

# 2009 NFL Nationals International Extemp Topic Area Analysis

By Omar Qureshi

## 1: Western and Eastern Europe

This topic area is different than in years past. Generally Western Europe gets its own topic area, and Eastern Europe is more closely linked with the Russia topic area. I can't say that I consider the way that it is formatted this year is a particularly good idea. In any case, this is truly a behemoth of a topic area. Regional sources such as *The Times of London*, *The Guardian Unlimited*, *Der Spiegel*, and *the Scotsman* are all helpful places to go.

It is very important to be attentive to national politics in countries throughout Europe. Great Britain, in particular is in the middle of a wild political storm. With the Member of Parliament spending scandal shaking up public opinion, it is important to look to analyze the specific impacts of the scandal on political parties and political will. Individual national political issues in Europe will be important to the more powerful countries in Western Europe- Germany, Italy, France, and Spain.

Despite how passé it is, it seems as though the national tournament tends to dwell on EU expansion. Here it is a good idea to cover up on the basics- whether or not the EU is at a point where expansion is a good idea. Similarly, be sure to address Eastern European countries like Ukraine and Georgia. These countries have strong movements for EU integration; however they are still facing problems with Russia as well as domestic political opposition.

The fourth of June will bring European and European Council elections. It seems likely that smaller parties will be more successful than in years past. These elections are also important because they give a preliminary indicator of how the EU is likely to mature over the next few years. Pay close attention to the economic agenda being pushed in these elections.

From the perspective of Eastern Europe, it is prudent to note the structures of power domestically. This means analyzing whether or not countries like Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, I think that the tournament will address the progress of Kosovo- domestically and internationally. Serbian nationalism, too, has been a major issue. Serbia is not doing very well economically. I am fairly certain that there will be a focus on the direction Serbia is going to progress in: whether it is economic progress or a continued level of fierce nationalism without political accomplish.

There is another large area that needs to be addressed when discussing Europe: Russia. However, I will address this in the Russia topic area analysis.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. Will Brown's code of conduct legislation salvage the tarnished image of the Labour Party?
2. Can the Saakashvili government avert chaos?
3. Is Turkey making progress towards EU integration?
4. What effect will the recent European elections have on regulatory banking legislation?
5. Can Bosnian Serbs retain autonomy?

## 2. Russia

Russia is stirring up quite a storm in the international political community. Russia has tremendous power in the international order. I expect the questions at nationals to reflect the nature of Russia's power globally. Last year all the rage at nationals was evaluating Medvedev against Putin. This year I think that there will be a slightly different tone when addressing Russian leadership. Look to regional sources like *The Moscow Times*, *RIA Novosti*, and *Pravda*.

First and foremost, make sure to fill your boxes with information on Russian natural gas control as well as the countries that they export the most amount of natural gas to. This information is tremendously significant because the more dependent a country is on Russian natural gas, the more political power Russia wields over that country. This should be the foundation of your analysis of Russian relations with Europe.

Along those same lines, also look for information detailing Russian oil pipelines to Western Europe. Pipelines from Russia that go through Eastern Europe are of special interest. Countries like Ukraine and Kazakhstan have recently had debate about increasing pipeline use fees, potentially making Russia pay more for the transit of its gas. Especially in Ukraine, Russia is pushing its political agenda. Of course, this is the case for quite a few Eastern European countries. Analysis pertaining to the pursuit of Russian interests in the domestic politics in Eastern Europe is very important.

The hottest issue in the eyes of the international community that Russia has been involved in has been Georgia. Continued involvement with Georgia- South Ossetia and Abkhazia- will certainly be an issue reflected in the questions at nationals. Russian human rights atrocities in Chechnya are also likely to be contained within this round.

In addition to western and eastern Europe, Russia's involvement in international treaties and organizations are also important. Russia's position in the WTO talks to be held in St. Petersburg will be of tremendous importance. Also, look to Russia's position towards current and potential NATO allies. Russian involvement will also be necessary if there is to be any progress made on the successor treaty to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which is soon set to expire.

