Civilizations of the Middle East and Southwest Asia

The Modern World

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VOLUME 4

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Civilizations of the Middle East and Southwest Asia

Volume 4

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Preface

In ancient times, barriers such as mountain ranges and great bodies of water slowed the cultural interaction between peoples. The modern era, however, is defined by the shrinking of frontiers as revolutions in transportation and technology closed distances.

Around the turn of the sixteenth century, European nautical technology allowed the transport of people and goods over distances never before fathomed. The Age of Exploration had begun and with it came the Modern Age. The groundwork for this age had been set in the preceding centuries by the conflicts between two religions, Christianity and Islam. The Crusades, armed Christian campaigns against various Muslim groups from the eleventh century through the fifteenth century, sought to wrest the holy city of Jerusalem from Islamic control. The mustering and marching of crusaders across Europe helped develop trade routes throughout the continent. The interactions in the Middle East, born in conflict, brought to the European market a taste for the products of the Middle East and the Far East. Advances in mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences were also imported from the Middle East to Europe. These advances and an increased economic interest in regions outside Europe led to the explosion of trade and exploration that ushered in the Modern Age.

From the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, European commercial powers became colonial powers. The Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and British established colonies across the globe in order to assure ownership of trade routes. Trading posts guaranteed the continual supply of goods and natural resources, such as spices and precious metals. During this period, the cultures of the colonizers and the colonized would greatly influence each other. Such mutual influences and blending can be seen, for example, in gastronomy; modern Indian cuisine was created when chilies from South America arrived in India and then influenced the tastes of British colonists.

In the twentieth century, former colonies became independent. The struggle for independence was often fierce and the creation of democratic governments hard fought. The endurance and spirit of Nelson Mandela, for example, helped South Africa overcome apartheid. The last century also saw two World Wars, as well as devastating regional conflicts and civil wars. While technological advances have made it possible to explore space, the same advances also have the capability of destroying property and life.

Articles in the five volumes of *The Modern World: Civilizations of Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe,* and *the Middle East and Southwest Asia* are arranged alphabetically with time lines and cross-references that provide the reader a greater historical context in which to understand each topic. Features expand the coverage: "Turning Points" describe cultural, political, and technological changes that have had a lasting effect upon society; "Great Lives" profile individuals whose deeds shaped a people's history and culture; "Modern Weapons" delivers hard facts on modern warfare; and "Into the 21st Century" provides an introduction to topics that are important for understanding recent dramatic developments in world history. Each volume will be your guide in helping you to explore the rich and varied history of the modern world and participate in its future. May this journey offer you not only facts and data but also a deeper appreciation of the changes throughout history that have helped to form the modern world.

Sarolta A. Takács

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A Crossroads of Ancient Lands and Contemporary Issues

The history of the modern Middle East and Southwest Asia goes back thousands of years. Indeed, the region was a center of civilization in prehistory and one of the areas in which agriculture originated and the world's first cities were built. Yet the region faces a host of contentious issues—political, social, religious, and economic. Home to numerous and diverse populations, the area has always been a crossroads between east and west, and it remains so today.

THE GEOGRAPHIC REGION

The Middle East and Southwest Asia covers a vast expanse, from India in the east to the western shore of the Mediterranean Sea, north to Turkey, and south to the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The region is dotted with rugged mountains, rocky hills, vast deserts, and watered fertile lands.

Mountains run through almost every country of the region. While the Taurus Mountains run east and west through the southern edge of Turkey, the Zagros range, stretching northwest to southeast, divides Iran from Iraq. Other ranges include the Elburz Mountains of Iran and the Asir Mountains of Saudi Arabia. Historically, the mountain ranges presented barriers to—or created passageways for—ancient peoples. Also, the mountains and hills block the flow of rain clouds to the inland parts of the region. Thus, even though the area is surrounded by seas—the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea to the north, and the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf to the south—fresh inland water is scarce. Rainfall, too, is unpredictable. Only Turkey, northwestern Iran, and a narrow rim along the seas in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria flourish with regular and adequate rainfall.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British used the term *Near East* to refer to the countries along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, while the French and other Europeans called the same area the "Levant." To the east of this area was the region referred to as the "Middle East," and farther east was the "Far East." The term *east* was used in relation to the region's location relative to Western Europe. Today, the term *Near East* is seldom used. Instead, scholars generally refer to the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

A BIRTHPLACE OF MODERN CIVILIZATION

This region has been a center of human settlement for thousands of years. It was the site of the earliest urban centers, the invention and first use of the wheel, and the development of the first alphabet, number systems, lunar and solar calendars, and many more innovations. It was from here that the three major **monotheistic** religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam began and spread. Throughout its long history, the region has experienced an impressive number of cultural diffusions: Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Canaanite, Hebrew, Aramaic, Hittite, Phoenician, Persian, Greek, Roman, Arabic, European Crusaders, Mongolian, and Turkish.

Major trade routes have crisscrossed the Middle East and Southwest Asia since ancient times. Phoenician seafarers traded with and reached all settlements along the Mediterranean coast and beyond. The influence of the region on modern world civilizations has been evident in language, religion, science, mathematics, literature, arts, and philosophy.

PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES

More than half of the people of the Middle East today are Arabs. Their Islamic religion,

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their culture, and their languages have had a profound impact on the entire region. About 90 percent of the region's Arabs are Muslim; most of the others are Christian.

Within the region, more than 65 million people live in Iran, formerly called Persia. Iranians take pride in their long past, which they trace back 2,500 years to the non-Arab Persian Empire and the rule of Cyrus the Great. In Iran, the dominant language is Persian, or Farsi, an Indo-European language distantly related to English. The majority of Iran's people are **Shia** Muslims.

Turkey's more than 71 million inhabitants are a blend of peoples who have lived in the Middle East and Southwest Asia for centuries. The original inhabitants—the ancient Greeks and the Hittites—were absorbed by the Seljuk Turks, who in turn were followed by other Turkish groups, most notably the Ottomans. Primarily Muslims, the Turks speak Turkish, which has central Asian roots but is now written in the Latin alphabet.

More than 7 million people live in the region's only true democracy—Israel. Although most Israeli citizens are Jewish, about 1 million of the population are Muslim or Christian Arabs. Jews settled in Israel from around the globe—arriving in the first modern Jewish homeland from the Middle East, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Bound not only by faith, Israeli Jews are also united in their desire to live in the state of Israel. Hebrew is the official language, although Arabic is used among the Arab population. English is a commonly used second language.

Among the other peoples who live in the region are Armenians, Kurds, and Palestinians. Armenia became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Kurds, who live in northern Iraq and parts of Turkey and Iran, control an autonomous region within Iraq. Some Kurds, however, seek a fully independent nation. The Palestinians, many of whom live in Israel and the Palestinian territories in Gaza and in the West Bank, seek an independent homeland.

MODERN HISTORY AND THE RISE AND FALL OF MIDDLE EASTERN EMPIRES

Europeans often define modern history as the period after the discovery of the Americas in 1492 or the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Although this is a reasonable **periodization** of western history, it does not fit the history of the non-Western world. Turning points and major changes in East Asia or South Asia or the Middle East and Africa do not necessarily coincide with the turning points in Western history. Whereas the rise of the Ottoman Empire, also beginning with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, usually signifies the start of modern times in the Middle East, another often cited turning point is the rise of the Abbasid **caliphate** in 750.

The Abbasid caliphate was the longest ruling Islamic dynasty anywhere in the world, lasting from 750 until 1258, when the Mongols conquered it. Some of the most significant achievements in human history were accomplished during this time. The system of Arabic numerals, which originated in India, was developed further with the use of the zero, making it possible to use the decimal system in mathematics. Notable advances were also made in algebra and logarithms. And progress was made in the sciences and architecture, as well as in preserving many of the ancient Greek writings through translation and interpretation. Even as the central caliphate in Baghdad became politically weak and militarily ineffective, advances in cultural pursuits continued.

As the power of the caliphate in Baghdad declined, non-Arab military officers controlled the state and several of its provinces.

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They limited local Christians' freedom to worship, rescinding rights that Christians had had during the early days of the Islamic caliphates. The military also tried to prevent the travel of European Christians to the Holy Land—the lands where Jesus of Nazareth lived and died—as well as defeating Byzantine Christian armies and threatening Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire.

In 1095, the pope, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, appealed to European kings and princes to launch invasions against the Muslims in the Middle East in order to return the Holy Land to Christians. The outcome was nearly 150 years of bloody fighting campaigns, called the Crusades. Although the Crusades ultimately failed in their mission, the several "crusader states" established along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean became the scenes of cultural diffusion and exchange of goods and ideas between the European west and the Islamic east.

For the next 300 years—from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries—the region of the Middle East and Southwest Asia was divided among numerous local kingdoms, sultanates, and principalities. They vied with and fought against each other until the beginning of the sixteenth century when the Turkish Ottomans, having taken Constantinople in 1453, moved south and east, occupying most of the region with the exception of Persia (present-day Iran). They founded the Ottoman Empire, which lasted until the early twentieth century.

Ottoman administration was strong and well organized during the first two centuries of its rule. However, several factors led to its stagnation and ultimate decline. Beginning in the sixteenth century, European trade routes to Asia, which once passed through the Middle East, were diverted to sea routes around Africa. Science and technology in Western Europe progressed rapidly after the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment. Ottoman religious **conservatives** and political leaders resisted change, and some looked at Western societies with disdain. The gap between the West and the Middle East and Southwest Asia widened. European powers, especially Great Britain, France, and Russia, began to take advantage of Ottoman weakness. From the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, they interfered regularly in Ottoman affairs and fought for spheres of influence, preferential treatment, and special trading rights. Their conflicts of interest and mistrust of each other allowed the Ottoman Empire to last until the twentieth century. Indeed, the empire was nicknamed the "Sick Man of Europe." Ottoman reformers attempted to modernize their empire during the nineteenth century, but the attempts were too late and not bold enough. In World War I (1914–1918), Turkey allied itself with Germany and Austria-Hungary, together known as the Central Powers. The defeat of the Central Powers ended the era of Ottoman governance in the Middle East, which had lasted for more than 400 years.

While the Ottoman Empire dominated most of the Middle East and Southwest Asia, Persia remained free of Ottoman control. Several dynasties ruled Persia during this time. The first was the Safavid Dynasty, which governed from 1502 to 1736. The Safavids were Shiites and fought several wars against the **Sunni** Ottomans. The Persian empires extended into a wide area of Central Asia before the Russians occupied these areas in the nineteenth century. The last Persian dynasty to rule Iran was the Pahlavi, which ended with the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM, AND INDEPENDENCE

The defeat of the Central Powers in World War I ended the Ottoman Empire and forever

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changed the Middle East. Britain had promised the Arabs an independent state if they supported the Allies—Great Britain, France, Russia, and later the United States. In the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Britain had promised the Jews the establishment of a homeland in Palestine. Instead, the British and the French concluded a secret agreement to divide most of the Middle East between them. They also planned to divide Turkey into several smaller states under European influence.

After the war ended in 1918, chaos struck the region. The French invaded what is today Syria and Lebanon and overthrew an emerging Syrian kingdom that included the present-day states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan, as well as the Palestinian territories. The British occupied the region to the south of the French area in what are today the states of Israel and Jordan and the Palestinian territories. The British also maintained troops in Iraq, Egypt, the Persian Gulf states, and south Yemen. Thus, after World War I, most of the Middle East and Southwest Asia fell under colonial rule. Turkey, under the strong leadership of Atatürk, was able to foil the plans to divide it and remained free of European dominance.

European **colonialism** in the region brought about movements of national liberation and demands for independence by the local populations. Several revolts and uprisings in Syria against the French and in Palestine against the British initially failed. In Palestine, the Arabs fought the British, longtime Jewish residents, and new Jewish immigrants who had fled the Holocaust—the extermination of more than 6 million Jews by the Nazis in Europe. The end of World War II in 1945 brought about more changes in the region, as the drive for sovereignty escalated. New independent states emerged, and the British eventually removed their troops from Egypt, Iraq, and south Yemen and granted independence to the Persian Gulf states. The land east of the Jordan River became the independent state of Transjordan, which was dominated by Great Britain. Greater Syria was divided into the present-day states of Syria and Lebanon. The independent state of Israel was established on May 14, 1948.

CONFLICTS, WARS, AND NEW WEALTH

Independence did not bring about lasting peace, freedom, or prosperity. Instead, the majority of countries in the region, such as Syria and Iraq, came under military or autocratic rule, depriving their citizens of the freedoms they had sought. Only Israel became a true democracy. Devastating and costly wars have plagued the region ever since and have made it one of the least stable areas in the world. Five regional wars have been fought between Israel and surrounding Arab states. Millions of Iranians fled their nation and did not return home after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In the 1980s, a long and bloody war between Iran and Iraq lasted more than eight years. In 1990, Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait and had to be evicted by an international coalition of forces in the Persian Gulf War (1991). During the 1990s, internal fighting in Iraq between the semiautonomous Kurds and the central government left thousands dead. Civil war in Lebanon lasted for nearly fifteen years, and turmoil still plagues the nation. In 2003, the United States and several of its allies invaded Iraq after intensive bombing. The invasion was followed by costly violence in which more than half a million Iraqis were killed and 4 million became refugees. Turkey, on the other hand, moved closer to a free and democratic state, hoping to join the European Union (EU).

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Several of the conflicts in the Middle East and Southwest Asia have been related to the vast reserves of oil and natural gas found within these countries' borders. More than two-thirds of the world's oil reserves are located in the region. With the rise in the price of crude oil in the late twentieth century, many Southwest Asian countries have been able to provide services to their people with little or no taxation. Additionally, they are investing hundreds of billions of dollars in the world's financial markets. Still, the wealth is not evenly divided, and not all Middle Eastern countries benefit from it. The gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" has grown dramatically, posing new threats to the precarious stability in the region.

Frustration with existing governments and the failure to resolve ongoing conflicts have driven some people in the region to religious extremism and deadly terrorism. Various **fundamentalist** groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, labeled terrorist organizations by the United States and the United Nations, often spread fear and death in the region. Peace between Israel and many of its neighboring Arab states remains elusive. In Iraq, insurgents continue to threaten the transition to a democratic government. The future is uncertain, and the prospects for resolving the area's major conflicts remain a challenge—for the region and for the entire world.

Mounir Farah, Ph.D.
General Editor

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Map of the Modern Middle East and Southwest Asia

The geography of the region includes the mountains and plateaus of Turkey and the vast deserts of the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran. Although oil reserves are abundant, freshwater is scarce. In this vast, ethnically diverse region, many people speak Arabic, and Islam is the dominant faith. In Iran, Farsi is the major language. In Israel, Hebrew is widely spoken, and Judaism is the major religion. Politically, the nations of the region range from the democracies of Israel and Turkey to the theocracy of Iran.

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A–C

Abbasid Dynasty

Line of **caliphs** ruling the Islamic Empire from 750 to 1258. Named for their ancestor Abbas, Muhammad's paternal uncle, the largely **Sunni** Abbasids moved the seat of Islamic power from Damascus to Kufah, and later to Baghdad in 762. This shift was fateful for several reasons: it stripped power from the Arab-dominated Umayyads, reorganized trade routes within the empire, and greatly increased the Persian influence at court.

The Abbasid Dynasty is considered the Golden Age of Islam in the East, when Islamic scholars and doctors made many scientific discoveries that became the basis for the rise of science in Europe. At their peak, the Abbasid caliphs ruled nearly all of the Middle East and North Africa, fostering remarkable development in the sciences and arts.

ORIGINS

The early Abbasids opposed the ruling Umayyad caliphs on the grounds that the Damascus-based caliphate was too **secular**, lacked strong moral grounding, and was incompetent. The Umayyads were overthrown because they viewed non-Arab Muslims as an inferior class, enabling the Abbasids to draw support from important non-Arab Muslim groups such as the Persians. Abu Muslim, an agent of the Abbasids, was sent to the province of Khorasan in eastern Iran to instigate a revolt in 745. The Abbasids had been sowing the seeds of this revolt for nearly two decades, and Abu Muslim openly called for revolution in 747. He gained widespread support within Khorasan as well as other provinces, whose non-Arab Muslim populations had suffered as second-class citizens under the Umayyads. The revolt was successful, spreading throughout the **caliphate**, and

RISE AND FALL OF THE ABBASID DYNASTY

Date	Event
747	Starting in Iranian province of Khorasan, Abu Muslim leads open revolt against the Umayyads
750	Marwan II defeated at Battle of the Great Zab River; Abu'l-Abbas As-Saffah declared first Abbasid caliph
762	Second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur, establishes Baghdad as new capital
786–809	Reign of Harun al-Rashid, during whose rule the Abbasid Caliphate reaches its zenith
ca. 890s	Decline of Abbasid rule well under way as western provinces begin to assert political independence
945	Iranian Buyids enter Baghdad, demanding recognition as sole rulers of their territories
970s	Fatimid emirate established in Egypt
1055	Seljuk Turks take power from Abbasids in all but name and religious function
1258	Mongols invade and sack Baghdad, putting an end to the Abbasid Dynasty

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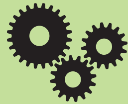

TURNING POINT

Mongol Invasion

In the early thirteenth century, Genghis Khan unified the nomadic tribes of present-day Mongolia and Southern Siberia and began to conquer the surrounding region. By the time of his death in 1227, he ruled an empire that stretched from the Pacific coast of China west to the Caspian Sea. Included in his conquests were Khwarezm, a Sunni Muslim empire in Eastern Persia and Central Asia that had become independent near the end of the Abbasid caliphate. The Khwarezmid rulers had insulted Genghis Khan by killing diplomats he sent to them, provoking him to invade. Within only a few years, he had devastated most of their great cities, including Samarkand.

Thirty years later, Genghis Khan's grandson Hulagu returned to the region to continue the Mongol conquest of Southwest Asia. Leading an army of at least 100,000, fully equipped with trebuchets, which are massive bolt throwers, and other siege weapons, Hulagu first conquered the Assassins, an extremist Shia sect based in Eastern Persia and Afghanistan, driving them from their supposedly impregnable mountain fortress at Alamut, near modern-day Tehran.

In 1257, when Hulagu's emissaries called on the Abbasid caliph Al-Mu'stasim to surrender and pay homage to the Mongols, the caliph refused, and in 1258 Baghdad was conquered. Hulagu's troops were characteristically merciless in their sack of the city, rampantly killing and looting. By some estimates, more than 200,000 residents of the city were murdered. The great libraries and centers of learning of the Islamic Golden Age were burned, their collections torched or thrown into the Tigris River, which was reputed to have turned black with ink. According to tradition, because the Mongols thought that spilling the caliph's sacred blood might cause some natural upheaval, Hulagu instead wrapped the caliph in a thick carpet and had him trampled to death.

The battle marked the end of the Abbasid Dynasty. It would be centuries before Baghdad recovered. In the meantime, Southwest Asia was plunged into a period of increasing fragmentation and outside influence.

after Abu Muslim struck a decisive blow to the Umayyad caliph Marwan II at the Battle of the Great Zab River in 750, Abu'l Abbas As-Saffah was proclaimed the first Abbasid caliph. The following year, he captured Damascus and killed most of the Umayyad ruling family. He established his capital in the city of Kufah, in Iraq, instead of Damascus.

The second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur, built a new capital city, Baghdad, along the Tigris River and then moved to it in 762. This signified a decisive characteristic of Abbasid rule: the turn toward Persia and away from North Africa and Europe.

PEAK

At the height of its power, during the reign of Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809), the Abbasid Empire stretched from India to Morocco. The Byzantine Empire even paid tribute to the Abbasid court, which also established diplomatic ties with Charlemagne, the emperor ruler of most of Western Europe. Baghdad became one of the great cultural centers of the world, with

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schools of science, medicine, and literature. Al-Rashid built an enormous library and research center there called the House of Wisdom, where scholars translated countless Greek and Latin works into Arabic and Persian.

DECLINE

The Abbasids came to rely heavily on an army composed of Berber, Slav, and, most significantly, Turkic soldiers known as Mamluks, who gradually gained power over the caliphs. In addition, many independent dynasties like the Ghaznavids in Eastern Persia, Northwest India, and Afghanistan and the Fatimids in Egypt and North Africa began to gain control of outlying provinces by the end of the tenth century, sometimes paying tribute to the caliphs in exchange for political independence.

The decline of Abbasid rule was hastened by the 945 invasion of Baghdad by the Persian Buyids, who successfully demanded political autonomy in their eastern provinces. By the 970s, the Fatimids had established their own **emirate**. In 1055, the Abbasids lost all real political power to the Seljuk Turks, who nonetheless still nominally recognized the caliph as the supreme leader. From this point on, the Abbasid Dynasty continued only as the titular leaders of their caliphate.

In 1258, the Mongols, led by Hulagu Khan, sacked Baghdad, destroying its centers of learning and killing tens of thousands of its citizens. This marked the end of Arab rule in the region for several centuries.

See also: Baghdad; Byzantine Empire; Economic Development and Trade; Islam; Literature and Writing; Religion.

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Agriculture

Until the rise of the oil industry in the early twentieth century, agriculture was the primary economic activity of the Middle East. Raising crops and animals for food or cash still figures prominently in the region, but in many countries, its present scale is a fraction of what it was historically. Aside from Turkey, Yemen, Syria, the area of the West Bank, Iraq, and Iran, agriculture comprises no more than 10 percent of any country's total **gross domestic product** (GDP).

Petroleum, petroleum products, and manufactured goods now overshadow agriculture in the place where it was first invented. Nevertheless, the agricultural products of the region are still crucial to the sustainability of many of its cultures.

OVERVIEW

The Middle East has the least amount of arable land of any world region except polar and subarctic lands. Major agricultural activity transpires only where there is sufficient rainfall or where extensive irrigation projects have been completed. The Middle Eastern nations with the greatest percentage of irrigated land are, in decreasing order, Israel (9 percent), Lebanon (8.5 percent), Iran and Iraq (6 percent), and Syria

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Modern technology, including computer-controlled sprinkling systems, has helped Israel greatly increase its agricultural production. (David Rubinger/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images)

and Turkey (5 percent). The three nations with the greatest total area of irrigated land are Iran, Turkey, and Iraq. Lebanon, Turkey, and Iran also receive relatively high amounts of rainfall, giving them the most naturally fertile land.

Every other area in the region is dominated by desert or by semiarid conditions that limit agricultural production. Nomadic, desert-dwelling Bedouin tribes have made the best use of these intimidating conditions, driving their herds between scarce grazing lands and occasionally cultivating small plots of grains.

Three types of agricultural activity exist in the Middle East: animal husbandry, permanent crop cultivation, and cultivation of arable land. Livestock of the region consists of sheep, goats, cattle, horses, camels, chickens, and, in Turkey, water buffalo. Jewish and Islamic prohibitions against eating pork have made pigs all but nonexistent in the Middle East. Also, changes in the landscape brought about by the modern era, such as networks of roads and vast, mechanically cultivated fields, have drastically curtailed the practice of **pastoralism**, or driving herds of animals such as goats and camels between pasturelands. Only in Saudi Arabia are there significant numbers of camels, while cattle have come to replace many of the other species as populations become more urbanized and pastoralism wanes.

Permanent crops consist of those that are not replanted each year, mainly date palms, olive trees, and fruit trees, especially figs, peaches, apricots, pomegranates, and citrus. Arable land produces mainly wheat, barley, corn, assorted vegetables, and cash crops such as sugar beets, tobacco, tea, and cotton. Specialty crops grown in small amounts, mainly for local consumption, include coffee and *qat,* whose leaves have a narcotic effect when chewed.

HISTORY

Some crops have been grown in the region since antiquity. Durum wheat, which is extraordinarily hardy and resistant to desert conditions, is one of these. Another is barley, which is salt-resistant and therefore a

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good crop to grow on irrigated lands; over time, irrigation leads to a buildup of salts in the soil, and much of the land in the Middle East has been rendered unusable by several millennia of irrigation. Other crops such as bananas, eggplants, and tea were introduced to the region from South Asia and East Asia.

Agriculture was largely subsistence-based under the centuries of Arab rule. Even after the Ottoman Empire established control of the region in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it did little to change the ancient system of land tenure. Under this system, a few individuals owned great amounts of territory, leasing the right to raise crops in exchange for the lion's share of the harvest. The Ottoman regime simply regarded itself as the sole landholder in the areas under its control. It collected agricultural taxes in the same way the Arabs had, although it supplemented this taxation with the *timar* system. Individuals were granted leases over extensive territories in exchange for services to the states and for providing soldiers for the Ottoman army. Many tribal leaders maintained control of their traditional lands this way.

Only in the nineteenth century did this system start to change. As the Ottoman Empire increased trade and other forms of exchange with Europe, agriculture came to be perceived as a way to profit by exporting surpluses. As a result of the wave of **nationalism** that swept the region at the start of the twentieth century, questions of land ownership and clearly defined boundaries became paramount. Though united in faith, the Arab peoples of the Ottoman Empire differed culturally and linguistically from their Turkish rulers. Many Arabs wanted to own the land they worked outright, instead of essentially leasing it through the *timar* system.

Also, the Ottomans had done little to encourage the cultivation of unsettled lands, and the question of who would own them became critical in many regions, particularly Palestine. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the Ottomans began to sell land to Jewish immigrants but refused to sell any to their Arab subjects, who had cultivated it for centuries. Denied ownership of the land they worked, Arabs felt increasingly anxious about Jewish settlement of uncultivated areas.

At the same time, the profitability of agriculture led many nomads to settle and begin life as cultivators. However, they became trapped by debt to absentee landlords in the same way as other farmers, becoming virtual serfs in vast estates controlled by a few sheikhs.

The 1950s was a period of dramatic change in agricultural practices across the Middle East. In many areas, the techniques of mechanized farming were introduced, and tractors, modern irrigation networks, and chemical fertilizers became standard features of agricultural practice. At the same time, the percentage of workers involved in agriculture dropped significantly in many countries, a pattern familiar to Western nations whose farming sector had been industrialized. Compared with these states, however, most Middle Eastern nations still had larger segments of the population employed in agriculture.

The 1950s also brought desperately needed land reforms to many areas, notably South Yemen, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. Nationalist policies aimed to increase self-sufficiency as well as alleviate the burden of debt under which many cultivators labored. Reforms generally limited the size of holdings in order to break up tribal oligarchies that in some cases had controlled specific regions for hundreds of years. These reforms generally have failed to achieve the intended effect, however. Rapid rise in population combined with the

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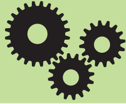

TURNING POINT

Aquaculture

Aquaculture, or the cultivation of fish and other seafood as well as aquatic plants on farms, has become a significant element of Middle Eastern agriculture. Of the Arab countries, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq all have old traditions of fishing, but until the mid-twentieth century, their collective output was negligible.

Today, with booming populations and the severe stresses irrigation places on already scarce water sources, several Middle Eastern nations have turned to aquaculture to meet their goals of agricultural self-sufficiency. Since the mid-1980s, the collective aquacultural output of the Middle East has quintupled. Iran, Iraq, and Israel lead production, and Saudi Arabia has been steadily building its capacity. After the 1970 completion of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, government support led to the development of a highly successful aquaculture industry on the shores of Lake Nasser. However, traditional saltwater fishing off the Nile Delta declined simultaneously because of the restricted flow of water from the dam. Nevertheless, Egypt's net fishing output has increased as a result of these developments.

One popular method of aquaculture uses a large, anchored net that has been set in coastal waters. Farmers place immature fish, known as fry, inside these nets, provide them with food, and monitor their growth. When they have reached a certain size, the net is hauled to shore and the fish are harvested. However, this is not the only method adopted by Middle Eastern states; ocean trawling, or dragging a large net behind a slow-moving ship on the open sea, has also proven successful. The Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean are used for this purpose, although Israeli trawlers have been known to fish as far away as the Atlantic Ocean.

Other methods of aquaculture include the building of artificial inland ponds where fish are bred, kept, fed, and harvested much like terrestrial livestock. Shellfish such as oysters, mussels, and scallops are particularly well suited to this practice. Other kinds of fish, while protected from their natural predators, tend to fall prey instead to disease. This has resulted in an aquacultural development parallel to one in animal husbandry: the addition of antibiotics and other medicines to the stock's diet. The effect of these medicines on persons who eat the harvested flesh is a matter of growing concern, especially as aquaculture continues to gain importance in the Middle Eastern diet.

high capital requirements of mechanized agriculture led to failure in many areas, which has meant that the rural populations of the Middle East remain the poorest sector of society.

AGRICULTURE BY NATION

To better understand agriculture in the region, it is helpful to examine the states in which it is most prominent.

Turkey

Turkey is a leading agricultural power. More than half of its flat land, which lies in its interior, is used for agriculture or animal husbandry. Mechanization of agriculture started in the 1950s, when tractors greatly increased the amount of arable land. With a relatively temperate Mediterranean climate, Turkey has enough water to produce an abundance of crops.

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Approximately 80 percent of Turkey's cropland is devoted to cereals, particularly wheat and barley. Cash crops such as cotton, tea, and tobacco are common, and citrus fruits, grapes, nuts, hemp, potatoes, sugar beets, and a variety of vegetables are all staples. Livestock is another significant component of the nation's agriculture. Large numbers of water buffalo, sheep, goats, and cattle are raised for dairy products as well as meat.

Although its agricultural contribution to the region has always been significant, Turkey is presently in a position to become a primary source of food for the Middle East because of its extensive water resources as well as its wide variety of climates and soils.

Saudi Arabia

Most of Saudi Arabia is desert, making agriculture there either impossible or extremely costly. Prior to the growth of its oil economy in the first half of the twentieth century, Saudi Arabian society was primarily Bedouin in character. Dairy products formed the main part of the Bedouin tribal diet, supplemented with occasional camel meat, vegetables and grains obtained from settlements at the desert's edge, and dates and palm fruits from oasis trees.

As oil revenues transformed Saudi Arabian society, the ruling House of Saud became increasingly concerned about the nation's agricultural self-sufficiency. Consequently, government funding has greatly expanded agriculture, primarily through massive irrigation projects. Saudi Arabia is now able to export wheat, although this ability comes at a cost. Much of its irrigation is draining irreplaceable water from aquifers, and it is unclear how long this pace of production can last. It is also self-sufficient in milk and egg production, but otherwise must import the majority of its foodstuffs.

Lebanon

Lebanon, on the other hand, has abundant water resources. Though its arable land is fairly scarce, this abundance of water allows intensive irrigation in many places. Lebanon's fertility is the source of its historical status as a fiercely contested prize, for it could provide any imperial power with a regional agricultural base to feed large armies. It is a major producer for the smaller Arab nations of foods such as bananas, citrus fruits, grapes, olives, figs, almonds, apricots, plums, and pears.

Iraq

Iraq occupies much of the region once known as Mesopotamia, one of the areas in which agriculture was invented more than 9,000 years ago. It is one of the few states to possess an excess of water sources, which means that it has to contend with annual flooding as well. Until the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Iraqi agriculture was well developed and highly modernized. Amid economic sanctions imposed after the war, agricultural productivity plummeted. Damaged irrigation and sanitation facilities led to widespread malnutrition and illness, and many farmers reverted to subsistence cultivation. The 2003 U.S. and British invasion further devastated agricultural production and displaced about 4 million people as Iraq's **infrastructure** suffered extensive damage. In addition, some damage from the 1991 war had never been repaired. Exports largely evaporated, and Iraq's population came to rely on foreign aid in order to survive.

Iran

The Iranian steppe, like Turkey, encompasses a diversity of terrains and soils. Approximately one-third of Iran's land is arable, though only one-tenth of total land is cultivated due to a lack of water sources. Its agricultural output resembles Turkey's in composition and quantity. However, the

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bulk and quality of its agricultural exports are not what they could be because of continued international opposition to the Iranian government. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, many small farmers forcibly occupied larger farms, leading to rural turmoil that was not settled until the 1990s. With its resources, Iran can easily provide for its own needs. Its primary agricultural products include cereals such as corn, rice, and barley, cotton, spices, tobacco, and timber. It is also one of the primary fish exporters in the area, working both freshwater sources and the Persian Gulf.

Israel

With relatively meager agricultural resources, the most limiting of which are a lack of arable land and adequate water resources, Israel has succeeded in building a self-sustaining system that serves as a model for research-based development. Starting with farming communes known as *kibbutzim,* early twentieth-century Jewish settlers slowly began cultivating large areas of Palestine that had been left unsettled by the Ottomans. Since gaining independence in 1948, Israel has led the region in scientifically based agricultural methods such as advanced irrigation and the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Although agriculture dominated the Israeli economy during its early decades, other sectors such as mining, manufacturing, and services overtook it by the end of the twentieth century. Agriculture is still an important sector because of the food security it provides, though it does not account for a large percentage of Israel's GDP. In order to ensure this security, agriculture in Israel receives a large amount of government support in the form of a protected market and substantial water subsidies. In this way, Israel maintains agricultural self-sufficiency in the face of overwhelming hostility from Arab neighbors.

By contrast, agriculture in the Palestinian territories has suffered from Israeli occupation. Dire poverty has also meant that the Palestinians have been unable to replicate Israel's success with mechanized agriculture. This has led to a startling new landscape feature in many places—a green line where rich cropland extends from the border into Israel, and undeveloped or dry land extends into the occupied territories.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Environmental Issues; Gaza; Gulf States; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Iraqi War; Israel; Jordan; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Saudi Arabia; Society; Technology and Inventions; West Bank; Yemen; Zionism.

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Al-Qaeda

See Terrorists, Stateless.

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Arab League

An alliance of Arab nations formed in 1945 with the goal of encouraging inter-Arab cooperation on political, economic, and social issues. It is also known as the League of Arab States; founding members include Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

Since its inception, all of the Arab states of North Africa and the Gulf States have joined the league. In 1974, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was admitted as the official representative of the Palestinian people.

Prior to the founding of the Arab League in Cairo on March 22, 1945, Arab nations lacked an institutional forum in which they could address and resolve grievances or weigh economic and political alliances among themselves. The historical political disorganization and internal disagreements within Arab states as well as among them worked against the interests of Arab peoples in the first half of the twentieth century. This lack of unity allowed foreign powers such as Britain and France to dominate the region. The Arab League was formulated as a remedy for this problem.

The League's early focus was the issue of Jewish settlement in Palestine. One of the first acts taken by the Arab League in 1945 was the initiation of a boycott of Jewish businesses in Palestine. In addition, the League declared war on Israel the day after its inception, May 15, 1948. After the armistice ending the war later that year, the League extended its boycott of Israel.

In the 1960s, the League's focus expanded to include cultural, scientific, and educational improvements for member states. The 1970s saw a radical shift toward politics within the League, although the shift contributed to internal divisions that have hampered its effectiveness ever since.

Cairo was the original site of the League's headquarters, but when Egypt became the first Arab nation to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, its League membership was suspended and the headquarters was moved to Tunis, Tunisia. Readmitted to the League in 1989, Egypt was also the first Arab state to end its boycott of Israel, with a few member states following suit in the 1990s. After Egypt's readmittance, the League's headquarters returned to Cairo.

In 1987, the Arab League, with the exception of Syria, remained united in defense of Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War, and in 1990 it endorsed a resolution criticizing Western nations for hindering Iraq's development of advanced weapons. However, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 divided the League, with the Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates), Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Djibouti, Somalia, and Lebanon supporting the military action of the First Gulf War against Iraq and with the PLO, Libya, and Iraq condemning it. Jordan did not support the war or condemn it, trying unsuccessfully to resolve the problem without a war.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Arab League remains divided on how to deal with Israel and the West and how to resolve inter-Arab disagreements. While tensions toward Israel and the West persist, members are also faced with issues such as Muslim fundamentalism, Syria's involvement

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in Lebanon, and internal conflicts between Palestinian factions.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Camp David Accords; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gaza; Gulf States; Intifada; Iraq War; Islam; Israel; Mecca; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Palestinian Issue; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Society; World War II; Zionism.

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Arab-Israeli Conflict

Beginning with Israel's declaration of statehood in 1948, an ongoing conflict between Israel and various Arab nations and Palestinian groups. Central to the conflict are the longtime refusal of many Arab nations and organizations to recognize Israel's right to exist, displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, friction between Israel as a Jewish state and its Muslim neighbors, and questions about the status of Palestinians living in Israel, the occupied territories, and the rest of the Arab world.

ORIGINS

In the nineteenth century, European Jews faced increasing **anti-Semitism**. Laws in a number of countries prevented Jews from working in many trades, owning land, or having access to education. Jews were blamed for societal ills and subjected to physical attacks. In response, the Zionist movement, led by Theodor Herzl, declared at the first World Zionist Conference in 1897 its goal of establishing a Jewish nation. Another leading Zionist, Chaim Weizman, argued that this nation should be located in lands ruled by the Jews in biblical times, territory that was populated by Palestinian Arabs and ruled by the Ottoman Empire at the end of the nineteenth century.

After World War I, the area that is now Jordan and Israel was a British mandate—an area controlled and occupied by the British. In the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British declared their support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," provided the rights of existing inhabitants were protected. As persecution of Jews in Europe became increasingly horrific, many fled to Palestine. The increased number of settlers created resentment in the Arab population, and conflicts over land in Palestine turned violent as well. This prompted the formation of the Haganah, a paramilitary organization dedicated to protecting Jewish inhabitants.

Britain faced a growing Jewish minority in the region of its mandate closest to the Mediterranean Sea, while the eastern part of its mandate remained overwhelmingly Muslim and Christian Arab. In 1922, Britain divided its mandate into the Arab state of Transjordan and the smaller territory of Palestine, which they proposed to divide into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. Some Zionists viewed this reduction as a betrayal of the Balfour Declaration, while many Arabs became increasingly aggressive in their opposition to any Jewish state in the region. In the 1930s, extremists on both sides waged guerrilla war against each other and against the British.

After World War II, many Jewish survivors of the Holocaust emigrated from Europe to Palestine. Sympathy for the European Jews, 6 million of whom were exterminated by the Nazis, created the atmosphere in which the

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CRITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Year	Event
1917	Balfour Declaration makes British support for a Jewish state in Palestine explicit
1947	U.N. Resolution 181 (II), otherwise known as the Partition Plan, divides Palestine into Jewish and Arab provinces
1948	Founding of Israel; first Arab-Israeli War (Israeli War of Independence) results in Israeli victory over combined forces of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq
1956	Egypt blockades Israeli port in Gulf of Aqaba; Suez War between Egypt and Israeli, British, and French forces lifts blockade
1964	Founding of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); terror attacks on Israelis increase
1967	Six-Day War results in overwhelming Israeli victory; Israel takes control of Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, West Bank, and Gaza Strip
1973	Yom Kippur War inflicts heavy losses on Israeli forces, though they rally and push out invading Egyptian and Syrian armies
1978	U.S. President Jimmy Carter invites Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin to Camp David for talks; Camp David Accords result
1979	Israel and Egypt sign the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, ending war between them and granting mutual recognition
1982	Israel invades Lebanon to push PLO out of range of rocket attacks; numerous civilian deaths turn world opinion against Israel
1987	First intifada commences in Gaza Strip, leading to mass violent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians
1993	Oslo Accords, signed by PLO and Israel, outline peace process
1994	Israel and Jordan sign the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty
2000	Second, al-Aqsa intifada begins in Jerusalem
2005	Israeli settlers withdraw from Gaza Strip
2006	Israel invades Lebanon in retaliation for Hezbollah rocket attacks and kidnapping of Israeli soldiers

1947 United Nations Partition Plan was passed, reiterating a two-state solution. In this plan, Jerusalem, religiously important to Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike, was to be a separate international zone governed by the Untied Nations. However, the Arab nations rejected the UN plan—refusing a Jewish state in their midst and any non-Muslim control of Jerusalem.

ISRAELI WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

After passage of the 1947 UN Partition Plan, Jews and Arabs escalated their guerrilla war in advance of the British departure from Palestine. In general, the Jewish settlers fought to defend their settlements, while the Arabs fought to gain territory in anticipation of a new all-Arab Palestine. Fighting on both sides was brutal, and some Palestinians fled their homes inside the proposed borders of the Jewish state.

On May 14, 1948, Jewish leaders formally declared the establishment of Israel as a sovereign nation, with David Ben-Gurion as its first prime minister. The British left the next day, and the armies of Egypt, Transjordan—now referred to as Jordan—Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon invaded Israel.

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MODERN WEAPONS

Uzi Submachine Gun

In need of a lightweight, powerful weapon capable of delivering rapid, accurate fire and able to withstand the dust and sand of the region, the Israeli army adopted the Uzi submachine gun in 1955. Designed after the Israeli War of Independence by Uziel Gal, the Israeli army officer after whom the gun was named, the Uzi was inexpensive to manufacture, easy to maintain, and extremely durable. Its performance, as well as its distinctive silhouette, created by its pistol-grip magazine and short, stubby shape, has made it one of the most recognizable weapons in the world.

Because of its small size, just under 25.6 inches (65 cm) in length, and its 600-rounds-per-minute rate of fire, the Uzi quickly became a favorite with assault troops engaged in close combat. Other countries were impressed with the Uzi's performance and accuracy and began adopting the weapon, first for use in elite special forces units and later for more general police and military use. The weapon's legendary status has been further enhanced by its popularity in Hollywood action movies.

In the 1980s newer, more advanced variations of the Uzi—the Mini-Uzi and the Micro-Uzi—were developed for use by police and anti-terrorism forces. Smaller and lighter than the original, these weapons still retain the original's standard of durability and power. Israel has exported Uzis worldwide, although the Israeli army phased out the weapon in 2003.

Well trained but outnumbered, Israeli forces prevailed over the Arab invaders. Under the terms of the 1949 armistice agreements, Israel gained most Palestinian territory except for the Gaza Strip, a small stretch of land along the southeastern Mediterranean, and the West Bank, the area west of the Jordan River that includes parts of Jerusalem. After the war, Egypt occupied Gaza and Jordan seized the West Bank.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced in the conflict fled to refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Significantly, the Arab nations did not extend citizenship to and naturalize these populations as Israel did with Jews exiled from Arab nations. Palestinian refugees insisted on keeping their identity, hoping to return to the territory in the future. With encouragement from the Arab nations, they chose to pursue the recapture of Palestinian lands by force. When these efforts failed, the Palestinians in exile became a stateless people, often forbidden by law from joining the nations in which they sought refuge.

WARS OF 1956, 1967, AND 1973

Since 1949, the armed aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict has had two distinct dimensions: a series of conventional wars from 1956 to 1973, and a guerrilla war between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and other organizations designated as terrorists by the United Nations (UN), including the United States and Israel.

Of the three major conventional wars fought between Israel and the Arabs—the Suez War of 1956, the Six-Day War of 1967, and the Yom Kippur War of 1973—the most decisive was the Six-Day War, after which the Israelis occupied the Gaza Strip and the

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THE SIX-DAY WAR

In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel was pitted against the Arab countries of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Although completely surrounded by adversaries and significantly outnumbered, Israel defeated the combined Arab forces in rapid order on all fronts.

West Bank, including all of Jerusalem. In addition, Israel also seized the Sinai Peninsula, bordering Egypt's strategic Suez Canal, and the Golan Heights, a part of Syria.

While these wars firmly established the conventional military superiority of the Israelis, they ushered in an era of increasingly violent terror attacks on Israeli targets. Key to this phase was the PLO, established in 1964. Nominally, the PLO represented the scattered Palestinian population, with the specific goal of the destruction of Israel. Among the more active groups in the PLO was the Movement for the Liberation of Palestine, or Fatah, led by Yassir Arafat.

The PLO began to wage guerrilla war against Israel from bases in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and, after 1967, the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. After a series of increasingly violent actions by the PLO, including bombings, kidnappings, and hijackings, some Arabs began to seek an end to the ongoing conflict. The Camp David Accords negotiated by U.S. president Jimmy Carter, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, and Israeli prime minister

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Menachim Begin in 1978 led to the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty on March 26, 1979. Nearly thirty years after Israel's founding, Egypt became the first Arab nation to recognize the Jewish state's right to exist. Jordan became the second with the signing of the 1994 Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty.

PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

With the unwillingness of Arab nations to wage conventional war against Israel, the Palestinians turned increasingly to terrorism. In 1982, faced with a heightened PLO presence on its northern borders, Israel invaded Lebanon to stop guerrillas attacking from bases in the area. In 1987, the Palestinian populations of Gaza and the West Bank, increasingly frustrated by two decades of occupation and growing numbers of Israeli settlements in the territories, staged a violent series of protests known as the **intifada**.

In addition to mass demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and riots, tactics of the intifada included stone-throwing attacks on Israeli towns and the targeting of soldiers and civilians with suicide bombers. Israel responded by closing schools and preventing the free movement of Palestinians into Israel. The Oslo Accords of 1993 attempted to resolve the situation by ceding control over parts of the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinian National Authority in exchange for an acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist. But infighting among the Palestinians made the situation increasingly unstable as more radical elements continued to attack Israel.

After Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, it became increasingly the stronghold of Hezbollah, an Islamic terrorist group supported by Syria and Iran that also has a strong presence as a political party and social organization. The beginning of the twenty-first century saw renewed unrest in the occupied territories, with Hezbollah and Hamas, another radical Islamist group, joining the PLO in violent opposition of the Israelis.

In response to waves of suicide bombings in the years after 2000, Israel began construction of a wall that not only would contain Palestinians in the West Bank, but would significantly alter the borders of the territory, bringing land east of Jerusalem under Jewish control. Seen by the Palestinians and others as an attempt to unilaterally redraw borders and crush the economy of the West Bank, the wall drew international condemnation and further undermined Arab-Israeli relations.

In 2006, Israel again invaded Lebanon, this time in response to the abduction and capture of soldiers on the Israeli side of the border. Israel's effort to expel Hezbollah from Lebanon proved unsuccessful. Also during 2006, Israel began to withdraw forces from Gaza and the West Bank, dismantle settlements in the areas, and continue its strategy of containment.

