

Name:

Challenges in Our World Today

CHALLENGES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Among the greatest challenges in our world today is achieving greater stability and peace in the Middle East. The countries of the Middle East share similar cultures. Most were once part of the Ottoman Empire and then came under British or French rule after WWI.

In Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and the countries of North Africa, most people are Arabs and speak Arabic, and follow the Sunni branch of Islam. In Iran, people speak Farsi and follow the Shi-ite (*Shia*) branch of Islam. In Israel, most people are Jewish and speak Hebrew. However, there is also a great diversity of political forms in the Middle East: some states, like Saudi Arabia, are conservative monarchies; others are military dictatorships; Israel is a democracy.

The Arab-Israeli conflict

In 1917, the British government issued the **Balfour Declaration**. It announced that a homeland for the Jewish people would be created in Palestine. Many Arabs viewed **Zionism**, the migration of Jews to Palestine, as a form of European imperialism; Jews saw this as a return to their traditional homeland. Jewish immigration to Palestine swelled in the 1930s and 1940s because of the Nazi persecution of European Jews. Palestinian Arabs opposed the admission of more Jews, and Jewish immigration was restricted by the British authorities.

In 1948, after years of fighting Jewish guerilla groups, Britain gave up control of Palestine. They handed the problem of creating a Jewish homeland over to the United Nations. The United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two states: Jews were given the new **State of Israel**; Palestinian Arabs were given the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The existence of Israel became a central political issue in the Middle East.

Check for Understanding

“In order to obtain Arab support in the war, the British promised Sherif of Mecca in 1915 that in the event of an Allied victory, the Arab provinces of the Turkish Empire would become independent. The Arabs understood that Palestine would be included in this sphere of independence. To gain support of the World Jewry, the British Government in 1917 issued the Balfour Declaration. The Jews understood that, if the experiment of establishing a Jewish National Home succeeded and a sufficient number of Jews went to Palestine, the National Home might develop in course of time into a Jewish State.”

- *Summary of the Report of the Palestine Royal Commissions, 1937*

1. Write a one sentence conclusion of the passage above.

ISRAEL STRUGGLES TO SURVIVE

- ❖ **Israel's War for Independence.** In 1948, five neighboring Arab countries rejected the existence of Israel. They launched an attack on Israel but were defeated. As a result of the war, Jordan seized the West Bank, Egypt took the Gaza Strip, and Israel took slices from each of these territories. Many Palestinians fled from Israel and became refugees in neighboring Arab lands.
- ❖ **The Suez Crisis of 1956.** **Gamel Abdul Nasser** of Egypt nationalized the **Suez Canal** and closed it to Israel. Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt. The United States and the Soviet Union demanded they halt their invasion.
- ❖ **Six Day War.** War erupted again in 1967. Israel defeated its enemies in only six days and acquired the Gaza Strip, and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.
- ❖ **Yom Kippur War (1973).** Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur and had early successes. Israel again repelled Arab forces, keeping the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.
- ❖ **OPEC and Oil as a Political Weapon.** In the early 1970s, oil producing countries formed the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries**, or OPEC. Many OPEC members are located around the Persian Gulf- Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. During the 1973 war with Israel, Arab OPEC members used oils as a “**political weapon**,” refusing to sell oil to countries friendly to Israel. Higher oil prices greatly added to the Arab oil-producing countries' wealth and influence.
- ❖ **Camp David Accords (1978).** Egyptian President **Anwar al-Sadat** and Israel's Prime Minister **Menachim Begin** visited President Carter at Camp David. They agreed that Israel should return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for establishing peace between the two countries- ending thirty years of warfare. Other Arab countries denounced the agreement and broke off diplomatic relations with Egypt. In 1981, President Sadat was assassinated by Arab extremist, who saw the accord as a surrender to Israel. Nonetheless, the agreement was a first step in the direction of peace.



Presidents Sadat and Carter, and Prime Minister Begin.

Check for Understanding

2. What is a major reason for the outbreak of conflict between Arabs and Israelis in 1948?

Israel and the Palestinians

Hostility between Palestinian Arabs and Israelis further complicated Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors.

