

# Middle East Study Guide

## Map



## Vocabulary

- Ottoman Empire
  - the primarily Islamic empire (but tolerant of Christianity and Judaism) that existed in the current-day “Middle East” that rose from the fall of the Roman and Byzantine Empires and fell due to U.N. separation (mandates) after WWI to Britain and France (and was weakened due to nationalist movements within it). It also allied itself with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire during WWI
- Sykes-Picot Accord
  - a secret agreement between the British and the French that said they were willing to split up the Middle Eastern territories between themselves. This eventually turned into the U.N. “mandate system” that was carried out, which they said was because the territories were unable to govern themselves and needed assistance from more advanced powers. This was in contrary to Wilson’s (the U.S.’s) views of self-determination, the right to self-governance; but he backed down. This

allowed for the colonialism (a form of imperialism) and exploitation of the Middle East by European countries, primarily for oil

- secular
  - non-religious; separate from the church; usually referring to a government
  - examples: the U.S.
- theocracy
  - a system of government ruled by God through clergy
  - examples: Iran
- Shia
  - Islamic branch with < 10% of Muslim population
  - constantly conflicts with Sunni Muslims (e.g. Syrian war, on the side of Assad)
  - majority in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon
- Sunni
  - (opposite of Shia: see above)
  - majority in Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia
- Arab Spring
  - a movement of democratic revolutions that spread across the Middle East
  - started in 2010 with Tunisian man lit himself on fire to protest the government
  - in many other countries, such as Syria (current civil war) and Egypt; some unsuccessful
- refugees
  - because of the Arab Spring and terrorist groups, thousands of people are getting killed every day, and more and more people are getting kicked out of their homes or fleeing their countries in search of a better home
  - currently, Syrian civil war and ISIS terrorism are the two major driving forces of refugees; and the largest recipient countries are European countries, such as Germany and Greece, as well as some neighboring Middle Eastern countries
  - European countries cannot bear the weight of the millions of refugees flooding in, becoming an international human rights conflict now

## Current Events

- Syrian Civil War
  - Arab Spring led to many successful democratic reforms in other countries; Syrian people felt the same way
  - timeline (source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKb9GVU8bHE>):
    - started with civilian uprising in the capital
    - the Free Syrian Army (FSA) formed from defecting Syrian military
    - Assad released extremist prisoners to make the rebels seem worse
    - other extremists joined the rebel side

- Kurds defect from Syrian rule
- Iran is helping Assad
- Gulf states help rebels to counter Iran, through Turkey
- Hezbollah helps Assad
- Gulf states send more in, now through Jordan
- now it is Sunni supporting rebels vs. Shia supporting Assad
- U.S. starts training Syrian rebels, urging Gulf states to stop Assad, and was ready to use air strikes against Syria after chemical weapons
- Russia is backing Assad
- ISIS breaks off of Al Qaeda in 2014 because of internal disagreements
  - fights Kurds instead of Assad
  - starts to form its own caliphate
  - starts in Syria, marches across Iraq
- Pentagon trains Syrian rebels to fight ISIS (not Assad)
- Turkey starts bombing Kurds
- Russia backs Assad, bombing anti-Assad rebels (not ISIS like it said)
- ISIS
  - Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
    - (ISIL: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant)
    - (IS: Islamic State)
    - (Daesh)
  - see above for history
  - very extreme group: beheadings and violence
- Iranian Nuclear Program
  - (see below for Iranian Revolution): Iran and U.S. have serious trust issues
  - just last week, deal was made to increase relations and trade in Iran after allowing inspections and the taking away of much of Iran's nuclear capability (taking uranium and putting centrifuges into disuse)
  - pros and cons:
    - pros:
      - improve relations (trust) and trade (economy)
      - we have less threat by nuclear weapons
    - cons:
      - we are taking Iran's stuff (what if it is for peaceful purposes?)
      - this may be giving us false security (what if there are more enrichment facilities?)
- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

- Zionism: movement for a Jewish homeland that started in the 1800s with persecution in Europe, got popular (especially in U.S.) after WWII with the Holocaust
  - not popular with Arabs because where Israel was supposed to be was in Arab land
- British made two promises:
  - Balfour Declaration: promised Jews a homeland
  - promised Arabs an independent nation
- U.N. split some area into Palestine and Israel (with Jerusalem divided evenly)
- battles:
  - Arab-Israeli War (1948):
    - Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq  $\longleftrightarrow$  Israel
    - Israel wins, takes land and some of Jerusalem
  - Six Day War (1967):
    - Egypt  $\longleftrightarrow$  Israel
    - Israel destroys military in days, wins and takes land (Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, Golan Heights)
    - U.S., Britain, France called upon to aid, refused
  - October War (1973):
    - Egypt, Syria  $\longleftrightarrow$  Israel
    - Israel wins in about a month
    - U.S. assists Israel
  - First Intifada (1987):
    - Palestinian civilians  $\longleftrightarrow$  Israeli military
  - Second Intifada (2000)
    - Palestinian civilians and terrorists  $\longleftrightarrow$  Israelis
    - more violence, less peace, stalled peace process
- calls for peace
  - Camp David Accords
    - between Egypt and Israel, ended when Sadat was assassinated by Egyptian extremists
  - Oslo Accords
    - between PA and Israel, ended when Rabin assassinated by Jewish extremists

## Historical Events

- 1979 Iranian Revolution
  - shah Mohammed Reza was forced into Allied allegiance and an agreement that allowed them to take their oil

- when the Iranians wanted to nationalize AIOC, a British-owned Iranian oil company, the shah refused it to keep good relations
- U.S. and British took out the prime minister to make him more powerful
- U.S. and Israel helped him create a police force (SAVAK) to hunt down opponents; soon became violent
- shah became wealthy with American / British financial aid (money → corruption)
- shah wanted to modernize
  - increase education
  - increase women's rights
  - redistribute land to peasants
- Khomeini, a cleric, opposed the shah, saying that he was trying to bring western ideals into their world; he wanted to be more conservative; others liked him; was exiled by the shah
- Iranian Revolution: students protested and got killed. 40 days later, more protesters. Some got killed. 40 days later, the cycle continued, and this went on until 2 million Iranians gathered in the capital, Tehran, so that the army refused to shoot more civilians and the shah had to leave
- exiled Khomeini returned to power (dead now)
- *The Iranian Revolution was caused by a greedy and corrupt leader who cared more for Western support (and therefore power) rather than the needs and wants of his own people.*
- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
  - (see above)
  - Palestinian Statehood
    - two-state solution or one state (only Israel or Palestine)?
  - Jerusalem
    - how to divide it: holy to them (and Christianity)
  - Jewish Settlements
    - illegal under international law to alter conquered land now (creating settlements) — blind eye turned because of U.S. alliance
  - Barrier Wall
    - (see above: is illegal)
    - wall goes into West Bank, taking up a lot of it
  - Palestinian refugees
    - similar to Syrian refugees, surrounding countries are being flooded
  - water resources
    - water is essential in primarily dry Middle East, and Israel controls most of it
  - borders

- some people want to go back to the 1967 ceasefire lines and go for the two-state solution
- Reasons for U.S. involvement in the Middle East
  - Arab Spring
    - Syrian civil war
    - Egypt
  - Iran revolution and nuclear weapons
  - Israeli-Palestinian conflict
    - Israel is strong ally and promoter of democracy
  - terrorism
    - Taliban
    - Al Qaeda
    - Hezbollah
    - ISIS
    - Hamas
  - refugee crisis
  - (see above)