

GLOBAL SNAPSHOTS

Issues Transcending Regional Boundaries:

The Middle East

Contents:

- **10 Things Students Should Know About: *the Middle East***
- **Global Issues:**
 - Conflict, Resistance and Resolution
 - Environment and Sustainability
 - Trade and Economics
 - Popular Culture
- **Other Useful Resources**



The Middle East (Near East) is a term used since the 1900s to mark the area at the juncture of Eurasia, Africa, the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. The term defines a geographical area but does not have precise borders. The modern Middle East began after World War I, when the Ottoman Empire, which was allied with the defeated Central Powers, was partitioned into a number of separate nations. Other defining events in this transformation included the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the departure of European powers, notably Britain and France from the area.

In its modern definition, it includes the states of Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Egypt is considered a part of the Middle East with its Sinai Peninsula in Asia but North African nations of Libya, Tunisia and Algeria are called North African. Sometimes, depending on the topic of interest, the Middle East may include other countries in the region: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia of the Caucasus region; Cyprus, Afghanistan and the North Africa, Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia.

The Middle East is primarily arid and semi-arid with grasslands, rangelands, and deserts. The Anatolian Plateau is between the Pontus Mountains and Taurus Mountains in Turkey. Mount Ararat in Turkey's eastern borders is 5,165 meters, while Mount Damavand in Iran's Elburz Mountains rises to 5,610 meters. The Dead Sea, located on the border between the West Bank, Israel, and Jordan, is situated at 418 m (1371 ft) below sea level, making it the lowest point on the surface of the Earth.

