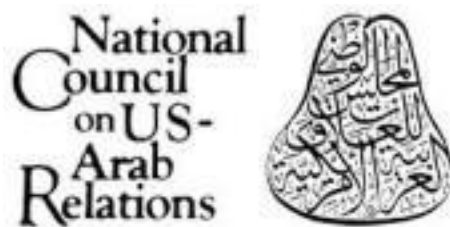




2026-2027

Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council on Political Affairs
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Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the Council on Political Affairs! My name is Charlotte Pulliam, your chair for the 2026-2027 National University Model Arab League. I am a senior at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, majoring in Political Science with a Concentration in International Relations and Comparative Politics and a minor in History. This will be my fifth Model Arab League Conference, and third year at NUMAL. I'm incredibly honored to be your chair for this season, and am especially excited for another amazing year of debate!

At this moment in time, the Arab League is faced at a crossroads of foreign influence and disruption from outside states. This has been especially present in current events, which only exemplifies the global necessity to understand the underlying factors as to why these events are taking place. The Council on Political Affairs is a place to discuss how politics, rules of governance, and conflict are able to be diplomatically discussed. In the Political Council, you will find that actionable solutions are made with the combination of social and economic factors. Additionally, delegates will find that some of these topics are relevant to recent events. With your knowledge and research, do your best to represent your country's present policies and position within debate.

No matter your experience in debate, I urge every delegate to utilize decorum when deliberating these topics. This is a space for peaceful diplomacy, respect, and understanding of your neighbors' views, beliefs, and aspirations. As we debate these topics, please recognize that these matters do not only affect us as delegates but the millions of people who are being directly affected by these issues every day. You as a delegate have the ability to grow from this conference, which all starts with doing your best to research not only your country's position on these topics, but the rules of procedure in debate.

I hope that every delegate is able to have an exciting and memorable time in this Council. Managing the difficulties of diplomacy, making fruitful debate, and creating impactful outcomes takes courage and spontaneity. This may mean stepping out of your comfort zone, but I promise it is all for the better. I encourage you to raise your placard and do your best, even if you feel uncertain in the moment. It is my best hope that your time at this conference allows you to have fun, make new connections, and expand your knowledge of international affairs. If you have any questions or concerns that come about through your research, please feel free to reach out. I wish you all the best of luck!

Sincerely,

Charlotte Pulliam

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Topic I: Addressing the strategic and political ramifications of military partnerships between Arab League states and foreign powers, with emphasis on foreign military bases.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

The MENA region is home to a large number of foreign military bases.¹ While exact numbers are difficult to say, there are over 40+ bases within the region, with most based around the Persian Gulf.² The density shows the geopolitical importance of the region globally, as it lies at the crossroads of trade between Europe and Asia, and is the center of the global energy market. Major global powers find it important to establish prominent military links and be able to exert military influence in the region, as this is one of the main uses of hard power. With this in mind, military bases are one of the most direct forms of geopolitical military cooperation. This form of diplomacy brings foreign military personnel into another country, but there are other forms of military partnership that also exist. This soft power diplomacy consists of joint military training and weapons sales. Modern weapons sales and contracts between nations come with long term maintenance and training agreements that can make outside nations reliant on maintaining good relations with the host nation. Equipment contracts also tie sellers to purchasers, weapons manufacturers who want to guarantee that any classified technology remains protected by the purchasing nation.³ This often limits what equipment can be purchased from other Western nations. Critics point to the potential dependency and limiting options the terms of these agreements impose.⁴ When entering into these kinds of agreements, both sides may benefit, but some have rejected them as potential foreign influence in Arab states.

Questions about the presence of foreign military bases have most recently been raised by the Iran-US conflict. The US maintains the largest number of military bases within the Middle East and has conducted strikes against Iran from its bases. Iranian attacks in response have targeted these bases and their host countries.⁵ US is not the only foreign power targeted, as a French Base

¹ Hamzawy, Amr, and Rain Ji. "Navigating Influence: Great Powers in the Middle East and North Africa." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 4 Sept. 2024, carnegieendowment.org/features/navigating-influence-mena

² "Mapping US Troops and Military Bases in the Middle East." *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera Media Network, 12 June 2025, www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/12/mapping-us-troops-and-military-bases-in-the-middle-east.

³ Hartung, William D. "Promoting Stability or Fueling Conflict? The Impact of U.S. Arms Sales on National and Global Security." *Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft*, 20 Oct. 2022, quincyinst.org/research/promoting-stability-or-fueling-conflict-the-impact-of-u-s-arms-sales-on-national-and-global-security/.

⁴ Rashid, Atif. "Arab States' Reliance on America Has Backfired. It's Time to Stop Playing into the Western Agenda." *Analyst News*, 3 Apr. 2026, www.analystnews.org/posts/arab-states-reliance-on-america-has-backfired-its-time-to-stop-playing-into-the-western-agenda.

⁵ Amnesty International. "Iran: Deadly Drone Strikes on Bahrain and Saudi Arabia May Constitute War Crimes – New Research." *Amnesty International*, 18 June 2026,

in the UAE was also struck by Iranian attacks, leading France to increase its presence to protect its military base.⁶ Iranian attacks have shown targeting of any nation it sees as a threat and potential ally of the US. By offering their state as a host country, member states pose the risk of intertwining themselves with conflicts they have little control over. Ballistic missiles in mid-July targeted military bases in Jordan, Bahrain, and Qatar, where US Forces have operated.⁷ Since the strikes, diplomatic relations between the two countries remain stalled, while Arab League member states now must choose how to react.

Overall, diplomatic relations with foreign powers are crucial for ties to trade and collective security. However, as tensions continue to rise, involvement in specific partnerships, such as military bases and weapons procurement. Military bases as a form of hard power influence over Iran may continue to have serious implications for the safety of member states when considering the ongoing conflict.

B. History in the Arab World

The modern history of foreign military partnerships in the Arab World starts with the Cold War, when the newly independent region became a center for the struggle between the American and Soviet blocs seeking to hold influence.⁸ The sale of military equipment to and training of these new militaries were seen as an important way to bring nations closer, with equipment requiring long term maintenance contracts and military personnel who received training from other nations aligning with the nations that trained them.⁹ In the struggle between East and West, many nations would seek alternative pathways within military partnerships. This Non-Aligned Movement sought to create a third option. This movement was led in the MENA region by Egypt, then the United Arab Republic, and attempted to balance and reduce influence from the United States and the USSR.¹⁰ These efforts still struggled with a lack of domestic industry, forcing a reliance on the purchase of foreign military equipment, and when the United States became the sole superpower, non-aligned nations lacked an alternative to balance influence.¹¹ The MENA region

www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/06/iran-deadly-drone-strikes-on-bahrain-and-saudi-arabia-may-constitute-war-crimes-new-research/.

