

## Letter from the Executive Board

On behalf of the entire Executive Board, I welcome you to this meeting of the UNESCO at Step By Step Model United Nations 2016, in which, we will be discussing the agenda 'Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Region of Middle East'. We wish to discuss the agenda because the condition of the cultural heritage in the Middle East has worsened over the past years. The cultural heritage of any region gives identity to the place as well as the people. Since the beginning, the culture has united the people and gave the sense of belongingness which led to the formation of societies. Now, with the destruction and ill-management of these sites, the cultural diversity and identity stands at risk. From this committee we expect zeal to find solutions to the problem posed before us.

We understand how the delegates wait patiently for the background guide as it helps them to understand the agenda better and act as a preparatory tool for them. For this reason, we are mentioning a few pointers that all the delegates are requested to keep in mind before reading the background guide and preparing for the Conference.

This background guide **does not** contain all the information available on the agenda but tries to **introduce** the agenda in order to help delegates in further research. The first section of this guide highlights the mandate of the committee, i.e. the functions and powers of the UNESCO. The second section briefly discusses the definition of culture and its importance to make it more evident the need to preserve cultural heritage. The third section deals with the agenda briefly. This section also includes some case studies to ensure better understanding for the delegates.

The delegates are requested to be careful with every term which is used in speech or in documentation as it may have a **legal implication**. Some general terms we use to explain certain on ground practices may also share common etymology with codified language of law. The delegates are expected to be thorough with their research, and base their analysis and conclusions on the same during the debate.

We are sharing a **suggested pattern** for researching (if required). It is as follow:

- a. Researching and understanding about the UNESCO, especially its mandate and the historical work done on the agenda.
- b. Understanding the allotted Member State, especially through its economy, polity, culture etc.
- c. Comprehending the Foreign Policy of the allotted country (Not just the policy on the given agenda, but also the larger framework of the policy).
- d. Reading and analysing the background guide thoroughly.
- e. Further researching analysing agenda using the footnotes and links given in the guide and from other sources such as academic papers, institutional reports, national reports, news articles, blogs etc.

- f. Understanding policies adopted by different blocs of countries (example: NATO, League of Arab States etc.) and major countries involved in the agenda, especially their position, ideology and adopted past actions.
- g. Characterizing the agenda into sub-topics and preparing speeches and statements on them. It is the same as preparing topics for the Moderated Caucuses and their content.
- h. Preparing a list of possible solutions and actions the UNESCO can adopt on the issue as per your State's policies.
- i. Assembling proof/evidence for any important piece of information you are going to use in committee from the list of sources mentioned above.
- j. Keeping your research updated to the present time.

Lastly, we would like to humbly request all delegates to put sincere efforts in preparation and research for the simulation and work hard to make it a fruitful learning experience for all. Feel free to contact us to clarify queries or doubts.

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## Proof/Evidence in the Council



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Evidence or proof is acceptable from sources:

1. **News Sources:**

a. **REUTERS** – Any Reuters article which clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in council.

(<http://www.reuters.com/> )

b. **State operated News Agencies** – These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any Country as such but in that situation, they can be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are,

- i. RIA Novosti (Russia) <http://en.rian.ru/>
- ii. IRNA (Iran) <http://www.irna.ir/ENIndex.htm>
- iii. BBC (United Kingdom) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>
- iv. Xinhua News Agency and CCTV (P.R. China) <http://cctvnews.cntv.cn/>

2. **Government Reports:** These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. **However, a nuance is that a report that is being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as credible information.**

Examples are,

- a. **Government Websites** like the State Department of the United States of

America <http://www.state.gov/index.htm> or the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation <http://www.eng.mil.ru/en/index.htm>

b. **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** of various nations like India(<http://www.mea.gov.in/>), People's Republic of China(<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/>), France(<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>), Russian Federation([http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/main\\_eng](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/main_eng))

c. **Permanent Representatives** to the United Nations Reports <http://www.un.org/en/members/> (Click on any country to get the website of the Office of its Permanent Representative.

d. **Multilateral Organizations** like the NATO (<http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>), ASEAN (<http://www.aseansec.org/>), OPEC ([http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/)), etc.