Sixty years after the founding of Israel, the conflict between it and its Arab neighbors continues. A nation conceived as a haven against anti-Semitic violence was under daily attack by enemies who continued to advocate its destruction. The Palestinian Arabs, after a half-century in exile, were yet to establish stable rule over the portions of the West Bank and Gaza they govern. Jerusalem contains religious sites important to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and thus, unfortunately, tensions remain.

See also: Arab League; Balfour Declaration; Camp David Accords; Gaza; Intifada; Israel; Jerusalem; Jordan; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Religion; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank; Zionism.

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Arafat, Yassir *See* Palestinian Issue.

Armenian Genocide

From 1915 to 1917, the forced mass evacuation and related deaths of between 500,000 and more than a million Armenians by the rulers of the Ottoman Empire. Today, the Republic of Turkey claims the deaths were the result of sectarian and ethnic strife, disease, and famine exacerbated by World War I. Outside Turkey, most scholars believe the deaths, because of their number and scope, were the result of a state-supported campaign to destroy the Armenians as an ethnic group within the Ottoman Empire and take over their land and properties. As such, these scholars believe that it should be defined as a genocide.

ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

In the late nineteenth century, Armenians were the largest single Christian minority in the Ottoman Empire. In addition to occupying a large region of northeast Anatolia and Armenia, they had sizable populations throughout present-day Turkey. Because they were neither Turkic nor Muslim (their tradition holds that the Armenians were the first kingdom in the world to adopt Christianity), they were persecuted in the Ottoman Empire, forced to pay additional taxes, and prevented from practicing certain professions.

During the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876–1909), the Ottoman Empire lost a war with tsarist Russia, which occupied a large section of the Armenian homeland. While Russia did relinquish the territory in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, the 1880s saw the Armenian population agitating for greater autonomy and rights in the wake of the Ottoman defeat. Abdul Hamid's response was the brutal suppression of Armenians throughout the empire. An 1896 bank robbery by Armenian radicals in Istanbul unleashed a further wave of violence against the Armenian community. Estimates vary widely, but from 20,000 to 200,000 Armenians were killed in the Ottoman Empire between 1895 and 1897.

WORLD WAR I AND GENOCIDE

By the start of World War I in 1914, a reformist group known as the Young Turks had deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid. The liberal reformers in the group were soon ousted by more nationalistic and militaristic members. In 1914, the Ottoman Empire joined the war on the side of the Central Powers, principally Germany and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, against their longtime foe, the Russians. After a disastrous campaign in the Caucasus Mountains in early 1915, the defeated Turks blamed the area's Armenian population for siding with the Russians. The Ottoman parliament then passed a series of laws making it legal to forcibly deport Armenians and allowing their property and land to be seized.

In the aftermath of this legislation, the Ottoman military forced Armenians throughout empire from their land. The Armenian people were marched to concentration camps, where they often lacked proper shelter and food. In addition to outright killings of Armenians, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands died from starvation in the camps or on the roads to them. While the Turkish government today denies that the treatment of the Armenians constituted genocide, even its own estimates place the number of Armenians who lost their lives in this period at 300,000. The testimony of

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third-party witnesses from the United States, Russia, and even the Ottoman allies in Germany and Austria put the estimates considerably higher, between 800,000 and 1.5 million. When the modern state of Armenia declared its independence in 1918, many of the remaining Armenians in Turkey fled there. Today, there are virtually no Armenians living in Turkey.

See also: Culture and Traditions; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Refugees; Society; World War I.

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Art and Architecture

The visual art and architecture of the modern Middle East and Southwest Asia is dominated by styles and designs that originated in Persian or Arabic culture. These cultures in turn were influenced by earlier periods of the region's rich cultural history, particularly periods dominated by Roman and Byzantine design and engineering.

Since the early twentieth century, modern and traditional forms have been combined to produce buildings, textiles, paintings, and monumental works that further expand the Islamic repertoire. While Middle Eastern art has had its most obvious impact on areas where Islam is widely practiced, its crafts have played an influential part in the development of the arts of Europe, India, and China.

ISLAMIC ART

It is most convenient to speak of "Islamic Art" during the region's modern period in reference to the myriad forms, purposes, and achievements of artists working in widely diverse cultures. In this sense, the term refers to art produced in the lands controlled at one time by the Arab **caliphate**. Within this broad category, however, it is important to recognize distinct Persian, Byzantine, and Turkish traditions.

The region was Arabized as Islam spread during the eighth and ninth centuries, and their arts share certain fundamental characteristics. These characteristics were the result of cultural developments during Islam's early period rather than religious injunctions, since the Koran, Islam's holy book, does not offer any commentary on aesthetics. The early, **ascetic** form of Islam developed elaborate ceremonies during the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750), and a veritable explosion of artistic development occurred during the Golden Age of Islam, the Abbasid Dynasty (ca. 750–1258). Early Islam was quite strict when it came to the arts, and **fundamentalist** Muslims who follow the original practices of Islam; namely, a more restricted use of religious icons.

After the establishment of the first two caliphates, Arabs controlled lands that for centuries had been inhabited by Romans, Persians, non-Arab Semites, and Mesopotamian peoples. They inherited the rich architectural and monumental traditions of these cultures, incorporating their techniques into their own arts. The uniquely Arabic contribution to Middle Eastern art therefore originated after the caliphate had absorbed and synthesized these traditions.

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Intricate arabesque designs are evident throughout the dome of the Masjid-E-Iman Mosque in Iran.
(Robert Harding World Imagery/Getty Images)

Nonrepresentational Art

Although the Koran does not expressly prohibit the representation of living beings, the Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition behind Islam does. This prohibition stems from the Hebrew Bible injunction against making any images that could be worshiped as idols. Islamic artists have historically avoided depicting humans or animals, opting instead to craft mesmerizing patterns. This avoidance of representation is called **aniconism**. Representational art occasionally arose in different periods and places, but it never enjoyed public sanction. At times, in Islamic Egypt, North Africa, and India, it was banned outright; in other areas it was tolerated in private settings. Human and animal figures came to be incorporated in the flourishing **arabesques** that developed during the Abbasid Dynasty.

Named for the Arab artists who invented and developed them, arabesques are a form of largely nonrepresentational art that have dominated the Middle Eastern world for centuries. The arabesque is a complex patterning of lines, shapes, leaves, and abstracted human and animal forms, each emerging out of another in a seemingly endless profusion. Tradition holds that this beautiful complexity is meant to reflect and praise the complexity of Allah's (God's) creation, the world itself.

Arabesque designs cover nearly every available surface in mosques, on rugs, and in illustrated books. Although Islamic artists adhered to aniconism, they were no less lavish than their European counterparts when it came to decoration.

Calligraphy and Book Arts

As a result of pervasive aniconism, or the avoidance of representational art, calligraphy became a highly refined art form in the Islamic world. As a **logocentric** religion, Islam reveres the word of Allah, recorded in the Koran, over any other visual or material aspect of faith. It was considered art enough to copy God's word, written in divinely inspired classical Arabic, into beautifully ornate forms. The name *Allah* can be found everywhere in Islamic calligraphic art even today, and the coats of arms of many countries bear calligraphic inscriptions derived from the Koran.

Around C.E. 1000, a special, elaborate script called *naskhi* was developed for use in copying the Koran. Another distinct script, *maghribi,* used for the same purpose, also

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developed in Moorish Spain around the same time. The elevation of calligraphy to a central Islamic art helped encourage the development of a lively tradition in book arts in Persia during the later Abbasid period (ca. 1000–1200). Specialized techniques for parchment making, book binding, and inking were perfected, and the complicated decorative tradition of geometric patterning was added to ornate calligraphy to produce beautiful illustrated texts, mainly copies of the Koran and the collected *hadith,* or quotes from Muhammad's sayings.

Textiles

Clothing was the chief indicator of rank and status in Islamic societies. **Caliphs** regularly made gifts of articles of clothing to their followers or to those with whom they had political ties. Silk was the preferred fabric for clothing of any value, although cotton was used by the majority of the people. Calligraphic inscriptions often decorated clothing, and important events would be recorded on silken banners.

A workshop for the manufacture of *tiraz,* or embroidered inscriptions, was established in Baghdad and closely controlled by the Abbasids. The workshop itself also came to be known as *tiraz*. Its output met the increasing demand for calligraphically decorated textiles that developed between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.

The famous Persian rugs that continue to grace walls and floors throughout the world today were first developed in this period as well. Arabesque complexity was combined with traditional Persian motifs to produce these highly valuable items, which soon became some of the most sought after in Europe and China.

Importance of Islamic Arts

From the days of the Abbasid Dynasty until the fifteenth or sixteenth century, virtually all of Europe's luxury goods were manufactured in the Middle East. Islamic artists either invented or perfected numerous crafts, such as metalwork, ceramics and glazing, glasswork, rug weaving, and dyeing. They produced clothes for European nobility from Chinese silks, and their beautiful tiles were used to adorn churches and other important buildings.

Many Islamic artworks also made their way east and south, to China and India, during the latter half of the Abbasid Dynasty. Islamic motifs have been found on contemporary Chinese pottery, and a strong Arab influence on northern Indian art has been identified.

Islamic art was therefore of global stature for several centuries, and experienced a decline only after the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century.

ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

The Arabs inherited advanced architectural techniques from the Romans and Byzantines. The focus of their building activities was therefore not on discovering or inventing new techniques so much as adapting those already developed to their primarily religious aims.

Mosques

The centerpiece of Islamic architecture is the mosque, a sanctified place of prayer that unites the community spiritually. Although regional materials and styles varied, the basic layout of the mosque remained the same throughout the Islamic world. A large central court was left empty for believers to gather, with enough room for the **prostrations** required by Islamic worship. An interior niche known as a *mihrab* points toward the holy city of Mecca, and a tall exterior minaret allows the **muezzin** to call the faithful to daily prayer. Furniture is minimal, although there is usually a pulpit for weekly sermons and a stand for the Koran. The

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INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Restoring the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Although Islamic art reigns supreme in the region, there are nevertheless a number of non-Islamic buildings and artworks that have survived the many centuries of Islamic dominance. Christian communities in northern Iraq (the Assyrians and Chaldeans), Lebanon and Syria (the Marionite, Orthodox, and Melkite Catholic Churches), and Israel (mainly Orthodox and Catholic Christian Arabs) have maintained their respective holy sites during this time, and a number of Byzantine or Roman churches were converted into mosques with little structural alteration. As a result, their modern form exhibits features of both artistic traditions.

The holiest Christian site in the world lies in the Old City of Jerusalem. Variously known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Church of the Resurrection, this ancient basilica was built in the fourth century C.E. and is widely believed to be the location at which Jesus Christ was crucified and buried.

Over the seventeen centuries of its existence, the church has been destroyed and rebuilt, lost and regained, numerous times by Persians, Byzantines, Crusaders, and Muslims. Four major Christian sects—Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian, and Coptic Orthodox—all have laid claim to it and fought bitterly over the right to guard and maintain it. In 1852, they divided up areas within the church and the responsibilities associated with them, and to this day fiercely monitor their respective charges. Physical violence and even riots have broken out at the mere shifting of a chair on the roof. To compound this complex arrangement, two ancient Muslim families were charged by Saladin with keeping the door and its key, a responsibility they carry out to the present day.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre desperately requires repair, as major structural elements have been damaged or neglected for centuries. Despite its deteriorating condition and the disputes among its four Christian claimants, millions of pilgrims visit every year, not to mention students of Middle Eastern history, art, and architecture.

most ornate furnishings include enormous decorative lamps, candlesticks, and shields with Koranic verses written or carved in fine calligraphy.

Palaces

The Umayyad rulers initiated a new phase in Islamic architecture, that of palace building. Numerous rural palaces, consisting of a central two-story structure with an elaborate entrance and patio, were built throughout what is now Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia as private pleasure centers for the Umayyad princes. Their design did not reflect any need for defensive measures.

The Abbasid princes elaborated on the basic palace scheme. They were the first to build urban palaces that also served as administrative centers, a reflection of the more centralized, direct nature of Abbasid government. In some locations, such as Baghdad, whole cities grew up around these palaces, which housed thousands of people and were almost cities within cities.

Later Abbasid rule also witnessed the development of palace-fortresses, again a reflection of changing political conditions.

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Skirmishes with the greatly reduced but still threatening Byzantine Empire, as well as incursions from Turkic groups, spurred the building of large, self-sufficient palaces throughout present-day Iraq that featured massive defensive walls as well as extensive internal zoos and gardens, all designed to impress foreign visitors as much as native subjects.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

After the thirteenth-century Mongol invasions, Islam changed irrevocably. Many former taboos were broken, and representational art became more common, especially since the hagiography, or worshipful biography, of Muhammad had produced new narratives about him that were particularly well suited to visual depiction. The most important of these was the story that he did not die but ascended into heaven on a winged horse at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

The influence of **Sufism**, especially in Persia, also introduced new themes to Islamic art. Sufism is the term for several traditions of Islamic mysticism that emphasize the search for divine knowledge through direct personal contact with God. The earliest Sufi traditions began as a reaction to the decadence of the Umayyads and focused on a simple, even ascetic, lifestyle combined with strict adherence to Koranic law. Sufi themes in art included symbolic depictions of holy light such as pierced domes, as well as other mystical or allegorical symbols, some of whose nature is not fully understood today.

With the decline of nonrepresentational art, supernatural beings could finally be depicted as well. Illustrations of angels became common, especially in Persian texts. Other supernatural beings, such as *jinni,* desert or wilderness spirits, and monsters from folklore also appeared.

Miniatures

Apart from larger decorative designs such as arabesques, Islamic painting also found a vital outlet in miniatures, or small paintings of a few figures, in fifteenth-century Persia. These were often painted in a series that depicted scenes from a long narrative such as the Persian *Shah-nameh* or *Book of Kings.* Miniature painting flourished as representational art came to be more accepted, first in Iran and then across the Arab world. Once established, this art form became part of the Islamic repertoire.

Turkish Influence

Under Seljuk rule in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a growing middle class began to assert its taste in the arts. This was expressed as a widespread turn toward representation. Figures, human and animal, were added to traditional decoration to animate everything from calligraphic works to clothing, metal dishes, and tiles. A long-established preference for personal charms, a holdover from the pre-Islamic days of tribal religions, also grew under the more centrally militarized society the Turks introduced. Mamluk rule in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did not bring about any major innovations, though previous arts, especially stone building and metalwork, achieved new levels of technical perfection.

A new group of Turkic people, the Ottomans, seized control of the remnants of the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century and moved into Arab lands in the early sixteenth century. This triggered another wave of Turkish artistic influence. This was itself influenced by both Byzantine and Italian traditions, and Turkish mosques of the Ottoman period (fifteenth through nineteenth centuries) exhibit structural and decorative elements found in Italian windows, gates, and roofs. Ottoman architecture reached its

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greatest development in the sixteenth century with a series of mosques that give Istanbul its characteristic skyline and include the Mosque of Suleiman, the largest mosque in the Ottoman Empire, and the Sehzade Mosque. Built in the mid-sixteenth century by Sinan, the greatest Ottoman architect, they are at once simple and imposing; every unnecessary element has been left out, and every feature is subordinated to the great central domes.

Apart from religious art and architecture, the Ottoman period also saw the construction of the famous Turkish baths with high, vaulted ceilings and intricate tile work. Several Ottoman palaces still survive that bring together centuries of Turkish development in architecture.

Persian Influence

Persian motifs soon spread back into Arab lands after the beginning of the Abbasid Dynasty in the late eighth century, when Persian culture at large was set on a more equal footing with Arabic. These motifs included stylized birds, angels, flowers, and winged creatures. Persian culture also had a strong influence on the Mughal culture of sixteenth- through eighteenth-century India, which adopted Persian literary forms, painting styles, and architecture. The Taj Mahal is an excellent contemporary example of this influence.

Modern Period

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, traditional arts have been subjected to foreign influences, mainly Western, and many have responded by incorporating modern techniques. Some crafts are on the wane because of the influx of inexpensive manufactured goods, while others, such as the legendary Persian rugs, have found a global market. The basic design of mosques has changed little, although new ones are usually constructed with modern materials such as steel and concrete; many even incorporate loudspeakers in their minarets to aid the muezzins. Modern painting techniques have been studied and widely adopted, although religiously **conservative** states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia exercise strict control over public artistic expression. This turn to fundamentalism has driven many artists and intellectuals from their homelands, though they still carry on their work in exile.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Baghdad; Byzantine Empire; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Islam; Istanbul; Jerusalem; Literature and Writing; Mecca; Medina; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Society; Technology and Inventions.

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Atatürk

See Istanbul.

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Baghdad

The capital and largest city of Iraq. With more than 6 million residents, Baghdad is one of the largest cities in Southwest Asia and one of the largest Arab populations in the world. Once the capital of Abbasid Dynasty, it was the cultural center of Islam for 500 years. Currently at the center of the ongoing Iraq War, the city is the scene of brutal sectarian violence and resistance to U.S. occupation.

Although Baghdad is believed to have been built on the Tigris River as the seat of government for the Abbasid Dynasty in 762, a city of the same name is mentioned in pre-Islamic texts. It seems likely, then, that the Abbasid city was built on the site of an earlier town. Baghdad also sits just to the north of the site of the ancient city of Babylon. The original city was built on a circular layout, with two concentric walls surrounding a central mosque. By the late eighth century, Baghdad may well have been the largest city in the world as well as a major center of learning and trade.

By the time it was sacked and heavily damaged by the Mongols in 1258, Baghdad was still a vital trade center, but had diminished in importance with the decline of the **caliphs**. The city was destroyed again by the Mongol leader Tamerlane in 1401. Next Baghdad served as a provincial capital for a variety of Mongol, Persian, and Turkomen empires. In 1534, the city was conquered by the Ottoman Turks and became part of the Ottoman Empire.

In the aftermath of World War I, Baghdad became the capital of the new Kingdom of Iraq. It remained the capital after the 1958 coup that ended royal rule of that country. With rising oil prices bringing in much-needed income in the 1970s, Baghdad's infrastructure was modernized. During the Persian Gulf War of 1991, Baghdad was bombed and much of its energy infrastructure damaged or destroyed.

Starting in 2003, Baghdad was at the center of the Iraq War and sustained great damage, first from coalition bombing and then from looting. As the war continued, Baghdad became the site of repeated terrorist bombings aimed at U.S. forces and Iraqis cooperating with them. In addition, sectarian violence increased between Shia and Sunni extremists, making the city one of the most dangerous places in the world in the early twenty-first century.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Art and Architecture; Economic Development and Trade; Iraq War; Literature and Writing; Terrorists, Stateless; Tools and Weapons.

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Balfour Declaration

An official letter in 1917 from Great Britain's Lord Arthur Balfour—then foreign secretary, formerly prime minister—to Lord Walter Rothschild, a leading British Zionist, affirming the British government's support for a Jewish state in the historical region of Palestine.

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The text

Foreign Office,
November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely

Arthur James Balfour

IMPLICATIONS

Issued during World War I, Lord Balfour's statement was carefully crafted. A Jewish state in Palestine was the fundamental goal of the Zionist movement and, as such, the declaration appealed to Zionists within the Allied Powers, to the newly installed Russian Revolutionary government, which had several members of Jewish ancestry, and to the Jewish populations within the Central Powers. Despite this, there were some in the Zionist camp who were displeased that the declaration did not include all of Palestine as the location for the Jewish state.

To the Arab world, the declaration reeked of imperial excess. The British were giving land that was not their own to a third party. That the religious and civil rights of the inhabitants were to be recognized and protected was of no consequence to Arabs, who regarded the entire declaration as an infringement on local sovereignty.

The Balfour Declaration was a cornerstone on which the state of Israel was founded. Because of its **unilateral** nature, however, it was also a rallying point for those opposed to the much-awaited Jewish state.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Israel; McMahon-Hussein Agreement; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Palestinian Issue; Saudi Arabia; World War I; Zionism.

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See Camp David Accords.

Byzantine Empire

The eastern half of the Roman Empire, which, unlike its western counterpart, maintained a coherent political and cultural identity for more than a millennium. The Byzantine Empire left a rich legacy of architecture and art in the Middle East. It facilitated the medieval Crusades and supported the only significant Christian presence in the Middle East for many centuries.

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ORIGINS

The Byzantine Empire was rooted in two of the most important and powerful civilizations of the Mediterranean region: the Greek and the Roman. For several centuries before the dawn of the Common Era, Greeks founded colonies along the Anatolian and eastern Mediterranean coasts. These were absorbed by the Roman Empire around the first century B.C.E., though Greek culture and language remained firmly in place in these regions. The Roman Empire split into two halves in the fourth century C.E.; its eastern half, with its capital at Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), became what is now known as the Byzantine Empire. This name refers to Byzantium, the original Greek colony that later became Constantinople, and was only given to the empire by nineteenth-century scholars. The Byzantines never referred to themselves as such—they simply regarded themselves as Romans. This identity was more complex, however: though politically and militarily Roman, they were thoroughly Greek by custom and language. Most importantly, they had been devout Christians ever since Emperor Constantine had converted to Christianity.

By 750, the Byzantine Empire was in a state of decline. It had lost many of its extensive holdings in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine to the Islamic Arab invasions of the seventh century.

AGE OF ICONOCLASMS

From 730 to 787 and from 813 to 843, the Byzantine Empire suffered further decline due to widespread internal conflict over **iconoclasm**, or the destruction of religious images. Iconoclasts, those who believed that Christian tradition forbade the making and veneration of religious images, removed or defaced religious icons such as statues and paintings of Jesus Christ. Iconophiles opposed them, believing that since Jesus Christ was the material incarnation of God, material images used for religious worship were therefore not only permissible, but essential. After much turmoil, violent confrontation, and legal vacillating between the two positions, icon veneration was made an official part of Orthodox belief in 843. By then, the iconoclasm controversies had done their damage. The empire had lost most of its Italian territories, which were important ports for the Mediterranean trade, making it more difficult to defend its southeastern borders against the Arabs. Imperial sanction for the veneration of icons, however, allowed a rich tradition in the visual arts to develop in succeeding centuries. This tradition in turn influenced Ottoman art by contributing a lushness of color and detail.

SCHISM AND REVIVAL

In 1054, a schism between church leaders led to the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in the west and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Byzantium. At the same time, the Byzantine Empire lost control of the remainder of its Italian territories. In the ninth and tenth centuries, however, the greatly reduced Byzantine Empire experienced a renaissance as it reclaimed Greek lands and most of the Balkans. It alternately gained and lost territory in what is now Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan in wars with the Abbasid Dynasty. This in itself was a great success, since the empire had turned what was a fight for survival into a series of offensive wars of expansion.

As an illustration of Byzantine gains, near the end of the tenth century nearly all of Syria and Palestine as well as most of Mesopotamia had been reconquered. The Byzantines could have marched on Cairo, Jerusalem, or even Baghdad as well, but Emperor Basil II chose to hold these regained

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After enduring years of a siege, the thousand-year-old Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottoman Turks under the leadership of Mohammed II on May 29, 1453. (Benjamin Constant/The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images)

territories instead, focusing his efforts in conquering Bulgaria in the Balkans.

The arrival of the Seljuk Turks in Anatolia (present-day Turkey), in the mid-eleventh century signaled yet another change of fortune for the Byzantines. Having neglected its eastern borders in favor of European wars, the Byzantine Empire was largely taken by surprise when the Seljuks, who had assumed control of the Abbasid caliphate, pushed all the way west across Anatolia to Nicaea, a region just south of Constantinople, by 1081.

On the verge of annihilation, the Byzantine Empire received a respite by Pope Urban II's 1095 appeal for recruits to fight a war for the Holy Land. The Crusades that followed rejuvenated the empire, as the crusaders had to pass through Constantinople on their way to Jerusalem and were made to swear to restore all Byzantine lands they retook from the Turks. They did so at first, allowing the empire to regain part of Anatolia, but the crusaders soon established principalities in Syria and Palestine, bickering among themselves and refusing to turn more land over to the Byzantines.

FINAL DECLINE

Emperor Manuel I Comnenus (r. 1143–1180) presided over the last period of potential

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RISE AND FALL OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

CA. 630s–680s Byzantines pushed back into Anatolian and European territories by Islamic Arab invaders

730–787 First iconoclastic period results in weakening of empire through internal conflict

813–843 Second iconoclastic period results in loss of Italian territories

843–1025 Revival under Macedonian Renaissance; interest in classical culture peaks

1002–1018 Wars against Bulgarians under Basil II, the "Bulgar Slayer"

1018 Bulgaria surrenders and is annexed; Byzantines control Balkans

1025 Basil II dies; decline of empire begins

1054 Religious split within Christianity results in Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches

1071 Seljuk Turks conquer most of Anatolia; last Byzantine outposts in Italy lost

1097 Crusaders help Byzantine armies recapture Nicaea from the Turks

1097–1176 Byzantines recapture Anatolian coasts from Turks, pushing them into central Anatolia

1176 Emperor Manuel I Comnenus fails to capture Konya, capital of the Seljuk Turks

1180 Emperor Manuel I Comnenus dies; decline of empire accelerates

1185 Bulgaria rebels successfully; Byzantines lose Balkans

1204 Constantinople conquered by Crusaders; short-lived Latin Empire established

1261 Michael VIII retakes Constantinople, ending Latin rule

1300s Empire wracked by civil war as territories seek independence; land continually lost to Turks

1453 Constantinople conquered by Ottoman Turks under Mehmed II; remaining Byzantine lands subsumed into Ottoman Empire

Byzantine recovery in the latter half of the twelfth century. Faced with numerous enemies, popular opposition, and financial difficulties, Manuel nevertheless hoped to restore the empire to its former power. He mounted several fruitless campaigns against the Normans, who had taken Sicily, and the Seljuks, whose 1176 victory at Myriocephalon, in central Anatolia, finally stopped Byzantine expansion.

Then, in 1204, a group of Venetian crusaders sacked and looted Constantinople and briefly ruled what they called the Latin Empire. Although they retook the city, the Byzantines never fully recovered. In the thirteenth century, successive invasions by Ottoman Turks devastated their Anatolian holdings, and their outlying territories in Europe achieved independence through successful rebellions.

By the end of the fourteenth century, the empire had been completely dismembered. Only Constantinople remained in Byzantine hands. It was beseiged in the 1400s, but its final conquest was delayed by Mongol attacks on the Ottomans. The Byzantines enjoyed a brief respite through the 1420s, when the Ottomans fought off Mongol attacks.

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THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE, CA. 1025

The Byzantine Empire experienced many cycles of growth and decline. It shrank dramatically following the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476. By the late tenth century, however, the Byzantines had recaptured much of their former territory in the Balkans and Asia Minor. The death of Emperor Basil II in 1025 led to another extended period of decline.

The empire came to its end when the Turkish sultan Mehmet II conquered Constantinople in 1453.

LASTING IMPACT

The Byzantine legacy can be found primarily in the region's cultures and religions. The empire established Christianity as a major world faith, allowing it to spread throughout Europe and the Middle East. Its ornate art, especially its mosaics and frescoes, have a unique, immediately recognizable, and widely influential style. Constantinople (now Istanbul) still houses many of its architectural wonders, such as the vast cisterns, or underground water sources, and the Hagia Sophia, a magnificent church that was made a mosque, then a museum. Finally, the empire's complicated political affairs gave rise to the word *byzantine,* which means "complicated or intricate" as well as "devious and insincere."

See also: Art and Architecture; Crusades;

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Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Istanbul; Language; Literature and Writing; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Religion; Society; Technology and Inventions; Tools and Weapons.

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Camp David Accords

A series of agreements signed by the United States, Egypt, and Israel in September 1978 with the goal of a long-term solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Based on the concept of trading land for peace, the accords led directly to the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, including the first formal recognition of Israel by an Arab nation. A framework for a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict along the same lines has made progress, though only sporadically, since Camp David.

BACKGROUND

In 1977, newly elected U.S. president Jimmy Carter made the Middle Eastern peace process a priority of his administration. Egypt's president Anwar Sadat jump-started the peace process when he became the first Arab leader to visit Israel in November 1977. While in Israel, Sadat addressed the Israeli parliament, known as the Knesset, on peace, territories occupied by Israel, and the Palestinian issue. Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin saw reasons to engage in talks with Egypt alone, instead of with a larger Arab delegation. In September 1978, Carter called the two foreign leaders to meet with him at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland.

TALKS AND RESULTS

At first the talks did not go well. Discussions between Begin and Sadat grew heated in the first three days, leading to a complete impasse. Carter responded by typing a draft agreement describing resolutions of the major issues and presenting the draft to each leader in personal meetings. He would incorporate their feedback, then present the redrafted agreement to the other leader for review. Over the next nine days, the prospects for a settlement seemed dim. But

In September 1978, U.S. president Jimmy Carter (center) celebrated the signing of the Camp David Accords with Egyptian president Anwar Sadat (left) and Israeli prime minister Menachim Begin (right). The Accords were the first peace treaty between Israel and one of its Arab neighbors. (David Hume Kennerly/Getty Images)

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GREAT LIVES

Menachem Begin (1913–1992)

One of Israel's most uncompromising and controversial leaders, Menachem Wolfovitch Begin spent his entire life fighting for the establishment and security of a Jewish state, both in the streets of Jerusalem and in the Knesset (Israeli parliament). Born on August 16, 1913, in the Belarusian town of Brest-Litovsk, Begin came from a line of respected and accomplished **rabbis**. At the time, Brest-Litovsk was on the western borders of Russia near Poland, so Begin went to Warsaw for his education.

Graduating with a law degree from the University of Warsaw in 1935, Begin became a key figure in the Betar Youth Movement, a Zionist organization active in Eastern Europe. From his earliest days, Begin had listened to his father praise Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement. Instead of practicing law, Begin devoted himself completely to Zionism.

When Germany invaded Warsaw in 1939, Begin narrowly escaped by crossing into the Soviet Union. His parents and one of his brothers died in concentration camps, however, and Begin was arrested in the Soviet Union and sent to a gulag, or prison camp, in Siberia for a year. Then in 1942, he made his way to Palestine as part of the Polish army in exile.

Once in Palestine, he joined a right-wing militant Zionist movement called Irgun Zvai Leumi. The Irgun had split from the Jewish militia, the Haganah, because its members thought the Jewish leadership was overly accommodating to British rule. Begin's fierce but precise speeches quickly elevated him within the organization, which he led from 1943 to 1948. Under Begin's leadership, the Irgun committed many terrorist acts, especially bombings, against the Arabs and British. For these acts, the Haganah as well as the British pursued Irgun members.

After the establishment of Israel in 1948, Begin helped found the right-wing political party Herut, serving as head of the opposition in the Knesset until 1967. In 1970, he became joint chairman of the Likud Party. When his party won a landslide parliamentary election on May 17, 1977, Begin became Israel's sixth prime minister.

Begin was uncompromising on the issue of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Moreover, he opposed the return of these territories to their previous owners, Egypt and Jordan. Nevertheless, he was determined to seek peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and in 1978, he was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Egypt's president Anwar Sadat for their cooperation in the Camp David Accords.

During his years as prime minister (1977–1983), he ordered the bombing of Iraq's first nuclear reactor in 1981 and the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The invasion succeeded in its goal of driving the PLO from Lebanon to Tunisia, but Begin was widely criticized for the deaths of many Palestinian civilians. World opinion turned against Israel, and massive opposition at home forced Begin to resign in 1983.

Begin grew increasingly remote after his retirement from public life, and died at his apartment in Tel Aviv on March 9, 1992. His legacy remains deeply divisive today, even in Israel. His life embodied many of the tensions within Israeli society. He was a stalwart defender of the right to establish a Jewish state, and he did not shy away from sometimes resorting to violent means to help achieve it.

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BACKGROUND AND RESULTS OF CAMP DAVID TALKS

October 1973 Egypt and Syria defeated in Yom Kippur war, convincing many that Israel could not be destroyed militarily

January 1977 U.S. President Jimmy Carter takes office and restarts peace talks between Arab states and Israel

November 1977 Frustrated with the slow progress of talks, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat makes a state visit to Israel, the first Arab leader to do so

September 5, 1978 Carter receives Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin at Camp David, Maryland, for a week and a half of talks

September 8, 1978 Heated talks reach an impasse; Sadat and Begin unable to continue talks face to face

September 9–17, 1978 Carter negotiates one-on-one with both leaders; historic Camp David Accords settled and signed

October 1978 Begin and Sadat jointly awarded Nobel Peace Prize

March 1979, Based on Camp David Accords, Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty signed, making Egypt first Arab state to recognize Israel

Carter's room-to-room diplomacy and relentless drive to achieve peace eventually prevailed on the thirteenth day, when Begin conceded a major point about Israeli settlements in the Sinai Peninsula.

The document that came out of Camp David, titled "Framework for Peace in the Middle East," laid the foundation for the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt signed the following year. Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula over a three-year period; Egypt agreed to open the Suez Canal to Israeli ships; and both nations promised to normalize relations with each other. By not proposing any resolution to the question of the legal status and rights of Palestinians living in the West Bank, Carter had achieved a remarkable breakthrough in the Arab-Israeli conflict at Camp David.

OTHER CONSEQUENCES

While the immediate consequence of the Camp David Accords was the peace treaty, there were others as well. Egypt, then the most powerful Arab nation, was suspended from the Arab League. Ultimately other Arab nations, notably Jordan, also made treaties with Israel. As a result, the status of the Palestinians became the focal point of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Sadat and Begin shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978, but Sadat was assassinated in 1981. Since Camp David, there have been several more attempts at a land-for-peace approach to the Israeli-Syrian and the Palestinian issue, including the Oslo Accords of 1993. While there has been some turnover of lands in the Gaza Strip and West Bank to Palestinian control, this has not brought peace to the region.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Gaza; Israel; Jerusalem; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Religion; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank.

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Crusades

From 1095 to 1291, a series of military campaigns waged by European Christians against Muslims in Anatolia and the inhabitants of the biblical lands surrounding Jerusalem. The nominal goal of the Crusades was the recapture of these lands, though in reality they were a response to several centuries of Muslim expansion.

With the formal blessing of a succession of Catholic popes, European forces made long, difficult journeys to the eastern Mediterranean to wage these campaigns. While ultimately indecisive in military terms, the Crusades had long-term political, economic, and social impacts on both Europe and Southwest Asia. They established a fundamental and persistent mistrust and even hostility between Muslims and European Christians, while simultaneously exposing both to new scientific, economic, and political ideas.

BACKGROUND

Jerusalem is a holy city for three of the world's major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—containing numerous sites considered sacred by followers of these faiths. By the eleventh century, Jerusalem and the lands traditionally associated with the Hebrew and Christian Bibles were under the control of the Seljuk Turks, who had taken them from the Fatimid Egyptians. Under Turkish rule, Christians in these lands faced increased persecution.

At the same time, the Byzantine Empire had lost most of its territory in Anatolia to the Turks. The decline of what had been a great Christian empire at Muslim hands alarmed Europe's Christian leaders, who became willing to set aside the considerable conflicts among themselves in order to counter the threat of further Muslim expansion. Moreover, these leaders headed governments that were more stable and better organized than any in Europe since the Roman Empire. The Crusades could not have occurred before the development of this organizational capacity.

First Crusade

At the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II exhorted European Christians to go to war against Muslims in the Holy Land. In exchange for military service, he promised crusaders full forgiveness for all their earthly sins. Between 60,000 and 100,000 volunteers joined the First Crusade, motivated not only by religious fervor, but also by the possibility of riches and adventure. Despite their purportedly religious aims, however, the crusaders massacred Jews in Germany as they made their way toward the Holy Land. This seemingly inexplicable contradiction demonstrates the sense of license crusaders had; for many of them, religious aims did not prevail over material ones.

The initial wave of crusaders was composed of ill-equipped and inexperienced pilgrims, most of whom died of starvation in Hungary. A much stronger force assembled at Constantinople from late 1096 through early 1097, led by such illustrious Norman lords as Hugh of Vermandois, a brother of Philip I of France, Godfrey of Bouillon, and Robert II of Normandy. At a considerable cost, this second wave took Nicaea in 1097 and Antioch in 1098 (both in Anatolia), killing its Christian and non-Christian inhabitants alike. Similarly, Christian and non-Christian inhabitants were massacred in Jerusalem when the crusaders took it in 1099.

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TURNING POINTS OF THE CRUSADES

Year	Event
1095	Pope Urban II advocates First Crusade at Council of Clermont
1096	First Crusade begins; crusaders massacre Jews in Germany
1099	Frankish crusaders take Jerusalem
1099–1109	Crusader States established
1127	Seljuk leader Zangi becomes ruler of Mosul and consolidates power in Syria, then begins to assault crusaders
1144	Edessa falls to Zangi, spurring the Second Crusade
1146	Zangi murdered; son Nur al-Din assumes control and continues to fight crusaders
1147	Second Crusade reaches Syria and besieges Damascus
1148	Second Crusade fails to take Damascus and ends
1169	Saladin comes to power in Egypt
1174	Nur al-Din dies; Saladin then marches on and seizes Damascus
1187	Saladin's forces recapture Jerusalem
1189	Third Crusade begins
1192	Third Crusade ends after retaking only a handful of coastal cities
1193	Saladin dies
1204	Crusaders sack Constantinople and establish Latin Empire
1229	Sultan al-Kamil of Egypt gives Jerusalem to Frederick II during Sixth Crusade
1258	Mongols sack Baghdad
1261	Byzantines retake Constantinople
CA. 1300	Crusader States dissolved

The crusaders solidified their gains by establishing four Crusader States in the lands they had captured: the counties of Edessa and Tripoli, the principality of Antioch, and the kingdom of Jerusalem. Despite their vows to the Byzantine emperor to return all recaptured Byzantine lands, the crusaders returned only Nicaea, and busied themselves with fortifying their new states with castles.

The First Crusade was by far the most successful when measured in terms of the crusaders' original aims. Although the unexpected nature of the European assault greatly aided the crusaders, a more decisive factor in their relatively rapid and expansive gains was the widespread power struggles between Seljuk military leaders, called *atabegs,* and the Fatimid **caliphate**.

Muslim Counter-Crusade and Second Crusade

Only several decades after the crusaders took Jerusalem did Muslims begin to mount an effective counter-crusade; before then, there was simply no organized opposition of a comparable scale. This changed when an *atabeg* (Turkic governor) named Zangi consolidated control of Syria and northwestern Iraq in the 1120s and began a series of campaigns against the Europeans that culminated in the capture of Edessa in 1144. Zangi was assassinated two years later, but his son, Nur al-Din, carried on his work.

The fall of Edessa prompted the Second Crusade, whose forces arrived in Syria in 1147 after a costly trip through Anatolia. Though the majority of the First Crusade's

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During the wars known as the Crusades, the North African Muslim city of Tripoli fell to the western crusaders in April, 1102. (Charles Alexandre Debacq/The Bridgeman Art Library/ Getty Images)

forces were Frankish, those of the Second Crusade were a mixture of Frankish and German, being led by King Louis VII and Emperor Conrad III respectively. Instead of supporting the remaining Crusader States, however, these newcomers besieged Damascus, which until then had maintained friendly ties with the kingdom of Jerusalem. They failed in their attempt in July 1148, thus ending the Second Crusade.

Saladin and Third Crusade

In the 1150s and 1160s, Nur al-Din further consolidated political and military power in the region, taking Damascus in 1154 and continuing to assault the Franks in the Crusader States. The Europeans, having failed to make much headway in the Holy Land, had launched several attacks on Egypt instead. In 1169, therefore, Nur al-Din sent forces under his second-in-command, a Kurdish warrior named Salah al-Din (known in the West as Saladin), to aid the Fatimids against these attacks.

Saladin accomplished much more than this, however; he overthrew the Fatimid caliphate and took command of Egypt. When Nur al-Din died in 1174, Saladin declared himself sultan of Egypt and founded the Ayyubid Dynasty. He eventually took control of Syria and became a Muslim hero, recapturing numerous crusader-controlled cities, including Jerusalem in 1187.

In response to the fall of Jerusalem and the general devastation of the Crusader States at the hands of Saladin, Frederick I Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire (Germany), Philip II Augustus of France, and Richard I of England led the Third Crusade in 1189. This force soon faced internal instability, however, when Frederick I drowned in southern Anatolia in 1190. Most of his army returned to Germany, and the remaining English and French forces managed only to retake a few Mediterranean ports. Richard I also negotiated a three-year truce with Saladin in 1192 that allowed Christian pilgrims to visit Jerusalem.

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ROUTES OF THE CRUSADES

During the Middle Ages, European Christians, known as Crusaders, traveled by land and by sea to reach the Holy Land with the intention of defeating the Muslims who ruled there. The difficult journeys often took months to complete. Ultimately, the Crusades did not achieve their goal of returning the Holy Land to Christian rule.

Later Crusades

Crusades were launched sporadically throughout the thirteenth century, but only two of them resulted in significant shifts in power, temporary at that. The Fourth Crusade of 1202 targeted Constantinople, a prosperous Christian city and a center of learning, which was taken in 1204 and made the seat of the short-lived Latin Empire. The city was devastated and looted by the Crusaders. Byzantine rule was reestablished in 1261. The Sixth Crusade, led by Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire in 1227, could not make any military gains due to infighting among Crusader States. Frederick gambled on diplomacy instead, and won control of Jerusalem and a number of other religiously significant towns such as Bethlehem and Nazareth for a ten-year term. The Egyptian Ayyubid ruler was too busy trying to suppress rebellions in Syria, and so readily agreed to the Holy Roman Emperor's terms.

Other Crusades could not halt the inevitable decline of the Crusader States, all of

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GREAT LIVES

Saladin (ca. 1138–1193)

The most famous Muslim hero, Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (Saladin in the West), overthrew the Fatimid **caliphate** that ruled Egypt, united Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Yemen. He led some of the greatest Muslim military successes against the Christian crusaders, campaigns that resulted in the permanent recapture of many of the territories the crusaders had seized.

Born in Tikrit, now part of Iraq (and the birthplace of executed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein), Saladin belonged to a prominent Kurdish family. He did not begin to distinguish himself until he was a young man, when he served in several campaigns in Egypt against invading Franks. He assassinated Shawar, the vizier of the Egyptian Fatimid caliph, and was appointed to take the vizier's place as well as command Nur al-Din's troops there in 1169.

Saladin flourished as a leader. In 1171, he overthrew the Shiite Fatimid caliphate that ruled Egypt and replaced it with his own Sunni government, which would grow to become the Ayyubid Dynasty. Saladin remained subservient to his commander, Nur al-Din, but when the emir died in 1174, Saladin declared himself Sultan of Egypt and immediately invaded Syria with a small but effective force.

From 1174 to 1186, he worked to unite the Muslim territories of Palestine, Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia against the crusaders. He was very skillful in the use of anti-crusader propaganda, and used force where diplomacy failed. He was soon known in these lands as a firm but generous and fair ruler.

In July 1187, Saladin destroyed a large crusader army in northern Palestine, then swept through the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, capturing castles and towns that the crusaders had controlled for nearly nine decades. On October 2, 1187, the city of Jerusalem surrendered to him; this was the final spiritual blow to the Crusades.

Saladin was expected to kill the Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem as revenge for the crusaders' slaughter of Muslims there when they captured the city in 1099. Instead, however, he allowed them to pay a ransom for their freedom, earning him a reputation in Europe as a just and devout leader.

Saladin died in his capital at Damascus on March 4, 1193. His family ruled the lands he had united for about fifty years before the Mamluks, Turkish muilitary leaders, overthrew them. Saladin's legacy did not lie in an enduring political structure but in his reputation as an accomplished Muslim leader. More than any other Muslim commander, Saladin was responsible for the decline of the crusader presence in the Middle East.

which had fallen into Muslim hands by the end of the century.

SIGNIFICANCE

The ultimate significance of the Crusades was not political in nature, but economic and religious. For one, they created an entirely new network of trade between the Middle East and Europe that passed through Egypt and eastern Mediterranean ports. Not only new goods such as Persian rugs and Indian spices spread through Europe; also passed along were the potent ideas and discoveries of Islamic science, mathematics, and philosophy. The logistics of funding, equipping, and transporting

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huge crusader armies to the Middle East also led to the rise of banking and trade systems that became the core of Italian commercial power during the Renaissance. Most of all, perhaps, the Crusades cast the Christian and Muslim worlds at odds to a depth and extent that continue to effect world events to the present day.

See also: Byzantine Empire; Economic Development and Trade; Jerusalem.

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Culture and Traditions

With a few exceptions, most notably Israel, the cultures of the modern Middle East and Southwest Asia have synthesized Persian, Arabic, and Turkish traditions into a diverse set of practices. European cultures, from the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, have also influenced the region. Although the Middle East and Southwest Asia have many common cultural traits, diversity is certainly evident.

ISLAMIC INFLUENCE

Although Islamic culture was originally Arab in character, contributions from Persian, northern Indian, and Turkish peoples were assimilated as the Umayyad caliphate spread throughout the region in the seventh and eighth centuries. Widespread modernization and the establishment of nation-states have further diversified Islamic culture, but a variety of other traditions remains influential in Middle Eastern Islamic societies. The majority of Middle Eastern Muslims favor religiously and socially conservative practices derived from literal interpretations of the Koran and *hadith,* or the holy book of Islam and the collection of sayings by Islam's prophet, Muhammad. However, in the last three decades of the twentieth century, a growing number of **progressive** Muslims made their presence felt, primarily by embracing such Western notions as gender equality and individualism.

Dress

The Koran instructs women to dress and behave modestly in public. At home, however, Muslim women often dress in Western-style clothing such as pants, shirts, blouses, and dresses. Muslim women who don protective clothing intend to shield their body or face from attention only when they go out. Although Westerners frequently perceive this practice as degrading or repressive, it is intended as a gesture of respect for women. While the majority of Muslim women do cover their heads in what is called *hijab*, many do not. Observing this custom depends on how conservative one's social environment is and how family members interpret the Koran. A small minority of women cover their faces, except for a slit for the eyes. This is called *niqab*.