⁶ “France Sends Jets to Defend Its UAE Installations amid Iranian Drone Strikes.” *TRT World*, 1 March. 2026, www.trtworld.com/article/1f858ca31ea7.

⁷ Bush, Daniel, Paul Brown, and Alex Murrey. “Iranian Strikes on Bases Used by US Caused \$800m in Damage, New Analysis Shows.” *BBC News*, 21 Mar. 2026, www.bbc.com/news/articles/cddq7j48p35o.

⁸ “U.S. Policy in the Middle East” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region; Arabian Peninsula*, U.S. Department of State, 19 July 1968, history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v21/d30.

⁹ Cohen, Raphael S. “Why Overseas Military Bases Continue to Make Sense for the United States.” *War on the Rocks*, 14 Jan. 2021, warontherocks.com/2021/01/why-overseas-military-bases-continue-to-make-sense-for-the-united-states/.

¹⁰ Hamid, Shadi. “Egypt in Middle of Arab Cold War.” *The National Interest*, 21 Apr. 2011, nationalinterest.org/feature/egypt-middle-arab-cold-war-5208.

¹¹ Patrick, Stewart M. “The Nonaligned Movement’s Crisis.” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 30 Aug. 2012, www.cfr.org/articles/nonaligned-movements-crisis.

was one of the largest global arms purchasers between 2020 and 2024, making up over 25% of global arms imports.¹² The largest exporter of arms to the Middle East has continued to be the United States, followed by a collection of European states, mainly France, Germany, Spain, and Italy. Some have seen this relationship as an overreliance on the West for defense in the Arab world, while others have seen it as the only available option.

The current permanent military presence of foreign powers in the Middle East is relatively new, and began after the 1991 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the subsequent Coalition invasion of Iraq. In the aftermath, global powers, especially the US, established a permanent presence to protect their allies from potential conflict.¹³ The presence would increase further as part of the Global War on Terror in response to the September 11th Attacks. The 2003 invasion of Iraq and the War in Iraq further drew foreign militaries. Unlike after the 1991 war, high levels of US troops in the Levant and Gulf states became permanent in the region as the conflict dragged on and expanded. Even after Syria and Iraq were stabilized, US troops have been slow to leave the region. Now US bases in these nations have become a part of the US-Iran war. US attacks in February of 2026 against Iran were launched from US bases across the Middle East.¹⁴ Since then, the US-Iran conflict has remained ongoing, with US bases supporting missions against Iran and being attacked in retaliation.

Outside the Middle East, Djibouti hosts the highest density of military bases, hosting China, France, Japan, Italy, and the United States, and is in the planning stages of a Saudi Base. These bases have been important in international peacekeeping efforts, especially anti-piracy. This is important to nations' operations in the region, with the US's Africa Command being based there. International organizations such as the African Union warned against allowing foreign military bases in 2016, due to the possible diplomatic entanglement. US and Chinese bases in close proximity also raise concerns, as tensions between the two powers increase.¹⁵

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

As tensions rise globally, a more collective Arab approach seems necessary to avoid Arab nations being unwillingly caught in the crossfire. The Arab League has taken several approaches to address these issues. In the past, efforts to avoid reliance on a single power as a security

¹² George, Mathew, Katarina Djokic, Zain Hussain, Pieter D. Wezeman, and Siemon T. Wezeman. "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2024." *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Mar. 2025, www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/fs_2503_at_2024_0.pdf.

¹³ Barnett, Michael N. "Regional Security after the Gulf War." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 111, no. 4, 1996, pp. 597–618. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2152086.

¹⁴ Al Jazeera Staff, Reuters, and The Associated Press. "Why Are the US and Israel Attacking Iran? What We Know So Far." *Al Jazeera*, 28 Feb. 2026, www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/28/us-and-israel-attack-iran-what-we-know-so-far.

¹⁵ Milliken, Emily. "Djibouti Is the Next Arena for US-China Competition in the Red Sea." *Atlantic Council*, 31 July 2025, www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/djibouti-is-the-next-arena-for-us-china-competition-in-the-red-sea/.

guarantor benefited from a multipolar world. After the fall of the USSR, nations now have few alternatives as security providers.¹⁶

When it comes to military bases, both Iraq and Syria called for the withdrawal of US troops that entered to combat the Islamic State in 2014, but were met with lengthy timelines for withdrawal. While Iraq no longer desires a United States presence, the US has been an important part of stabilizing Iraq after the rise of ISIS in 2013. Member states must face the challenge of deciding whether to remove troops and bases from the region or allow continued operations of these bases.¹⁷ In the past, they have been used as a deterrent factor to geopolitical opponents and to assist in stabilization. Presently, due to increased conflict and disintegrating trust in relationships, states are now looking to redefine partnerships with foreign powers. Foreign bases can be an important part of a nation's diplomacy with global powers, but have also shown they can expand conflict to a regional scale.

After the Iranian strikes, the Arab League convened an emergency meeting calling for collective defense between Arab League nations. Though the Arab League has convened in the past regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, member states proved the possibility of collective security and defense among states. During the initial crisis, the convention of foreign ministers proved to be beneficial, as many member states retain anti-Iranian sentiments. During sustained military engagement, diplomatic relations falter as military tensions rise. After years of peaceful negotiations, the strikes provoked the weakening of diplomatic relations between member states and Iran.

Presently, diplomatic relations have continued to falter as military tensions rise. After years of peaceful negotiations with Iran, the strikes on military bases and surrounding areas have provoked the weakening of diplomatic relations between member states and Iran. The GCC has exemplified the shared principle of non-alignment, which gives reason for these policy implementation failures. The GCC has attempted to remain strategically undecided when involving themselves in military partnerships. The present goal for GCC states is to strategically and autonomously position their efforts to maintain security. If persistent conflict were to arise, they can avoid entanglement in military action. With global attention now turned to the present conflict, member states are once again looking to the GCC for potential solutions for a joint military strategy. Improving on previous strategies of non-alignment in the wake of the Iran conflict could build on decades of Arab strategy.

¹⁶ Layne, Christopher. "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise." *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1993, pp. 5–51. *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, Harvard Kennedy School, www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/pantheon_files/files/publication/is3102_pp007-041_layne.pdf.

¹⁷ "U.S. Security Cooperation with Iraq." *U.S. Department of State*, www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-iraq.