While it is still important to compare and contrast Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin, it is more important to consider the state of Russia as a whole. Particularly, develop thoughts on whether or not the opposition parties in Russia can be considered legitimate threats. Also analyze the domestic economic situation. A large part of the Russian budget is derived from natural gas and oil- see how the money is being spent and how that is leading to popular support or a lack thereof.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. How will Putin's recent talks with Tymoshenko shape Ukrainian politics?
2. Can Russia avoid the global economic turn down?
3. What's next for Russia in Georgia?
4. Does a legitimate opposition exist in Russia?
5. Has Medvedev brought legitimate legal reform to Russia?

### 3. Africa

This topic area is simultaneously simple and brilliant. Africa is one of the greatest challenges that the world faces. It is usually a very good round at nationals because it allows for analysis of truly perplexing problems. This past year has posed many challenges- new and old within the troubled continent. There is a lot of stuff to cover here- luckily, you will probably already have a lot of general information about warfare and disease within this trouble continent. Look to *allafrica.org* for regional news sources.

To begin, it is prudent to address issues of warfare and genocide within Africa. Sudan, Somalia, and Nigeria each have violent conflicts that I believe will be addressed by the questions at nationals. On Sudan, be sure to pay close attention to the conflict in the south which is escalating rapidly. Bear in mind that questions of this sort at nationals are often quite nuanced in that they focus on specific groups of actors. An example of this would be a question about Somalia with relation to Eritrean troops. I mean to say that you should expect the questions about genocide and war to pay particular attention to specific people, groups, or nongovernmental organizations.

Political problems, too, will most certainly make their way into the questions at nationals. The Jacob Zuma government in South Africa has a plethora of challenges to face- from political opposition, crime, and the economy. Prepare to address political questions in Egypt, Congo, Kenya, and Niger. Robert Mugabe and Zimbabwe will most certainly make an appearance in this round. Also be sure to keep your African Union file up to date as questions about its usefulness have popped up in the news recently.

Invariably the two biggest issues in the news recently have been rampant disease and Somali pirates. Water shortage and sanitation have been particularly destructive throughout the continent. Quality and not quantity is very important when dealing with disease, malnutrition, water problems, and piracy. Search for thoughtful pieces of evidence with studies by researchers and opinions by top thinkers on how to best tackle these problems. General pieces of information from the *LA Times* aren't particularly helpful here. There is a tremendous amount of literature available on the topics in this paragraph. Unfortunately, a good chunk of it is quite useless to you and your boxes.

#### *Practice Questions:*

1. Have Shabab militants made extended conflict inevitable in Somalia?
2. Will Jacob Zuma effectively tackle the challenge of crime in South Africa?
3. Will the MDC continue to be a viable force in Zimbabwe?
4. How can clean water be distributed in Sub Saharan Africa?
5. Who is to blame for recent violence in southern Sudan?

#### 4. The World: Challenges and Opportunities

This is without question my bet for the final round at nationals- though it is plausible that the final round will be the terrorism round. Though this topic area is better than last year's (just The World), it still isn't particularly fascinating. In any case, the words "challenges" and "opportunities" are quite helpful in narrowing down what is going to be contained. To a large extent the issues you cover in this topic area will also be a part of your preparation for all the other rounds of the tournament.

I definitely think that a question about the state of the global economy will be involved with this round. Needless to say, I would hope that the finalists (assuming my prediction is correct) are sure that they can be engaging with an economics topic before drawing it. I also expect there to be questions about the coming expiration of the Kyoto Protocol and the writing of its successor treaty. Read up on the hindrances involved with global cooperation on an environmental treaty.

Nuclear non-proliferation is also a major issue to read up on for this round. Really look to sink into those deeply analytical journal articles for thoughts on a way to draft up a successor treaty to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Really go in for quality analysis here. A speech about nuclear non proliferation demands really thoughtful analysis. It is difficult for judges to swallow overly ambitious rhetoric on the issue of nuclear non proliferation. When analyzing nuclear weapons you should really consider the gravity of the topic at hand. It will allow you to give deft yet cautious analysis.