10 THINGS STUDENTS SHOULD LEARN ABOUT:

The Middle East

1. **There are many ethnic groups in the Middle East.** Arabs, Turks, Persians, Jews, Armenians, Georgians, Egyptians, Kurds, Greeks, Assyrians, Azeris, Circassians, Berbers, Nubians, Samaritans, and Turkmens all live in the Middle East. Originally, the term "Arab" referred to the peoples that inhabited the northern and central portions of the Arabian Peninsula. Following the spread of various Arab-Islamic empires throughout the Middle East and into Europe and South Asia, the term "Arab" has come to be synonymous with those who speak Arabic. Presently, about 60% of the total population in the Middle East speak Arabic and consider themselves to be an Arab. Not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs.
2. **The Middle East is very diverse in religions,** most of which originated there. Islam in its many forms is the largest religion in the Middle East, but Judaism and Christianity are also important. There are also minority religions like Bahai, Yazdanism, and Zoroastrianism.
3. **Most Muslims in the Middle East belong to the Sunni sect of Islam.** Another sect, Shiite or Shia Islam, is the majority religion in Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, and Bahrain. There are also Shiite minorities in Lebanon, Kuwait, and Yemen. Other smaller sects exist within Islam. These sects include, among others, the Alawites, the Druze, the Ibadis, the Ismailis, the Shafis, and various Sufi orders. Islam is practiced in other countries besides the Middle Eastern states listed above.
4. **A majority of the Muslims do not live in the Middle East.** Over the centuries Islam spread far and wide, through Asia and Africa, and even to parts of Europe. This spreading of Islam has resulted in Islam becoming the dominant religion in non-Middle Eastern states such as Central Asia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia. There are also large numbers of Muslims in the Philippines, China, the former Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, parts of Europe, and the United States. More Muslims live outside the Middle East than within.
5. **Languages of the Middle East include languages from Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic, and Altaic language families.** Arabic, in its numerous varieties, and Persian are most widely spoken in the region. Other languages in the region include Armenian, Syriac (a form of Aramaic), Azeri and Turkmen (Turkic), Berber languages, Circassian, Persian, Georgian, Gilaki language, Mazandarani languages, Hebrew in its numerous varieties, Kurdish languages, Luri, Turkish, and Greek. English is used among the middle and upper class, in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Iraq and Kuwait. French is spoken in Algeria, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, and Egypt. Urdu and other South Asian languages are spoken in many Middle Eastern countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and Qatar, which have large numbers of South Asian immigrants.
6. **The 3 largest Middle Eastern economies, according to CIA world factbook 2013 in terms of PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) are Turkey, followed by Iran and Saudi Arabia.** When it comes to per capita based income, Qatar (\$102,100) is number one, followed by Kuwait (\$42,100) and Israel (\$34,900). The three lowest ranking countries in the Middle East, in terms of per capita income are Afghanistan (\$1,100) and Iraq (\$ 1900). The economic structures of Middle Eastern nations are not similar, while some nations are heavily dependent on export of oil and oil related products (Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Kuwait), others have a diverse economic base (Turkey and Egypt). Industries of the region include oil and oil related products, agriculture, cotton, cattle, dairy, food products, textiles, leather products, surgical instruments, and defense equipment (guns, ammunition, tanks, submarines, fighter jets, UAVs, and missiles).
7. **Mass production of oil began around 1945, with Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates having large quantities of oil.** Estimated oil reserves, especially in Saudi Arabia and Iran, are some of the highest in the world, and the international oil cartel OPEC is dominated by Middle Eastern countries.
8. **The Arab Spring is the wave of demonstrations and protests (non-violent and violent), and civil wars in the Middle East's mostly Arabic-speaking nations that began on December 18, 2010.** By December 2013, rulers had been forced down in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen; civil uprisings had erupted in Bahrain, Syria, and major protests had broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan.
9. **The world's earliest civilizations originated in the Middle East: Mesopotamia (Sumer, Akkad Assyria and Babylonia) and in Egypt.** These were followed by the Hittite and Greek and Urartian civilizations of Anatolia (Asia Minor) and Elam in pre-Iranian Persia, as well as the civilizations of the Levant (Ebla, Ugarit, Canaan, Aramea, Phoenicia, and Israel). Other civilizations emerged in Iran, North Africa (Carthage) and on the Arabian Peninsula. Later the area would be under the Romans and the Byzantine to name only two. The Arab conquest of the region in the 7th century AD, after Islam, unified the entire Middle East and created the dominant Arabic speaking Islamic identity. The Mongols and the Turkic Seljuk and Ottoman Empires, the Safavids and the British Empire later dominated the region.
10. **During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union competed to influence regional allies.** The United States sought to divert the Arab world from Soviet influence. Current issues include the Syrian civil war, Iraq after US occupation, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, political turmoil of Afghanistan, and the Iranian nuclear program.

Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Description

Comprehensive peace in the area (and with positive results globally) is only possible with a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has been going on for decades. However, the conflict between the major Palestinian political parties Fatah and Hamas threatens Palestinian national unity and is critical to the success of a two-state solution.

Principal obstacle to a viable two-state solution is the continued presence and expansion of Israeli settlements and outposts in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The West Bank is home to some 500,000 to 700,000 Israeli settlers living among 2.4 million Palestinians. Almost 40 percent of the West Bank has been absorbed by Israeli settlements and related infrastructure and other areas closed to Palestinians. The settlement grid cuts off Palestinian communities from each other and has had a devastating impact on the social and economic life of Palestinians in the West Bank.

The situation of the Palestinians has become a source of unrest and displeasure within the Muslim populations globally.

Timeline of the conflict

1917 Lord Balfour, the British foreign secretary, issues a declaration promising the Jews a homeland in Palestine.

1918 The League of Nations grants Britain a mandate over what became Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan.

1930 Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine, which had been going on since the 1880s, increases due to persecution by the Nazis. Clashes between the Jewish immigrants and Palestinians are already taking place.

1947-49 Britain gives up its mandate and the United Nations takes over supervision. The UN suggests the establishment of an Arab state and a Jewish one. The Jews accept, but the Arabs reject the proposition. David Ben-Gurion declares the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948.

1964 The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) is founded under the leadership of Yasser Arafat. It vows to reclaim their land and destroy the state of Israel.