The role of women in public affairs in Muslim societies varies greatly from place to place. In some countries, women are denied active participation, and their roles are limited mainly to child rearing, housework, and when

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Qatari children dressed in traditional garb walk past the Asian Games official merchandise store at a shopping mall in Doha, the capital of Qatar. (Karim Jaafar/Stringer/AFP/Getty Images)

necessary, working in education and medicine in order to treat other women. In other countries, they hold leading positions in government and politics, ranging from holding membership in parliament to being the head of government. The four most populous countries in the Muslim world (Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Turkey) have had at one time or another women leading their governments.

Islamic Etiquette

A number of rules of etiquette are commonly practiced throughout the Islamic world. Those governing hospitality are especially important, as the conduct of business is based on personal relationships of trust and intimacy. Guests are invariably greeted with refreshments, including coffee, sweets, figs, and other fresh fruit.

Public manners are no less subject to Islamic influence. Middle Easterners tend to interact at close bodily range, but physical affection is avoided. Muslims typically greet and take leave of each other with set phrases from the Koran praising Allah. Marketplace manners are distinctly lively, as sellers engage in vociferous, sometimes frenetic haggling with buyers.

Family Life

Familial ties are paramount, often leading to instances of **nepotism** and other forms of favoritism in government and business. While these are regarded as corruption in Western societies, they are natural expressions of the ancient system of tribal relations that has dominated Arab lands since their early settlement. Consequently, family life and professional life are often intermingled to an inextricable degree. Elders are respected as authorities, and family life remains strongly **patriarchal**. The origins of Middle Eastern family life can be found in pre-Islamic tribal relations as well as in the Koran.

Men may marry any number of women under Islamic law, though they may not

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have more than four wives at one time. Some Islamic leaders have used this law to consolidate dynastic power. Ibn Saud, the founding monarch of modern Saudi Arabia (r. 1932–1953), fathered forty-five sons and an unknown number of daughters in the first decades of the twentieth century; his enormous family continues to rule the country today.

Generally speaking, although the Koran teaches equality between the sexes, women do not have the social, legal, political, or economic status of men in Islamic cultures. In more conservative states, women are often subjected to physical abuse when accused of flouting Islamic law and are not allowed to hold positions of authority in government or in religious bodies. In such Islamic countries, women's roles are limited.

Law

The majority of Islamic states base their legal systems on Sharia (literally "path"), or the body of sacred Islamic law. In such conservative states as Saudi Arabia (primarily Sunni) and Iran (Shia), before laws or royal decrees are passed, they must be approved by the *ulema,* or authoritative group of Islamic legal scholars, to ensure that they are in line with Koranic teachings. The selection of the *ulema* of each country varies in terms of political influence and doctrinal character.

Islam does not prohibit corporal punishment or slavery, though the latter has been officially outlawed across the region; the former is still in widespread use in conservative Islamic states. In Saudi Arabia, for example, a habitual thief may have one hand cut off, but not if he is sufficiently poor and the stolen goods are public property. Public executions are also still relatively common in conservative Islamic states. In more Westernized states, however, European models of jurisprudence have largely prevailed. Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria all have court systems based on **secular** law.

IRANIAN CULTURE

While Iranians have adopted many Islamic cultural practices, especially since the 1979 revolution, a distinct Persian culture has survived since antiquity. Tension between this traditional identity and Shiite Islam has been a regular feature of Iranian life since the Pahlavi Dynasty invoked Iran's ancient monarchical tradition as a means of legitimating its authority in the twentieth century. Prior to the Pahlavis, Persian traditional culture had undergone a centuries-long process of integration with Islamic identity that reached its peak in the arts and literature of the sixteenth century.

Shia is the predominant branch of Islam in Iran, and the sometimes violent persecution early Shiites experienced at the hands of the Sunni majority has left a permanent mark on Iranian culture. The Iranian Shia identity revolves in part around this history of persecution, and the public expression of radically **fundamentalist** beliefs is commonplace.

Until the twentieth century, the formal study of music was limited by Islamic law. The limitations were dropped during the Pahlavis' rule (1926–1979). Some of the limitations were restored when Ayatollah Khomeini's Shia government reintroduced this ban. Folk songs and classical Persian music have been passed down unofficially, however, and Western pop music enjoys a healthy if illicit following.

Other cultural arenas, notably film, literature, and education, are closely monitored and censored by Iran's *ulema.* Foreign culture is equally subject to this scrutiny. In 1989, when the British-Indian author Salman Rushdie published his novel *The Satanic Verses,* Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwah,* or Islamic legal opinion, that denounced the

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book for satirizing Muhammad and put a bounty on Rushdie's life.

TURKISH CULTURE

Of all the predominantly Islamic states in the region, Turkey exhibits Western influence most overtly and pervasively. The founder of the modern Turkish state, Kemal Atatürk (r. 1923–1938), led a sweeping modernization campaign that made many former social mores and Islamic practices, particularly dress, marriage, and public expressions of worship, either officially defunct or outright illegal.

Consequently, Turkey has the most diverse culture in the region, having inherited Greek and Roman artistic influences from the Byzantine Empire, an emphasis on tribal affiliation and ethnic identity from the Turks, and Islamic traditions from the Arabs. Persian culture has also had a profound impact on Turkey's music and poetry, as its artists have been inspired by and adopted traditional styles and instruments.

Turkey is a socially and politically liberal society compared to other nations in the region. Western dress, media, and customs are most popular, as Turks increasingly identify with Western Europe. The government is highly secular, particularly since political expressions of Islamic fundamentalism are frequently quashed by the military, which remains loyal to Atatürk's vision of a modern republic. Nevertheless, Islamic politicians have made significant political gains in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2007, for example, Abdullah Gül, a moderate Islamist politician, won the presidential election.

A continuing blemish in Turkish culture, however, is the repression of ethnic minorities such as Armenians and Kurds. Until the late 1990s, the Kurdish language and other expressions of Kurdish identity were illegal, despite the fact that approximately 20 percent of Turkey's population is Kurdish. Significant tension between mainstream Turkish society and minorities periodically results in bloody conflict and further repression of non-Turkish cultures.

CULTURAL ANOMALIES

Also found in the region are cultures or groups that have resisted Islamization or adapted it in response to their special economic or political circumstances.

Gulf States

Among the wealthiest countries in the world, the Gulf States of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates are in general less socially and religiously conservative than their Arab and Persian neighbors. Massive oil revenues have been used to develop the infrastructures of these countries. Western dress and social habits are also much more common there. Significant numbers of foreign laborers, as well as engineers and managers have contributed to a cultural practice that is more similar to Turkey's than to Iran's.

Israel

Israel's population consists mainly of Arabic Palestinians, Middle Eastern (Sephardic) Jews, Jewish immigrants from numerous Western nations, and native-born Israeli Jews. Israel is a Jewish state, established in 1948 as the Jewish homeland, so the traditions of Jewish society predominate. While the Arabic elements of Israeli society tend to follow the dominant Islamic cultural patterns of other Arab states, the majority Jewish population is highly diverse, tends to be extremely well educated, and, with one significant exception, is politically progressive.

Like conservative Muslims, the politically conservative Orthodox Jews, who comprise a minority but significant segment of the Israeli population, live according to a strict set of religious tenets, maintaining unique

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dress, diet, and social mores as dictated by rabbinical interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. The rest of Jewish Israel is Western in outlook, owing to the Russian, German, French, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, and British immigrants who settled in the region during the twentieth century. The traditions of Judaism constitute the primary cultural influence there, determining national holidays, education, and, to a significant extent, legal procedures.

Other Minorities

The largest stateless ethnic group in the region, the Kurds, maintain their own cultural traditions in the face of chronic repression from their host nations, mainly Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. They are primarily mountain herders, though a significant number live as farmers in small villages or urban dwellers in larger cities.

Christian Arabs in Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian countries form a significant minority with more than 10 million living in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. While most are members of Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches, Protestants constitute a small minority among these Christians. The Christians of the Middle East trace their adherence to Christianity to the early days of the first century.

FOOD CULTURE

Mutton, wheat bread, yogurt, dates, meat, rice, barley, and dairy products form the basis of most of the region's diet. Cheese and curd are the mainstay of the nomadic Bedouin diet. Two sets of religious dietary laws, one Islamic and one Judaic, govern the permissibility of various foods for followers of each faith. Both require the blessing and slaughtering of animals in a specific way and forbid the consumption of blood. *Kashrut,* Judaic dietary law, forbids the consumption of pork and of meat and dairy products at the same meal; *halal,* Islamic dietary law, forbids the consumption of pork and intoxicants such as alcohol.

See also: Agriculture; Armenian Genocide; Art and Architecture; Baghdad; Byzantine Empire; Economic Development and Trade; Gulf States; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Islam; Israel; Istanbul; Language; Literature and Writing; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Saudi Arabia; Slavery and Slave Trade; Society.

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Economic Development and Trade

Most of the economic activity in the Middle East prior to the twentieth century was based on local subsistence and cross-continental trade. The Middle East is a corridor through which goods, ideas, and even populations can pass between Europe, Asia, and Africa. As a result, control of the area has been hotly contested by Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Turks, and, most recently, European states.

With the discovery of oil and development of the modern petroleum industry in the early twentieth century, the economic picture of oil-possessing states was radically transformed. States that had previously exercised little political or economic power were now able to dominate not only their neighbors, but also the global economy, which had come to depend on petroleum. The three types of Arab societies that dominate the area—nomadic, villager, and urban—have distinct economies that interact in complex ways.

NOMADIC ECONOMIES

For centuries, nomadic societies have relied on camels, cows, goats, and sheep to meet their needs. Most practice a form of seasonal grazing, moving their herds between fertile territories whose boundaries are determined by intertribal affairs. In mountainous regions, **transhumance**, or moving herds between seasonal grazing areas at different elevations, is the most common practice. When the opportunity arises, herdsmen may also grow their own crops.

The diet furnished by these activities is nutritionally poor, featuring little variety in vegetables and fruit, and a large number of dairy products. Meat is rare, as it traditionally comes only from animals near-dying of natural causes. Therefore, animals and dairy products are the chief trade goods of the nomads, who supplement their production with regular raids on each other or nearby villages.

Nomads also serve as guides for larger caravans moving through inhospitable desert regions. The Bedouins' knowledge of oases and back trails was no doubt an essential component of the success of East-West trade routes over many centuries.

As economies in the region have modernized, and especially as national concerns over boundaries and control of natural resources such as petroleum have become paramount, the nomadic economy has both benefited and suffered. National boundaries now limit herding movements, and oil fields have either blocked access to fertile areas or destroyed them entirely. On the other hand, the Bedouin enjoy a de facto protected status in many Arab states because of the centrality of their way of life to Arab identity. This status means that they are often allowed to wander freely within certain regions, and sometimes receive government aid. They have also been able to acquire modern amenities, such as electronic devices and motor vehicles, that make their activities easier. The majority of Bedouins have settled near villages and towns, and their children attend public schools. Their numbers have declined to the point that they constitute no more than 3 percent of the population of the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

VILLAGE ECONOMIES

Village economies have always been prey to several debilitating factors, including restricted land ownership, a challenging

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climate, and poor communication. The rise of **nationalism** and the oil state in particular have generally increased the threat.

Before the 1950s, the majority of growers in the Arab Middle East had never owned the land they worked. Instead, a small number of landowners in cities had traditionally owned vast tracts of land, which were worked by peasants who paid fees to them. The fees are determined by the peasants' total contribution to the process of cultivation; those who contributed labor as well as their own seeds and tools earn more than those who contributed only labor. It was common for the latter to receive only 20 percent of the profits from a harvest. When their earnings could not support them, they often turned to moneylenders who charged exorbitant rates of interest. It was a self-perpetuating cycle of hard work, poverty, and debt. Land reforms in most of the Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian countries since the 1950s have provided the majority of peasants with land to cultivate and support their own families. However, the rapid rise in population and the repeated division of land areas among inheritors made it difficult to support families on smaller areas of farmland. Consequently, more and more villagers find it financially impossible to continue, and move to large cities for employment.

The Middle Eastern climate, though quite varied, is overwhelmingly semiarid or arid. Freshwater is the most valuable resource in the region apart from oil. Droughts can have devastating effects in semiarid regions where surpluses are rare. While modern technology such as **desalination plants** and advanced irrigation techniques has increased agricultural output, these technologies are costly. When government aid is not forthcoming for the development and distribution of these technologies, the climate itself presents insurmountable problems to poverty-stricken villagers.

URBAN ECONOMIES

By contrast, urban economies in Southwest Asia have always enjoyed a great deal of activity, except when invaders sacked or conquered individual cities. The major economic centers have included Baghdad, Tehran, Damascus, Beirut, and Istanbul. As centers of power over vast rural areas, these cities were often all invaders needed to control in order to dominate entire native populations.

During the medieval period, the Middle East was the hub of East-West trade. Many cities originated as waystations on the legendary Silk Road stretching from China to Europe. Silk and spices flowed from China and India through Iran and the Arab caliphates to the Byzantine Empire and then to Europe, while minted gold flowed back into Middle Eastern states. During the heyday of the Arab caliphate (the Abbasid Dynasty, 750–1268), Persian rugs and many other kinds of dyed cloth were valuable commodities, as were glassware, tiles, and mechanical devices ranging from water clocks to toys.

Historically, Middle Eastern cities were centers of international trade as well as manufacturing. Elaborate metal, cloth, and ceramic goods could be produced only in cities, where the infrastructure and population could support specialized **artisans**.

Cities were also the province of an element central to economic growth: knowledge. Some of the world's oldest universities were founded in these Arab cities, and the new techniques and ideas they collected or developed were circulated throughout the Islamic world through the trade networks supported by urban centers.

OIL

Though Arab, Mongol, and Turkish empires came and went, the basic economic landscape of the region did not change

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A huge 317-metric ton oil tanker arrives at the port of al-Ahmadi, south of Kuwait City. (Yasser Al-Zayyat/AFP/Getty Images)

significantly until the discovery of massive oil reserves in the early twentieth century. Starting in what is now Iraq and Saudi Arabia, foreign companies surveyed the land and built drilling facilities. Between the world wars, global demand for petroleum and its by-products skyrocketed, and unheard-of amounts of revenue began to flood the region's oil-rich states, including Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States.

It took decades for these states to fully understand the power they commanded in the world economy. The formation of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in the 1960s resulted in practical political power of a kind these states had not known since the Abbasid Dynasty. Petroleum output has since been adjusted to bring political pressure on the world's largest industrialized nations, including the United States, Western European states, and China.

Although economic changes have varied from country to country, the majority of **gross domestic product** (GDP) in the region's oil-rich nations comes from petroleum exports. Nevertheless, in many of these nations, a large percentage of the workforce remains in agriculture.

Economic growth in many of these states increased steeply through the mid-twentieth century, then leveled off in the 1970s and 1980s as improvements in health facilities

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and rural infrastructure led to a population boom that continues today. Overall, the oil industry has provided many benefits to the populations of oil states, though it has created a few new challenges as well. The most serious of these is the heavy reliance on oil to the exclusion of other sources of revenue. Because other economic sectors such as agriculture have come to rely heavily on the money generated by oil exports, threats to oil production such as the Iran-Iraq War, the Persian Gulf War, the Iraq War, and the Arab-Israeli wars have had a devastating effect on the region's economies.

Oil and the Gulf states

The Gulf States (Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman) exemplify the transformations brought to the Middle East by the development of the petroleum industry. Most of their economies have until recently depended entirely on oil exports. For instance, nearly half of Kuwait's GDP and a full 80 percent of its government's income comes from petroleum. Kuwait's oil revenue is used to import nearly all its foodstuffs and about 75 percent of its drinking water.

These states have been diversifying their economies in an effort to reduce their dependence on oil production. Only about 11 percent of Bahrain's GDP now comes from petroleum, while the rest is generated by a strong service sector. Other nations, such as Oman, have funded development in the agricultural or fishing sectors in order to reduce their dependence on imports.

Because of the economic, cultural, and demographic similarities among the Persian Gulf States, the leaders of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia decided to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981. Soon after its founding, the GCC produced a Unified Economic Agreement that allows the free movement of people and capital among its member states, much like the European Union. This, in turn, has bolstered members' individual economies by encouraging foreign investment and providing a fluid labor pool on which the petroleum industry can draw freely.

Largest Oil Producers: Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia

The region's three largest oil producers are also its three most influential political states. In the 1960s and 1970s, Iran's economy was diversified enough that it had not relied primarily on oil (though oil is its chief export), but on agricultural products. This situation changed in the last two decades of the twentieth century, however, and today Iran's economy relies on its oil industry to a dangerous extent.

Iraq's economy was devastated by eight years of war with Iran followed by the 1991 Persian Gulf War, after which UN sanctions were imposed on Saddam Hussein's government. The U.S. invasion of 2003 and subsequent developments have dealt another crushing blow to Iraq's infrastructure. Infant mortality rates, illness and malnutrition, and deaths from military and terrorist violence all have soared. The cessation of Iraqi oil production caused the price per barrel to soar as well, though other countries have adjusted their output to meet demand.

Resource-Poor, High-Tech: Israel, Jordan, and Syria

Israel, Jordan, and Syria are relatively poor in natural resources. Israel has some good agricultural land, but not enough on which to base a modern economy. Syria has good agricultural land and some oil. Consequently, the three countries have opted to develop high-tech, skill intensive industries such as electronics manufacturing. Jordan still receives considerable foreign aid, al-

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though the total amount has decreased significantly since its founding as an independent kingdom in 1946. Israel, for decades prior to and after its 1948 foundation, received large contributions from sources worldwide. This capital allowed it to rapidly develop its civilian industries and armed forces. It also derives a significant amount of revenue from tourism centered on its numerous religious and historical sites.

Turkey

Turkey does not have oil reserves, but since shortly before the end of the twentieth century it has been developing its natural gas reserves for exportation. It does have abundant farmland, however, and the bulk of its economic output is in the agricultural sector. It is also the region's major steel producer and a leader in textiles. As part of a bid to join the European Union, it has also focused on developing its services sector in order to present itself as a fully industrialized, modern state.

See also: Agriculture; Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Culture and Traditions; Environmental Issues; Gaza; Gulf States; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Iraqi War; Israel; Istanbul; Jordan; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Saudi Arabia; Society; Technology and Inventions; Terrorists, Stateless; World War I; Yemen.

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Environmental Issues

Because arid and semiarid lands dominate the geography of the Middle East and Southwest Asia, water has been a constant concern for all of the region's people. Only recently, however, has the protection of water supplies from overuse and pollution been seen in a broader context of environmental concerns.

The industrialization of the region that began in the early twentieth century has led to three serious ecological problems that the Middle East has yet to resolve: a population explosion, increasingly scarce freshwater, and pollution from the oil and chemical industries. An ongoing series of wars and guerrilla activity have also polluted many areas with toxins. Environmental consciousness is slowly spreading through the region, however, offering hope to millions who otherwise face a bleak future.

POPULATION EXPLOSION

Like much of the world over the past 150 years, the Middle East has experienced a dizzying rise in population as a result of medical advances, mechanized agriculture, and improved sanitation systems. From 1950 to 2007, the region had the highest population growth rate in the world. Over the course of the twentieth century, its total population shot from 60 million to nearly 300 million.

The majority of this growth occurred in urban centers due to the expansion of the oil industry and industries that support it. **Petrodollars** have allowed many Middle Eastern states to offset the negative effects of such steep growth by building infrastructure, including health care facilities, schools, and roads.

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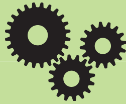

TURNING POINT

The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is one of the most fascinating bodies of water in the world. It is situated along the northern part of the Israel–Jordan border and is fed from the north by the Jordan River. Located at Earth's lowest dry elevation, it contains a high density of salts and other valuable minerals. The surrounding area has long been a health resort and tourist destination, because its low elevation means that harmful ultraviolet radiation is dramatically reduced, while the barometric pressure is higher than in surrounding areas with higher elevations. In combination with the salt content of the Dead Sea's waters, these qualities make the area ideal for the treatment of skin and respiratory disorders, as well as cystic fibrosis.

The water level of the Dead Sea declined significantly in the last decades of the twentieth century. The total area has shrunk to two-thirds of its size in the 1950s. The sea has separated into two parts, divided by a former peninsula that is now a land bridge. Sinkholes have also appeared along its banks.

The alarming decline in depth and size has been attributed to irrigation. Water has been diverted from the Jordan River to such an extent that only 7 percent of its original volume now reaches the endangered sea. This water is used primarily for agriculture in Israel, although Syria and Jordan also divert their share before the waters of the Jordan River reach the Dead Sea.

An ambitious plan to save the Dead Sea was proposed in 2005. Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian government have agreed to cooperate in building a canal running from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Dead Sea in order to replenish it. Although it would be more expedient for Israel to build a canal to the Mediterranean, it compromised with Jordan on the issue so that its impoverished neighbor would benefit from operating desalination plants along the length of the canal, providing desperately needed freshwater for irrigation and human consumption.

Even so, environmentalists have expressed grave doubts about the project. The chemical makeup of the Dead Sea is unique, and they contend that mixing marine water with it could lead to further ecological catastrophe in the region. Despite its name, the Dead Sea is actually home to a small number of algae species. When conditions are right, such as they were in 1980, the entire sea turns red with algal blooms. It remains to be seen whether this project will be undertaken or not. What does appear certain, in the meantime, is that without a greater flow of water, the Dead Sea could disappear completely.

Such negative effects include sanitation problems, an increase in crime, and a heavier burden on agricultural and water resources. These effects cannot be completely neutralized, but only temporarily held at bay. As populations grow, wise land use becomes increasingly critical. In many instances, however, the nature of such use is unclear, or economic and political conditions make it impossible to put land to its best use. For example, much arable land in Israel has been turned into housing developments, and it is thought that Iraq has destroyed the majority of its Mesopotamian

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wetlands, its primary source of freshwater, through a number of engineering projects.

WATER PROBLEM

Eighty percent of the region's freshwater is located in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Syria. In other countries, including Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, the available freshwater dropped below the threshold that defined water scarcity at the end of the twentieth century. Although **desalination plants**, or treatment facilities where saltwater is turned into freshwater, have helped breathe life into the deserts, the urgency of securing sustainable water supplies continues to mount in virtually every country in the region.

Not only is freshwater scarce, but a number of major bodies of water have suffered from pollution as well. The Mediterranean coast along the Gaza Strip receives untreated sewage from the overcrowded Palestinian refugee camps there, and access to clean water in the West Bank has been severely curtailed by the destruction of its infrastructure.

The Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Red Sea each contains large amounts of toxins from sunken ships as well as unexploded munitions and mines, all from wars waged in the twentieth century. These toxins have had measurable negative impacts on fish populations. Unless the human population boom in Middle Eastern countries is checked, it is unlikely that all countries of the region will be able to secure enough water from internal sources.

INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION

The rapid development of the oil industry in numerous Middle Eastern nations has led to significant pollution as well. In terms of income, the economies of the oil states have soared over the course of the last century, but this growth has been largely one-sided. The oil industry has received the lion's share of government attention, while other sectors such as agriculture, health care, and services have languished.

While oil drilling is lucrative, it is also environmentally destructive. Petroleum byproducts often leak into the areas surrounding oil fields, and the heavy traffic of oil tankers into and out of the Persian Gulf has resulted in numerous oil spills. Wars in recent decades, including the 1991 Persian Gulf War, have also released significant quantities of pollutants into the air. For example, when Saddam Hussein was pushed out of Kuwait in early 1991 by an international military force (the start of the Persian Gulf War), his forces set more than 600 oil wells ablaze and dumped several million barrels of oil into the Persian Gulf. Local ecosystems are still recovering slowly.

Turkey and Iran both face increasingly severe problems with acid rain due to the rapid industrialization that has occurred since the early decades of the twentieth century. For the first time, these nations have to contend with the damage wrought by acid rain on human and nonhuman populations alike.

PROSPECTS

As the global environmental movement gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, Middle Eastern states began to acknowledge the problems they faced. For the most part, however, few have taken substantial steps toward improving their prospects for an environmentally sustainable future. The economies of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and the Gulf States are so dependent on their oil industries, both for internal consumption and export, that the chances of developing clean, alternative energy sources there seem unlikely. Moreover,

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the populations of many countries have little power in their respective governments, which continue to pursue their own interests at the expense of their citizens' health. Because it is the population at large, not the ruling elite, that suffers the consequences of environmental problems, there is a heightened consciousness of these issues among the masses, who unfortunately have little official power to effect positive change. Furthermore, the gap between rich and poor individuals, as well as rich and poor countries, has widened considerably since the rise in the price of oil.

Continual strife between Arabs and Israelis as well as among Arabs has also contributed to these issues by distracting official and popular attention from them while intensifying them through the destruction of important facilities, the widespread deployment of military technologies and their toxic by-products, and the creation of more refugees.

Many countries in the region have recognized the importance of setting aside land in preserves and parks in order to maintain a healthy level of native **biodiversity**. Apart from this positive development, however, environmental issues have yet to take center stage in the Middle East.

See also: Agriculture; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gaza; Gulf States; Iran; Iraqi War; Israel; Jordan; Oil; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Saudi Arabia; Society; Technology and Inventions; Terrorists, Stateless; Tools and Weapons; West Bank.

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Gaza

Site of intense conflict between Palestinians and Israelis and home to several militant and terrorist groups that refuse any compromise with Israel. Gaza refers to both the strip of coastal land bordering Egypt to the southwest and Israel to the north and east and to the area's chief city. It is about 139 square miles (360 sq km) in size and populated by approximately 1.4 million people.

Gaza City has been continuously inhabited for several millennia because it lies on an important trade route to Egypt. It was occupied by the Egyptian, Roman, Arab, and Ottoman empires successively.

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the 1917 Balfour Declaration called for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestinian lands. This plan caused the long-standing tension between Arabs and Jews in the region to flare up, setting the stage for the more or less continuous political turmoil that has plagued Gaza ever since.

In 1929, Arab riots led to the removal of Jewish inhabitants from Gaza by British forces. In 1947, UN Resolution 181 (II) partitioned Palestinian lands into Jewish, Arab, and international territories to be occupied by multiple ethnicities and governed by the United Nations. Gaza was included in the Arab partition. The declaration of the new Jewish state of Israel immediately after the passing of Resolution 181 (II) led to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

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During the course of that conflict, Gaza was occupied by Egyptian forces and several hundred thousand Palestinian refugees fled there. The territory remained under Egyptian control for many years, and its inhabitants were prevented from moving to Egypt by the Egyptian authorities. Many of these refugees wanted to enter Egypt, but the Egyptian government did not want to shoulder the burden of assimilating them. They were also denied Egyptian citizenship, leaving their political status in doubt.

Over the course of several conflicts in succeeding decades, Israel occupied Gaza, then returned it to Egypt several times. During the 1967 Six-Day War, however, Israel captured the territory and Gaza remained under Israeli control for the next twenty-seven years. Jewish communities were built throughout the territory, and Israel imposed strict rules to guard against terrorist attacks, inspecting and controlling goods passing into and out of the region as well as restricting Palestinian movement across its borders.

The Israeli government funded the establishment of numerous settlements in Gaza during the 1970s, primarily in order to secure Israel's control of the territory but with the secondary motivation of solidifying control over more of the lands traditionally regarded as part of the region of Palestine. Under the Israelis, the Gaza economy improved with the development of roads, farms, greenhouses, and other infrastructure, but Palestinian inhabitants did not greatly benefit from these improvements. Although Israel signed a peace agreement with Egypt in 1979 and began returning other captured lands, Gaza was excluded from these and remained under Israeli control.

Tension mounted as more Israeli settlements were established and expanded in Gaza. The tension culminated in the 1987 **intifada**, or Palestinian uprising, against Israeli rule in Gaza and the West Bank. Gaza became the center of anti-Israeli activity, especially that of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which had the most powerful military and political presence in Gaza after Israel.

Numerous diplomatic attempts to resolve the conflict failed, until a substantial agreement between Israel and the PLO was reached in the 1993 Oslo Accords. These accords were the result of the first face-to-face negotiations between Israeli diplomats and representatives of the PLO, including its leader Yassir Arafat.

The Oslo Accords brought approximately 80 percent of Gaza under limited control of the Palestinian Authority (PA), an interim Palestinian government with jurisdiction over Gaza and the West Bank that was established as part of the accords. In compliance with the accords, Israeli forces began to withdraw in 1994. In the following years, Israel imposed greater restrictions on Gaza to quell terrorist activity, stemming chiefly from the radical Islamic organization Hamas, which was also the primary opposition party to Fatah, the party partially founded by Arafat that had swept the PA's first elections in 1996.

Violence in Gaza intensified from 2000 to 2003, starting with a second intifada (the al-Aqsa Intifada), which started in Jerusalem but soon spread to all the occupied territories of Palestine. Under the leadership of Ariel Sharon, elected Israeli prime minister in 2001, Israel retaliated with military strikes against the PA. The new round of violence led many to believe that the Oslo Accords, too, had failed to bring peace to the Middle East.

However, Sharon reversed policy in 2005, and by the end of the year, all Israeli settlements in Gaza had been removed.

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Supported by what was perceived as a widespread failure of the Fatah government to stand up to Israeli aggression, Hamas won a majority of legislative seats in 2006. In June 2007, it seized control of Gaza and established a government independent of the Palestinian Authority.

Today, Gaza is home to more than one million Palestinian refugees. Its population suffers from widespread poverty, religious and political violence, and malnutrition. The people are not recognized as citizens of any sovereign state, and rely solely on donations, including aid from Israel, to fund what few social services are available. Much of the population lives in refugee camps from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War that became permanent over time. Terrorist groups have recruited young, disenfranchised Palestinians from this area for decades, and its future is uncertain. It has become a lightning rod for pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli sentiment worldwide.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Camp David Accords; Intifada; Israel; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank; Zionism

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Gulf States

Group of six Arab countries that border the Persian Gulf—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Oman—and that share similar cultures and economies and often act together politically and economically. Because of their energy resources, the Gulf States are often the focus of international attention.

Historically, the cultures of the Gulf States have been almost entirely Arabic. These cultures trace their roots to the nomadic Bedouin tribes that roamed the desert belt extending from the Arabian Peninsula in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. Although Iran borders the gulf as well, it is not considered a Gulf State because its Persian culture is different from the shared Arab background of the others.

Islam reached the regions of present-day Gulf States soon after the advent of the Umayyad Dynasty in the late seventh century. Today, the majority of their combined population of 40 million is Sunni, with a significant minority of non-Muslim foreign workers. Shia Muslims constitute a significant minority in the important eastern province of Saudi Arabia and nearly half the population of Bahrain.

Until the 1930s, these states had poorly developed economies based primarily on fishing and pearl diving. Both of these industries were eclipsed by the discovery of crude oil in the region. The petroleum industry began to develop rapidly after this discovery, as drilling facilities and refineries were built throughout the Gulf States. The Persian Gulf and its surrounding regions now make up the world's largest reserve of petroleum.

Immense wealth began to flow into the Gulf States as their economies became oil-based. Today, their per capita measures of income

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THE GULF STATES, 2008

The six Gulf States include Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE is a federation of seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Fujairah, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Quwain, and Ras al Khiaimah. All of the Gulf States are hereditary monarchies that lack popular political representation.

rank among the world's highest. In many instances, however, the wealth is unevenly distributed. Most of Saudi Arabia's wealth is controlled by the ruling family, the Sauds. A similar situation is found in the other Gulf States where the ruling families control oil revenue. Nonetheless, the populations of these states benefit in the fact that they pay little or no taxes and receive free education, health services, and subsidized housing. Nevertheless, the general population remains poor. A similar situation is found in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, although wealth is more evenly distributed in Bahrain and Qatar.

With the exception of Saudi Arabia, which was independent since the 1920s, the Gulf States were established after the withdrawal of European powers, particularly France and Britain, after World War II. The

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lands occupied by these states were placed under the administration of European powers after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, operating as virtual colonies by providing cheap petroleum. Today, all the Gulf States are constitutional or absolute monarchies, with rule of the country passing to successors within the royal family. This leaves the general populace with little political voice, although both Bahrain and Kuwait have elected legislatures.

In 1981, the six states formed a trade bloc, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG), also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The CCASG promotes a number of social and economic initiatives in member states, including joint ventures and strengthening of cultural ties. All of the Gulf States except for Bahrain and Oman also belong to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 triggered the Persian Gulf War, in which thirty-four nations, including the United States, pushed Iraqi forces out of the country. Kuwait's infrastructure suffered considerably because of the conflict, however, oil revenue and Kuwait international investment funds have helped the country recover from the devastation of the war. The Kuwaiti dinar is the highest-valued currency in the world today.

The Gulf States are of politically strategic importance to the petroleum-based economies of the United States, Europe, India, Japan, and China. Alleged human rights abuses and exploitation of foreign labor have strained relations, but Western threats of severing relations ring hollow because of the critical petroleum provided by the Gulf States.

See also: Economic Development and Trade; Environmental Issues; Oil; Saudi Arabia; Slavery and Slave Trade; Society; World War II.

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Hamas *See* Terrorists, Stateless.

Hezbollah *See* Terrorists, Stateless.

Intifada

Palestinian uprising against Israeli domination that began in December 1987. Protests and fighting first broke out in Gaza, then spread to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. More than 1,000 Palestinians and 160 Israelis died in the clashes. A second, even more violent intifada commenced in 2000.

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Intifada literally means "shaking off" in Arabic, but is usually translated as "uprising." It originally referred to the 1987 mass uprising of Palestinians that began in the largest Palestinian refugee camp, Jabalia, located in the northern part of the Gaza Strip. In the years preceding 1987, several killings of both Palestinians and Israelis, including children and men accused of being terrorists, had pushed religious and political tensions to the breaking point. The term *intifada* was also applied to the second Palestinian uprising, which began in 2000.

On December 6, 1987, an Israeli was stabbed to death by Palestinians in Gaza. Two days later, four Palestinians were killed in a traffic accident in Jabalia involving an Israeli truck; rumors spread that the accident was a deliberate act of revenge in response to the Israeli death.

This sparked a series of riots in the camp, which led to the death of a young Palestinian who had thrown stones at Israeli forces. The rioting spread throughout Gaza, then to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the other Palestinian Territories. The iconic image that emerged from this conflict was that of a Palestinian youth hurling stones at an Israeli tank.

A number of factors had set the stage for the intifada. First, Palestinian resentment of Israeli rule was more intense and widespread than ever. Palestinians had no political rights under the Israelis and were regularly treated as second-class citizens. Second, living conditions inside Gaza, especially in Jabalia, had reached a low point. Refugees from the Arab-Israeli wars had made Gaza one of the most densely populated places on earth. Unemployment was rampant because of trade restrictions imposed by Israel, a lack of economic infrastructure, and overpopulation. Third, Palestinians faced a bleak political future. Their claims for an independent state, while supported by other Arab states, were not being realized.

The intifada continued until 1993 and included boycotts, strikes, vandalization, suicide bombings, and armed confrontation. By then, more than 1,000 Palestinians and 160 Israelis had been killed; an additional 1,000 Palestinians had been killed by their own people, supposedly for collaborating with Israelis. The 1993 Oslo Accords, a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), promised to put an end to the violence and redress some of the injustices suffered by both sides. The PLO officially recognized the state of Israel; in return, Israel recognized the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people.

The second uprising, known as the al-Aqsa Intifada, began in 2000 after the Oslo Accords failed to diminish the tensions between Israelis and Palestinians in the occupied territories. This intifada was sparked by a visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem by Ariel Sharon, an Israeli politician and former general.

Because the Temple Mount is a Muslim holy site, Palestinians interpreted the visit as a provocation, although Sharon insisted that he was merely asserting the right of all Israelis to visit it. In fact, the Temple Mount is considered holy by all three Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rioting and armed conflict once again spread throughout the occupied territories, and it has continued ever since, costing thousands of lives on both sides. Sharon, who was elected Israel's prime minister in 2001, evacuated Israeli settlers from Gaza in 2005, amid domestic political pressure. The intifada waxed and waned, but never officially ended.

See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Camp David

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Iran

Islamic republic, formerly known as Persia, bordered on the north by the Caspian Sea, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia; on the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; on the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan; and on the west by Iraq and Turkey. Iran's official language is Persian, also known as Farsi, and Iran is the most populous Shiite Muslim nation in the world. Ethnically, it is mostly Persian, with Turkic, Arab, and Kurdish minorities as well as smaller minorities of Christian Armenians and Assyrians. Most of the Jews who once lived in Iran migrated to Israel.

Geographically, Iran is an extremely rugged country with major mountain ranges—the Elburz in the north and the Zagros in the west—and large areas of semiarid mountain plains. Located along the easiest overland passage between East Asia and the Mediterranean, Iran straddled many important East-West trade routes. Today, it is the fourth-largest producer of oil in the world and has significant reserves of natural gas as well as deposits of iron, copper, and coal.

CULTURE

Iran has long and unique traditions in literature, architecture, science, and medicine. The thirteenth-century Sufi poet Rumi is still widely quoted in Iran, and the early-eleventh-century *Shah-nameh (Book of Kings),* by the poet Ferdowsi, is the national epic. Persian architecture is noted for its patterned brickwork, glazed ceramics, symmetrical geometric forms, and massive vaults and domes. The ruins of ancient cities at Isfahan and Persepolis are among the most impressive of the ancient world. Persian physicians and scientists were at the heart of the Islamic Golden Age from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries; many of their works were written in both Arabic and Persian and had a critical influence on the European Renaissance. Persian textiles, especially the famous, ornately detailed Persian rugs, were unmatched in the Middle East and Europe through the Middle Ages. The abstract patterns of Persian textiles have been especially influential. In the modern era, Iranian filmmakers have won numerous international awards.

HISTORY

The Persians had built a strong and prosperous empire in ancient times. After a period of decline, Persia came to political and cultural prominence during the Abbasid caliphate (750–1268), which established the non-Arab Persians as social and cultural equals of the Arab counterparts. Persian culture, especially its literary forms and art techniques, spread rapidly through the Muslim Middle East by the eleventh century.

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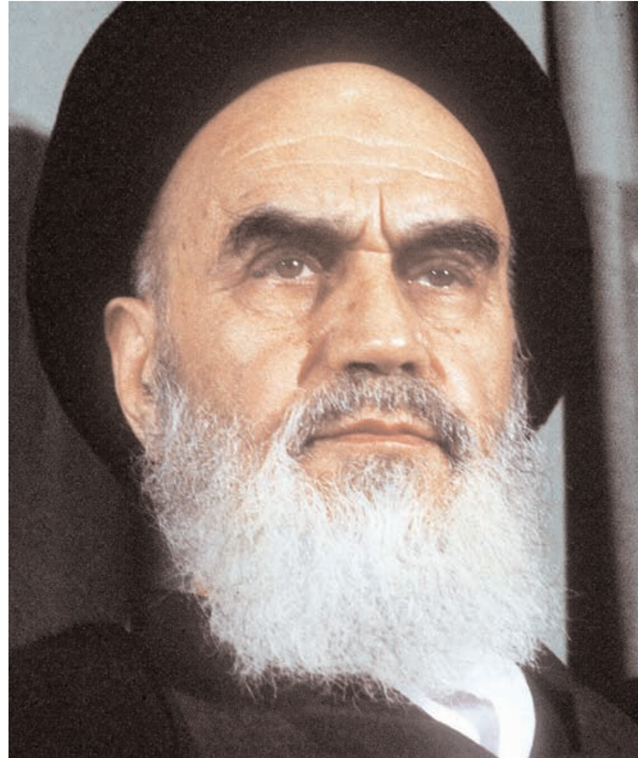
By the end of the ninth century, Persia had become somewhat independent of the caliphate. This independence restricted Arab influence within Persia, protecting the unique Persian identity. As Abbasid power declined in the late ninth and tenth centuries, a Persian cultural renaissance occurred. During this period, Persian became a prominent literary language for the first time.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries were a time of great intellectual foment in Persia. Islamic philosophy, based on Greek philosophy that had been translated into Arabic and Persian, began to spread westward from Persia into Arabic lands, Africa, and Europe, as well as southward into India. Persian physicians, including Avicenna (Ibn Sina), whose *Canon of Medicine* became the standard medical text in Europe for seven centuries, contributed an astonishing number of discoveries, treatments, and inventions to medicine.



The revered Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini officially declared Iran an Islamic Republic on April 1, 1979.
(Gabriel Duval/AFP/Getty Images)

Turks and Mongols

The Seljuk Turks established a far-reaching empire in the eleventh century that included most of Persia. The period of Turkish domination ended with the arrival of Genghis Khan and the Mongols in 1218. With these invaders came death and destruction; the Persian population dropped considerably as a result of mass murder and famine during this time.

Two lines of Mongol leaders established even larger empires that encompassed Persia: the Ilkhanate (1200s) and the Timurid Dynasty (late 1300s). Both of these empires were Muslim, though the former suppressed Persian culture while the latter revived it.

Savafid and Qajar Periods

In the sixteenth century, the Safavid Dynasty, founded by Shah Ismail I (r. 1502–1524), reestablished Persia as a power in its own right. The Safavids restored a sense of Persian identity and established Shia Islam as the official religion. Safavid power began to wane in the eighteenth century in the face of attacks on its borders from Sunni Afghans in the east, a growing Russian Empire in the north, and Arab and Turkish raids from the west. These threats led to increasing fragmentation within Persia.

The Turkish leader Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar reunified the region in the late 1700s. Through brute force, he established the Qajar Dynasty, which ruled from 1781 until 1925. Though the Qajars instigated a number of modernizing reforms, they gradually lost territory to Russia and Great Britain. Their political power waned as a result.

Modern Iran

In 1921, army officer Reza Khan staged a successful coup against the British-influenced

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regime, seizing full control of Iran in 1925 and crowning himself Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925–1941). Reza Shah pursued an aggressive program of modernization, banning traditional Muslim customs as well as reorganizing Iran's economy and military. Anxious about potential British and Russian domination of Iran, he sought closer economic ties with Germany during the 1930s. This prompted an Anglo-Soviet invasion in 1941; Reza Shah was forced to abdicate, and his son, Mohammad Reza, was crowned shah.

During Mohammad Reza Shah's reign (r. 1941–1979), Iran experienced increasing tension between **secular** and religious social segments. The oil industry, which had been developing since the 1910s, had helped modernize Iranian society—a trend that, however, was opposed by many Iranian Shiites. From the 1950s through the end of the 1970s, the shah resorted to increasingly brutal methods to maintain his power. In 1979, a popular revolution sent the shah into exile and paved the way for the return of an exiled Islamic cleric, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who in 1979 founded a **fundamentalist** Shiite Islamic republic. Seizure of the U.S. Embassy and diplomatic personnel by a group of radical protesters in 1979 led to an international crisis. Between 1980 and 1988, Iran and Iraq fought a bloody war that resulted in 1 million Iranian casualties.

In 2007, Iran was ruled by the religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and governed by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Although Iran did not officially participate in the Iraq War, accusations that it supported Shiite insurgents in Iraq soured its relations with the United States. Additionally, Iran's program to develop nuclear power sources came under intense scrutiny by the international community; the United States and Israel in particular suspected Iran of seeking to develop a nuclear weapon.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Art and Architecture; Iranian Revolution; Islam; Language; Literature and Writing; Oil; Religion; World War II.

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Iranian Revolution

A popular uprising in Iran that culminated in 1979 with the establishment of a **theocracy** based on Shiite fundamentalism. The long-exiled cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini became Iran's new leader after its monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah, fled the country. Iran's political and economic relationship to the world changed permanently after the revolution.

By all outward appearances, Iran seemed to be a fully modernized state by the 1970s, but this appearance masked explosive divisions within Iranian society. Widespread resentment toward the regime of the king, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1941–1979), stemmed from four main sources. First, the shah had supported a U.S. intervention in the 1950s that removed the nationalistic, **socialist** prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh from power. Second, with Mossadegh gone, the shah could more easily impose severe autocratic measures on the restive elements of Iranian society. Third, the process of the modernization of Iran over the course of two generations had produced

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BACKGROUND AND PROGRESSION OF IRANIAN REVOLUTION

June 1963 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini arrested, then exiled, sparking widespread riots; martial law declared by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi to quell violence

1977 Shah relaxes censorship laws, which unleashes a flood of anti-government expression; deeply dissatisfied Iranian population demands more reforms

January 9, 1978 Police kill 70 student protesters at pro-Khomeini rally in Qum

February–August 1978 Police kill more protesters; demonstrations erupt throughout Iran

September 8, 1978 "Black Friday"; Iranian troops fire on Tehran demonstration, killing hundreds

September 9, 1978 Shah declares martial law and arrests opposition leaders

October 1978 Protest movement begins series of strikes

December 1978 Massive strikes and demonstrations; government clearly unable to control events

January 16, 1979 Mohammad Reza Shah flees country

February 1, 1979 Khomeini returns to Tehran and is welcomed by millions of followers

February 11, 1979 Iranian military declares itself neutral in widespread skirmishes between guerrilla groups and government

April 1, 1979 Khomeini proclaims Islamic Republic

a deep-seated alienation. Much of the money from oil revenue was spent in urban centers, particularly Tehran. Rural areas remained relatively neglected. Fourth, the regime of the shah emphasized the secular and downplayed its Islamic culture.

In the 1970s, the shah sought to strengthen economic and political ties with the United States even further. For its part, the United States was happy to have what appeared to be a strong, stable ally and source of oil in an otherwise turbulent region.

The illusion of stability did not last long. Many revolutionary groups, including Islamic, nationalist, and Marxist factions, opposed the shah. When mass student protests began in the early 1970s, the government responded harshly, arresting thousands.

The revolution centered around one charismatic figure: the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. As an ayatollah, which is the highest Shiite religious leader, he had considerable influence among the faithful. In the view of Khomeini and many others, the shah was allowing the United States and other foreign powers to exert undue influence on Iran. The shah also censored his critics and was known to engage in torture and assassination. All of this made his rule intolerable to a growing number of Iranians.