Global development is simultaneously a challenge and an opportunity for the world. I strongly believe that questions on international development organizations will be present at nationals. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund are two major organizations associated with development. Polish up on their current flaws as well as the potential benefit that these organizations can have. The United Nations is another group to think about in on the issue of global development. As Aaron Mattis and I can both attest to, the chances for a UN Human Rights question in the national final round is pretty high.

Another general area I think will be encompassed under this topic will be what I call global tragedies. AIDS, malnutrition, malaria, water, poverty, and famine are all major global issues. These are challenges that face a disturbingly large part of the global population. Be attentive to issues covered by the *International Crisis Group* and *Human Rights Watch*. The plight of the underdeveloped world is a very difficult topic area to tackle. When thinking about analysis for these topics be bold and take a stand. Make sure you read think tanks and expert opinions here.

##### *Practice Questions:*

1. Is the World Bank an effective organization in alleviating poverty?
2. Is the United Nations doing enough to combat AIDS globally?
3. Can the international community come to an agreement on a successor treaty to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty?
4. Has the WTO fallen out of significance?
5. Can the world go green?

## 5. China, Taiwan, Japan, and the Koreans

In my opinion, this is a very well crafted topic area. It is pertinent, however, it is not too big or too small. Be sure to look at regional resources here. I'll give you a list of potentially helpful ones. *Yomiuri Shimbun, the Far Eastern Economic Review, the Japan Times, Hong Kong Standard, South China Morning Post, Chosun Ilbo, and Taipei Times.*

China's economic growth tends to always be a hot issue at nationals. Specific information concerning economic development and sustainability is an issue to be attentive towards. Also brush up on the economic relationship of China with Australia as it has been a very hot topic recently. Be very attentive to the way that the Chinese economic system is set up. Extempers cannot hope to just assume that the function of China's economy is identical to western free market economies. Find background in encyclopedias and information databases.

In terms of China it is also important to observe the way in which they interact with Tibet and Taiwan. On the issue of Tibet, China is particularly strict and aggressive. The government of China frequently denies basic human and political rights in Tibet. Tibet is a region that is struggling for solidarity. Taiwan on the other hand is a thriving territory. However, China has placed a ceiling on its expansion by attempting to get countries to isolate Taiwan. Both regions are of tremendous significance when analyzing China. Independently, extempers should consider the domestic, political situation in Taiwan; especially the recent shift to more moderate demands from China.

Japan is likely everything extempers would expect it to be: politics and the economy. Focusing on these areas will be very beneficial for the tournament. While you should be meticulous in your research, on Japan don't bend over backwards to find evidence on ridiculous issues for the country. For instance, you can probably skip over the article about the electrical grid. South Korea is much the same. Just patrol the regional news sources and be attentive to recurring issues.

It seems that North Korea always jumps into the headlines during the time surrounding the NFL national tournament. This year is no different. Unlike Japan and South Korea, you should be really attentive to all sorts of issues about North Korea. This is because the tight media restrictions in North Korea prevent a lot of information from coming out- so the stuff that does come out is tremendously important. Any news about food shortages and decreasing quality of life is very important. A question on North Korea should be approached with the help of a lot of think tanks and not just arbitrary newspaper reports.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. How can social class discrimination better be combated in Japan?
2. Can political opposition gain political preeminence over the old political dynasties?
3. Are Chinese ties with Taiwan warming?
4. Is North Korea a legitimate nuclear threat to the west?
5. Will the Chinese economy be able to weather the global recession?

## **6. US Foreign Policy: The Foreign Perspective**

Well this topic area is going to be fun. For the past 6 years international extempers could just give different variations on the same narrative in this round: a lot of the international community just didn't like Bush. With the election of Obama there is an enormous complication both in and out of extemp speeches. There is a tremendous amount of uncertainty as to what precisely Obama will bring to US foreign policy. This is reflected in the foreign perspective of US foreign policy. I cannot stress the importance of using think tanks and international sources enough within this topic area.