When it comes to the nations in the crossfire currently, there may be significant underreporting of the quantity of strikes and surrounding infrastructure that were damaged. This makes negotiations with foreign nations more difficult, as quantifying the amount of destruction from either US or Iranian drones must be reported on accurate terms.¹⁸ Defensive measures like the radar interference used by Oman also have the potential to prevent strikes before they happen. Establishing a common framework for how Arab nations respond to attacks and manage alliances could assist in preventing escalation of similar conflicts in the future.

With restrictions that foreign arms purchases may put on a nation, finding alternative foreign arms purchases can help make the Arab world more independent in its decision-making.¹⁹ This could allow for the withdrawal of troops or strengthening of other industries that would ensure mutual trust between nations. As well, would there be a feasible avenue for collective security within the Arab League? Future strategies should focus on a combination of ways the Arab League can increase its strategic independence when developing alliances and improving security while respecting individual nations' foreign policy.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Does your nation host any foreign military bases, and how have they been affected by recent conflicts in the Middle East?
- Is your nation a major importer of arms? If so, from what nation and how has it affected your nation's diplomacy?
- Should the Arab League create an alternative to or counter foreign military bases?
- Can the Arab world find alternatives to foreign arms purchases to become more independent from an industrial-capacity perspective?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What should the Arab League's stance on foreign defense partnerships look like?
- How can Arab nations maintain their diplomatic independence while sourcing much of their defense technology from abroad?
- How should nations be expected to respond to attacks on foreign military bases within their countries?

¹⁸ Schneider, Frédéric. "The Costs of the Iran Conflict for the Gulf." *Middle East Council on Global Affairs*, 2026, mecouncil.org/blog_posts/the-costs-of-the-iran-conflict-for-the-gulf/.

¹⁹ Spindel, Jennifer. "Arms for Influence? The Limits of Great Power Leverage." *European Journal of International Security*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2023, pp. 395–412. Cambridge University Press, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-international-security/article/arms-for-influence-the-limits-of-great-power-leverage/DE39F571F702163FD856D55E6929AB57.

IV. Additional Resources

[Who are the Gulf's Military Allies and how are they Helping in the Iran War](#)

News Article written by Sarah Shamim that discusses how specific Gulf countries share ties and partnerships with the United States regarding the War in Iran. The article provides examples of the alliances between member and outside nations align their military partnerships involving the conflict.

[Military Empires: A Visual Guide to Foreign Military Bases](#)

A collective database source that showcases the locations of every global military base. By worldbeyondwar.org This resource gives an insight into which states occupy and run military bases in each country. This also shows a brief history of each base constructed.

Topic II: Investigating the causes of civil conflict to reduce political violence within Arab League states.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

There are many causes of civil war that are highly dependent on the country's political stability. How citizens perceive the efficiency of government institutions can lead to the formation of new parties. When people believe a government is ineffective and unable to care for its people, they may take destructive action to gain political traction. If this happens, certain parties may intend to engage in terrorist activities to advance their agenda. This can be caused by government persecution based on shared political and religious beliefs. As political parties struggle with national governments, this civil conflict may prevent civilians from overcoming corruption and economic insecurity. As a result, political extremist groups begin to organize due to continued disagreements between elites and civilians, so it is important to understand the factors encouraging the development of extremist groups.

First, civil conflict can be caused by structural motivators. These are defined as problems within a country's economic or political system that encourage groups to take action against corruption within the state. These include examples like repression, discrimination of human rights, a history of inequality, and persistent hostility between identity groups.²⁰ Outside involvement in the governance of other nations. The state's structure isn't working for the people, extremist groups will begin to emerge with short-term solutions that attempt to fix the structural inconsistencies of the state. Secondly, there are individual incentives that cause civil conflict. These types of factors deal with the individual living in the state. For example, personal uncertainty about the governing structure, as well as the perception that ruling power will not be able to support them in the future. This includes belonging and support of religious beliefs, with the addition of the fear of repercussions from extremist groups. Finally, there are enabling factors. These are the types of factors that motivate an individual to act within extremist groups. Allowing for an incentivized pathway forward for an individual to become a part of the movement and to begin political extremism in association with the group.²¹ This also includes religious leaders and their presence in social networks. Online platforming of these movements as well may contribute to an individual's activity within an extremist group. Together, there is no particular order in which these events or factors may motivate an individual to partake in extremist groups. Any number of these motivators could be a reason for such tension and the

²⁰ Wolfowicz, Michael, et al. "Cognitive and Behavioral Radicalization: A Systematic Review of the Putative Risk and Protective Factors." *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2021, e1174. Wiley, doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1174. PubMed Central, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10121227/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10121227/).

²¹ Mattei, Cristina, and Sara Zeiger. "Factors Contributing to Radicalization: A Conceptual Framework." *Hedayah*, Oct. 2021, hedayah.com/app/uploads/2021/10/Factors-Contributing-to-Radicalization.pdf.

emergence of civil conflict. Civil conflicts can also develop for complex reasons that go beyond these three motives and include outside influence.

Foreign intervention has turned some of these conflicts into proxy wars, where foreign funds drive increased support for prolonged military entanglement. This includes economic sanctions that are applied to states by foreign powers. This could be for reasons that include humanitarian rights violations, and this may further disrupt the political stability of the state. For example, Syria has been widely sanctioned by the United States and the European Union due to ongoing repression and human rights violations.²² With this in mind, sanctions take away the prospect of rehabilitation for a central government and businesses with operations outside the country.

When military parties fight for control, central governments are unable to find financial and political stability in order to suppress violent political groups. This then causes citizens to bear the weight of political violence and civil war turmoil.²³ The effects of civil conflict have been experienced widely throughout the Arab League. For example, the Houthis have repeatedly threatened shipping through the Bab Al-Mandeb, Somalia's instability caused civilians to turn to piracy to survive. In the last decade alone, civil conflicts have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the region.²⁴ That number rises further when you include the effects of famine and limited access to health care. Millions more have been displaced, creating massive refugee crises throughout the MENA region. Instability resulting from these conflicts also tends to spread to neighboring countries. This was also seen as the Islamic State (IS) was able to quickly spread throughout Iraq and Syria since 2014.²⁵ This continued persistence of political extremism as a precursor to civil conflict has been an ongoing issue within the region. These causes of political violence can be the precursors of much larger civil conflict, an ongoing issue which calls for diplomatic action.

