts not only political, but economic and culturally as well.

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

Despite being an area of the world seemingly always embroiled within a conflict, the founding of the Arab League in 1945 was one of the first intergovernmental organization to join countries together diplomatically to resolve differences and be united. Many other partnerships and cooperation’s in the MENA region have led to political and economic cooperation such as the GCC. The issue of the Gulf Crisis has been ongoing and with no real indication that the issue is coming to an end. The Council on Political Affairs has a duty to try to address the current blockade and formulate strategies to ensure protection against similar events occurring again.

A similar political crisis resulted from the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, during a thirteen-day standoff between the United States and Cuba after the discovery of Soviet missiles aimed at the United States, only ninety miles from the Cuban coast.<sup>23</sup> Following the political resolution of the crisis, diplomatic relations between the two countries was almost non-existent until very recently, and continue to remain fraught with suspicion. The strain between these two countries has had long standing effects, potentially similar to what has been seen with the Gulf crisis.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- Between Qatar and the countries currently imposing the blockade, whom does my country tend to side more with? Is my country more neutral on the topic or does it openly back one side?
- In what ways has my country been impacted by the blockade, if at all?

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, Al Arabiya English.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, Al Arabiya English.

<sup>23</sup> History.com Editors. “Cuban Missile Crisis.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 4 Jan. 2010, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/cuban-missile-crisis>.

- Do my country's economic and political affiliations impact or limit the amount of action that can be taken regarding the Gulf Crisis?
- What could the lasting impacts of a continuation of the Gulf Crisis be upon my country?

### III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What have the impacts of the Gulf Crisis been upon the Arab League as a whole?
- Could an ending of the blockade be a viable solution?
- From the far-reaching political implications of the current Qatar-Gulf blockade, how does the League mitigate the impact and ensure the sovereignty of each individual nation?
- What are future diplomatic features the League could implement to prevent similar blockades from occurring in the future?

### IV. Additional Resources

- [Qatar: Beyond the Blockade \(YouTube\)](#)  
*A featured documentary by Al Jazeera which provides background into the current Gulf Crisis and its impacts as seen within Qatar. This gives a generalized and beginners background to the current and on-going issue and can provide insight necessary to begin a deep dive of research into the issue.*
- [The Gulf Divided: The Impact of the Qatar Crisis](#)  
*This research paper utilizes the history of the beginning of the blockade and incorporates the current news and impacts on the region nearly two years later.*
- [The Riyadh Agreement \(Translated\)](#)  
*This translated document by CNN provides the necessary information upon what the Qatari Emir and various other GCC countries came to agree upon in 2013, and the violation of such is believed to be the reason for the current Gulf Crisis.*
- [Qatar given 10 days to meet 13 sweeping demands by Saudi Arabia](#)  
*An in-depth look at the demands upon Qatar, which, in conjunction with studying the Riyadh Agreement, allows a deeper understanding of the Gulf Crisis.*

## **Topic IV: Exploring ways to increase the political involvement of ethnic minorities across the Arab League.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### **A. General Background**

An ethnic minority constitutes a “group of people of a particular race or nationality living in a country or area where most people are from a different race or nationality”.<sup>24</sup> For many nations within the Arab League, ethnic minorities such as the Kurds and Berbers inhabit many Arab League countries with little to no recognition by the governments within the country they inhabit, and many have been denied human rights.<sup>25</sup> For some groups, the reluctance to recognize non-Arab groups has coincided with the association of an Arab ancestry with being Muslim. The ethnic minorities within the Arab League wish for the sovereignty they desire through territory and recognition of the country they reside in. Due to this, political involvement amongst these groups is sparse or discouraged, often from within their community.

Research published within the Oxford Research Encyclopedias suggests “members of ethnic minorities are generally less active in politics, more likely to use contentious forms of political action, and support left-wing political parties that promote minority interests”.<sup>26</sup> In the 1994 Arab Charter on Human Rights Part Two Article II, it states that, “each State party to the present Charter undertakes to ensure that every individual located within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, shall have the right to enjoy all the rights and freedoms recognized in this [Charter], without distinction on the basis of race, color sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other status, and without any discrimination between men and women”.<sup>27</sup>

#### **B. History in the Arab World**

Syrian Kurds make up between 7-10 percent of the population but, “some 300,000 have been denied citizenship since the 1960s, and Kurdish land has been confiscated and redistributed to Arabs in an attempt to ‘Arabize’ Kurdish regions”.<sup>28</sup> In Iraq, Kurds make up 15-20 percent of the population and have long advocated and fought for their independence, including a 4-year war in 1994. In September 2017, a referendum on independence resulted in more than 90 percent of the

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<sup>24</sup> “ETHNIC MINORITY: Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” *ETHNIC MINORITY | Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary*, [dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/ethnic-minority](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/ethnic-minority).