3. **UN Reports:** All UN Reports are considered are credible information or evidence for the Executive Board of the Security Council.

a. **UN Bodies:** Like the SC(<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>), GA (<http://www.un.org/en/ga/>), HRC (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>) etc.

b. **UN Affiliated bodies** like the International Atomic Energy Agency (<http://www.iaea.org/>), World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/>), International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm>), International Committee of the Red Cross (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/index.jsp>), etc.

c. **Treaty Based Bodies** like the Antarctic Treaty System (<http://www.ats.aq/e/ats.htm>), the International Criminal Court (<http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menus/ICC>)

**Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>), Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/>) or newspapers like the Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>), Times of India (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>), etc. be accepted.**



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO UNESCO

**In 1945**, UNESCO was created in order to respond to the firm belief of nations, forged by two world wars in less than a generation, which is political and economic agreements are not enough to build a lasting peace. Peace must be established on the basis of humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity.

UNESCO strives to build networks among nations that enable this kind of solidarity, by:

- ☐ Mobilizing for education: so that every child, boy or girl, has access to quality education as a fundamental human right and as a prerequisite for human development.
- ☐ Building intercultural understanding: through protection of heritage and support for cultural diversity. UNESCO created the idea of World Heritage to protect sites of outstanding universal value.
- ☐ Pursuing scientific cooperation: such as early warning systems for tsunamis or trans-boundary water management agreements, to strengthen ties between nations and societies.
- ☐ Protecting freedom of expression: an essential condition for democracy, development and human dignity.

Today, UNESCO's message has never been more important. We must create holistic policies that are capable of addressing the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. This new thinking on sustainable development reaffirms the founding principles of the Organization and enhances its role:

- ☐ In a globalized world with interconnected societies, intercultural dialogue is vital if we are to live together while acknowledging our diversity.
- ☐ In an uncertain world, the future of nations depends not only on their economic capital or natural resources, but on their collective ability to understand and anticipate changes in the environment - through education, scientific research and the sharing of knowledge.

- ❑ In an unstable world - marked by fledgling democratic movements, the emergence of new economic powers and societies weakened by multiple stress factors – the educational, scientific and cultural fabric of societies – along with respect for fundamental rights - guarantees their resilience and stability.
- ❑ In a connected world - with the emergence of the creative economy and knowledge societies, along with the dominance of the Internet, the full participation of everyone in the new global public space is a prerequisite for peace and development.

UNESCO is known as the "intellectual" agency of the United Nations. At a time when the world is looking for new ways to build peace and sustainable development, people must rely on the power of intelligence to innovate, expand their horizons and sustain the hope of a new humanism. UNESCO exists to bring this creative intelligence to life; for it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace and the conditions for sustainable development must be built.

#### HOW DOES UNESCO WORK?

Every day, UNESCO adds value to the international community in a range of ways, by functioning as:

- ❑ A laboratory of ideas;
- ❑ A standard setter;
- ❑ A catalyst for international cooperation;
- ❑ A clearing house;
- ❑ A capacity builder for Member States.

UNESCO relies on a vast network of people, institutions and partners to focus its work and amplify its impact, including:

- ❑ A network of 199 National Commissions that maintain constant dialogue between civil society and governmental authorities. Unique within the UN system, this mechanism ensures UNESCO's relevance at the national level.
- ❑ UNESCO Institutes and Centres
  - Category 1 Institutes and Centres are an integral part of UNESCO, and strengthen the capacity of Member States - particularly in developing countries.
  - Category 2 Institutes and Centres work under the auspices of UNESCO. These Institutes and Centres are not legally part of the Organization, but are associated through formal arrangements. They contribute to the implementation of UNESCO's programmes through capacity building and exchange of information in a particular discipline.

UNESCO is the only UN agency whose name is associated with the protection and management of cultural and natural sites or geographic areas, where implementation of its ideas and programs is carried out. They include:

- ☐ World Heritage sites, one third of which are natural;
- ☐ Biosphere reserves;
- ☐ Geoparks;
- ☐ Intangible cultural heritage;
- ☐ Memory of the World Programme.

UNESCO also draws upon the work of scientists, cultural workers, teachers and organizations involved in the educational, scientific and cultural life of societies. Over the years, UNESCO has formed rich and varied networks that allow it to establish deep ties with a range of civil society organizations and national authorities.

