



2023 - 2024

Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE

Joint Defense Council

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**National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations**



Original draft by Jack Stokes, Chair of the Joint Defense Council at the 2024 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

It is my honor and privilege to welcome you to the 2023-2024 National Model Arab League, and specifically, the Joint Defense Council. My name is Jack Stokes and I will be your chair for the coming year. I am a senior Politics major, with a German Cultural Studies and Theatre minor at Converse University in Spartanburg, South Carolina. I have participated in multiple model conferences (Model Arab League and Model NATO) as both a chair and a delegate. I most recently served as a representative of Iraq in the Special Council on Medicine and Health, and most recently chaired the Military Committee at the 2022-2023 International Model NATO Conference. My expectations of this council culminate into two key points, a steadfast dedication to diplomacy as well as respect for your peers.

The Joint Defense Council can be both contentious and difficult to navigate as we discuss problems facing many regions under the League's watch, however, those involved in the discussions must remember that the council you are serving is comprised of individuals from across the region and consideration must be given to every facet of the issue facing the League, not any individual country. It is crucial to consider ideas in the room, but remember that these solutions and discussions being crafted pertain to real-world disasters and individuals. That being said, this is an educational opportunity and I will always encourage you to ask questions and hope you feel comfortable letting yourself grow around your peers.

This conference can be an intimidating experience for those not familiar with the Model, but this is an educational opportunity and those who have served in any position are expected to and encouraged to provide aid and assistance to expand the opportunities of all Model Arab League participants. I look forward to this council- not just the ideas you will bring to the table, but the lives and the wisdom you will bring into the room both in and out of the debate.

Sincerely,

Jack Stokes
Joint Defense Council Chair

Topic I: Resolving illicit arms trafficking in former and current conflict zones.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

In 2019, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database reported that major conventional weapons transferrals within/to Middle Eastern states have exponentially increased over the past 15 years. Arms control inadequacies, such as arms diversion within the MENA region's Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control frameworks, have been identified and targeted since the late 1960s with the intention of reallocating resources to controlling decommissioned or lost service weapons, varying in weapons classifications from handheld weaponry to heavy artillery. A March 2020 report¹ by SIPRI Arms Transfers Database showcased that certain countries had increased arms imports by as high as 631%, one of many examples that showcase an increased flow of arms into the MENA region. These increases in arms imports among countries and mercenary groups throughout the region fuel an already existing and systematic problem the MENA region faces.

Considering that the region is host to increasing arms diversion and trafficking, with a 20% rise between 2005 and 2019,² residual social and economic damages caused by trafficking operations fueled dependence on trade within conflict-ridden countries and zones. Libya, Syria, and Yemen have been financially devastated and economically reshaped to rely on more war-economic structures.

Through these lenses, navigating the arms trafficking crisis and translating its impact on both economic and social structures within individual states is crucial. A continual reliance on conflict and a war-torn economic structure has destroyed many modern Middle Eastern powers and states, and signs of continual abuse in relation to arms smuggling have, ironically, created loopholes in which weapons sent by Western aids have been turned against their initial purveyors. Shifting sentiments, such as global political changes within world powers such as the United States, or other Western powers, have also aided continual instability in terms of inter-regional disputes regarding arms.³

In researching different forms of arms trafficking and its control throughout the region, it is important to focus on the impact of the non-state actors. These consist of, but are not limited to: the numerous smuggling rings that operate in impoverished and warring

¹ Arms Transfer and SALW Controls in the Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and State of Play." *SIPRI*, www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2022/arms-transfer-and-salw-controls-middle-east-and-north-africa-challenges-and-state-play

² Countering Illicit Arms Transfers in the MENA Region: The Case of Yemen ..., library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/16657.pdf

³ Cohen, Zachary. "Trump Administration Considering New Weapons Sale to Saudi Arabia, Top Democrat Says | CNN Politics." CNN, 27 May 2020, edition.cnn.com/2020/05/27/politics/trump-pompeo-saudi-arms-sale-menendez/index.html

states, resistance groups with goals of governmental destabilization, and, most notably, terrorist groups seeking to denounce and reduce Western impact and reach.

