



KING'S ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2026

The 1990 Arab League Emergency Summit Baghdad

PRESIDENT RESEARCH PACKET

President: Mutaz Fakhouri

**Managing the Arab Response to Intra-Regional
Disputes and Border Tensions**



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President's Letter:

Dear Delegates of the 1990 Arab League Emergency Summit Baghdad,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to KAMUN's 26, 1990 Arab League Emergency Summit – Baghdad. This is not just any committee — this is a committee set in one of the Arab world's most decisive moments, where diplomacy was measured in hours, and every choice deeply affected the future.

I am Mutaz Fakhouri, a twelfth-grader at King's Academy, and I have the honor of serving as your President this year. The Baghdad Summit was a meeting where leaders faced enormous pressure and no easy answers. As a special committee, we will recreate that urgency. You will need to think quickly, defend your positions fiercely, and adapt to shifting alliances. What you say, or don't say, will change the outcome.

Our first topic, "Managing the Arab Response to Intra-Regional Disputes and Border Tensions," will take you into the months before the invasion of Kuwait, where disputes over oil production, war debt, and influence threatened unity in the Gulf.

Our second topic, "Rising Soviet Jewish Immigration into Occupied Palestinian Territories," will challenge you to respond to a demographic and political shift actively encouraged by Israel's Law of Return, and to address its significant consequences on the region.

This committee will not be slow or forgiving. Expect a war room atmosphere. Tense, fast, and unpredictable. Every statement will be tested, every alliance questioned. In 1990, leaders in Baghdad had no luxury of looking back, and neither will you. When you walk into this room, you are stepping into history, and in this history, hesitation can cost you everything.

See you soon,

Mutaz Fakhouri

President of The 1990 Arab League Emergency Summit Baghdad

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Introduction:

In the months leading up to August 1990, tensions were quietly but steadily building across the Arab world. Iraq, led by Saddam Hussein, was at tension with its Gulf neighbors over oil production, falling prices, and unpaid debts from the Iran–Iraq War. What may have begun as financial disputes quickly turned into political friction, with threats and private warnings exchanged behind closed doors.

Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates of overproducing oil to weaken Iraq's struggling post-war economy. Kuwait refused to forgive Iraq's debts, viewing Hussein's demands as an attempt to shift responsibility for his country's costly war. Border disputes, especially over the Rumaila oil field, added fuel to the fire, and smaller Gulf states watched nervously, aware that any misstep could draw them into a larger conflict.

The Baghdad Emergency Summit was called in this tense atmosphere. On the surface, it was meant to resolve disputes within the Arab League, but behind the scenes, it was a stage for careful strategizing, testing loyalties, and subtle warnings. Every word mattered, every gesture was watched, and any mistake could have dire consequences. Leaders had to navigate this fragile balance, trying to prevent a crisis that was already begging to happen.

Beyond the immediate disputes, the summit reflected deeper regional anxieties. Decades of unresolved tensions, competition for influence, and differing national priorities meant that even small disagreements could escalate quickly. Delegates were not only negotiating economic and territorial issues but also attempting to maintain a sense of unity in a region under immense pressure. In Baghdad, the room was more than a meeting hall, it was the heart of a potential storm, where history hung in the balance, and the eyes of every Arab were watching every move.

Definition of Key Terms:

Saddam Hussein :

The leader of Iraq at the time, whose decisions and demands really stirred the pot in the Gulf. His push for debt forgiveness and control over disputed areas made neighboring countries nervous and pushed tensions higher.

Iraq-Kuwait Tensions :

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The bad relationship between Iraq and Kuwait that wasn't just about money or land, it was a mix of politics, pride, and pressure. Everything from oil prices to border disagreements added tension and made conflict feel possible at any moment.

Oil Overproduction :

When Kuwait and the UAE produced more oil than agreed, it drove prices down and hurt Iraq's fragile post-war economy. For Iraq, this wasn't just economics, it felt like a deliberate challenge.

Iran–Iraq War Debt :

Iraq owed a lot of money from its long war with Iran and hoped neighboring countries would help out. Kuwait's refusal to forgive the debt became a sore point, adding fuel to the growing disagreements.

Rumaila Oil Field :

A valuable oil field near the Iraq-Kuwait border that became a flashpoint. Who controlled it and how much oil was taken mattered a lot, it showed bigger struggles over territory and influence.

Baghdad Emergency Summit :

A special meeting of the Arab League held in July till August 1990 in Baghdad, Iraq, aimed at addressing and resolving disputes among Arab countries, specifically tensions between Iraq and its Gulf neighboring countries over oil production, debts, and borders.

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Major Parties Involved:

Iraq:

As the host and central figure, Hussein sought Kuwait's forgiveness of Iraq's war debts, reductions in oil production, and resolution of border disputes such as the Rumaila oil field.

Kuwait:

Kuwait firmly reduced Iraq's demands, maintaining its position on oil production and territorial boundaries, viewing Iraq's claims as unjustified.

United Arab Emirates:

The UAE supported Kuwait, concerned that Iraq's pressures on oil and borders could destabilize the Gulf region economically and politically.

Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia acted as a mediator, working to reduce tensions, protect Gulf stability, safeguard oil markets, and maintain its regional influence.

Jordan:

Jordan took a moderate stance, promoting dialogue and regional unity while carefully balancing its diplomatic relations between Iraq and the Gulf states.

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Timeline:

1988 :

Palestinians declare independence; Arab states reaffirm support for the PLO.

1989 :

The Iran-Iraq War ends. Iraq is left bankrupt and in debt to Gulf states, fueling tension.

Late 1989–1990 :

Jewish immigration from the collapsing Soviet Union to Israel raises Arab fears over Palestine.