The shah sought to quell the unrest by exiling Khomeini in 1963. The cleric spent the next thirteen years in Najaf, Iraq, the theological center of Shia Islam. He lived a highly regimented yet simple life there, teaching and issuing directives to his followers in Iran and elsewhere. Because of his strict religious observance and fierce, uncensored opposition to the monarchy, he became a symbol of both Shia Islam and Persian **nationalism**. Shortly before the revolution, the vice-president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, forced him out of Najaf. The ayatollah left for Paris, where he stayed until his return to Iran.

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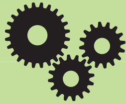

TURNING POINT

The Fleeing of the Shah

On January 16, 1979, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last shah of Iran, prepared to board a silver-and-blue Boeing 707 in Tehran. He said goodbye to his palace staff, military advisers, and personal bodyguard, and tucked a box of Iranian soil into his jacket pocket. He declared that he was going on vacation because he was tired, but all of Iran knew what was really transpiring: the king was being forced to flee the country he had ruled for more than thirty years.

By 1979, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolution had finally achieved the momentum it needed to induce a major political shift. The ayatollah's followers had joined with **secular** groups, including right-wing nationalists and left-wing socialists, to present a united front against the shah's repression. The shah would not escape with his life unless he left the country.

The shah's vision for Iran's future as a wealthy, powerful, educated, and thoroughly Westernized state diverged from the visions of nationalists and Islamists alike. Both of these groups perceived Westernization as a means for foreign powers to take control of Iran's affairs. The shah's attempts to force this future upon his people had led to this moment.

Boarding with his wife Farah, the shah faced an uncertain future. They stayed briefly in Cairo, Egypt, then in Morocco, where King Hassan II was reluctant to host the deposed shah because of radical Muslim agitation throughout the Middle East. The shah had sought to build close political ties with the United States, which was perceived by the majority of the Middle East's Muslims as a threat to their self-determination. This anti-U.S. sentiment was thus directed equally at the shah.

However, many Iranians who had fled Iran when it became apparent that the new Islamic government was in many ways more intolerant than its predecessor supported the shah's return to Iran. This never came to pass, however, primarily because the new Islamic government, which would never allow the shah to return, had become too powerful. After spending time in the Bahamas and Mexico, the shah, suffering from cancer, asked to come to the United States for treatment; President Jimmy Carter reluctantly agreed, but the shah's visit outraged Iranians everywhere. On November 4, 1979, a group of young, radical Iranians stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran, kidnapping more than sixty diplomats, and began a standoff with Washington that lasted more than a year. The shah died of cancer on July 27, 1980, in Cairo.

With his departure came the end of the Iranian monarchy. More recently, the Iranian people have forced the Islamic regime to introduce various Westernizing reforms, such as the relaxation of censorship laws. The shah's supporters outside Iran continued to hope for a restoration of his line.

In 1978, students protesting slander of Khomeini were killed by the shah's troops in Qum. During the funeral, a soldier killed a mourner, and riots exploded in the city and elsewhere. The following year was a maelstrom of mass protest and clashes between government forces and protestors. The conflict was further inflamed by fiery

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speeches from Khomeini, recorded in Paris on cassette tapes and distributed through underground networks in Iran. Many protesters were killed, which galvanized thousands more to join the opposition. The shah, realizing he could no longer rule, fled from Iran in January 1979.

Khomeini returned to Iran in triumph on February 1, 1979. He declared a Provisional Revolutionary Government, and after several days of fighting between revolutionary and loyalist members of the armed forces, Khomeini's followers took control of the armed forces and the government.

The revolution's Islamic elements then turned against their **secular** allies. After executing hundreds of officials of the old regime, Khomeini's government shut down presses that criticized the revolution, then closed universities for two years in order to dismiss what amounted to tens of thousands of teachers who were too "Westernized." This revolution within the revolution culminated in the establishment of one of the world's only theocracies of the twentieth century.

The government of Iran today is based on a constitution in strict compliance with the Koran. Religious leaders wield ultimate authority in the country and can replace elected officials if they are deemed to be out of step with Islamic law. Iran is also a bastion of **fundamentalist** Islamic thought, teaching strict Shiite beliefs in its schools and supporting radical Islamist terrorist groups.

Nevertheless, a large part of Iranian society embraces a modern, secular way of life. Tehran is a thriving, cosmopolitan city, where people drive cars, use cell phones, and attend large public events such as soccer games. Despite working within strict censorship rules imposed by the state, Iranian filmmakers have released a number of works that have earned critical acclaim and commercial success in the West.

See also: Culture and Traditions; Iran; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Religion; Terrorists, Stateless.

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Iraq War

A highly controversial and intractable conflict that began in March 2003 with the invasion of Iraq by 150,000 American and British troops, supported by a comparatively small number of troops from other nations. Although conventional fighting ended within two months as Iraq's major cities quickly fell into the invaders' hands, an ongoing guerrilla war has claimed thousands of American and British lives as well as hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives. The continuing conflict contradicted U.S. government claims that the war would end swiftly and that the liberated Iraqi people would soon be able to build a stable democracy. Along with assertions that dictator Saddam Hussein (r. 1979–2003) was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), these claims formed the basis of U.S. president George W. Bush's argument in favor of war.

The U.S. occupation galvanized Islamic **fundamentalists** worldwide, leading to intensifying levels of violence within Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. On the other hand, many people feared that the complete withdrawal of American troops would

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MODERN WEAPONS

Bunker Buster

The term *bunker buster* refers to a bomb designed to penetrate hardened targets such as bunkers buried deep underground or buildings constructed of reinforced concrete. They were first conceived during World War II by a British designer, and a limited number were built and deployed to hit Nazi military facilities.

Bunker busters are unusually large bombs that contain significantly greater amounts of explosive than more conventional bombs. They are also built with rocket motors to increase their velocity or with high-density warheads designed to break through floors of buildings or the soil above a buried bunker. In the first moments after a bunker buster makes impact, its high velocity drives a hardened penetrating tip into the impacted surface with extreme force. Enough kinetic energy is released in the form of heat that the surface is actually liquefied. The liquid then flows over the bomb, whose velocity drives it deeper into the target. In this way, these missiles are capable of penetrating several hundred feet of soil or concrete.

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, ad hoc bunker busters were built and deployed to hit Iraqi installations. Since its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the United States has restored bunker busters to regular production and use. Military intelligence indicated that both al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's forces in Iraq were using caves or buried buildings as headquarters and weapons caches. Larger, more powerful and more precisely guided bunker busters were designed to target these.

A great deal of controversy surrounded the Bush administration's proposed design and use of *nuclear* bunker busters in the Iraq War and future conflicts with terrorist organizations. These weapons would penetrate deeply buried targets and annihilate them with a small nuclear explosion. Supporters of this tactic, including the Bush administration, argued that the limited nuclear yields of such weapons could be precisely controlled, minimizing the amount of fallout. Critics, including scientists and human rights activists, have pointed out that to completely contain such a blast, the bunker busters would have to penetrate to a depth several hundred feet greater than they were currently capable of penetrating. The nuclear bunker buster program was officially suspended in 2005, although some military and government officials continued to argue in favor of it.

allow a full-fledged civil war to break out between the Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiite components of Iraqi society, perhaps drawing in foreign forces as well.

BACKGROUND

The immediate roots of the Iraq War lay in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. At its conclusion, the peace terms dictated by the U.S. compelled Saddam Hussein to destroy his stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and terminate his growing nuclear weapons program. Despite numerous United Nations resolutions, however, he alternately denied UN inspectors access to suspected weapons facilities or delayed inspections for many hours or days, presumably to conceal or relocate illegal materials.

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After 1991, the United States and Great Britain also maintained no-fly zones over southern and northern Iraq to prevent Hussein from engaging in further aggression against Shiite and Kurdish rebels who lived there. Economic sanctions imposed on Iraq at the time were intended to punish Hussein and weaken his regime, though ironically he was able to use foreign aid meant for the Iraqi people to strengthen his rule, by confiscating medical supplies and food.

In 1998, U.S. president Bill Clinton ordered Operation Desert Fox, a limited bombing campaign targeting several Iraqi military installations, in response to Hussein's repeated defiance of the UN. Hussein expelled the UN weapons inspectors soon thereafter, and the sanctions began to lose support among Iraq's neighbors.

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, President George W. Bush began to argue that Iraq posed a serious threat not only to neighboring countries but also to the United States. He claimed that Hussein sponsored terrorist organizations including al-Qaeda and would sell WMDs to them for use on U.S. targets. He also claimed that Hussein had rebuilt his stores of such weapons. All these claims either lacked substantial evidence or were later proven false.

BUILDUP TO WAR

In November 2002, the United Nations passed Resolution 1441, demanding that Hussein comply with previous resolutions and readmit UN inspectors to complete their tasks. Hussein did so, and Hans Blix, a Swedish lawyer and executive chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), led the inspection team, which included American members, searching for the alleged WMDs.

In January 2003, despite UNMOVIC's failure to turn up any evidence, British prime minister Tony Blair and Bush continued to argue that Iraq constituted an immediate threat because of its WMDs. Traditional allies such as France and Germany balked at their arguments, citing Blix's reports that the Iraqis were complying with inspectors. The gap between available evidence and the Anglo-American argument led many to protest the push for war. Tens of millions of people worldwide demonstrated against the war in February and March.

Having failed to convince most of the world that an invasion was necessary, Bush nevertheless issued an ultimatum on March 17, demanding that Hussein give up power and leave Iraq within forty-eight hours. When Hussein ignored the ultimatum, the United States launched a series of air strikes at military and government targets in Baghdad and elsewhere on March 20; the next day, American and British troops moved in from Kuwait and Jordan. The Iraq War had begun.

COURSE OF WAR

American and British forces took control of all of Iraq's major cities within three weeks, and an interim government was established under U.S. sponsorship. The troops settled in to begin the search for Hussein and the alleged WMDs as well as to help restore order. Hussein was captured on December 13 of the same year, but no evidence of WMDs was ever found.

The occupying forces remained in place indefinitely, attempting to quell a persistent and deadly guerrilla resistance that had claimed more than 4,000 American and tens of thousands of Iraqi lives by mid-2007. Many Iraqi deaths remain uncounted and vary from 88,000 to more than 1 million. The war destroyed much of Iraq's economy and led to widespread tribal and sectarian violence in the power vacuum that resulted when Hussein and his Baathist Party were deposed.

Millions more joined anti-war movements

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worldwide, especially as evidence mounted of what critics identified as the Bush administration's improper handling of many of the war's aspects: American troops were underfunded, lacking sufficient equipment and numbers to effectively help Iraq's transition to a democracy. Government contractors providing services or private military forces in support of the invasion were given no-bid contracts whose negotiations have been kept private. Iraqi prisoners were tortured by U.S. troops at the Abu Ghraib prison, one of Hussein's primary facilities for the imprisonment of dissidents.

U.S. public opinion on the war, which was deeply divided from the outset, turned strongly against it as a result. Former and even active members of the military command joined veterans, human rights activists, and vocal members of all political persuasions in criticizing George W. Bush's decision to go to war in the first place, and without an exit strategy. The drawn-out insurrection, which was sustained in response to the continued presence of U.S. forces, encouraged al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups to recruit in Iraq. While many of Iraq's neighbors had perceived Hussein as a threat, they became even more alarmed at what appeared to be unprovoked American military intervention. Worst of all, no clear resolution to the conflict was apparent.

See also: Baghdad; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Environmental Issues; Gulf States; Iran; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Refugees; Religion; Society; Technology and Inventions; Terrorists, Stateless; World War I.

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Islam

The predominant **monotheistic** religion of Southwest Asia, practiced by believers called Muslims. "Islam" means "submission" or "surrender" in Arabic, reflecting the religion's core tenet of absolute subservience to God, or Allah. Islam's holy scripture, the Koran or Qur'an, is held to be the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel, in seventh-century southeast Arabia.

Islam is directly related to Judaism and Christianity, recognizing most of the same prophets and containing some beliefs of each. It spread explosively over the seventh and eighth centuries, reaching from India in the east, across North Africa, and into the Iberian Peninsula in the west, as well as north to Anatolia and south throughout the Arabian Peninsula and Africa. Over the centuries it has continued to grow and now is considered the second-largest organized religion in the world (after Christianity), with an estimated 1.4 billion adherents in 2007. Approximately 300 million of the faithful live in the Middle East, where more than 90 percent of the population is Muslim. Islam is the majority religion in every Middle Eastern country except Israel.

BELIEFS

The dominant belief of Islam is that there is one God, Allah, who is the creator of all things and who holds ultimate power over all creation. Islam shares this quality of

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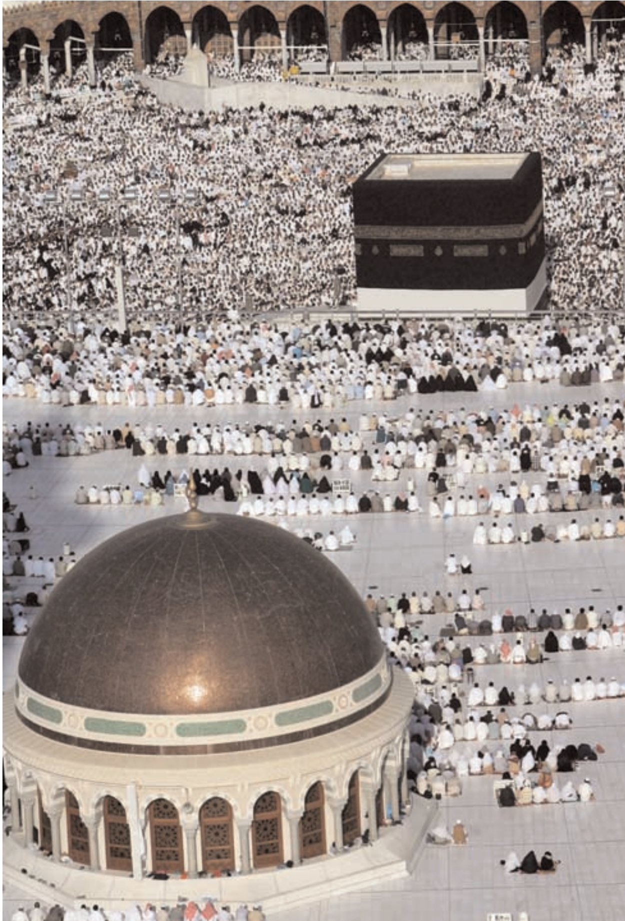

At the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Muslim faithful pray as they begin the annual hajj, or pilgrimage to the holy city. (Mohammed Abed/AFP/Getty Images)

monotheism with Judaism and Christianity. Muslims strive to live in obedience to God's will in anticipation of a Day of Resurrection, when sinners will be condemned to hell and the obedient to paradise.

In Islamic tradition, the will of God was revealed to the prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, who then exhorted others to obey. Muhammad was regarded as the final prophet in this line, the messenger of Allah who alone received the full and final revelation. Muslims believe that the Koran is a literal transcription of this revelation; because it was originally written in Arabic, translations of this holy book are considered imperfect. For this reason, most converts to Islam study Arabic in order to be able to read the Koran in the original. However, Muslims need not be literate in order to participate fully in their faith, since memorizing and chanting verses from the Koran is one of the religion's holy arts. Those who memorize the entire book by heart are given the title *hafiz* ("memorizer"), since they are regarded as protectors of the word of God.

There are five essential religious duties for Muslims, known as the Five Pillars of Islam: to declare the profession of faith (*shahada*), which is that there is only one God and Muhammad is his messenger; to perform formal prayers (*salat*) five times a day while facing in the direction (*qibla*) of Mecca; to give alms (*zakat*); to fast during the daylight hours of the holy month of Ramadan (*saum*); and to make a pilgrimage (hajj) to the holy city of Mecca if at all possible during one's lifetime.

Islam also incorporates rules about diet, cleanliness, and customs. Many of these originate in the Koran, though a sizable number derive from *hadith,* or stories about the life of Muhammad from eyewitnesses. Taken together, these rules are known as Sharia, or sacred law. While Islam does not have a tradition of ordination, meaning that there is no official designation of priests, men who have completed a course of religious study lasting many years are regarded as religious leaders. They then teach, address congregations at mosques, adjudicate in religious courts, and conduct special rites.

ORIGINS

Muhammad was born in Mecca in about 570. He developed a deep interest in Judaism, studying the stories of the prophets in a secluded cave just outside Mecca. According to the Koran, Muhammad began to

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ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF ISLAM, 632–750

By the time of his death in 632, the prophet Muhammad had united the entire Arabian Peninsula under Islam. During the following century, Arab armies and merchants would spread Islam throughout the Middle East into what is now Iran and Afghanistan, across North Africa into modern-day Libya, and into the Iberian Peninsula.

receive divine revelations there in 610. The Koran describes how the archangel Gabriel appeared to him as he reflected in the cave, commanding him, "Recite!" He then began to speak the word of God through the power of Gabriel, though Islamic tradition claims he was illiterate.

Initially his preaching was ignored or scorned, since the Bedouin society into which he was born was **polytheistic;** they worshipped multiple deities, whose images and sculptures were gathered around a large sacred stone structure in Mecca known as the Kaaba. Muhammad's monotheistic teaching threatened these beliefs and the social order upon which they were built. Slowly, however, he started to win followers among the downtrodden, the dispossessed, and the young. As his following grew, so did tensions between Muhammad and the ruling families of Mecca. In 622, Muhammad and many of his followers fled some 300 miles (485 kilometers) north to Yathrib, where he won many converts and adjudicated a peace among many clans that had long been in conflict. Muhammad became the town's undisputed leader, and it was renamed Medina al Munawarah, or "the illuminated city" in his honor.

Muhammad and his followers began to raid caravans from Mecca, and in 624, war erupted between the two cities. Despite being outnumbered, the Muslims triumphed, and, after several years of fighting,

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ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF ISLAM

CA. 570 Muhammad born in Mecca

610s Muhammad begins preaching the tenets of Islam, based on his experiences of divine visitation in a cave outside Mecca

622 Muhammad and followers migrate to Yathrib (later Medina) in the Hegira

630 Muslim conquest of Mecca

632 After making Farewell Pilgrimage to Mecca, Muhammad dies

660–750 Umayyad Dynasty conquers North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and parts of Anatolia and northern India

750–1055 Abbasid Dynasty overthrows Umayyads, then presides over Golden Age of Islam

900s Turkic groups from Central Asia migrate south and west, converting to Islam

1055–1268 Seljuk Turks dominate Abbasid Dynasty

1098–1300s Muslims fight crusaders in Palestine and Syria

1400s Rise of Ottoman Empire

1453 Ottoman Turks complete conquest of Byzantine Empire by taking Constantinople

1683 Islamic armies defeated at Siege of Vienna

1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran establishes theocracy

2003 Iraq War begins; violence erupts between Sunni and Shia Iraqis

conquered Mecca in 630. In Mecca, Muhammad cleansed the Kaaba of all idols and declared it the holiest site in Islam, establishing it as the destination of the holy pilgrimage, or hajj, all Muslims are to undertake. Two years later, Muhammad died in Mecca after delivering a detailed sermon on how Muslims ought to conduct their lives.

In the aftermath of Muhammad's death, tensions about who should lead the Muslim community, or ummah, nearly split it in two. One large faction supported Abu Bakr, an early convert and Muhammad's father-in-law. A minority supported Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. The latter group finally gave their allegiance to Abu Bakr, but the dispute gave rise to the schism in Islam between **Sunni** and **Shia**. The Sunni recognized Abu Bakr as the first **caliph**, elected by the community; the Shia regard Ali as Muhammad's rightful heir.

Denominations

The division between Sunni and Shia persists today. The two major branches of Islam differ primarily in their views of who has the right to lead the ummah and which writings may be used as the basis of Islamic law. The Sunni, whose name comes from the Arabic *sunna* ("path"), believe the leader of the ummah should be elected, and that *hadith,* sayings and precendents set by Muhammad, form part of the basis of Islamic law. The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni, though conflicting demographic data makes it impossible to determine exactly how large this majority is.

The minority Shia (from *shiat Ali,* the "followers of Ali") believe that only descendents of Muhammad can lead the ummah. They regard the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties as illegitimate for this reason. Shia Muslims disagree with the Sunni

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on which *hadith* are to be considered part of Islamic law. Currently, Shia is the official denomination only in Iran, though Shiites comprise the majority in Bahrain and Iraq as well.

Not a denomination in its own right, **Sufism** is distinct from both Sunni and Shia in that it emphasizes an ascetic, mystical experience of God's revelation over any of its external expressions, as in law or social custom. Other minor Islamic denominations include Ibadism, and Yazidi. The Sikh religion of northern India combines many Islamic beliefs with Hinduism.

Spread of Islam, Caliphates, and Emirates

In the century after his death, Muhammad's followers conquered Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Persia, and the Arabian Peninsula. They fought to bring the value system given to them by God into the world. This fight in "defense of faith" is called *jihad*, which also refers to one's internal struggle against evil. *Jihad* literally means "exertion" or "struggle."

Islam recognized Jews and Christians as "people of the book," to be given protection and treated fairly, though they were subjected to a special tax. **Pagans** were presented with two options: conversion to Islam or death. Partly because the tax that Muslim rulers levied on non-Muslims was less than that levied by Byzantine and Persian rulers, Islam was quickly accepted in the territories controlled by these empires (Persia, Palestine, Syria, northern Mesopotamia, and Anatolia). Some actually converted to Islam to avoid the tax altogether.

The Umayyad Dynasty, established in 660 by the caliph Muawiyah, had its capital in Damascus and focused on spreading Islam west across North Africa and, eventually, into the Iberian Peninsula. Under Umayyad rule, the **caliphate** also expanded into northern India. Though Islam teaches complete equality among Muslims, the Umayyads were known for their prejudice against non-Arab Muslims, who were not allowed to advance beyond a certain level in government.

The Abbasid Dynasty replaced the Umayyad Dynasty in 750. Starting from a rebellion in an eastern province of Persia, the Abbasid family's revolt soon gathered enormous support from non-Arab Muslims, whom the Abbasids treated as equals. The Abbasid caliphs moved the Islamic capital to Baghdad, and a strong Persian influence entered Islamic philosophy and arts.

From the eleventh century onward, the Islamic Empire fragmented into numerous emirates, or smaller territories ruled by **emirs**. While the caliph was the ultimate religious and political leader of the caliphate, emirs were lower in stature and lacked authority over the entire ummah.

Until the twentieth century, most Middle Eastern societies were governed by laws based largely on Sharia. Today, many Muslim Middle Eastern nations still incorporate Sharia in their governmental framework. Several nations, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, have made Sharia the foundation of all **secular** law.

SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

Islam dominates the cultures, economies, and politics of the Middle East. Even in Israel, the only Middle Eastern nation that does not have a majority Muslim population, many internal policies are formed in reaction to the threat posed by Muslim nations and organizations, most of which take an anti-Israel stance. In addition, because of the importance of Middle Eastern petroleum, Islam impacts many other nations outside the region, though less directly.

Islamic concepts such as the jihad and the promise of paradise in the afterlife have been used propagandistically by **fundamentalist**

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Muslims to motivate many acts of terrorism. Most Muslims believe that this use of Islam is a distortion or perversion of Muhammad's revelation.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Baghdad; Byzantine Empire; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Israel; Literature and Writing; Mecca; Medina; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Society; Terrorists, Stateless.

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Israel

A small but prosperous nation on the eastern Mediterranean coast and the world's only Jewish state. Although the modern nation has existed only since 1948, Israel's history is ancient. The founding of modern Israel was—and remains—the subject of great controversy, epitomizing Middle Eastern tensions between the secular and the religious as well as between the traditional and the modern.

GEOGRAPHY

Israel's physical geography consists of four major regions. The Mediterranean coastal plain, which includes the cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa, is the site of much of Israel's agriculture and industry. The Valley Region, stretching along the Jordan River from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south, is similarly fertile. The northern highland region includes the highly populated areas of Jerusalem and the West Bank, while the southern desert region is sparsely populated, but contains small oil deposits.

Israel is bordered by Lebanon and Syria on the north, Jordan on the east, and Egypt on the southwest; it surrounds the contested regions of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Demographically, Israel's population of nearly 7 million is dominated by Jews, many of whom emigrated from Europe and Russia before and after World War II as a result of persecution and the systematic killing of millions of Jews by the Nazis in Germany. Approximately one-third of the world's Jewish population lives in Israel today. The largest minority in Israel are the Palestinian Arabs, most of whom are Sunni. A small percentage of Palestinians are Christian.

Religious and secular disagreements among Israelis make the nation's society highly complex and diverse. To foster a spirit of unity among Jewish immigrants from so many different countries, Hebrew was resurrected as one of Israel's national languages, the other being Arabic; English is semi-official. Along with a strong sense of national identity and the religious or culture practice of Judaism, this is perhaps the only factor common to all Jewish Israelis.

ECONOMY

Israel's economy started with a strong agricultural base. Small, self-sufficient agricultural communities known as *kibbutzim* were formed shortly after the turn of the twentieth century. They are strongly **socialist** in nature: tools, labor, and profits are shared communally, and until the latter half of the

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twentieth century, children at some *kibbutzim* were raised apart from their parents.

Today, Israel's leading industries include electronics, diamond cutting, textiles, and chemicals. The Dead Sea is a rich source of potash and phosphates. Agriculturally, it is among the most productive countries in the region and is largely self-sufficient, except for certain grains.

The Israeli economy today is overwhelmingly service-based. The service sector includes such activities as transportation, marketing, retail, entertainment, tourism, and business services. This reflects the relatively resource-poor nature of Israel's lands; apart from minerals and agricultural products, it must import many of its raw materials. The manufacturing and service sectors, particularly in high-tech industries, have grown disproportionately as a result.

HISTORY

Having suffered centuries of **anti-Semitism** wherever they settled, many Jews were in favor of establishing a homeland in the area known as Palestine. This area included the biblical kingdom of David and Solomon, the great unified state that represented a high point of Jewish religious and national identity.

The dream of rebuilding the Second Temple (the temple built in the sixth century B.C.E. that replaced King David's First Temple and was destroyed by the Romans in C.E. 70) and founding a new Hebrew nation was a long-cherished one for Jews. In the nineteenth century, a number of Jewish intellectuals argued for a return to Palestine, which then sheltered fewer than 25,000 Jews. Sharp increases in anti-Semitic violence throughout Europe lent their arguments great urgency, and the Zionist movement was born in Central and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century. This political movement aimed to create and populate a strong Jewish state.

After World War I, Britain became a chief supporter of a Jewish state in Palestine. At first, it encouraged Jewish immigration to the British Mandate of Palestine, the region of the former Ottoman Empire it administered. However, Arabs also wanted a homeland in Palestine, a dream that was denied them under Ottoman rule. As Jewish immigrants from Europe and Russia as well as Arab immigrants from the surrounding former territories of the Ottoman Empire repopulated Palestine, it became the site of increasing violence between the two ethnic groups. Britain tried to quell this by proposing a cooperative government, but both Jews and Arabs rejected the idea.

Britain responded by restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine in the 1940s, which angered Jews who lived there as well as those hoping to immigrate. Clandestine immigration increased dramatically during and after the Holocaust during World War II, when millions of Jews fled Nazi persecution in Europe. As a result of the Holocaust, more than 6 million Jews were murdered—one-third of the world's Jewish population at the time. Finally, the United Nations passed a resolution on November 29, 1947, declaring that Palestine would be divided into an Arab state and a Jewish state.

Founding of Israel and Arab-Israeli Wars

When British troops withdrew, Palestine collapsed into violent turmoil between Jewish and Arab militias. The Jews gained the upper hand in Jerusalem and other major cities, and on May 14, 1948, declared the establishment of the nation of Israel. David Ben-Gurion, a staunch Zionist who was elected its first prime minister, united the Jewish militias under one military command.

Over the next few days, Israel was invaded by Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Transjordan (later Jordan), and Lebanon. However, the Jewish military, whose members were well-

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GREAT LIVES

Golda Meir (1898–1978)

A founder of Israel and its fourth prime minister, serving from 1969 to 1974, Golda Meir was one of the country's most influential and inspiring politicians. Apart from her long and distinguished history as a strong Zionist leader and eloquent advocate for Israel, she held the distinction of being Israel's only female prime minister.

Goldie Mabovitch was born on May 3, 1898, in Kiev, Ukraine, but her family relocated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, when she was eight years old. She joined Zionist and socialist groups while still a student and became the leader of the Milwaukee Labor Zionist Party. In 1921, she emigrated to Palestine with her husband Morris Myerson.

Joining a kibbutz forced Meir to further develop her organizational and leadership skills in order to help the community grow in the face of increasing Arab-Jewish turbulence. She was a strong inspirational presence at the kibbutz and was soon elected to be its representative in the Histadrut, or General Federation of Labour. This organization, originally a trade union congress, eventually became the single most influential entity in the Israeli economy.

World War II brought Meir into the realm of international politics, an arena in which she would excel. During the war, she became one of the most forceful advocates for the Zionist cause in negotiations with Great Britain. She was one of the signatories of the declaration of the state of Israel in 1948, and soon thereafter became Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union.

In 1949, she was elected to the Knesset, Israel's national legislature, and served as minister of labor in the administrations of David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett from 1949 to 1956. In that capacity, she improved Israel's infrastructure with important road and housing construction projects and strongly promoted a policy of unrestricted Jewish immigration to Israel. Ben-Gurion appointed her foreign minister in 1956 and asked that she Hebraicize her name, since Sharett had ordered that all members of the foreign service do so. She chose Meir, meaning, "makes a light," and altered her first name to Golda. During the 1960s, she was diagnosed with lymphoma, a form of cancer, but kept it secret when she retired in 1965. She returned to service briefly as secretary general of the Labor Alignment, a new political party that incorporated her old one, Mapai. She retired again from that position before being elected prime minister in 1969.

As prime minister, Meir worked hard to make peace agreements with Arab nations. Then, in 1973, she faced the biggest challenge of her career. On October 6, the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur that year, Egypt and Syria launched a massive military attack that took Israel by surprise. Though Israeli forces stopped the invasion by October 26, the nation was in a state of shock. Along with many military commanders, Meir faced severe criticism for being unprepared and resigned on April 11, 1974.

Golda Meir died of leukemia in Jerusalem on December 8, 1978. To this day, she remains a towering figure in modern Jewish history. Few could match her adamant commitment to Zionism and the state of Israel, which was expressed in fiery, uncompromising speeches. Ben-Gurion once described her as "the only man in the cabinet."

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trained and fighting for their very survival, won. The Arabs lost their first war with Israel because of poor coordination and internal strife. Separate armistice agreements were signed by Israel and each Arab state from February to July 1949.

During the 1950s, Israel scrambled to secure its position. It had absorbed hundreds of thousands of Holocaust refugees, and Jews living in Arab states soon swelled these numbers considerably. In addition, the Arab countries had rejected offers of peace with Israel, and Arab guerrilla fighters killed hundreds of Jews in the early 1950s.

Over the next two decades, Israel fought three wars with Arab countries: the 1956 Suez War with Egypt; the 1967 Six-Day War with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan; and the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria. It won major victories in all three cases, capturing Gaza, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and all of Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Guerrilla warfare between Jews and Arabs has never entirely ceased. Egypt was the first Arab nation to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, but hostilities between the two ethnic groups have generally grown more intense. In 1987, the Palestinian **intifada**, a violent rebellion against the Israeli occupation, began in Gaza and spread to other Palestinian areas controlled by Israel. A second peace process was begun in 1993 by Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yassir Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This effort failed, too, and a second intifada commenced in 2000. In 2005, Israel pulled out its troops from Gaza and abandoned its settlements there, a result of changes in Israeli popular opinion regarding Palestinian territories, but it still controlled the Golan Heights, all of Jerusalem, and the West Bank.

In the summer of 2006, Israel fought a limited war in southern Lebanon with Hezbollah, one of the Islamist terrorist organizations that seek the destruction of Israel. Hezbollah fighters had been launching rockets into northern Israeli cities from bases in southern Lebanon. Although Israeli military action put an end to the attacks, it was widely criticized for its alleged use of cluster bombs, an anti-personnel weapon designed for use against massed troops, on Lebanese villages.

POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

With U.S. support and an undeclared nuclear weapons program, Israel today has the most powerful military in the region. However, Israel still suffers numerous terrorist attacks inside its borders, largely from pro-Palestinian organizations, as well as from neighboring nations such as Lebanon. Since the 1980s, thousands of soldiers and civilians alike have died in Arab terrorist attacks and Israeli military retaliations.

The Zionist dream of a Jewish state was realized in Israel, whose founding in turn provoked the growth of Palestinian **nationalism**. Despite its small land area and population, Israel has been a focal point of international politics from the day of its founding. Although many disputes that drive the Arab-Israeli conflict have yet to be resolved, Israel has taken a number of proactive steps toward a lasting peace in the Middle East.

See also: Agriculture; Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Camp David Accords; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Environmental Issues; Gaza; Intifada; Iraq War; Jerusalem; Jordan; Language; Literature and Writing; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Religion; Society; Technology and Inventions; Terrorists, Stateless; Tools and Weapons; West Bank; World War I; World War II; Zionism.

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Istanbul (formerly Constantinople, Byzantium)

The largest city and seaport of Turkey, located on a triangular peninsula between the Black Sea the Mediterranean Sea. Throughout its 2,500-year history, Istanbul has been a vital site of cultural exchange between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

The Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires all have claimed it as a conquered territory or capital. Many landmarks from its storied past, such as the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, survive today, attesting to the city's complex cultural heritage. Istanbul in the twenty-first century is a bustling, cosmopolitan city that serves as a commercial, industrial, and tourist hub for the region.

EARLY HISTORY

The city began in the seventh century B.C.E. as Byzantium, one of many Greek colonies established along the Black Sea coast. Spread across the Bosporus, the only channel between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, it effectively served as a hub for commerce between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The Roman Empire eventually absorbed Byzantium as it spread into Asia Minor. The Roman Empire suffered civil war, invasion, pestilence, and famine, but Byzantium was largely spared these calamities.

Its second incarnation began in the fourth century C.E., during the reign of Constantine, the first Roman emperor to embrace Christianity. By this time, the Roman Empire had split into eastern and western halves for administrative purposes. Tensions between them resulted in open war, which Constantine won in 324. He decided that the ancient Greek city of Byzantium would serve well as the new capital of a reunited empire, and in 330 he rechristened it Constantinopolis. The city remained the Eastern Roman Empire's capital until 1453.

BYZANTINE PERIOD

The eastern half of the Roman Empire, designated the Byzantine Empire by nineteenth-century scholars, slowly lost its territories in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt over the next millennium, first to the Islamic Empire that expanded rapidly during the seventh and eighth centuries, then to the Seljuk Turks who invaded Anatolia in the ninth and tenth centuries. However, Constantinople maintained its strength and self-sufficiency in the face of broader imperial decline because of its ties to Europe and its strategic location on transcontinental trade routes.

By the end of the eleventh century, however, Constantinople was put in serious danger by Turkish advances just across the Bosporous Strait. The Byzantine leaders

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Originally an Eastern Orthodox Church, the Hagia Sophia is now a world-famous museum in Istanbul, Turkey. (Harvey Lloyd/Taxi/Getty Images)

turned to Europe's Christian leaders for aid, which came in the form of crusader armies. Nearly all the crusaders had to pass through the city on their way to the holy lands in Palestine, and the remnants of the Byzantine Empire survived because of their aid in driving back the Turks.

Nevertheless, Venetian crusaders succeeded in sacking the city during the Fourth Crusade. They established the Latin Empire, an unstable state that faced constant warfare with its neighbors until Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259–1282) restored Byzantine rule in 1261. The Palaiologos Dynasty ruled Constantinople until the Ottoman invasion.

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

By the mid-fourteenth century, tribes of Turks were crossing into Anatolia in great numbers. The tribes immediately surrounding Constantinople were united by the Turkish leader Osman in the 1290s and came to be known as the Ottomans, meaning "followers of Osman." The Ottomans expanded their territories in western Anatolia and southeastern Europe, and turned toward eastern Anatolia at the turn of the fifteenth century.

Constantinople remained unscathed but contained by the early Ottoman expansion; the nomadic warriors lacked the powerful siege equipment necessary to breach the city's thick fortifications. This did not stop them from the attempt, however. After several unsuccessful sieges, the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481) finally captured Constantinople in 1453. The last Byzantine emperor was killed, thus completing the Turkish conquest.

Mehmed II converted the city's churches into mosques, built several more of them (including the Eyup Mosque and the Mosque of the Fatih), and repopulated the devastated city with captive Greeks from other conquered territories, as well as with his own people. Constantinople became the Ottoman capital in 1457.

Under the Ottomans, the city flourished as never before. Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566) built many superb mosques and palaces, and Constantinople prospered at the center of a network of

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HISTORY OF ISTANBUL

330 Roman emperor Constantine founds Constantinople as new Roman capital

700s–800s Site of iconoclasm struggles within Orthodox Christian Church

1054 Schism within the Church leads to Orthodox and Roman Catholic branches

1203–1204 Venetian crusaders sack city and establish Latin Empire

1261 City retaken by Michael VIII; empire threatened by West as well as Ottoman Turks

1453 Ottoman leader Sultan Mehmed II captures city

1457 Designated capital of Ottoman Empire

1500–1800 Era of peaceful growth as Ottoman Empire reaches height of power

1830s Progressive sultan Mahmud II begins Westernization of city

1908 Young Turks depose sultan Abdülhamid II

1914 Ottoman Empire enters World War I as German ally, suffers numerous defeats

1915 Mustafa Kemal, future founder of Turkey, saves city from British at battle of Gallipoli

1918 Armistice; city occupied by Allied forces

1923 Treaty of Lusanne restores lands that comprise present-day Turkey; Kemal elected president of new republic, begins vigorous campaign of Westernization; capital moved to Ankara

1930 City name officially changed to Istanbul

1950s Rapid industrialization draws vast numbers of peasants to city, straining its infrastructure

1985 Historic areas of Istanbul added the UN's World Heritage list

2000 Istanbul's population exceeds 10 million, making it one of the largest cities in Europe

renewed trade routes between Asia, the Middle East, Russia, and Europe.

The blending of cultures continued until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when developments in Europe and internal troubles began to destabilize the empire. The contrast between Stamboul, the medieval Muslim quarter of the city where sixteenth-century buildings were decaying amid nearly empty streets, and the busy, modern Pera and Galata quarters occupied mostly by wealthy European foreigners, symbolized the cultural turning point at which Constantinople found itself.

A **progressive** sultan, Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), began a process of Westernization around the 1820s. He was opposed by **conservatives** such as the Janissaries, Muslim warriors who had formed the fighting elite of the Ottoman Empire since the late fourteenth century. In the so-called Auspicious Event of June 1826, the Janissaries rebelled when they heard of the sultan's commission of new, Westernized troops. Mahmud II responded by shelling their barracks, killing most of them and executing the survivors. Victorious over his opposition, Mahmud II proceeded with internal reforms that were carried on by his successors into the twentieth century. These were hastened by the Crimean War (1853–1856) with the presence of British and French troops in Constantinople.

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GREAT LIVES

Atatürk (1881–1938)

Atatürk, whose original name was Mustafa Kemal, was the father of modern Turkey. An officer in the Ottoman army for most of his career, he led a successful rebellion against Allied occupation forces after World War I, then oversaw the birth of a secular Turkish nation.

Born in 1881 to a middle-class Muslim family in Salonica (Thessaloniki, Greece), Mustafa Kemal had a secular early education and entered Istanbul's War College at eighteen. The striking differences between the Muslim and foreign quarters of Istanbul startled him; he was convinced that Westernization was the only way to halt the widespread decay within the formerly great Ottoman Empire.

While on duty in Damascus in 1906, Kemal founded the Society for Fatherland and Freedom, a group dedicated to ending pervasive corruption within the military and government. A powerful group called the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) had formed for the same reasons in Istanbul, and Kemal joined them when he was reassigned to Salonica in 1907. The CUP ousted the sultan in 1908 and established an autocratic government that relied on military force to rule. Kemal earned the enmity of many CUP members for his criticism of this reliance.

During World War I, he earned the nickname "the Savior of Istanbul" after halting a 1915 British advance on the Gallipoli Peninsula, located near the city. After this, he was posted in eastern Anatolia, where he witnessed the devastation that followed the Turkish massacre of the Armenians.

Upon returning to Istanbul in 1918, he was greeted by the sight of several dozen Allied ships anchored in the port. After defeating the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the Allies planned to divide Anatolia among themselves. A resistance movement against the Allies and the complicit sultanate began in eastern Anatolia. When sent to quell this movement, Kemal joined it instead, launching what would become the vicious but successful Turkish War of Independence.

After the Turkish Republic was declared on October 29, 1923, Kemal pushed through a breakneck program of modernization. Islamic customs such as wearing fezzes and veils were banned, and all religious laws were rewritten with a secular basis. Kemal introduced a new alphabet based on Latin characters instead of Arabic ones. He even changed time: Turkey adopted the Western calendar, the 24-hour clock, and the 6-day workweek.

In 1934, Turkish citizens were required to take second names, counter to Muslim practice. The Grand National Assembly (GNA) gave Mustafa Kemal the name Atatürk, "father of the Turks," to reflect his accomplishments. By 1938, liver cirrhosis had taken its toll, and he retired to a yacht in Istanbul to recover. Instead, he slipped in and out of comas until his death on November 10.

Atatürk's dream of a modern, secular Turkey was largely realized, although the tension between its Islamic past and its secular international future has never disappeared. To this day, Turkey still struggles to define itself, caught between Atatürk's secular vision and the spread of Muslim fundamentalism.

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TWENTIETH CENTURY

The reforms did not go as planned, however, as conservative Muslim citizens of the empire resisted changes that ran counter to Islamic law. European intervention, particularly British, French, and Russian, weakened the Ottoman state. Moreover, the rise of national movements in some of the provinces demanding independence from Ottoman authority destabilized the state.

In 1908, Constantinople was occupied by an army led by the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), or Young Turks, a rebel organization composed of young military officers who were alienated by what they perceived as widespread corruption within their own ranks as well as within the Ottoman government. They wished to return the empire to its glory days. Deposing Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), they set up a new government based on Islamic law. The new leaders proved unable to solve the empire's problems in the face of increasing resistance from the provinces, and the government transformed into a reactionary dictatorship. They joined World War I on the side of Germany.

Mustafa Kemal, a Turkish military leader who was later known as Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, saved the city from invading Allied forces, primarily British, at the Battle of Gallipoli in February 1915–January 1916. He later returned from service in eastern Anatolia to find it occupied by Allied forces after the October 30, 1918, Armistice of Mudros that ended the war. Determined not to let them carve up the empire, he led a resistance movement that grew into a civil war. The Allied forces were driven from the city on October 2, 1923, and the Turkish Republic was declared on October 29. Ankara was chosen as the new capital, and Constantinople was officially renamed Istanbul in 1930. The name had long been in unofficial use, derived from a Greek phrase, *eis ten polin* ("in the city").

Post–World War II to Twenty-First Century

Turkey's neutrality during World War II protected Istanbul from invasion. During the second half of the twentieth century, the city's population increased nearly tenfold as rural peasants flocked there in search of employment in the rapidly industrializing economy. This strained the city's sanitation, electricity, gas, water, and transportation systems to the breaking point. As of 2006, the population of Istanbul was approaching 10 million; a considerable number of its citizens live on the outskirts in shantytowns that have gradually become semipermanent tenements.

Yet Istanbul also embodies Atatürk's vision of a modern, **secular** Turkey. It prospers as a tourist destination because of its layered history, structures from each period of which still stand in various states of preservation. Each succeeding civilization did not destroy existing structures; instead they added their own favored ornaments and embellishments. For instance, the Ottomans converted many Byzantine churches into mosques by adding minarets to their exteriors and Arabic inscriptions to their interiors.

Few Roman landmarks remain, but one is among Istanbul's most fascinating and mysterious sites—the Basilican Cistern, or Yerebatan Sarayi, near the Hagia Sophia. One of the many cisterns built to provide the city with a reliable water supply during wartime, this chamber contains more than 330 columns rising from its dark waters. Hagia Sophia itself ranks among the most renowned and celebrated buildings of the world; a beautiful building with an enormous dome, it was originally built as a

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church by Emperor Justinian I and was completed in 537. Under the Ottomans, it was converted into a mosque; in 1934, it became a state museum.

Istanbul's importance as a commercial center never diminished, and today it is one of the hubs of trade between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. It is also Turkey's most important industrial center; textiles and cement predominate the manufacturing sector. Although Ankara, located in the center of Turkey, serves as the political capital, Turkey's cultural and spiritual heart is without question Istanbul.

See also: Art and Architecture; Byzantine Empire; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; World War I.

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Jerusalem

Ancient city in Israel considered holy by members of all three **Abrahamic** religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Since ancient times, Jerusalem has been perhaps the most contested site in all of Europe and the Middle East.

The name *Jerusalem* comes from the **Semitic** term *UruShalem*, meaning city of peace. Jerusalem is synonymous with two paradoxical concepts: sanctity and strife. To Jews, it is the holy City of David, the past and future site of the twice-destroyed holy Temple and the center of Jewish culture. To Christians, it is the holy site of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, which opened the gates of heaven to the faithful. To Muslims, it is the place from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, the third holiest site after Medina and Mecca. In political terms, Jerusalem is also a potent symbol of repression, violence, domination, provocation, and, potentially, reconciliation and lasting peace.

The city was captured by Jewish tribes under King David around 1000 B.C.E. and became the capital of the joint kingdom of Israel and Judah. David's son Solomon expanded the city and built the First Temple, which housed the Ark of the Covenant, the holiest relic of the Jews. In the following millennium, Jerusalem was conquered and the Jewish Temple destroyed twice, once by Babylonians and once by Romans, who drove most of the Jews out of the city. It was next captured by the newly converted Muslim Arabs in 638. A Byzantine church was converted into the Dome of the Rock, a magnificent mosque that today sits atop the site of the original Jewish Temple.