B. History in the Arab World

As aforementioned, illicit arms trafficking has plagued the Arab world since the early 1960s, promoting new opportunities to fuel ongoing conflicts within the MENA region. These conflicts are difficult to compare in terms of relation to arms diversion and trafficking within the region. Mapping the SALW movement throughout the conflict zones has been used to determine the impact on the local communities of civilians and military operations within areas of conflict activity. As seen in Yemen, by overlooking international arms embargoes, the rise of civilian casualties defines the scope of impact. These extensive collections of 40-60 million weapons within select regions have proven to worsen ongoing humanitarian crises within the region. The same 2020 report labeled the arms transfer happening within the region as “[an] illustration of the growing role that some states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) play in the global arms trade—not only as arms importers but also increasingly as arms producers and exporters.”

Another important cycle of arms flow within the region is the Syrian arms trade. With nearly \$1 billion USD worth of training, ammunition, and arms being transferred to Syrian rebel groups, and Syrian government stockpiles, Syria has suffered lasting impacts from accidental arms transfers. Arms smuggling has even crossed the Syrian borders of Lebanon, with nearly 60,000 rounds of ammunition being seized from an Italian container ship anchored at the Lebanese port of Tripoli.

State-building, an idea and practice not unknown in the region, has battled an expansive market of unregulated and unofficial arms trade. This arms trade has stunted the economic and political growth of nearly every state within the region. Libyan arms smuggling plagued development for nearly two decades; during the 2011 collapse of the Gaddafi regime, it saw an increase in civilian involvement in almost every aspect of weapons handling - from civilian gun ownership to civilian gun selling - the weapons being bought and sold, however, were untraceable and therefore could only be countered with an increase of military dominance and funding.⁴

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

Consider the patterns of economic and social catastrophes left in the wake of continual arms smuggling and trafficking throughout a state. One of the most crucial aspects of the illicit arms trade has been the civilian impact, and focusing on and delineating the difference between punishment, correction, rehabilitation, and control is crucial for this topic, but not necessary for a solution.

⁴“Illicit Trafficking and Libya’s Transition: Profits and Losses.” United States Institute of Peace, 11 Oct. 2016, www.usip.org/publications/2014/02/illicit-trafficking-and-libyas-transition-profits-and-losses

Enforcing arms embargoes in a region that cannot regulate such embargoes would be fruitless, for direct engagement with the diversion, long-term reform is crucial. Educational reform is not to be overlooked either. Considering the impact of mental health on this topic, the individual aspect of this epidemic cannot be forgotten, and possible reform to focus on the rehabilitation of former militia members, who tend to fuel illicit arms trade following service in hopes of gaining economic capital, would be intermediate solutions that could fuel new eras for states plagued with this crisis.

To reiterate the aforementioned idea of regulation, to attempt to regulate arms would not necessarily be implausible, but remembering the attempts in the past, how can a modern solution differ?

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How exactly has arms diversion or illicit trafficking of weapons affected countries bordering your state?
- What methods of arms diversion prevention have your state or other states within the MENA taken?
- In what ways has the trading of illicit arms impacted geopolitical power and the appearance of the MENA region to the security scrutinies of other world alliances?
- How have non-state actors attempted to curb or increase the flow of illicit arms throughout the region and to what extent have they been successful?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How has the arms trafficking within the region influenced the reliance on a war-torn economic structure?
- Will the arms trafficking race continue in religious or military instability regions?
- How should non-state actors be held responsible, stopped, or in some form prevented from expanding their operations within the region?
- Should weapons from allies outside the region be considered weapons of war and how can the Arab League define, or moderate international arms trading?

IV. Additional Resources

- [Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2019 | SIPRI](#)

A 2019 report detailing arms transfers from 1950-2019 pertaining to imports, exports, and illicit trade within the region amongst the Middle East and Europe,

Asia, Africa, and North America.

- [The Arms Trade in the MENA Region: Drivers and Dangers](#)

An article by the Arab Center Washington DC discussing reasons and factors for arms trade, both transfer and illicit trade, keenly relying on the above SIPRI Arms Transfer report and relating it to other studies from the region.

- [Up in arms: The Middle East as the World's Illicit Arms Depot | Global Initiative](#)

This article published by Global Initiative focuses on the Arab region and how it relates to the Global Crime Index. It has linked many useful reports and data snapshots that could be beneficial to finding solutions pertaining to criminal conflict.

- [Limiting Conventional Arms Exports to the Middle East](#)

This relatively dated composition gives any person researching this topic a historical perspective. Published in 1992, this report looks at decreasing the flow of arms into the Middle East with the main focus being U.S. economic stability. This gives lots of procedural information and historical context to arms flow within the region.

