



*The League of Arab
States*
GWCI A XIV
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Chair: Behnam Taleblu

Vice Chair: Jared MacDonald

Crisis Director: Jeremy
Worthington

**THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
GWCIA XIV**

Welcome Delegates,

My name is Behnam Ben Taleblu and I will be your Chair in the League of Arab States during GWCIA XIV. I am a sophomore in the Elliott School of International Affairs. I am of Persian decent originally and am from New York City, literally one block up from the actual UN headquarters itself. I am Double-Majoring in International Affairs and Middle Eastern Studies with a concentration in International Politics in the latter discipline. Additionally, I am minoring in Religion with a concentration in Islamic Studies. Model UN and all things Middle-Eastern have been manifestations of my passion, and it is during GWCIA that I hope both of these 2 will yield a great time to debate and discuss a crucial issue of geo-strategic importance in the world.

The Persian/Arabian Gulf Region is home to some of the largest oil exports, strongest navy presences and most importantly the base of many key players in Political Islam. During our time together I will act as the Secretary General of the League, Amir Moussa, and will be referring to this waterway as “Arabian Gulf” only.

This is not done to offend anyone, but to keep with the historic and rhetorical manner in which this league operates. Last year I was a Vice Chair for the GA during GWCIA and was Chair of the Security Council the following spring during WAMUNC. I look forward to a great debate. Feel free to contact me with any questions before the conference at bbt@gwmail.gwu.edu

With Regards,
Behnam Ben Taleblu

Hey everyone!

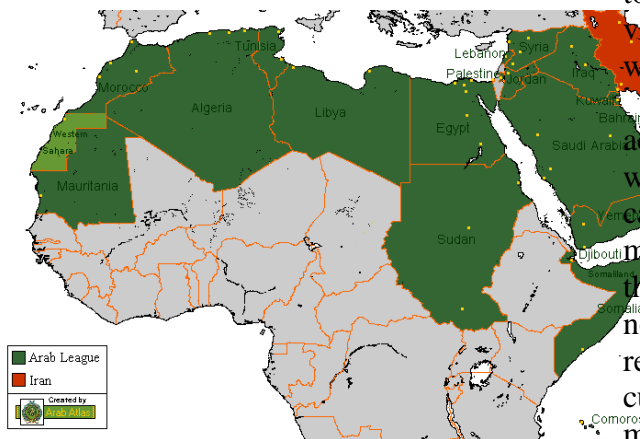
My name is Jared MacDonald, and I am sophomore in the Elliott School of International Affairs. I'm majoring in International Affairs--with a Middle Eastern concentration--and minoring in Political Science and Religion. Last year I served as a crisis staffer in GWCIA XIII and WAMUNC XI, and this year it will be my honor to serve with the League of Arab States crisis committee for the second consecutive occasion. This time, I look forward to serving as your Vice Chair.

Sincerely,
Jared MacDonald



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The League of Arab States Introduction:



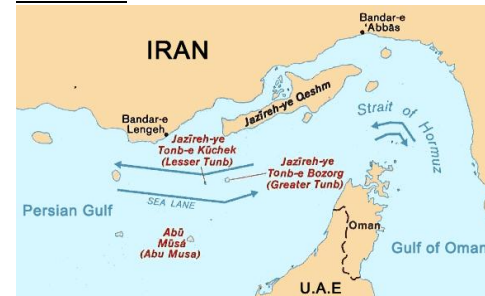
The League of Arab States was formed in Cairo on March 22, 1945 with six members: Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Yemen joined as a member on May 5, 1945. Slowly but surely the Arab League grew to include 22 members spanning from the Middle East to North Africa. Today, the league has taken on 4 additional members who act as observers. The league originally convened to uphold one major principle within what it called the Arab world; “to draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.”

A League like No Other...