## **SECTION 2: CULTURE**

'Culture' is a term used frequently and sometimes vaguely. In everyday conversation, culture is confined to the arts, or alludes to the way of life of certain classes or even countries. But there are so many connotations attached to it. This section is meant to help us define it more precisely and to appreciate its different aspects.

Just like you need a map to navigate over unknown space or territory, you need culture to conduct or behave yourself in society. Culture is the common understanding, which is learnt and developed through social interaction with others in society. A common understanding within a group demarcates it from others and gives it an identity. But cultures are never finished products. They are always changing and evolving. Elements are constantly being added, deleted, expanded, shrunk and rearranged. This makes cultures dynamic as functioning units.

The capacity of individuals to develop a common understanding with others and to draw the same meanings from signs and symbols is what distinguishes humans from other animals. Creating meaning is a social virtue as we learn it in the company of others in families, groups and communities. We learn the use of tools and techniques as well as the non-material signs and symbols through interaction with family members, friends and colleagues in different social settings. Much of this knowledge is systematically describes and conveyed either orally or through books.

### **DIVERSE SETTINGS, DIFFERENT CULTURES**

Humans live in a variety of natural settings like in the mountains and plains, in forests and clear lands, in deserts and river valleys, in islands and main lands. They also inhabit different social set up like in villages, towns and cities. In different environments, people adapt different strategies to cope with the natural and social conditions. This leads to the emergence of diverse ways of life or cultures.

### **DEFINING CULTURE AND ITS DIMENSIONS**

Culture is a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the total way of life of a people. It is an abstraction from behaviour. It is learned behaviour. It is a storehouse of pooled learning. It is the social legacy of the individual acquires from his/her group. It is a set of standardised orientations to recurrent problems. It is a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour.

Three dimensions of culture have been distinguished:

1. Cognitive: This refers to how we learn to process what we hear or see, so as to give it meaning (recognising the cartoon of a politician).
2. Normative: This refers to rules of conduct (not opening other people's letters, performing rituals at death).



3. Material: This includes any activity made possible by means of materials. Materials also include tools or machines. Examples include internet 'chatting', using rice-flour paste to design *kalam* on floors.

## CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Identities are not inherited but fashioned both by the individual and the group through their relationship with others. For the individual the social roles and s/he plays imparts identity. Every person in modern society plays multiple roles. For instance within the family s/he maybe a parent or a child but for each of specific roles there are particular responsibilities and powers.

It is not sufficient to enact roles. They also have to be recognised and acknowledged. This can often be done through the recognition of the particular language that is used among role players. Students in schools have their own way of referring to their teachers, other students, class performances, and so on. By creating this language which also serves as a code, they create their own world of meanings and significances. Similarly, women are also known to create their own language and through it their own private space beyond the control of men especially when they congregate at the pond to bathe in rural areas or across washing lines on rooftops in urban areas.

In a culture there can be many sub-culture, like that of the elite and working class youth. Sub-cultures are marked by style, taste and association. Particular sub-cultures are identifiable by their speech, dress codes, preference for particular kind of music or the manner in which they interact with their group members.

Sub-cultural groups can also function as cohesive units which impart an identity to all group members. Within such groups there can be leaders and followers but group members are bound by the purpose of the group and work together to achieve their objectives. For instance young members of a neighbourhood can form a club to engage themselves in sports and other constructive activities. Such activities create a positive image of the members in the locality and this gives the members not only a positive self-image but also inspires them to perform better in their activities. The orientation of their identity as a group is able to differentiate itself from other groups and thereby create its own identity through the acceptance and recognition of the neighbourhood.

## ETHNOCENTRISM AND COSMOPOLITISM

It is only when cultures come into contact with one another that the question of ethnocentrism arises. Ethnocentrism is the application of one's own cultural values in evaluating the behaviour and beliefs of people from other cultures. This means that the cultural values projected as the standard or norm are considered superior to that of the beliefs and values of other cultures.

Ethnocentrism is the opposite of cosmopolitanism, which values other cultures for their difference. A cosmopolitan outlook does not seek to evaluate the values and beliefs of people according to one's own. It celebrates and accommodates different cultural

propensities within its fold and promotes cultural exchange and borrowings to enrich one's own culture. For instance, the American Culture recognises and accepts the presence and rights of the LGBT community but the same is not recognized. In the countries in the East like India. There have been instances such as the pride parade in Canada which look for a change in the global culture towards the LGBT community because they think everyone should adopt this culture to progress.

