North Africa & Southwest Asia
a.k.a. the Middle East
Major Physical Features of North Africa & Southwest Asia

Deserts:

- **Sahara Desert** in Africa
  - Largest desert in the world
  - **Ergs** – vast areas of sand that cover 25% of the Sahara
- The Arabian Desert in SW Asia
  - Rub’ al Khali (Empty Quarter) – the largest sand sea in the world
  - No freshwater lakes or rivers
  - Some **oases** exist (area in the desert where underground water allows plants to grow)
Major Physical Features of North Africa & Southwest Asia

- Mountains
  - Caucasus Mountains
    - divide the region from Europe
  - Atlas Mountains ➔
    - in Morocco & Algeria
    - Block moist air from the Atlantic Ocean
  - Zagros Mountains, Iran
  - Hindu Kush, Afghanistan ➔
Major Physical Features of North Africa & Southwest Asia

Waterways:

• Rivers:
  • Tigris & Euphrates Rivers
    • Form an alluvial plain called Mesopotamia
  • Nile River – longest river in the world
    • Nile Delta →
    • NO rivers on the Arabian Peninsula or Sahara

• Seas:
  • Red Sea – between Middle East & Egypt
  • Persian Gulf – between Iran & Saudi Arabia
  • Dead Sea – so salty no fish can survive
  • Mediterranean Sea
Climate of North Africa & SW Asia

- Arid & Semiarid climate everywhere in the Middle East & North Africa except the coasts & mountains
  - **wadis** – dry streambeds that flood when it rains
  - Sandstorms – hot dry air blows dust & grit

- Mediterranean climate
  - Along the coasts
History & Religion in SW Asia & North Africa
History of SW Asia & N Africa

Mesopotamia - 8,000 yrs ago – beginning of civilization (present-day Iraq)
• Hunters & gatherers began to farm and create villages & writing systems
• Wheat, cattle, horses originated there

Egypt - 5,000 yrs ago – one of the 1st governments, religions, & written languages (hieroglyphics)
• 200 BC - world’s 1st library in Alexandria
• Pyramids, mummies, & pharaohs (kings)
History of Southwest Asia

• Birthplace of **monotheistic** (one-god) world religions - *early religions prior to this were polytheistic* (many gods)
  • Judaism – ~2000 BC
  • Christianity – ~AD 30
  • Islam – ~AD 600s
Judaism

- God ("Yahweh") created nature, but is not found in nature
- A loving, personal god
- Holy City: Jerusalem
Christianity

• **Jesus** – Jewish teacher

• Teachings:
  • The “Golden Rule”
  • Humility, charity, “love your neighbor”

• Followers (apostles) believed he was Christ (a messiah) & the son of God sent to free the Jews from their enemies

• Holy City: Jerusalem
Islam

• Today, most people in the Middle East are Muslims
  • Believe God (“Allah”) spoke to a prophet (Muhammad) in AD 610 and dictated a holy book (Qur’an) in the Arabic language
  • Worship in mosques where Muslims are called to prayer →
  • Holy Cities: Mecca & Medina, Saudi Arabia
  • 2 main groups: Sunni & Shia
The “Five Pillars of Islam”

• Five actions Muslims strive to do:
  1. Public statement of faith (“I believe in Allah…”)
  2. 5 prayers/day
  3. Give charity to poor
  4. Fast during the month of Ramadan
  5. Pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca at least once a lifetime
Culture of Saudi Arabia

• Government is an absolute monarchy that rules with Sharia (Muslim) law
  • Religion helps determines laws
  • King Salman bin Abdull aziz →

• Family – VERY important
  • No social activities outside of the family

• Women’s rights
  • Male guardianship system
The Spread of Islam

- AD 600s-900s - Islamic Empires led by **caliphs** (Muslim rulers) took over the SW Asia & North Africa
  - Jews, Christians, & Muslims are all living on the same land!
Continued Conflict in the Region