1967 In this six-day war, Israel seizes the Sinai from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem from Jordan. Talks have centered on the return to pre-1967 borders ever since.

1979 Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian President, signs a recognition pact with Israel and the Sinai is returned to Egypt.

Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

1980s The establishment of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land continues systematically. In 1987, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza launch the intifada (popular uprising) against Israeli occupation.

1993 The Oslo accords are signed and provide for mutual recognition between the PLO and the state of Israel, while limiting Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza. Jordan signs a peace deal with Israel.

2000s The second Intifada begins. Israel reoccupies wide areas of the West Bank where Palestinians had gained self-rule under the Oslo accords. Israel begins building its West Bank barrier.

2004 Mahmoud Abbas succeeds Arafat as PLO chairman and in 2005, Sharon and Abbas announce a ceasefire.

2006 Israel fights Hizbullah in a month-long war that causes at least 1,100 Lebanese and 156 Israeli deaths.

2007 The Fatah-Hamas coalition collapses when Hamas takes control of Gaza in bloody battles that leave hundreds dead. Israel declares it a 'hostile territory' and cuts fuel and electricity supplies. The political and territorial split - which continues to this day - means Hamas controls Gaza while Fatah under Abbas controls the West Bank.

2008 and 2009 New US president Barack Obama and secretary of state Hillary Clinton make efforts to find an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Ever since Regular outbreaks of violence between Arabs and Israelis still take place and Israeli settlements continue to grow.

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- Free Palestine (A political group dedicated to equal treatment of Palestinian people):
<http://www.freepalestinemovement.org/home.html>
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Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

The Syrian Civil War

Description

Syria is along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, about the size of Washington state, with a population of 22 million. Although Syria is very diverse, ethnically and religiously, most Syrians are ethnically Arabs and follow the Sunni branch of Islam. Civilization in Syria goes back thousands of years, but as a nation-state its borders were drawn by European colonial powers in the 1920s.

In March 2011, in a Syrian city called Deraa, locals took to the streets to protest after 15 schoolchildren had been arrested and reportedly tortured for writing anti-government graffiti on a wall. The protests were peaceful to begin with, calling for the children's release, democracy, and greater freedom for people in the country. The government responded angrily and the army opened fire on protesters, killing four people. The following day, security forces shot at mourners at the victims' funerals, killing another person. People were shocked and angry at what had happened and soon the unrest spread to other parts of the country.

While the protesters first called for democracy and greater freedom, once security forces opened fire on peaceful demonstrations, people demanded that the President, Bashar al-Assad, resign. President Assad has refused to step down. As the violence worsened he has offered to change some aspects about how the country is run, but his many supporters inside and outside of Syria have helped him to hold onto his office.

The Syrian Civil War (Syrian Uprising) has become an armed conflict between forces loyal to the government and those seeking to oust it. The Syrian army gets support from Russia and Iran, while Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the US transfer weapons to the rebels.

International pressure on the Asad regime has intensified since late 2011, and the Arab League, EU, Turkey, and the United States have expanded economic sanctions against the regime. In December 2012, the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces was recognized by more than 130 countries as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Unrest continued in 2013, and the death toll among Syrian Government forces, opposition forces, and civilians is over 100,000. In January 2014, the Syrian Opposition Coalition and Syrian regime began peace talks at the UN sponsored Geneva II conference.

A 2012 UN report describes the conflict as being "sectarian in nature", between mostly Alawite government forces, militias, and other Shia groups fighting against Sunni-dominated rebel groups. More than four million Syrians have been displaced, more than three million Syrians fled the country and became exiles, and millions more are in poor living conditions with shortage of food and drinking water. In Turkey alone there are 900,000 Syrian refugees.

Timeline of the conflict

March 2011 Unrest and demonstrations start spreading.

August 2011 President Barack Obama calls on Assad to resign and orders Syrian government assets frozen.

Summer 2012 Fighting spreads to Aleppo, Syria's largest city and its former commercial capital. Kofi Annan quits as UN-Arab League envoy after his attempts to broker a ceasefire fail.