Literally the whole world is testable under this topic. Resultant from this is a lot of information to cover. A wise extemper would prepare for this round by looking for information on foreign opinion of USFP while researching all the other topic areas. Doing this will increase efficiency tremendously. Be wise in the perspectives you look at. For example, a question on a US missile defense system in the Czech Republic (a big issue last year) would require analysis of what the people want in the form of percentages. However, popular support is not enough. Look to what specific political actors are saying. Consider the question on a variety of levels relevant to the opinion of a country- economic, political, popular support, strategic defense, and benefits of support.

In light of Obama's recent speech at Cairo University- considered to be his Middle East address- prepared extempers should really be attentive towards the Middle East and the Muslim world under this topic area. I expect a good part of the rounds questions to come from the Middle East and Muslim world. It is an issue that is tremendously relevant, especially because of the media coverage surrounding the Obama speech. Also, I would spend a good time dealing with leftist countries in Central and South America.

This topic area can be overwhelming if you let it be. A good strategy to prevent this from being the case is watching Secretary of State Hillary Clinton like a hawk. The places she travels and the countries she addresses in her press briefings are all likely to be reflected in the questions at nationals. This topic area draws upon all the other topic areas and questions you on foreign perspectives. As a result, if you prepare well for the other rounds at nationals, this round will just require a bit more research.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. Will Syrian ties with the US warm?
2. Has Colombia become disenfranchised by the Obama administration?
3. Will the United States hinder the development of a successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol?
4. Has the US done enough to support Kosovo?
5. Is AFRICOM helpful to African states?

## 7. Central and South America

Again, I quite like this topic area. It is a big topic area, but it is by no means unmanageable. I have never been very successful in finding many country specific sources for Central and South America- thought there do exist some. However, one think tank that I find tremendously useful is *the Upside Down World*. It is a fantastic source that really gets into the meat of issues across Central and South America as well as Mexico and the Caribbean.

One thing that is fascinating about Central and South America is the similarity between countries. Leftist countries like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua all have very charismatic leaders. They operate in similar ways and are in close dialogue with one another. There is a great deal of solidarity between these countries as they identify with each other. For right leaning countries there is a relatively favorable view of the United States. It is important not to get into the habit of making generalizations in extemp, but when it comes to this topic area it is important to keep in mind whether the country leans left or right (if you can make a distinction that is).

Research on charismatic leaders like Hugo Chavez, Lula De Silva, Evo Morales, and Daniel Ortega is very important. All of these high profile leaders have been in the news recently, and being able to give a deep analysis on Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, and Nicaragua necessitates a thorough understanding of these men and their policies. Similarly, look to the Kirchner family in Argentina. Really look to the background of the aforementioned leaders. Observe the context in which they are able to retain power as well as their ascent to power.

It is also a good idea to look to the natural resources within these countries. For example, oil in Venezuela and sugarcane in Brazil are tremendously important to the ways in which those countries function economically. When analyzing these questions at nationals really take a good look into the way that the countries are structured.

I believe that a considerable amount of the questions at nationals under this topic area will address individual national political questions. Approach these questions with a realization that some background built into your points is quite necessary. People who do not study South America often have a skewed idea of what happens in a country that is labeled as "leftist." Being explicitly clear about what is happening in these countries is very important.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. Is Hugo Chavez losing domestic support?
2. Is Lula De Silva bringing adequate social reform to Brazil?
3. Will the center left coalition be able to retain control in the upcoming Chilean election?
4. Can Kirchner salvage her image?
5. Is Colombia headed towards autocracy?

## 8. India, Pakistan, and SE Asia

So if this topic area is correct there will be no questions on Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, or Nepal (to name a few). I hope that this isn't the case. I would like to assume that the Indian subcontinent is included within this topic area. This is a ridiculously titled topic area and I think it would be very unfair to ask a question specifically about any of the aforementioned countries because they are not encompassed within this round- or in any round throughout this tournament. As you can see, I am very displeased with the way that this topic area is titled. Unfortunately, nationals isn't always fair so be sure to prepare for those types of questions. Look to *The Times of India* and the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*.

