

Topic 1: Addressing the Impact of Digital Colonialism and Surveillance on Development and Sovereignty in the MENA Region

General Overview: Digital colonization refers to the use of technology, data, and surveillance, all in the interest of obtaining power. Countries in the MENA region have a history of political tension, unrest, corruption, and colonization. Technology such as data centers, servers, and even everyday-use items such as laptops, computers, and phones, have sparked outrage over rumors of spying through microphones and cameras, stealing data, and more. This could lead to the use of data to sway public opinion in specific regions, to ensure that the public supports whatever regime suits the owners of the technology. This could also lead to a loss of privacy due to surveillance, and therefore increased control through technology, where people do not feel they can make their own decisions freely, or even speak freely. This is why new sectors such as big data and cybersecurity have emerged, with countries in the MENA region desperately needing them, to ensure that public opinion is controlled, data is protected, and privacy is ensured. According to a study by MarketsandMarkets, the Middle East and Africa cybersecurity sector is expected to grow from an estimated USD 22.2 Billion in 2023 to USD 36.2 Billion in 2028.

Topic 2: Addressing the Impact of Colonization and Territorial Disputes on the People of Kashmir and Regional Stability in South Asia.

General Overview:

Kashmir is a region located in South Asia, bordered by India, China, and Pakistan. It is a long-lasting territorial dispute between the three nations, but mostly between Pakistan and India. It is currently split into three regions, administered by India, China, and Pakistan. Conflict and unrest started in 1947 when Britain ended its rule over the Indian subcontinent leaving behind dysfunctional border lines, awkwardly splitting up religions and creating unease. This created disputes mostly in the Jammu and Kashmir region, with each country claiming that the region decided to join it. This led to a Pakistani-Backed invasion of the region attempting to claim control, the invasion failed, and the Indians invaded after that, with conflict arising and numerous invasions taking place. In a UN ceasefire deal, a line of control was established which created a northern Pakistan occupied region, and an Indian occupied southern region, but no final border. China then joined the dispute by invading the Aksai Chin region and taking control. To this day, tensions rise

between the two nations leading to civilian casualties, loss of infrastructure, harmful environmental degradation caused by weapons and bombing, and more. It is important to come up with a suitable solution for the people of Kashmir, and to ensure the de-escalation of tensions and military activity in South Asia.

Topic 3: Responding to the Exploitation of Resources and Colonization in Western Sahara

General Overview:

Western Sahara is a region in the northwest coast of West Africa, and at the edge of North Africa. It is a disputed territory with a history of unrest and colonization. It was claimed by Morocco in 1957, but Spanish troops prevented Morocco from claiming it and united some provinces as “Spanish Sahara” to be under Spanish control. Then Mauritania claimed the province in 1960. Then, further complicating the issue, phosphate deposits were discovered in the northern part of the region, which created economic incentives to claim the land. After years of drought, desertification, exploitation, and colonization, indigenous tribes sprang up in the early 1970s, calling itself the “Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro”. This liberation movement caused Spain to announce its withdrawal from the region. Spain then agreed to the partition of the land to be split between Morocco and Mauritania, despite this contradicting court rulings that were in the favor of the indigenous people, where this agreement did not grant them independence or sovereignty. Morocco controls the northern two thirds of the region (including the phosphate deposits) and Mauritania controls the southern third. This led to resistance from the Polisario front, aiming to liberate it from Morocco and Mauritania rule. When Mauritania agreed to withdraw, this led to Morocco annexing the entire Western Sahara region. Then, a UN referendum agreed that the indigenous Sahrawis would vote on whether they would like to be an independent state until Polisario rule, or under Moroccan rule. Both sides agreed, but Morocco then moved tens of thousands of settlers into the region and insisted that they have voting rights. This led to issues with voting, and the continuation of Morocco expanding its infrastructure in the region. To this day, due to the valuable phosphate deposits and other resources, these countries continue to fight over control to exploit the resources. The exploitation of resources in Western Sahara led to environmental degradation, social instability, and ethical questions. Countries like Morocco exploit fish, phosphate, and even have wind farms in occupied Western Sahara, which is all illegal under international law. To combat this, the origin of resources and whether they are allowed to be exported or not can be tracked by either third party observers such

as UN or NGO workers, or even technological infrastructure. Another way to respond to resource exploitation is the implementation of environmental protection agreements. profits from the exploitation of resources should also be equally split between parties, including the indigenous people of the land, in order to ensure a stable resolution to the conflict while compensating the indigenous people of Western Sahara.