March 2013 Rebel forces capture Raqqa, the first major population center controlled by the opposition.

August-September 2013 A chemical weapon attack in Damascus kills hundreds.

October 2013 Under international pressure Syria destroys its chemical weapons production equipment. The number of Syrian refugees registered with the UN tops two million.

February 2014 Peace talks are led by UN-Arab League mediator Lakhdar Brahimi in Geneva, but end without a breakthrough.

May 2014 Mr Brahimi resigns as UN-Arab League envoy.

June 2014 Assad wins the presidential elections with 88.7 per cent. ISIL (ISIS) seizes much of northern and western Iraq and declares a so-called Islamic caliphate. In July, they take control of Syria's largest oil field, al-Omar.

September 2014 US-led coalition begins air strikes against ISIS targets in Syria.

January 2015 UN estimates Syria's conflict has killed at least 220,000 people and uprooted nearly a third of the prewar population of 23 million from their homes.

September 2015 Russia begins launching air strikes in Syria in support of Assad's forces.

November 2015 Seventeen nations meeting in Vienna adopt a timeline for a transition plan in Syria. In December, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 2254 endorsing the Vienna road map.

February 2016: Indirect peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition take place in Geneva, but soon collapse.

Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

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Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

Islamic State in Iraq & Syria/Levant [ISIS/ISIL]

Description

The self-proclaimed Islamic State is a militant movement that has conquered territory in western Iraq and eastern Syria, where it has made a bid to establish a state in territories that encompass some six and a half million residents. Though spawned by al-Qaeda's Iraq franchise, it split with Osama bin Laden's organization and evolved to not just employ terrorist and insurgent tactics, but the more conventional ones of an organized militia.

In June 2014, after seizing territories in Iraq's Sunni heartland, including the cities of Mosul and Tikrit, the Islamic State proclaimed itself a caliphate, claiming exclusive political and theological authority over the world's Muslims. Its state-building project, however, has been characterized more by extreme violence than institution building. Beheadings of Western hostages and other provocative acts, circulated by well-produced videos and social media, spurred calls in the United States and Europe for military intervention, while mass violence against local civilians, justified by references to the Prophet Mohammed's early followers, has been a tool for cementing territorial control. Widely publicized battlefield successes have attracted thousands of foreign recruits, a particular concern of Western intelligence.

The United States has led an air campaign in Iraq and Syria to try to roll back the Islamic State's advances. Iraqi national security forces have allied with Shia militias to push it back on the ground. By January 2015, the US-led coalition against the Islamic State is reported to have launched more than 900 air strikes against militant targets in Iraq since the campaign began. Meanwhile, militant groups from North and West Africa to South Asia have professed allegiance to the Islamic State. In March of that year, the Islamic State destroyed the Assyrian archaeological sites of Nimrud and Hatra. For the last year and a half, government forces have regained control of some major cities (such as Tikrit), however ISIS has also captured new territory.

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Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

Conflict in Yemen

Description

The seizure of power in Yemen by an armed Shia Muslim movement known as the Houthis has thrown the country into disarray and provoked concerns about further Middle East instability. "The Houthis are victims of their own success," says April Longley Alley, a Dubai-based researcher at the International Crisis Group. After rapid advances beyond their northern base, the Houthis now face blowback as the rival al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has allied with some tribes to repulse their advances. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has perceived the ascent of the Iran-aligned Houthis on its southern border as a new front in its contest with Iran for regional dominance. These developments, Alley says, threaten to add a sectarian dimension to a political crisis that has mounted since Yemenis overthrew long-time President Ali Abdullah Saleh during the Arab uprisings in 2011.

The meltdown in Yemen is pushing the Middle East dangerously closer to the wider regional conflagration many long have feared would arise from the chaos unleashed by the Arab Spring revolts. What began as a peaceful struggle to unseat a Yemeni strongman four years ago and then mutated into civil strife now risks spiraling into a full-blown war between regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran over a country that lies at the choke point of one of the world's major oil supply routes.