I believe that there will be quite a few questions on Pakistan (and potentially Afghanistan). Pakistan's stability is rapidly deteriorating. Waziristan, Baluchistan and Swat are all regions to be particularly attentive to when addressing the security problems in Pakistan. On top of security concerns, the current Pakistani government is weakening by the day. In preparation for this round of nationals really look to learn about the plethora of problems facing this troubled country. For Afghanistan, what will likely be questioned is the usual blend of terrorism, poor governance, and drugs.

Questions on India will likely be economic and political in nature. Look for regional sources to explain domestic problems in more depth. Despite its powerful technology sector, India is still very much an underdeveloped country- with problems ranging from sanitation to the remnants of the caste system. Be sure to recognize this in your analysis of India. Assuming that Nepal is going to be in question under this area, I would look to research a bit on what kind of political problems are occurring with the Maoists. Even though the topic area doesn't make any mention of a region including Nepal, I still think that it is wise to cover the country's political problem.

The term Southeast Asia is flexible, however, by all definitions I have read there is no mention of Sri Lanka-which is a bit problematic to me given the government's recent defeat of the Tamil Tigers. Again, I think that Sri Lanka will be testable. Other than that, my recommendation when looking towards Southeast Asia is to be attentive to political and humanitarian problems. Don't try to overextend yourself here. Obviously all the Southeast Asian countries have many problems, but for the most part just look towards the political and humanitarian ones.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. How can the Pakistani government better control the violence in the Swat region?
2. Will Thailand sink back into political conflict?
3. Is the Malaysian government becoming more progressive?
4. What does the recent parliamentary victory of the Indian congress party mean for India?
5. Is East Timor progressing towards stability?



## 9. The Problem of International Terrorism

Though terrorism is so 2004, it is a very interesting new topic area for the NFL national tournament. I think that this is going to make for a very competitive round. As a result, I really hope that this round isn't used until late at nationals as I think that it will really bring out the best in extempers fighting for a spot in the final round(s) of the tournament. Nothing even similar to this topic area existed in any of my campaigns through the national tournament, so my ideas on what to look for might be a little off.

First of all, make sure that your analysis in this topic area comes from major think tanks and journals. Terrorism is a global subject (as the title of the round recognizes) and ought to be analyzed by looking towards in depth studies conducted by the top security and political scientist researchers in the world. *The Washington Quarterly*, *the Brookings Institution*, and the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* are all very good places to begin research. On a similar note, look towards international affairs journals published by elite universities throughout the US. I know that Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, Yale, and Brown all offer very prestigious journals.

To begin with, I would place a lot of focus on looking at specific terrorist organizations. Don't just restrict yourself to Al Qaeda and the like. Terrorism is present in a variety of places by many different organizations. Be sure not to overlook international drug cartels- considered by many to be responsible for a lot of organized terrorism throughout the world. These terrorist groups exist across Europe as well as South America. Many would even consider revolutionary and separatist movements like the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka to be terror organizations. Though I passionately hate this phrase- "think outside the box" when researching international terror organizations.

Another area to focus on is aggressive measures of counterterrorism. The potential transit of nuclear weapons is a tremendous threat to the global community. Preventing terrorist organizations from getting their hands on a nuclear weapon is a very big concern. Along these same lines is the transit of biological and toxic weapons. Try to find thoughtful ways to limit the potential for these weapons to be proliferated. These issues will apply to a whole host of terrorist organizations.

It is also important to bear in mind the way that terrorist organizations are structured in terms of where they recruit and how they retain power. Keeping a running knowledge of this allows for a better means of explaining how to take these organizations down. When giving these speeches explain the specific threat that the terrorist organization you are addressing poses to the world.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. What terrorist organization poses the greatest threat to the world?
2. What can be done to prevent the acquisition of biological and toxic weapons by terrorist organizations?
3. How is Al Qaeda maintaining its power?
4. How can drug related terrorism be decreased in South America?
5. How safe is the world from nuclear terrorism?

