

11.3 The Middle East, as we use the term in this lesson, is the region stretching from Egypt in the west to Iran in the east and from Turkey in the north to the Arabian Peninsula in the south. Although the majority of people in the region today are Muslims, there are also Christian communities and the mostly Jewish nation of Israel.



>> These Iraqi women wear the modified hejab covering their hair. Hejab is required by law in Iran and Saudi Arabia, but it has been freely adopted by many Muslim women worldwide as a sign of their faith.

 **Interactive Flipped Video**

The Modern Middle East Takes Shape

The Challenges of Diversity

As a world crossroads since ancient times, the Middle East is home to many ethnic groups. Arabs are a majority in some countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. In other countries, the majority populations are non-Arab Muslims, such as the Turks of Turkey and the Persians of Iran.

Mandates Gain Independence At the end of World War I, the Treaty of Versailles and other agreements parceled out many of the lands once dominated by the defeated Central Powers. Britain and France were given mandates over large parts of the Middle East.

Under the mandate system in the Middle East, territories taken from the defeated Ottoman empire were administered, or run, by Europeans. Britain, for example, controlled the Palestine mandate and three provinces of the old Ottoman empire that were joined together into modern-day Iraq. The stated goal of the mandate system was to move the mandates gradually toward independence.

From the outset, Arabs resisted the mandates. In British-ruled Palestine, tensions also grew between Arab and Jewish residents. In the Balfour Declaration, Britain had supported a Jewish national

>> Objectives

Analyze the development of modern nations in the Middle East.

Describe the founding of Israel and the impact of the Arab rejection of Israel.

Understand how oil has affected nations of the Middle East.

Examine the impact of Islam on government, law, and the lives of women.

Define the “Arab Spring.”

>> Key Terms

kibbutz
Golda Meir
Suez Canal
Gamal Abdel Nasser
Anwar Sadat
Ruhollah Khomeini
theocracy
secular
hejab

home in part of the Palestine mandate, while Arabs in the region demanded self-rule. During the 1930s, independence movements and nationalist calls for an end to European control grew. Following World War II, the former mandates became the independent countries of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. The Palestine mandate was partitioned into Arab areas and Israel.

Religious and Ethnic Divisions The borders of the new nations were artificially drawn and lumped together diverse ethnic and religious communities. Some ethnic minorities demanded self-rule, or even independence.

Different religious sects, or groups loyal to their own set of beliefs, further divided the new nations. Many countries were home to both Shiite and Sunni Muslims, along with Alawites, Druze, different Christian sects, and Jews. In Iraq and Bahrain, for example, the Shiite majority was ruled by the Sunni minority. Sectarian violence, or conflict based on religious loyalties, posed challenges to unity. Many nations like Syria and Lebanon had diverse groups, including Muslim and Christian Arabs, Assyrians, Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds.

Kurdish Nationalism The Kurds are an ethnic group with their own language and culture. They form

important minorities in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. Kurdish nationalists have long called for an independent homeland. In Turkey, Kurdish rebels resisted government efforts to suppress their culture. In Iraq, a Kurdish uprising in 1991 was brutally suppressed. Today, Kurds in Iraq have much autonomy, but many Kurds still want their own state.

? EXPRESS PROBLEMS CLEARLY What is the main cause of ethnic and sectarian violence in the Middle East?

The Founding of Israel

As early as the 1880s, Jews had begun actively organizing and advocating for the re-establishment of a home in their ancient homeland. The horrors of the Holocaust created strong worldwide support for a Jewish state. Many Jews, including Holocaust survivors, migrated to the Palestine Mandate after World War II.

In 1947, the UN drew up a plan to divide, or partition, the Palestine mandate between the Arabs and Jews. The plan called for the division of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. The UN General Assembly voted to adopt the plan. While the Jews accepted partition, Arabs rejected the partition plan. They argued that



>> Analyze Maps This map shows the countries of the modern Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iran are three of the world's largest oil-producing countries. Why might control of the Strait of Hormuz be important?

Interactive Map

Palestine was one of the lands that had been promised to them by the British in return for Arab support in World War I.