But the confrontation has added a new layer of unpredictability — and confusion — to the many, multidimensional conflicts that have turned large swaths of the Middle East into war zones over the past four years. The United States is aligned alongside Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and against them in Yemen. Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, who have joined in the Saudi offensive in Yemen, are bombing factions in Libya backed by Turkey and Qatar, who also support the Saudi offensive in Yemen.

Timeline of the conflict

February 2014 Presidential panel gives approval for Yemen to become a federation of six regions as part of its political transition.

April 2014 Yemen's military launches an operation to drive al-Qaeda fighters out of southern towns.

August 2014 President Hadi sacks his cabinet and overturns a controversial fuel price rise following two weeks of anti-government protests in which Houthi rebels were heavily involved.

September 2014 Clashes erupt between Houthis and Sunni fighters, backed by troops. Houthi rebels take control of Sanaa.

October 2014 Houthi rebels capture the strategic Red Sea city of Hudeida, Yemen's second biggest port after Aden and a key source of supplies for the country's capital.

Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

November 2014 Yemen announces a new government, which is rejected by the Houthis.

January 2015 Houthis seize state TV and clash with troops in the capital, in what the government calls a coup attempt. President Hadi and his government resign in protest at the takeover by Houthi rebels of the capital.

February 2015 The rebels announce that a transitional five-member presidential council will replace President Hadi. Security Council demands the Houthis negotiate a power-sharing agreement under Gulf Cooperation Council patronage. President Hadi escapes to Aden where he later rescinds his resignation.

March 2015 Houthi fighters capture parts of the central city of Taiz and its airport in their bid to seize more territory across the country. Saudi Arabia says a coalition consisting of 10 countries, including members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, began air strikes targeting Houthi positions in Sanaa.

April 2015 Yemen's Houthi rebels, supported by army units, gained ground in the southern city of Aden, despite air strikes. President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi fled to neighboring Saudi Arabia. More than 100,000 people have fled their homes after the Saudi-led coalition air strikes began in Yemen, according to UNICEF. The Saudi military is boosting security along the Yemeni border, moving in tanks, artillery units and border guards to counter the threat posed by Houthi fighters. Yemen's Houthi fighters have condemned a UN Security Council resolution imposing an arms embargo on the group, saying the decision supported "aggression".

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Conflict, Resistance and Resolution

The Libyan Civil War (2014-Present)

Description

Since Muammar Gaddafi was toppled by Libyan rebels and NATO airstrikes in 2011, Libya is in a state of civil war, with rival militias battling for control of different parts of the country. The situation evolved into a struggle between Islamists and nationalists, tipping into full-scale war in June when the Islamists suffered heavy defeats in parliamentary elections. Rather than accept the result, Islamist leaders accused the new parliament of being dominated by supporters of the former dictator and declared it unconstitutional. An alliance of Islamist militias and their allies from Misrata, Libyan Dawn, took control of the capital, Tripoli, in late August 2014. Libya then had two governments, one in Tripoli and one in the east of the country, both battling for the hearts and minds of the myriad militias. Peace talks between the Tobruk and Tripoli-based factions were sponsored by the United Nations and an agreement to form a unified interim government was signed in December 2015. By April 2016, the Government of National Accord was formed in Tripoli.

Timeline of the conflict

February 2014 Protests erupt in response to the General National Congress (GNC) refusal to disband after mandate expires. The post-Gaddafi authorities struggled to curb the militias formed during the uprising.

May 2014 General Khalifa Haftar launches military assault including airstrikes against militant Islamist groups in Benghazi and tries to seize parliament building, accusing Prime Minister Maiteg of being in thrall to Islamist groups. A month later, Prime Minister Maiteg resigns after supreme court rules his appointment illegal. The new parliament chosen in elections is marred by a low turn-out attributed to security fears and boycotts; Islamists suffer heavy defeat. Fighting breaks out between forces loyal to outgoing GNC and new parliament.

