

POL 135
International Politics of the Middle East
Term Paper—Suggested Topics and Instructions
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The purpose of the term paper is to evaluate your competence in applying theoretical constructs and approaches used in the study of international relations to the analysis of issues, processes, and events in the Middle East. This document provides a list of sample topics for the term paper. Students who wish to select topics from this list are welcome to do so. Those who wish to write the paper on different topics not in the list are required to write a one-page paper outline and submit it to the TA in the course, Richard Johnson, by the date of the midterm. Following the list of topics there are general instructions on how to write a successful term paper.

A. Suggested Topics for the Term Paper

- The superpowers and the Middle East—the effects of superpower intervention on conflict and cooperation in Middle East politics
- Revolutionary state formation and international conflict—the effect of state formation on war outbreak in the Middle East
- The effect of regional movements (Pan Arabism, Arab Nationalism, Zionism, Radical Islamic movements) on Inter-Arab Politics
- The effect of universal ideologies on the international politics in the Middle East
- Does the tail wag the dog? Relations between Middle East states and their super power “patrons” before, during, and following wars
- The diversionary theory of war: Middle East applications
- A comparative analysis of decision making in crises: Are there cross-cultural differences in how leaders make decisions at times of crisis? Comparing Arab to non-Arab decision making processes
- The relationships between civil wars and international wars in the Middle East: the Yemen civil war (1962-67), the Lebanon civil war (1974-87), and the Algerian civil war (1989-1998)
- The impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the domestic politics of the Arab states
- Why did the Arab League succeed/fail in resolving inter-Arab conflict? Cases include the Yemen civil war, the Lebanon War, the Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq war.
- The sources of Middle East Alliances—did states balance or bandwagon?

- The reliability of Middle East alliances—why did allies fulfill/fail to fulfill their treaty obligations.
- The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Does this principle apply to patterns of alliance formation in the Middle East?
- The effect of leadership on inter-Arab politics: how did individual leaders shape patterns of discord and collaboration among Arab states
- Is there a relationship between economic downturn and war in the Middle East?
- The economic incentives of peace: how did economic factors affect conflict resolution efforts in the region?
- Sources of Middle East terrorism. How and why did some groups decide to become terrorists in the Middle East
- Can the liberal peace apply to the Middle East?
- Democracy, Radical Islam, and international cooperation in the Middle East? Can the three coexist?
- How did wars shape the political structures of regimes in the Middle East?

1. General Structure of the Paper

The paper is based on the application of a specific theoretical topic covered in the class discussions and the readings to one or more historical cases, issues, or aspects of Middle East politics. A good structure of the paper is the following

- a. **Introduction.** The introduction lays out the specific research questions, the context of the paper (e.g., national movements, conflict theory, political economy, alliances and international organizations, etc.), and provides a brief overview of the paper. In general, it is a good idea to write the introduction at the end after you have finished the research and spelled out your findings and conclusions. This way, if the paper has a central theme, it is useful to point it out at the outset.
- b. **Theory.** This section lays out the theoretical framework that guides the case study. It discusses the relevant theoretical literature and derives from it a set of hypotheses that are researched in the next sections.
- c. **Narrative of the Historical Case/cases.** Brief description of the facts and the historical processes you are studying. Be sure to discuss the actors, the problems, and the facts that are relevant to your analysis, and not provide unnecessary information.

- d. **Analysis.** This section applies the concepts, approaches, ideas, and methods entailed in the theory you are using on the historical case/cases. Be sure to relate the analysis of the case to specific hypotheses that you had specified in the theory section. The key question here is whether and how do the facts of the case either support or contradict the hypotheses. Also, it is useful to say something about if and how the theory helps explain seemingly inexplicable aspects of the historical case.
- e. **Conclusion.** This section summarizes your findings and whatever other conclusions you derived from the research. You can also point out shortcomings or advantages in the theory on the basis of your study of the case. If there are policy implications, please mention them.

2. Technical Matters

- Bibliography and references. Be sure to use sources and cite them correctly. Use the APA style or the APSA style for citations and references. Look up any of the APSA journals (*American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, etc.) for examples.
- Style. Spend some time thinking on *how* to organize your paper, how to present your arguments, how to support them, and how to conclude. A well written paper makes for a better grade than a poorly written one.
- Questions. I encourage creativity in writing, but to be on the safe side, check with me any ideas that you think are not really of a standard form that you want to put in your paper

Good Luck