- [Opportunities to Regulate Conventional Arms in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa](#)

This political analysis puts effort into determining political opportunities that both Western and regional forces have to possibly limit arms movement within the title's locations.

Topic II: Creating a League-wide security protocol for natural and man-made disasters to provide safe and sustainable prevention, recovery, and development methods.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

In the past decade, the MENA region has been susceptible to numerous new and aggressive forms of natural disasters. As climate change has advanced in a region already plagued with numerous man-made disasters, the region has faced new, multi-faceted levels of issues. From disaster response infrastructure to a lack of capability in defense, the region has been known to lack major climate-related infrastructure.

It is important to note that climate change has not been defined by every member of the League, at least in any comprehensive manner, and with no clear definition or recognition of the intensifying climate within the region, not every state has been on the same path of aid or relief when pertaining to destructive disasters.

The United Nations has released reports that suggest trillions of dollars of infrastructure focusing on early warning systems and miscellaneous climate-resilient infrastructure. The same United Nations climate action report suggests more agriculturally based solutions such as solar-powered irrigation, and other adaptive measures, a 30% drop off in agricultural yields could be avoided by 2050.⁵ Another important factor is ensuring aid reaches vulnerable populations within the region. Not neglecting the international community in solutions and funding for climate aid is crucial, especially considering the trillions of dollars of international climate finance.

B. History in the Arab World

From disaster risk analysis and disaster management, every state within the region has struggled with disaster response in some form. Following the 2023 earthquake that impacted both Turkey and Syria, the League was shocked by the realization that the fallout of disaster in the region was increasingly becoming more destructive. Politically driven aid and indecisive internal response led to more casualties and slower recovery and development within the affected region.⁶ This unfortunate event, however, was the result of an uncontrollable cause, unavoidable in nature, and met with an all but robust or prepared

⁵ “Climate Adaptation.” United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-adaptation?gclid=CjwKCAjw3dCnBhBCEiwAVvLcuwRRjvAKgfyClzL0OHX_-vDWM2eI7MGsS44bS6BxmLYq-si_hXsO6RoCZa4QAvD_BwE. Accessed 6 August. 2023.

⁶ “Disaster Dynamics: Assessing Middle East Responses to the Turkey-Syria Earthquake and Other Destructive Events.” The Washington Institute, www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/disaster-dynamics-assessing-middle-east-responses-turkey-syria-earthquake-and-other

response, creating the environment for longer reconstruction and social rehabilitation. The natural disasters within the region have defined a lack of recovery capabilities and the League's current inability to aid the countries seeking or in need of rehabilitative aid.

As already stated, the failings of the response to the 2023 Turkish and Syrian earthquakes highlighted the lack of recovery and aid infrastructure within the two countries impacted. This is not mutually exclusive, however. In the past two decades, every member of the LAS has been tested in their responses to natural and man-made disasters, all having major sustainable security failings.

The 2020 Beirut explosion killed upwards of 215 people and injured hundreds more. The response from within, or lack thereof, showcased an internal failure to act, as many states are unable to interact or respond effectively due to the crippling aspects of any disaster.⁷ Historically, man-made and natural disasters within the region are left to the individuals who bear the weight of the state-wide disasters. The 2020 explosion highlighted major flaws in aging infrastructure and flawed systemic methodologies within the region - the Lebanese port, where the explosion occurred, created the catalyst for the 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate to explode. With no security protocols or immediate aid readied, over 250,000 people were left homeless and thousands, to this day the wounded city has still not been able to effectively rebuild major locations destroyed in the explosion.⁸

Beirut is just one example of a man-made disaster within the region, and considering the region is plagued with an increasingly heated climate and growing natural disasters, the space for unintentional error is becoming narrower and must be met with proper precautionary infrastructure.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future: Non-State Actors

There are many aspects that need to be considered when researching this topic. How does the League define man-made disasters? When and in what capacity will the League intervene or provide aid following a natural or man-made disaster? What policies does the League already have in place for aiding member states affected by disasters? Does the League have the infrastructure in place to address climate change threats? These major

⁷ "After Two Years, Lebanon Has Done Nothing in Response to the Port of Beirut Blast." Wilson Center, www.wilsoncenter.org/article/after-two-years-lebanon-has-done-nothing-response-port-beirut-blast#:~:text=Lebanon%20Ideas%20Forum-,After%20Two%20Years%2C%20Lebanon%20Has%20Done%20Nothing%20in%20Response,the%20Port%20of%20Beirut%20Blast&text=On%20August%204%2C%202020%2C%20a.a%20failed%20state%20within%20months

