



2022 - 2023

Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE

Joint Defense Council

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**National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations**



Original draft by Anna Scott, Chair of the Joint Defense Council at the 2023 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the 2022-2023 Model Arab League Joint Defense Council. My name is Anna Scott, and I am thrilled to serve as your chair for this year's council. I am a third year student at Converse University studying History and Political Science, and this will be my fourth year participating in the phenomenal opportunity that is Model Arab League. I spent two years on the Joint Defense Council as a delegate, and was the chair for the Joint Defense Council at SERMAL and NUMAL 2022. This program has provided me with debate skills, leadership abilities, and personal and professional connections that will last a lifetime. Below I have provided some advice that I wish I would have had during my first year on Model Arab League as well as my first year at the National University conference.

- 1. Don't be afraid to mess up.** If this is your first time at a Model Arab League conference and especially if it is your first time at NUMAL, you're bound to be at least a little bit nervous about your own performance. You feel as though you're surrounded by people more experienced than you, and therefore hesitant to say something out of fear of being wrong. The reality is that this is a learning experience for everyone involved- myself included. Nobody is going to judge you if your phrasing is not that of a career diplomat; this leads me into my next point.
- 2. You are a country, not a student or delegate anymore.** It is imperative to stay on your country's policy, even if it may conflict with your personal beliefs. The entire point of this program is to learn foreign policy across the board, not just the foreign policy of the country in which you reside. Try creating a master document of your assigned member state's policies on relevant subjects to ensure you have a reference point in making solutions and do not agree to terms that are not realistic.
- 3. Stay as up-to-date as possible on the subjects provided in this year's agenda.** It is not enough to research these topics a week in advance- you must know the history behind them as well as the recent developments in the MENA region. It will show in debate if you are not well-versed in the material.
- 4. Have fun with this!** You're going to meet so many amazing people and make lifelong connections through this program. Take photos, exchange contact information, and even have lunch with your fellow delegates between debating time. I have met people that I now consider to be my best friends through this program, and I wouldn't trade the experiences NCUSAR has provided me for anything in the world. I sincerely hope you can say the same by the end of the conference season.

If anyone needs *anything* from me before or during the conference season, please feel free to email me at aescott003@converse.edu. Otherwise, happy researching!

-Anna Scott

Topic I: Proposing a standardized, League-wide policy on nuclear technology, including weapons and other forms such as energy.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

In recent years, countries all over the globe have been both researching and implementing nuclear technology to combat climate change. The process of “decarbonising” one’s economy- decentering carbon-based energy sources and replacing them with more eco-friendly ones- has become particularly popular in western countries. However, many of these policies are focusing on nuclear energy and power plants; this is rather controversial among climate activists, especially since the disasters of Chernobyl and Fukushima have displayed the dangers of this technology when it is not managed properly. Another major issue that those advocating for carbon alternatives have with it is the cost, as it is much more expensive to operate a nuclear power plant than to use things like solar or wind-derived energy.¹

Nuclear weapons, on the other hand, are a far more disputed topic. There have been countless calls over the years for all countries to disarm, yet it never happens. There are currently nine countries that possess nuclear weapons, with the total figure being around 14,500 weapons worldwide. Though there has already been a significant decrease in this number since the Cold War ended, organizations like the UN continuously call for stricter measures to ensure this trend continues.² This is also a tense topic in current affairs due to the war in Ukraine, with concerns of Russia’s WMD capabilities making a constant cycle in the news.

B. History in the Arab World

With the 1960s, there came a push to establish a Middle East nuclear weapon free zone. In 1974, Egypt and Iran released a joint declaration calling for a resolution including this. In 1991, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution (687) that both ended the Gulf War as well as established the goal of the MENWFZ.³ This was furthered in 1995 with the NPT Review Conference held by the International Atomic Energy Agency, with experts believing that the creation of this zone would assist in global nonproliferation as well as overall peace in the Middle East. As of 2014, Iraq, Iran, and Syria were found in noncompliance of the IAEA’s standards- Syria remains in noncompliance to this day.

In more recent years, the most notable advancement toward a WMD-free MENA region has been the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2015. This deal provided substantial relief from sanctions in exchange for Iran dismantling a hefty portion of its nuclear weapons program. This deal was repealed in 2018 under the administration of US President Donald Trump, as his administration felt that it was not accomplishing its intended goals.