- ❖ **The P.L.O.** Many Palestinians had fled Israel in the 1949 war. IN 1964, Palestinian Arabs formed the **Palestinian Liberation Organization**. P.L.O. leaders refused to recognize Israel and vowed to win back their homeland.
- ❖ **Use of Terrorism.** In the 1960s and 1970s, the P.L.O. used terrorism as a weapon. **Terrorism** is the use of acts of violence against innocent civilians in order to make demands on a hostile government. Some Palestinians felt they had no other way to opposed Israel. P.L.O. terrorists hijacked planes, attacked an Israeli school, and murdered eleven Israeli athletes at the **1972 Olympics** in Munich.
- ❖ **War in Lebanon.** The P.L.O. first found a home in Jordan, but were later expelled and moved to Lebanon. In 1975, civil war erupted in Lebanon between Lebanese Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shi'ite Muslims. In 1976, Syria invaded Lebanon. In 1978 and again in 1982, the Israeli army entered Lebanon to destroy P.L.O. camps.
- ❖ **Intifada ("Uprising").** The West Bank and Gaza Strip, taken by Israel in the Six Day War, had Palestinian populations. In 1978, younger Palestinians who had grown up under Israeli occupations began a series of violent demonstrations. Israel imposed measures to contain the protests, but without much success. Meanwhile, some Jews built their own settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which was resented by the Palestinians.



Progress in Arab-Israeli relations

The past twenty years have seen limited progress in Arab-Israeli relations, including the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and talks of future statehood.

- ❖ **Middle East Peace Conference.** In 1991, after winning the First Gulf War, the United States pressured Arab and Israeli leaders to sit down to the **Middle East Peace Conference**. In the following year, Israel's new Prime Minister, **Yitzhak Rabin**, entered into secret negotiations with P.L.O. leader **Yassir Arafat**. They reached an agreement in the **Oslo Accords** in 1993. Israel promised to give the Palestinians control of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In exchange, the P.L.O. agreed to recognize Israel's existence. Israel also signed a treaty with Jordan.
- ❖ **The Second Intifada.** Lack of progress led to another Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation in 2001. Israel's new Prime Minister, **Ariel Sharon**, attacked Arafat's compound in response to repeated suicide bombings. In 2002, Israel started building the **West Bank Barrier**, a high wall separating the West Bank from Israel. The following year, Sharon announced he would dismantle all Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in an effort to achieve peace. Israel left its settlements in Gaza in 2005.

- ❖ **Divisions Among the Palestinians.** Meanwhile, P.L.O. leader Yassir Arafat died in 2004, leading to a split between those who supported **Fatah**, Arafat's political party, and a more radical party, **Hamas**. Because Hamas still refused to recognize Israel's right to exist, Israel considered Hamas as a terrorist organization. Hamas won Palestinian popular elections in Gaza in 2006, and took power. Meanwhile, Fatah remained in power in the West Bank.
- ❖ **New Attempts at Negotiations.** In 2007, Israel's Prime Minister **Ehud Olmert** and Palestinian President **Mahmoud Abbas** agreed to negotiate over the issues still dividing Israelis and Palestinians, including the future control of Jerusalem, the existence of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and the right of Palestinian refugees who left Israel.
- ❖ **Israel Strikes Against Hezbollah and Hamas.** While Israelis negotiated with Fatah leaders, they faced continuous rocket attacks from Hezbollah activists in Lebanon and from Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In 2006, Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. Israel responded by invading Southern Lebanon to destroy Hezbollah military bases. The United Nations passed a resolution to end the fighting and promised to disarm Hezbollah. Based on these terms, Israel withdrew from Southern Lebanon; however, Hezbollah has refused to disarm.

In 2008, Israel launched air strikes and sent ground troops into the Gaza Strip to halt rocket attacks on Israel. Most world leaders recognized Israel's right to defend itself, although many criticized the severity of the response. Since then progress towards peace has been slow, but world leaders continue to work toward a solution. The security of Israel against terrorism, the right of Palestinians to their own state, and the future status of Jerusalem are all key issues that continue to remain unresolved.

Applying What you have learned

3. Do you think peace between Arabs and Israelis in the next 20 years is achievable? Explain your view.

4. Explain the major reasons for the outbreak of the conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis.

Radical Islamic fundamentalism

Another serious challenge in the Middle East is the rise of radical Islamic Fundamentalism, which has been linked to the emergence of global terrorism.