July 2014 UN staff pulls out, embassies are shut, foreigners are evacuated as security situation deteriorates. Tripoli international airport is largely destroyed by fighting. Ansar al-Sharia seizes control of most of Benghazi.

January 2015 Libyan army and Tripoli-based militia alliance declare partial ceasefire after UN-sponsored talks in Geneva.

July 2015 A Tripoli court sentences Gaddafi's sons Saif al-Islam and eight other former officials to death for crimes committed during the 2011 uprising against his father.

January 2016 UN announces new, Tunisia-based interim government, but neither Tobruk nor Tripoli parliaments agree to recognise its authority.

March 2016 New "unity" government arrives in Tripoli by boat after opposing forces block airspace. A month later, UN staff returns to Tripoli after absence of nearly two years.

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Environment and Sustainability

- **Water in the Middle East**

Description

In the Middle East, water is an important strategic resource and political issue. By 2025, it is predicted that the countries of the Arabian Peninsula will be using more than double the amount of water naturally available to them. In the Middle East, all major rivers cross at least one international border, and rivers like the Tigris and Euphrates cross through three major Middle Eastern nations. The nations downstream from these rivers are hugely affected by the actions and decisions of the upstream nations. Up to 50% of water required for any specific state within the Middle East finds its source in another state. For example, Jordan has little water and dams in Syria have reduced Jordan's available water sources over the years. Dams in Turkey have cut the water resources in Iraq. Water is an important issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The mountain aquifers lie under the West Bank and the coastal aquifer is mostly under the Israeli coastal plain. Currently, a total of 150 million cubic meters per year is consumed by its residents—115 million cubic meters per year by Palestinians and 35 million cubic meters per year by Israelis. Water usage issues have been part of a number of agreements reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

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Environment and Sustainability

- **Food Security**

Description

Food security relates at both the micro and macro levels to the economic, physical, and social access to sufficient food sources. Food security for a country or a region exists when all or most people within it can regularly access sufficient quantities of nutritious food. A nation's food sovereignty is measured by the degree to which it is food self-sufficient, and has possession of an adequate food supply to meet its population's needs. The Middle East, one of the most arid regions of the world, faces challenges in maintaining both food security and food sovereignty. That is, some of the countries in the region are agricultural producers and exporters but demonstrate levels of under-nutrition, hunger, and food insecurity. Some others have higher levels of income and do not face the problems of hungry or malnourished populations, but are not self-sufficient in terms of food production and demonstrate low food sovereignty. For example, 60% of food is imported in the Gulf while the population is increasing. The needed irrigation levels cannot be sustained in some of the areas. By 2060, in Saudi Arabia, the desert will have reclaimed the irrigated areas from the farmland. This is a major issue, which will have to be addressed in the coming years.

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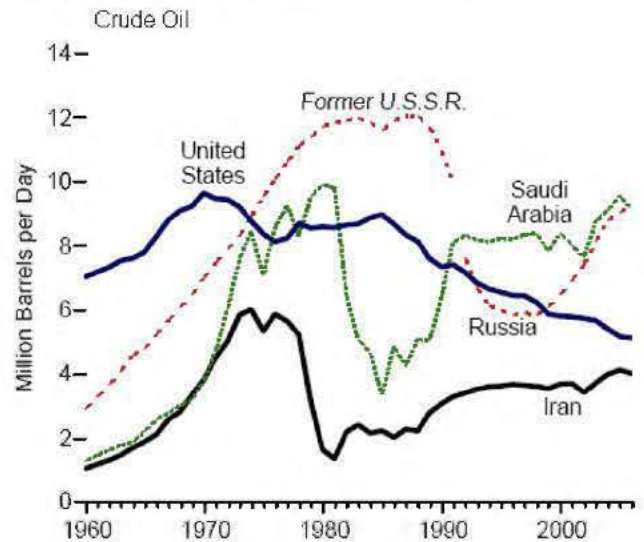
Trade and Economics

OPEC and Its Continued Relevance

Description

OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) came to dominate the world in a market unrecognizable today. Formed in 1960, it had the objective to “co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.” Unlike in the 1960s and 1970s, today the top oil producers sell to a more varied market and there are many producers outside of OPEC. The growth of China as an oil consumer with the recent rise in US oil production has led to a change in OPEC tactics.

