

Part I: America's Role in the Middle East

The U.S. Air Force's Prince Sultan Air Base lies deep in the barren desert of Saudi Arabia. Little more than half a century ago, the area knew only infrequent camel caravans. Today, it is marked by a 15,000-foot runway and barracks that house nearly 4,000 American troops. Beyond the base's outer ring, a security perimeter extends a quarter mile into the desert. Guard units equipped with the latest night-vision technology track movements around the clock in the empty stretches of sand.

Prince Sultan Air Base stands as testimony to America's military power and technological ingenuity. At the same time, it raises serious questions about our country's involvement in a part of the world that is central to U.S. foreign policy.

1. **Why are U.S. forces stationed at the Prince Sultan Air Base?**

The air base is designed to protect U.S. interests in a part of the world we know as the Middle East. In a crisis, U.S. pilots are positioned to provide air support for the more than 15,000 American troops stationed nearby. They are a few minutes flying time from the Persian Gulf — the center of the world's oil industry. Veering northward, U.S. pilots are within easy reach of Iraq and Iran, two countries that American leaders have identified as foes of the United States. A few hundred miles to the west and U.S. warplanes are over Israel, a long-time ally of the United States and the flashpoint of four wars since 1948.

In 1991, 100 U.S. warplanes from the facilities at Prince Sultan took part in the huge multinational effort that defeated Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf War. In 1996, the air base was expanded after a suicide bombing attack on another U.S. installation in Saudi Arabia claimed the lives of nineteen American soldiers.

The Prince Sultan Air Base and the growing U.S. commitment in the Middle East are at odds with the overall direction of U.S. foreign policy. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, the United States has been redefining its international role. Without the pressure to contain Soviet communism, the

U.S. defense budget has been cut. American troops have been withdrawn from overseas bases in Western Europe and elsewhere. In the past decade foreign aid spending in most parts of the world has been slashed. U.S. leaders — in step with the mood of the American public — have been able to turn their attention to problems at home

2. **Why has the United State maintained an active role in the Middle East?**

Nonetheless, the United States has maintained an active role in the Middle East for two reasons.

First, the Persian Gulf War placed the United States at the center of the balance of power in the Middle East. In leading a coalition of twenty-eight nations, the United States smashed Iraq's bid to seize Kuwait. Nonetheless, Iraq's Saddam Hussein held on to power and has continued to defy the international community. The nearly 4,000 U.S. troops at the Prince Sultan Air Base are there primarily because of the threat from Saddam Hussein.

Second, our country has become deeply enmeshed in settling the long conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Since 1991, the United States has sponsored a series of peace talks. As a result, breakthrough agreements have been signed between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as between Israel and Jordan. The peace process, however, has hit numerous snags, and all sides continue to look to the United States for leadership.

3. **How did the fall of the Soviet Union affect U.S. policy in the Middle East?**

In this unit, you will be called on to take part in the debate regarding U.S. policy in the Middle East. You will find that two events, the Persian Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, mark a sharp break with the past. Previously, America's confrontation with the Soviet Union had convinced a solid majority of Americans that containing communism was vital to protecting U.S. interests and values. The Middle East was one of several regions of the world in which Americans and Soviets competed for power

and influence over four decades.

Now that the Soviet Union is gone, the United States has greater influence than ever in the Middle East. What is lacking, however, is a broad public consensus defining our country's goals in the region.

You will be confronted with the same questions facing U.S. policymakers: Which interests and values should provide the basis for America's position in the region? How should the Middle East's enormous oil reserves and our country's close relationship with Israel figure into our calculations? What is the challenge presented to America by the growing importance of Islam in the politics of the Middle East?

To prepare you for your assignment, you will first explore the history of U.S. involvement in the Middle East since World War I. The second part of the background reading examines the new era that began with the Persian Gulf War and analyzes the issues that have risen to the top of the U.S. policy agenda in the region.

THE HOLY LAND

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, most Americans were introduced to the Middle East through the Bible. The territories that are today at the center of the Arab-Israeli conflict were referred to as the "holy land." To a large extent, America's first impressions of the Middle East were filtered through the eyes of Protestant missionaries. The missionaries came in hope of converting the Muslims of the region to Christianity.