B. History in the Arab World

Terrorism, especially religious terrorism, has a history within Arab countries. Groups like the IS rose partially out of Sunni minorities' fear that they would not be represented in Iraq as the Shia majority came to power. Sectarian violence has been the biggest cause of civil conflict in the Arab world in the last two decades.²⁶ This specific tension can be qualified as a combination of a structural motivator and individual incentive. As this tension rises, distrust in governing

²² Human Rights Watch. "US, EU, UK: Lift Syria Sanctions Hindering Recovery." *Human Rights Watch*, 18 Feb. 2025, www.hrw.org/news/2025/02/18/us-eu-uk-lift-syria-sanctions-hindering-recovery.

²³ Cunningham, David E., Madeline Fleishman, and Peter B. White. "International Economic Sanctions and Conflict Prevention in Self-Determination Disputes." *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 62, no. 6, 2025, pp. 1984–2000. SAGE Publications, doi.org/10.1177/00223433251317460.

²⁴ Herre, Bastian. "Millions Have Died in Conflicts since the Cold War; Most of Them in Africa and Intrastate Conflicts." *Our World in Data*, 15 July 2024, updated July 2025, ourworldindata.org/conflict-deaths-breakdown.

²⁵ "Israel Gaza: Conflict and Crisis." *BBC News*, 2014, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034.

²⁶ Middle East Institute. "Sectarianism in the Middle East and Asia." *Middle East Institute*, 1 Nov. 2019, mei.edu/publication/sectarianism-middle-east-and-asia/.

institutions takes form as civilians join extremist groups, like the IS, where cross-border political coordination platforms a direct response from ruling powers.

The Arab Spring is the biggest example, as protests in Tunisia rose against corruption and lack of accountability and quickly spread throughout the Arab world. Then the fallout of the Arab Spring left some states unable to find governing stability with present political groups and central governance. The Arab Spring was also the beginning of the current political conflict in Yemen.²⁷ Citizens in poor living conditions with a lack of financial security became prone to starvation and poverty. Calls for new leadership caused a split between protestors and parties in control, resulting in oppressive violence and violations of human rights in the country. Yemen's civil war split along religious and historical boundaries. Starting in 2014, Ansar Allah, better known as the Houthis, seized the north of the country. During the Cold War, the country had been split between South Yemen, a former British colony that became a socialist country aligned with the Soviet Union, and a Nasserist Egypt-aligned North Yemen. The North follows Shia Islam, similar to Iran, while the South is mainly Sunni, as in most Gulf states. This division is an important part of the proxy war ongoing between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The war saw successful long-term ceasefires but has continued to be a threat to regional security.

Alternatively, in Somalia, foreign involvement has taken a toll on the country's political coordination. Somalia has been in varying degrees of civil conflict since 1978, but the most current conflict is between the government and the radical Islamic group Al-Shabab, a member group of Al-Qaeda. Somalia is not an example of ethnic conflict but instead, the damage that can be caused by long term lack of stability and economic hardship.²⁸ In Sudan, the civil war which began in 2023 is a purely political conflict which had its origins in the 2021 military coup in the country. Two military factions, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), have fought over control of the country in one of the most devastating ongoing conflicts. Both sides have drawn foreign support to the conflict, escalating it further.

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

Looking at previous civil wars provides an example of the causes that push people towards political violence. Crackdowns against protests, as seen in Libya and Syria, often led to the escalation of violence, while the countries that were able to sit at the table with protesters avoided escalation. Successful negotiations must do more than just stop the ongoing conflict. There must be promises made and kept on both sides to increase trust between political leaders. In Iraq, religion and ethnicity divided the country and led to decades of civil conflict. While

²⁷ Al-Tamimi, Adeb Abdulelah Abdulwahid, and Uddagatti Venkatesha. "Arab Spring in Yemen: Causes and Consequences." *Shodh Sarita*, vol. 7, no. 28, Oct.–Dec. 2020, pp. 59–63. ResearchGate, www.researchgate.net/publication/353827749.

²⁸ Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States, Collapsed States, and Weak States: Causes and Indicators." *Wilson Center*, 7 July 2011, www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/failed-states-collapsed-states-and-weak-states-causes-and-indicators.

problems persist, Iraq has made great strides. The ethnic division of the country was eased by the granting of autonomy to the Kurdish provinces. Efforts at resolving the Shia-Sunni split that led to War in Iraq have focused on the improvement of government services and representation within the Iraqi political system. While the nation is still in the process of recovery, domestic reforms and international assistance have aided in Iraq's stabilization.

Civil conflict is a reality for many states in and outside of the Arab League. Though this may be a constant, there are many ways that nations are able to address grievances of minority groups and political parties that can improve government legitimacy and stop violence before it spreads. Relocation, refugee, and migrant status are common results of prolonged civil conflict. Humanitarian rights violations such as starvation and torture persist in these nations, causing a cycle of political instability. Additionally, preventing the radicalization of citizens into groups that see violence as a means to achieving their goals is important in the Arab World. Radicalization is more likely amongst young people who lack opportunities or a sense of community.²⁹ There are a number of programs seeking to prevent radicalization in the Arab world but are often lacking in their ability for outreach and long term viability. Each nation faces unique challenges in issues of civil conflicts, but the lessons learned can be implemented League-wide.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What forms of civil conflict has your nation faced, and how did the government respond?
- How has your nation addressed political violence and extremist groups?
- Does your nation have enforced sanctions? If so, has this affected its political stability?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are some ways that nations could agree on protections against civil conflict?
- How can the league create policies to prevent youth radicalization, a main driver of civil conflict?
- How can the Arab nations reduce the motivating factors causing violent extremism?

²⁹ Andrade, Gabriel, Abderrahim Benlahcene, and Dalia Bedewy. "Youth Mental Health and Religiously Framed Radicalization in the Middle East and North Africa Region: A Review of Evidence and Gaps." *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, vol. 17, 2026, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC13058846/>

IV. Additional Resources

[Factors Contributing to Radicalization](#)

An academic framework by Cristina Mattei and Sara Zeiger produced by Hedayah. The authors are part of an international organization focused on countering and preventing violent extremism. This source examines the many factors that contribute to violent extremism, and methods to counter the potential for radicalization within groups.

[Committing to Peace](#)

This is an academic journal written by Barbara Walters and is published by Princeton University. The journal dives deep into why some civil wars are fought for large periods of time, and others end with peaceful negotiation. It also contributes multiple methods as to how governing powers are able to negotiate and bargain with groups to reach a settlement of terms.

[ACLED's Middle East Database](#)

From the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, this is a website that provides detail on the current events and conflict within the Middle East. Containing important current events about the Houthi and Islamic State extremist groups. This information about the present conflicts helps to understand the ongoing and pressing issues surrounding civil conflict in the region.