During the Middle Ages, Christian Europeans launched a series of Crusades to retake Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land. The city was occupied variously by Europeans, Turks, and Arabs until, after its decimation by the Mongols and Mamluks from central Asia, the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent rebuilt it in 1537. However, it was considered a backwater by the Ottomans, who neglected it during their rule.

After defeating the Ottoman Empire in 1917, the Britain controlled Jerusalem and its surrounding lands, called Palestine. Both Arabs and Jews flocked to resettle these lands and often clashed in bloody conflict. Under United Nations Resolution 181, passed

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in 1947, the city was to be governed internationally, but this never came to pass.

During the Arab-Israeli wars of the twentieth century, Jerusalem was occupied by both sides several times. It was a site of ongoing violence between Arabs and Israelis, who regained access to Jewish holy sites (such as the Western Wall, the only remains of the Second Temple) only after Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War. From 1970 to 1990, Arab-Israeli tensions in Jerusalem were generally muted, although the first **intifada** that started in Gaza in 1987 spread there as well. These tensions were exacerbated in 1996 when Israel rejected a proposal to allow the Palestinians to make East Jerusalem the capital of a Palestinian state.

In 2000, the al-Aqsa intifada began in Jerusalem, ushering in a new era of terrorist attacks in the city. Though Palestinian residents of Jerusalem gained more control over their affairs as a result of the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, tensions remained high in the city in the 2000s because of its rapidly growing Jewish population. Today, it is Israel's most populous city with about a half million people.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Art and Architecture; Balfour Declaration; Camp David Accords; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Intifada; Islam; Israel; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Religion; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank; Zionism.

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Jordan

Officially the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, an Arab country bordered by Syria to the north, Iraq to the northeast, Saudi Arabia to the east and south, and Israel to the west. Jordan is a **constitutional monarchy** whose population is almost entirely Arab; more than 90 percent of the population is Sunni.

Only 3 percent of Jordan's land is arable. The climate in the western part of the country, the Jordan rift valley, is typically Mediterranean, with hot, dry summers and cooler, wet winters, making it ideal for citrus fruits and olives. This area is fertile only because of a sophisticated irrigation system dating from the 1960s. Just east of the Jordan valley, the Transjordan plateau runs from Syria in the north to the Jordanian city of Ma'an in the south. Broad, rolling plains cover this region, making it suitable for rain-fed agriculture and animal husbandry. The rest of Jordan is desert inhabited by nomadic Bedouins.

Jordan occupies part of the former League of Nations mandate, or administrative region, put under British supervision after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. Arab supporters of the Allies during World War I were promised control of these lands, but when the French forced one of these supporters, Faisal ibn Hussein, to give up his kingdom in Syria, his brother Abdullah traveled to Ma'an with a small army to support Faisal. To avoid further conflict, in 1921 the British created a region called Transjordan for Abdullah to rule. This was the origin of present-day Jordan, which is called the Hashemite Kingdom

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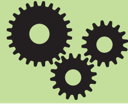

TURNING POINT

Araba Valley Treaty

In 1994, Jordan and Israel signed the Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace, also known as the Araba Valley Treaty. This treaty normalized relations between the two countries, making Jordan the second Arab country after Egypt to recognize Israel.

Prior to this treaty, Jordan had in effect recognized its Jewish neighbor unofficially; ever since his coronation in 1951, King Hussein ibn Talal had conducted secret talks with Israel on a variety of issues. Because of its economic and political instability, Jordan could not afford to alienate its Arab neighbors. However, it derived many benefits from pragmatically pursuing a neutral relationship with Israel; for example, during the 1970 civil war, Israeli air strikes helped Hussein drive back Syrian tanks invading from the north in support of Palestinian rebels.

Jordan and Israel faced a common opponent in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which sponsored terrorist attacks against both states. In the late 1980s, Jordan and Israel moved closer and closer to an official peace agreement, until the 1993 Oslo Accords established a framework for peace between Israel and the PLO. This agreement, along with political pressure from U.S. president Bill Clinton, prompted Jordan to begin talks with Israel.

Negotiations began in fall 1994. Apart from an official end to hostilities between the two states, the treaty dealt with an issue of supreme importance to both: water supply. The Araba Valley, which lies on the Israel-Jordan border between the Dead Sea to the north and the Gulf of Aqaba to the south, had been annexed by Israel. This denied Jordan access to water sources in the valley. The Araba Valley Treaty solved this problem by returning the valley to Jordan and by making provisions for each state to divert water from the Jordan River, which flows into the Dead Sea from the north. The treaty also allocates groundwater in the Araba Valley to each nation.

Secure access to these water sources has significantly improved the stability of Jordan's economy, although the country still faces a water deficit. The treaty set a precedent for cooperation between the two states that has led to the development of further joint projects, including a feasibility study for a canal from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Dead Sea (the Two Seas Canal). Such a facility would further relieve Jordan's water problem by providing freshwater from **desalination plants** along the canal. Such a project was inconceivable before the Araba Valley Treaty. The treaty was therefore not only historic politically, but also pragmatic economically.

Other provisions of the treaty included an open-border policy, which has benefited Jordan through Israeli tourism, and an agreement to work together to relieve the suffering of Palestinian refugees. Another important provision recognized Hussein as the custodian of Muslim holy sites in East Jerusalem. Finally, the treaty formalized a decades-long cooperation between the two countries on anti-terrorist measures.

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of Jordan after the dynastic name of Faisal and Abdullah's family.

Britain ceded full independence to the country on March 22, 1946. Abdullah proclaimed himself king shortly thereafter and changed the nation's name in 1949. In May 1948, Abdullah joined his Arab neighbors in attacking Israel after it declared its independence. He seized the western bank of the Jordan River, land originally designated by the United Nations as part of the Arab state in Palestine. In 1950, Jordan formally annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Nearly half a million Palestinians became subject to Jordanian rule, doubling the nation's population at the time.

Abdullah opposed Palestinian independence, however, and was assassinated by a young Palestinian at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on July 20, 1951. His son, Talal, succeeded him for a brief period followed by his grandson, Hussein ibn Talal. Hussein struggled to maintain his rule in the face of widespread resistance from his Palestinian subjects. In 1957, he created a royal dictatorship in response to an attempted coup.

Jordan lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem to Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War. Hussein had in effect been forced into the war by Egypt and Syria, who otherwise might have supported a Palestinian rebellion against him. He declared martial law in 1970 in response to Palestinian terrorism, sparking a civil war. Jordan officially renounced all claims to the West Bank in 1988. As part of his efforts to establish peace in the Middle East, King Hussein signed the Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace in 1994, ending a 46-year state of war with Israel. In 1999, Hussein's son Abdullah II succeeded him and has continued to pursue his father's moderate policies, combating Islamic fundamentalism within Jordan and working with Israel to find a solution to the Palestinian issue.

Jordan's population now exceeds 5 million and includes more than a million refugees from the West Bank, Kuwait, and Iraq, who fled to Jordan during the 1967 Six-Day War, the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and the 2003 Iraq War, respectively. This population has placed a dangerous strain on Jordan's economy, which has relied heavily on foreign aid since the 1950s. The country faces significant challenges because of its relative lack of natural resources, which has prompted it to emphasize development of its service and technology sectors.

See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Environmental Issues; Israel; Refugees; West Bank; World War I.

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Language

At the confluence of three vast continents with remarkably different cultures, the Middle East and Southwest Asia offers one of the world's richest linguistic mosaics. Migrating populations and several millennia of warring empires laid a foundation of ancient languages that modern languages drew on as they developed. Similarly, political and demographic changes in the twentieth century, such as the division of the Ottoman Empire into separate nations and immigration from Europe and South Asia, have laid the groundwork for further linguistic development in the twenty-first century.

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Arabic, Persian, and Turkish predominate, although increasing numbers of foreign workers have resulted in sizable communities of Urdu and Hindi speakers, particularly in the Gulf States. Persecuted minorities, such as the Armenians and Kurds, have rallied around their respective languages as a means of resistance. Regions formerly controlled by France and Britain, such as Lebanon and Syria, still contain many speakers of French and English, and the ancient Hebrew language of the Jews was rekindled as a way to unite the disparate immigrants in what eventually became the modern state of Israel.

ARABIC

The majority of the Middle East's population speaks Arabic. Arabic is a **Semitic** language, which is the only subgroup of the much larger Afro-Asiatic family of languages that exists outside Africa. Hebrew belongs to the same Semitic subgroup, sharing many key features with Arabic. Native Arabic speakers number in the hundreds of millions.

Arabic is a root-based language, which means that patterns of consonants (the roots) indicate basic concepts, while patterns of interspersed vowels convey grammatical meaning. Thus, the words for *book, library, letter,* and *write* all share the same consonantal root but differ in vowel patterns. As for its sounds, Arabic contains many more guttural sounds than European languages. Like English, Arabic has forms for three persons (the first person, "I"; the second person, "you"; and the third person, "he," "she," or "it"); unlike English it also has two genders and three numbers (singular, dual, and plural).

Arabic is written right to left in a flowing script that is given to beautiful flourishes and aesthetic embellishment. Many mosques are decorated with phrases from the Koran that double as breathtaking examples of calligraphy.

Arabic is widespread today for two reasons. One is the rapid spread of Islamic forces over the Middle East and North Africa in the seventh and eighth centuries. Muslim conquerors established small ruling elites in the lands under their control, introducing their faith and offering incentives such as reduced taxes and increased social status to potential converts. The second reason has to do with the Islamic belief that the Koran is the literal word of God, dictated to Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel. As such, it is regarded as verbal perfection itself and cannot be imitated by human speakers. This inimitable quality is known as *i'jaz,* and because of it, translations of the Koran into any other language are viewed as inherently flawed or incomplete. Thus, Muslim converts were required to study Arabic in order to read the Koran and pray properly.

Over the centuries, Arabic came to replace the native languages of the lands west of Persia. These cultures, which bore the stamp of Byzantine or Persian influence, became thoroughly Arabized. This is the chief reason Arabic predominates in the Middle East today.

Today Arabic exists in several forms. One is the classical Arabic of the Koran. The others are regional dialects in Arabia, Syria, and Iraq.

PERSIAN

The Persian language belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. As such, it is closer to English than to Arabic. Its proper name is Farsi, after Fars, the region in southwestern Iran where it originated. It is the official language of Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, claiming more than 80 million native speakers.

Modern Persian is derived from Middle and Old Persian, languages once spoken in

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the lands of present-day Iran as long ago as the third century B.C.E. Consequently, Iran has an ancient, rich literary tradition to draw on for its linguistic and national identity.

Grammatically, Persian resembles modern European languages in its use of auxiliary verbs and a suffix to indicate possession. It also resembles English in its lack of case inflections, or alteration of nouns to carry extra grammatical information. For example, in English as well as in Persian, prepositions indicate whether a noun is a direct or indirect object. However, Persian makes use of a linguistic feature that is extremely rare in English: the infix. This is a word or part of a word that is inserted into another word to carry specific grammatical meaning, such as plurality or singularity. Persian is also particularly well suited for word building through the addition of prefixes and suffixes to basic roots.

When the Arabs conquered Persia in the eighth century, Persians converted to Islam in large numbers. Arabic dominated political and religious life, but Persian remained the everyday language of the people. During this period of Arab domination, the Arabic script was borrowed to transcribe Persian, and many Arabic words and phrases entered Persian as loanwords.

The Persian language gradually divested many of these loanwords, as Persian power waxed again after the collapse of the Abbasid Dynasty beginning in the tenth century. It in turn influenced the languages of neighboring groups, including Turkish and Urdu. It even became the language of learning and high culture in the Indian subcontinent prior to the arrival of the British.

Three main dialects of Persian survive today: modern Iranian Persian, Dari in Afghanistan, and Tajik in Tajikistan. Tajik differs most from the other two in that it is written with Cyrillic characters rather than Arabic ones.

TURKISH

Turkish is the chief language of the Turkic subgroup, which belongs to a widespread family known as Altaic. The Altaic classification is a controversial one among linguists, since it includes a number of languages that do not seem to be strongly related. However, most linguists agree that Altaic ought to include the languages of Central Asia, the original home of the Turks. The Seljuks introduced Turkish to Anatolia in the twelfth century, and modern Turkish is descended from the Turkish spoken by the Ottomans. Today, there are approximately 70 million native Turkish speakers.

The concept of vowel harmony is very important in Turkish. This means that all the vowels in a word tend to come from either the front of the mouth or the back. A number of prefixes and suffixes are used in Turkish to produce long words that in English would be translated into phrases.

After the Turks converted to Islam around the ninth century, they too adopted the Arabic script for their written language. Arabic characters are poorly suited to express Turkish sounds, however. Many Arabic and Persian loanwords and even syntactic patterns entered Turkish as the Turks migrated into Arabic and Persian lands.

Under Ottoman rule, the language of the administrative class was actually a mixture of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish that was quite different from the pure Turkish spoken by the general population. This mixture was known as Ottoman Turkish.

After Kemal Atatürk founded the modern republic of Turkey in 1923, he abolished the use of Arabic script and introduced a new Turkish alphabet based on Latin characters. This was better suited to express Turkish than the Arabic script, as it could accurately represent the full range of sounds in the language. He also created the Turkish Language Association, which was tasked with

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replacing all foreign words that had entered the language with neologisms based on Turkish roots or with ancient Turkish words that had fallen into disuse.

Thus, Turkish underwent significant change several times during the twentieth century. Indeed, it continues to change today in response to increased identification with European culture. Millions of Turkish laborers have also brought their language into Western European states, especially Germany.

HEBREW

Hebrew is a Middle Eastern language with a serendipitous history. Like Arabic, it is Semitic and works on a system of combining vowels with consonantal roots in order to produce syntactic as well as semantic meaning. It ceased to be a spoken language by about the third century B.C.E. and instead became the language of Jewish ritual.

Commentaries on the Torah, collectively known as the Mishnah, were still written in Hebrew, though not exclusively. With the Jewish diaspora that started in C.E 70., Hebrew spread throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, often surreptitiously.

Until the nineteenth century, it was a dead language and virtually extinct in the Middle East. With the rise of Zionism in the late 1800s, however, interest in Hebrew as a spoken language was rekindled. The Jewish linguist Eliezer Ben-Yehuda led the effort to reconstruct Hebrew from its earliest scriptural forms and transform it into a language to unite the disparate Jewish immigrants to Palestine. Ben-Yahuda did this by speaking only Hebrew to other Jews and calling for Rabbis to use Hebrew for all instruction in Jewish schools in British-Palestine. He also started a Hebrew-language newspaper to help adults master the tongue. Many words had to be invented from scant Hebrew roots.

Like Arabic, Hebrew is written right to left using a square script that is based on Aramaic, another ancient Semitic language that supplanted Hebrew. Today there are an estimated 15 million native Hebrew speakers worldwide, less than half of whom live in Israel. It is the official language of Israel and today enjoys a thriving literary tradition.

MINORITY LANGUAGES

Armenian is an ancient Indo-European language spoken by approximately 7 million people worldwide. It is the official language of Armenia as well as Armenian citizens of Turkey and Azerbaijan. Although it has incorporated many loanwords, particularly from Persian, it has helped to maintain ties between Armenians who left their homeland as part of the Armenian diaspora after the Armenian genocide in the late 1910s.

Kurdish is spoken by the Kurds, a nomadic people who largely occupy southeastern Turkey, part of Syria, and northern Iraq and Iran. Although they have long sought their own sovereign state, the nations that host them have consistently resorted to violence and political threats in order to prevent this. The number of Kurdish speakers is estimated in the tens of millions, although the exact number is not known. Kurdish is written in Arabic script in Iraq, Syria, and Iran and in Latin alphabets in Turkey.

Significant populations of Russian and Yiddish speakers can be found in Israel, a result of the massive migration from Eastern Europe to Palestine around the turn of the twentieth century.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Art and Architecture; Culture and Traditions; Iran; Islam; Israel; Literature and Writing; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Society; Zionism.

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Lebanon *See* World War I.

Literature and Writing

The Middle East is home to the world's oldest literary traditions. Some begin with the invention of writing in Sumeria around the fourth millennium B.C.E.

Globally, influential religious works, such as the Torah, the Christian Gospels, and the Koran, originated in the Middle East. Four major traditions continue today, each of which relies in some part on earlier religious texts. Only in the twentieth century did these distinguished traditions give rise to voices that challenge the predominance of religious writings, producing works of personal expression, political protest, and countercultural sentiment. Today, Middle Eastern literature is more diverse in character and function than at any point in its history.

ARABIC LITERATURE

Prior to the advent of Islam, the Bedouin tribes that occupied the Arabian Peninsula maintained a tradition of oral literature that was not recorded until the seventh and eighth centuries. The poetry of this period served as a model for composition and aesthetic achievement during the course of succeeding centuries.

After Muhammad's death in C.E. 632, the Koran was transcribed. It is regarded as the high classical Arabic style somewhere between poetry and prose. This style is held to be inimitable because of its divine origin, a quality expressed by the Arabic term *i'jaz.* One consequence of this belief was the requirement that all Muslims study Arabic, since the word of God could not be adequately translated into other languages.

The Koran is the wellspring of Arabic literature, furnishing innumerable metaphors, images, and felicitous phrases for later Arabic writers. With the spread of Islam, Arabic penetrated every society in the region; peoples throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia became Arabized and Islamicized in the following centuries. The Arabic script was adopted for use in writing a number of other languages, including Persian and Urdu. Yet, although they use the Arabic script, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu writers belong to their respective traditions.

In the eighth century, stories about the life and words of Muhammad that had been passed down from eyewitnesses were written down and collected. Known as *hadith,* these stories have served to develop Islamic law and are a source of continual controversy within the Islamic community, as different sects variously denounce specific *hadith* as spurious.

Arabic Poetry

Classical Arabic poetry relied heavily on monorhyme, or the repetition of a single

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rhyming syllable. Classical poetry has sixteen meters that set the pattern and the rhyme for each poem. Poetry has been used for any number of expressive purposes, including lament, eulogy, praise, admonition, and sheer verbal play. Until the twentieth century, Arabic classical poetry was one of the most admired and cherished forms of literature. Poets held highly esteemed positions in society. Rulers lavished gifts on poets in order to gain their poetic praise and favor.

Arabic Prose

Prose in Arabic is traditionally complicated in style and simple in substance, full of many kinds of word play. The *maqamah,* often translated as assembly, superficially resembles the Western short story in that it focuses on a limited plot and scope of action, but over time, its style became so baroque as to obscure the meaning of the story. This kind of writing became the model for fictional varieties of prose, and it was only at the end of the nineteenth century, when European influence spread throughout the region, that a more straightforward style became popular among Arabic writers.

The *maqamah,* though highly popular for centuries, reached its classic form in the hand of al-Hamadhani in the tenth century and al-Hariri, a twelfth-century writer in Basra who recounted the adventures of Abu Zayd as-Saruji, a fictional character who is part wanderer, part confidence artist. So ingenious and rich was his writing that it is still admired and studied widely in the Islamic world today.

Golden Age of Arabic Literature

Classical Arabic literature reached its height under the Abbasid Dynasty of the eighth through the tenth centuries. The renewed interest in Greek learning contributed Hellenistic elements to Arabic writing, and the political shift toward Persia brought Persian traditions into vogue. Arabic writing also became more democratic, as conquered peoples began to express themselves in Arabic alongside the Arab ruling class. Representative writers from this new class were Bashshar ibn Burd, a blind love poet and son of slaves, and Abu al-Atahiyah, who invented a new kind of **ascetic** verse that reflected on the transitoriness of the world.

Most famous among the Abbasid poets were Abu Tamman, al-Buhtry, and Abu Nuwas, who died early in the ninth century. Ribald and hedonistic in both deed and word, he nevertheless wielded the language with unmatched skill and seemed to flaunt the prohibitions of Islam.

A "modern" poetry gradually developed that addressed topics outside the scope of traditional forms, in styles that incorporated qualities previously foreign to Arabic literature such as bitter satire, rich descriptions of everyday objects, and poems of unrequited worldly love. Arabic prose also developed under the influence of pre-Islamic Persian narratives.

Numerous stories of the Abbasid ruler Harun al-Rashid's court in Baghdad, many of them apocryphal, made their way into the constantly changing collection of popular stories known as the *Alf laylah wa laylah,* or *The Thousand and One Nights.* This book is a compilation of Persian, Arab, Turkish, and Indian fables, legends, and myths that express the full range and complexity of Middle Eastern culture. The earliest known reference to this collection dates from the tenth century.

Modern Arabic Literature

Arab writers responded to European influence in the nineteenth century by adopting numerous European styles, including real-

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ism in prose and free verse in poetry. More importantly, however, was the adoption of a new mode of literary production by Arabic writers: journalism. This was unheard-of in the Middle East before nineteenth-century Arab intellectuals began to use it as a means of expressing political ideas, particularly those criticizing Ottoman rule.

The rise of nationalist sentiment and the establishment of new states such as Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria fueled a wave of social and religious critique. Scholars point out a true break with Arabic literary tradition after World War II, when the predominant romantic style and religious themes gave way to a realistic style and **secular**, liberal, political themes.

Prior to the twentieth century, there were no Arabic novels, as the Arabic prose tradition focused on short narratives. The earliest Arabic novel to attain recognition was *Zaynab,* a story about a village girl forced into an arranged marriage, written by Egyptian Muhammad Husayn Haykal in 1910. The undisputed master of the Arabic novel, however, is Najib Mahfuz, an Egyptian who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. Mahfuz received death threats for his outspoken books, which criticize the pervasive culture of religious fundamentalism.

After World War II, women writers finally came into prominence in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria. Prose writers there gained the freedom to address issues of inequality and religious conflict, although **conservative** Muslims in many Arab states continued to exercise considerable powers of censorship.

Modern Arabic poetry shifted from highly imagistic, romantic work such as that by the Lebanese poet Khalil Gibran to more experimental and stylistically varied free verse in the 1940s. The strife born of the Arab-Israeli conflict has given rise to a number of politically committed Palestinian poets, including Rashid Husayn, Tawfiq Zayyad, and Fadwa Tuqan. One of the most famous modern Arabic poets is Adonis, a Lebanese poet who invented a surreal form of poetry that addresses a wide range of topics.

Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1988. He died in August 2006. (AFP/Stringer/Getty Images)

PERSIAN LITERATURE

Pre-Islamic Persian literature had as great an influence on the Arabic writing of the seventh century and after as Bedouin oral traditions had on Arabic poetry.

Persian Poetry

Although Persians wrote in Arabic for many centuries following the Islamic conquest in the late 600s, they fused their own pre-

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Islamic traditions with those of the Arabs and eventually contributed significant poetic innovations to Arabic literature.

The *roba'i* is a quatrain, or four-line stanza, with a fixed meter and rhyme scheme. Writers in the Persian tradition adapted it for many different uses, such as relating narratives or religious instruction.

More significant was the *masnavi,* or epic poem written in rhyming couplets. This was an old Persian form that found new life in Arabic during the eighth century and quickly spread alongside Persian culture. Arabs had no epic tradition of their own and turned to the Persian *masnavi* when they did compose long-verse narratives.

Development of Persian Tradition

While the Abbasid Dynasty saw the rise of Persian influence within the broader tradition of Arabic writing, a new, exclusively Persian tradition also arose toward the end of the tenth century in northeastern Iran. In the eleventh century, Mahmud of Ghazna presided over a highly literary court that developed new styles of lyric and epic poetry.

One of the most influential Persian works, the *Shah-nameh* or *Book of Kings,* was completed in 1010 for Mahmud by Ferdowsi, the greatest of Persia's epic poets. This work of nearly 60,000 lines collected mythical and historical stories about the long line of Sasanian kings who ruled Iran prior to the arrival of the Arabs. It contains few Arabic words and is considered the masterwork of Persian national literature.

Another great achievement of the eleventh-century Persian tradition is the *roba'iyat* quatrains of Omar Khayyam. A prominent mathematician, astronomer, and scientist, Khayyam was also a masterful poet whose collected works provided the Western world a first glimpse into the world of Persian literature when they were translated into English by Edward FitzGerald in the nineteenth century.

The eleventh century witnessed the development of a new kind of mystical poetry as well, which reached its fullest expression in the work of the thirteenth-century writer Mawlana Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi (known as Rumi in the West). His chief work, entitled simply *Masnavi,* is a collection of mystical thought and imagery. It became second only to the Koran in importance to sects of mystical Muslims known as Sufis.

The best-known Persian religious poet after Rumi is Mohammad Shams od-Din Hafez, who perfected the *ghazal* during the fourteenth century. His work is widely considered the best of all Persian lyric poetry. Although he is known as Hafiz in the West, "Hafez" is simply an honorific indicating that its bearer has memorized the Koran. Hafez was a lecturer and commentator on the Koran before he lost his position as court poet in Shiraz. *Divan* is his most famous work, exhibiting a mastery of image and verbal play that is difficult to fully convey in translation.

Modern Persian Literature

Persian writers responded similarly to European influences in the nineteenth century by turning to realism, social critique, and personal political expression. A shift in Iranian poetry occurred approximately at the same time as modernist movements in European poetry in the 1910s. Ali Akbar Dehkhoda and Abolqasem Aref were leading poets who argued that the changing conditions within Iran demanded a new kind of experimental poetry. Iranian poetry continued to diversify in succeeding decades until the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Muhammad Taqi Bahar, one of Iran's greatest twentieth-century poets, openly criticized the shah and was vocal in his support of revolution. The Iranian Revolution

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drove out many of Iran's prominent writers, who continued to criticize the Islamist regime from exile.

Iranian prose was revolutionized by Sadeq Hedayat, a writer who spent a great deal of time living and studying in Europe. His short stories criticized the monarchy and the clergy, and his modernist style as well as his themes were influential. His works were banned in Iran in 2006 because of their political nature. Mohammad-Ali Jamalzadeh is considered the father of the modern Iranian short story and his stories include many satirical elements. To the surprise of many, Jamalzadeh returned to Iran after the revolution and even praised many of the changes made by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

TURKISH LITERATURE

The Turkish literary tradition began later than the Arabic and Persian ones. Nomadic raiders from the Central Asian steppes since antiquity, Turkic tribes began to convert to Islam en masse in the latter half of the tenth century. Around the same time, they began to filter down into Syria, the Levant (modern Israel and Lebanon), and Anatolia. By the fourteenth century, the Seljuk and Mamluk Turks had fully established themselves in the region, and other Turks occupied nearly the whole of Anatolia.

The first significant Turkish writer was Yunus Emre, a thirteenth-century Sufi mystic who was profoundly influenced by Rumi's work. Yunus Emre wrote on mystical subjects such as divine love in a straightforward style, employing traditional meters from Anatolian folk poetry. His work had a lasting impact on Turkish mysticism and experienced a revival during the renaissance of Turkish literature in the early twentieth century. Today, Yunus is considered the founder of Turkish literature. After the twelfth century, the Turks readily adopted the *mevlûd,* a kind of short *masnavi* celebrating Muhammad's birth. The greatest Turkish example of this form, the eponymous *Mevlûd,* was written in the fourteenth century by Süleyman Çelebi and retains its overwhelming popularity today.

Modern Turkish Literature

Among the changes instituted by Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, was a Latin-based writing system for Turkish that replaced the old Arabic script of the Ottomans. This was symbolic of the revolution in national identity and politics that Turkish writers wrestled with after the founding of the Republic of Turkey. Many writers embraced European trends such as realism in prose and free verse in poetry. Important Turkish writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries include Nazim Hikmet, a highly influential Marxist poet who lived in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and Orhan Pamuk, a postmodern novelist who received Turkey's first Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006. Along with many other outspoken writers, Pamuk has been prosecuted by Turkish authorities for his criticism of the government's role in the Armenian genocide.

ISRAELI LITERATURE

A relative latecomer to the literary landscape of the Middle East, Israeli literature has its roots in the ancient Hebrew tradition. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the revival of Hebrew, many Israeli writers have built a body of work that reflects the complex tensions of life in the Middle East.

Israeli literature has tended to continue the literary traditions of the regions Jewish immigrants left, mainly Russia and Europe. Recurring themes include the trials and struggles of early Jewish settlers, life in the agrarian communes known as *kibbutzim,* and the ongoing conflicts both between Arabs and Jews and between religious and

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secular factions within Israeli society. S.Y. Agnon, one of the giants of Israeli prose, wrote extensively about the conflict between tradition and modernity in Jewish life. He is known for his idiosyncratic vocabulary, which draws on classical Hebrew. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966.

Other notable Israeli writers include Yehuda Amichai, a gifted lyric poet and staunch nationalist; Aharon Appelfeld, a prose writer who explores the horrors of the Holocaust and its aftermath; and the novelist Amos Oz, who devotes much of his attention to the Palestinian issue.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Armenian Genocide; Baghdad; Culture and Traditions; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Islam; Israel; Language; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Religion; Society; World War I; World War II; Zionism.

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McMahon-Hussein Agreement

Promise of British support for an Arab state in exchange for the instigation of an Arab uprising against the Ottoman Empire in the mid-1910s. The agreement arose from what is called the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence of 1915 and 1916. In this exchange, Arabs saw a clear promise on the part of the British to establish an Arab kingdom.

The correspondence was between Sir Henry McMahon, then British high commissioner in Egypt, and Hussein bin Ali, the sharif of Mecca. At the time, Britain and France were allied against the Ottoman Empire and Germany in the Great War, or what would come to be known as World War I. Britain controlled Egypt, and the post of high commissioner was equivalent to that of chief diplomat of a province. The Islamic title of sharif referred to the steward of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Arab lands were then part of the vast Ottoman Empire.

Hussein bin Ali discovered that the Ottomans planned to depose him after the war ended, because of his support of Arab nationalism and opposition to the policies of the Ottoman government. Consequently, he opened negotiations with McMahon in 1915. He had already been presented with a document by the British, the Damascus Protocol, that promised support for an Arab revolt against the Ottomans. The McMahon-Hussein correspondence focused on elaborating and detailing the nature of British support during and after the revolt, especially regarding the establishment of an independent Arab state.

The McMahon-Hussein Agreement was spelled out in the letter of October 24, 1915. In it, McMahon states that Great Britain will recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs following a revolt against the Turks. While not a formal treaty, the letter was viewed by the Arabs as a binding agreement, and they began preparations for a large-scale upheaval, the 1916 Arab Revolt.

In June 1916, an Arab army numbering nearly 75,000 troops severed an important

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railway link between Damascus and Medina. This allowed British forces to advance into Palestine and Syria from Egypt, ultimately resulting in the British defeat of the Ottomans in 1918.

The British promise would prove to be empty, however, as the 1917 Balfour Declaration stated Britain's support for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. This came as a harsh blow to the Arabs. T.E. Lawrence (known more popularly as Lawrence of Arabia), a long-time British ally of the Arabs, continued to lobby for Arab independence in the lands promised by the McMahon-Hussein correspondence. However, part of these lands were governed by the French after World War I due to the establishment by the League of Nations of administrative authorities called mandates, which granted power to France and Britain. The French controlled what is now Syria and Lebanon, while the British had jurisdiction over present-day Israel, Jordan, and northern Iraq. Britain divided its mandate into Transjordan and Palestine in 1921, and a United Nations resolution in 1947 proposed a further division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Thus, the dream of a united Arab state was thwarted.

The united Arab state promised by Britain in exchange for Arabic support against the Ottomans never materialized. The mandates under Britain and France were instead divided and, largely in the 1940s, given political independence, resulting in the present-day countries of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Iraq.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Gaza; Israel; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Saudi Arabia; Society; West Bank; World War I; Zionism.

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Mecca

Holiest city in Islam, birthplace of its prophet Muhammad, and destination of millions of Muslims on hajj, or pilgrimage. Muslims face in the direction of Mecca during daily prayers. It is also the capital city of Saudi Arabia's Makkah Province, in the western Hejaz region.

Mecca is located 45 miles (72 km) east of the Red Sea port city of Jeddah. With a population of 1.3 million, Mecca is Saudi Arabia's third-largest urban center and also its most ethnically diverse, since Muslim pilgrims from around the world have settled there. Non-Muslims are not allowed to enter Mecca.

Mecca grew up in pre-Islamic times around a cubical stone building called the Kaaba. Islamic tradition holds that the Hebrew patriarch Abraham and his son Ishmael built the Kaaba, but it was a holy site long before Muhammad's birth around C.E. 570 Adherents of pre-Islamic **pagan** faiths worshipped their idols in the square around the Kaaba, which now stands inside the Great Mosque, al-Masjid al-Haram. Mecca's location at a crossroads of north-south and east-west trade routes also contributed to its pre-Islamic growth. It also had a steady water supply from the Well of Zamzam, which, according

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to Islamic tradition, was a holy spring revealed by God to Ishmael's mother, Hagar.

Mecca's majority pagan population resisted, then grew openly hostile to, Muhammad's religious teaching, which began in 610. In 622, he was forced to flee the city for Yathrib (Medina), which became the first Muslim stronghold; the Islamic calendar dates from this flight, called the Hejira. Mecca's importance grew incalculably after Muhammad conquered it with his Muslim army in 630. He destroyed the pagan idols around the Kaaba and declared the city to be the holy center of Islam. He died there in 632.

Mecca's importance as a center of trade declined over the following century, but as the center of the rapidly expanding Islamic faith, it prospered as never before. It suffered only two disruptions in the succeeding centuries: one in 692, when the Umayyad general al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf put down a rebellion there, and one in 930, when Tahir Sulayman, the leader of a Shiite sect, sacked the city. Control of Mecca passed to the Abbasid Dynasty in the eighth century, the Egyptian Mamluk sultanate in 1269, and the Ottoman Empire in 1517. Until the twentieth century, the city was governed locally by sharifs, descendants of Muhammad.

In 1926, the House of Saud overthrew the sharifs and incorporated Mecca into present-day Saudi Arabia. The Saudis renovated the city and its religious landmarks, modernizing facilities for pilgrims. As **petrodollars** began to pour into the country in the 1930s, Saudi Arabia also improved access to the holy city for the millions of Muslims who travel there yearly on the hajj, a pilgrimage that all Muslims must make at least once during their lives.

Mecca faces many problems arising from its high population density, including a lack of local food and water supplies, housing shortages, and occasional accidents caused by crowding pilgrims. Its economy is almost entirely service oriented, meeting the needs of as many as 3 million pilgrims yearly.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Gulf States; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Terrorists, Stateless.

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Medina

The second holiest city in Islam after Mecca, Medina is located on a fertile oasis about 100 miles (160 km) north of Mecca in the western Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia. Muslims revere Medina as the first city to embrace Islam, harboring Muhammad after his flight from Mecca in C.E. 622, and as the Prophet's burial place. Originally Yathrib, it was renamed Medina al-Nabi, "City of the Prophet," in Muhammad's honor. The population today is approximately 1 million.

Like Mecca, Medina was first a small oasis town in the vast, unforgiving deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. Its early population was dominated by Jews who had been expelled from the Roman Empire in the second century. It prospered from the fourth to the seventh centuries as a result of renewed hostilities between the Byzan-

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tine and Persian empires to the north and northeast. Both empires had traditionally made use of Arab tribes as military auxiliaries, spies, and trading partners to foil each other's movements.

By the seventh century, Medina was home to a number of **pagan** Arab tribes as well as a Jewish minority. Several traders from Medina are said to have witnessed Muhammad preaching in 619 near the Kaaba in Mecca, a holy site to Arabs even before the advent of Islam. The Medina traders were impressed with the prophet and returned later with representatives from all twelve of Medina's major tribes.

The representatives asked Muhammad to come to their city as a mediator and judge. Facing increasing persecution from Mecca's prominent families because of his teachings, Muhammad agreed, and over the next several years, he sent his Muslim followers ahead of him in small groups. He made the journey himself in 622; this trip is known as the Hejira in Islam and marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Muhammad was welcomed almost universally by the citizens of Medina. Nearly all of its residents, other than Jews, converted to his new faith, and he was able to build an army at this new stronghold that withstood several invasions by pagan Meccans. He expelled the Jews from Medina when they refused to recognize him as a legitimate prophet. In 630, he conquered Mecca, consolidating power between the two cities.

Since that time, Medina has been one of the holy sites that Muslims visit on the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. The Ottoman Empire took control of Medina in 1517, briefly losing it when Arab **fundamentalists** known as Wahhabis led by the House of Saud captured it in 1804. The Turks recaptured it in 1812, and in an effort to establish firmer control of the entire Hejaz, built the Hejaz railroad from Damascus to Medina between 1904 and 1908.

The rail connection was disrupted by Arab attacks coordinated by the British military officer T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) during the early years of World War I. Since then, Medina has been in Arab hands; the House of Saud took control in 1925 and incorporated it into the modern state of Saudi Arabia.

Medina contains a number of Islamic holy sites, including the first mosque ever built and the ditch Muhammad dug to defend the city against the invading pagans from Mecca. The most prominent of these sites is the Prophet's Mosque, which Muhammad himself helped build.

Although Medina is one of Saudi Arabia's largest cities by population, modernization there has lagged somewhat in comparison with Riyadh and Mecca. The fertile land around Medina helps provide food for the millions of pilgrims who visit the city each year.

See also: Arab League; Culture and Traditions; Gulf States; Islam; Mecca; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Religion; Saudi Arabia; World War I; Yemen.

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N–R

Nationalism and Independence Movements

Political and social movements aimed at establishing sovereign states. **Nationalism** is a social or political orientation that takes the nation as the primary unit of cultural identity. Along with European models of education, economic systems, and military organization, nationalism was perceived as a means to prevent foreign powers from establishing yet another empire in Southwest Asia in the twentieth century.

After centuries of rule by the Ottoman Empire, the peoples of the Middle East came to realize an opportunity for self-determination following the empire's defeat in World War I. The sole exception to this was Iran, which had managed to remain independent of Ottoman rule after the Turks spread throughout Arab lands in the sixteenth century.

TURKEY AND ARMENIA

The Armenians, a Christian people occupying the eastern parts of Anatolia since antiquity, had lived in relative autonomy within the Ottoman Empire for centuries. Because the Armenians had a long history of independence prior to the arrival of Seljuk Turks in the eleventh century, Armenian nationalism has always been quite strong. However, it was met with severe repression by the Ottoman and, later, Turkish government.

Armenians were massacred between 1894 and 1896 by the Ottoman sultan Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876–1909) in response to a mass movement for greater rights within the empire. When the Young Turks overthrew Abdul Hamid in 1909, Armenians hoped that the new government would be more sympathetic to their goals, but instead they were treated with even more hostility and suspicion. During World War I, Armenians worked to disrupt Ottoman operations. The Ottomans responded by deporting, displacing, or massacring anywhere from several hundred thousand to more than 1 million Armenians between 1915 and 1917; this is known as the Armenian genocide.

In 1920, Armenian nationalist hopes were thwarted by defeat in the Turkish-Armenian war as well as by an invasion by the Soviet Union. The Armenian population was split among several Soviet republics including the Soviet Republic of Armenia. It was only in 1991 that Armenia achieved independence as the first non-Baltic state to secede from the Soviet Union. In the years since, armed conflict with Azerbaijan and the continued repression of Armenian nationalism within Turkey have prevented the Armenians from officially reclaiming all the territory they once occupied.

ARAB STATES

Before the outbreak of World War I, Arabs under Ottoman rule did not have a strong sense of national identity. Although they were united by their language, faith, and culture, they were treated as second-class citizens by the Ottomans. Treatment worsened during World War I, as the Ottoman army requisitioned large amounts of material, especially vital agricultural produce, from the Arab lands that now comprise Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan. The seizure of goods ran counter to prior Ottoman policy, which

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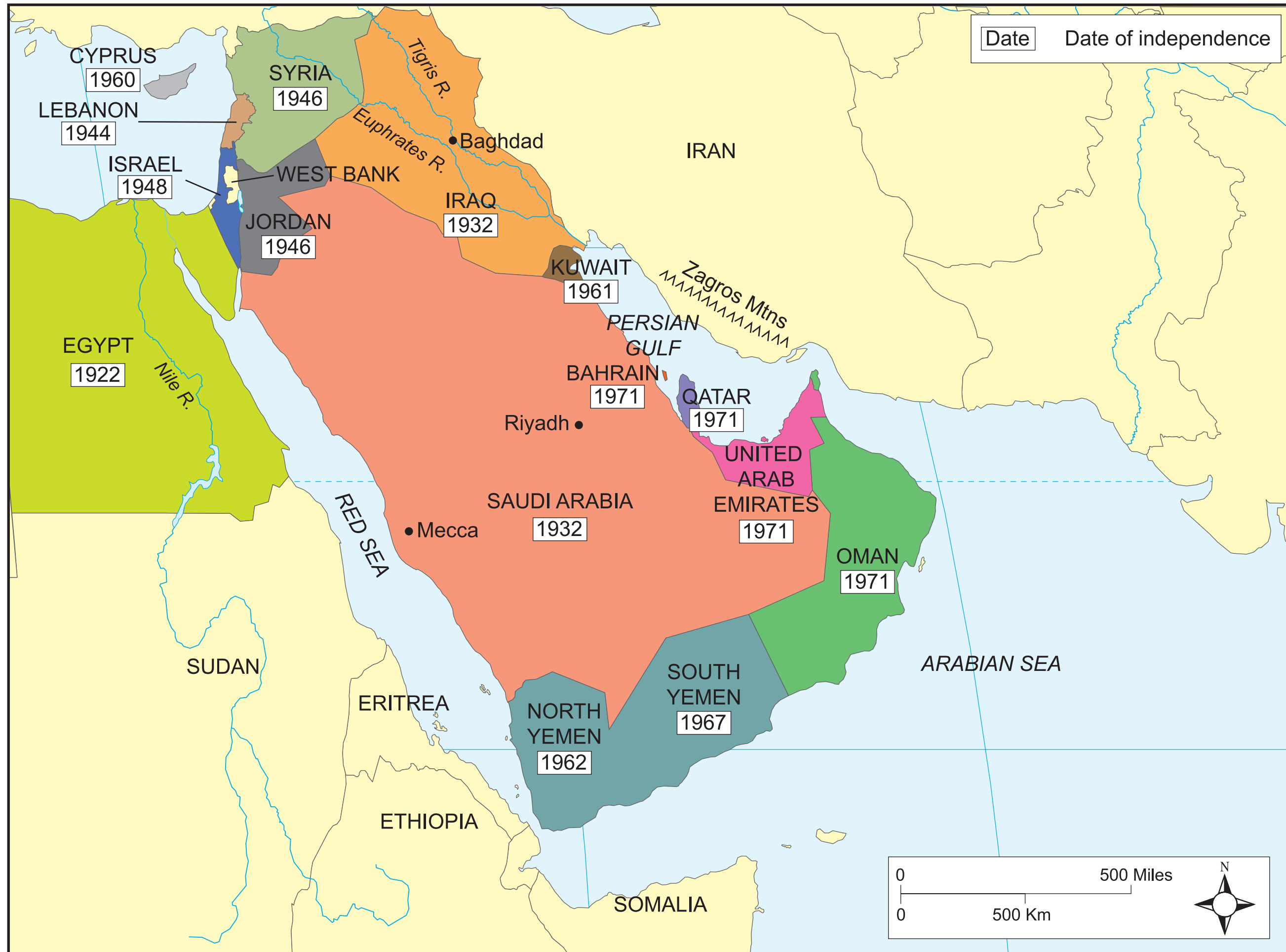
INDEPENDENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

After World War II, Britain and France gave up most of their colonial claims in the Middle East. In 1946, Lebanon and Syria gained independence from France and Jordan earned its independence from Britain. In 1948, Jewish leaders in British Palestine accepted the establishment of the independent Jewish state of Israel. Oman, which had been independent since 1650, became a British protectorate in the 1890s. The British left Oman in 1971.



had allowed non-Turkish peoples within the empire a large degree of local autonomy.

The Ottomans dealt severely with Arab complaints about this treatment, imprisoning and sometimes executing dissenters. Tension between Arabs and Turks grew steadily in the early 1910s. Hussein ibn Ali, the sharif, or religious guardian, of Mecca and Medina, declared an Arab rebellion against the Turks in 1916. The British took advantage of this split by approaching the Arabs and offering support for the creation of an Arab state in exchange for military cooperation against the Ottomans; the Arabs agreed. The offer took shape in the correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, British high commissioner in Egypt, and Hussein ibn Ali during 1915 and 1916. These letters are known as the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence.

T.E. Lawrence, or Lawrence of Arabia, was a key figure in the successful Arab Revolt of 1916 to 1918 that undermined Ottoman

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GREAT LIVES

Lawrence of Arabia

Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888–1935), or T.E. Lawrence, was born in Wales to an aristocratic family. Pursuing an early interest in medieval military architecture, particularly castles built by the crusaders, he could not have realized that he would become the key figure in leading the crusaders' enemies, the Arabs, in their quest for political independence.

Before the outbreak of World War I, Lawrence traveled for several years in Arab lands from Mesopotamia to the Sinai Peninsula. He worked as an archaeologist and cartographer, helping to excavate and analyze ancient cities and fortifications. After the war began, he became a British officer assigned to produce military maps and gather intelligence on Ottoman forces.

When Hussein ibn Ali, the sharif, or religious guardian, of Mecca and Medina, started a rebellion against the Ottomans in the Arabian Peninsula in June 1916, Lawrence convinced his superiors to let him consult with the sharif's son, Faisal. Lawrence forged an agreement for British material support for the rebellion in return for Arab coordination of guerrilla actions with overall British military strategy.

It was Lawrence's custom to adopt the dress and practices of the lands in which he traveled, and he was so trusted by his Arab allies that he eventually became a confidant of Faisal. During World War I, Lawrence fought alongside the Arabs in many battles, coordinating their attacks to disrupt Ottoman communication and military movements. His leadership was crucial to Arab victories in Aqaba and Damascus. He later wrote about his wartime activities in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935).

