



Departamento de Medio Oriente

The Middle East Department (DEMO), which belongs to the **Institute of International Relations (IRI)**, **National University of La Plata (UNLP)**, was created in 1996 at the request of the Director-Founder of the Institute, Dr. **Norberto Consani**. Thereafter, the DEMO has organized several academic activities related to the region. Among the most important, these are:

- The organization of a “Middle East Conference” every two years.
- The annual academic production on the Middle East, published in the IRI’s yearbook.
- The quarterly academic production of Reports on the situation in the Middle East.
- The teaching of Arabic language.

Moreover, the DEMO has also organized several talks about the most varied regional issues with local and international academics and government officials.

The series of “Conference on the Middle East” begun in 1996 and whose edition in 2012 was the ninth, are not only important because they are the only of its kind to be held amongst the country, but because they summon students and academics from Argentina along with worldwide specialists in the region, as well as officials from the mezz-eastern governments. Hence, it stands as a privileged space for knowledge sharing and for establishing discussions on the means of construction of the realities from the Middle East.

The IRI's Yearbook (Middle East) is pertaining to social, economic and political issues and processes related to the countries belonging to the region, covering: the relations between them; those between them and the world powers; and, from the previous Yearbook onwards, it has also added Argentinian relations towards the Middle East and the South America - Middle East relationships. Thus, the purpose of the DEMO is to contribute to the knowledge of the political, cultural and economic realities of this important region to encourage ties between Argentina and mezz-Eastern countries and, more broadly, between these and Latin America.

The inclusion of this object of study in the activities of DEMO should be located in the new international context.

Indeed, Argentina has undertaken cooperation processes with Arab countries in the region and has also given recognition to the Palestinian state, supporting its request to the UN to encourage the establishment of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. It is also



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important to note that these recent positive steps towards the region have been made in line with South American regional policies towards it. In this regard, we believe that the development of the South America - Arab Countries Summit (ASPA) is a turning point key in the south-south relations, symptom of a world facing multi-polarization processes.

This is why we recognize a great importance in the impulse the Argentine State has breathed to its relationships with Arab countries, especially from the ASPA's First Summit, but, more specifically, from **Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's** government onto the Second and Third ASPA Summits, and the strengthening of bilateral relations with some countries in the region, being the decree which enables the opening of an Argentinian Embassy in Qatar, a clear example of the latter. We consider the "Arab world" and the Middle East as a whole, not just as an obviously strategic region in regard to international politics, and as a partner one state could deepen economic ties with, but also as a rich region in social and cultural terms, with whom it can narrow bonds of significant importance, if the tendency is indeed a multilateralizing world. In this context, we believe that a strong political cooperation in terms of equality between two economically and culturally rich regions, such as South America and the Middle East, could be very beneficial to expand our room for maneuver and ensure that our voice has more weight and presence in the international arena.

In order to help improving this strategic relation, the Department has started to produce the Quarterly Reports on the political, social and economic situation of different and relevant countries of the Middle East.



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