⁸ "Rebuilding Beirut: A Roadmap for an Equitable Post-Disaster Response: Columbia World Projects." Rebuilding Beirut: A Roadmap for an Equitable Post-Disaster Response | Columbia World Projects, worldprojects.columbia.edu/news-media/rebuilding-beirut-roadmap-equitable-post-disaster-response Accessed 19 Aug. 2023.

questions have shaped the conversation around the possible expansion of development methods in the region. Considering the impact of modern natural disasters and the failings of the League in relation to response and aid, and an increase in reliance on external aid.

While external and non-state-centered aid reliance is not negative, complete reliance can put the region in a position of flailing power. It could be beneficial to research internal operations already in progress within the region in order to promote local economic stimulus and in turn, provide some aid in the form of job relief.

A comprehensive solution for this topic should look to expand access to aid and sustainable resources to individual member states of the League, while also attempting to provide some form of short-term stimulus for current and relatively recent crises within the region.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What can the League do to effectively and strategically respond to disasters within the region?
- Why has the region failed, as a whole or individually, to respond effectively to security crises pertaining to disaster?
- How can the League generate immediate and long-term aid to countries following disasters?
- In what ways is the current state of the climate going to reshape how League-wide responses are implemented?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League effectively aid countries when responding to destructive disasters?
- How can the League expand overall access to sustainable resources when redevelopment is occurring within states?
- What type of relationship should the League take with external aid sources (i.e. UN, Red Cross)?
- How can individuals within the region be educated on how to respond to these issues?

IV. Additional Resources

- [Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) | GFDRR](#)

An analysis and summary composed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) on the Middle East and its disaster preparedness as well as disaster composition.

- [Humanitarian Response | UNICEF Middle East and North Africa](#)

This is the UNICEF page on humanitarian disaster response and aid. This page details challenges and direct actions being taken by both UNICEF and other organizations within the region to combat regional disasters and their impact.

- [Asia & Middle East | Direct Relief](#)

Direct Relief is an organization working directly within the MENA region to equip resource-poor and vulnerable communities with direct humanitarian and disaster relief. This page details, by state, province, or region, their work in the world.

- [Disaster Risk Reduction in the Middle East and North Africa - PrepareCenter](#)

This is yet another example of possible solutions and or examples of active operations within the region. The Global Disaster Preparedness Center focuses on many major crises within the region (migration, the Syrian crisis, communicable diseases, etc.), and has already, or is creating frameworks that aid in combatting these issues. This is yet another resource for solution creation.

Topic III: Considering the growing sophistication of cyberattacks against vulnerable populations and measures to counter the increase in cyber crimes.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

In the modern world, cyberattacks are the new, efficient, hands-free method of delivering crippling blows to political and economic enemies. From personal information theft to intentional cyber-data transfer, modern scenes of conflict have been reshaped by this change in global attacks.

Political motivation has driven many major cyberattacks in recent years - data theft and monetary disruption drive countries and non-state operatives to interfere with governmental infrastructure and operations. These attacks have been at the behest of anointed countries and individual groups. An example of a global cybersecurity threat funded, operated, and staffed by unknown individuals is the Anonymous hacker group. Founded in 2003, the self-named social justice group has sought to undermine agencies around the globe. These non-state actors have had global outreach and in turn, have had nearly unrestricted access to many major operations within the MENA region.⁹ This unrestricted access seems harmless to those not comprehending the extensive cost of a cyberattack. According to the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), the cost per data breach in the region sits at \$6.53 Million USD,¹⁰ which when partnered with a 13% increase in security breaches in the region annually, produces not just security concerns, but major economic loss and worry.

The focus of this topic is vulnerable populations- focusing on those groups within the region that have been, in recent years, progressively more targeted due to income and location. Cyberattacks have become rampant within the region the League oversees. The power that individual hacker groups maintain is what the focus of prevention is for this topic.

B. History in the Arab World

With cyberattacks in the region increasing and considering the lack of cybersecurity infrastructure, portions of the region have been a sandbox for groups to wreak economic, social, and political havoc.