After the war, Lawrence became the Arabs' chief European ally in negotiations with the Allies for an Arab state. He felt deeply guilty about the British intent to support Jewish settlement in Palestine in spite of the McMahon-Hussein Agreement, an intent he was aware of long before it became evident to the Arabs. Lawrence argued constantly for Arab independence and joined Faisal's delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. However, European ambitions and persistent factionalism within the Arab coalition rendered his efforts fruitless. The Allies ignored the Arabs' desire for a unified Arab state and instead partitioned the Arab lands formerly controlled by the Ottomans into two administrative regions called mandates, one under British rule, the other under French rule. Disillusioned, Lawrence refused to be crowned a British knight in recognition of his service.

The publication of his memoir as well as collections of his prolific correspondence with such prominent figures as the playwright George Bernard Shaw earned Lawrence widespread fame after the war. Although he did not seek fame, he became a legendary figure in his own lifetime. After another stint in the British military under two assumed names, he died in a motorcycle accident in 1935.

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military operations in the northern region of the Arabian Peninsula and allowed British forces to advance into Palestine.

After the war, the former territories of the Ottoman Empire were divided into areas of Allied administrative control. In

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1920, instead of gaining the united Arab state they were promised, the Arabs faced what amounted to foreign colonial governments in the British and French mandates (the term used for the administrative regions in Arab lands). These mandates were further divided arbitrarily into smaller Arab states by the ruling European powers.

THE KURDS

The Kurds are a distinct ethnic group numbering about 30 million who live primarily in southeast Turkey, eastern Syria, and northern Iraq and Iran. Kurdish communities exist in several other nations worldwide as well. Kurds constitute the largest minority group in Turkey and Iraq. Kurdish nationalism developed in the twentieth century as a result of the partitioning of traditional Kurdish lands between these four countries. All four of these nations have repressed Kurdish identity and battled Kurdish nationalist groups to varying degrees.

The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, signed by the Allies and the Ottoman Empire, provided for an independent Kurdistan. Following the Turkish War of Independence, however, this treaty was replaced in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne, which made no mention of the Kurds. Until the 1970s, aspects of Kurdish identity ranging from use of the Kurdish language to traditional dress were restricted or banned within Turkey.

In 1974, Abdullah Ocalan, a Kurdish university student, founded a Marxist-Kurdish nationalist organization called the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The PKK began a guerrilla war against the Turkish government that escalated precipitously in the 1980s and 1990s. The Turkish military set out to crush the movement, destroying thousands of Kurdish settlements in southeastern Turkey. Ocalan was captured in 1999, which resulted in a decline in PKK guerrilla activity. In response to pressure from the European Union (EU), Turkey took the first steps toward recognizing the Kurds as a distinct people by legalizing Kurdish radio broadcasts as well as classes conducted in Kurdish.

Iraq dealt with the Kurds in a similar fashion, waging armed conflict from the 1970s through the 1990s. As many as 5,000 Kurds were gassed by the forces of Saddam Hussein in 1988 in an attempt to put down a rebellion. Another Kurdish rebellion was crushed in the early 1990s. Iraqi Kurds achieved an unprecedented measure of autonomy following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Since then, a semi-independent government in Iraqi Kurdistan has protected Kurds there and provided a secure base for Kurdish nationalist fighters in the surrounding nations. The prospects for a fully independent Kurdish state remain very dim, however, as the emergence of a new state in the lands inhabited by the Kurds would disrupt the balance of power in the Middle East. None of the four nations that host Kurds wants this to happen.

COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS

Communist movements have arisen in nearly every Middle Eastern country since the 1920s, but with little political success. The most notable are communist groups in Turkey, Israel, and Iran, which were all still active at the start of the twenty-first century.

Iranian communists were active in the revolutionary coalition that ousted the shah during the Iranian Revolution in 1978. After the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (r. 1979–1989) came to power in 1979, however, many of these communists were arrested or executed, or else joined thousands of other Iranians who fled the country and its **fundamentalist** Islamic regime. Communist groups continue to operate in Iran today, fighting in the political arena to overthrow the Shiite regime, but their power is limited.

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See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Armenian Genocide; Balfour Declaration; Culture and Traditions; Gaza; Gulf States; *Intifada;* Iran; Iranian Revolution; Islam; Israel; Istanbul; Jordan; Language; McMahon-Hussein Agreement; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Saudi Arabia; Society; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank; World War I; Zionism.

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Oil

The most abundant and politically influential natural resource in modern Southwest Asia. According to some estimates, the countries of the Middle East possess more than 40 percent of the world's total petroleum reserves. Since the establishment of large-scale drilling early in the twentieth century, oil has irrevocably altered the economic and political landscape of the Middle East and made it the focus of sustained international attention.

DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

The production of Middle Eastern oil began in Iran in 1901, when a British speculator and businessman named William D'Arcy won a commission from the shah to search for petroleum. D'Arcy had the backing of the British government, since Britain's Royal Navy, the most powerful in the world, consumed oil voraciously, and the British government was determined to maintain its maritime supremacy. After striking oil at Masjed Soleiman in southwestern Iran in 1908, D'Arcy founded the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC, later British Petroleum). APOC built a pipeline from Masjed Soleiman to a refinery at Abadan, a port town on a river whose mouth lies near the Persian Gulf.

After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, APOC began exploring in present-day Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Major fields were soon identified in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain.

These countries lacked the capital to build drilling facilities and refineries, however. Instead, they turned to international oil companies for investment capital; these companies were in a strong negotiating position and made agreements that reserved the greater part of oil profits for them.

In exchange for paying a minimal royalty to the newly established governments of each respective nation, oil companies were given complete freedom over pricing and production. Oil prices were extremely low by today's standards, and the cheap, plentiful energy source facilitated the rapid industrialization of Western nations, Russia, and Japan. Meanwhile, oil money flowed into the relatively impoverished Arab states, where it was largely retained by ruling elites.

OPEC, OAPEC, AND OIL SHOCKS

The disproportionate sharing of oil profits led to increasing frustration in the 1930s on the part of the Middle Eastern governments of oil-producing states. The influx of foreign capital also produced new tensions within their societies, since the modernization this money supported clashed in many respects with Islamic teaching.

Therefore in 1945, when oil-rich Venezuela demanded that international oil companies

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An armed guard talks to a Saudi businessman outside the Saudi Aramco oil refinery at Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia. (Barry Iverson/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images)

operating within its borders split their profits evenly with oil states instead of paying only insignificant royalties, Middle Eastern oil producers began to echo this demand readily. Fifty-fifty splits in profits between the international oil firms and each Middle Eastern oil state were secured in renegotiations by the end of the 1950s. This drove down the profitability of foreign oil enterprise while increasing Middle Eastern oil income tenfold during the 1960s.

These shifts in the balance of power over oil led to a summit among representatives of oil-producing nations in August 1960. Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Iran formed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in an effort to wrest control of pricing and production from foreign companies. By setting minimum prices per barrel and maximum production quotas for each of its members, OPEC ensured that oil prices remained favorable to producers. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates joined OPEC in 1961 and 1967, respectively.

In 1968, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya formed the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) to promote Arab oil interests, specifically the development of the oil industry in these countries. OAPEC differs from OPEC in that OPEC tries to set price controls on the global sale of oil, whereas OAPEC coordinates oil-related development among its members. Its members came to include Bahrain (1970), Iraq (1972), Qatar (1970), Syria (1972), and the United Arab Emirates (1970).

These organizations contributed to two oil shocks—or sharp spikes in prices and drops in production—during the 1970s. The first came in 1973, when OAPEC members began curtailing production in order to protest U.S. support of Israeli in the Yom Kippur War that October. By sharply raising the demand for and price of oil, these countries hoped to force the United States to cut aid to Israel, or otherwise apply political pressure on the Jewish state to return its captured territories. This policy was not successful.

By October 20, Saudi Arabia had halted all shipments to the United States. This led to vastly increased prices, peaking at $20 per barrel. The high cost of gasoline pushed the U.S. economy into a recession, as people lined up for miles to purchase the carefully rationed fuel. OPEC members realized

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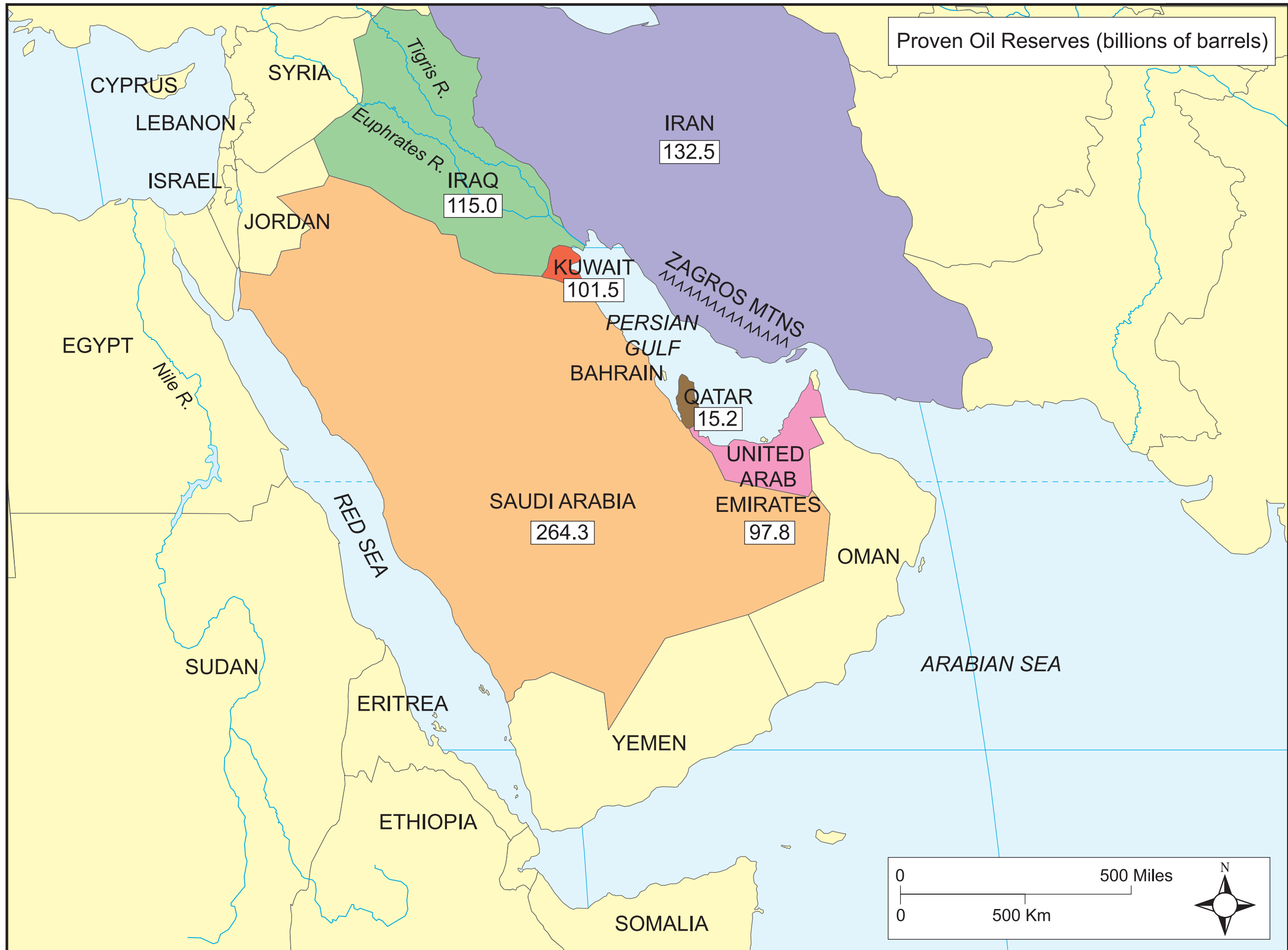
REGIONAL OIL RESERVES

Most of the world's known oil resources are located in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region. Saudi Arabia alone controls some 38 percent of the global petroleum supply. The political instability that characterizes this region of the world is particularly troubling because of oil's vital role in fueling the international economy.



the power they wielded over the rest of the world and set a higher minimum price per barrel, which Western nations agreed to out of dire economic need. The explosion in oil prices led to a worldwide recession in 1974 and 1975, and a scramble to reassess political ties with Middle Eastern nations that had previously seemed insignificant.

A second major oil shock came in 1978 and 1979 as a result of the Iranian Revolution. The massive protests that forced the shah from Iran shut down the nation's oil industry, and the Islamic Republic established in 1979 was inconsistent in production and pricing. The Iran-Iraq War, which began in 1980, nearly stopped Iranian production completely and greatly curtailed Iraqi production.

Oil prices jumped to $20 and even $30 per barrel in 1978 and 1979. This helped spur environmental and economic reforms in industrialized nations, which sought to reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern oil. However, the highest oil prices were

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seen in the first decade of the twenty-first century after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, which shut down Iraqi oil production temporarily. Prices peaking at more than $100 per barrel in early 2008 led to greatly increased gasoline prices throughout the world.

IMPACT

Since the mid-twentieth century, Middle Eastern oil states have experienced drastic social changes as a result of an enormous influx of foreign capital. Some countries, such as Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, have adjusted easily to this newfound wealth, investing in education, agricultural development, defense, and infrastructure. Others, such as Saudi Arabia, have experienced it as a source of ongoing tension, as the wealth brings with it foreign workers and customs denounced by the Islamic fundamentalists who form the majority of the Saudi population.

Saudi Arabia is the world's chief producer and exporter of oil, although Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates also have reserves that individually dwarf those of the United States. Arab oil states have turned their oil into economic and political advantage. Today the fate of the global economy is intertwined with developments in the Middle East because of its dependence on oil. However, estimates indicate that oil reserves will be depleted by mid-century. Such estimates, along with overwhelming evidence of global climate change, have spurred research into alternative energy sources. The potential consequences for the Arab world and its role in international affairs are as great as those that followed the discovery of oil itself.

See also: Economic Development and Trade; Environmental Issues; Gulf States; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Iraq War; Saudi Arabia; Technology and Invention; World War I.

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Ottoman Empire and Turkey

Named for its early fourteenth-century founder, Osman I, one of the most expansive and longest-lived empires in the world, and its modern successor. At its height in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire stretched from Austria to Iran and along the coast of North Africa, encompassing former Arab and Byzantine territories.

The empire was the most serious threat to Western Europe for four centuries, before succumbing to internal rebellion and economic and political stagnation in the nineteenth century. After the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I, Atatürk, an Ottoman military officer, founded modern-day Turkey.

SOUTHWEST ASIA BEFORE THE OTTOMANS

The Turks were originally nomadic horsemen from the steppes of Central Asia. Around C.E. 1000, Seljuk Turks and Mamluks dominated the Arab caliphates that had succeeded the Abbasid Dynasty. Known for their fierce devotion to Islam, these warriors

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were key to the Muslim victory over the Christian crusaders from Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. At the end of the twelfth century, Genghis Khan and the Mongols pushed westward from northern China into Turkish and Persian lands. They eventually defeated the Seljuks and established khanates, or empires led by khans, in Mesopotamia and Iran.

This aggressive expansion drove Turkish groups westward as well, and the ancestors of the Ottomans fought with the remainder of the Byzantine Empire for control of Anatolia. They occupied most of it by the end of the twelfth century. Independent Turkic principalities emerged at the end of the thirteenth century, one of which was led by the founder of the Ottoman Empire, Osman I.

EARLY EXPANSION

As *bey,* or prince, Osman controlled an area in northwestern Anatolia near present-day Istanbul (then Constantinople). When Turks had first converted to Islam several centuries earlier, they merged their pre-Islamic identities as tribal warriors with their new faith. As a result, fourteenth-century Turks were often zealously devoted to conquering new lands for Islam. These religious warriors were called *ghazis.*

Osman recruited many ghazis for his campaigns, and refugees from the Mongol invasions also swelled his ranks. By 1301, he had conquered all but the major cities of the former Byzantine region of Bithynia. Osman's son, Orhan I, eventually captured the large port city of Bursa, in northwestern Anatolia, in either 1324 or 1326, and then succeeded his father. Bursa was commercially and strategically important, as it allowed the Turks to prepare attacks on Constantinople and Europe. Orhan united his holdings in an official state, reorganized the army, and began to systematically extend his control in all directions.

Under Orhan's son, Murad I, the Ottomans pushed deep into the Balkans. Murad founded the famous janissaries, or elite Turkish infantry, to ensure a fighting force more stable than the tribal ghazis. For the rest of the fourteenth century, the Turks slowly but steadily conquered more territory in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Hungary. They suffered a severe setback in 1403 when Tamerlane, a Mongol leader, invaded Anatolia. Murad's son Beyazid, then sultan, was captured and died in captivity, while Murad's other sons fought for control of the sultanate. This period, known as the Ottoman Interregnum, ended in 1413 with Mehmed I's victory over his brothers. He quickly reconquered lost Anatolian and Balkan territory and moved the Ottoman capital to Adrianople (Edirne in the far northwest of present-day Turkey).

In 1423, Mehmed's son and successor, Murad II, became the first Turk to besiege Vienna, and though he lost European territories to the combined power of Christian states there, he managed to force peace treaties that returned much of the Balkans to the Turks. His son, Mehmed II, was one of the empire's most significant leaders. Conquering Constantinople in 1453, he moved the imperial capital there in 1462 and captured further territory in the Balkans, Greece, Anatolia, and even the Crimean Peninsula.

PEAK OF EXPANSION

The capture of Constantinople marked the beginning of the Ottoman Empire's golden age. Mehmed codified new laws to assist in governing his expansive holdings, instituting a new tax system and the millet. Millets were minority communities in Ottoman lands that were largely self-governing, although they acknowledged Ottoman rule and paid taxes.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had defeated the Mamluks

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THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, CA. 1526

The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 marked the beginning of the golden age of the Ottoman Empire, which reached its greatest heights under the leadership of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566). Defeat at the siege of Vienna in 1683 set the empire on a long decline that ended with its collapse following World War I.

and taken their lands in Syria, Egypt, and southwest Arabia. The Ottoman navy was one of the most powerful in the world, and the empire used it to control trade routes to India and China. Culturally, the empire reached its height under Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), who reformed the legal system, streamlining it and ensuring that it was based on the Koran, and promoted the arts and sciences. His military campaigns expanded the empire into Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and further into Europe. In 1529, he even besieged Vienna, though plague and an early winter forced him to retreat before he could capture the city.

DECLINE

With Suleiman's death, the Ottoman Empire began a long period of economic stagnation that led to its political decline. As European powers began to exploit the riches of the Americas, the Ottomans fell behind their Christian rivals economically

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and technologically. Succeeding sultans did not demonstrate the military or political acumen of their predecessors, and several internal revolts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries weakened the central government.

Nationalist ambitions flared throughout Ottoman lands, and successful local revolts by peoples who had grown resentful of Ottoman rule liberated Greece, Egypt, Arabia, and Syria. Muslim and Turkish refugees from these revolts poured into the remaining Ottoman lands, putting further stress on governmental and economic systems and leading to increasing stagnation. In attempting to address the needs of these refugees, too many government resources were diverted from maintaining a competitive position in world trade. A program of political, economic, military, and social reform known as the Tanzimat was carried out between 1856 and 1876. This was largely unsuccessful at reversing the empire's decline, however, because the organization of the central Ottoman government had allowed too much autonomy for the provinces. Once a province liberated itself, the empire was simply unable to muster the military and administrative resources necessary to retake it. The Tanzimat did Westernize many aspects of Ottoman society, such as industry, dress, and education.

WORLD WAR I AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN TURKEY

Frustrated with widespread corruption and concessions to European powers on the part of the sultanate, young militants formed the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) in 1908, and eventually took control of the empire in 1913. They attempted to restore the empire to its former position even as it continued to lose territory in the Balkans and North Africa.

The Ottoman Empire entered World War I on the side of Germany, but was defeated by the British in 1918 and came to an official end at the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. Its former lands in the Middle East were divided into mandates administered by France and Britain. Anatolia would have been similarly partitioned were it not for Mustafa Kemal, or Atatürk, a career Ottoman military officer who led a successful Turkish War of Independence against the Allied occupation forces. The modern state of Turkey was established in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne.

MODERN TURKEY

Atatürk carried out an extraordinary and ambitious series of reforms that made Turkey into a fully modernized nation. Under Atatürk, the capital was moved to Ankara, and a new Turkish identity came into being that deliberately abandoned its Ottoman past. However, these reforms were carried out in a largely autocratic way; multiple political parties were not allowed until after World War II. Universal suffrage and direct elections were introduced then as well.

Censorship laws were relaxed during the 1950s as Turkish society became increasingly educated, politically liberal, and Western in orientation. However, bad harvests and heavy foreign borrowing placed great strains on the Turkish economy during this period. Inflation and unemployment rose dramatically. By 1960, the failure of the government to address these problems led to student demonstrations. The government responded by imposing martial law on April 28. One month later, a successful military coup put a small group of **conservative** officers in charge. They carried out purges in government, academia, and the military, imprisoning or executing hundreds. A new constitution was written and new elections were held in 1961, when the military withdrew from the political process.

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RISE AND FALL OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

1100s Turks invade and occupy most of Anatolia

1293 Final Mongol defeat of Seljuk Turks; establishment of ten Ghazi Turk emirates in Anatolia

1301 Osman I, founder of Ottoman Empire, rules former Byzantine region of Bithynia near Constantinople

1324 Osman's son, Orhan I, captures Bursa and makes it Ottoman capital; Orhan succeeds Osman two years later

1330s–1390s Turks push into Balkans and are driven back

1402 Tamerlane, Mongolian leader, defeats Turks at Battle of Ankara; Mongols rule eastern Anatolia

1413 Mehmed I defeats rivals to become new sultan, moves capital to Adrianople

1423 Sultan Murad II besieges Constantinople and Vienna; Turks lose Battle of Salonika and are driven out of Balkans

1451 Mehmed II succeeds Murad as sultan

1453 Mehmed II captures Constantinople, makes it Ottoman capital nine years later

1520s Ottoman Empire reaches its military and cultural height under Suleiman the Magnificent

1529 Suleiman besieges Vienna, but fails to capture it

1580s–1590s European powers undermine Ottoman economic power with New World silver and other goods

1683 Unsuccessful Second Siege of Vienna

1699–1820s Decline of Ottoman Empire, loss of territory on western borders

1820s-1900s Nationalist movements within empire lead to loss of many border territories

1908–1912 Committee of Union and Progress (Young Turks) comes to power in Constantinople

1913 Young Turks seize power in military coup and impose military rule

1920 Following defeat in World War I, Ottoman Empire partitioned according to Treaty of Sèvres; Turkish War of Independence begins

1923 Turks win War of Independence; Treaty of Lausanne establishes modern state of Turkey

1920s–1930s Atatürk introduces sweeping reforms that modernize Turkey and distance it from its Ottoman past

During the 1960s, Turkey suffered through what amounted to a civil war, as militant political groups fought one another in cities throughout the nation. Also, a Kurdish revolt began in eastern Turkey. The widespread chaos led to a second declaration of martial law in 1971 that was lifted in 1973. A second coup came in 1980, though this one was generally supported by the public. A new constitution was written and approved in 1982, and elections held again in 1983. A strong, stable government emerged from these elections. The 1980s were a period of economic recovery and expansion for Turkey.

From the late 1980s to early 1990s, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a militant political organization, carried out a number

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of terrorist attacks on government property and officials. The Turkish military responded by moving into southeastern Turkey in force, burning Kurdish villages and killing thousands of their residents. The Kurds have since made limited political gains, such as the right to broadcast Kurdish-language radio programs; they have even won seats in Turkey's parliament.

Turkey's economic strength continued to grow through the turn of the twenty-first century. It is a major agricultural producer in the region, and its industrial and technological sectors have been expanding rapidly. Today, its population is approximately 73 million, the majority of which are Turks; Kurds make up the largest minority. Turkey has applied for membership in the European Union (EU), reflecting the degree to which the nation has come to identify with Western cultures over Middle Eastern ones.

See also: Armenian Genocide; Art and Architecture; Byzantine Empire; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Islam; Israel; Istanbul; Jerusalem; Language; Literature and Writing; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Refugees; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Society; Technology and Inventions; Tools and Weapons; World War I.

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Palestinian Issue

Undecided status of Palestinians living in areas controlled by Israel and the primary source of Arab-Israeli conflict into the twenty-first century. While Palestinians are native inhabitants of the region now occupied by the state of Israel, they lack a state of their own.

Escalating violence between Arabs and Israelis over the issue of land control drove approximately one million Palestinians into surrounding Arab states during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence. The violence continues to the present day. Although significant progress has been made on the issue, the fate of the Palestinians remains in question.

PALESTINE UNDER THE ARABS

The Palestinian issue has deep historical roots. The name *Palestine* comes from the Latin term "Philistine," in reference to an ancient people who lived in what is now the coastal region of Israel. Today's Palestinians are an ethnic mixture of many groups, such as Canaanites, Hebrews, Greeks, and Arabs, who have lived in the area at one time or another.

By the mid-seventh century C.E., the Christian Byzantine Empire had tenuous control of the region, sometimes surrendering territory to its archrival, the Persian Empire. Many Palestinians converted to Christianity.

When Islamic warriors swept through the region in the seventh century, Palestine became part of the Arab caliphate; it would remain so for the next 700 years. The majority of its population became Muslim, while a minority remained Christian or Jewish.

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Followers of Islam, as well as followers of Judaism and Christianity, consider Palestine sacred.

PALESTINE UNDER THE TURKS

Arab rule over the region of Palestine was briefly interrupted by the Crusades during the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. While crusaders invaded Palestine, Turkic groups from Central Asia were seizing power throughout the Middle East. They helped liberate Jerusalem and other cities from the Europeans, while also coming into conflict with the Fatimid caliphate, an Islamic state that ruled Egypt and the other Ayyubid Sultanate that followed.

The Ottoman Turks eventually took over the remnants of the Byzantine Empire and all Arab lands, including Palestine. Under five centuries of Ottoman rule, Palestine was relatively peaceful but economically depressed. It was still regarded as sacred to Islam, but it was not strategic to the Turks and was therefore largely neglected.

During the nineteenth century, the weakening Ottoman Empire began losing territory, and Palestine absorbed some of the Muslim refugees who fled. Around this time, Europeans began having an impact on Palestinian culture through trade, which undermined the traditional balance of power by putting Jews and Christians on an equal political and economic footing with Muslims. In response to these developments, Arab peoples in the area began to develop nationalistic sentiments. They desired their own Arabic state, and this desire proved critical to the outcome of World War.

WORLD WAR I, ZIONISM, AND BRITISH PALESTINE

The British made several conflicting agreements with Jews and Arabs during World War I, promising to support the establishment of sovereign states for each; these states overlapped in the region of Palestine. The McMahon-Hussein Agreement of 1915–1916, promising support for an Arab state in Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, conflicted with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which explicitly supported Jewish settlement. Arabs were dismayed by the shift in policy and lobbied British politicians, but to no avail. Zionism was a well-established political movement by World War I, and Jewish immigrants had been acquiring Palestinian land for the better part of a century.

After the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I, the League of Nations created two mandates, or areas of administrative control, out of Ottoman lands in the Middle East. Palestine was part of the British Mandate. Because of open British support for Jewish immigration, Palestinian Arabs became more and more anxious about the loss of their homeland. They tried diplomacy as well as violence to restrict Jewish settlement, but the British did nothing to ensure that the Palestinians would have their own state.

Jews and Arabs alike formed militias and began a guerrilla war against both each other and the British. The fighting escalated until the Arab revolt against British rule in 1936, when mass insurrection by Palestinians was met with British force. By then, several hundred thousand Jews were living in Palestine.

WORLD WAR II AND ISRAEL

During World War II, as a result of the systematic murder of more than 6 million Jews during the Holocaust, Jewish immigration to Palestine reached new heights. This led to unprecedented levels of violence between Palestinians and Jews. The British responded by trying to restrict Jewish immigration, but the policy failed for two main reasons: one, the Jews already settled in Palestine were committed to armed defense of their communities in the face of decades of Arab attacks; and two, the British simply could

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not stop the tens of thousands of persecuted Jewish refugees having survived the Holocaust trying to get into Palestine. Jewish groups began to attack British targets as well as Palestinian ones, and Palestinians responded in kind. Britain finally withdrew from Palestine in 1947, leaving the country in the care of the United Nations, which proposed dividing it into a Jewish and an Arab state.

Both groups were opposed to the idea. As British forces left, Jewish militias launched a series of attacks on Palestinian villages. By that time, many Jews had served under British officers and had better military training than their Arab neighbors. Having faced centuries of often violent **anti-Semitism** in Europe and Russia as well as the Middle East, followed by mass extermination during the Holocaust, the Jews were determined to found a sovereign nation where they would be safe from persecution. After the state of Israel was declared in May 1948, nearly 800,000 displaced Palestinians became refugees. The majority of these people ended up in ill-equipped camps in the regions today known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Several hundred thousand also fled to Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt.

PALESTINIANS TODAY

Since the creation of Israel, the Palestinian issue has become a lightning rod for pan-Arab **nationalism**. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed. This umbrella organization includes many pro-Palestinian groups that acknowledge it as the official representative of the displaced and stateless Palestinians.

After the crushing defeat of Arab states in the 1967 Six-Day War, the PLO became an independent organization, and Yassir Arafat became its chairman in 1969. Terrorist attacks by Palestinian nationalists and Israeli military retaliation became commonplace in the region. Arafat gradually shifted his position to one of diplomacy, but this has had mixed results. In 1987 and 2000, two **intifadas**, or Palestinian uprisings, have led to eventual concessions from Israel, while diplomatic talks have largely failed to produce results.

The concessions have included the 1994 establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), a self-governing body administering the occupied regions, and the 2005 withdrawal of Israeli forces and settlers from the Gaza Strip. The PNA is composed of a president, a prime minister, and the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Mahmoud Abbas was elected the first prime minister in 2003, and upon Arafat's death in 2004, he became the president as well. The two primary Palestinian political parties, Hamas and Fatah, formed a short-lived coalition government in 2006, when Hamas won an unexpected victory over Fatah in the PLC. Violence between the two parties escalated until Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, forming a rival Palestinian government, while Fatah remained in power in the West Bank.

Today there are approximately 9 million Palestinians. Close to 1 million live in Jordan, while approximately 1 million more are scattered throughout Lebanon, Syria, the Persian Gulf States, and Egypt. Most of the rest are confined to the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza, where living conditions are among the worst in the world. Unemployment rates soar to 40 percent and higher, and malnutrition and disease afflict a large portion of the population. Foreign aid sent to the Palestinians often ends up in the hands of militant groups, such as Hamas, which continue to dominate the political and cultural landscape.

These groups demand nothing less than the destruction of Israel and the return of all Palestine into Palestinian hands. An increasing number of Palestinians and Israelis favor a two-state solution, but issues of territorial control, security, and long-entrenched animosity make any resolution

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GREAT LIVES

Yassir Arafat (1929–2004)

As a founder of the Fatah movement, a political group dedicated to the liberation of Palestine from Israeli rule, and longtime chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yassir Arafat was one of the most recognizable if controversial figures in the Middle East.

Born in Cairo to Palestinian parents, Arafat began attending the prestigious Cairo University in the 1940s. He became an Arab nationalist by 1946 and helped smuggle arms to pro-Arab fighters in the British mandate of Palestine. When the 1948 Arab-Israeli War broke out, he tried to enter Palestine to join the fighting but was turned back by Egyptian forces. This event colored his view of supposedly pro-Palestinian Arab states.

Upon returning to college, Arafat joined the Muslim Brotherhood and served as president of the Union of Palestinian Students. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, and then served in the Egyptian military during the 1956 Suez Crisis.

Arafat then started a contracting firm in Kuwait and began raising money for pro-Palestinian groups. It was there that he helped found a group that would become Fatah, one of the largest and most influential of the Palestinian nationalist organizations.

An important turning point in Arafat's political career came in 1968 when Israeli forces attacked Karanmeh, Jordan, the headquarters of Fatah. Arafat secured an agreement of support with Jordan and urged his militant followers to hold their ground against the Israeli assault. More than one hundred Palestinian fighters died in the incident, but Israel withdrew its forces when threatened by the Jordanians. Despite the high Arab death toll, this confrontation was widely regarded as a victory for Fatah as well as Arafat. He attained the status of a national hero, and Fatah's numbers swelled.

In 1969, Arafat was named chairman of the PLO. He became a highly controversial figure on the world scene, publicly advocating diplomacy with Israel as a means to achieve Palestinian independence while planning and directing repeated terrorist campaigns.

Arafat remained chairman of the PLO until his death in 2004, although an internal split in the 1980s threatened his authority. He signed the 1993 Oslo Accords, a peace agreement between the PLO and Israel that established a framework for Palestinian independence. For these historic agreements, Arafat shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize with Israeli leaders Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin. The Oslo Accords, however, failed to produce a lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

Yassir Arafat became ill late in 2004 and died on November 11. No other Palestinian leader has been more polarizing. He is known to have supported numerous terrorist acts during his long political career and was accused of supporting many more. He remains a national hero to some Palestinians and a villain to others, and was one of the Arab world's most potent if contradictory figures.

problematic. As of the mid-2000s, hopes for a unified Palestinian state remained dim as the PNA was split by fighting between Fatah and Hamas. The Palestinian issue remains one of the defining conflicts of the Middle East in the twenty-first century.

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See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Byzantine Empire; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gaza; Intifada; Islam; Israel; Jerusalem; Language; McMahon-Hussein Agreement; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Refugees; Religion; Society; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank; World War I; World War II; Zionism.

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Pollution *See* Environmental Issues.

Refugees

People who have fled their Middle Eastern or Southwest Asian homeland because of war, political oppression, or religious persecution. Due to numerous upheavals in recent centuries, the Middle East has become home to millions of refugees of many different nationalities.

As the Ottoman Empire lost territory in the nineteenth century, Muslims from lands it formerly controlled, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Algeria, and Egypt, fled to its remaining territories in the Middle East. These stricken populations placed a great deal of stress on the already weakened empire, which had to find a way to house and feed them. The additional stress contributed to the empire's decline. Turkish refugees also returned to Anatolia before and during the Turkish War of Independence from 1920 to 1923.

The next major wave of refugees came at the end of the nineteenth century, when more than one million Jews fled **pogroms** in Russia. Thousands of these refugees eventually settled in Palestine as part of the Zionist movement. In a more general sense, Jews who moved to Palestine as Zionists regarded themselves as refugees from pervasive **anti-Semitism** in Europe and elsewhere.

As World War II began in Europe, millions more Jews fled Nazi-controlled territory. An overwhelming number of them attempted to settle in British Palestine, but Britain detained them in camps on Cyprus in order to prevent further escalation of Jewish-Arab violence. Thousands managed to sneak into Palestine anyway.

After the British withdrew from Palestine in 1947, widespread attacks and evacuations forced by Jewish militias caused many more Palestinians to abandon their homes. The next massive wave of refugees, Palestinian Arabs, began in the interim before the founding of Israel on May 14, 1948. Approximately 100,000 refugees had been displaced within Palestine or had fled to surrounding Arab states before that date.

By the time of Israeli independence, around 300,000 Palestinians had fled for Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. The city of Haifa was almost totally abandoned by Palestinians, who refer to the mass exodus as al-Nakba, or

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"the catastrophe." Over the course of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, an additional 500,000 Palestinians sought refuge in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. They lived in hastily constructed United Nations camps that were ill equipped to serve so many. Israelis seized or destroyed property they left behind, and in many cases razed whole villages.

Today more than 4 million Palestinian refugees inhabit these same camps and others in Gaza and the West Bank. They comprise one of the world's largest stateless populations and one of its worst humanitarian crises.

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Iran received about 1.2 million Iraqi refugees. The conflict also drove nearly 400,000 Palestinian refugees from Kuwait to Jordan, bringing much-needed capital to Jordan's economy but taxing the country's limited water supplies. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the fighting that ensued created another enormous Iraqi refugee population—up to 5 million, about half of whom were displaced internally; most of the rest fled to Syria and Jordan. In many cases, they faced circumstances little better than those of the Palestinians.

The **fundamentalist** Muslim **theocracy** established in the wake of the 1979 Iranian Revolution also drove out thousands of Iranians and members of non-Islamic faiths, such as Christians and Baha'is. Most of these refugees traveled to the United States and Europe, where they regrouped and began to work for democratic reform from abroad.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Gaza; Intifada; Iranian Revolution; Israel; Jerusalem; Jordan; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Religion; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank; World War I; World War II; Zionism.

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Religion

Religion has played a more important role in Southwest Asia than perhaps any other region of the world. No fewer than three great world faiths were born there: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Collectively, these three great religions have had an immeasurably profound impact on world history. While a small number of minority religions also exist in Southwest Asia today, these three continue to predominate.

PAGANS AND POLYTHEISM

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have much in common. They are **Abrahamic** faiths, originating from the life and family of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham, who lived in the early second millennium B.C.E. Followers of all three religions revere the Hebrew prophets. All three faiths regard Jerusalem as a holy city and have other holy sites, mainly churches, synagogues, and mosques, scattered throughout present-day Israel and the occupied territory of the West Bank. Finally, they are all expressions of **monotheism**, or the belief in only one god. Long before the advent of these monotheistic faiths, however, Southwest Asia was populated by adherents of various forms of **polytheism**, the belief in multiple gods or in groups of gods called pantheons. Followers of monotheistic religions often refer to followers of

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polytheistic religions as **pagans** in order to distinguish them from monotheistic groups.

ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroastrianism was founded on the teachings of the legendary prophet Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, who lived sometime between the tenth and seventh centuries B.C.E. in what is now Iran. He taught that there are two equally matched forces in the universe: good and evil. Ahura Mazda is the creator, the supreme god of good and order; Ahriman is the spirit that brings evil and chaos.

As creations of Ahura Mazda, humans are morally obligated to fight evil. They are given the power to choose between good and evil, however, and once they die, they are judged by their choices and either rewarded or punished. Zoroastrianism took root in Persia around the sixth century B.C.E. and soon dominated Persian culture (though it never became an official state religion). Ancient Persian kings were not looked upon as gods themselves, but as servants of Ahura Mazda devoted to justice and peace.

Zoroastrians believe in the absolute equality of all people, regardless of gender, faith, or ethnicity. They discourage laziness and encourage active spiritual and material participation in the struggle for a just, orderly society. Charity, hard work, and environmental values are all prominent in Zoroastrianism. The principle of good is symbolized by an eternal flame, and Zoroastrians often conduct rites or pray in front of a fire.

Zoroastrianism never became a world faith because it was too closely tied to Persian nationalism. When Islam swept through Persia in the seventh century C.E., the decline of Zoroastrianism began as more and more people gradually took up the new faith. Today, Zoroastrians number anywhere from a half million to 2 million, most of them in India, Pakistan, Iran, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Despite its decline, Zoroastrianism remains one of history's most influential religions. Later monotheistic faiths such as the three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—inherited many concepts from Zoroastrianism. Among these are the **dualism** between good and evil (symbolized by a Creator as well as a Destroyer), the ultimate triumph of good, and a final judgment of the soul after death. Zoroastrianism is also believed by some to be the source of such Judeo-Christian concepts as angels, heaven, hell, the messiah, the millennium, and the halo.

JUDAISM

The ancient religion of the Hebrews, or Jews, Judaism is also the source of both Christianity and Islam. Hebrews were a tribal, nomadic, **Semitic** people who lived in a united kingdom founded by David, one of their greatest kings, in what is now northern Israel around the first millennium B.C.E. In 957 B.C.E., David's son Solomon built their great Temple, the center of the faith, in Jerusalem. Jews trace their religion to the ancient Hebrew patriarch, Abraham, who lived in the second millennium B.C.E.

Jewish belief is based on the teachings of the Tanakh and the Talmud. The Tanakh, or Hebrew Bible, is the collection of sacred writings that includes the Torah, the five books presumably written by the great Hebrew prophet Moses, and other writings that make up the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. The Talmud is a collection of interpretations of the Tanakh by **rabbis**, or Jewish religious leaders. Unlike other faiths, Judaism is grounded in scripture and not in religious figures. Thus, Jews are sometimes called "people of the book."

Jews believe in an all-powerful, benevolent God who created the universe. They also believe that God made a special covenant with the Jewish people through Abraham. This covenant included the settlement

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The Dome of the Rock Mosque abuts the Western Wall of the Second Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, Israel. Jerusalem is a holy city to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. (Jon Arnold/Taxi/Getty Images)

of the Jews in lands promised to them (present-day Israel). The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed twice (in 587 B.C.E. and again in C.E. 70), and the site on which it was located, the Temple Mount, is the holiest site in Judaism today. Jews in the twenty-first century also go to the Wailing Wall, all that remains of the Second Temple, to pray and conduct various rites.

In practice and doctrine, Judaism has never been a unified faith. All Jewish sects recognize the primacy of the Tanakh and all believe in one God, but several Jewish traditions have evolved over the centuries. The major Jewish denominations are Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Orthodox Jews insist on a life that revolves around religious practice and the ultra-Orthodox often reject modern ways of living. Conservative Jews believe that religious practice should change according to changing circumstances, but they strongly emphasize tradition. Reform Jews incorporate more liberal ideas into their beliefs and typically lead fully modern lives.

Rabbis are spiritual leaders who have studied scripture and Jewish codes of law and have received ordination, or official recognition as a religious authority. They are also community leaders who advise others, settle Jewish legal questions, and interpret scripture as necessary. Traditionally, only men can become rabbis. Today, however, some Reform and Conservative Jewish congregations recognize women rabbis.

Religious dress includes a skullcap for men (*kippah*), a prayer shawl (*tallit*), and leather boxes containing biblical verses that are worn on the head and arm (*tefillin*). Traditionally, Jews pray three times per day and sometimes more. Prayer usually consists of recitation from scripture. Jews gather for communal prayer and study in buildings known as synagogues. Other observances of Judaism include ritual **circumcision** after birth, dietary restrictions known as *kashrut,* and a coming-of-age ritual known as *bar mitzvah* and *bat mitzvah* for boys and girls, respectively.

The Jewish day of rest, Shabbat or the Sabbath, is Saturday. On this day, Jews are traditionally forbidden from engaging in activities considered "work," such as lighting fires and carrying things in public. Important Jewish holidays include Passover (commemorating the Jewish exodus from Egypt), Rosh Hashanah (the New Year) and Yom Kippur (when Jews make amends for their sins), and Hanukkah (celebrating the rededication of the Second Temple).

Today Judaism is the dominant religion of Israel, where more than 5 million Jews reside. Much smaller Jewish enclaves with unique

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traditions can be found throughout Southwest Asia, especially in Yemen and Egypt. Some 40 percent of the world's Jews live in the United States. Although Judaism is a religion closely tied to Jewish ethnicity, non-Jews also become Jewish through conversion.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity originated in the life and teachings of a Jew named Joshua, or Jesus, who lived close to the beginning of the Common Era. Christianity honors the same Jewish prophets and leaders as Judaism, but includes a number of additional Christian writings in its body of scripture. Only Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism rival Christianity in terms of impact on world history. Christian beliefs have influenced and inspired billions of people throughout history.

Christianity takes its name from "Christ," meaning "Anointed One," a title given to Jesus by his followers. The name indicates their belief that he was the Messiah, or savior, as prophesied by Jewish belief. According to the New Testament (the life of Jesus and his teachings, written by his followers), Jesus had a divine birth and performed many miracles during a lifetime of teaching, until Romans crucified him, or executed him by hanging him on a giant wooden cross. This cross is now the primary symbol of Christianity. It is written that three days after his crucifixion, Jesus returned from the dead to impart further teachings and encouragement to his disciples. His resurrection is said to have opened the gates of heaven to all people.

Christianity is a highly diverse religion united by several core beliefs: one all-powerful God created everything; humans have immortal souls and are judged after they die; Jesus was the divine savior and spiritual leader of all humanity; and his sacrifice made it possible for everyone to be forgiven by God and admitted into heaven.

Christians regard the Hebrew Bible and New Testament as divinely inspired and therefore authoritative on matters of faith. Different sects include other books as part of their scriptural canon or emphasize one book over the other. The majority of Christians also believe that God is three beings in one: God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. This is known as the Holy Trinity.

Many forms of Christianity feature a priest, most often male, who leads a congregation, conducts rites, or otherwise acts as an intermediary between the faithful and God. Sunday is the Christian sabbath, when the faithful gather in churches to pray, sing, and eat the Eucharist (bread and wine that have been consecrated by a priest and represent both Christ's last meal with his disciples and the body and blood of Christ himself). Other important Christian rites, or sacraments, include confession, in which a priest listens to and prays for the forgiveness of a follower; and baptism, in which consecrated water is poured over the head to symbolize inspiration by the Holy Spirit. In many Christian denominations, baptism is performed by full immersion.

Important Christian holidays revolve around Christ's life and include Christmas, a December celebration of his birth, and Holy Week in the spring, which includes Good Friday and Easter Sunday, holidays commemorating his death and resurrection.

Although all of its significant events occurred in the Middle East, in particular Palestine, Christianity is a minority religion in the Middle East today. Sizable native populations of Christians can be found only in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, although Christian foreign workers in the Gulf States number 2 to 3 million. The majority of Middle Eastern Christians belong to sects influenced by Orthodox Christianity, the state religion of the Byzantine Empire, which

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dominated the region for centuries. Estimates of the regional Christian population range from 10 to 12 million.

ISLAM

The overwhelmingly dominant religion of the Middle East, Islam is based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, born around C.E. 570 Islam is such an integral part of life in all Middle Eastern countries that it has replaced many features of pre-Islamic cultures. Of the more than one billion Muslims worldwide, approximately one-quarter live in the Middle East today.

The two major sects of Islam, **Sunni** and **Shia**, often come into direct conflict in the region. The majority of the world's Muslim population is Sunni, but all Shia-dominated countries are located in the Middle East. These are Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain.

There are minor differences between Sunni and Shia practice. Both believe in the Five Pillars of Islam, the five religious duties of all Muslims: *shahadah,* the profession of faith; *salah,* daily prayer; *zakah,* charity to the poor; *saum,* fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; *hajj,* a pilgrimage to Mecca. At the same time, differences in *hadith,* or accounts of Muhammad's words and deeds, have led to different interpretations of Islamic law for each sect. The main point of contention between them has to do with the right to spiritual leadership. Sunni believe that the **caliph** can be elected, while Shia believe that only direct descendents of Muhammad can lead the Muslim world.