The Middle East had been the cradle of civilization and the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the Middle Ages, the Islamic empires of the region had been at the center of science, scholarship, and commerce. By the 1500s, the Ottoman Turks had skillfully ruled a huge

empire of diverse peoples and religions stretching from the Persian Gulf to the western end of North Africa for three centuries. As late as 1683, an Ottoman army reached the gates of Vienna in central Europe before being turned back.

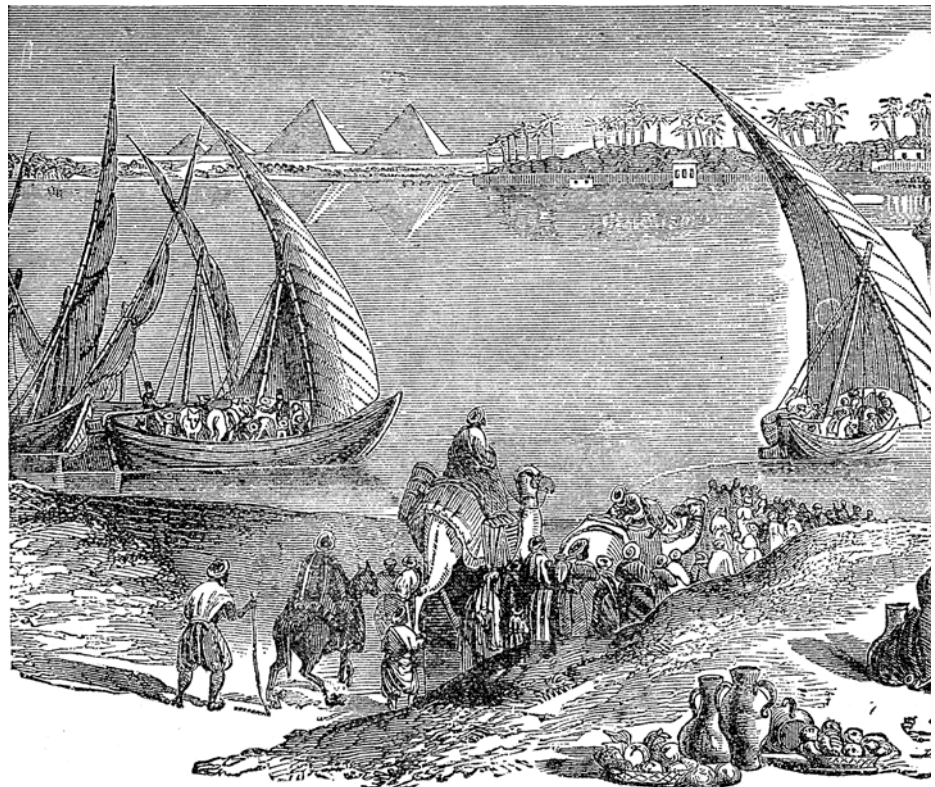
To the east of the Ottomans, the Safavid Empire of Iran had been a thriving center of Persian culture and commerce from 1501 to 1736. A well-administered and stable governmental system allowed the Safavid capital of Isfahan with its population of over 400,000 to become renowned for its poetry, paintings, and scholarship.

The Middle Easterners who greeted the missionary pioneers in the early 1800s were surprised when they began to understand that their region had fallen behind the Western world of Europe and the United States. In fact, the missionaries' presence served to illustrate the technological and economic gulf between their own society and the one they had entered.

4. *Why did the Middle East lag behind the West?*

With the rise of the West the relationship increasingly turned one-sided. The advances in science

From A History of the Empire and People of Turkey



The 19th-century Middle East in the Western imagination.

and technology that fueled the Industrial Revolution in Britain, the United States, and other Western nations were slow to reach the Middle East. The Ottoman military was unable to match the firepower of its European rivals.

By the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was in steady retreat. In southeastern Europe, the Ottomans lost territory to local independence movements. In the Caucasus, they were driven out by ambitious Russian tsars. Meanwhile, the Ottoman economy increasingly fell under the economic domination of Britain and France.

