

Beirut Declaration and Arab League

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Manifest pedagogy: Regional and international groupings are hot topics for UPSC. As Arab league is completing 75 years this year, it's origin, membership and functions are important from prelims point of view. It is also necessary to know how the ties of India with the league has evolved in these years.

In news: 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of Arab league.

Placing it in syllabus: India and regional organisations

Dimensions:

- Arab League, its origin and functions
- India and Arab League
- Beirut declaration

Content:

Arab League – its origin and functions:

- The Arab League, formally the League of Arab States is a **regional organization in the Arab world, which is located in Africa and Western Asia.**
- Following the adoption of the **Alexandria Protocol** in 1944, the Arab League was **founded in 1945 in Cairo, Egypt.**
- It aimed to develop the Arab economy, resolve disputes and coordinate political aims.
- It **initially had six members:** *Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan (renamed Jordan in 1949), Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.*
- **Yemen joined as a member on 5 May 1945.**

- Currently, the League has 22 members, but **Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011.**



- The 31st Arab League Summit is yet to be held in 2020.

Members:

- The **Charter of the Arab League**, also known as the Pact of the League of Arab States, **is the founding treaty** of the Arab League.
- Adopted in 1945, it stipulates that “the League of Arab States shall be composed of the independent Arab States that have signed this Pact.”
- Today, it has **22 members**, including three African countries among the largest by area (Sudan, Algeria and Libya) and the largest country in Western Asia (Saudi Arabia).
- **Five countries have observer status** that entitles them to express their opinion and give advice but denies them voting rights.

Structure:

- The **highest body of the league is the Council**, composed of representatives of member states, usually foreign ministers, their representatives or permanent delegates.
- **Each member state has one vote, irrespective of its size.**
- The council meets twice in a year and may convene a special session at the request of two members.
- The **league is run by the General Secretariat, headed by a secretary-general.**
- It is the administrative body of the league and the executive body of the council and the specialised ministerial councils.

Functions:

- To draw closer the relations between member-states and coordinate their political activities;
- safeguard their independence and sovereignty;
- promote the interests of the Arab countries;
- mediate in disputes between members or between members and a third party;
- promote cooperation in the matters relating to economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare, and health.

The Arab League **has no mechanism to compel members' compliance with its resolutions**. The charter states that decisions reached by a majority "shall bind only those states that accept them," which places a premium on national sovereignty and **limits the league's ability to take collective action**.

India and Arab League:

- Being conferred **observer status in 2007**, India was the first member to enter the League although it does not have an Arab community.
- This has enabled it to attend the Arab League Council meetings and have access to certain documentation.
- There are important **Indian investments** in countries stretching from Oman and Saudi Arabia to Egypt, Sudan and beyond.
- There have been **cultural ties** with the region throughout history.
- **Much of our external trade passes along the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.**
- India's *staunch commitment to the Palestinian cause, common views on major international developments and strong economic and commercial relations* form the **foundations of India-Arab relations** today.
- The **total bilateral trade with the Arab countries is over US\$ 180 billion** and the region is home to 7 million

Indians and **caters to 60% of our crude oil imports.**

- India's major exports to Arab League countries are chemicals, automobiles, machinery, foodstuff and other fast moving products, while it is a large importer of Arab oil and gas.
- India hosted foreign ministers of 22 Arab League nations in Delhi in January, 2019.

What is the Beirut declaration?

- The 20 countries of Arab League in **2019** in the **Arab Economic and Social Development Summit** issued a **joint statement called the Beirut Declaration.**
- It called for the **establishment of an Arab free trade zone.**
- It also urged the international community to **support nations hosting Syrian refugees** and take steps to minimize the impact of the refugee crisis.
- The declaration noted that the refugee crisis leads to an economic slowdown, increases the expenditure and deficit, imposes burdens on public sectors and infrastructure and poses risks to the society.
- Arab leaders **called on the world to shoulder its responsibilities to minimize the impact of the refugee crisis** and double efforts to encourage and facilitate the return of refugees to their homeland.
- Arab states called upon **donor nations to fulfill their promises to offer financial support** to nations hosting refugees.
- It was the **first time Arab countries have reached a consensus on encouraging Syrian refugees to return to their country.**

Mould your thought: What is the significance of the Beirut declaration of Arab League? How has the ties of India with the league evolved in recent years?