



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL of Philadelphia



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“Activating pan-Arab cooperation and joint action is the way to realize the aspirations of our peoples to live in peace and security and build a better future.”

—King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The League of Arab States

The League of Arab States (Arab League) is a regional organization founded in 1945 to “draw closer the relations between member States, coordinate collaboration, safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.” According to its charter, these affairs are within the areas of trade, communications, movement, culture, social welfare, and health.¹ The charter has also created provisions for military cooperation and established the process by which the League convenes meetings and summits. Meetings normally occur twice a year, but sessions may be called at any time by two member states. Since the League’s establishment, Arab leaders have held nearly 40 summits, of which 27 were ordinary, nine were emergency (or extraordinary) and three were economic. From its original six member states (Syria, Transjordan – now Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt) the League has expanded to include 22 states spread across Africa and the Middle East.

Crisis Simulation

In recent weeks, an economic crisis has hit the country of Iran after the United States decided to unilaterally withdraw from the Iran Nuclear Deal Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in early May of 2018. The decision to leave the agreement, originally poised to bring about peace and stability in the region, has since strained US relations with some of its longest standing allies. New US sanctions against Iran and any country that does business with them has disrupted oil markets, causing oil prices across the Middle East to plunge to record lows, while simultaneously heightening tensions in an increasingly volatile region.



Map highlighting Iran © Shutterstock.com

As a result, a massive spike in youth² unemployment across the region causes youth in the MENA region to become increasingly discontent. In direct response to the crisis, an independent newspaper reported that 19 year old Reza K., President of the Tehran chapter of *Youth for Change* (YFC) a youth civil society organization stated, “We are well aware that economically, our prospects are dim. We must now prepare for poverty and inflated prices for essential products like food and medicine. There is talk about being aware of the prospect of war with the west and Saudi Arabia. Those in charge need to do their job and step up now – or we will have no choice but to take matters into our own hands.”

¹ “Pact of the League of Arab States,” Yale Lillian Goldman Law Library, (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arableag.asp).

² The authors define youth as ages 14 to 29, a demographic category also used by the World Bank.

As several other countries begin to feel the impact from the economic crisis happening in Iran and the disruption of oil markets, extremist propaganda from the Islamic State aimed at recruiting disenfranchised youth catches the attention of political leaders in both Egypt and Jordan, forcing them to call an emergency Joint Cabinet Crisis meeting of the Arab League. In one Islamic State video (photographed at left) circulated online in Egyptian forums, a Jordanian Islamic State fighter held up his passport, just before burning it.



A Jordanian Islamic State fighter holds up his passport just before burning it in an Islamic State video (2018).

The Arab League unanimously decided to include in its upcoming Joint Cabinet Crisis meeting, a select group of political representatives from fellow League members who have the largest *Youth for Change* membership base (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates). Concerned about the situation in Iran (a non-Arab league country), the group called in a select group of high ranking cabinet officials to join in the discussions. The meeting is set to occur in Cairo on Thursday, July 12th. The meeting's agenda items include: attempting to solve the region's growing youth unemployment dilemma and minimizing the seemingly dangerous potential for youth radicalization.

Background Information: Youth and the Arab League³

In many countries all over the world, young people are paying a high price for the financial and economic crisis affecting their societies as youth unemployment rates have risen globally since 2009. Young people are growing up in in the MENA region with the current perception that their living standards will be lower than that of their parents and preceding generations. To help address the topic of youth unemployment, the Arab League hosted an annual Youth Forum to strengthen the dialogue between European and Arab youth who shared common concerns. The forum was held annually between 2007-2009, but ended as a result of the League's funding reprioritization.

In 2011, protesters in several Arab nations began to call for the overthrow of long-standing autocratic governments in the MENA region. Civil unrest boiled throughout the region as citizens called for democratic reforms. The Arab Spring, as the movement was eventually dubbed, began in the countries of Tunisia and Egypt. Online social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, allowed protestors to not only communicate with other local activists but also to share their stories with an international audience. While the exact potency of social media platforms during the Arab Spring is still debated, the Internet undoubtedly helped protestors publicize their demand for democracy.

In August 2012, a symposium titled "Arab Spring: Youth Participation for the Promotion of Peace, Human Rights, and Fundamental Freedoms" was held by the European Commission and Council of Europe in partnership with the Arab League and Arab youth organizations. It included workshops to discuss potential solutions and movements for youth issues such as "active participation in democratic processes, equal access to quality education, including non-formal and informal learning and youth work, employment and social inclusion." In addition, the "UN Arab Youth Volunteering for A Better Future" was a program created to connect Arab youth to volunteer opportunities in their society in order to encourage greater civil society engagement; countries that have participated in the program include Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen.