Unlike many other organizations which are based solely on geographic integrity, the founding principle of this league was culture. Arab culture, in a sense, needed manifest itself in political, economic, cultural, scientific and social programs dedicated to progress in the Arab world. These individual features would be addressed at yearly conferences hosted by an LAS member in order to foster greater brotherhood via

Arab hospitality and more importantly, to caucus together before presenting a variety of issues that plague the Arab world in the international community. The LAS sought to respect every acting member’s territorial sovereignty whilst maintaining a strict stance when it came to the rule of law. Each LAS member is indebted to the other because they seek a mutual protection that grows not out of political necessity, but out of respect for a state that practices a similar culture. Hence, on the international stage many Arab countries tend to support each other when the ‘proper’ (Pan-Arab, Islamic) rhetoric or rallying cries are utilized. This is all a result of successful caucusing.

Themes:



The status of Palestine is a premier issue that the Arab League caucuses over. There have been boycotts of League meetings by members due to the ‘disrespect’ shown to Palestine by a member nation in the past year. Moreover, many of these countries have not made sincere diplomatic overtures to Israel as a state, but acknowledge the Saudi peace initiative of a 2 state solution.

Economic interdependence is also a key issue discussed. Their reliance on each other as major trading partners in addition to Asia and the western world provides league nations with a step up in trade.



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Moreover, trade is often reliant on the honoring of military and tactical alliances. The signing of an agreement on Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation in 1950 has officially mandated league members to act together and coordinate in military adventures. Building off of that, the LAS still respects the sovereignty of these states and prefers that issues of a military nature be dealt with abruptly as they are a matter of security for all member states.

The Convergence of our Interests:



The LAS fully respects the tradition of sovereignty within the limits of each Arab member state. That being said, there are a convergence of interests, Arab interests, which seek to prevent Iran from becoming a hegemonic power in the region and rivaling nearly 30 years of effective US-Arab rapprochement. Iran is a growing power, one that threatens not only us, but the world when it comes to their elusive nuclear program, their intense nationalism and embedded philosophy that they are the best in our region.

The History:

Iranian and Arab relations have often been described as pitted against each other when it comes to regional power relations. The amount of historical legitimacy used by the Persians to justify their bold and strategic moves in the Arabian Gulf,

Strait of Hormuz, and even in the eastern Mediterranean is uncanny and even offensive at times. They invoke memories of the Persian Empire, when nearly the entire ancient world was under their domineering yoke, and their strong influence in neighboring Arab states like Iraq, Kuwait, and Bahrain prevailed.

But Iranians and Arabs have also worked together to bring a religion they share to the forefront of the world's best civilizations. Arabs and Iranians utilized Islam to make some of the greatest scientific, astronomical and mathematical achievements the world had yet to see. They used to discuss philosophy, the religious sciences and literature. Alas, those days are gone. Long gone. Today, Iran uses our religion against us.

How to be a Hegemonic Power, 101:

Up until 1979, Iran was consistently run by Shahs, or kings in the classical monarchial tradition of that country. Their influence was often described in ethno-linguistic terms and they were very much separated from the Arabs. There was a profound superiority complex, because even though they practiced the same religion, culturally, ethnically and religiously they continued to feel superior. Some even claim that Iran became completely Shiite in the 16th century simply to stand apart from the more mainstream and orthodox Arabs. In the modern era, Iran used its strategic ties with the US, to negotiate a stronger position in the earlier half of the 20th century. The ruling Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, exerted Iranian influence by being a rational actor in the region and stomping out communism and socialism wherever he found it. Iran was ruled by his iron fist as he bought large

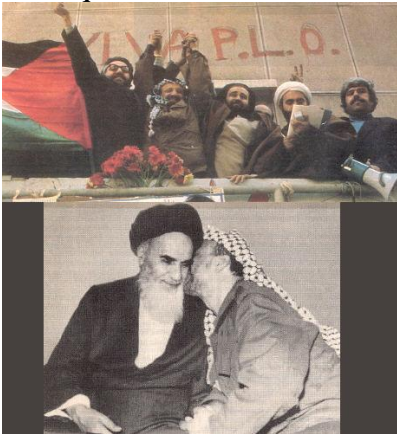


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amounts of arms, artillery, aircraft, missiles and tanks to counter growing Arab nationalism that was sparked by Arab giants like Gamel Abdel Nasser.