¹<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/11/12/is-nuclear-power-the-way-forward-to-combat-the-climate-crisis>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/16/list-of-countries-with-nuclear-weapons.html>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East_nuclear_weapon_free_zone

With the change in presidency, however, came the possibility of renewing the deal. Saudi Arabia has been critical of how this plan was initially established, with their primary focus being that they themselves were not included in the negotiations despite being directly affected by Iran's nuclear capabilities. They also added that they would be willing to obtain a nuclear weapon if Iran were to strengthen their program. Israel dismissed the plan altogether, stating that it was too lenient.⁴ In July 2022 the United States placed severe sanctions on firms for Iranian-based petroleum products despite the efforts to revive the deal.⁵

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

In July 2017, the Arab League established the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, opening it up to signatures in September of the same year. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit stressed that disarmament to him meant the "final and irreversible" disposal of nuclear weapons worldwide, not merely a cessation of their production. Since this has occurred, Israel has furthered its anti-disarmament stance as well as opposed the idea of a MENWFZ.⁶ There has been a push to dismantle WMDs altogether, but chemical and biological weapons are much easier to dispose of than nuclear weapons. In addition, they are not seen as a major defense measure for a country's national security the way that nuclear weapons are.

In 2020, the UAE finally commenced operations on a 12-year long project to create a nuclear power plant. The Barakah Power Plant is a collaboration between the IAEA and the South Korean government, with the goal being for it to continuously provide about a quarter of the UAE's power. This is the most recent development in the age of nuclear power since the 1990s, when China constructed the Qinshan Nuclear Power Plant. With the most recent nuclear disaster being that of Fukushima in 2011, there is still an uneasiness about the safety of depending on nuclear power when there are options like solar power that would work well for the MENA region.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What are the most cost-efficient alternatives to nuclear energy?
- What technology can be used to update older nuclear power plants to keep them operating safely and efficiently?
- What has previously hindered the goal of disarmament of nuclear weapons?

⁴ <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-iran-nuclear-deal>

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<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/6/us-imposes-new-iran-sanctions-amid-efforts-to-revive-nuclear-deal>

⁶https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/arab-league-hails-passing-of-treaty-on-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons-121012300306_1.html

- How does the MENA region differ from the west in terms of why nuclear weapons may be seen as necessary defense measures?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the Arab League use our natural resources to deviate from carbon or nuclear energy?
- What about our past solutions can be changed to provide a better outcome?
- What countries outside of the Arab League have had positive outcomes at attempts to disarm, and what can we learn from them?
- What are less severe measures that the League can take to ensure security in our nations without using the threat of nuclear weapons?

IV. Additional Resources

- [International Atomic Energy Agency](#)
- [Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant](#)
- [Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East Introduction](#)

Topic II: Resolving the territorial disputes caused by climate change, such as water and food insecurity.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

Approximately 60% of the population in the MENA region has very little to no access to drinking water, with those outside of large cities often being left out of infrastructure projects that would alleviate this issue. Because of this, the region is expected to experience between 6-14% GDP loss before 2050. A seemingly easy fix would be desalinization; however, this is a process that leaves a hefty carbon footprint and is not possible for all countries.⁷ Imports are critical to ensuring every nation has the access they need to water that is drinkable and that can be used for both agriculture and cleanliness. This is where water and food insecurity go hand in hand- if there is no water for crops and livestock, there is no income for farmers or food for the public. This is further impacted when countries are dependent on one another for keeping their citizens healthy- particularly if there is a wealth disparity involved.

The four pillars of food safety are as follows: availability, access, utilization, and stability. These four words all sound similar, yet do not always go hand in hand. A country can have an availability of food but not provide the public access to it, and there

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<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/03/water-scarcity-is-a-growing-problem-across-the-middle-east-is-this-how-we-solve-it/#:~:text=The%20most%20water-scarce%20region%20in%20the%20world%20is,extrame%20compared%20to%20the%20global%20average%20of%2022%25.>

can be access to crops with poor stability. In addition, there are countries that do not always fully utilize what is available to them.⁸ There needs to be a mission in place for the Arab League to begin fulfilling all of these pillars- otherwise, these crises will only worsen as climate change speeds up.