<sup>25</sup> BBC. “Who Are the Kurds?” *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Oct. 2017, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440).

<sup>26</sup> Just, Aida. “Race, Ethnicity, and Political Behavior.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 16 May 2017, [oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-238](https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-238).

<sup>27</sup> “Arab Charter on Human Rights.” *Refworld*, [www.refworld.org/publisher,LAS,MULTILATERALTREATY,,3ae6b38540,0.html](https://www.refworld.org/publisher,LAS,MULTILATERALTREATY,,3ae6b38540,0.html).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 2017.

3.3 million Kurdish voters supporting the secession of the Kurds from Iraq, the Iraqi government declared it was illegal and the Iraqi forces retook the disputed territory.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Berbers (or Amazighs) is the pre-Arab ethnic group living within the hills of Morocco. In many villages, “decades of neglect have left the country’s remote, non-Arab communities without basic infrastructure and cut off from services, such as health and education”.<sup>30</sup> Following the Arab Spring in 2011, the Berber received official recognition of their language and culture in the new constitution of Morocco, although an official law confirming Berber as the official language was not adopted until 2019.<sup>31</sup> Egyptian Copts, an Egyptian Coptian Christian minority that comprise the largest majority of Egyptian Christians, also suffered two Daesh led bombing attacks which targeted their churches in 2017.<sup>32</sup> Throughout their long existence, the Copts have long been persecuted, but due to recent tensions millions have left Egypt and become expatriates.<sup>33</sup> Lebanese Maronite Christians also feel unwelcome in their home countries for exhibiting pro-Western government ideology, where many prominent leaders were assassinated.<sup>34</sup>

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

Similarly, in Nepal, their officially recognized indigenous population which makes up 37%, the Janajatis, had faced structural marginalization, including exclusion from political freedom. Following a 2006 civil war, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed which granted these minorities political freedom and more autonomous control over their population.<sup>35</sup> This same track might be followed by League states to encourage greater stability in regions with semi-autonomous ethnic groups.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, many of the protests and demonstrations occurred at the hands of ethnic minorities or by those advocating for them. The recognition of the reality of the Arab Spring and its lasting impact upon the Arab League make this issue paramount to preventing another uprising from happening.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond, Paul Adrian. “Morocco’s Berbers Urge Broader Reforms.” *Egypt | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 6 May 2014, [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/moroccos-berbers-urge-broader-reforms-2014357321228806.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/moroccos-berbers-urge-broader-reforms-2014357321228806.html).

<sup>31</sup> “Morocco Adopts Law Confirming Berber as Official Language.” *The Arab Weekly*, [theArabweekly.com/morocco-adopts-law-confirming-berber-official-language](http://theArabweekly.com/morocco-adopts-law-confirming-berber-official-language).

<sup>32</sup> Blumberg, Antonia. “Who Are Egypt’s Coptic Christians And What Do They Believe?” HuffPost, HuffPost, 10 Apr. 2017, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/who-are-egypts-coptic-christians-and-what-do-they-believe\\_n\\_58ebc537e4b0c89f912058d5](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/who-are-egypts-coptic-christians-and-what-do-they-believe_n_58ebc537e4b0c89f912058d5).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> “Maronites.” Minority Rights Group, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/maronites-2/>.

<sup>35</sup> Castillejo, Claire. Ethnic and Indigenous Groups in Nepal’s Peacebuilding Processes. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2dcad865860b5424320ba4720b19442a.pdf>.

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What ethnic minorities reside within my country?
- What is the relationship between the ethnic minorities in my country and my government?
- Are ethnic minorities within my country involved within the political process, including their ability to vote or hold office?
- What is the attitude of the ethnic minorities within my country towards the current political process and how has that impacted, or not impacted, the affairs of state?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are the current restrictions placed upon ethnic minorities barring them from the political process within the Arab League and how can those be mitigated?
- In what ways can countries be held accountable for involving and implementing a solution?
- What is the benchmark, or goal, for success in involving ethnic minorities in the political process and how can it be measured?
- Would all ethnic minorities be included in this resolution and if not, who would be left out?

## IV. Additional Resources

- [Inside Story: Berbers in North Africa](#)  
*This YouTube video by Al Jazeera English explores the Berbers community in North Africa and the potential impact of a unified ethnic minority upon the already existing government.*
- [Egypt's Nubians Seek Return to Homeland](#)  
*This YouTube video by Al Jazeera English explores Egypt's Nubian community who now constitutes its largest internally displaced people's group after a dam was built flooding and destroying thousands of their homes.*
- [Arab Charter on Human Rights](#)  
*This document, which all League members are party to, is essential to understanding your country's role in protecting human rights and the increased obligation.*
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)  
*This United Nations document further serves as an example for the standards every country is further held to within the Arab League.*