Background Information: MENA Youth and the Potential for Radicalization⁴

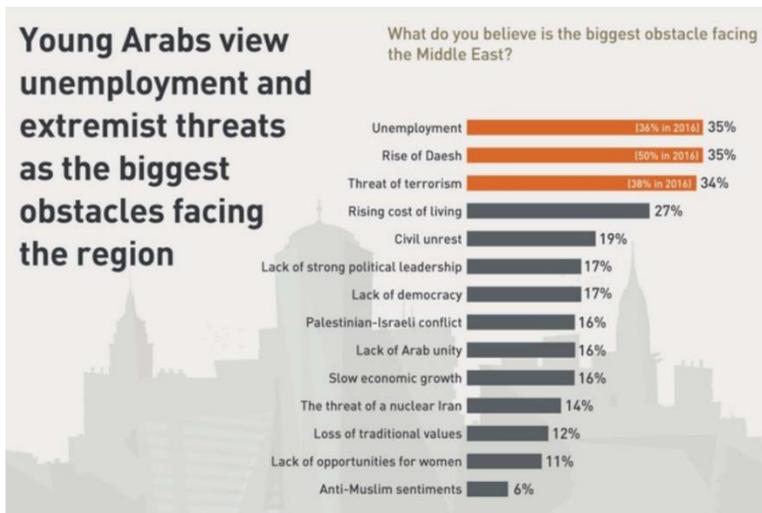
MENA youth living in areas of civil unrest or war are especially vulnerable to radicalization, because individuals in these areas are less likely to have legitimate opportunities. Radicalized individuals disapprove of views besides

³ This section is adapted with permission from the *National Council on US-Arab Relations' Model Arab League Resources*

⁴ This section is adapted with permission from the *National Council on US-Arab Relations' Model Arab League Resources*

their own and go to great lengths to achieve their extreme goals. The political vacuum created in the wake of the Syrian Civil War presented an opportunity for violent extremist groups to flourish, resulting in the formation of Daesh.⁵ A “political vacuum” occurs when no legitimate authority controls a certain territory. For example, a state may only have enough resources to effectively govern over its major cities, but not the surrounding rural lands. Citizens living in these loosely controlled areas often lack access to resources pertaining to health, education, and safety, known as “social services.”

If individuals cannot receive free education, employment, police protection, or medical attention from their state, they are likely to seek these resources from other organizations. If unemployment in these affected regions rises, individuals are more likely to become increasingly discontent with their leadership. Knowing that they can take advantage of this, extremist groups and non-state actors use convincing propaganda to help with recruiting young members. “Propaganda” is defined as biased information created to promote a certain ideology, viewpoint, or cause. Radical organizations can quickly gain supporters by identifying a common enemy and promoting the notion that extremism will help defeat said opponent. MENA youth are attracted to these groups because they provide a sense of identity, belonging, and cohesiveness.



ASDA/A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey (2017).

Extremist groups and non-state actors will often take advantage of these in-need individuals by filling these “political vacuums” and administering social services themselves. These organizations flourish in loosely controlled lands because there is no legitimate authority to stop them. Civilians receiving these resources are then encouraged to adopt the terrorist group’s ideology. An organization’s “ideological roots,” meaning its key beliefs and ideals, determine the group’s actions and goals. A terrorist group’s ideological roots often lie in “sectarianism,” the division of a larger group into smaller factions. For example, many terrorist organizations identify with a certain sect of a religion.

While a distinct difference exists between religious ideologies and extremist ideologies, extremists tend to use religious doctrines to justify and support their actions. This has led to an assumption that extremist organizations are linked to religious ideologies, which is not always the case. Through narrow interpretations of religious texts, extremists manipulate religion to fit their cause. For example, militant Islamist ideologues make references to religious texts, lending their violent cause a religious justification.

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

The events in a number of countries in the Arab region since the beginning of 2011 have imposed a new perception of young people’s capacities and aspirations. Doubling as both a large demographic and crucial actors in the processes of political changes, young people in the MENA region have often stood up for more freedom, equality and justice. They also stand up for better future perspectives in education and work, economic and social development. Though several avenues have been devised by the Arab League to engage youth in peaceful political participation, more outlets are needed. In particular, solutions brought forth in this Joint Cabinet Crisis meeting

⁵ “Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism,” The Carter Center, https://www.cartercenter.org/peace/conflict_resolution/countering-isis.html

should be focused on creating long-term programs within individual member states and in the League as a whole. Furthermore, solutions might look to also raise awareness of political issues and civil society for youth.

Students, you have been assigned to one of six countries, including: (1) Arab Republic of Egypt, (2) Tunisia, (3) Islamic Republic of Iran, (4) Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, (5) Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, (6) the United Arab Emirates, and (7) Youth for Change. Prior to Thursday’s crisis simulation, please read through the important background resources for your country or group and complete the “Questions to Consider.” Come to Thursday’s crisis simulation with a set of responses to the ‘Questions to Consider’ listed below.

Questions to Consider

1. Are the following terms similar or different in their definitions and use? Define and explain: 1) foreign fighter; 2) extremist; 3) terrorist; 4) rebel; and 5) radicalist.