Moreover he was afraid of the growing Baath party in Iraq. Thus 8/10 of Iran's air and land bases for military operations were placed on the western boarder, as if he sensed an Arab attack. He further sought to isolate Arabs by not partaking in the oil boycott of western powers that supported Israel. Fortunately his nationalistic reign came to an end in 1979 when the monarchy was abolished, but with the end of Iranian nationalism, came a distinct form of Islamism, or Khomeinism that sought to not only use Persian nationalism to bully around other countries but a specific form of religious revolutionary zeal as well.

The Iranian Revolution and its consequences:



The Iranian Revolution was very bitter sweet for the members of the League of Arab States. For once, the western powers finally admitted that all the Iranian domineering in the Gulf was detrimental. They began to understand how Iran's new foreign policy was forming, and decided to take measures, any measures that is, to prevent Iran from exporting its revolution abroad, and do whatever it takes to maintain the free flow of oil. For us as Arab states there

were numerous problems to be dealt with that have different repercussions on the world stage than they do in our own backyard. First we will address the rhetorical, Iran is Persian and we are Arab. Iran is also mostly Shiite and we are mostly Sunni. However, much to our surprise they have been the most instrumental from 1990 and on when it came to the issue of Palestine and the Palestinian question. Whenever the LAS pulled away, or donated money, or did not stand up for the rights of Palestinians, Iran was there, providing rhetorical support to the intifada. Hence, it rose to prominence in the hearts of many Arabs. Once Iran noticed this, it realized that it could use Conservative politicians to separate the Arab street (impoverished, Pan- Islamic and emotional) from the Arab governments (Moderate Sunni Arab dictatorships) in order to create a legitimacy crisis. The cases below, in addition to the occupation of three islands in the Gulf is what drives this league to work together to end Iran's aspirations for supremacy in the region.

Thwarted attempts:

Some of Iran's claims are obvious. Their claim to the Shatt al Arab waterway (Arvanad Rud in Farsi) led to the Iran Iraq war, started by Saddam to liberate Iranian Arabs. Thus Iraq has always been a natural check and balance to Iranian hegemony. However, since the fall of Saddam, Iran has extended its arm into Iraq again and attempted to gain a foothold by using their religion and not their ethnicity to get support of many mainstream Muslims. Now, with Iraq's independence, we need to draw it back into the Arab sphere of influence and make it recognizes its goal as a regional power.



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Other claims are a bit outdated. Their rivalry with Egypt has led them to break off diplomatic relations and prevented normalization of relations because of Iran's consistent support for the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, the fact that they pay tribute to Khaled Islambouli the assassin of the great Egyptian president Anwar Sadat is what prevents Egyptian dignitaries from even visiting Iran.

With regard to Saudi Arabia, these two countries have fallen into a natural ideological battle within the religion of Islam. Iran believes the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to be corrupt and unworthy of the keys to the Kaaba, the holiest site in Islam. They are also responsible for a series of protests during the Hajj seasons during the late 1980's which led to the death of some Muslim pilgrims en route to the Kaaba. Moreover, Saudi oppresses Shiite Islam and teaches that it is a heresy; however Iran sees Wahhabism as the downfall of Islamic Civilization.

Saudi Arabia needs to take back the mantle of the leadership of the Muslim world from Iran. They need to point out Iran's follies and religious inaccuracies. Additionally, they need to work harder to get Gulf States like Qatar and Bahrain from maintaining a friendly and trade based relationship with Iran.

Other nations, like Algeria, accuse Iran of finger pointing and would appreciate the end of Iran's hypocrisy in the region. Algeria leads the charge against Iran's autocracy by conceding to some reforms and western pressures. Moreover, they are seen as mediators or back channels for diplomatic dialogues between the west and Iran. Libya was a prominent Iranian ally when it was purchasing nuclear material from the AQ Khan network; however when it turned

its nuclear material over to the UN and the IAEA for inspection, Iran's black market ambitions were thwarted. To add insult to injury, Libya now advocates for a free and independent Kurdistan, where a sizeable portion of Iran would be autonomous if not a separate country.