## 10. The World Economy

This is a very necessary topic. Though I am glad that it is used year after year, this is often a round where extempers fumble. Not only does it ask for economic analysis, it asks for international economics- which is more complicated for a speech. Naturally, it is important to look at financial newspapers and reviews for help analyzing pressing economic issues in the world. *The Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg*, *the Financial Times*, *the Economist*, and *the Australian Financial Review* are all great resources for this topic area.

First and foremost, brush up on basic economics before jumping into this topic area. Extempers often face huge hurdles in that it is very difficult for them to clearly explain the economic significance of a policy or an exchange to a judge. Look up the basics on imports and exports as well as the nature of international banking (the Wikipedia pages will do) to gain a solid mental footing on international economics. In fact, if you come across a tough banking article really make sure you are comfortable explaining its content in a way that is understandable to the lay man. I cannot emphasize the importance of doing this enough.

As per the issues themselves, let's just put it this way- there are a lot of things to cover. A good place to start is with the IMF, WTO, and World Bank. These organizations encompass free trade and economic development, so it is natural that there will be questions about them. Questions on how to reform these institutions will certainly be an issue reflected in the questions at nationals. I would also spend time researching international banks and addressing credit and liquidity issues as they are the largest problem facing the world economy today.

I also expect a good percentage of the questions in this round to be about the externalities of economic policies. Look to groups of countries or people being harmed by international economic policies. Observe why harm is taking place and to what countries are benefitted by the policy employed. The creation of social inequality due to economic policies is a recurring theme in international economics. On a similar note, environmental harms resultant from economic policies is perfect material for a few questions at nationals.

On a final note, try to find ways to think of strategies to make a question about international economics engaging. Every extemper has a different way of doing this; however in a round about economics this is particularly important.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. Is the World Trade Organization losing its relevance?
2. How can the ECB recover?
3. Is the IMF still significant?
4. What impact will Russia's recent economic downturn have on regional economies?
5. What can be done to increase liquidity among Southeast Asian countries?

## 11. Science, Technology, and the Environment

Oh boy. Last year the topic area was just about the environment. I have no idea why science and technology is included in this round. This is an awful topic area because science and technology are thrown in. I find this topic area to be awful. *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* is the only place I know that gives relevant scientific analysis with reference to the international community.

There are a lot of things to cover under the environment. First and foremost, the drafting of a successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol is something that every extemper must have in their boxes. Be attentive to the countries that are hindrances to the development of international agreement on the reduction of dangerous emissions. Take note of what a future treaty must take into account to avoid the implementation problems of the Kyoto Protocol. Be very meticulous in your study of unifying the world under the mission of reducing emissions. I imagine that a large part of this topic area will have to do with developing a long term sustainable solution to global warming.

The environment is much more than just global warming however. You should take this topic area to include a plethora of issues from pollution and its impact on usable water to harm to animals. I would just suggest that you look through scientific magazines for this type of information. Be very clear on how you explain problems and solutions in your speeches though. It is often very difficult for a judge to swallow bits of scientific analysis when addressing environmental problems.

I doubt that the science and technology portion of this round will be anything particularly invasive. Look to the stuff reflected in the news headlines of *the New York Times*, *the Christian Science Monitor*, and *the Times of London*. From those headlines I would recommend making a list of topics you are unsure about and engaging in more specific research. I would also look to diseases throughout the world as they might be testable under science. Again, this round hasn't existed in any of my trips to the national tournament, so I can't say specifically what I think will be covered.

### *Practice Question:*

1. How can carbon markets make both ecological and economic sense?
2. What is the biggest hindrance to a new global environmental protocol?
3. What can be learned from the Kyoto Protocol?
4. How can AIDS medication be more effectively distributed in Africa?
5. Has the threat of the Swine Flu passed?