Arabs and Israelis in Conflict In 1948, when Britain withdrew from the Palestine mandate, Jews proclaimed the independent State of Israel. Neighboring Arab nations launched the first of several wars against Israel, but were defeated.

As a result of these wars, Israel gained control of more territory. After the 1948 war, Jordan took control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, while Egypt took the Gaza Strip. Today, Palestinian Arabs do not have an independent state, but a series of negotiations over the years has resulted in peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and the creation of an autonomous Palestinian authority within Israeli-controlled territories.

The 1948 Arab-Israeli war created a huge refugee problem. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled their homes in Israeli territory. The UN housed them in temporary camps in nearby countries, where they remained for decades. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees expelled from Arab lands fled to Israel.

The Growth of Israel After the 1948 war, Israel developed rapidly. A skilled workforce set up businesses. Kibbutzim produced crops for export. A **kibbutz** (kih BOOTS) is a collective farm.

In 1950, Israel passed a law called the right of return, granting every Jew the right to live in Israel and become an Israeli citizen. This was a response to the Holocaust when countries closed their doors to Jews fleeing the Nazis. This law established Israel as a safe haven for the Jewish people. Jews from around the world migrated to Israel. They joined native Israelis who had struggled to win independence.

An early leader was **Golda Meir**, who had emigrated from Russia to the United States as a child. In the 1920s, she moved to a kibbutz in Palestine and later joined the Jewish independence movement. In 1969, she became Israel's first woman prime minister.


? INFER Why did people around the world support a Jewish homeland in Palestine?

New Nations in the Middle East

After independence, Middle Eastern nations set out to build strong modern economies. Only a handful of nations in the region had rich oil reserves. Most Middle



>> Israeli flags fly in New York City to celebrate the birth of Israel, which became an independent state on May 14, 1948. **Explain** Why was an Arab state not established as well?

 **Interactive Gallery**



>> Palestinian women and children flee to Arab-held territories in June 1948. Refugee camps were set up to accept those who could not find shelter. **Recall** How long did some Palestinian refugees live in the refugee camps?



>> This photograph shows members of the royal family of Saudi Arabia, one of the most oil-rich nations on Earth. Most power remains with the king and royal family, but tribal sheikhs also have influence. **Recall** Which other Middle Eastern state has a hereditary monarchy? Which two states have multiparty systems?



>> Gamal Abdel Nasser (left) led Egypt from 1952 until 1970. Here, he and the president of Syria celebrate the union of their countries to form the United Arab Republic in 1958. This Pan-Arab experiment lasted only three years. **Hypothesize** Why is Egypt such an important country in the Middle East?

Eastern nations were poor, and each faced its own set of challenges.

In some countries, nationalist military leaders seized power. They wanted to promote economic growth and end foreign influence, but they were also authoritarian rulers who suppressed critics, often brutally. Some countries, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, had hereditary monarchs. Only Israel and Turkey had stable multiparty systems.

Egypt's Leadership in the Arab World Egypt is the most populous nation in the Arab world. Since most of Egypt is desert, its population is crammed into the narrow Nile River valley.

Egypt controls the **Suez Canal**, the vital waterway that provides the shortest sea route between Europe and Asia. Egypt also shares a border with Israel.

In 1952, **Gamal Abdel Nasser** seized power in Egypt. Determined to modernize Egypt and end Western domination, Nasser soon nationalized the Suez Canal, ending British and French control. Nasser's Arab nationalism made him popular in the Arab world. He led two unsuccessful wars against Israel. Egypt relied on Soviet aid during the Cold War.

In 1979, Nasser's successor, **Anwar Sadat**, reduced ties with the Soviet Union and sought aid from the United States. He also became the first Arab leader to make peace with Israel. In exchange for peace, Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. Sadat was assassinated by Islamist extremists in 1981. Hosni Mubarak took over and cracked down hard on extremists, jailing even moderate critics.

The Arab Spring and Its Impact In 2011, popular unrest swept across the Middle East, launching pro-democracy movements, known as the Arab Spring. Frustration with corrupt and dictatorial governments, along with high unemployment, fed demands for change. The Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia, spread to Egypt and other nations. During the Arab Spring, massive street protests forced Egypt's Hosni Mubarak to step down after 30 years in office.