Early 1990 :

Iraq accuses Kuwait of overproducing oil, worsening its financial crisis.

28–30 May 1990 :

Arab leaders meet in Baghdad at Saddam Hussein's invitation. Nineteen states attend (Syria and Lebanon absent). The summit focuses on Arab disputes, border tensions, and the dangers of Soviet Jewish immigration. The final statement reaffirms Jerusalem as Palestine's capital and warns of demographic threats, but divisions remain.

June–July 1990 :

Iraq's dispute with Kuwait escalates.

2 August 1990 :

Iraq invades Kuwait, triggering regional crisis.

10 August 1990 :

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An emergency summit in Cairo condemns the invasion, calls for withdrawal, and agrees to send Arab peacekeepers, though states are split in their loyalties.

12 August 1990 :

Saddam proposes linking Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait to Israel leaving occupied lands, but offers no unconditional exit.

January–February 1991 :

The Gulf War begins; a US-led coalition with Arab support forces Iraq out of Kuwait.

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Implications:

The 1990 Baghdad Summit highlighted the urgency of addressing Arab disputes before they escalated further. Gulf states were particularly concerned that unresolved border tensions and disagreements over oil production would weaken regional economies and undermine the collective strength of the Arab world. Instead of projecting unity, divisions risked making Arab states more vulnerable to foreign influence at a time when the region was under global surveillance.

Beyond economics, leaders at the summit were also worried about the safety and wellbeing of civilians. History had already shown that border conflicts and resource disputes often came with high human costs, including violence, forced displacement, and instability for entire communities. Allowing tensions to grow risked triggering another humanitarian crisis that could spread across already fragile areas in the Gulf and Levant.

Oil remained at the heart of these concerns. Control over oil fields, disputes about revenues, and disagreements on production quotas all carried the potential to spark confrontation. Leaders recognized that oil wealth could either bind Arab states together through working together or divide them through competition. If mishandled, disputes over oil would not only threaten Arab unity but also disrupt the global energy market, creating consequences far beyond the Middle East.

Military escalation was another fear. The Iran–Iraq War had only recently ended, leaving behind memories of the devastation caused when border disputes turned into full-scale conflict. Summit participants knew that another cycle of militarization would not only destabilize the region but could also open the door for foreign powers to intervene directly, further complicating the disputes.

Finally, the greatest concern was the risk of outside involvement. With major powers like the United States and the Soviet Union already competing for influence in the Middle East, unresolved Arab disputes created opportunities for outsiders to exploit divisions for their own gain. This raised the danger of local disputes escalating into global crises. The Baghdad Summit therefore carried a clear message: unless Arab states found ways to manage their conflicts internally and present a united front, they risked losing their sovereignty.

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Proposed Solutions:

1. Encourages the Arab League, the United Nations, and all directly involved Arab states to hold a summit focused on peacefully resolving intra-regional disputes and border tensions, ensuring that each state's sovereignty and rights are respected;
 1. Summit participants should openly present their territorial concerns and disputed borders to promote transparency and fairness,
 - i. Each state may claim only territories within their recognized borders according to existing treaties and agreements,
 - ii. States may not attempt to take control of their neighbors' territories or change borders by force,
2. Calls for the creation of a clear agreement and border framework during the summit to stop escalation and maintain regional stability;
 - i. The framework should include:
 1. A detailed map showing each state's recognized borders and any disputed areas,
 2. Temporary arrangements for disputed zones, which may be managed neutrally or through international mediation until a final resolution is reached,
 - ii. Any state that violates the agreement by using force to alter borders will be referred to the Arab League Council and, if needed, the International Court of Justice for arbitration,
3. Stresses that disputed areas should be managed through cooperation rather than conflict;
 - i. States may establish joint economic or security initiatives in disputed areas, increasing shared benefits and reducing the risk of clashes,
 - ii. Military activity in disputed zones is prohibited, with violations resulting in

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sanctions or temporary suspension of privileges within the Arab League,

4. Emphasizes that unresolved disputes should be addressed regionally to avoid outside interference;
 - i. Arab states should prioritize internal negotiation and solutions,
 - ii. Any external actors attempting to exploit divisions will be viewed as a threat to Arab sovereignty and regional peace.

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“Food for Thought”:

- Could the Arab League have stopped the invasion of Kuwait if leaders in Baghdad had acted differently — or was war already inevitable?
- Was forgiving Iraq’s war debts an act of Arab solidarity that could have saved the region, or simply rewarding reckless decisions by Saddam?
- When oil is both the lifeline of Arab economies and the source of so many disputes, can it ever truly unite the region, or will it always divide?
- How do smaller states like Kuwait and the UAE protect their sovereignty when pressured by powerful neighbors — compromise, alliance, or resistance?
- Would keeping the disputes “in the family” (within the Arab League) have made the region stronger, or was outside involvement from global powers like the U.S. and USSR impossible to avoid?
- If Arab leaders had walked out of Baghdad with a real agreement on borders and oil, how different might the Middle East — and even the world — look today?

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Appendix:

Appendix A

"Don F. Pratt Museum-101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)." Facebook, www.facebook.com/DonPrattMuseum/posts/on-this-day-in-1990-saddam-hussein-invaded-kuwait-iraqs-tiny-oil-rich-neighbor-w/925918796237090/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2025.



Appendix B

Notteboom, Theo, et al. "Shipping Lanes, Strategic Passages and Oil Production in the Middle East." *Port Economics, Management and Policy*, Routledge, 2022, <https://porteconomicsmanagement.org/pemp/contents/part5/ports-and-energy/shipping-lanes-strategic-passages-oil-production-middle-east/>.