2. In the short, or long term, does your assigned country risk becoming socially, economically, or politically unstable?

3. What is your assigned role in the crisis (See: Crisis Simulation Assignment Document) and what skills and/or tools do you think your role can you bring to help your cabinet and your country help solve the crisis?

4. Which social services offered by extremist groups are the most compelling to native populations and why?

5. Have any programs or initiatives been developed in your assigned country to counter the recruitment efforts (commonly known as counterterrorism) of extremist organizations?

6. How does extremist propaganda play a role in radicalizing MENA youth and how can this be prevented?

7. How do extremist groups in/near your assigned country use religious doctrines to legitimize their actions?

8. How are MENA youth recruited by extremist organizations (in your assigned country, or region) and what positions do youth fill in radical groups? What motivates youth (in your assigned country, or region) to join?

9. Does your country engage youth in the political process? Are there any existing groups or organizations that exist within your assigned country that work to help empower youth (economically, politically, or otherwise?)

10. Briefly describe your assigned country's relations (diplomatic, economic, etc.) with the other countries involved in the Joint Cabinet Crisis?

11. If this crisis worsens, what is the possible impact on your country's economy, military and security infrastructure? Will your country be forced to intervene if it is not involved already?

Crisis Simulation Resource Guide

I. General Background Resources

- *Here to stay and growing: Combating ISIS propaganda networks*
The Brookings Institute
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/here-to-stay-and-growing-combating-isis-propaganda-networks/>
- *Youth Radicalization is on the rise. Here's what we know about why.*
The Washington Post
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/25/youth-radicalization-is-on-the-rise-heres-what-we-know-about-why/?utm_term=.b4186bece778
- *The State of Middle Eastern Youth*
Hartford Seminary
https://www.academia.edu/31029084/The_Muslim_World_CIRS_Special_Issue_The_State_of_Middle_Eastern_Youth
- *What is Salafism? How a Nonpolitical Ideology Became a Political Force*
Foreign Affairs
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-11-24/what-salafism>
- *What is "Islamic State"?*
BBC
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29052144>

b) Arab Republic of Egypt (Egypt)

- *Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood*
Council on Foreign Relations
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/egypts-muslim-brotherhood>
- *Egypt: Extremism & Counter-Extremism*
Counter Extremism Project
<https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/egypt>
- *Radicalization after the Arab Spring: Lessons from Tunisia and Egypt*
The Brookings Institute
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/radicalization-after-the-arab-spring-lessons-from-tunisia-and-egypt/>

c) Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Jordan)

- *Counterterrorism and Youth Radicalization in Jordan*
<https://ctc.usma.edu/counterterrorism-and-youth-radicalization-in-jordan-social-and-political-dimensions/>
- *Jordan: Extremism and Counter-Extremism*
Counter Extremism Project
<https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/jordan>

- *US-Funded counterterrorism training center opens in Jordan*
LA Times
<http://www.latimes.com/sns-bc-ml--jordan-us-counterterrorism-20180322-story.html>

d) Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia)

- *Saudis announce Islamic Coalition anti-terrorism coalition*
BBC
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35099318>
- *Saudi FM: Iran 'number one state sponsor of terrorism'*
Al Jazeera
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/saudi-fm-seeks-pressure-iran-hezbollah-171109193012811.html>

e) United Arab Emirates (UAE)

- *UAE takes new measures to fight radicalization*
The Arab Weekly
<https://the arabweekly.com/uae-takes-new-measures-fight-radicalisation>
- *UAE Calls for Zero Tolerance Policy Towards Terrorism to Restore Stability in the Middle East*
United Nations
<https://www.un.int/uae/news/uae-calls-zero-tolerance-policy-towards-terrorism-restore-stability-middle-east>

f) Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran)

- *Iran Out to Remake Mideast With Arab Enforcer: Hezbollah*
New York Times
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/27/world/middleeast/hezbollah-iran-syria-israel-lebanon.html>
- *State Sponsors of Terrorism: Iran*
U.S Department of State
<https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272235.htm>
- *Islamic State threatens more bloodshed in Iran*
The Washington Post
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iran-was-at-the-forefront-of-the-fight-against-isis-now-it-has-to-face-the-militants-at-home/2017/08/14/e4fb735a-7dfe-11e7-b2b1-aeba62854dfa_story.html?utm_term=.b1d398e17042

g) Tunisia

- *Tunisia: Extremism and Counter-Extremism*
Counter Extremism Project
<https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/tunisia>
- *The Salafist Temptation: The Radicalization of Tunisia's Post Revolution Youth*
Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point

<https://ctc.usma.edu/the-salafist-temptation-the-radicalization-of-tunisias-post-revolution-youth/>

- *Radicalization after the Arab Spring: Lessons from Tunisia and Egypt*
The Brookings Institute
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/radicalization-after-the-arab-spring-lessons-from-tunisia-and-egypt/>
- *Dealing with Jihadi Radicalization in Tunisia*
Institute for Global Change
<https://institute.global/insight/co-existence/dealing-jihadi-radicalisation-tunisia>