The "Arab Spring" took different paths in different nations. Some governments suppressed the protests. Other countries, such as Egypt, held elections. Egyptians went to the polls with great hopes in 2012. An Islamist leader, Mohammed Morsi, was elected president. Within a year, however, he was ousted by the Egyptian military after mass protests erupted against his government. New elections are scheduled for 2014.

The results of the Arab Spring also varied from country to country. In Tunisia, Islamist and **secular**, or nonreligious, parties formed a coalition to work together for democratic reform. Hopes for democratic

reforms, however, faced an uncertain future in other nations. In Egypt, any new leader will face severe social and economic problems as well the deep divide and ongoing conflict between Islamists and secularists.

Elsewhere, similar political, religious, and other divisions posed challenges. In Syria, pro-democracy protests pitched Syria into a horrendous civil war. Many people grew disillusioned with the "Arab Spring," which had not brought promised changes. Others argued that change would take time.

An Islamic Revolution in Iran Because of its vast oil fields, Iran was a focus of Cold War rivalries. Its ruler, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, favored the West but faced nationalist critics at home, led by Mohammad Mosaddeq (MAW sah dek). After Mosaddeq was elected prime minister in 1951, he nationalized the foreign-owned oil industry. The shah, with U.S. help, ousted Mosaddeq and returned the oil industry to Western control. This move outraged many Iranians.

Although the shah modernized industry, redistributed land to peasants, and gave new rights to women, opposition to his rule grew, especially among the Islamic clergy. In response, the government brutally silenced critics.

The shah's foes rallied behind Ayatollah **Ruhollah Khomeini** (ROO hoh lah koh MAY nee). The Ayatollah, a religious leader, condemned Western influences and accused the shah of violating Islamic law. In 1979, massive protests drove the shah from power. Khomeini and his supporters proclaimed the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The new government was a **theocracy**, or government by religious leaders. The Iranian Revolution introduced strict Islamic law. Like the shah, the new leaders silenced critics. In 1979, Islamists seized the American embassy in the capital and held 52 hostages for more than a year.

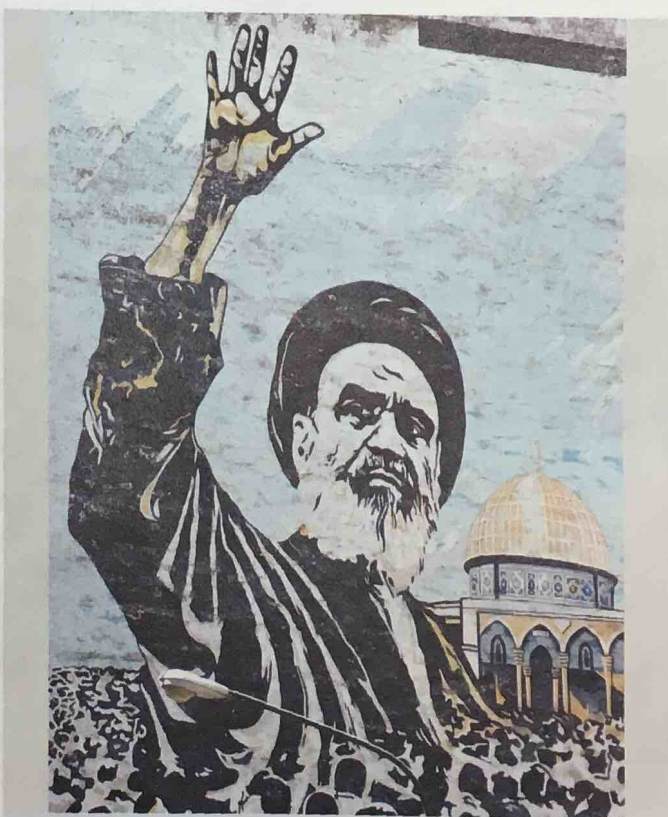
The new Islamic republic soon faced a long, bloody war with its neighbor Iraq, and tense relations with the West. The United States accused Iran of backing terrorists. Along with its allies, the United States imposed harsh economic sanctions to keep Iran from developing nuclear weapons. In 2013, Iranians elected a self-proclaimed moderate, Hassan Rouhani, as president.