Many countries within the region face more difficulty in cybersecurity due to their

⁹ “What Is a Cyberattack?” IBM, www.ibm.com/topics/cyber-attack#:~:text=Cyberattacks%20are%20attempts%20to%20steal,unauthorized%20access%20to%20computer%20systems

¹⁰ “2020 IBM Report: Average Cost per Data Breach Incident in the Middle East Stands at \$6.53 Million.” Al Bawaba, www.albawaba.com/business/pr/2020-ibm-report-average-cost-data-breach-incident-middle-east-stands-653-million. Accessed 27 Aug. 2023.

global involvement. Saudi Arabia faced nearly 22.5 million attacks in the past year on average and spent millions of dollars to counter and correct damages caused by the bombardment of attacks.¹¹ In fact, the entire region has some of the most targeted countries in the world - the United Arab Emirates saw a 250% increase in cyberattacks between 2020 and 2021.¹² This growth in cyberattacks within the region has been countered by growth in cybersecurity market size within the region with an increase from \$15.6 billion (2020) to \$29.9 billion (2025).¹³

Vulnerable populations within the region are considered vulnerable based on many factors, such as class, age, ethnicity, and location, vulnerability via technology, and reliance on modern technology for everyday life. Vulnerable populations also include any population reliant on any major infrastructure that could be crippled by devastating attacks. With crippling attacks on Iranian fuel distribution networks from eastern enemies following geopolitical aid, the importance of cybersecurity infrastructure has been highlighted over the past decade in both hate-related incidents and political ones. Now, strategic cyberattacks, aimed at crippling major infrastructure and public frameworks have terrorized many urban areas within the region. A 97% increase in generic cyberattacks on the healthcare sector since the COVID-19 pandemic within the region was reported in 2021¹⁴.

It is important to note that attacks are fueled by younger individuals seeking quick cash and social clout. A 2022 report¹⁵ found that individuals aged 15-24 were fueling the epidemic. Considering most terrorist organizations within the region recruit from younger populations, monitoring or establishing security measures to prevent organizations such as ISIS from recruiting vulnerable, weakened populations is paramount to providing security to the region and combating a major avenue of recruitment for these extremist organizations.

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

Considering the varying amounts of technological infrastructure across the region, finding solutions to the lack of cybersecurity will be difficult, so preventative and responsive measures will most likely be at the forefront of cybersecurity innovation in the current age of the League. This means prevention will be difficult in areas that lack the

¹¹ Olech, Dr Aleksander. "Cybersecurity in Saudi Arabia." Institute of New Europe, 25 Mar. 2023, ine.org.pl/en/cybersecurity-in-saudi-arabia/

¹² Murphy, Dan. "Middle East Facing 'cyber Pandemic' as Covid Exposes Security Vulnerabilities, Cyber Chief Says." CNBC, 6 Dec. 2020, www.cnbc.com/2020/12/06/middle-east-facing-cyber-pandemic-amid-covid-19-uae-official-says.html

¹³ Cybersecurity in the Middle East - Threatcop, threatcop.com/blog/cybersecurity-in-the-middle-east

¹⁴ "The 2022 IOT and OT Global Threat Landscape Assessment Report." Sectrio, 21 Feb. 2022, sectrio.com/iot-security-reports/2022-iot-and-ot-threat-landscape-assessment-report/

¹⁵ Middle East & Africa Cybersecurity Market - Growth, Trends, COVID-19 Impact, and Forecasts (2022 - 2027) <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/4774885/middle-east-and-africa-cybersecurity-market>

technological infrastructure that each state possesses. Referencing inter-regional successes such as Oman is also crucial to this topic. Ranked third in the world by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Oman has positioned itself in this way by establishing clear bodies and financial institutions, such as the Information Technology Authority (ITA), for long-term preventative measures. Identity and access management platforms and policies, security awareness training, and attack surface management tools could all be considered practices that could be shared through a security forum or other public-facing report.

As previously stated, these attacks are fueled by groups of individuals aged anywhere from 15 to 24. This is important to note for the purpose of solution-making - educationally based solutions that target younger audiences and reshape the local conversation around cybersecurity and attacks in the MENA region could be effective.