The terrorist groups like the Daesh'/ 'Islamic State' (henceforth: ISIL) practice ethnocentrism as they believe that their ideology of Islam is superior to any other culture. They cause destruction of symbols of other cultures and faiths mad also anything that is of value to the same to form a territory where only their culture is prevalent.

The UN, on the other hand, follows cosmopolitism. It encourages all the nations to respect all cultures and works towards peaceful cohabitation in a culturally diverse world.

### SECTION 3: CULTURAL HERITAGE

#### HERITAGE

Heritage, encompasses tangible and intangible, natural and cultural, movable and immovable and documentary assets inherited from the past and transmitted to future generations by virtue of their irreplaceable value. The term 'heritage' has evolved considerably over time. Initially referring exclusively to the monumental remains of cultures, the concept of heritage has gradually been expanded to embrace living culture and contemporary expressions.

As a source of identity, heritage is a valuable factor for empowering local communities and enabling vulnerable groups to participate fully in social and cultural life. It can also provide time-tested solutions for conflict prevention and reconciliation.

#### CULTURAL HERITAGE

According to Article 1 of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the following are considered as "cultural heritage".

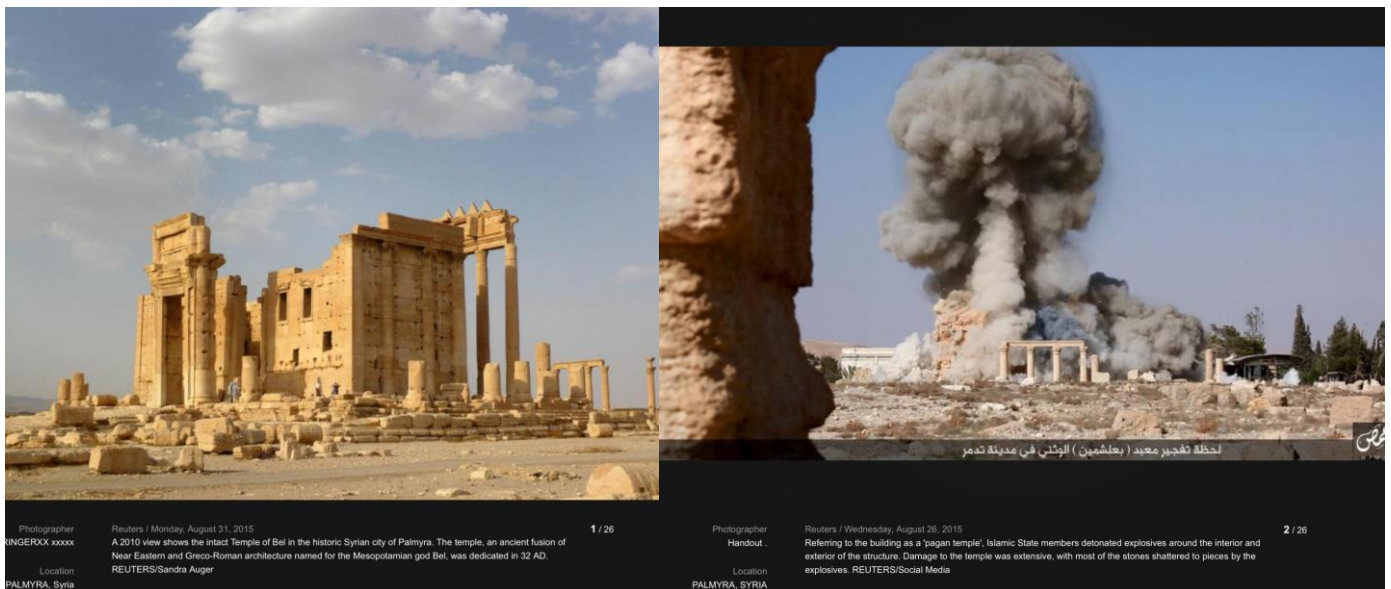
- **Monuments:** architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- **Groups of buildings:** groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- **Sites:** works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

#### CULTURAL HERITAGE UNDER THREAT

There are various cultural heritage that are under threat. Causes of these threats vary from one case study to another. We shall not be mentioning each case study. But to ensure the delegates get a glimpse of distinct causes, we have mentioned some of the case studies along with their cause of destruction.