Islamic beliefs have been incorporated into a number of minority or ethnic faiths in the region, including the Yazidi, Druze, and Baha'i religions.

BAHA'I

The last major faith in the region is Baha'i. Founded in mid-nineteenth century Iran by a man named Baha'Ullah, Baha'i insists on the underlying unity of all religions. It synthesizes beliefs from all world religions, especially Islam.

The tenets of Baha'i come from the mid-nineteenth-century teachings of Mirza Ali Mohammad, who proclaimed that a prophet would soon arrive to usher in a new spiritual era. He took the title of Bab ("gateway" in Persian), and his teachings spread rapidly until he was arrested and executed for blasphemy by the Iranian Shiite clergy in 1850.

Baha'Ullah, one of Bab's early followers, declared that he was the prophet the Bab spoke of, and the majority of Babis agreed with this claim. The growing popularity of the Ba caused Ottoman rulers to imprison Baha'Ullah for most of the rest of his life. He died in 1892. His descendents continued to spread his teachings, and by the mid-twentieth century Baha'i had become a world faith.

Today less than half a million Baha'is live in the Middle East, most of them in Iran. Since the Iranian Revolution of 1978, they have faced severe persecution. The Baha'i World Centre is located in Haifa, Israel, the current destination for pilgrimages.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Baghdad; Byzantine Empire; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Iranian Revolution; Islam; Israel; Jerusalem; Mecca; Medina; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Society; Zionism.

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S–Z

Saudi Arabia

Arab kingdom occupying most of the Arabian Peninsula and the world's leading exporter of petroleum. The House of Saud has ruled parts of this area intermittently for centuries, but a united kingdom was not established until 1932. Since then, it has experienced both dizzying economic prosperity and increasing tensions between religious conservatives and the royal family's efforts to modernize the country.

GEOGRAPHY

Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East by area, covering 830,000 square miles (2.15 million square km). It sits in the middle of the Arabian Peninsula, with Yemen and Oman to the south; Kuwait, Iraq, and Jordan to the north; the Persian Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates to the east; and the Red Sea to the west. In the center of the country lies the Najd, a rocky plateau where the capital of Riyadh is located. Surrounding the Najd are a thousand square miles of some of the hottest and driest desert on the planet. To the south, there are mountains that receive regular rainfall.

Mecca and Medina, Islam's two holiest cities, are located in the southwestern area known as the Hejaz. About 25 million people live in Saudi Arabia, but as many as 5 million of its inhabitants are foreign workers. Saudi Arabia relies heavily on imported labor; the presence of so many non-Muslim foreigners has introduced significant tension into its conservative, **fundamentalist** Islamic society.

ECONOMY AND DEMOGRAPHY

The country's economy relies almost entirely on its petroleum industry. Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of crude oil in the world. It has used its hundreds of billions of dollars in oil revenue to fund economic development in other sectors of the nation's economy. It also contributes large amounts to the building of mosques, madrassas (Islamic religious schools), and other Islamic learning centers around the world.

More than 10 percent of Saudis today are unemployed. While welfare systems provide them with basic necessities, the high unemployment rate contributes significantly to hostility directed at foreigners in the country, especially foreign laborers. The foreign workers typically live in separate communities to ensure that their cultures do not mix with that of native Saudis.

Upward of 95 percent of Saudis are **Sunni** Muslim, and most of the remainder are **Shia**. The Sunnis follow Wahhabism, a conservative Islamic movement in the eighteenth century. Aimed at reforming the faith, Wahhabism was also an expression of Arab nationalism in the face of Ottoman domination. This highly conservative aspect of Saudi culture still predominates today.

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy ruled by members of the House of Saud. Tensions remain high between traditional Saudi culture and modernizing influences from the outside world that have accompanied the steady flow of oil revenue.

HISTORY

Saudi Arabia's history as a unified sovereign nation began in 1744, when Muhammad ibn Saud, the first head of the House of Saud, agreed to back an **ascetic** form of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism. Ibn Saud made the agreement with the founder of this sect, Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, in order to

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The al-Faislaiya Tower (left) is a landmark of Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. To its right, with speakers, is a minaret. (Patrick Baz/AFP/Getty Images)

increase his political authority over the region around Riyadh. The understanding between royal government and conservative religious leaders has characterized Saudi Arabian society ever since.

Ibn Saud and his allies began conquering other tribes in the 1740s and 1750s, expanding their power base from Diriyah, near present-day Riyadh. The First Saudi State reached its peak when Ibn Saud captured the Hejaz from the Ottomans in 1802; the Hejaz is the western coastal region of the Arabian Peninsula that is of central importance to Islam, as it includes the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Ottoman's Egyptian viceroy was sent to oppose him, and Ibn Saud's forces gradually lost all the territory they had won. In 1818, the Ottomans captured and ended the First Saudi State.

Second and Third Saudi States

Turki, a grandson of Muhammad ibn Saud, founded the Second Saudi State in 1824, but it survived less than seventy years before being crushed by the Sauds' chief rivals in the Najd, the House of Rashid. After this, Ibn Saud, young and desperate, led a sneak attack on Riyadh in 1902. He ousted the Rashidis and within thirty years reestablished the Saudi state with himself as king.

This Third Saudi State, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has experienced great turmoil since its founding, primarily as a result of the social transformations brought by the development of the petroleum industry as well as by a resurgence of conservative Wahhabism. It has been a tenuous ally of the United States, but also a primary supporter of fundamentalist Islamic teachings.

King Saud ibn Abdul Aziz, successor to King ibn Saud, was considered a corrupt and weak ruler by the religious leaders of Saudi Arabia as well as the rest of the House of Saud. The House of Saud forced him to abdicate in 1964 because of the way he squandered the vast oil revenues that began to pour into the country during the 1950s and 1960s. His half-brother and successor, King Faisal, was a much stronger ruler who embarked on a sweeping program of modernization.

While this improved the lives of many Saudis, it was also denounced by conservatives as violating Sharia, the sacred law of Islam. King Faisal was assassinated in 1975 by one of his own nephews. After the Great Mosque in Mecca was taken over by a large group of fundamentalists in 1979, the royal family curtailed its plans for further modernization in order to regain popular support.

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GREAT LIVES

Ibn Saud (ca. 1880–1953)

Ibn Saud (whose full name was Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud Al Saud) was a tribal as well as religious Arab leader whose tenacity and single-minded pursuit of political dominance led him to found the modern state of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, his efforts to develop his country's oil industry put Saudi Arabia on the path to great regional and global influence.

Born in Riyadh around 1880, Ibn Saud pursued a primarily religious education until the age of ten. His family fled to Kuwait in 1890 after his father attempted to restore independence to the House of Saud. This followed a long period of political domination by the Saudis' chief tribal rivals, the Rashidis. The attempt at independence failed, and Ibn Saud lived in exile while the Rashidis took control of Riyadh.

In 1902, at the age of twenty-one, Ibn Saud took a large band consisting of forty of his brothers, cousins, and other warriors loyal to the Saudis to try to reclaim his family's property. Relying on a surprise attack, he successfully captured Riyadh; most of the former supporters of his family's rule rallied to his cause. Over the next twenty-five years, he recaptured most of the Arabian Peninsula as well.

Ibn Saud was careful to recreate the Wahhabist political system used by his ancestors, who had founded two previous Saudi states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wahhabism is an austere, puritanical form of Islam founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century. A cooperative agreement between al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud, the founder of the House of Saud, had allowed the latter to establish the First Saudi State in 1745.

Ibn Saud declared himself king in 1932, founding the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He ruled as absolute monarch, but he was a devout Wahhabist and never failed to consult religious authorities before finalizing a decision.

In 1933, he made a historic agreement to allow Americans to search for oil in the kingdom. In 1938, they discovered what would turn out to be the world's largest reserves. Aramco, a joint U.S.-Saudi company formed to carry out oil production, began pumping, and profits began to trickle in.

World War II curtailed revenues by effectively shutting down oil production. Increasingly concerned with his nation's security, Ibn Saud met with U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt aboard a ship in the Suez Canal in 1945. The two leaders agreed to support each other: Saudi Arabia would provide desperately needed oil for American troops in Europe, and the United States would provide military assistance to its newest ally.

In the 1950s, Saudi Arabia began to experience unprecedented prosperity from oil revenues. Shortly before he died, Ibn Saud could count on several million dollars a week in oil profits alone. However, he was unable to cope with this financial bonanza. The Saudi Arabia of his youth, with its idealized Bedouin lifestyle, began giving way to Western manufactured goods, buildings, and fashions. The king had not anticipated how oil profits would threaten everything he believed in: austerity, religious humility, and close-knit tribal life. Ibn Saud's health deteriorated rapidly and he died on November 9, 1953.

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THE HOUSE OF SAUD

Year	Event
1744	Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, founder of Wahhabism, forms a political alliance with Muhammad ibn Saud
1802	Saudi forces capture the Hejaz, a region that includes Mecca and Medina
1818	Ibrahim Pasha, Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, captures Saudi capital of Diriyah
1824	Second Saudi State established
1891	Rashidis, rivals of the Sauds, destroy Second Saudi State
1902	Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, founder of modern Saudi Arabia, recaptures Riyadh; two decades later, he captures Mecca and Medina
1932	Ibn Saud declares himself king and founds Saudi Arabia
1933	Diplomatic relations with United States established; vast oil fields discovered in Saudi Arabia
1945	President Franklin D. Roosevelt makes oil-for-security deal with Ibn Saud in order to supply U.S. forces in Europe
1953	Ibn Saud dies; Prince Saud ibn Abdul Aziz succeeds him as king, and Prince Faisal becomes minister of foreign affairs
1964	King Saud is replaced by Prince Faisal with approval of religious authorities
Late 1960s	King Faisal modernizes Saudi Arabia, incurring disfavor of religious conservatives
1975	King Faisal assassinated by nephew Faisal ibn Musaid; Prince Khalid succeeds him on Saudi throne
Late 1970s	Oil profits reach hundreds of billions of dollars; massive building projects undertaken while Saudi family loses credibility with conservatives
1979	Great Mosque taken over by fundamentalists; Saudi Arabia funds and sends thousands of volunteers to Afghan War with Soviet Union
1982	King Khalid dies and is succeeded by Crown Prince Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud; Iran-Iraq War breaks out, and Saudi Arabia supports Saddam Hussein with money and weapons
1990	Iraq invades Kuwait; King Fahd seeks religious approval before allowing foreign troops into kingdom
1992	King Fahd introduces the "Basic Law of Government," a kind of constitution
1996	King Fahd disabled by strokes; Crown Prince Abdullah becomes unofficial ruler
2005	King Fahd dies and is officially succeeded by Abdullah

Saudi Arabia became a great patron of fundamentalist Islam.

This was expressed in many ways, such as legal limitations on the rights of women (it is illegal for them to drive, for example), and the censorship of sentiments that ran counter to Sharia. Corporal punishment based on Sharia was instituted as well. In 1979, Saudi Arabia sent nearly 45,000 troops to help the Afghans fight a guerrilla war against the invading Soviet Union. This invasion galvanized fundamentalist Muslims, as it was perceived as an attack by a godless **secular** power on Islam. Today these same fighters (including al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden) work in terrorist organizations to rid the Middle East of U.S.

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and other Western forces, whom they view as infidels corrupting the Land of the Two Mosques (a nickname for Saudi Arabia, referring to Mecca and Medina).

When Western forces arrived in 1991 to fight the Persian Gulf War to expel Iraq from Kuwait, they were welcomed by the Saudis. When American forces still had not left by the mid-1990s, however, Osama bin Laden and other Saudi fundamentalists declared war on them. Al-Qaeda, originally an organization founded to help the families of the Saudi fighters sent to Afghanistan in 1979, mounted a terrorist campaign to remove the Western military presence from Saudi Arabia.

Today, Saudi Arabia's internal tensions are greater than ever. The ruling elite are some of the richest people on Earth. They control an important position in the kingdom, while the majority of the population is among the poorest. The royal family maintains close ties with industrialized nations of the West, the source of its oil riches, while the largely fundamentalist populace denounces these countries as aggressors and infidels. The complexities of Saudi Arabian society make it perpetually volatile.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Environmental Issues; Gulf States; Iraq War; Islam; McMahon-Hussein Agreement; Mecca; Medina; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Religion; Society; Technology and Inventions; Terrorists, Stateless; Tools and Weapons; Yemen.

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Slavery and Slave Trade

The enslavement of human beings and the buying and selling of men, women, and children were regular practices of Middle Eastern societies until the nineteenth century. After that time, pressure from European nations and a general trend toward modernization in the region led many states to outlaw slavery at last.

Early Muslim practice did not forbid slavery, and there are numerous references to it in the Koran. Islamic law validates the ownership of human beings but affirms their humanity rather than classifying them as objects or possessions. Like free men, the enslaved possess an immortal soul and will face God's judgment after death. Moreover, the Koran urges masters to treat their slaves kindly and classes them with other members of society who deserve protection, such as women, children, the elderly, and the sick. In these regards, Islamic slavery differed from slave practices in neighboring regions.

While slavery was widespread in the Arab world from the ninth through the nineteenth centuries, the number of slaves was never great enough to meet the demand for them. Several factors contributed to this insufficiency. Muslims were urged to free their slaves as an act of piety. In addition, the castration of male slaves was a common practice that prevented slaves from procreating. Also, since many slaves were imported from Africa and elsewhere, they lacked natural immunities for diseases of the Middle East and died in large numbers. The constant demand for

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slaves led to a lively slave trade within Arab lands.

Unlike other regions, such as North America, which employed large numbers of slaves in agricultural labor, Islamic slaves were primarily domestic servants who prepared meals, cleaned, and performed other household tasks. Many if not most domestic servants were female who were treated as concubines, and occasionally married if they were Muslim. Islamic slaves enjoyed full legal status and protection under Sharia, Islamic law. By and large, they were better off than slaves elsewhere. This was true of slaves within the Ottoman Empire as well, who could become soldiers, sailors, and **artisans**.

As **emancipation** movements swept through Europe and the Americas in the nineteenth century, some Muslim leaders began to reconsider their view of slavery. Some declared it contrary to Koranic teaching. Increased pressure from Western nations after World War II led to the suppression and eventual outlawing of slavery in Saudi Arabia in 1962. Other Muslim countries, such as Qatar, did not outlaw it until the 1960s.

A troubling trend began to emerge in Saudi Arabia during the early 2000s, however, as several high-ranking Islamic jurists issued statements advocating slavery, particularly of Jewish women and children. The child slave trade increased dramatically in the 1990s and 2000s. Children continue to be smuggled into the country, sometimes mutilated, and forced to work as beggars. Women from East and South Asia are imported as sex workers and have so little control over their lives that it is fair to call them slaves. Although slavery no longer officially exists in the region, an underground slave trade still pervades most Middle Eastern nations.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Iran; Islam; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Society.

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Society

The shared culture and institutions that establish a common identity among a group of people. Like other societies, Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian societies have undergone remarkable transformations in the past century. The most dramatic, in fact, have occurred only since the latter decades of the twentieth century.

Broadly speaking, Middle Eastern peoples fall into one of three social categories: nomads, villagers, and urbanites. Life for each of these has been revolutionized by European influence, an influx of foreign technology, and the rise of the oil industry.

NOMADIC CULTURE

One of the roots of Arabic culture is derived from the nomadic tribes, known as the Bedouins, who wander the deserts from Morocco and Egypt to the Arabian Peninsula and the Iranian steppe. Primarily sheep and camel herders who lived in small groups organized around blood ties, pre-Islamic Bedouin spent much of their time searching for grazing lands. Each group was led by a single male elder known as a sheik. Larger,

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loose coalitions of tribes could occasionally be formed for some specific purpose, but these usually dissolved upon the death of their foremost sheikh, who had invariably created the coalition out of little more than his strong presence and personal charisma.

Today, these nomadic societies still exist in desert lands throughout the region, especially in Arabia, the Negev, and parts of western Iran. Their traditions have changed little in centuries, although the territory open to them has been severely circumscribed by the development of the oil industry. Their numbers have decreased dramatically as many have settled in cities where they can find numerous kinds of employment previously unknown to their culture. The total number of Bedouins is less than 3 percent of the whole population in the region.

Although Bedouins still rely on the same practices of herding and occasional cultivation as their ancestors, two aspects of Bedouin life are notably different today. For one, modern amenities have been readily adopted. It is not unusual to see Bedouin transporting their camels in trucks, cooking with a kerosene stove, or even using electronic gadgets such as televisions in their tents. For another, Bedouin tribes engage in raiding less frequently now that state authority and local government are both stronger and more committed to intervening in rural affairs. Previously, nomads would conduct raids on each other or on villages, sometimes even exacting a yearly tribute from settled communities.

Women in traditional chadors (center) and men and women in Western-Style dress wait at a bus stop in Istanbul, Turkey. (AFP/Stringer/Getty Images)

VILLAGES

More than half of the Middle East's inhabitants live in small villages of several hundred people as peasants or farmers, **artisans**, and merchants. The large-scale industrial agriculture of the West is being introduced into many areas of Southwest Asia, however, because of its high capital requirements and partly because the semiarid climate of the Middle East requires significantly more irrigation for massive farming efforts, the use of sophisticated equipment has been limited.

Like that of the nomads, village life is based on familial ties. Clans occupying the same village might carry on feuds for generations. However, the amounts of property involved in a feud tend to limit such conflicts. Because of the need to trade, villagers tend to be more open to outside ideas, although they are still socially and religiously conservative relative to urbanites.

Many material improvements have come to the countryside as a result of agrarian reforms and oil revenues, including better

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health care facilities, schools, sanitation, roads, and communication networks. Infant mortality rates and malnutrition have decreased, but illiteracy remains high, particularly among women.

All in all, the fabric of village life has been greatly disrupted by the consequences of the rapid rise in population and the advent of modern information technology. Traditional sources of income such as crafts and even agriculture have diminished, while villagers moving to cities face competition from foreign laborers. These developments have considerably increased the social and political tensions already inherent between the countryside and the city.

TOWNS AND CITIES

The greatest social diversity can be found in the region's cities, many of which have been populated continuously for centuries if not millennia. City life is quite familiar to Middle Eastern populations, as some of humanity's earliest urban centers arose in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the eastern Mediterranean.

Political power has historically concentrated in Middle Eastern cities to a disproportionate degree. Small ruling elites in cities have been able to control vast territories primarily because their settlements arose near crucial water sources. Larger populations in cities translated into larger military or police forces, which could be used to quell rebellious peasants. In addition, Arab leaders also based their authority on religious succession, which proved far more powerful than brute force. For example, when the Mongols conquered the area in the thirteenth century, they eventually converted to Islam as a way to consolidate power over the native population. **Pagan** rulers would never have been tolerated by the Arab and Persian faithful.

Because of their strategic importance in trade networks and the natural exchange among populations of mixed tribal affiliations and ethnicities, cities are where new ideas, religions, customs, and technologies have been most readily adopted. Urban centers thus experienced the most sweeping social changes, which followed on the heels of modernization. These changes are largely Western in origin and have more to do with daily and work life than with social arenas such as religion and the family. The adoption of the Western calendar and a Western workweek are among the most significant, as are exposure to Western arts and media.

Yet Western influence has also provoked sharp resistance to change and a reaffirmation of traditional Islamic values. This is particularly true in Saudi Arabia, where women are still not allowed to drive, and Iran, where adherents of minority religions such as Baha'i, Zoroastrianism, and Yazidanism are heavily persecuted.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Apart from Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel, there are no primarily democratic states in this region. All of the Arab states are either emirates (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait), absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia), or constitutional monarchies (Bahrain, Jordan). Legislative and democratically elected components of government have varying amounts of power, but in general, these countries are effectively ruled by a few small dynasties. Full, Western-style democracy has been slow to spread. The laws of the Arab states and Iran are based on Sharia, or Islamic law, which has been interpreted variously by different sects over time.

Iran

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Iran was a monarchy, but popular rebellion forced constitutional limitations on the

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INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Secular or Religious Societies?

A defining aspect of all Middle Eastern societies is the perpetual tension between religious and secular elements. For the better part of their history, these cultures have been dominated by religious practices, mainly those of Islam. Only in the nineteenth century did the possibility of organizing daily affairs in a **secular,** or nonreligious, way arise in the Middle East.

This possibility was first introduced through contact with secular European societies. The leaders of some Middle Eastern nations, such as Turkey and Iran, saw secular life as a way to achieve rapid modernization in order to resist colonization. This kind of top-down, forced modernization is known as **defensive developmentalism**.

However, the majority of Middle Eastern states resisted secularization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and continue to do so today. For devout Muslims, there can be no separation between daily life and religious belief. Since 95 percent of the region's population is Muslim, secular societies are rare. Nevertheless, the question of a secular versus a religious society is predominant in several nations: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Israel.

The program of secularization implemented by Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s established modern Turkey; a large portion of the population has benefited from it despite decades of political violence, military coups, and unofficial civil war. Another large portion has always resisted it and, in the early 2000s, Islamic political movements have captured major elected positions for the first time in decades. Religious teaching was banned until 1950, and since then new mosques have been built throughout the country. Although an educated elite continues to ensure Turkey's secular identity, the vast majority of Turks have never abandoned their Muslim identity, and the future social composition of the country is hard to predict.

Iraq, meanwhile, has had a primarily secular government from the time Saddam Hussein assumed power in 1979 to the present day. Although his regime was authoritarian, with a strong Sunni agenda, Hussein was always guided by political and economic practicalities rather than religious ideology. Since the 2003 U.S. military invasion, the provisional government of Iraq is superficially secular, based on popular vote and a constitution; in reality, its elected officials were under extreme pressure by both the internal Shia majority and the Sunni majority of the larger Arab world. Whether or not Iraq's secular elements will prevail is one of the great uncertainties of the nation's future.

Under the Pahlavi family, Iran was a monarchy, and numerous secular groups banded together with Islamic fundamentalists to overthrow the regime in 1979. In the twenty-first century, secular political groups still fight for the Iran they were never able to see, while Iranian intellectuals, who overwhelmingly favor a secular state, fled the country and must work indirectly to achieve their aims.

Finally, the question of a secular state is paramount in Israel. Although the Jewish identity largely depends on religious affiliation, the Zionist movement was composed of both secular and religious elements. Today Israel is the strongest secular Middle Eastern state, although considerable internal debate between religious groups and secular parties has resulted in a culture of political compromise.

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shah's power. Since the Iranian Revolution of 1978, however, Iran has been ruled as a theocratic republic. Popular elections are held for major positions of power such as the presidency, but candidates must be approved by the *ulema,* or ruling council of Islamic judicial scholars. The ultimate political power resides with these judges, since they must also approve presidential appointees as well as legislation. Popular revolt installed the fundamentalist Islamic government, which continues to struggle against further revolt by its former allies, primarily nationalist and communist groups.

TURKEY

Perhaps no country in the region has witnessed greater social change than Turkey. Within the span of twenty years, from the 1910s to the 1930s, it went from an impoverished, internally divided, economically stagnant remnant of the Ottoman Empire to a secular, modern state with significant economic impact on the region.

The government founded by Kemal Atatürk in 1923 was authoritarian, ruling through one party and specifying official social practices from writing to dress as part of an aggressive effort to establish a new national identity. This effort was largely successful, although it has been compromised by a predominantly Islamic backlash in recent decades.

The Turkish constitution has been revised numerous times, particularly after several periods of military rule. Military intervention in Turkish government has become a pattern that raises disturbing questions about the true extent of democratic rule there. Meanwhile, Turkish society is characterized by the ongoing struggle between conservatives, who promote a return to Islamic practice, and **progressives**, who seek to fully realize Atatürk's vision of a modern, secular Turkey. In some areas, such as suffrage and women's rights, the progressives have achieved their aims; in others, such as sexuality and marriage, conservative values still hold sway.

ISRAEL

Israeli society is the chief exception to the Islamic majority in the Middle East. It has been heavily influenced by European and Russian immigrants who comprised most of its early Jewish population and who make up about five-sixths of the total today. Within Jewish society there are significant splits, mainly between Middle Eastern (Sephardic) and European (Ashkenazi) Jews. The former are descendents of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa as well as those who never left the region during the Diaspora (the scattering of Jews worldwide that began with the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in C.E. 70) and continued farming and herding in predominantly Arab lands. The latter are European in culture and tradition, and are overwhelmingly devoted to Western ideas of individualism, secularization, and modernization. They make up the majority of Israel's Jewish population and tend to be highly educated. Another significant split is between Reform and Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews insist on policies and cultural practices derived from the Tanakh, or Judaism's holy writings, while Reform Jews are a diverse group who have modified their religious practice to conform with modern lifestyles.

Israel's government is a full-fledged representative democracy, consisting of executive, judicial, and legislative branches. The 120-member Knesset is the sole legislative body, and often consists of coalitions of numerous special-interest parties owing to the religious and ideological divisions in Israeli society. More than 15 percent of Israeli

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citizens are Palestinian Muslims and Christians. They are represented in the Knesset and are active in Israel's non-religious political parties. The prime minister is the head of government, while the president serves a primarily ceremonial role.

Only one-tenth of Israel's population is rural, making it one of the most urbanized and industrialized nations in the region. It is also the most militarized, owing to continued hostility from its more populous Arab neighbors. All Jewish citizens are required to serve in the armed forces for several years; once their service is over, they enter the reserves and continue to undergo annual training until well into middle age. Thanks to its military, one of the best trained and best equipped in the world, Israel has survived more than a half-dozen major wars and lesser conflicts since its independence in 1948.

Although during its early decades it was essentially a **socialist** state, by the close of the twentieth century Israel had completed the transition to a primarily capitalist economic model. Still, the sense of national unity that pervades Jewish Israel has not faded with this transition.

See also: Agriculture; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gaza; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Islam; Israel; Istanbul; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Saudi Arabia; Technology and Inventions; Terrorists, Stateless; World War I; World War II; Zionism.

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Syria

Arab country bordered by Turkey on the north, Iraq to the east and southeast, Jordan to the south, and Lebanon and Israel to the southwest. Syria's terrain includes a large fertile plain in the west as well as the Syrian Desert in the east. The nation's capital is Damascus, an ancient city, renowned for being the oldest continually inhabited city in the world. It was the center of the Islamic caliphate during the reign of the Umayyad Dynasty (early seventh to mid-eighth centuries). The population of Syria today is approximately 20 million.

Prior to the twentieth century, the name *Syria* referred to a vaguely defined region along the eastern Mediterranean coast, which included the current countries of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. Under Ottoman rule from the sixteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, Syria was a group of three provinces (Damascus, Aleppo, and Beirut) whose borders corresponded roughly with those of the modern states of Syria and Lebanon.

Syria has experienced considerable political and economic instability since it achieved independence from French rule in 1946. After defeating the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the Allies divided its Arab lands into two mandates, or regions of administrative control: Great Britain governed Palestine, while France governed Syria. This ran counter to promises made by Britain to its Arab allies during the war. Faisal ibn Hussein, a leader of the 1916 Arab Revolt that helped the British

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GREAT LIVES

Hafez al-Assad (1930–2000)

A former general, President Hafez al-Assad was Syria's strongest and arguably most ruthless leader, maintaining a continuous reign for the last three decades of the twentieth century. He was highly controversial outside Syria because of his efforts to quell internal dissent, as well as his foreign policy, which sided with the Islamic Republic of Iran and maintained close relations with the Soviet Union. At home, however, his political orientation and anti-Israel stance won him many supporters.

Assad was born on October 6, 1930, in Qardaha, a city in northwestern Syria. He joined the Syrian Baath Party when he was sixteen and attended a military academy, graduating in 1955 and becoming an air force pilot. He traveled to Egypt and the Soviet Union in the late 1950s, then returned to Cairo and helped form a secret organization called the Military Committee in 1960. This organization aimed to promote Baathist Party ideals of Pan-Arabism, or the political unification of Arab peoples. After the United Arab Republic—a union of Egypt and Syria—broke up in 1961, Assad returned to Syria.

He conspired with other Baathists to seize power and was a key leader in the 1963 coup that put the Baath Party in charge of the government. He was promoted to major general and became the commander of the air force in 1964, then the leader of the Baath Party in 1969. In 1970, he seized full control of the government. Assad sought to achieve the Baathist promise of a strong socialist economy; he also passed a number of liberal reforms that included a relaxation of censorship in the arts. However, he was criticized for sometimes resorting to brutally repressive tactics—arresting, torturing, and executing political dissenters. He also sponsored anti-Israeli terrorism.

Assad was a skilled and pragmatic politician who altered his foreign policy to fit changing circumstances. Because of the split between the Syrian Baathist Party and dictator Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Baathist Party, Assad supported Iran during the bloody and protracted Iran-Iraq War of 1980–1988 and also sent troops as part of the U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraq from Kuwait in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Although his policies and support of terrorist organizations earned him the enmity of Israel and many Western nations, Assad turned Syria into a formidable power in the Middle East, presiding over a stable government for thirty years. He died in Damascus on June 10, 2000.

advance into Palestine and ultimately defeat the Ottomans, had been elected king of a united Syria and Palestine in March 1920. However, the Conference of San Remo in April 1920 declared that these regions would be placed under mandate control.

French troops occupied Damascus in July 1920, forcing Faisal out of the city. In August, France declared the state of Lebanon, primarily to isolate and lend political power to the sizable community of Christians there; this was expected to help France assert authority over its mandate. After putting down a Syrian rebellion in 1925, France entertained the notion of Syrian independence. A treaty to this effect was signed in 1936, but France never ratified it and so remained in control of Syria.

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In 1940, the French Vichy government, a regime established by the Nazis after they successfully invaded France, took over Syria, but was overthrown by a joint British-French invasion the following year. The French then withdrew from both Syria and Lebanon in 1946, and Syria attained its independence.

The new state faced significant challenges, as it was composed of populations that had little to do with one another. Sunni Muslims dominated, but there were also large communities of Christians, Alawites, and Druze. A short period of civilian rule ended in March 1949, when a series of four military coups put one colonel after another in power. The last was overthrown in 1954, when constitutional rule was reestablished.

Syria briefly joined with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic in 1958, but because the Syrians felt the Egyptians did not treat them as equals, another coup in 1961 made Syria independent once again. The Baath Party, which promoted the idea of a united Arab state, seized power in both Syria and Iraq in 1963, and the possibility of political union between the two countries briefly arose. This union never materialized, however, and the Syrian Baath Party became the chief rival of the Iraqi branch, as both claimed to be the legitimate leader of the Pan-Arab movement (a political movement that aims to form a unified Arab state).

In 1970, the Baath Party put General Hafez al-Assad in control of the country. He led Syria until his death in 2000. Support for the Assad regime grew because of its land reform and agricultural development policies, as well as its unrelenting opposition to Israel. In addition to participating in several Arab-Israeli wars (1948, 1967, 1973), in which it lost the fertile southwestern territory of the Golan Heights to Israel, Syria occupied Lebanon when it was torn by civil war in 1976 and provided military support to Palestinian rebels in Jordan in 1970.

Syria's image as a leader of the Pan-Arab movement was tarnished when it supported Iran in the 1980 Iran-Iraq War. Since then, Damascus has maintained close ties with the Iranian regime. When Assad died in 2000, his son, Bashar al-Assad, succeeded him, ushering in hopes on the part of many nations, including the United States and Israel, for political reform within Syria. These reforms did not materialize, however, and diplomatic ties with Washington deteriorated after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The United States imposed economic sanctions in 2004. Following the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005, international pressure forced Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon.

See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Jordan; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; World War I.

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Technology and Inventions

The Middle East has a long and distinguished history of technological innovation. This peaked during the reign of the Abbasid Dynasty from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, going into decline when the Mongols invaded. Under Ottoman rule, technological development progressed slowly when it did at all. Following the development of the oil industry in the region during the 1910s, a new era of innovation followed widespread modernization.

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EARLY DEVELOPMENT

From the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, the Arab caliphate, or Islamic Empire, encompassed lands previously ruled by various peoples, among them the Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Spanish, and Indians. Moreover, the caliphate had direct access to Chinese trade and the long history of technological progress in East Asia. Inheritors of these traditions, the Arabs synthesized and fully developed their potential, producing many achievements in chemistry, astronomy, navigation, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, and mathematics. These inventions and ideas circulated throughout Muslim lands and later into Europe, laying the foundations for the Renaissance there. During Ottoman rule, scientific development in the Middle East slowed significantly. The Ottoman state resisted change and innovation coming from Europe. While the Middle East was developing at a very slow pace and near stagnation, Western Europe was going through the industrial revolution. Not until the nineteenth century did the Middle East begin serious attempts to adopt modern technology.

GOLDEN AGE OF ISLAMIC LEARNING

The Islamic Golden Age is generally held to have begun during the eighth century under the Abbasid Dynasty. Prior to Abbasid rule, the mass conversion of many conquered peoples in Arab lands had produced a continuous flow of materials, designs, and ideas throughout the Islamic world.

The art of papermaking greatly stimulated learning during the period of Abbasid rule. A closely guarded secret of the Chinese, papermaking methods were obtained by the Arabs from two Chinese prisoners after the Battle of Talas in eastern Iran in 751. The Arabs quickly improved on these techniques by using linen instead of mulberry bark, producing paper of higher quality, greater weight, and lower cost. With paper, communication as well as intellectual discourse over vast distances became much easier. The art of papermaking was eventually passed to the Europeans.

Relatively cheap, plentiful paper allowed the Abbasids to build an enormous university and library in Baghdad, the Dar al-Hikma, or House of Wisdom. Religious and intellectual freedom under Abbasid rule encouraged Christians, Jews, and Muslims to study there and engage each other in spirited philosophical, literary, and scientific debates. Texts recovered from the past Greek and Roman civilizations were collected, copied, translated, distributed, and studied in Baghdad. Soon this collection of scholarly works was unrivaled in the world.

Islamic Medicine

Basing their work on the writings of the Greek physicians Galen and Hippocrates, Islamic doctors undertook detailed examinations of anatomy and began to develop a variety of new medicines and treatments. By the fifteenth century, the Persian physician Mansur ibn Ilyas had produced an exhaustive collection of anatomical diagrams titled *Tashrih al-badan* (*Anatomy of the Body*), which became a model for practice not only in the Middle East, but also in Europe and parts of Africa. In the eleventh century, the remarkable **polymath**, or master of numerous intellectual disciplines, Ibn Sina (Avicenna in Latin), had penned the *Al Qanunfi al-Tibb* (*The Canon of Medicine*), detailing both a methodology for diagnosing illness and the use of many medicines. This book became a classic of medical literature in Europe and was widely used as a primary textbook for the next eight centuries.

The total number of Islamic innovations in medicine is staggering. A short list includes

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the invention of antiseptics, opthamology, tracheotomies (surgery of the throat), inoculations, medical syringes, anesthesia, the scalpel, the use of catgut for internal stitches, the speculum (a tool for inspecting body cavities), aromatherapy, plaster, and forceps. Islamic doctors also undertook serious study of mental illness, running psychiatric wards in the hospitals of major cities such as Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, and Baghdad, while their European contemporaries dismissed such illness as demonic possession and generally refused to treat mentally ill patients.

Perhaps most crucial among the astonishing advances was the idea that medical knowledge—and by extension scientific knowledge of any kind—could only be acquired through the careful observation of empirical evidence. Furthermore, such evidence could be obtained in a controlled way by designing and carefully conducting specific experiments. These ideas are key to the modern scientific method, and without them, the Scientific Revolution could not have occurred in Europe.

Mathematics

In the ninth century, the Muslim mathematician and astronomer Muhammad al-Khwarizmi developed the "calculus of reason and juxtaposition," known simply as *al-jabr,* or algebra. It was a fundamentally new way of doing mathematics that allowed number problems to be represented and treated in an abstract way. This manipulation of abstractions in the form of variables allowed mathematicians to make further discoveries; for this reason, algebra is considered a crucial breakthrough in the history of math.

By the tenth century, Arabs were using numerals borrowed from the Hindus in India to do arithmetic. These numerals were altered slightly and passed on to Europe, where they became known as Arabic numerals. Other Islamic mathematicians made many advances in mathematics, including the study of radicals, geometry, and number theory.

Chemistry

Islamic thinkers also pioneered advances in chemistry. In the eighth century, the most famous Muslim chemist, Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geber in Latin), improved distillation techniques passed down from the ancient Greeks. He also invented the fundamental techniques of modern chemical engineering: crystallization, filtration, evaporation, liquification, oxidization, and purification. Moreover, he discovered and wrote treatises on the use of many acids, including hydrochloric, nitric, citric, and acetic acids. Jabir invented *aqua regia,* a potent substance capable of dissolving gold, when he combined hydrochloric and nitric acids. His written works became the classical texts of European **alchemy**. Other Muslim chemists discovered and mass-produced alcohol for medicinal and industrial purposes and invented the perfume industry, as well as soap and shampoo.

Measuring Instruments

Having absorbed extensive Greek knowledge on astronomy, Islamic scholars were in an excellent position to perfect instruments for measurement and prediction. During the tenth century, these included the astrolabe, an instrument that aided navigation by measuring the altitude of celestial bodies, thereby allowing the calculation of latitude. The astrolabe was important for a religious reason as well: once latitude was determined, Muslims knew in which direction Mecca lay and could face it while they prayed. Another important measuring instrument was the sextant, used to determine the angle of a celestial object relative to the horizon in order to triangulate a ship's position on a map. These became the chief instruments of

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navigation for centuries, although the sextant was not invented by Europeans until the eighteenth century. Star charts and celestial globes, used to solve astronomical problems, were developed in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries in Persia and Baghdad by astronomers such as al-Farghani, Ibrahim al-Fazari, Abbas ibn Firnas, and al-Sufi.

Optics

For centuries, it was widely believed that the eye was able to see because it emitted rays of light that illuminated whatever it looked upon. This idea originated with the Greek philosophers Euclid and Ptolemy. However, it was a tenth-century Arab Muslim scholar, Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen in Latin), who first discovered that the opposite was true.

Today, Ibn al-Haytham is known as the father of optics for his research into how the eye interacts with light. He designed the *camera obscura,* the world's first camera (a word deriving from the Arabic *qamara,* meaning a dark or private room), and is credited with being the first scholar to practice the scientific method by designing practical experiments to test his theories. He also invented the parabolic reflector, a curved dish that collects and focuses different forms of energy such as sound, light, or radio waves. Modern telescopes and satellite dishes rely primarily on the parabolic reflector for their operation.

Mechanisms

Islamic engineers were skilled at creating water-powered devices. One particularly talented engineer, the twelfth-century Arab Muslim Abu al-Iz al-Jazari, invented the crankshaft, which transforms rotary motion into linear motion. The modern world is indebted to al-Jazari for this, for nearly all modern machinery—whether cars or conveyor belts—relies on the crankshaft in some way. Al-Jazari invented devices for raising water as well as weight- and water-powered mechanical clocks of a complexity previously unknown. He is credited with being the father of robotics for his invention of programmable humanoid musicians that floated on a boat, playing music determined by the bumps on a turning drum. Plans for more than fifty other mechanical devices, including combination locks and water pumps, are included in his writings.

DECLINE

The Islamic Golden Age is thought to have ended with the destruction of the Abbasid Dynasty in 1258 by the Mongols, who burned innumerable books and libraries in their marauding sweep westward. Fortunately, much of the Islamic world's knowledge and inventions had made their way into western Islamic lands, and new centers of learning arose in Cairo, Fez, and several cities in Spain.

Wars with crusaders and between competing Turkish empires (the Seljuks and the Mamluks) during the eleventh and twelfth centuries further fragmented the Islamic world, disrupting the easy flow of ideas and materials through the Middle East that had produced such amazing achievements in so short a time. When the Ottoman Empire spread from Anatolia in the early sixteenth century, scientific development slowed considerably because of the socially and religiously **conservative** laws and customs imposed by the Turks. Prior to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, trade routes between Europe and Asia had to go through the Middle East, but sea routes replaced the overland routes and reduced the importance and the volume of trade through the region.

The Ottomans paid virtually no attention to developments in Europe, which they considered a barbaric backwater. The

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A worker at a desalination plant oversees operations. (Lim Sin Thai/Associated Press)

Renaissance came and went, followed by the Industrial Revolution. Thus, by the time the Ottomans were seriously threatened by European ambitions in the Middle East at the end of the nineteenth century, they were sorely outclassed by the superior military technology of Western nations.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since its inception in 1948, Israel has led the region in research and development. This is due in part to the emphasis placed on the high-tech sector of the economy, which was developed in order to compensate for a relative lack of crucial natural resources such as oil and freshwater. It is also due to the nation's recognition of the importance of maintaining technological superiority in the face of overwhelming hostility from surrounding Arab states. Israeli scientists have thus focused over the decades on dry-land farming and irrigation techniques, both of which have reached new heights under their guidance.

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, many of that nation's scientists, artists, and intellectuals fled to Europe or the United States, fearing imprisonment or execution at the hands of the **fundamentalist** Islamic clergy. While they have carried on work in exile, Iran's technological development languished until the 1990s, when a more relaxed attitude on the part of the ruling clerics encouraged the redevelopment of scientific endeavor. Since the late 1990s, the number of Iranian articles in reputable scientific journals has soared and the country's university population rose from about 100,000 in 1970 to more than 2 million in 2006. Iran launched a program to develop nuclear power in the 1950s. This program became controversial in the 1990s amid accusations by Western nations that Iran was trying to develop nuclear weapons. Because the Iranian government refused to fully comply with inspections of its facilities in the early 2000s, the United Nations imposed sanctions on it in 2006.

Other Islamic states have generally lagged behind East Asian and Western countries in technological development. Along with education and economic reforms, such development has been uneven

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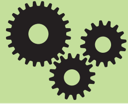

TURNING POINT

Desalination Plants

The most critical environmental issue facing the Middle East today is, in essence, the one it has always faced: water supply. With the introduction of modern agriculture, which requires enormous amounts of fertilizer and water to produce large crops on small, intensively farmed plots, water demand in the region has quickly outstripped local supply. Aquifers deep under the dry surface, which have slowly accumulated groundwater over the centuries, have been tapped in order to meet this demand, but this is at best a stopgap measure.

The invention of the desalination plant promises a lasting solution to this increasingly urgent issue. Desalination plants are facilities built on the shores of saltwater bodies. Using a variety of techniques, including reverse osmosis—in which seawater is forced under high pressure against membranes that filter out salts and other minerals—these plants can produce freshwater from salt water. Some of them also generate electricity in the process, bringing down the cost of the energy used to run them.

Desalination plants require massive amounts of energy, but the oil-rich nations of the Middle East are in a good position to provide the needed funds. Of greater concern is the environmental impact of these plants. Once freshwater has been created, the remaining brine has to be reintroduced in the nearby saltwater body, but elevated concentrations of salt can quickly kill local sea life. Various schemes have been introduced to counteract this effect, such as releasing the brine slowly over a widespread area. At some plants, the brine is further processed into food-grade sea salt.

Until 2006, the world's largest desalination plant was located in Jabal Ali, near Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Israel is currently building an even larger one on its Mediterranean coast. This plant, when complete, should theoretically provide all of southern Israel's 1.5 million inhabitants with freshwater.

From the perspective of the extremely arid Middle Eastern states, desalination plants are one of the most promising technological developments of recent decades. They can help reduce dependence on foreign imports while providing additional employment in desert areas.

within states as well as across the region. The sole exception to this is oil-related technology, including drilling rigs and refineries, which have received the lion's share of political and economic resources in the region. One significant development in drilling technology is slant, or horizontal drilling. Instead of using vertical wells to reach large oil deposits, slant drilling cuts wells at an angle, allowing access to smaller pockets of oil that are normally inaccessible through vertical wells. Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of slant drilling into Iraqi oil fields; he ostensibly invaded in 1991 to stop this practice, but many have challenged this justification for his invasion.

See also: Abbasid Dynasty; Agriculture; Art and Architecture; Baghdad; Byzantine Empire; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Environmental Issues; Gulf States; Iran; Iranian

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Terrorists, Stateless

Politically motivated fighters who use methods of unconventional warfare in order to achieve their aims. Organizationally, terrorists may function as anything from loosely allied tribes to militias and even armies, but they are not official representatives of any recognized nation or state.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the primary motivation behind terrorist organizations in the Middle East lay in Islamic ideology, particularly the concept of jihad, which literally means "struggle" but has been interpreted by many **fundamentalist** Islamic clerics as a broader call to a holy war with non-Muslims. Specifically, these terrorists have targeted Israel and Western influences in the Middle East.

Since the early decades of the twentieth century, the Middle East and Southwest Asia have been home to numerous such organizations. Most of these came into being as part of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and all of them have played significant roles in shaping the political and economic landscape of the region. National oppression, poverty, and feelings of helplessness in parts of the Middle East and in other parts of the Islamic world have provided fertile ground for the growth of terrorist groups.

SURVEY OF ORGANIZATIONS

As increasing numbers of Jewish settlers flocked to Palestine in the first decades of the twentieth century, Arab leaders tried diplomacy to protect their position of power in the region. However, Arab populations also turned to violence as a means to contain Jewish influence. In response, Jewish settlers formed militias of their own, which were recognized as terrorist organizations by both mainstream Jewish society and the British until they were disbanded in 1948 upon the founding of Israel.

One of the Jewish militias, the Irgun, carried out random assassinations of Arab civilians in retaliation for each act of Arab terrorism. It also smuggled Jews into Palestine after Great Britain closed the region to further Jewish settlement in 1946. Irgun operated from 1931 until 1948; its most notorious act was the 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, then the headquarters of the British military. Shortly after the incident, the British resolved to pull out of Palestine.