Hopes rose for an easing of tensions between Iran and the West. At home, however, Rouhani faced an economy hurt by years of economic sanctions and deep political divisions between hardliners and reformists.

Modern Turkey Once the heart of the Ottoman empire, Turkey became a republic in the 1920s under Ataturk. It has the third-largest population in the Middle East after



>> Women played an important role in the Arab Spring movement. This massive demonstration took place in Cairo on July 8, 2011. **Hypothesize** What motivated women to participate in the Arab Spring movement?



>> Ayatollah Khomeini was Iran's ultimate political and religious authority for 10 years after the Iranian Revolution. Khomeini, who died in 1989, is still revered in Iran. This mural is in Tehran.

Egypt and Iran. Although it is a Muslim country, most of its people are Turks, not Arabs. Turkey commands a strategic location, straddling Europe and Asia, and has served as a link between Europe and the Middle East. Turkey applied to join the European Union, but some EU members demanded that it make economic and other reforms. Turkey also sought closer ties with its Middle Eastern neighbors.

Although the military intervened in the past, today Turkey is a multiparty democracy with a market economy. Clashes erupted in 2013, however, that pitted the moderate Islamist government against protesters who opposed the growing authoritarianism of the government. The clashes reflected a divide between supporters of the older secularist ideology of Ataturk and those supporting the more Islamist-oriented policies of the government.

? CATEGORIZE What types of governments are most common in the Middle East?

The Importance of Oil in the Middle East

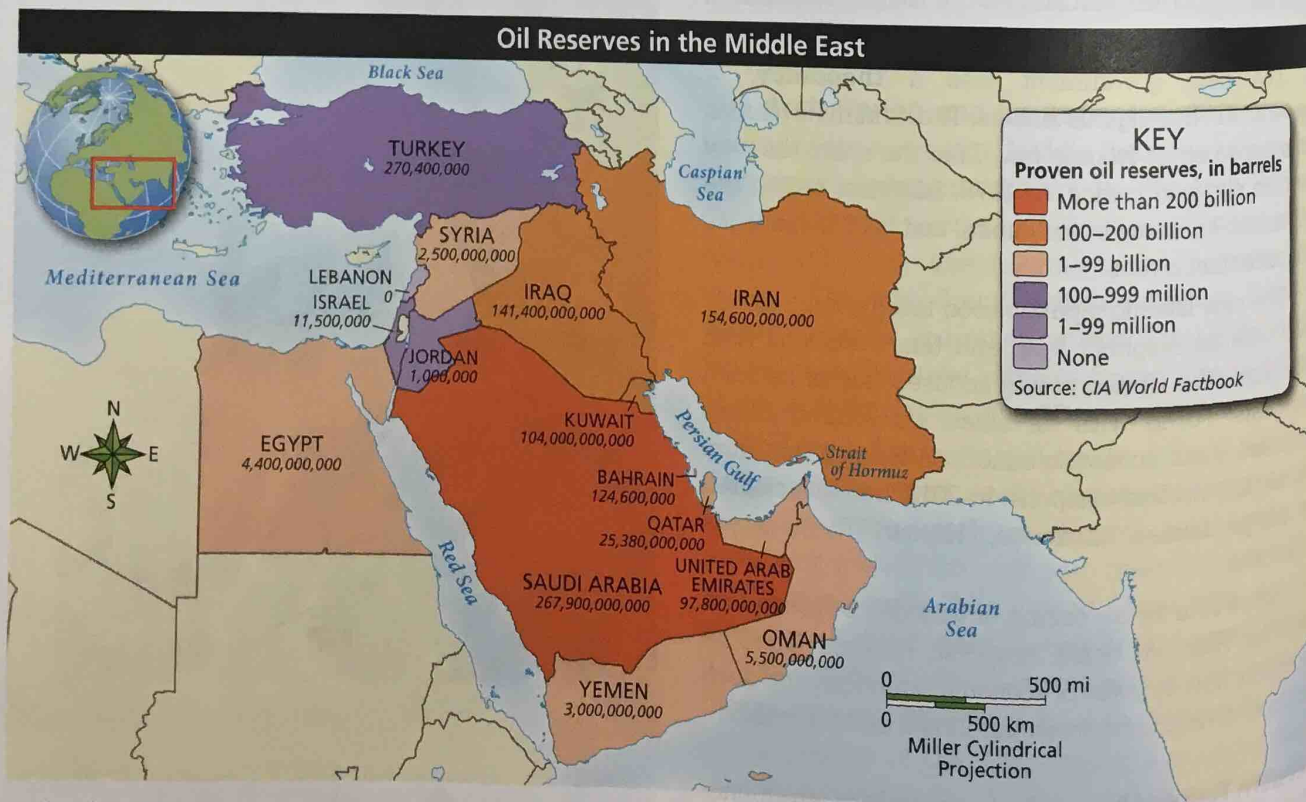
Parts of the Middle East have huge oil resources, giving the region global importance. A handful of oil-producing nations prospered. They included Saudi

Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and several small states along the Persian Gulf. The oil-producing nations also border vital shipping lanes that carry oil from the region to the world. Even though these oil-rich countries provide aid to their neighbors, most Middle Eastern nations lack oil and have struggled economically.

OPEC In 1960, the oil-producing nations of the Middle East, along with Venezuela, set up the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). OPEC wanted to end the power of Western oil companies and set its own oil production quotas and prices.

In 1973, Middle Eastern members of OPEC used oil as a political weapon. They stopped oil shipments to the United States and other countries that had supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War. This oil embargo triggered a global recession and led other countries to try to develop other sources of oil. Since then, OPEC has focused on setting production quotas and has added new members.

Saudi Arabia Saudi Arabia has one of the world's largest oil reserves. It exports vast amounts of oil to the West. In return, it has received military aid from the United States. Its ruling family is committed to Wahhabism, a strict sect within Sunni Islam. Oil wealth allowed Saudi Arabia to modernize its infrastructure, such as transportation and communication systems.



>> Analyze Maps This map shows the known oil reserves of Middle Eastern countries. On what body of water do the nations with the largest oil reserves lie?

At the same time, the government has suppressed opposition.

INFER How can OPEC influence global events?

Islam and the Modern World

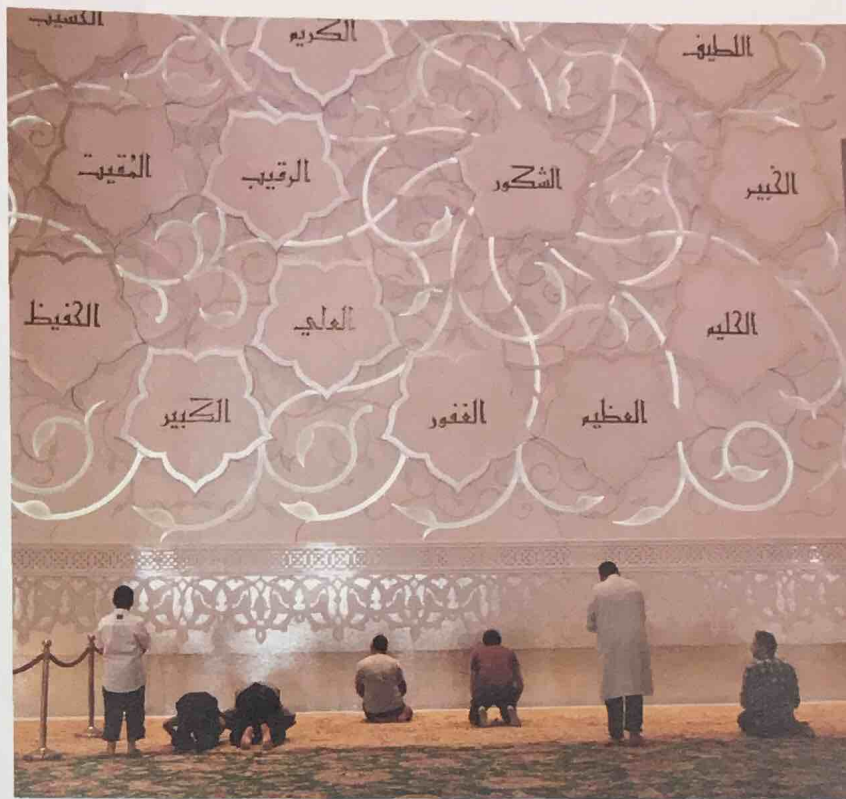
After independence, some Middle Eastern countries adopted Western-style secular governments. Leaders in Egypt and Syria, for example, saw secular government as a means to modernization. In time, however, many secular leaders became authoritarian rulers. At the same time, Western cultural influences, introduced during the age of imperialism, spread. In cities, people bought goods imported from the West. They wore Western fashions and watched American television shows and movies.