In Iran, the Qajar dynasty had replaced the Safavid Empire. Throughout the 19th century, Russia and Britain competed to control Iran and its resources. Iran's economy and infrastructure suffered from being in the middle of the two great powers' struggle. In 1907, Russia and Great Britain, fearing the newly established constitutional regime in Iran agreed to cooperate and coordinate their interests. In 1912, they invaded Iran to assure "stability" and "security."

5. ***Why did the United States keep its distance from the Middle East?***

The United States kept its distance from the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. Although the United States was the world's leading economic power by the beginning of the 20th century, U.S. leaders were not eager to join the European scramble to establish colonies in Asia and Africa. The United States busied itself establishing its own colonies in Latin America and the Philippines.

Until the outbreak of World War I in 1914, America's connection to the Middle East was limited to a string of missionary schools and hospitals, and a handful of trading companies. The missionaries themselves had given up on their initial plans to convert Muslims. Instead, U.S. missionaries competed with French and Russian missionaries to enroll local Christians in their schools.

THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

The modern Middle East grew out of the devastation of World War I. In the early months of the war,

the Ottoman Empire allied itself with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Ottoman leadership, which had come under the control of "Pan-Turkist" nationalists, hoped to build a new Turkish Empire stretching into Central Asia. Instead, World War I resulted in the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. Although the decisive battles of the war took place in Europe, the Middle East was thrown into turmoil as well. British forces, with the assistance of their Arab allies, drove Ottoman armies out of most of the empire's Arab provinces. Fighting along the Caucasus front between Russia and the Ottoman Turks turned vast areas into a wasteland.

6. ***What did the Sykes-Picot accord contain?***

Meanwhile, much of the most important action took place away from the battlefield. In 1916, diplomats from Britain and France signed a secret treaty concerning the postwar division of the Ottoman Empire. Under the terms of what was known as the Sykes-Picot accord, the British and French agreed to carve up the Arab provinces of the empire between themselves.

7. ***What promises did Great Britain make to Arabs and Jews?***

In 1917, the British issued the Balfour Declaration, pledging to help establish a "national home" for Jews in what were then the Ottoman province of Palestine. The British hoped that the declaration would rally Jewish opinion, especially in the United States, behind the Allied war effort. At the same time, the British won the support of Sharif Hussein, the ruler of Mecca, by promising their help in setting up an independent Arab state after the war. In exchange, Hussein incited a rebellion against the Ottoman Turks in Arabia.

When World War I finally ended in 1918, both Arabs and Jews looked to Britain to keep its promises. Meanwhile the British and French were determined to assert their control over the Middle East.

8. ***How did President Wilson's principle of "self-determination" affect the Middle East?***

President Woodrow Wilson presented the main

obstacle to British and French designs. Initially, Wilson had been reluctant to join the Allied war effort. When he led the United States into World War I in 1917, he insisted that his country was fighting for a higher set of ideals than the European powers. He announced a sweeping fourteen-point peace plan just as substantial numbers of American troops were reaching Europe. Among the key principles of Wilson's proposal was a call for a postwar international system (a "League of Nations") based on the "self-determination" of nations.

Arab leaders applauded Wilson's views. They saw the president's emphasis on self-determination as an endorsement of Arab efforts to govern themselves without outside interference. In contrast, the British and French realized that self-determination undermined their plan to impose the Sykes-Picot treaty on the Middle East.

Ultimately, the British and French won the test of wills with Wilson. At the Paris Peace Conference following World War I, Wilson backed down from his defense of self-determination to maintain unity among the Allies.

When Wilson returned to the United States, he encountered strong opposition to American participation in the new international system. In 1920, the Senate soundly rejected the treaty that Wilson had helped negotiate. Wilson's defeat was a turning point for America. Over the next two decades, U.S. foreign policy was to be marked by a mood of "isolationism," in which American leaders sought to avoid troubles overseas.

9. ***How did U.S. isolationism affect the division of the Ottoman Empire?***

Once the United States had retreated from the international scene, Britain and France were free to complete the division of the defeated Ottoman Empire. The British laid claim to the chief prizes of the region, extending their influence to Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq and Kuwait), most of the Arabian peninsula, Palestine, and Transjordan (present-day Jordan). The French were left with what are today Syria and Lebanon. (The French had extended their control over present-day Algeria, Morocco, and Tuni-

sia before World War I.)