Lebanon goes way back with Iran and will be, in conjunction with Syria, one of the few countries attempting to oppose the dismantling of all forms of Iranian influence in the region. This friendship, not between governments, but between peoples helped to create a branch of the Iranian revolutionary guards in Lebanon in 1982, seeking to combat Zionism and western imperialism. This was called Hezbollah, and sought to rally Lebanese citizens around concepts of Shiite martyrdom and Lebanese nationalism. However, Iran's influence has been steadily receding after the summer 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel where for the first time a Muslim army was able to prevent the Israeli's from completing their goal. The tide turned against Hezbollah in the recent elections because it was proven that Iran was not dedicated to nation building and reconstruction, but merely rallying people around a flag, any flag, simply to prevent Israeli-Palestinian peace.

And finally, Syria seeks to further its role as an intermediary between Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah, but it is also, like Iran looking for regional recognition. It has already expressed interest in back channel talks with the US. We don't need to drive the wedge that far, yet. Syria, for a long time has wanted a dominant role in Middle Eastern affairs and the LAS can welcome them if they begin to lean toward our region bloc and not the fabricated projection of Iran's.



Occupation...not where you might expect it:

Another reason for our annual convergence is the status of the occupied islands in the Arabian Gulf. Three islands are yet to be returned to the United Arab Emirates, moreover to the Emirate of Sharjah. The islands are off of the coast of Iran and the UAE respectively. Our working definitions for international waters are 2 kilometers beyond the stateside boundary where lands meet water. But since these islands are, as we believe them to be, belonging to the Emirates, we disagree with Iran's occupation of them. Hence, we disagree with their borders/boundaries as it infringes upon the territorial integrity of the Arabian Gulf. Until the Iranian military bases are removed and a full transfer of sovereignty, under the GCC and UN mandates are met, we will, as a body, continue to refer to them as occupied.

The Claim:

Due to Iran's increasingly growing global sphere of influence, the Gulf States in particular have tried to settle this on seemingly polite terms. But whenever Iran has reached out, the Gulf States, namely the UAE has backed down. This questions our league's ability to trust the UAE and personifies their lack of foresight when it comes to international negotiations. Instead the Saudi's and Bahraini's have had to vouch for the Emirates on the multitude of times that they have internationally 'snubbed' Iran.

Many other non Gulf States in the LAS see this as a minor bickering point and a source of contention between Khaleej (Gulf) and non Khaleeji Arabs.

Oman, who is in full favor of free trade and maintaining the straight of Hormuz influence-free noted Iran and many other Islamic nations' criticism when the Emirati's allowed a French military presence on Abu Musa.

Iraq, which is strategically positioned in the Arab world, has refused to deny Iran its right to the island and 'stayed silent' during most meetings on the matter. It is ironic that this shift in Iraq's behavior became so sudden because during the Saddam era the occupied islands were a source of justification and outlet of anger against the Persians.

Egypt, and many other moderate Sunni-Arab autocratic regimes that are US friendly tend to avoid the matter but do not mind pressuring Iran when the west is watching. However in classical Nasserite tradition they don't mind using slogans like the Arabian Gulf to anger more Iranians on a daily basis.

Conclusion or the end of the beginning?

While Islamic unity is now stronger in the world than ever, the deep seated hostility between Persian and Arab still runs strong, especially in the Gulf. Iran's powerful military displays in the past few years alongside the positioning of 2 US Carriers, including the USS Nimitz, show a sign of escalation. The Gulf States are still in disarray, Pan Islamism is on the rise, and Iran is attempting to usurp our position as the guardians of Islam, and the greater security structure of the Middle East. It is up to us, as a League to assure and preside over the first congress that can successfully deal with Iran's growing ambitions, find a way to check them and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The future of the gulf and the security in the globe rests in our hands.



Questions to Consider:

- Why does Iran feel threatened by the rising economic giants of the Arabian Gulf?
- How has Iran reacted to the US presence in the region?
- What efforts has Iran made or attempted to make in order to reconcile its foreign policy with ours?
- What lasting effects could a nuclear Iran have on the whole region?
- Why have Iraq and Lebanon gravitated towards Iran ever since the US invasion of Afghanistan?
- How can the LAS stand-up to Iranian Hegemony while attempting to explore all possible diplomatic opportunities?
- What direction do you see the LAS taking in the near future when it comes to the occupied islands in the gulf?
- How has Iran used pan-Islamic rhetoric to garner support from Sunni Arab states?



Links and Citations:

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