Moving the majority of the region into the digital age has continued to divide the MENA region and has also proven to be nearly impossible in some cases due to a lack of infrastructure, monetary assistance, and even technological innovation. Considering the current state of play the region is in is important when crafting and implementing solutions across the League.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has cybersecurity been considered within the MENA region and within the League?
- In what ways are the League and its members vulnerable to cyberattacks from both local and global threats?
- What has been the relationship of the region with cybersecurity frameworks outside of its borders?
- How will cybersecurity continue to affect the region in times of heightened global conflict?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League prevent cyberattacks aimed at major aspects of infrastructure (i.e. oil, etc.)?
- In what ways can the region benefit from cybersecurity efforts not implemented by all players?
- What vulnerable populations can still be affected by cyberattacks even when not directly targeted?
- How can the region continue to defend itself against continually sophisticated global cyber threats?

IV. Additional Resources

- [2020 IBM Report: Average Cost per Data Breach Incident in the Middle East Stands at \\$6.53 Million | Al Bawaba](#)

This is an uncomplicated news article that links other important reports, but most importantly creates perspective for the on-the-ground and real issues, both economic and social issues being created by these cyberattacks.

- [Cyber Security Risks in MENA Region: Threats, Challenges and Countermeasures - GIWPS](#)

This source will serve as an amazing tool for analyzing how the region is affected by any form of cyber impact. This analyzes not only the weak spots of the cyber infrastructure, this report highlights key countermeasures not already put in place. It will be useful, especially for a topic that deals with such a relatively new aspect of defense for many member states.

- [Cyber security in the Middle East: A strategic approach to protecting national digital assets and infrastructure](#)

Similar to the above source, this report focuses on protecting national assets such as oil reserves and electrical grids, key targets of many Middle Eastern or MENA region challengers/destabilizers.

Topic IV: Expanding the EU-LAS project to address cross-border transit security of refugees and other displaced persons.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

The European Union (EU) – League of Arab States (LAS) Project is a joint program between the European Union and the Arab League originally drafted to increase sustainability efforts within the MENA region. Beginning in 2019 the program has concentrated on international small arms transfer control, identifying the corruption of sources of small arms, and any residual methods of control pertaining to SALW. However, since its establishment of the program in 2019, many critics have argued that the EU-LAS project could expand its reach and focus on refugee and displaced persons migration throughout and outside the region.

The program was designed to be adaptable to the ever-changing landscape of the region, official sentiments even state “The EU–LAS project aims to share expertise and best practices in order to strengthen the capacity of LAS member states to combat illicit small arms and light weapons, including their acquisition by terrorists and criminals,” language that could be easily adapted. With existing partnerships with primary world-building diplomatic missions and organizations such as INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO), the foundations of the project could serve as a base program for expansion into a focus on the security concerns that come with large-scale movements of people between states both in and around the Arab Leagues’ jurisdiction. The critical implementation between the European Union and the League of Arab States comes due to the waves of refugees that have crossed into European Union member countries due to conflicts and instability within regions.¹⁶

The EU-LAS partnership differs from many partnerships, but is similar to the ongoing partnerships with the United Nations Security Council and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)¹⁷; the efforts, or purpose, of these partnerships is grounded in regional transformation and rehabilitation of the MENA region. As noted in each of the mission statements of the aforementioned intergovernmental partnerships, all see expanding potential within the region, from reintroduction efforts to the aiding and reconstruction of conflict zones.

B. History in the Arab World

After the 2015 signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the League of Arab States, both geopolitical alliances have maintained advanced partnerships in the battle against illicit arms trade and other small arms-related issues/conflicts. Generating meaningful dialogue regarding conflicts going on within the region (i.e. Syrian conflict and the war in Yemen), the

¹⁶ “Middle East and North Africa.” Global Focus, reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa

¹⁷ <https://igad.int/>

partnership has flourished and allowed for greater involvement between the two organizations. One key aspect is the flexibility that the 2015 memorandum ensured an understanding of dynamic issues that both regions face has allowed for cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, and crisis response.¹⁸

Following the 2019 adoption of the modern EU-LAS project, operations shifted to focus solely on the SALW defense initiatives currently promoted and practiced throughout the region. Most notably, the 2019 initiative opened the LAS, due to the partnership with the EU, to a shared operational goal with INTERPOL. INTERPOL allows the LAS to utilize their notice tools and utilities, namely the INTERPOL notices (international notices placed on individuals or groups that will flag them in every country, state, or province partnered with them).¹⁹