B. History in the Arab World

Many countries within the Arab League, such as Jordan and Syria, are dependent upon other nations for freshwater imports. In addition, Palestine is dependent on Israel for their access to safe water. It is crucial for countries within the Arab League to cooperate with one another on sharing water resources, otherwise disputes could cause the entire region to suffer economically.⁹ It is predicted that by the year 2025, water access in the region will decrease to only 500 cubic meters per person and that both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers will run dry by 2040. This will likely cause Iraq to collapse, as these are the sources of water preventing their people from thirsting to death. The World Bank asserts that 82% of the water in the region is not being used efficiently, which needs to be investigated and corrected. Underground reservoirs are where we see the most conflict over water in the MENA region, as most countries share a reservoir with neighbors.¹⁰

The UN estimates that there are roughly 24 million Yemenis (83% of their population) who are undernourished, and that there are 12 million Syrians who need emergency food assistance. This is not something that disappears once they flee conflict zones- roughly half of all Lebanese homes inhabited by Syrian refugees are still food insecure despite fleeing the worst of the war.¹¹ Lebanon is also dealing with hyperinflation, however, which causes their overall population to not be able to afford food. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly not helped matters, with millions out of work and unable to purchase goods essential to their households.

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

We are currently seeing disputes over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, primarily between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. Libya is also facing security tensions that cause a decrease in their access to canals, something the United Nations has warned against politicizing. Egypt has launched an informational campaign encouraging its citizens to ration water and to reconsider what is necessary for their

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<https://berytech.org/food-security-in-mena-region/#:~:text=As%20per%20FAO%2C%20the%20MENA%20is%20the%20only,count%20of%20people%20in%20need%20reaches%202%20million.>

⁹ <https://www.ecomena.org/water-scarcity-in-mena/>

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<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/mena-regions-water-crisis-avoiding-potential-water-wars>

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<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2021/09/24/mena-has-a-food-security-problem-but-there-are-ways-to-address-it>

usage. This is advisable to most Arab League member states, as much of the available water is wasted in a time where mass migration is happening due to its scarcity. There are currently measures in place in the two climates most similar to the region, Australia and the southwestern United States, that have managed to conserve water effectively while not compromising agricultural staples.¹²

In addition to solving the water crisis, broadening trade and public-private partnerships would increase imports of food. Particularly on the African continent, it is crucial to use food trade as a method of diplomacy to strengthen international ties.¹³ While many think of food insecurity as being caused by conflict, we can also have the inverse effect; when critical resources are scarce, diplomatic and territorial tensions heighten. Egypt went from having one of the most abundant food sources to rationing in recent years; why? There are four primary factors that influenced this drop: inflation, the exchange rate, industrial output, and investments. The food subsidies created an imbalance of supply and demand, and in trying to correct this, Egypt created the opposite issue for themselves. It is also worth noting that a standardized approach is not what is needed- each country struggles with a lack of resources on a very different scale, therefore a uniform solution will not provide the desired outcome.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What are the most abundant resources this region has to offer, and how can those be used to slow climate change?
- What countries face the biggest obstacles in trying to solve these disputes?
- What action plans are already in place to assist in famines or droughts? Are they effective?
- How does accessibility to water affect non-state actors and their actions in the region?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can countries embroiled in conflict safely gain access to these resources?
- How can water be used more efficiently to prevent international dam or reservoir disputes?
- Are informational campaigns surrounding rationing completing their intended mission?
- How can the Arab League prevent private enterprises from hoarding materials related to this issue?

IV. Additional Resources

¹² <https://www.ecomena.org/water-scarcity-in-mena/>

¹³

<https://rightforeducation.org/2018/08/02/food-insecurity-and-how-we-can-stop-it/#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20key%20reasons%20for%20food%20insecurity,tackle%20food%20insecurity%20is%20by%20reducing%20poverty%20levels.>

- [Food Security in the Middle East](#)
- [MENA Has a Food Security Problem, But There Are Ways to Address It](#)
- [Food Security in the Middle East | EcoMENA](#)

Topic III. Assessing the likelihood of artificial intelligence creating cybersecurity threats as the technology for it progresses.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

To recognize artificial intelligence as a security risk means that there is a firm grasp on what it is defined as. According to IBM, “Artificial intelligence leverages computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind”. Another key difference between artificial intelligence and human intelligence is that AI lacks the barrier of a human conscience- it can create solutions that are not always ethical simply because it is the quickest or most efficient way of doing things. In 1950, scientist Alan Turing proposed the “Turing Test” to determine what set living beings and machines apart. This test, while now considered to be ineffective due to technological progression, was ahead of its time for the 50s- it paved the way for companies to push for more human-like computer capabilities to both decrease labor costs and to be on top of their competition.¹⁴