The Iranian Revolution

In the 1960s and 1970s, **Shah Reza Pahlavia**, ruler of Iran, adopted elements of Western culture and technology, but his government was also guilty of widespread corruption and brutal repression. Iran's religious leaders held massive public demonstrations, which led to the overthrow of the Shah in 1979.



Shah Reza Pahlavia of Iran.



Iranian militants seized U.S. Embassy staff and held them hostage

Ayatolla Khomeini, an Islamic Fundamentalist, became Iran's new ruler. **Fundamentalism** is any movement within a religion that seeks a return to its basic values. **Radical Islam Fundamentalism** was mainly a reaction against the values of the West. It calls for strict enforcement of Islamic law (*Sharia*). Under Khomeini, there was no separation of religion and state in Iran. He established a new constitution based on the Quran, gave support to acts of terrorism in Lebanon and elsewhere and even permitted the seizure of hostages from the U.S. embassy in the capital city of Tehran. The

American hostages were held for more than one year before their final release.

The First Gulf War

In the same year as the Iranian Revolution, **Saddam Hussein** seized power and imposed a brutal dictatorship on neighboring Iraq. In 1980, Hussein attacked Iran, leading to a bloody eight-year war. In 1990, Hussein occupied neighboring oil-rich Kuwait. Fearing an invasion of Saudi Arabia and a disruption in the flow of oil, the United States and its allies sent troops to expel the Iraqis from Kuwait. Iraqi forces were quickly destroyed, but allied leaders allowed Hussein to remain in power in Iraq. Soon after, Hussein's army attacked the Kurdish in Northern Iraq in an attempt at genocide.

Al-Qaeda and the September 11, 2001 Attacks

Al-Qaeda was a terrorist organization formed by **Osama bin Laden**, a wealthy Saudi who had helped fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. He was angered at the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaeda members considered themselves radical Islamic Fundamentalists fighting a holy war, or **Jihad**, against the West. The vast majority of Muslims reject their views. Al-Qaeda set up camps in Afghanistan to train their members in guerrilla warfare and acts of terrorism. On **September 11, 2001**, al-Qaeda terrorists living in the United States hijacked several U.S. commercial airliners. The hijackers t



World Trade Center Towers on fire

from the crew and crashed them into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. As a result, the towers of the World Trade Center collapsed. President **George W. Bush** and other world leaders responded by declaring a “**War on Terrorism**.”

The War in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a dry mountainous country located in the heart of Central Asia. The **Taliban**, a group of radical Islam Fundamentalists, had gained control of Afghanistan after the defeat of Soviet forces. Once in power, the Taliban imposed strict religious beliefs: women were forbidden to appear in public without covering their faces and bodies. Women were also denied opportunities for education or employment. Men were banned from trimming their beards. “Religious police” roamed the streets, beating anyone who disobeyed these strict Islamic rules.

The Taliban also allowed terrorist groups like al-Qaeda to operate training camps in Afghanistan. When Taliban leaders refused to surrender Osama bin Laden after the September 11 attacks, the United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban regime. They destroyed terrorist bases and established a democratic government in Afghanistan. Despite the allied occupation, violence continued in Afghanistan, as well as in bordering areas of Pakistan. The allies also failed to capture bin Laden.

The Second Gulf War

Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein failed to honor his agreement to permit United Nations inspectors to monitor Iraq to ensure that he was not stockpiling nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. After the terrorists attack on the United States, world leaders insisted that Iraq show it was not hiding weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) it might give to terrorists. Some members of the United Nations Security Council urged delay, but the United States, Britain, and their allies insisted on invading Iraq in 2003. Hussein’s government quickly collapsed. Hussein fled but was later captured, tried by an Iraqi court, and executed. Iraqis voted on a new constitution and elected a democratic government in 2005. Ironically, it appears that Hussein did not really have any WMDs.

Despite their initial success, allied occupation forces suffered continuing casualties when Hussein loyalists, religious radicals, and other opponents of the occupation staged an insurgency. Tensions between Iraq’s main ethnic groups- Shi’ites, Sunnis, and Kurds- also added to the conflict. A surge of additional foreign troops helped to reduce the violence in 2006. As Iraq becomes more stable, American and other foreign troops are gradually being withdrawn and Iraqi security forces are taking over their functions.