Considering the ongoing migrant and refugee crisis within the region, namely due to miscellaneous conflicts within the region, internal displacement of MENA region citizens is at a historical high. A September 2022 report determined the MENA region contained over 40 million migrants and nearly 10 million internally displaced persons.²⁰ This new high is due to worsening relations within the regions of conflict as well as residual COVID-19 impacts. In addition, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) published a report stating that the Ukraine conflict has worsened and intensified the ongoing crises within the region. An example is food prices - in Lebanon, food prices have increased 75-100% since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict, and Iran has found itself in a similar situation. The aforementioned report suggests that nearly 1.9 million residents of the region could slip into hunger due to the near total reliance on Russia and Ukraine for wheat, leading to many relocating to different countries within the region and intensifying internal displacement within the region.²¹

In order for delegates of this meeting to creatively and effectively utilize this program as a foundational tool for conceiving a system for sidestepping the need for refugees to relocate, you must remember key mutual security interests shared between the EU and the League.

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

The EU-LAS project has clear and structured operational objectives and looks to expand these in its current state. As historical partnerships have showcased, one objective

¹⁸ “League of Arab States (Las).” EEAS, www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/league-arab-states-las_en

¹⁹ “Project EU-Las.” INTERPOL, www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Firearms-trafficking/Project-EU-LAS

²⁰ “Migration and Displacement Crisis in Mena: Responding to the Basic Needs of People on the Move: IFRC.” Homepage,

www.ifrc.org/press-release/migration-and-displacement-crisis-mena-responding-basic-needs-people-move#:~:text=Beirut%2C%20September%2012%2C%202022%20%2D,the%20ongoing%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic

²¹ “Ukraine Conflict Intensifies Existing Humanitarian Crises in the MENA Region, Warns the IFRC: IFRC.” Homepage, 3 Mar. 2022,

www.ifrc.org/press-release/ukraine-conflict-intensifies-existing-humanitarian-crises-mena-region-warns-ifrc.

is insufficient when the partnership has proven mutually beneficial - the EU-LAS project is no exception to this.

One key consideration to this issue must be the delicate balance between migrant relocation and migrant aid. Internally displaced persons must be addressed on both a League level and member state level, specifically how they are to be considered in definition as well as the priority of a possibly changing EU-LAS project. Special attention should be allocated to conflict zones - Syrian refugee displaced is an example of this. As the EU-LAS mission statement presents, creating and maintaining cultural relations is a “global objective,”²² and it is key to maintain that in any solution that deals with the partnership.

Additionally, although not crucial to any short or long-term solution, it would be recommended to briefly and summarily address the continual impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on heightened displacement within the MENA region.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- In what ways has the migrant crisis affected the economic and social development of countries surrounding my own?
- Following the COVID-19 pandemic, how has the situation worsened and in what ways have current systems in place failed?
- What mutual interests do both the EU and the League share pertaining to the security and stability of migrant and refugee populations within the MENA region?
- Do the EU and the League have the capabilities and capacity to house and develop systems for the continually increasing number of

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Have the migrant populations increased due to a lack of structure from the League or individual member states neglect of the crisis?
- In what ways will the migrant crisis continue to worsen as the population within the region continues to grow and tensions worsen?
- In what ways can the League address both Western and Eastern interference within the region pertaining to conflicts causing these displacements?
- How can the EU-LAS project be foundational to the League in efforts to expand geopolitical partnerships?

²²“EU-Las (League of Arab States) Culture.” EU Neighbours, 7 July 2022, south.euneighbours.eu/opportunity/eu-las-league-arab-states-culture

IV. Additional Resources

- [Migration to, from, and in the Middle East and North Africa Data Snapshot](#)

This data snapshot is a concise breakdown of specific demographics of migrants and refugees within the MENA region. This serves as a tool to gauge what scale these crises are occurring on.

- [Middle Eastern and North African Immigrants in the United States](#)

This article is specific to Western involvement within the migrant crisis plaguing the region. This gives historical perspective to the involvement of, notably, the United States and the relationship between the region and the West as it pertains to migration.

- [Assessing the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants and Displaced Populations in the MENA Region](#)

This in depth report breaks down the main impact of COVID-19 on the displaced crises in the region. It focuses mainly on health service failures as well as social protection and other basic services impacted and still affected post-COVID 19 pandemic.

- [European Union \(EU\) – League of Arab States \(LAS\) Project | Small Arms Survey](#)

This resource is mainly to allow any newcomer to the EU-LAS alliance the opportunity to understand the exact reach of the project as well as understand the comprehensive approach to the project the topic is seeking to promote.