With Russia consumed by civil war, Iran increasingly fell within Britain's sphere of economic domination. Turkey and Saudi Arabia were the only Middle Eastern countries to attain complete independence after World War I. In Turkey, a nationalist movement overthrew the last remnants of the Ottoman Empire and established a republic in 1923. Saudi Arabia preferred not to have connections with the international world and did not become a member of the League of Nations.

10. ***What were "mandates"?***

Many of the new states of the Middle East were given a special status under international law. Rather than being classified as colonies, they were defined as "mandates." In reality, the Arabs within the mandates saw themselves as subjects of European colonialism.

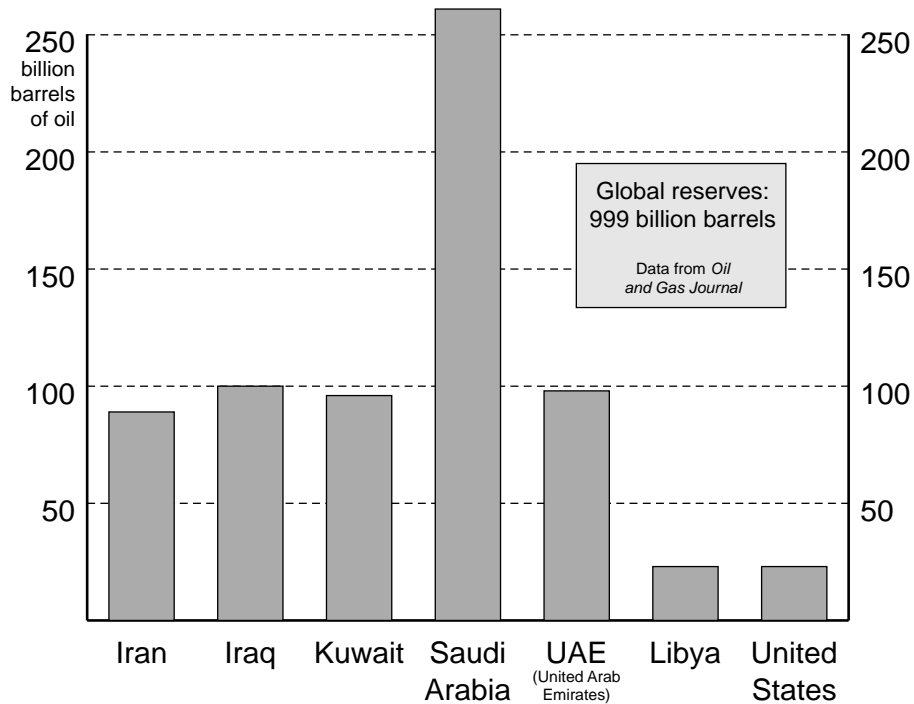
By the early 1920s, the outlines of today's Middle East were clearly recognizable. With few changes, the map drawn by the Allies at the Paris Peace Conference was to remain intact. Britain's contradictory promises during World War I had planted the seeds of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The heavy hand of European imperialism bred growing resentment against the West, giving rise to new political movements that stressed angry nationalism or a revival of Islam. On the economic front, the stage was set for the development of the oil industry in the Middle East.

THE POLITICS OF OIL

The contest for control of the Middle East after World War I was driven largely by oil. The war effort had been powered mostly by coal, but far-sighted military strategists understood that the next major war would be fueled by oil.

The British were especially sensitive to the importance of oil. Although they ruled a huge empire, their prospects for finding oil in their colonies were poor. Their best shot at gaining access to large oil reserves was through domination of Iraq and Iran. The French too were concerned about oil. In ceding control of Iraq to Britain, they bargained for a 25 percent share of the mandate's oil industry.

Current Proven Oil Reserves



11. **How did the United States become involved in the oil politics of the Middle East?**

Compared to the European Allies, the United States was a latecomer to the oil politics of the Middle East. Unlike Britain and France, the United States was an oil giant, producing roughly two-thirds of the world's output during World War I. Nonetheless, U.S. policymakers encouraged American oil companies to begin looking overseas for new oil reserves.