• 1100-1200s: Crusades – military expeditions of European Christians to free the Holy Land from the “infidels”
  • The Catholic Pope promised forgiveness of sins for all who went to the Middle East to fight
• 1200s: Mongols invaded Southwest Asia
• 1300s: Ottoman Turks created an Empire in the region
North Africa is colonized

• 1500s – Spain & Portugal captured Morocco
• 1800s – France seized Algeria & Tunisia, Italy took Libya, and the UK controlled Egypt
• 1950s-60s – North Africa countries revolted & took back control of their governments
  • Established democracies & military regimes
World War I – 1910s

• The Muslim Ottoman Empire fought with Germany & Italy in WWI

• Leaders on the Arabian Peninsula agreed to help the Allies fight the Ottomans in exchange for autonomy after the war
  • Instead, after the war G.B. & France took over Syria, Palestine, Jordan, & Iraq as mandates (a country is run by another country until it is ready to rule itself)
Palestine

• 2 groups have claimed it as their homeland during its history
  • Arabs (Muslims)
  • Jews – had lived there until 1000 BC when they were exiled (kicked out) by invaders
    • Some returned, but most moved to other places
    • Were persecuted in those other lands & “Zionists” wanted to come back to their Holy Land

• How will WWII & the Holocaust affect Palestine?
World War II increases the Conflict

• After the Holocaust, many Jews fled Europe & moved back to their “Holy Land” of Palestine
  • Conflict between Arabs & Jewish immigrants

• What could be the solution to this Arab/Jew problem?
The Division of Palestine, 1948

• The United Nations took over & divided Palestine in half.
  • Palestine & Israel
Arab/Israeli War!

• The surrounding Arab nations attacked Israel
• Israel took over \(\frac{3}{4}\) of Palestine, and Egypt & Jordan took the rest!
  • NO MORE PALESTINE!
The West Bank & Gaza Strip

- Palestinian territories that were taken over by the Israeli government
- Israelis have moved into these territories & are pushing out the Palestinians
Palestinian Loss of Land – 1946 to 2000

Palestine 1946

UN Partition plan 1947

1949 – 1967

2000

Palestine

The Jewish State

The Jewish State

The Jewish State

= Palestinian land

= Zionist land
The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)

• The Palestinian government in exile
  • Refuse to recognize Israel as a country
  • Some conduct terrorism on Israel & its supporters
The Munich Olympics, 1970

• PLO terrorists kidnapped members of the Israeli Olympic team
  • Goal: to use them as hostages to get Palestinian prisoners freed from Israeli prisons
  • Actual Result: no prisoners were freed, all of the terrorists & hostages were killed
Palestinian Refugees

• Many Palestinian Arabs fled Israel during the wars.
  • Some found jobs & homes in other Arab countries
  • Others continue to live in crowded refugee camps, hoping to return to Palestine someday
Israel Today

• 80% of the population is Jewish
  • Jews have moved there from many different countries
  • Different Jewish customs & beliefs make it hard for their government to work together

• 20% of the population is Arab
  • Have full rights, but feel they are discriminated against for jobs, education, etc.
Economics of North Africa & Southwest Asia
Economics of North Africa & Southwest Asia

• Most areas are very dry, so people tend to live in large cities along rivers & coasts
  • World’s tallest building - the Burj Khalifa, Dubai, UAE
• Small rural villages & nomadic livestock herders
Finding Water in the Middle East

• Major issue – finding enough water for human use, irrigation, & animals
  • **Hydropolitics** – politics related to water usage & rights
• Overall water risk around the world:
Finding Water in the Middle East

• Desalination
  • Process of turning salt water into freshwater using evaporation

• Oases & aquifers
  • Aquifers – underground layers of rock in which water collects
  • Fossil water - Water that fell as rain thousands of years ago and is trapped below ground

• Tigris, Euphrates, & Nile Rivers
Economics: Oil in Southwest Asia

• Oil & natural gas
  • World’s largest oil reserves
• OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries)
  • Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, & Venezuela
  • Why do they collaborate?