Islamic Revival Some Muslims claimed that Western culture and capitalism were undermining Islamic society. They called for a return to Sharia, or Islamic law based on the Quran, and to traditional customs and values. These conservative reformers, known as Islamists or Islamic fundamentalists, blamed social and economic ill on the West. Only a renewed commitment to Islam, they declared, could improve conditions for Muslims around the world.

Many Muslims welcomed the Islamic movement as a way to cope with rapid social and economic changes. Moderate Islamists wanted to work toward democratic reforms within Islam. Radical Islamists, or fundamentalist extremists, however, advocated violence to achieve their goal.

Radical Islam Radical Islamic fundamentalist groups in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere sought to overthrow governments that they saw as too closely allied to the West. They also targeted Israel, which had defeated Arabs in several wars, and the United States. Although many governments cracked down on radical Islamic fundamentalists, these groups survived. In 1979, Islamic fundamentalists welcomed Iran's revolution. Iran became the first modern nation to topple a secular government and replace it with a government based on Sharia.

Islam and the Lives of Women Conditions for women vary greatly across the Muslim Middle East. In most countries, women won equality before the law, but women still faced legal and social hurdles, especially to jobs. Over time, however, educated women entered professions such as law and medicine.



>> Men worship at the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates. The mosque is large enough to accommodate more than 40,000 worshippers.



>> Egyptian supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist organization, celebrate the election of Muhammed Morsi. Morsi, who won the first election held in Egypt after the "Arab Spring," was overthrown by the military in 2013.

In Turkey, Egypt, and Syria, many urban women had given up wearing the **hejab**, or traditional Muslim headscarf, or loose, ankle-length garments meant to conceal. With the Islamic revival, many educated women returned to the hejab as a symbol of their faith. In religiously conservative countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, women must follow local Islamic traditions, such as wearing the hejab.

Women stood on the front lines of the “Arab Spring” to demand democratic reforms and equal opportunity. “I grew up in a world where we believed we could not do anything,” noted a young woman and online activist in Jordan. “Generations believed we could do nothing, and now, in a matter of weeks, we know that we can.”

Some women’s rights advocates pointed out that their goals were not based on Western values but on the traditions of early Islam that improved the status of women. Women’s rights movements faced serious challenges, however. While access to education has improved for women, girls are often less likely to attend school than boys because of the tradition that girls do not need a formal education for their expected roles as wives and mothers. Although governments recognized the productive value of women in the workforce, local

cultural restrictions often kept women from holding jobs outside the home.

? RUN-IN HEAD Why do Islamists oppose secular government and culture in the Muslim world?

ASSESSMENT

- 1. Identify** What are two events that have powerfully influenced the development of the modern nations of the Middle East?
- 2. Express Problems Clearly** How do religious and ethnic differences affect the Middle East?
- 3. Identify Cause and Effect** What effect did the Arab rejection of the State of Israel have on today’s Palestinians?
- 4. Describe** What are some ways oil wealth has affected the nations of the Middle East?
- 5. Cite Evidence** What influence has Islam had on the government of Iran since the overthrow of the Shah?