## **TERRORIST GROUP**

IS took control of Palmyra, the Pearl of the Desert in May, 2015.



### **Before-After images of Temple of Bel in the Syrian city of Palmyra**

The ancient city, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, is famed for its well-preserved Graeco-Roman ruins, and the Baalshamin temple, built nearly 2,000 years ago, is one of the city's best-known buildings. The modern city of Palmyra - known locally as Tadmur - is situated in a strategically important area on the road between the Syrian capital, Damascus, and the eastern city of Deir al-Zour.

The Islamic State has destroyed several sites in Palmyra. The militants believe any shrine or statues implying the existence of any other deity are sacrilege and should be destroyed. The Islamic state claimed the responsibility of destruction of two shrines near Palmyra, which they described as "manifestations of polytheism".

Palmyra now, has a symbolic value as Syrian forces backed by Russian air support drove Islamic State out of Palmyra in March, 2016. The loss of Palmyra represents one of the biggest setbacks for the ultra-hardline Islamist group since it declared a caliphate in 2014 across large parts of Syria and Iraq. Palmyra would now become a Launchpad to expand military operations. The site symbolises the beginning of the collapse in the morale of the mercenaries and eventually their defeat.

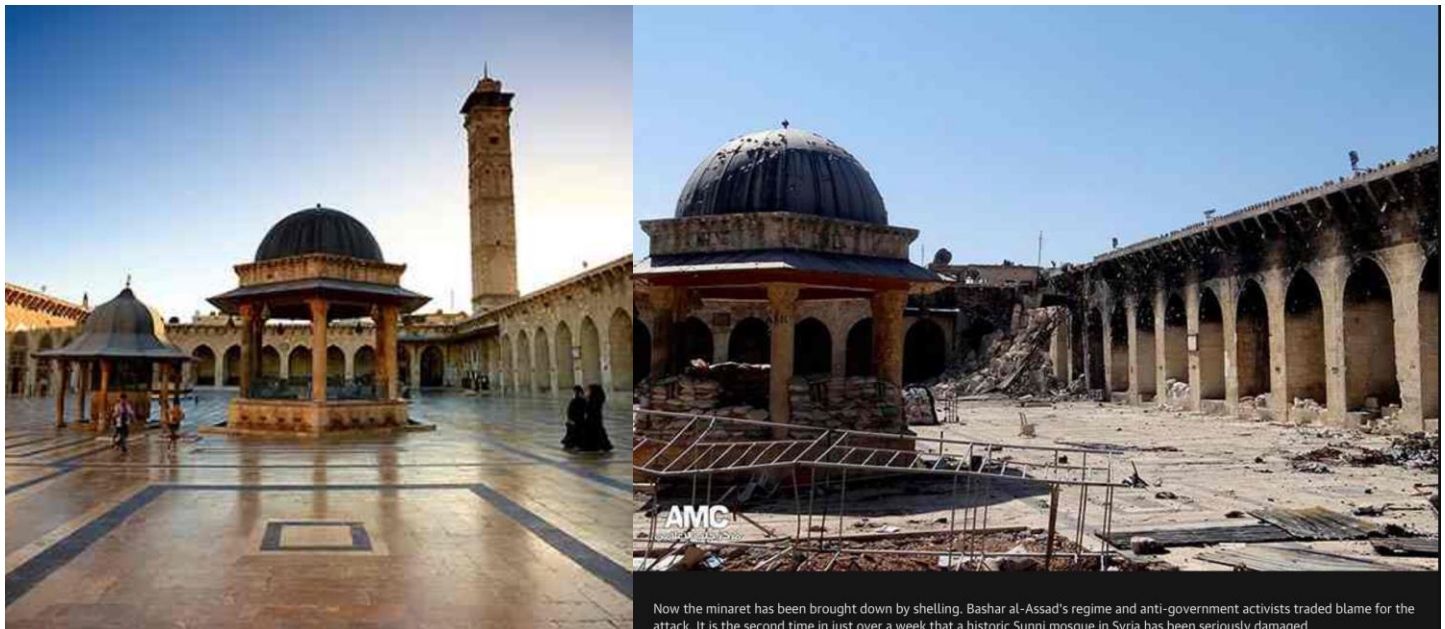
## **SUICIDE BOMBING**

Mecca in the Sunni dominant Saudi Arabia is a city, home to the second most sacred site in Islam. A mosque built in the 7th century by the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be upon Him). Every year millions of Muslim pilgrims from around the world visit the same.