After the founding of Israel in May 1948, Arab terrorist groups coalesced around the Palestinian issue. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) formed with the express goal of destroying the state of Israel. The PLO was actually an umbrella organization that brought together a number of anti-Israeli groups and militias. Since its founding, the PLO or its various factions have committed numerous acts of terrorism, including the 1972 massacre of Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich, plane hijackings, and countless suicide bombings. Although the PLO is the

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officially recognized political body that represents the Palestinian people, it has at best tenuous control over its constituent factions.

One of the most aggressive PLO groups, Fatah, was co-founded by Yassir Arafat. It is currently one of the leading political parties in the Palestinian territories, although since mid-2007 it has been engaged in a bloody power struggle with Hamas.

Hamas was founded at the beginning of the first **intifada** in 1987. It is a militant Sunni organization that has become notorious for its suicide bombings against Israelis and Israeli targets. Like similar organizations, it is devoted to the destruction of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian state in its place. To the dismay of Western and Israeli leaders, Hamas swept popular elections in 2006, displacing the previously dominant Fatah. Nevertheless the Palestinian presidency remained in the hands of Fatah. When Fatah refused to hand over power to Hamas in the Gaza Strip in June 2007, Hamas took the area by force.

Another prominent terrorist organization in the region is Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite group dedicated to ending what it perceives as Western **colonialism** in Lebanon. Hezbollah has engaged in numerous conflicts both within the country and with Israel, and maintains close ties with the Islamic government of Iran, whose ideology it has adopted. Hezbollah is widely supported among Muslim countries in the region, which tend to view it as a legitimate resistance movement. Its attacks, in retaliation for alleged Israeli aggression in occupied parts of southern Lebanon, proved successful in forcing an Israeli withdrawal when the legitimate Lebanese government could not do so. Hezbollah is also a Lebanese political party represented in the parliament with a large bloc of deputies.

TACTICS

Stateless terrorist organizations rely on unconventional means to make their political presence felt. Common tactics that have been developed since the 1960s include suicide bombings, airplane hijacking, and kidnappings, in addition to more straightforward attacks such as launching rockets or conducting armed raids.

Since the 1970s, suicide bombing has come to be associated with the Middle East because of its prevalence and increasing frequency. A suicide bomber is someone who has been recruited by a terrorist organization and directed to strap on explosives under clothing. They are given specific dates and locations at which to detonate the explosives, killing themselves and anyone in the vicinity. Terrorist groups often promise to take care of suicide bombers' families, or insist that the bomber will go to heaven as a result of his or her sacrifice.

LEGITIMACY

Although the term *terrorist* is often used subjectively, the United Nations has defined it explicitly. For example, many organizations in the Middle East that have been labeled *terrorist* by Western countries receive popular support in their respective communities or within the larger Muslim world. A number of nationalist organizations can also be described as resistance movements rather than terrorist groups, depending on one's perspective. For example, the Kurdish people of the area known as Kurdistan in southeast Turkey and northern Iraq and Iran have been fighting for an independent state for decades. In each of these countries, Kurdish political parties have been treated as terrorist organizations and the Kurdish people brutally repressed.

Both the spread of fundamentalist Islam and the dramatic economic disparity between stateless peoples such as the Palestinians and the ruling elite of each country continue to fuel terrorist organizations.

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INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Al-Qaeda

An international terrorist organization whose stated aims include the end of foreign influence in the Middle East and the establishment of a new Islamic caliphate in the region, al-Qaeda means "the base" or "the foundation" in Arabic. Virtually unknown to the general public in Western countries before the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, al-Qaeda has been active since the late 1980s.

Al-Qaeda was responsible for the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as for an earlier bombing at the World Trade Center in 1993. It also bombed two U.S. embassies in the East African nations of Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, killing hundreds. In October 2000, al-Qaeda members bombed the U.S.S. *Cole,* a navy missile destroyer, as it anchored in the bay of Aden, Yemen.

Al-Qaeda remains active globally, recruiting Islamic fighters and raising funds to carry out further terrorist activities. It is a highly decentralized organization, composed of autonomous cells that can operate without orders from higher organizational levels. As such, it has been extremely difficult to track and combat. The U.S. War on Terror focused primarily on al-Qaeda until the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003.

Al-Qaeda was founded in about 1988 by Osama bin Laden and other *mujahedeen,* or Islamic fighters, in Afghanistan. Its initial aim was to support these fighters in their resistance to the Soviet invasion and occupation, which began in 1979. Al-Qaeda raised funds for the war as well as for refugees and families of fallen *mujahedeen.* After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the organization shifted its focus to carry on the jihad, or struggle for Islamic power, elsewhere in the region and eventually worldwide.

Al-Qaeda has since merged with several other Islamic extremist groups. It has built training camps worldwide and recruits fighters from all over the Muslim world to carry on the jihad against Western influence, particularly that of the United States. Al-Qaeda has supported extremist regimes, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan, and conducted numerous attacks, primarily against American targets. Despite the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and an intensive search in the early twenty-first century, Osama bin Laden has remained at large.

Terrorism has become a standard, if unfortunate, feature of life in the Middle East.

See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Baghdad; Camp David Accords; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gaza; Intifada; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Iraq War; Islam; Israel; Jerusalem; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Religion; Saudi Arabia; Society; Tools and Weapons; West Bank; World War I; Zionism.

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Tools and Weapons

Because of the challenges posed by the harsh desert climate that dominates the Middle East and Southwest Asia, the chief tools developed or adopted there have generally been agricultural in nature. In prehistory, many basic agricultural tools such as the scythe and basic irrigation systems were invented in the region. During the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties from the seventh through the thirteenth centuries, these tools were greatly refined.

On the other hand, military technology in the Middle East has largely been characterized by importation rather than invention. Gunpowder from China was first used to great effect by the Turks, but the long decline of the Ottoman Empire prevented weaponry from developing at the same rate as it did in Europe. By the mid-twentieth century, most Middle Eastern states bought their weapons from either Western nations or the Soviet Union, paying for their defense with oil revenues.

EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

As the Islamic Empire expanded in the seventh and eighth centuries, new and more secure trade routes were established that linked Africa and Europe with Asia. The European demand for Middle Eastern goods such as Persian rugs, dyed cloth, glassware, and ceramic tiles encouraged the refinement of these techniques by **artisans**. Islamic advances in chemistry also led to the invention of the perfume industry in the eighth century. Finely wrought glassware for distillation was developed to meet the enormous demand for perfume both within the region and without.

With the study and translation of ancient Greek writings that occurred during the Abbasid Dynasty came great leaps in scientific understanding. These advances were applied to develop more efficient water-pumping mechanisms for irrigation. With increased water supplies, Arab farmers were able to build more extensive irrigation systems that contributed to better food security during this period.

Militarily, the Arabs enjoyed a number of strategic advantages over the technologically and numerically superior Byzantine and Persian forces they faced as they expanded out of the Arabian Peninsula. These advantages were threefold: familiarity with the desert environment, familiarity with back trails and hidden oases, and the use of camels, which were able to survive on very little food and water for extended periods.

All three of these factors meant that Bedouin forces could move unhampered through spaces where opposing armies might often not even be able to scout. Large Arab forces could be gathered to emerge suddenly out of the desert, taking a town or local stronghold by surprise.

Arabs fought primarily with curved swords, shields, and spears. As the Arab caliphate grew, newly converted Muslim soldiers with varied gear drawn from their respective cultures joined the Arab forces. It was not the invention of a new weapon that allowed the Arabs to rapidly overtake so much territory, but the intrinsic features of Bedouin society such as its wide-ranging nomadism, close ties of tribal kinship, and fervent devotion to spreading the teachings of Islam.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The Ottoman Turks spread through Anatolia starting in the eleventh century, but did

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not make much headway into Arab lands until the fifteenth century. Their armies became quite powerful after they fully assimilated the use of firearms and artillery in the mid-fifteenth century. Gunpowder required the development of entirely new strategies, and both the Mamluk and Seljuk states and the Persian Savafids were resistant to incorporating the new weapons because of their natural inclination away from any social or political changes that might contradict Islamic law. This resistance gave the Ottomans a significant military advantage, allowing them to defeat the other Turkish groups and put the Persians on the defensive. Only after severe defeats at the end of the sixteenth century did the Persians start to adapt to gunpowder.

Once the Ottoman Empire had established itself in Arab lands in the sixteenth century, it did not continue to refine its firearm designs as its European contemporaries did. This was partly because the demands of effectively administering their vast empire commanded most of the Ottomans' attention and resources. This disparity would have a similar effect on the Turks as their initial use of gunpowder did on their rivals; when Turkish armies faced European ones in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their weaponry was hopelessly outclassed.

MODERN PERIOD

Modernization schemes of Middle Eastern states tended to focus on the military first, replacing outmoded weaponry and its associated tactics with more powerful imports from industrialized nations. Many military officers were sent abroad to receive training in these same nations. By the 1970s, the militaries of several states had come to closely resemble their counterparts in other nations.

Following military modernization, agricultural industrialization transformed the economic landscape of the Middle East. Agricultural machines such as tractors and threshers and synthetic fertilizers greatly improved yields, freeing a large portion of the population traditionally engaged in cultivation. This labor pool was then available for the rapidly expanding oil industry in oil-producing states such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran.

Iran

Prior to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Pahlavi shah Muhammed Reza relied on foreign manufacture for Iran's military needs. Billions of dollars were spent on both Soviet and American equipment, including fighters, tanks, missiles, and firearms. After the 1979 revolution, however, the global community refused to sell further arms to Iran, at least officially. Moreover, it lost most of its technical expertise when the educated elite, composed of scientists, technicians, engineers, and scholars, largely fled the country. More than 60 percent of the army deserted when the shah fled, and the ruling clerics were forced to build a new army after bloodily purging all personnel loyal to the shah. This army was technologically and tactically inferior to Iraq's during the subsequent Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), which began when Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Iran in an attempt to take advantage of the post-revolution turmoil.

Since then, however, Iran's military has become the most powerful in the region. In the intervening decades, it managed to reverse-engineer (determine how to manufacture something by taking apart a finished example) Soviet missiles, and since the early 1990s, it has built its own submarines, guided missiles, fighters, tanks, armored personnel carriers, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). By 2006, Iran had become an arms exporter and was believed to be working on developing satellite capabilities as well.

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MODERN WEAPONS

Roadside Bombs

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies, Iraqi guerrillas have resorted to a number of unconventional methods to inflict enough casualties on what they perceive as an occupying force to dislodge it from their country.

The most notorious of these is the improvised explosive device (IED), or roadside bomb. IEDs are constructed with explosives and a trigger mechanism, which can be hidden in any kind of container that disguises their true purpose. They often appear innocuous until detonated, and can contain noxious, incendiary, or other destructive materials such as ball bearings, metal shards, or nails. When detonated, they injure and kill indiscriminately.

The improvised nature of these devices makes them highly effective and dangerous; the enemy forces for whom they are intended must constantly adapt their strategies for identifying and neutralizing them. They are also extremely easy to make; a wide variety of commonplace materials can be used in their construction. Casings for IEDs have included soda cans and dead animals, and they can be triggered by remote control, infrared sensors, or physical tripwires.

IEDs did not originate in Iraq. They have been a part of guerrilla warfare in Europe and Vietnam since the mid-twentieth century. In the Middle East, they were first deployed by Hezbollah to attack Israeli troops in 1982. During the Iraq War, IEDs constituted one of the largest single causes of death for Western troops. Upward of 40 percent of American casualties have been blamed on IEDs, which continued to grow in sophistication and frequency as the war dragged on. Since a large proportion of Iraq's munitions was looted during and after the initial allied invasion, the construction and deployment of IEDs seemed likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Iran has been building nuclear reactors since the last years of the shah's reign in order to meet projected future energy needs and to demonstrate to the world that it is a fully modern nation. Despite persistent alarm on the part of the United States, United Nations inspectors have uncovered little evidence that Iran has begun developing nuclear missiles. In 2006, however, a consistent failure to fully comply with inspectors led the United Nations to impose sanctions against the country.

Iraq

Iraq's military technology has resembled that of its neighbors: foreign-bought. There are only two notable developments in Iraqi weaponry since the 1960s. One was the use of mustard gas against Iranians during the Iran-Iraq War and against the Kurds during the Kurdish Rebellion in the late 1980s. The other was the ominous but ultimately ineffective long-range SCUD missile, used to attack Tel Aviv, Israel, and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, during the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

Both Iran and Iraq mined the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War, significantly disrupting the oil trade by destroying numerous tankers and polluting the area to an unknown extent. These mines were later cleared by sweeps.

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Israel

Israel has been a leader in the development of agricultural tools. It pioneered the use of cutting-edge scientific methods for intensive cultivation, such as advanced irrigation systems and the use of chemical fertilizers. It also invented a new irrigation technique known as drip irrigation, in which precisely calculated amounts of water are delivered to individual plants. This highly effective but expensive method has been adopted throughout the Middle East, despite its cost.

Israel also boasts one of the best trained and best equipped armed forces in the region. In spite of numerically overwhelming enemy forces in the Arab-Israeli wars, it has held its own and even expanded its territory. Moreover, Israel is the only country in the region believed to have developed nuclear weapons, although its government has never confirmed this information.

While much of its early military equipment, such as M4 Sherman tanks and Dassault Mirage III fighter planes, was bought from France and the United States, Israel also developed its own firearms and vehicles. Today these include the Uzi submachine gun, the Kfir fighter-bomber, and the standard-issue IMI Galil assault rifle. Israel's intelligence network is also regarded as the region's best. This is due in part to Israeli satellite capability, and in part to the strong **nationalism** that characterizes Israeli society.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Crusades; Environmental Issues; Iran; Iranian Revolution; Iraq War; Israel; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Palestinian Issue; Technology and Inventions; Society; World War II.

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Turkey

See Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

West Bank

Region covering 2,270 square miles (5,900 square km) along the west bank of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, extending west to Jerusalem and including the cities of Hebron, Nablus, Bethlehem, Jericho, and Ram Allah. The West Bank is also known by the biblical names of Judaea and Samaria. Approximately 2.7 million people live in the West Bank, most of them Israelis and Palestinian Arabs.

The West Bank is a site of constant conflict between Arabs and Israelis, primarily over the status of the Palestinians who live there. Since 2005, it has been governed by the Palestinian National Authority, although Israel still maintains a strong military presence and civilian settlements.

JORDANIAN RULE

When the state of Israel was declared in

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May 1948, it faced immediate attacks from its Arab neighbors. At the same time, nearly one million native Palestinians fled or were forcibly expelled from the lands claimed by Israel, and several hundred thousand sought refuge in the West Bank.

The borders of the West Bank were set by the 1949 armistice between Jordan and Israel. They corresponded roughly with the borders of the proposed Arab state to be created from the British mandate. After a referendum, Jordan formally annexed the region in 1950.

King Abdullah I of Jordan was openly hostile to Palestinian aspirations for a sovereign state. The Palestinians never stopped fighting for this, however, even though other Arab states prevented them from active political participation in negotiations with Israel. The many Palestinian nationalists who lived in the West Bank came to resent Jordanian rule, and radical Palestinian organizations based in the territory began to carry out terrorist attacks in Jordan during its decade and a half of rule there.

This situation ended with the Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israel soundly defeated Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The Arab states that had claimed to represent the Palestinian people lost their credibility with the Palestinians, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) became the recognized voice of displaced Palestinians.

ISRAELI OCCUPATION

Israel occupied the West Bank during the 1967 war, incorporating East Jerusalem into its territory and setting up a military administration for the remainder. For more than a decade, peace prevailed in the West Bank as Israel improved its infrastructure and interfered little in the lives of the Palestinians.

Israeli settlement of the region soared during the late 1970s, however, and Israel passed a number of laws that allowed the seizure of property left behind by absent owners, many of whom had fled during the 1948 and 1967 wars. The Palestinians grew alarmed at these measures. Israel refused to negotiate with the PLO concerning the status of the West Bank, particularly as the PLO refused to recognize the state of Israel. It was clear that the Israelis intended to stay.

First Intifada

In 1987, the first **intifada**, or Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, began in the Gaza Strip. Anti-Israeli violence soon erupted in the West Bank as well, in an expression of the anxiety, anger, and frustration of the enormous population of displaced Palestinians. Bombings, shootings, and armed clashes in the street became a feature of daily life in the West Bank, as Israelis retaliated militarily. Jordan abandoned its claim to the West Bank in 1988, and the PLO became the primary political force.

By 1993, the violence had grown so severe that Israel and the PLO entered into negotiations for Palestinian self-rule. These negotiations resulted in the 1993 Oslo Accords between the PLO and Israel, which established a framework for gradual self-government in the occupied territories. The Israelis were to evacuate occupied territories over a five-year period and turn over administration to the Palestinians. The Palestinian National Authority, a government that emerged from the PLO, gradually assumed control of the occupied territories.

Second Intifada

Things did not proceed as planned. In response to a visit by Israeli former general and politician Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount (the location of holy sites in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) in 2000, the second, or al-Aqsa, intifada began. Israelis reoccupied portions of Gaza and the West

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Bank, destroying much of the infrastructure of the Palestinian National Authority. The occupation wreaked havoc on the West Bank's economy, primarily due to Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement. Israel also began construction of an immense concrete barrier 436 miles (702 km) long between the West Bank and its own territory; Israel contended that the barrier is a way to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks, while Palestinians accused Israel of effectively annexing the West Bank by controlling traffic into and out of it.

TODAY

Approximately 2.45 million Palestinians live in the West Bank today, along with a quarter-million Israeli settlers. Most of the territory is governed by the Palestinian National Authority, although its mandate was violently disputed by the radical political party Hamas in mid-2007. Israeli settlers in the West Bank oppose any concessions to the Palestinians, as they believe the land is theirs by birthright.

Along with Gaza Strip, the West Bank is one of the most overpopulated, violent, and economically depressed areas in the world. As Palestinian hopes for an independent state have waned, attacks on Israelis have increased. This, in turn, has solidified Israel's position that it cannot allow Palestinian independence for fear of compromising internal security.

See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Crusades; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gaza; Intifada; Israel; Jerusalem; Jordan; McMahon-Hussein Agreement; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Religion; Society; Terrorists, Stateless; World War I; World War II; Zionism.

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World War I (1914–1918)

While World War I's devastating impact on Europe is well known, its consequences for the Middle East are less commonly recognized. Simply put, World War I and its aftermath redrew the Middle East along lines that remain in place today, establishing new tensions between different ethnicities and exacerbating old ones. The consequences of this redrawing continue to plague the peoples of the region today.

BEGINNING OF WAR AND ROLE OF OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire joined the conflict on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary in November 1914 and immediately faced Allied forces, primarily British, on four fronts: Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine, the Caucasus Mountains in the northeast of present-day Turkey, and southeastern Europe. Although the Ottomans posed a serious threat in terms of sheer numbers, they were outclassed both technologically and tactically by the Allied Powers. Aside from Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish military commander who would later found the modern state of Turkey, their only capable military leaders were actually German or Austrian. In battle after battle, they excelled at defending fortified positions, but as Britain developed

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new weapons such as the self-propelled tank and offensive aircraft, the Turkish armies suffered defeat after defeat.

Effects on the Ottoman Empire

The war strained Ottoman resources more seriously than had any prior conflict. Although the Turks ruled a vast geographic area, the practice of millets (the granting of self-government to minority religious communities) and a firmly embedded Islamist resistance to Western influence, including communication and military technologies, crippled Ottoman rule and left the empire slow to respond effectively to Allied threats.

Turkey requisitioned vast amounts of agricultural produce and other materials from its Arab territories in Syria and Palestine in order to support its forces. The Turks also impressed the peoples they ruled into military service. The seizures of matériel and personnel fed the nationalist fires that had been eating at the fabric of the empire for several decades, setting the stage for important Arab, Greek, and Armenian revolts.

Battle of Gallipoli and Defeat on All Fronts

Britain hoped to remove the Ottomans from the war early by launching a sneak attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula, which guarded the Dardanelles Strait and the Turkish capital at Constantinople. However, what was intended as a lightning strike dragged into a series of trench-based campaigns lasting over eight months between 1915 and 1916, known as the Battle of Gallipoli.

Mustafa Kemal (later known as Atatürk), who emerged as a national hero, led the Ottoman defense. British troops were primarily drawn from the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), supported by a smaller French force. This was the only major Ottoman victory and shifted the focus of the war to the other fronts.

Everywhere else, the Ottoman Empire could do little but fight drawn-out defensive battles. In Mesopotamia, the Turks stalled a British advance up the Tigris River for several years until their forces were destroyed and scattered in 1917. The British marched into Baghdad as liberators in March 1917 and eventually reached the oil-rich Mosul area. The Turks likewise surrendered Anatolian ground to the Russians on the Caucasus front until both sides were spent in 1918.

Most significant to the future of the Middle East, however, were the British campaigns in the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine. Although they had successfully repelled two Ottoman assaults on the strategically vital Suez Canal, the British could make little headway into Palestine proper. For several years they were defeated at Gaza, and only after securing the support of Arab tribes through the McMahon-Hussein Agreement of 1915–1916 did they start to move north along the Mediterranean coast.

By the end of 1917, the British controlled Jerusalem, Beersheba, Gaza, and Bethlehem. T.E. Lawrence (aka Lawrence of Arabia), a British military officer who assisted in organizing Arab resistance against the Ottomans, conducted hit-and-run raids with his Arab troops on Ottoman targets throughout the region. The Ottoman Empire effectively lost Palestine at the Battle of Megiddo (in the north of present-day Israel) in September 1918 and surrendered to the Allies one month later.

BREAKUP OF OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Allies had reached numerous secret agreements among themselves concerning the disposition of Ottoman lands, but most of these were made under the assumption that the war would be swift and that the entire empire, including Anatolia, would be available to the winners. Atatürk's 1923

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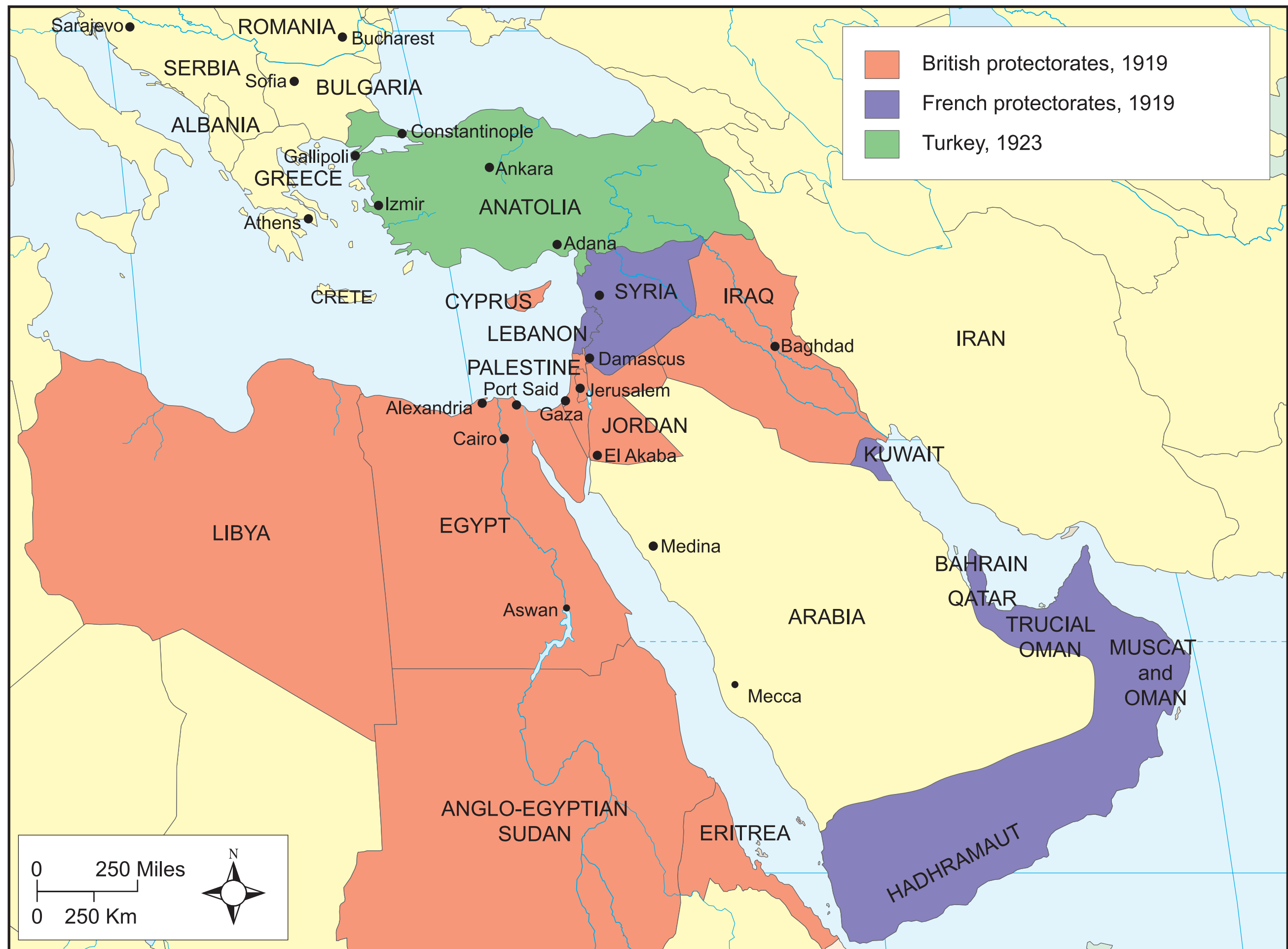
THE MIDDLE EAST AFTER WORLD WAR I

Following World War I, Britain and France established colonies and protectorates in the former Ottoman provinces of the Middle East. The regions of Palestine and Transjordan came under British rule; Syria and Lebanon were French protectorates.



victory in the Turkish War of Independence skewed these agreements, since it removed Anatolia from the victor's table. In addition, Russia had withdrawn from the war in 1917, surrendering its claims to Ottoman lands.

The Arab territories formerly controlled by the Turks were divided between France and Britain. Intermediate states called mandates were established under each European power, but these were little more than thinly disguised versions of imperial colonies because the European states were free to govern as they liked within their territories.

France divided its mandate into Lebanon and Syria in 1920 in order to ensure that a sizable Christian enclave would remain in the region. Lebanon was designed to be large enough to contain a sustainable economy. Although Syria's boundaries as a region had never been well defined, after World War I the growth of Arab nationalism in Damascus and Aleppo led to its independence in 1920. However, French troops invaded and occupied it in the same year.

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Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, was a British soldier who fought against the Ottoman Empire and helped liberate Palestine from Ottoman control. (Hulton Archive/Stringer/Getty Images)

Britain faced a difficult situation after the war, having made contradictory promises to support the nationalist ambitions of both European Jews and Arabs in its territory, known as British Palestine. In order to appease the Arab allies who were crucial to the British victory, it split its mandate into Palestine and Transjordan, which was closed to Jewish immigration and became the Hashemite Emirate of Transjordan under the rule of Sharif Hussein's son Abdullah; Hussein was the leader of the Arab forces that had sided with the British against the Ottomans in the Arabian Peninsula during the war.

Abdullah's brother, Faisal, deposed by the French after a failed rebellion in Damascus in 1920, was given authority over Iraq. Britain had created this country out of three former Ottoman provinces, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. Three very different populations—the Sunni Kurds, the Arabic Shia, and Faisal's Sunni companions—were suddenly united politically as a result.

IRAN

Fighting in Iran was minimal and did not greatly affect the outcome of the Great War. In 1914, Russia effectively controlled Iran, but withdrew its forces after the Russian Revolution in 1917. This left Great Britain as the sole European power in the region.

In 1919, Britain offered an aid package to the weakened Iranian government that would effectively turn the country into a British protectorate. The deal was wildly unpopular among Iranians and contributed to Britain's withdrawal from the country in 1921. However, Britain secretly aided Reza Khan, an officer in the Persian Cossack Brigade, when he seized military power in a 1921 coup.

Reza Khan was the first powerful Iranian leader to emerge in more than a century. Within four years, he built a strong, loyal army and consolidated enough political power to crown himself shah in 1925. Reza Shah was inspired by Atatürk's creation of a modern Turkey and tried to recreate his plans for the secularization and modernization of his own country, but fierce Islamist opposition prevented him from founding a republic.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Armenian Genocide; Baghdad; Balfour Declaration; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gaza; Iran; Islam; Israel; Istanbul; Jerusalem; Jordan; McMahon-Hussein Agreement; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Refugees; Religion; Saudi

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World War II (1939–1945)

In many ways, World War II was a continuation of the primary conflict of World War I between an ascendant, united German state and the European powers it threatened to eclipse. The Allies anticipated that Germany would seek to occupy the Middle East, primarily for its oil, but this never came to pass. Apart from three significant conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, and Iran, the region escaped the catastrophic destruction experienced by Europe and Russia.

ANGLO-IRAQI WAR

After the British created Iraq in 1932 from its World War I League of Nations mandate, the Sunni monarchy struggled to maintain control over its mixed population of Kurds and Arab Shias. Britain found it expedient to leave Iraq's internal religious and ethnic problems up to its new government, especially since keeping forces in Iraq was both expensive and provocative. In 1930, Iraq and Britain signed a very unpopular diplomatic accord, the Anglo-Iraqi Agreement, which granted Britain special commercial concessions regarding oil as well as unlimited freedom to base military forces in Iraqi territory. In return, Iraq was promised early independence from the British mandate, which it received in 1932. The majority of Iraqis viewed this as a thinly veiled attempt to maintain control over Iraqi affairs.

Anti-British sentiment was still strong when Britain pressured the pro-British Iraqi government to declare war on Germany following the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland. The Iraqis failed to do so for fear of provoking the populace, however, and instead severed diplomatic ties with the Nazis. This compromise did not placate the Iraqis, who staged a coup in April 1941 under the leadership of Rashid Ali al-Gaylani. A former prime minister of Iraq, al-Gaylani was an Arab nationalist who wanted to rid the region of British influence. He had sought diplomatic ties with Germany, offering Iraq's resources in exchange for help against the increasing population of Jews in Palestine.

After the coup, al-Gaylani's forces attacked a British Royal Air Force base at Habbaniyah, near Baghdad. Al-Gaylani posed a serious threat to the British war effort, since Iraq was both a major source of oil and an overland route for British troops in India and Egypt. At the beginning of May 1941, British troops landed in Basra and made their way to Habbaniyah, where they began shelling the rebellious Iraqis. This unit, composed of Indians and Australians, was designated Iraqforce.

The Germans responded by flying in two dozen aircraft from Vichy-controlled Syria to Mosul. Their raids did not deter the British forces, who had decimated al-Gaylani's forces by the end of the month. Britain then used Iraq as a base from which to attack Vichy forces in Syria and Lebanon and

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Looking for enemy snipers, British soldiers search the ruins at Palmyra, Syria, during World War II. (Time & Life Pictures/Stringer/Getty Images)

pro-Nazi Iranians during the Anglo-Soviet Invasion.

British troops occupied Iraq during and after the war in order to protect British access to its oil. They finally departed in 1947.

SYRIAN-LEBANON CAMPAIGN

After Germany defeated France and established the puppet Vichy government there in 1940, the French mandates of Lebanon and Syria came under Vichy control as well. This threatened Allied forces in the region, especially British troops in Egypt who were engaged in fighting Axis forces in North Africa. Britain decided to launch an offensive against Lebanon and Syria in June 1941 to counter the Vichy threat before it could materialize.

The Allies quickly overwhelmed French forces with a four-pronged attack originating in various parts of Iraq. The campaign was over in a month, but it was significant in two ways. First, a Jewish contingent recruited from Palestine served in the conflict and gained military training that later helped Israel survive its turbulent early years. Second, Lebanon and Syria both achieved independence under Allied authority and joined the effort against the Axis, thus ending the threat of German attacks in the region.

ANGLO-SOVIET INVASION OF IRAN

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the latter joined the Allied cause. Steady German advances threatened to cut

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off supply routes to the Soviet Union and also raised the specter of the loss of rich oil fields in Iran, where Reza Shah had become increasingly pro-German in his policies, despite pressure from Britain.

The two Allied powers decided to invade Iran in order to preempt a German-Iranian alliance. The Soviet Union invaded from the north and Britain from the south, and within two months the two powers had neutralized Iranian forces. Casualties were minimal on both sides, although several hundred Iranian civilians were killed in bombing raids.

The Allies deposed Reza Shah and elevated his son Muhammad to the throne in September 1941. Iran's new leader agreed to hand all Axis nationals over to the Allies and to supply the Soviet Union with oil and other resources. In exchange, both Allies withdrew troops in October, although the Soviets backed several short-lived separatist states in Iran's northern region over the following years.

PALESTINE

British Palestine suffered the most dramatic consequences from World War II. Palestinians were divided in their support for the Allies and for the Axis powers, the latter of which were openly anti-Jewish. Jews in Palestine were similarly divided. Some militant groups, such as the Irgun and Lehi, advocated alliance with the Axis as a way to liberate Israel from British rule or attacked British forces directly.

Britain moved to clamp down on further turmoil in the region by restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine during the war. Britain opened detention camps on the island of Cyprus for the soaring numbers of Jewish refugees from Nazi-controlled territories. There was no long-term solution for what to do with this enormous population, however, and tens of thousands of Jews managed to sneak into Palestine despite British efforts.

The Holocaust, the mass extermination by the Nazis of more than 6 million Jews, generated enormous support worldwide for the establishment of a Jewish state. By the end of the war, Palestine was home to nearly 400,000 Jews who were determined to establish a homeland in spite of overwhelming Arab opposition.

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

Apart from the area of Palestine, the nations of the Middle East did not in general experience significant changes as a result of World War II. Riding a wave of independence and nationalist sentiment that had really begun with World War I, the modern nations of Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq won their independence from European powers. Perhaps the most fateful consequence of the war was the establishment of the state of Israel, a goal toward which Zionists had worked for nearly 100 years but which came about much more rapidly as a result of the slaughter of Jews in Europe.

See also: Arab League; Arab-Israeli Conflict; Baghdad; Economic Development and Trade; Iran; Israel; Jordan; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Oil; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Technology and Inventions; Terrorists, Stateless; Tools and Weapons; World War I; Zionism.

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Yemen

Arab country that was one of the earliest sites of human civilization. Located on the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, bordered on the north by Saudi Arabia, on the east by Oman, and on the west and south by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, respectively, Yemen is one of the few countries in the world without strictly demarcated borders with its neighboring states. This is because the borders are located in desert regions that are hard to map, and because Yemen has made agreements with its neighbors to allow the free migration of Bedouin tribes through its territory.

The Ottoman Empire seized most of Yemen in the sixteenth century, but was driven out in 1636 by a successful resistance movement. A century later, a southern sultan split the country in two by establishing two independent states. Repressive governmental policies led to a coup in 1962 that ended the Rassid Dynasty, an Islamic regime that had ruled northern Yemen for centuries. The Yemen Arab Republic was born. Five years later, a rival Marxist state, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, was formed in the southern region. This division lasted until 1990, when the former Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) merged with the Marxist People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), giving birth to the modern state. This merger made Sana, the former North Yemen capital, Yemen's political capital. Aden, the former South Yemen capital, became its economic center.

Civil war and assassinations plagued both republics for decades. After they agreed to unite in 1990, the new country immediately faced widespread internal strife. Yemen reunified after a civil war in 1994, but has not fully recovered from the conflict. Today its relations with neighbors are tense, its natural and human resources underdeveloped, and its internal politics unpredictable.

Yemen is currently the fastest growing Arab country, with a population of 21 million. It is also one of the poorest Arabic countries and has relied on foreign aid for decades. Its reputation has been tarnished by human rights abuses, press censorship, and accusations that it harbors terrorists. Aden was the site of a suicide bomb attack against the American naval destroyer U.S.S. *Cole* on October 12, 2000, which killed 17 sailors and wounded nearly 40. In short, Yemen today is a poor democracy that struggles to balance modernization and economic development with traditional Arabic and Islamic culture.

See also: Agriculture; Arab League; Communist Movements; Culture and Traditions; Economic Development and Trade; Gulf States; Islam; Language; Oil; Ottoman Empire and Turkey; Religion; Refugees; Saudi Arabia; Terrorists, Stateless; World War I.

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Zionism

Jewish nationalist movement born in the nineteenth century that aimed to establish a Jewish state in the region of Palestine. Zion was one of the hills upon which ancient Jerusalem had been built; over time, the name took on deep religious and cultural significance for the Jews. It came to stand for the Jewish homeland itself.

Since the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in C.E. 70, Jews were scattered worldwide in what is known as the Diaspora, but continued to dream of returning to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple. Many of them faced **anti-Semitism**, or racial hatred of Jews, in their adopted homes. Expressions of anti-Semitism ranged from treatment as second-class citizens to murder. Anti-Semitism was widespread in Europe and the Middle East.

Some Jews believed that the problem of anti-Semitism was insurmountable and that the only solution lay in the creation of a Jewish state. This idea had a long history, but toward the end of the nineteenth century, it became widely discussed in Central and Eastern Europe as anti-Semitism increased sharply in Eastern Europe and Russia. Zionist organizations such as the Odessa Committee, a group in Russia that supported Jewish farmers in Palestine, began to form and debate among themselves what cold be done to counter the anti-Semitic trend.

More and more Jews began to return to Palestine, some of them financed by wealthy Jewish families like the Rothschilds, a Jewish international banking dynasty from Germany. They lived in small, self-sufficient, **socialist** agricultural settlements called *kibbutzim* (singular: *kibbutz*). The kibbutz was the brainchild of Moses Hess, who offered a vision of a productive agrarian state wherein Jews would no longer live on the margins of society, but in its very center.

Zionism came together as a political movement in 1896 after Theodor Herzl published *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*). This book offered Zionists a tangible goal to work for, galvanizing the movement in Europe. Herzel coined the term *Zionism* and the following year founded the Zionist Organization. He organized the first World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, along with Nathan Birnbaum, an Austrian journalist and philosopher; Zionist organizations across Europe were invited.

Meeting in Basel on September 3, 1897, the Zionist Congress began to set an agenda for the establishment of a Jewish state. During the early years of the movement, proposals for Jewish states in Argentina and Uganda were considered and rejected. Eventually, the majority of Zionists insisted that Palestine was the only acceptable location. This reflected the close intertwining of religious, ethnic, and national identity characteristic of Jewish thought.

Another goal of Zionism was the promotion of Hebrew culture, which included resurrecting Hebrew as an everyday language. After the Diaspora, Hebrew had been largely abandoned except for religious use. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a Russian linguist, was primarily responsible for its revival.

The Zionist movement suffered from internal debates and numerous opponents, but it gained great momentum after the rise of the genocidal, anti-Semitic Nazi Party in Germany. The horrors of the Holocaust during World War II galvanized worldwide Jewish support for Zionism.

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GREAT LIVES

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904)

Born Benjamin Ze'ev (Theodor) Herzl on May 2, 1860, Theodor Herzl was an Austrian Jew and journalist who founded Zionism as a political movement. Born in Budapest, Hungary, he lived in Vienna and Paris most of his adult life, working as a correspondent for the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse* and writing plays.

At first, Herzl was strongly opposed to Zionism. In fact, he was active in a German nationalist movement that sought to unify the German peoples of Central Europe. In 1894, however, the Dreyfus Affair in France radically changed his views.

Alfred Dreyfus was a French Jewish officer who had been falsely accused of spying for Germany. To the shock and dismay of Herzl and many other Jews, Dreyfus's trial led to an explosion of anti-Semitic sentiment among the French. Until that time, Herzl had believed that the best answer to anti-Semitism was assimilation into host cultures. The display in France, which was considered a nation tolerant if not openly accepting of Jews, convinced him otherwise.

In his 1896 book *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*), Herzl argued that anti-Semitism could never be eliminated and that the only hope for Jews was a Jewish state.

In 1897, Herzl founded the Zionist Organization, an umbrella body that brought together Zionist groups from across Europe and the United States. The organization met annually to determine how to establish a Jewish nation. Herzl also began to publish *Die Welt* (*The World*), a Zionist weekly newspaper, and met with many influential people in his quest to secure a Jewish state. One of these, the Ottoman sultan of Turkey, rejected his appeal for land in Palestine. Herzl turned to the British, who offered land in the Sinai Peninsula and then Uganda, but neither location was acceptable to the mainstream Zionist movement.

Although he died more than forty years before the founding of Israel, Herzl was one of the fathers of the modern Jewish nation. He believed wholeheartedly in Zionism, and his efforts eventually bore fruit. He seemed to know they would early on, writing in his diary in 1897: "If I had to sum up the Basel Congress in one word—which I shall not do openly—it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish state. If I were to say this today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years, perhaps, and certainly in 50, everyone will see it."

The Zionist movement achieved its primary aim on May 14, 1948, with the formation of the state of Israel. It reached another turning point after the Six-Day War of 1967, when it adopted the Jerusalem Program, a set of principles that strongly insisted on the primacy of Israel in Jewish life.

See also: Arab-Israeli Conflict; Balfour Declaration; Gaza; Israel; Jerusalem; Nationalism and Independence Movements; Palestinian Issue; Refugees; Religion; Terrorists, Stateless; West Bank; World War I; World War II.

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Glossary

The Historian's Tools

These terms and concepts are commonly used or referred to by historians and other researchers and writers to analyze the past.

cause-and-effect relationship A paradigm for understanding historical events where one result or condition is the direct consequence of a preceding event or condition

chronological thinking Developing a clear sense of historical time—past, present, and future

cultural history *see* history, cultural

economic history *see* history, economic

era A period of time usually marked by a characteristic circumstance or event

historical inquiry A methodical approach to historical understanding that involves asking a question, gathering information, exploring hypotheses, and establishing conclusions

historical interpretation/analysis An approach to studying history that involves applying a set of questions to a set of data in order to understand how things change over time

historical research An investigation into an era or event using primary sources (records made during the period in question) and secondary sources (information gathered after the period in question)

historical understanding Knowledge of a moment, person, event, or pattern in history that links that item to a larger context

history, cultural View of history based on a people's culture, or way of life, including investigating patterns of human work and thought

history, economic View of history based on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods

history of science and technology Study of the evolution of scientific discoveries and technological advances

history, political View of history based on the methods used to govern a group of people

history, social View of history based on the personal relationships between people and groups

patterns of continuity and change A paradigm for understanding historical events in terms of institutions, culture, or other social behavior that either remains consistent or shows marked differences over time

periodization The division of history into distinct eras

political history *see* history, political

radiocarbon dating A test for determining the approximate age of an object or artifact by measuring the number of carbon 14 atoms in that object

social history *see* history, social

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Key Terms Found in A to Z Entries

The following words and terms appear in context in boldface type throughout this volume.

Abrahamic Originating with the Hebrew patriarch Abraham or his covenant with God (most often refers to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)

alchemy Medieval chemical science that tried to turn base metals into gold

aniconism Taboo against depicting humans or animals in art

anti-Semitism Racial hatred of the Jewish people

arabesque Form of nonrepresentational art featuring a complex patterning of lines, shapes, leaves, or abstract animal forms

artisans Skilled workers who practice some trade or handicraft

ascetic Practicing strict self-denial as a measure of personal and especially spiritual discipline

biodiversity The variety of different plant and animal species in a given ecosystem

caliph Supreme religious and political leader of an Islamic state, from Arabic for "successor"

caliphate The land ruled by a caliph, a Muslim religious and political leader

circumcision Cutting off of the penis's foreskin after birth, usually for a religious reason

colonialism The policy of a parent country to obtain colonies for settlement and economic exploitation

conservative Political, religious, or social orientation given to preserving traditions rather than altering them

constitutional monarchy Political system wherein a monarch serves as head of state with powers defined or limited by a constitution

defensive developmentalism Rapid modernization in order to resist colonization

desalination plants Treatment facilities where salt water is turned into fresh water

dualism Idea of spiritual conflict between good and evil

emancipation Freeing of slaves and abolition of slavery

emir Islamic commander of lesser rank than a caliph

emirate The state or territory controlled by an emir

fundamentalist Relating to fundamentalism, the belief in a literal interpretation of a religious text such as the Bible or the Koran

gross domestic product (GDP) Total value of all goods and services produced within a country in a given year, minus net income from investments in foreign countries

iconoclasm The deliberate destruction or mutilation of religious icons, stemming from a belief that such icons are blasphemous

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infrastructure Large-scale public systems, such as roads, power and water supplies, and services that are essential for economic activity

intifada Arabic for "shaking off"; refers to two Palestinian rebellions against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

logocentric Having excessive faith in the meaning or power of words; word-centered

monotheism Belief in one god

monotheistic Characterized by the belief in one god

muezzin Official who calls Muslims to prayer five times daily from a minaret on the mosque

nationalism Political philosophy that emphasizes the nation as the primary unit of cultural identity

nepotism Political favoritism toward relatives

pagan Term used by followers of monotheistic religions to describe those of polytheistic faiths

pastoralism Way of life that depends on raising livestock for subsistence

patriarchal Characteristic of societies in which men are the most powerful members

petrodollars Revenue from the sale of petroleum to other countries

pogrom Organized violence toward or massacre of Jews

polymath A person who has mastered numerous intellectual disciplines

polytheism Belief in more than one god

polytheistic Characterized by the belief in more than one god

progressive Political, religious, or social orientation willing to revise or abolish traditions in order to promote social equality

prostration To lie face downward in submission or worship

rabbi Jewish religious leader and spiritual guide

secular Term used to describe something as nonreligious, especially a lifestyle or political orientation

Semitic Descending from the ancient peoples of the Middle East

Shia The Muslims of the branch of Islam comprising sects believing in Ali and the Immans as the only rightful successors of Muhammad

socialist Political orientation in which a centralized government or other group controls the economy, specifically through owning the means of production and distributing goods

Sufism Form of Islamic mysticism that emphasizes austerity an internal, personal experience of God

Sunni The Muslims of the branch of Islam that adheres to orthodox tradition and acknowledges the first four caliphs as rightful successors of Muhammad

theocracy Government whose laws have a religious rather than secular basis

transhumance Movement of livestock between seasonal grazing areas at different elevations

unilateral One-sided or from one direction; usually in reference to political or military action

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