Topic III: Exploring an Arab League response to the closure of maritime straits, concentrating on the diplomatic consequences of the trade shutdown.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

The Arab World has been at the crossroads of trade throughout history. Today, globally important routes of maritime trade pass through the Arab League. As trade has globalized, the straits that control these routes have heightened in importance, and their potential closure holds repercussions for the entire Arab League. Shut down not only economic consequences (i.e., a rise in the price of oil, supply chain shortages, increased inflation) but also diplomatic consequences. The current crisis in the Strait of Hormuz has seen attempted mediation by Arab states and conflict over whether or not the strait can be monetized by Iran, which would call into question the right to freedom of navigation.³⁰ The crisis has also increased efforts to reduce dependency on one single waterway through joint infrastructure projects between nations and agreements between Arab nations.

The potential closure of other straits has also become a possibility with Houthi threats against the Bab al-Mandeb. The Houthis, who have been in conflict with the Yemeni government, began targeting ships destined for Israel transiting the Bab al-Mandeb strait. Further causing a response by an international task force striking Houthi targets in Yemen and escalating the Yemeni Civil War.³¹ After conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis restarted in 2026, the Houthis began targeting shipping destined for Saudi Arabia as well.³² This conflict has shut down nearly all shipping through the strait and the Suez Canal by extension. The use of threats against global trade as a bargaining chip is a development the Arab League must pay close attention to.

A. History in the Arab World

The Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Bab al-Mandeb have long been crucial chokepoints for trade. The Strait of Hormuz controls access to the Persian Gulf. Bordered by Iran to the North, and Oman and the UAE to the south in peace time, an average of 15 million barrels of oil a day were exported by nations along the Gulf through the Strait. Not only does the strait control over

³⁰Rafiq, Muhammad Asim, Kanwal Riaz, and M. Abu Bakar Chandia. "The Strait of Hormuz and the Law of the Sea: The Strait of Hormuz Between Sovereignty, Diplomacy, and International Maritime Law." *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, vol. 9, no. 7, 2025, <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/the-strait-of-hormuz-and-the-law-of-the-sea-the-strait-of-hormuz-between-sovereignty-diplomacy-and-international-maritime-law/>

³¹ Wakin, Michael. "A Suspected Attack by Yemen's Houthi Rebels Targets a Ship Transiting the Bab el-Mandeb Strait." *AP News*, Associated Press, 10 July 2024, apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-ship-attacks-israel-hamas-war-5afb563fb10e863b73ba04eb7cedaa6e.

³² "Not Just Iran's Front." *IPS Journal*, 2025, www.ips-journal.eu/topics/foreign-and-security-policy/not-the-strait-has-controlled-modern-day-just-irans-front-9270/.

20% of the world's oil and natural gas exports, but over a quarter of exported fertilizer moves through the Strait. The modern day Strait of Hormuz is vital for the global economy and Arab states that rely on it not only for their exports but also their imports. The Bab al-Mandeb Strait lies at the south of the Red Sea bordered by Yemen and Djibouti. The Strait since the construction of the Suez Canal controls the majority of trade between East and West. Without passing through the Red Sea, trade must circumvent Africa via the Cape of Good Hope, adding another two weeks to any trip. Both straits are considered international waterways, meaning that the right for any ship to pass through them freely is protected by international law and does not reduce their value.

The current crises over the Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb straits are very recent conflicts, but it is not the first time access to straits and trade has been disputed in Arab League history. While not a strait, after the Six-Day War the major trade artery of the Suez Canal was closed. This closure represents a worst-case scenario, with the Suez remaining closed for eight years, forcing major adjustments in global trade and politics. The closure was a major point of contention between Arab nations and Israel, requiring the United States to assist in negotiations to reopen.

The most apt historical example is the Tanker War during the Iran-Iraq War. Both Iran and Iraq attacked shipping destined for the other country, leading to a large reduction in trade through the Strait of Hormuz. The conflict never escalated to the point of closure of the Strait due to threats of United States intervention. Although this did harm trade to other Gulf States, especially Kuwait. Eventually, the use of protected convoys endorsed by the Arab League was employed to secure shipping, with the conflict ending through a mediated ceasefire. The conflict was also one of the first to see the development of infrastructure projects to re-route oil exports around the Strait of Hormuz with the Saudi East-West Oil Pipeline.

The Red Sea Crisis began in 2023, as the Houthi response to Israel's war in Gaza. The Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, are a faction in the Yemeni Civil War backed by Iran. The Houthis stated they would blockade any shipping destined for Israel through the Bab Al Mandeb Strait. The following Houthi attacks on shipping froze almost all shipping through the Red Sea and Suez Canal and created global supply chain shocks. While most major shipping countries avoided the area, rerouting trade around Africa, the selective blockage allowed some shipping from friendlier nations to continue to use the Strait. The Red Sea Crisis still saw a near 70% decrease in shipping through the Red Sea and raised prices globally.³³ Multiple task forces led by the US and EU to protect transit of the strait during the crisis were created, and the Arab League denounced the attacks as destabilizing and condemned Iranian support of Ansar Allah. The Houthi attacks on shipping ended with the beginning of the Gaza ceasefire but restarted against shipping destined for Saudi Arabia after Saudi airstrikes on Sanaa Airport to prevent an Iranian

³³ Sainz, Santiago, and Álvaro Rodríguez. "The Strategic Disruption by Houthi Forces in the Maritime Corridor of the Red Sea, Global Economic, Humanitarian and Security Implications (2025)." *International Sustainable Development Observatory*, 2025, isdo.ch/global-e-h-s-implications-of-houth-forces-2025/.

aircraft from landing in Yemen. The Red Sea crisis has now become an extension of the current Gulf conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The Strait of Hormuz was closed by Iran in response to US and Israeli airstrikes that attempted to destroy the country's leadership. The closure shut off trade to multiple Gulf states and created massive supply chain disruptions globally. Iran's actions have been condemned repeatedly by the Arab League.³⁴ This has led to the combined efforts by the Arab League to respect sovereignty while protecting supply chains and the Red Sea, which remains a top priority.³⁵ In August, the Arab League stated that Iranian efforts in the Persian Gulf threatened freedom of navigation and that the League would uphold the law of the sea.

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

Any efforts to respond to both strait crises must seek to address the political issues behind them as well as their consequences. Improving infrastructure, creating plans to secure safe passage of shipping, and enhancing cooperation between member states can mitigate the effects of strait closure but leave open the creation of a lasting solution. The Arab League must seek ways to mediate conflicts that cause the closure of maritime straits to avoid future disruptions.

Investigating actions the Arab states can take to prevent straits from being used as targets and efforts to protect freedom of navigation are the goals of this Council.