## 12. Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean

This topic area looks awfully dull. With the exception of Mexico there really hasn't been any level of true excitement in Canada or the Caribbean. Luckily there are a lot of resources to look to for a speech about Canada and Mexico given their proximity to the US (and because Canada is an English speaking country). Every major city in Canada has a reasonably good newspaper to look to. *The Montreal Gazette* and the *Toronto Star* are both really good newspapers.

Mexico is facing a whole host of large problems. First and foremost is the burgeoning drug trade in the region. On top of the drug trade is violence that is undermining the security structure of the country as a whole. Rampant corruption is also a result of drug cartels. All of these problems stem out of the drug trade. Make sure to spend a good chunk of time researching and understanding the nature of the drug trade and all of the problems that it creates for the country. Being able to critically analyze drug cartels is an enormous asset going into the national tournament. Felipe Calderon is facing strong opposition because- among other factors- his inability to deal with drug cartels. Also bear in mind that Zapatista groups are calling for autonomy in the southernmost province of Mexico, Chiapas.

I believe that the questions on Canada will be about the political and economic situation. Be attentive to the fact that Canada is doing quite well economically, in spite of what is happening throughout the rest of the world. Moreover, Canadian politics should be approached in a way similar to the way that an extemper would approach American politics. For the most part the same concerns over crime, welfare, and the shifting role of the government are atop the concerns for the country of Canada.

Haiti and Cuba will be big issues when referring to the Caribbean. Haiti faces perpetual problems because of riots and organized crime. Cuba is nearing a major transition period, so I am sure that there will be a question or two about it at nationals. For the rest of the Caribbean, just look to major political issues as it is unrealistic to go any deeper than that.

### *Practice Questions:*

1. How can drug violence in Mexico be reduced?
2. Should Chiapas be granted autonomy?
3. How can Canada reduce organized crime?
4. Will a post-Castro Cuba be a legitimate democracy?
5. Is Haiti becoming a more stable country?

### 13. The Middle East

The Middle East is my favorite topic area at the national tournament. Extempers always seem to be well versed on the pressing issues within this very exciting topic area. It really needs no introduction. There are a lot of great sources to look into. Look towards the *Middle East Times*, *the Tehran Times*, *the Middle Eastern Review of International Affairs*, *the Jerusalem Post*, and *Haaretz* for information.

Obama's recent speech to the Muslim world has some significance to the Middle East in relation to the United States. I mean this in terms of Middle Eastern governments' responsiveness to diplomatic efforts by the west. Look to the views of individual countries' governments, and see if they are more likely to be open to dialogue and problem resolution as a result of Obama taking office. Though you might not get a question specifically on this, it will be helpful for your analysis.

It is also very important to look towards Israel. Israeli sentiment towards the United States doesn't appear to be very positive. Similarly with the election of Netanyahu, look to the more defensive measures employed by Israel and the impact that will have on relations with regional actors- namely Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. Analyzing the aforementioned countries with relation to Israel will be beneficial for a number of questions.

Naturally, brush up on your Iraq file. Many extempers have a ton of information on Iraq. I would strongly recommend that you get rid of redundant information as well as information from weaker sources. Find solid journal and think tank articles to fill your Iraq file. It is a country that demands nuanced analysis that simply isn't accessible from a *USA Today* article from April. Iran is another country to be wary about. Be very precise about what kind of sources you have in your boxes on this topic. Make sure that you don't have a bundle of useless sources to slow down your preparation.

Social justice is another concern to be aware of when addressing the Middle East. The plight of women and religious minorities is a problem in quite a few Middle Eastern countries. These are issues that often go unaddressed in extemp boxes amid all the other political problems. However, an awareness of social injustice allows for analysis to be more attentive to the realities of many Middle Eastern countries.

#### *Practice Questions:*

1. Will the opposition succeed in Iran's presidential election?
2. What does Netanyahu mean for Israeli-Syrian relations?
3. Is Hezbollah still the dominant military presence in Lebanon?
4. Is Saudi Arabia taking legitimate steps in guaranteeing women's rights?
5. Can the UAE economy survive the current economic crisis?