Although AI took off initially as search engines like Google, it has quickly moved to mimic more than just thought- machinery like Apple’s Siri or Amazon’s Alexa, which imitate human voice, are on the rise. Most people think of artificial intelligence as something new and unknown, even though simple four-function calculators can fall into this category. Since it was originally recognized as an academic discipline in the 1950s, AI has gone through numerous periods of public interest followed by what is known as “AI Winters”- a lack of interest.¹⁵ The primary concern in this day and age is how it can be used as a weapon, whether it be by state actors or private companies.

B. History in the Arab World

In 1972, the Arab League established the Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport. They have a branch of the Academy coined the College of Artificial Intelligence, which was opened in 2019. This college was founded primarily due to a scientific prediction that AI would replace humans within much of the workforce. The Egypt-based college holds an abundance of

¹⁴ <https://www.ibm.com/cloud/learn/what-is-artificial-intelligence>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AI_winter

research specialized to this topic, boasting eight different campuses to fulfill its mission.¹⁶

The Emergence of Offensive AI was a study conducted by Forrester Consulting which found that 88% of their respondents believe offensive AI technology is inevitable. This calls into question how various nations and multilateral organizations are preparing for such technology, both in creating their own offenses as well as defending against enemy technology. 80% of these respondents believe that extremely advanced cybersecurity measures are required to combat potential attacks, implying that most countries are falling behind in these measures.¹⁷

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

The director of threat hunting at Darktrace, a leading company of AI technology, says that the only way to combat AI threats is with defense mechanisms also designed with AI. The most common use of this technology when conducting a cyberattack is detecting weaknesses or inactivity of prevention tactics and safeguards used by the target. Firewalls being temporarily down are a perfect example of this- a network is left unprotected, and this is when the pre-designed attack is launched.¹⁸ Therefore, there needs to be an increase of preventative measures as well as research into advancing technology used by private companies. Perhaps a team of international experts primarily sourced from within the MENA region would be most beneficial to employ for this project.

While AI can be used offensively in various sectors of a country's military, the most controversial are automated weapons and methods of transportation. Because things in civilian life, like self-driving cars, are still relatively new, people are also naturally hesitant to depend upon similar technology for national defense. Logistics and surveillance, however, is gaining traction due to a lack of opposition in using AI to advance their protocols. There is, however, public concern about militaries using more advanced facial recognition systems that depend upon these tools, and the lack of privacy they create.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Why was artificial intelligence originally needed?
- What are the biggest AI success stories within the consumer market? What about from a militaristic perspective?
- What scientists and researchers are being consulted as this technology evolves?

¹⁶ https://aast.edu/en/admission/contenttemp.php?page_id=54600028

¹⁷ <https://darktrace.com/newsroom/88-of-security-leaders-say-supercharged-ai-attacks-are-inevitable>

¹⁸ <https://securityintelligence.com/articles/ai-security-threats-risk/>

- What are some notable advancements made within the Arab League?

III. Questions a Solution Might Answer

- How can AI be used safely and effectively, and without compromising existing technology?
- What are some possible effects of replacing certain human jobs within the military with automation?
- What are the jobs that cannot, or should not, be replaced by AI?
- Do the pros outweigh the cons of using this technology to achieve the goals of the JDC? Why or why not?

IV. Additional Resources

- [COMPUTING MACHINERY AND INTELLIGENCE](#)
- [Admission & Registration @ AASTMT](#)
- [AI Security Threats: The Real Risk Behind Science Fiction Scenarios](#)
- [Artificial Intelligence in the Military – An Overview of Capabilities](#)

Topic IV: Promoting joint military exercises with the African Union to further the League's multilateral relationships.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

The African Union is a multilateral body composed of 55 African nations from five different regions of the continent. It was originally established in 1963 under the title of Organization of African Unity (OAU), with the shift to the AU being announced in 2002. In its founding, the OAU sought to end the effects of colonialism on the continent such as apartheid, promote regional unity, protect sovereignty, and increase multilateral relations. Some of their specialized committees and councils operate under protocols similar to the Arab League- they have a Peace and Security Council, an Economic, Social, and Cultural Council, and even a Pan-African Parliament. Their Agenda 2063 has the intention of a “peaceful and secure Africa” as listed in Aspiration 4, and they center dialogue over conflict to help reach this goal.¹⁹ One major step they have taken to achieve this goal is the establishment of the Arms Control Database for the continent- this is intended to impede weapons trafficking.²⁰