In the past, mediation has proven effective in resolving the conflicts that now threaten naval security. The Houthis and Saudi Arabia enjoyed a multi-year ceasefire after bilateral relations were reestablished with Iran.³⁶ Conflict only began again with the expansion of the current war with Iran. Solutions to the current crisis can be peaceful, and normalcy can be returned to both straits. During the Somali Pirates crises, discussions for a pan-arab marine police force were held but were never expanded on.³⁷ Council members should consider how the current situation, based in political conflict, differs from previous disruptions to trade. In previous attempts at reopening trade, large global task forces were used. Investigating ways to create Arab based solutions could increase effectiveness and sustainability in the long term. If a plan to reopen trade is pursued, it is also important to consider how to bolster shipping companies' confidence in these routes.

³⁴ Arab News. (2026, August 31). *Iranian attacks on UAE, Jordan condemned*.

<https://www.arabnews.com/middle-east/iranian-attacks-on-uae-jordan-condemned-2656419>

³⁵ Francis, Fady. "New Arab League Chief Nabil Fahmy Outlines Regional Priorities." *Arab News*, 13 July 2026, www.arabnews.com/middle-east/new-arab-league-chief-nabil-fahmy-outlines-regional-priorities-2650747

³⁶ Stimson Center. (2023). *Peace for Yemen elusive despite Iran-Saudi deal and Saudi-Houthi talks*. <https://www.stimson.org/2023/peace-for-yemen-elusive-despite-iran-saudi-deal-and-saudi-houthi-talks/>

³⁷ "Arab Countries to Fight Somali Piracy." *Hiiraan Online*, 28 Oct. 2008, www.hiiraan.com/news4/2008/Oct/8434/arab_countries_to_fight_somali_piracy.aspx

Others would argue that alternatives to the straits should be found to reduce the strategic value of their interdiction, or ways to safeguard ships' transits in the current situation should be explored. The possible creation of infrastructure both to protect shipping and create alternative routes relies on strengthening Arab cooperation. Improved warning and communication systems could protect shipping and reduce risk but require cooperation of many Arab states. Projects like Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline, or Iraq's Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline with Türkiye, have provided alternative routes for the country's main exports and reduce the nation's dependence on the Strait of Hormuz.³⁸ These solutions can move only a fraction of the nation's oil exports and still leave the transport of other commodities in the same position. There are also many nations that do not currently have the option of an alternative route for their trade. Some proposed projects that could be enhanced by Arab League cooperation include the UAE's construction of new shipping terminals outside the Persian Gulf, Kuwaiti efforts to unify Gulf states' pipeline network, and a number of multimodal infrastructure projects being pursued across the Arab League.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has your nation been affected by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and Bab Al Mandeb?
- What are some diplomatic avenues to consider to mediate the tension surrounding naval trade?
- Has your nation had any statements on the status of either Strait or participated in any freedom of navigation efforts?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Should the Arab League look into a task force to protect trade and shipping?
- Should the Arab League seek a political solution protecting shipping from conflicts in the region?
- Should the Arab League invest in infrastructure to make nations less dependent on these straits that could be closed so easily?
- How can the Arab League support member nations affected by these strait closures?

IV. Additional Resources

[CNN | Tracking Traffic in the Strait of Hormuz](#)

A CNN tracker of the Strait of Hormuz giving a visualization of shipping routes, strikes, and effects of oil and gas exports. The article gives a brief summary and timeline of the crisis including negotiations.

³⁸ TSaba, Yousef, and Marwa Rashad. "Saudi Arabia Considers Expansion of Oil Pipeline to Red Sea, Sources Say." *Reuters*, 7 July 2026, www.reuters.com/business/energy/saudi-arabia-considers-expansion-oil-pipeline-red-sea-sources-say-2026-07-07/.

[United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea](#)

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Part VII covering the laws of the high seas including the right to freedom of navigation. The international convention guarantees the right of nations' ships to freely navigate the ocean and bans claims of ocean waters.

[International Maritime Organization | Middle East](#)

Information and data about the Strait of Hormuz by the International Maritime Organization. Gives important information from the perspective of a specialized United Nations body with links to other useful documents.

Topic IV: Addressing cross-border criminal networks and their impact on regional stability.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

The existence of cross-border criminal networks in the Arab world has become major news with the discussion of the Captagon trade, but the issue of these groups goes deeper than just this. Criminal organizations within the Arab League operate in numerous fields, often with interstate connections owing to the shared culture of the League. In the MENA region, a large portion of organized criminal activity is also connected to political and extremist movements. While organized crime for the sole sake of profit does exist, many extremist groups turn to cross-border criminal activity as a source of income. Hezbollah, a Lebanese Islamist political party and paramilitary group, has expanded into multiple lines of criminal activity as a source of income, including the production and trade of captagon, opium, cocaine, and marijuana. Outside of the drug trade, they also engage in smuggling of various products, including diamonds, cars, arms, explosives, money laundering, and counterfeiting.³⁹ While most criminal organizations do not have the same extensive reach as Hezbollah, this provides an example of activities undertaken by these groups.

Cybercrime is one of the newest forms of crime but also one of the most costly. Cyber criminals have both acted for political causes and their own personal gain, but enforcement has been implemented slowly. Another major cross-border crime in the MENA region is the trafficking and smuggling of people. In North Africa, refugees and migrants fleeing conflict and pursuing better opportunities in Europe are often the victims of human smugglers, and dangerous crossings.⁴⁰ Ransoms, robberies, forced labor, and various other crimes are committed by these smugglers against people in the most desperate situations. Migrants hired as workers under the Kafala system have also been subject to forced labor or marriage.

The effect these criminal organizations have on the government and the region as a whole is multifaceted. Criminal activity as a source of income for extremist groups undermines governance in two ways. Organized crime inflames corruption, reduces trust in the government, and worsens violence. The income generated by these activities is used to actively undermine governments, commit acts of violence, and grow their cause further.⁴¹ Criminal organizations

³⁹ Burman, Iftah, and Yehuda Blanga. "Lessons from the Syria-Hezbollah Criminal Syndicate, 1985–2005." *Middle East Policy*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2025, pp. 98–119. Wiley, doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12812.