![Crude Oil Reserves of the World*](image)
Economics: Israel

• High tech industries
  • Medical lasers
  • High-tech weapons
  • Aerospace equipment

• Services & Tourism

• The Dead Sea →
  • High levels of salt, potash, & bromine, so no fish in it, but can extract the minerals for export

• Struggles to convince people to live in the desert
  • Drains water from swamps & irrigates deserts for farming
Oman & Yemen

• Mostly farmers & herders
  • Use the falaj system to irrigate their farms using canals to bring water from the mountains

• Poor, but starting to drill & sell oil to improve their economies
Economics in North Africa

• Oil & natural gas in Libya & Algeria
• **Phosphates** (for fertilizer) in Tunisia & Morocco
• Egypt – modern technology & traditional farming done by **fellaheen** (poor farmers)
• Large cities have **souks** (traditional open-air markets) →
  • Cairo, Algiers, Casablanca
• Traditional nomadic herding is still done by Berbers near the Sahara Desert
Conflicts in Southwest Asia & North Africa
Conflict in Southwest Asia: Afghanistan

• Taliban – radical Muslim group that ruled harshly & trained terrorists to attack the West
• Osama bin Laden – Saudi Arabian millionaire who ran the terrorist group Al-Qaida
• After 9/11, the Taliban helped hide bin Laden
  • The US & other countries sent troops to attack the Taliban & Al Qaida training camps
Conflict in Southwest Asia: Iran

• Mostly Muslim
• 1925 - Ruled by a US-supported shah (dictator)
• 1979 – Revolution replaced the shah with an ayatollah (Islamic leader) republic
• 1980-88 – war with Iraq over oil lands in Iran
  • Put both Iran & Iraq into debt
• Today – corrupt Muslim extremist government that may secretly be building nuclear weapons & threatening Israel & western nations w/ terrorism
Conflict in Southwest Asia: Iraq

• 1st Persian Gulf War, 1991
  • Iraq invaded Kuwait to take their oil, so the US sent troops and the UN imposed an embargo (trade restrictions)

• 2nd Persian Gulf War, 2003-2010
  • US thought Saddam Hussein was making “weapons of mass destruction,” so the US invaded to remove him from power
  • Kurds – separate ethnic group with no country of their own, many were killed by Saddam Hussein
Conflict in North Africa:
Tunisia & The Arab Spring

• Dec. 2010 – A man in Tunisia protested his mistreatment by oppressive government police by self-immolation

• Sparked the “Arab Spring” – protests in several Arab countries to overthrow dictatorships & demand democratic reform
  • Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, UAE, Syria
Conflict in the North Africa: Egypt

• In February 2011, protestors in Cairo’s Tahrir Square forced 30-year president Hosni Mubarak to step down

• Has been a challenge to write a new constitution (set of rules for a new government)

  • Western-style democracy or Muslim fundamentalism (belief that gov’t should be based on Muslim laws)?
Conflict in North Africa: Libya

• Muammar al-Gaddafi →
  • Had been dictator since 1969
• Got rid of “Western influences”
  • No jeans, bars, pants (for women)
• Built up the military to attack its neighbors
• Allowed terrorism on the US until 1999
• Libyan people did not get a share of oil profits!
Conflict in North Africa: Libya

• Libyan rebels w/ NATO air support fought an 8-month civil war before capturing and killing Gaddafi in October 2011
Conflict in Southwest Asia: **Syria**

- March 2011: Peaceful protests turned into armed conflict when President Bashar Al-Assad’s oppressive government cracked down with violence.
- To fight the Syrian government, rebels formed the Free Syrian Army with many groups involved, some affiliated with al-Qaida
  - 170,000 dead & 6.9 millions displaced from their homes (4 million as refugees)
  - Aug 2013: the gov’t used chemical weapons to kill 1400 civilians
ISIS: Islamic State in Iraq & Syria

- Extremist group that took over territory in Iraq & Syria in 2014
- Uses brutal tactics to
  - control its territory, ruling with Sharia (Islamic) law
  - try to unite all Muslims
  - wage jihad (holy war) on non-Muslims around the world