To maintain good relations with the United States in the 1920s, the British agreed to allow American oil companies to participate in the development of the Middle East's oil resources. At the time, the two main centers of oil production in the region were northern Iraq and the Iranian side of the Persian Gulf.

Serious oil exploration in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait did not take place until the 1930s. Leading members of the Saudi royal family, worried that their traditional way of life would be disrupted, balked at opening their country to foreign oil firms.

The Saudis, however, needed money. In 1933, they signed a sixty-year agreement with Standard Oil of California (SOCAL). In exchange for \$175,000 up front and the promise of royalty payments on any oil produced, the Americans were permitted to explore

360,000 square miles of eastern Saudi Arabia (an area larger than Texas and Oklahoma combined). SOCAL invested \$10 million before making a major discovery in 1938. At about the same time, a British-American partnership struck oil in Kuwait.

12. **What was the first oil war?**

The eruption of World War II in 1939 dashed hopes of turning a quick profit from the newly discovered oil fields of the Middle East. Instead of expanding production,

American and British leaders took measures to prevent the energy resources of the Middle East from falling into the hands of Nazi Germany. In 1941, British and Soviet troops jointly occupied Iran to block German ambitions. Technicians even made plans to destroy the oil wells of the Persian Gulf in case Germany invaded the region.

In fact, the Allies stopped the Nazi war machine well short of the Persian Gulf. Nonetheless, World War II had a profound impact on the position of the Middle East in international affairs.

As strategists in World War I had foreseen, oil was indeed the lifeblood of the armies of World War II. The decisive weapons of the conflict — airplanes, tanks, and military trucks — all ran on fuels derived from oil. The war aims of the leading Axis powers, Germany and Japan, were shaped by their quest for oil resources.

The United States was the main engine of the Allied victory in World War II. Protected from enemy attack by two oceans, American industry boomed. By the end of 1942, U.S. military production surpassed the output of Germany and Japan combined. During the next year, American factories turned out roughly 100,000 warplanes.

"If there should be a World War III it would have to be fought with someone else's petroleum, because the United States wouldn't have it."

—Henry Ickes, secretary of the interior

The United States was blessed with abundant oil reserves. In 1940, for example, the United States produced 63 percent of the world's oil (compared to less than 5 percent from the Middle East). America's war-time leaders, however, feared that demand would soon outstrip supply. Like their British counterparts in World War I, U.S. officials in World War II sought to ensure their country's access to oil.

The U.S. strategy included fresh attention to Saudi Arabia. Before 1939, the United States did not have a single diplomat in the country. In 1943, however, President Franklin Roosevelt began providing aid to the Saudi monarchy, which was on the verge of financial collapse because of the war.

13. **How did the end of World War II change international relations?**

In addition to elevating the importance of oil, World War II brought down the old order of international relations. Western Europe no longer occupied center stage in world affairs. Instead, the postwar era was to be defined by the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

By 1948, the hostility between the former war-time allies seemed frozen in place. What was known as the Cold War would eventually reach every corner of the globe, heightening tensions to particularly dangerous levels in the Middle East.

14. **What developments raised the importance of the Middle East to the United States?**

That same year, two other developments were to raise the prominence of the Middle East. For the first time, the United States imported more oil than it exported. A 42 percent jump in gasoline consumption from 1945 to 1950 was the primary factor behind America's growing thirst for oil.

Second, 1948 saw the birth of the modern state of Israel in what had been the British mandate of Pal-



estine. Half a century after its inception by European Jews, the "Zionist" movement had achieved its goal of establishing an independent Jewish homeland.

Together, the Cold War, the demand for oil, and the establishment of Israel would dominate U.S. policy in the Middle East in the postwar era. After more than a century on the margins, the Middle East was destined to take a central role in U.S. foreign policy.

COLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Beginning in the early 1800s, Britain had been the leading power in the Middle East. Britain controlled the Suez Canal (linking the Red Sea and the Mediterranean) and most of Egypt after 1882. British naval forces patrolled the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf, guarding shipping lanes to India, the jewel of the British Empire.

In 1947, however, British officials told their American allies that they could no longer maintain their presence in the Middle East. World War II had

nearly bankrupted Britain. Britain's postwar leaders saw their enormous empire as a financial burden. Facing increasing resistance in their colonies, Britain's leaders were forced to grant the colonies the independence they desired. Britain also urged the administration of President Harry Truman to fill the vacuum in the Middle East ahead of the Soviets.