Top Producing Countries, 1960-2006



Source: US DOE, Energy Information Administration
Annual Energy Review 2006

Related Resources:

- Krauss, Clifford. “Iran’s President to Lead Next OPEC Meeting.” *The New York Times*. May 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/world/middleeast/20iran.html>
- Rubin, Jeffrey. “The End of Growth.” *Huffpost Business*. May 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffrey-rubin/the-end-of-growth_b_1471216.html
- Steffy, Loren. “‘Arab Spring’ in full bloom at recent OPEC Meeting.” *Midland Reporter-Telegram*. June 2011. http://www.mywesttexas.com/business/oil/article_00d70134-70bc-5e0a-9515-3d200be38c44.html

Trade and Economics

Tourism and the Middle East

Description

The era of the super-rich tourist has begun, but where it will go next is anyone's guess. With tourist destinations like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and super-exclusive resorts across the Middle East resuming their rise following the 2008 crisis, the likelihood of an economy based on tourism for Middle East countries increasingly depends on attracting the wealthy with untraditional services including access to off-shore banking and luxury on-demand. In a global world, the super-rich visitors come from many areas outside the US and Western Europe.

However, terrorism has devastated the tourism industry in Egypt and Tunisia, and in other Middle Eastern countries (even those untouched by conflict). In Yemen, tourists are few and far between, even in Aden and Sana'a, the mountain city whose ancient center used to be on many people's wishlists, along with other currently inaccessible World Heritage sites such as Libya's Leptis Magna, Syria's Palmyra and the Afghan buddhas of Bamiyan. Tourism, a very lucrative industry, is surely collapsing and is leaving many jobless. In Egypt, 1.3 million people directly depend on tourism. In Tunisia, every seventh worker is dependent on tourism. This collapse of the tourism industry, with unemployment and poverty rising, might encourage many hopeless people to join these terrorist groups, thereby creating a vicious cycle.

Related Resources:

- "New tourism plan targets Russia, Middle East, L. America." *The Guardian*. November 2012. <http://www.pesatimes.com/news/tourism-leisure/new-tourism-plan-targets-russia-middle-east-lamerica>
- Noueihed, Lin. "Turkish Tourism Feels Ripples of Arab Spring." *Reuters*. April 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/16/uk-turkey-tourism-idUSLNE83F03B20120416>
- Johanson, Mark. "Tourists Return to Egypt, But Image Problems Remains." *International times*. January 2013. <http://www.ibtimes.com/tourists-return-egypt-image-problem-remains-1037202>
- Smale, Will. "Arab nations aim to win back tourists." *BBC*. November 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-15651730>
- Rushby, Kevin. "Can Middle East tourism ever recover?" *The Guardian*. November 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/nov/24/can-middle-east-tourism-ever-recover-terrorist-attacks-egypt-tunisia>

Pop Culture

Art, Literature and Culture Post-Revolution

Description

The uprisings that occurred across the North Africa and Middle East region resulted in the toppling of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, and in uprisings in Syria – loosely termed the Arab Spring, and several other countries. Graffiti art is one form of revolutionary art that was widely used by protestors during the 2011 uprisings in addition to music and dance. Artistic expression facilitated the uprisings against dictatorial regimes in untraditional ways, particularly the rise of politically savvy graffiti artistry. These revolutions have paved the way for a new era and greater degree of freedom of expression. However, artists continue to face challenges post-revolution from the general public and specific groups that oppose certain forms of artistic expression and artistic content. Censorship, however, remains for artists in the post-revolution.