On July 4, 2016, a day before the Eid al-Fitr festival which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Saudi Arabia saw three terrorist attacks. The bombing at the Prophet's (Peace Be upon Him) Mosque in the city of Medina was the third attack to hit the kingdom on Monday, following blasts in the cities of Jeddah and Qatif. Suicide bombers killed four Saudi security forces outside the Mosque.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but the bombings in Qatif and Jeddah were consistent with the modus operandi of Islamic State (ISIS) in its targeting of Shia Muslims and US representatives, as well as Saudi interests. The attacks are seen as an attack on Islam itself.

## ARMED CONFLICT



Civil wars and domestic clashes continue to destroy the thousands of years of historical and cultural accumulation and historical richness.

The Civil war in Syria which started in 2011 has been the reason of destruction of many historical and cultural artefacts along with historical buildings. The historical buildings and mosques suffer a great deal because they are converted into headquarters by the clashing groups.

Great Mosque of Damascus, also called Umayyad Mosque, the earliest surviving stone mosque, built in the 8th century by the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd I. It comprises in its structure a shrine which is honoured by Muslims as well as Christians. Its marble grilles are the earliest examples of the Islamic Architecture. The walls of the mosque were once

covered with more than an acre of mosaics depicting a fanciful landscape thought to be the Qu'rānic paradise, but only fragments survive.

The mosque was damaged by the regime forces of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in 2013. The mosque's minarets have become unusable due to the attacks. The Eastern walls were brought down following heavy tank and rocket fire. The mosque not only became unserviceable due to the damage but many priceless, handwritten Quran disappeared.

Another instance being Saudi Arabia led military campaign against Shiite rebels in Yemen. The Saudis say they want to restore the Yemeni government, a key U.S. ally in the fight against al Qaeda, which was kicked out of the capital by the rebels in 2015. Saudi claims the purpose of the campaign was to "protect Yemen and its people from the aggression of the Houthi militias that are supported by regional powers whose goal is to establish hegemony over Yemen and to make it a base for its influence in the region". The country defends its military intervention in Yemen as being based on a UN resolution authorising the restoration of the internationally recognised government in Sana'a. It also insists that the intervention is necessary to defend its own security.

But the analysts say that Shiite-majority Iran and Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia are locked in a strategic contest for influence across the Middle East.

During the Saudi Arabian-led coalition airstrikes on Yemen, codenamed "Decisive Storm," that was initiated to stop the Houthi forces on March 26, many historical artifacts near the Marib region were destroyed. Also, hand-written manuscripts on the walls of the Ma'rib Dam were destroyed and the National Library of Yemen was wrecked during the armed assaults.

## **NATURAL DISASTER**

Bam is situated in a desert environment on the southern edge of the Iranian high plateau. The origins of Bam can be traced back to the Achaemenid period (6th to 4th centuries BC). Its heyday was from the 7th to 11th centuries, being at the crossroads of important trade routes and known for the production of silk and cotton garments. The existence of life in the oasis was based on the underground irrigation canals, the qanāts, of which Bam has preserved some of the earliest evidence in Iran. Arg-e Bam is the most representative example of a fortified medieval town built in vernacular technique using mud layers (Chineh).

For centuries, Bam had a strategic location on the Silk Roads connecting it to Central Asia in the east, the Persian Gulf in the south, as well as Egypt in the west and it is an example of the interaction of the various influences.

The 2003 earthquake caused the collapse of various sections of the Governor's Quarters and the upper parts of the defence walls. Following the 2003 earthquake, a team of experts coordinated by the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and ICHHTO prepared a Comprehensive Management Plan, 2008-2017. The new urban master plan for the

reconstruction of the City of Bam, prepared in 2004, respects the original street pattern. Conservation and protection of the World Heritage property requires a balanced approach to confer the site its place in the living culture and its contribution to the specific identity of Bam, as well as the values associated with the long and complex history of the city and its associated landscape.

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