15. How did the Soviets begin to assert their interests in the Middle East?

In fact, the Soviets had already begun to assert their interests in the Middle East. In Iran, the Soviets delayed the withdrawal of their troops. In Turkey, they raised territorial claims along the Soviet border and insisted on sharing control of the straits connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

16. What was the Truman Doctrine?

U.S. resolve to force the Soviet Union to back down remained in doubt until 1947, when President Truman announced a \$400 million foreign aid package to Turkey and Greece. In what was labeled as the Truman Doctrine, Truman pledged U.S. support for governments resisting communism.

The Truman Doctrine confirmed that the United States was prepared to step into the shoes of the British in the Middle East. America's long isolation from international politics was coming to an end. For U.S. policymakers, that meant that the Persian Gulf was to eventually rank second in importance only to Western Europe. Protecting the region's oil reserves from Soviet control was deemed critical to the West's economic survival.

17. Why was Saudi Arabia so important to the United States?

No country zoomed faster toward the top of the U.S. agenda than Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi oil production in the late 1940s was still meager, geologists had already estimated that the country contained the world's largest oil reserves. They understood that the center of the world's oil industry would soon shift from the Gulf of Mexico to the Persian Gulf.

American executives of the Arabian-American Oil Company, known as Aramco, increasingly coop-

erated with U.S. foreign policymakers to ensure smooth relations with the desert kingdom. When Saudi King Saud Ibn Saud voiced worries about threats from Arab rivals and the Soviets, President Truman assured him of U.S. support.

"No threat to your [Saud Ibn Saud's] kingdom could occur which would not be a matter of immediate concern to the United States."

—President Harry Truman

The establishment of Israel complicated America's efforts to outflank the Soviets in the Persian Gulf. King Saud and most other Arab leaders opposed Zionism. Saud even threatened to break his contract with Aramco to protest U.S. policy. Nonetheless, the United States played a key role in bringing the Jewish state into existence.

18. What role did Zionism have in the founding of Israel?

Zionism had its origins in Europe, where Jews had long been subjected to persecution. At the end of the 19th century, some Jewish intellectuals argued that their people could safely flourish only by establishing an independent state in their ancient homeland. In the early 1900s, Zionists sought to gain a foothold in what was then Palestine by buying land for Jewish colonies.

Between 1922 and 1939, the Jewish population in Palestine rose from 84,000 to 445,000, or about 30 percent of the total. The Zionist movement, however, increasingly found itself at odds with the aspirations of Palestinian Arabs to forge a state of their own. British efforts to strike a balance between Palestinians and Jews failed to hold down the escalating tensions.

Zionism might not have fulfilled its mission without the tragedy of the Holocaust. During World War II, Adolf Hitler sought to exterminate Jews in his short-lived empire. Six million Jews were put to death by the Nazis.

After the war, hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees saw immigration to Palestine as the only hope for rebuilding their lives. The Holocaust also won the Zionists widespread sympathy in the West. Truman was personally committed to the Zionist cause.

In 1947, the British turned over responsibility for Palestine to the newly formed United Nations (UN). A plan to divide the mandate between Jews and Palestinians passed the UN General Assembly by two votes, thanks in large part to American lobbying.

19. How did Israel's creation plant the seeds of conflict?

While most Jews applauded the UN decision, anger swept over the Arab world. Fighting soon engulfed much of Palestine. With the withdrawal of the last British forces in May 1948, the state of Israel was proclaimed and immediately won recognition from the United States and the Soviet Union. For the next eight months, Jews and Arabs battled for territory. Forces from Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Iraq sided with the Palestinians.

By the time a truce was reached in January 1949, the Jews had seized a large portion of the land that the UN had designated for the Palestinians. What was left of the former mandate was claimed by Transjordan (which absorbed the West Bank) and Egypt (which held the Gaza Strip). (See map on page 10.) More than 750,000 Palestinians became refugees. Arab countries refused to make peace with the fledgling Israeli state. Without a treaty, the cease-fire lines became in effect the borders between Israel and its neighbors.