Applying What you have learned

5. What has the rise of Radical Islamic Fundamentalism after the 1979 Iranian Revolution brought about?

“Failure to [destroy] the root causes of terrorism is almost certain to extend the Age of Terrorism. To appease the extremists might be easy but may not work. To allow them to win would be to accept the supremacy of evil. To allow them to win would be to accept the supremacy of evil. To promote democracy and open government might be the solution, but it stands on a shaky foundation of untested assumptions about the nature of the world and diverse cultures. Unfortunately, the world is at a point where it can see the danger from terrorism but not the cure. Worse still, a cure may not exist.

--Steven Mertz, “*Can Terrorism Be Cured?*” (2006)

6. Read the quote above. What does the author conclude about terrorism?

7. Do you think American leaders took the right step against terrorism by invading Afghanistan and Iraq? Explain your answer.

CHALLENGES To Human Rights

Promoting human rights and democracy has been an important U.S. foreign policy goal. **Human rights** refers to rights that all people possess, such as the right to meet their basic needs without persecution. In many countries, ethnic minorities and political opponents are deprived of their rights and instead face harsh treatment, imprisonment or member.

Genocide in the Balkans

Yugoslavia was created in 1918 by joining Serbia to former parts of Austria-Hungary. When Communism collapsed in 1991, the country fell apart. Bitter fighting erupted between Orthodox Christian Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Bosnian Muslims. The conflict began when Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence. Serb-dominated Yugoslavia responded by attacking Croatia.

Fighting then erupted in Bosnia between Muslims and Orthodox Christian Serbs.

Yugoslavia intervened on behalf of the Bosnian

Serbs. Some Bosnian Serbs began murdering Muslims civilians in Serb-controlled areas in what they called “ethnic cleansing”- an attempt to exterminate a people. Later, Serbs also



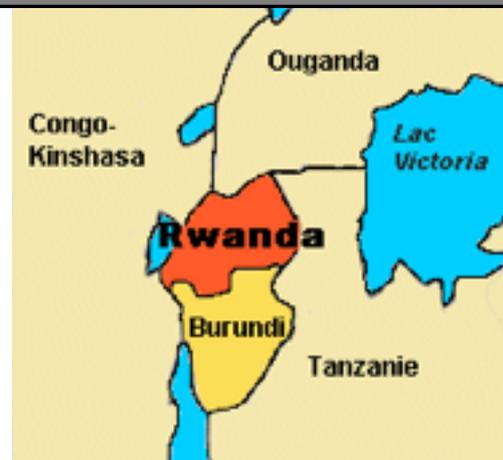
attacked Muslims in **Kosovo**. Eventually, the United States and other NATO countries sent in military forces to stop the fighting. Bosnia was divided into two republics- one Muslim and one Serb. Former Serb leaders were charged with committing crimes against humanity.

Genocide in Africa

Ethnic tensions also led to human rights violations in Rwanda, Burundi, and Darfur

Rwanda and Burundi

Rwanda and **Burundi** are small, densely populated countries located in Central Africa. Both are populated by a Hutu majority and Tutsi minority. In 1972, bitter fighting began between the Hutus and Tutsis. In 1994, Rwanda's President, a Hutu, was killed by a mysterious explosion on his plane. The event sparked renewed bloodshed. Government-sponsored Hutu troops began exterminating the Tutsi minority, who were blamed for the assassination of the Hutu President. The United Nations estimates that more than 850,000 people, about half of the Tutsi population, were slain in this civil war.



Darfur

Since the 1990s, a conflict has been brewing over grazing grounds and farmland territory in western Sudan. The **Janjaweed**, a government-backed militia group made up mostly of Arab tribesmen, has committed atrocities against the black African populations. Their crimes range from outright massacres of innocent civilians and rape to forcing people from their homes. More than 200,000 have died and 2 million have been displaced from their homes. The U.N. Security Council has called for the Janjaweed to be disarmed. In 2007, the United States government declared the Janjaweed killings in Darfur as acts of genocide.

Human Rights Violations

In addition to genocide, governments have also committed **politically motivated crimes**. For example, many governments in Latin America have violated **human rights** by imprisoning, torturing, or executing political opponents.

In **Cuba**, Fidel Castro imprisoned and killed opponents of his rule. In **Chile**, the military government tortured and killed suspected opponents. In **El Salvador**, "death squads" gunned down advocates of reform.