The Arab Spring has also sparked a new wave of cultural thought. It refocused attention onto Arabic arts and literature as a prism through which various scholars sought to understand ongoing social changes. Post-Arab Spring literature reflects the aftermath of a historical moment—whether it's the turmoil of war, chaos of proliferating paramilitary groups, or mass repression of coups and transition governments. One novel that reflects the Arab Spring's authoritarian backlash is *The Queue* by Egyptian author Basma Abdel Aziz. He characterizes the tone of this early Tahrir Square literature as “emotionally charged, given the considerable amount of violence.” Sherif Dhaimish, of Darf Publishers, characterizes broader Arabic literature of this period by an early wave of optimism, followed by disillusionment. So colossal has been the literary output that Youssef Rakha, Egyptian author of *The Sultan's Seal*, spoke of an “Arab Spring Industry” geared toward the “lucrative practice of political analysis.” “The opinion piece, talk show appearance, and Facebook status update overtook other generic possibilities. Arab Spring theorizing ... has become the most popular ‘literary’ activity.”

Related Resources:

- Ursula, Lindsey. “Art in Egypt’s Revolutionary Square.” *Middle East Research and Information Project*. January 2012. http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/art-egypts-revolutionary-square?ip_login_no_cache=13acdd903068a73d71e95d0e470f6e18
- Rodrigues, Jill. “Revolutionary Art on the Streets of Tunisia.” *Roger Williams University*. April 2013. <http://pdq.rwu.edu/news/revolutionary-art-streets-tunisia>
- Jurich, Joscelyn. “Revolution Hasn’t Changed Artistic Censorship in Tunisia.” *Hyperallergic*. January 2013. <http://hyperallergic.com/63757/revolution-hasnt-changed-artistic-censorship-in-tunisia/>
- El-Baghdadi, Iyad. “Meet Asmaa Mahfouz and the vlog that helped spark the revolution.” *Youtube*. February 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgJlgMdsEuk>
- Al-Mousawi, Nahrain. “Literature after the Arab Spring.” *Middle East Institute*. February 2016. <http://www.mei.edu/content/article/literature-after-arab-spring>
- “25 examples of the best street humour from Istanbul, Gezi park (#occupygezi) protests.” *Buzzfeed*. June 2013. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/lemoustache/25-examples-of-the-best-street-humour-from-istanbu-b7x9>

Other Useful Resources

CSME Website Resources

- <http://www.iub.edu/~csme/resources.shtml>

Resources

- Middle East Monitor: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/>
- Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/>
- MidEast Info: <http://www.mideastinfo.com/>
- Middle East Institute: <http://www.mei.edu/>
- Middle East Research and Information Project: <http://www.merip.org/>
- Al-Monitor, The Pulse of the Middle East: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/home.html#>
- "The World Factbook." *Central Intelligence Agency*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- "Global Connections: The Middle East." *PBS*.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/index.html>
- "Teach MidEast." *Middle East Policy Council*. <http://teachmideast.org/>
<http://teachmideast.org/for-educators/digital-book/>

Infographics

- "Tension in the Arab World." *Visually*. August 2011. <http://visual.ly/tension-arab-world>
- "Middle East Internet Statistics." *McCollins Media*. 2010. <http://mccollinsmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Infographics.jpg>
- "Securing the prize for the Middle East: Understanding the opportunities and challenges on the road to becoming a dominant global travel hub." *Amadeus*.
<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/U608w1Sz7bo/TV0Sf1HgKGI/AAAAAAAAAGI/KaqAmj41HqY/s1600/v5.jpg>
- "10 things you should know about water." *EPA Water Facts, Environment Canada Freshwater Quickfacts, UNESCO Water and Industry Figures, World Health Organization*.
<http://www.circleofblue.org/waternews/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/waterinfo.pdf>
- "Glass half empty: the coming water wars." *International Networks Archive*.
<http://www.princeton.edu/~ina/infographics/water.html>