⁴⁰ Horsley, Rupert, and Alice Fereday. "Human Smuggling and Trafficking in North Africa and the Sahel." *Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime*, 15 Dec. 2025, globalinitiative.net/analysis/human-smuggling-and-trafficking-in-north-africa-and-the-sahel-2025/

⁴¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "Organized Crime." *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/humanrights/areas/organized-crime.html.

thrive in and induce political instability, building parallel institutions that replace government ones. Economically, these groups stagnate growth for their own personal profit. Violence and the sale of drugs harm the health of communities affected. Crime in the MENA region also affects the position of Arab nations abroad. The smuggling of people from the Sahel and North Africa to Europe has become a major issue in the European Union, with partnerships between Arab nations and the EU to combat the issue.⁴²

B. History in the Arab World

While organized crime has existed previously throughout modern history, globalization has allowed criminal organizations to expand internationally. Modern communication, transport, and financial systems have allowed criminal enterprises to become more profitable and widespread. This increases its appeal to criminal organizations that are lacking in other opportunities to profit. In the digital age, these groups have benefited from new developments including encrypted communications, cryptocurrency trade, and online markets.⁴³

One of the most profitable and widespread crimes is the illicit drug trade. Drug traffickers in the MENA region have profited from the region's own consumption and the lucrative sale to European nations.⁴⁴ In the Arab world, manufactured amphetamines, especially Captagon, have become one of the most popularly used illegal substances.⁴⁵ The stimulants' low cost and addictiveness have made it extremely popular and launched a massive industry that has profited from its production. Sanctioned groups have even turned captagon production into a source of income. The former Assad government in Syria became the nexus of captagon production and trade, turning to it as a source of income during the Syrian Civil War.⁴⁶ After the fall of the Assad government, captagon production has declined but also expanded across the MENA region in smaller operations. One of the most notable partners of the Assad government in the drug trade was the group Hezbollah.

⁴² "EU Proposes Sanctions against Migrant Smugglers." *InfoMigrants*, 9 July 2026, www.infomigrants.net/en/post/72347/eu-proposes-sanctions-against-migrant-smugglers.

⁴³ United Nations, Secretary-General. "The Impact of Organized Criminal Activities upon Society at Large." *Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*, United Nations Economic and Social Council, 11 Jan. 1993, www.ijp.gov/pdf/iles1/Digitization/146195NCJRS.pdf.

⁴⁴ Sharki, Mohamed. "Too Big to Bust: A Look at Morocco's \$320bn Drug Industry." *Al Majalla*, 31 Oct. 2024, en.majalla.com/node/322859/business-economy/too-big-bust-look-morocco%E2%80%99s-320bn-drug-industry.

⁴⁵ United Nations. "Meth trafficking across Middle East becoming more advanced, UNODC warns." *UN News*, Aug. 2026, news.un.org/en/story/2026/08/1168142.

⁴⁶ Shaar, Karam. "Captagon Production Proliferation in the Middle East: Transformations, Challenges, and Policy Responses." *New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy*, 29 Oct. 2025, newlinesinstitute.org/global-security-mil-priorities/captagon-production-proliferation-in-the-middle-east-transformations-challenges-and-policy-responses/

As a cross-border criminal and political organization, Hezbollah has used both drug production and trafficking as a source of income.⁴⁷ Hezbollah's connections have extended through partnership with South American cartels in order to profit off the trade of cocaine, in what has been called narco-terrorism.⁴⁸ The trafficking of drugs from South America and Central Africa to the West especially Europe has become a profitable industry as a result of the MENA region's global positioning.⁴⁹ The high demand and income of European countries make the trade extremely profitable for the groups willing to participate while spreading corruption, violence, drug addiction, and strengthening criminal organizations in the countries that are trafficked through.⁵⁰ The drug trade's profitability makes it one of the most pervasive criminal operations and also one of the most corrosive.

Another one of the most prominent cross-border crimes happening within the Arab League is the smuggling and trafficking of people. Migrants seeking better opportunities and refugees fleeing turmoil and conflict often come from Arab nations and Sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to arrive in Europe. Making this journey, many migrants often rely on smugglers. Smugglers provide transport across the Sahara or Mediterranean illegally at a cost. These crossings are dangerous and smugglers are known to extort, abandon, or traffic migrants.⁵¹ Migrants lack legal pathways out of the country with limited access to services due to their status and fear of deportation, leaving them highly vulnerable to exploitation. The European Union has partnered with Arab nations to prevent migration across the Mediterranean, but the agreements have been with individual nations and mainly work to prevent migrants from arriving in their final destination, leaving many other issues unaddressed.⁵²

Cybercrime has quickly become one of the most disruptive threats today, ranging from identity theft and scams to ransomware and sabotage. Lack of knowledge and experience has slowed many Arab nations' responses to the threat, but joint efforts have shown progress. Smaller scam center operations have begun to appear in the MENA region, focusing on defrauding individuals across the globe. As Arab nations continue to digitize, the potential risk of cybercrime will rise

⁴⁷ Rose, Caroline. "The Future of the Illicit Captagon Drug Trade." *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 18, no. 10, Oct. 2025, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, ctc.westpoint.edu/u/the-future-of-the-illicit-captagon-drug-trade/

⁴⁸ Humire, Joseph M. "The Maduro-Hezbollah Nexus: How Iran-backed Networks Prop up the Venezuelan Regime." *Atlantic Council*, 7 Oct. 2020, www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/the-maduro-hezbollah-nexus-how-iran-backed-networks-prop-up-the-venezuelan-regime/

⁴⁹ Herbert, Matt. "The Butcher's Bill: Cocaine Trafficking in North Africa." *Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime*, 21 Sept. 2018, globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-butchers-bill-cocaine-trafficking-in-north-africa/.

⁵⁰ Sharki, Mohamed. "Too Big to Bust: A Look at Morocco's \$320bn Drug Industry." *Al Majalla*, 31 Oct. 2024, en.majalla.com/node/322859/business-economy/too-big-bust-look-morocco%E2%80%99s-320bn-drug-industry

⁵¹ Allaire, Delphine. "The Sahara Desert: A Deadly Frontier for Migrants." *Vatican News*, 19 July 2024, www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2024-07/the-sahara-desert-a-deadly-frontier-for-migrants.html.

⁵² Amnesty International. "EU/Tunisia: Agreement on Migration 'Makes EU Complicit' in Abuses against Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants." *Amnesty International*, 17 July 2023, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/07/eu-tunisia-agreement-on-migration-makes-eu-complicit-in-abuses-against-asylum-seekers-refugees-and-migrants/.

with it. Creating plans to cooperate in future cybercrime investigations and improving knowledge about digital technology and cybersecurity is an important avenue for the Arab League.

There are numerous other cross-border crimes, ongoing and historic, that responses to could be improved by enhanced Arab cooperation. The stealing and sale of historical artifacts robs Arab citizens of their history. These sales were even used by ISIS and similar groups as a source of funding.⁵³ The trafficking and sale of illegal weapons often arms anti-government groups, furthering political instability and violence.⁵⁴ Other smuggled items include oil, counterfeit money and goods, and alcohol, all of which are used to fund criminal enterprises and corrupt civil institutions.