The African Union has created multiple treaties that happen to fall in line with the goals of the Arab League, particularly where counterterrorism is involved. Though their treaties are formatted differently, their mission reaffirms that terrorism is a serious issue in the region. Boko Haram, the primary terrorist

¹⁹ <https://au.int/en/conflict-resolution-peace-security>

²⁰ <http://stgpeaceau.org/en>

group within northern Africa, often aligned itself with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in the early 2010s; this demonstrates shared struggles of the two multilateral bodies and why it is wise to work together.

B. History in the Arab World

While there have been important diplomatic moves made, such as the Arab League celebrating Africa Day, there is still work to be done in reaffirming that the two bodies share many of the same issues and therefore must pursue similar, and often collaborative, solutions.²¹ There is to be an Arab-African Summit set this year (2022), the fifth one since its creation. In 2021, there was the ninth assembly of the General Cooperation Meeting, in which Ahmed Aboul Gheit thanked the African Union for their stance in support of Palestine. In addition, this meeting covered topics from culture to the economy to international development; therefore, there are a lot of past diplomacy measures that one can base a new working language off of.²²

One point of contention for both bodies, however, is their refusal to take a stance on the ongoing issues between Spain and Algeria despite Algeria being a member state of both organizations. While the two countries have always been close trading partners, there has been a recent and dramatic shift in their attitudes towards one another due to Algeria's attempts to destabilize Morocco. Spain's response was to declare their support for Morocco as a sovereign state- Algeria followed up by cutting ties with Spanish banks and is expected to withhold gas from the country to apply more pressure.²³ While the Arab League and the African Union have always worked closely with one another, this is a topic in which neither of them are taking much action at all.

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

There are nine countries that currently belong to both of these multilateral bodies, therefore dialogue might be most easily spearheaded by these particular nations. Joint field missions have been a target of interest in the collaborative discussions, particularly when it comes to peacekeeping and peacebuilding

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<https://dailynewsegypt.com/2021/05/25/arab-league-affirms-commitment-to-partnership-with-african-union/>

²²

<https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20210204/joint-statement-general-secretariat-league-arab-states-and-african-union>

²³

<https://www.africannewspaper.net/2022/06/21/arab-league-african-union-deafening-silence-regarding-algeria-spain-feud-the-north-africa-post/>

tactics. Humanitarian relief has been provided to the AU from the LAS in the past, and often comes into play during meetings regarding conflict situations like Libya, Sudan, and Somalia. Terrorism has been the primary focus with Libya, whereas the LAS and AU have utilized domestic security forces where Somalia is concerned to enforce political changes.

The African Union has its own organ for terrorism-related action, the African Center on the Study and Research of Terrorism; this works with the Arab League's Committee on National Security and Combatting Terrorism. These two bodies would be ideal to incorporate in any solutions, as counterterrorism measures are currently the military threat that can be agreed upon the most. Other topics, however, include the aforementioned field exercises, joint defense action to end overlapping conflicts like that of Darfur, and peacebuilding in areas recovering from conflict. This topic can also overlap heavily with topic two, as water and food insecurity and disputes can be solved with this collaboration.²⁴

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What are the biggest challenges faced by member states of both bodies?
- Historically speaking, what treaties or agreements have impacted multilateral relations? Has it been mostly positive?
- How do the militaries of the member states of the African Union compare to those in the Arab League?
- Is counterterrorism the primary concern in joining forces? If not, what is?

III. Questions a Solution Might Answer

- How can joint military action solve or alleviate other problems posed in the topic list without combining topics?
- What are the more recently emerging security concerns that these two bodies share, and how is each body handling them on their own?
- How can the countries that have membership with both organizations be primarily utilized without excluding the remaining members entirely?
- Has this partnership's dialogue proven to be successful in deescalating shared conflicts? If not, is there any other action that has done so?

IV. Additional Resources

- [African Union](#)
- [Protocol to the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism \(EN\)](#)
- [Joint Statement by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and the African Union Commission](#)

- [Consultations between the African Union and the League of Arab States on Political, Peace and Security Issues - World | ReliefWeb](#)