Archbishop Oscar Romeo, an outspoken critic of the government, was assassinated after he opposed government human rights violations and repressions.

In **Argentina**, as many as twenty thousand people disappeared during the military rule that ended in 1984. The *desaparacidos* ("disappeared") are people who were kidnapped and



Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo conduct a demonstration in Argentina

never heard from again. The *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* are mothers relatives who demand information about the whereabouts of their children and loved ones. More recently, they have also demanded social reforms in Argentina.

Women's Rights

Human right also includes the rights of women. Throughout history, most societies have been **patriarchal**: men have held positions of authority, while women were treated as inferior. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the status of women changed. Following World War I, women in most industrialized countries achieved the right to vote.

Nevertheless, women still experienced inferior status in many parts of the world and continue to do so, even today. In parts of Africa and Asia, they suffer from forced mutilation of their bodies when they reach adolescence. In some Islamic countries, women must wear veils, refrain from being seen in public, and are not even permitted to drive cars. Even in Western countries, women are often under-represented in politics or top corporate jobs, and on average earn less than men.

Many international organizations are trying to end the worst abuses of women. For example, an international conference held in Beijing, China, in 1995 tried to enhance women's right worldwide. Participants agreed on a five-year plan to enhance the social, economic, and political power of women.

Many individual women have also provided inspiring models to others by becoming important influences on their times. You previously learned about the work of Indira Gandhi. Three other examples of influential women include:

❖ **Mother Teresa (1910-1997)**. She was born in Macedonia and became a Catholic nun. She began with no money or supplies. She devoted her life to helping the impoverished and homeless people living on the streets of India. Mother Teresa also started a new Catholic order, the Missionaries of Charity. IN 1979, her work with the poor was recognized when she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

❖ **Golda Meir (1898-1978)**. She was born in Russia but grew up in Wisconsin. In 1921, she migrated to Israel where she became its first woman Prime Minister. During her years as Prime Minister (1969 to 1974), Israeli athletes were murdered at the Olympic Games in Munich and her nation was attacked on Yom Kippur. Meir had to respond to these events.



Golda Meir.

❖ **Margaret Thatcher (born 1925)**. She was the first woman to serve as the Prime Minister of Britain. She served from 1979 to 1990. Known as the "Iron Lady," Thatcher sold off state-owned industries, promoted free enterprise, and strongly opposed Soviet Communism. She also sent troops to prevent the Falkland Islands from falling to the dictatorship of Argentina.

Challenges of Globalization

Another challenge facing the world today is “globalization” – the greater contact that now exists between different parts of the world. We can communicate with and even travel to other places more easily than in the past. Around the world people are influenced by the same technologies and ideas- from mobile phones and the Internet to American pop music and fast foods- creating a new global society.

There is also an emerging **global economy**. Companies move their production facilities to wherever in the world the costs of labor and other resources are lowest. Companies also hire other companies, often from overseas, to produce parts or to provide other services. This is known as **outsourcing**.

New information technologies, like the Internet, have contributed greatly to globalization. People can now easily obtain information. Medical advances are quickly shared. It is easier for customers to search for products and to place orders, even from overseas. Shipping has also become easier with **containerized** cargo- goods packed into truck like containers and loaded on a cargo ship. Later these same containers serve as the backs of trucks or railroad cars, without having to be repacked.

With a global network of communications, low tariffs or free trade, and low shipping costs, both natural resources and manufactured goods now flow more easily across national borders, creating a truly global market. Economic activities move to where they are most efficient. Multinational companies often have facilities in several countries. Goods and services are exchanged internationally through trade.

Because of globalization, people now enjoy a great variety of goods and services from all around the world. They also enjoy the benefits of greater **connectivity**- ease of communication. Advances in information technology, medicine, and engineering spread quickly. Globalization has also speeded up economic development. Average standards of living are higher than ever before. Local traditions, however, are sometimes lost to the new global culture.



A containerized cargo ship.

Check for Understanding

8. What has been an important impact of globalization?

9. What were the major goals of the Hutu led regime in Rwanda in 1994?

10. What is genocide? Give examples from the reading of at least 4 attempts.

11. Name three important women and explain their impact on women's rights.

12. Complete the graphic organizer below by describing each contemporary challenge.