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

When addressing the effects of cross-border criminal networks and their impacts, it is important to focus on how Arab nations can work together. Examples like Syria show that widespread criminal activity in one state can affect the entire region. Criminal organizations succeed where governance is limited and can degrade government institutions. Crime and its effects are not limited by boundaries, and require collective solutions for the best results.

Starting with prosecution, international efforts in the investigation of cross-border crime created INTERPOL. INTERPOL provides intelligence sharing, investigative support, and training to allow nations to cooperate on criminal investigations. The organization was slow to enter the MENA region due to government restrictions, but has made important progress by opening a regional bureau in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁵ This organization has also begun assisting Arab countries in Operation Ramz, the first large-scale cybercrime investigation in the MENA region.⁵⁶ International cooperation in the prosecution of organized crime in the Arab world has proven effective, but its current implementation is limited. Answering how Arab nations can cooperate on investigations through the Arab League or pre-existing international bodies will be important in addressing cross-border crime. Arab cooperation on addressing cross-border crime can also

⁵³ Friedman, Lindsey Lazopoulos. "ISIS's Get Rich Quick Scheme: Sell the World's Cultural Heritage on the Black Market—Purchasers of ISIS-Looted Syrian Artifacts Are Not Criminally Liable Under the NSPA and the McClain Doctrine in the Eleventh Circuit." *University of Miami Law Review*, vol. 70, no. 4, 2016, pp. 1068–1102. University of Miami School of Law Institutional Repository, repository.law.miami.edu/umlr/vol70/iss4/4.

⁵⁴ Fares, Sarah. "Up in Arms: The Middle East as the World's Illicit Arms Depot." *Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime*, 24 Mar. 2023, globalinitiative.net/analysis/middle-east-illicit-arms-trafficking-ocindex/.

⁵⁵ INTERPOL. "New INTERPOL Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa Moves a Step Closer." *INTERPOL*, 30 Jan. 2025, www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2025/New-INTERPOL-Regional-Bureau-for-the-Middle-East-and-North-Africa-moves-a-step-closer.

⁵⁶ INTERPOL. (2026, May 18). *201 arrests in first-of-its-kind cybercrime operation in MENA region*. <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2026/201-arrests-in-first-of-its-kind-cybercrime-operation-in-MENA-region>

extend beyond just prosecution. Creating common frameworks for corruption and border control as part of efforts to curb smuggling could build off this enhanced Arab cooperation. Knowledge sharing, like MENAFATF's Region Workshop on Criminal Asset Tracing, can be improved to better interdict the profits of organized crime.⁵⁷

Another way the Arab League can limit the effect of cross-border crime is by addressing the causes. Efforts to address the causes of crime within the League have been limited, and few have been long-term. In Palestine, the UN created programs to improve opportunities and youth engagement as a way to prevent crime and extremism. The UN also has worked with Egypt to create rehabilitation programs to reduce recidivism. Establishing consistent procedures for the handling of trafficked persons, like the ones adopted by Lebanon or shelter systems as established by the UAE, can improve victims' willingness to come forward and assist investigations.⁵⁸ These programs have been limited, though, and lack sustainability. The Arab League has the opportunity to build off these programs, improving long term viability and better adapting them to all Arab nations. Improving opportunities for Arab League citizens would be an important part of undercutting the appeal of criminal activity.

The smuggling and trafficking of people is another major branch of cross-border crime this committee should address. The catching and prosecution of traffickers can be assisted by increased patrols of borders and coastlines. Cooperation with non-Arab nations in these efforts can increase their sustainability, as shown by Tunisia's partnership with the EU, but also poses the risk of worsening conditions for victims.⁵⁹ Addressing the harm caused by trafficking and smuggling while improving systems designed to help victims will be important in improving regional stability. Attention should be paid to addressing cross-border crime from all angles, improving cooperation in prosecution to increase deterrence, while addressing the causes and bettering protections for those seeking help can assist in reducing criminality and its effects. Working towards these goals has the potential to empower Arab nations and improve lives across the league.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What is the status of organized crime within your country, and what efforts has your nation taken to respond to criminal activity?
- What groups in your country have participated in cross-border criminal networks, and are they political, criminal, or paramilitary?
- Between what nations has cross-border criminal activity occurred?

⁵⁷ Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force. (2025, June 17). *Regional workshop on criminal asset tracing, freezing, and confiscation*.

<https://www.menafatf.org/information-center/regional-workshop-criminal-asset-tracing-freezing-and-confiscation>

⁵⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "MENA Projects." *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, www.unodc.org/romena/en/mena-projects.html.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch. "EU: Tunisia Migration Deal Worsening Human Rights Violations." *Human Rights Watch*, 16 July 2026, www.hrw.org/news/2026/07/16/eu-tunisia-migration-deal-worsening-human-rights-violations.

- What kinds of avenues have international organizations like INTERPOL used to effectively combat international crime?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What can nations do to reduce the factors that push citizens to criminal activity?
- How can the demand for criminal services and goods be reduced?
- How can the league use international efforts to reduce cross-border crime?

IV. Additional Resources

[Dynamics of Migrant Smuggling in North Africa: Focus on the Central Mediterranean Route](#)

This article by Arezo Malakooti gives a description of the Central Mediterranean and the flow of migrants from Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, and Turkiye. While providing a resource to understand the economics of smuggling Malakooti also gives a reference to the key actors and locations with high reports of human trafficking. This gives a historic background for understanding the flow of human smuggling between cross-border criminal groups, and an incentive for areas to address in potential solutions.

[Strengthening the Rule of Law in the Arab Region: In-Depth Evaluation of the Regional Programme for the Arab States](#)

A UNDOC fact sheet by Emmanuelle Diehl, Elca Stigter, Anna Leena Lohiniva, and Emanuel Lohninger. This gives information about a program that is currently being pursued in the Middle East to strengthen the rule of law in Arab League member states. Providing a basic framework, this is an ongoing project that can be researched to give foundational solutions to the issues surrounding illegal activities within member states.

[Map of the Week: Illicit Drug Trade in the Middle East](#)

This article by Joel Pomeroy gives a map of the Middle East with the key places where the illicit drug trade is in high demand. Additionally, there is a broad scope of recent sources listed within that include updated sources from UN News, UNODC, and Al Jazeera. For understanding the captagon and methamphetamine trade, this also helps identify the underlying issues of illicit substance addiction.