20. Why did some U.S. officials fear supporting Israel?

Although the Truman administration approved a \$100 million loan for Israel, U.S. policy remained torn. Within the State Department (the governmental body responsible for carrying out U.S. foreign policy), many officials advised against supporting Israel. They feared an Arab backlash against the United States.

How did the politics of the Arab world change?

The politics of the Arab world underwent deep changes after World War II. As in other regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, resentment and mistrust toward the West spread in the Middle East. As Britain and France retreated from the region, Arab nationalists turned their criticism against the old political order. The monarchies and rich landowners that had cooperated with Britain and France after World

War I were accused of betraying Arab interests. In the 1950s and 1960s, nationalist military officers overthrew kingdoms in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Libya.

What role did Egypt's Gamal Abd al-Nasser play in Middle Eastern politics?

Egypt's Gamal Abd al-Nasser was the most prominent voice of Arab nationalism. A former army colonel, Nasser emerged as Egypt's leader after taking part in a coup that toppled the country's corrupt king in 1952. Nasser addressed his message not just to Egypt, but to the larger Arab world. He campaigned for "pan-Arabism" — the unification of Arabs into a single state. Nasser's prestige enabled him to skillfully play the United States and Soviet Union off one another.

Nasser thrived on drama. In 1956, he triggered an international crisis by reasserting Egyptian ownership of the Suez Canal. The canal provided an apt symbol for Nasser because it represented his nation's subordination to Western interests. It had been built jointly by the French and the Egyptians in 1869 and had later fallen under British control. Nasser's move



Thiele in the *Los Angeles Mirror News*

infuriated the British and French. Joined by Israel, the two waning colonial powers attacked Egypt and seized the canal. President Dwight Eisenhower was furious that the British, French, and Israelis had acted on their own. He forced them to quickly withdraw.

While the Suez Crisis was a humiliating setback for Britain and France, Nasser's reputation soared. Over the next decade, he strengthened his position as the most dynamic leader of the Arab world. Part of Nasser's appeal stemmed from his condemnation of Israel, which Nasser depicted as a Western outpost in the Middle East. In 1958, Nasser announced the merger of Egypt and Syria. He also built up his army, mostly with Soviet weapons.

Why did President Kennedy sell advanced anti-aircraft missiles to Israel?

U.S. officials mistrusted Nasser's motives but felt that his popularity could not be ignored. After the Suez Crisis, the United States resumed limited assistance to Egypt. At the same time, U.S. officials began to see Israel as a counterweight to expanding Soviet influence in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. In 1962, President John Kennedy approved the sale of advanced anti-aircraft missiles to Israel, along with a loan to help the Israelis pay for their purchase.

"We are interested that Israel should keep up its sensitive, tremendous, historic task."

—President John Kennedy

Three years later, President Lyndon Johnson permitted the Israelis to buy more than 200 tanks, again with generous financing. The arms sales marked the beginning of a steady flow of American military equipment to Israel. No formal alliance was signed, but the United States and Israel were clearly developing a special relationship.

21. *What factors contributed to the Six-Day War?*

Overheated nationalism, growing superpower involvement, and an escalating arms build-up ignited the third Arab-Israeli war in 1967. The immediate cause was Nasser's decision in May 1967 to order the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers separating Egyptian

and Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and to deny Israeli ships access to the Red Sea.

President Johnson attempted to resolve the crisis diplomatically. Israeli leaders, however, placed little faith in diplomatic solutions. In June 1967, they launched a surprise attack, destroying most of the Egyptian and Syrian air forces on the ground. With control of the air, Israeli tanks rolled across the Sinai to the Suez Canal. On their eastern flank, the Israelis drove the Jordanian army out of the Old City of Jerusalem and overran the West Bank.

Within two days, Egypt and Jordan were ready to accept a UN resolution for a cease-fire proposed by the United States. Israel, however, continued its military operations. Israeli warplanes bombed a U.S. communications ship based off the coast of Egypt, killing thirty-four American sailors. Although Israeli leaders claimed the attack was a mistake, U.S. officials privately believed that Israel's intent was to conceal Israeli military preparations against Syria. Indeed, two days later the Israelis smashed through Syrian defenses on the strategic Golan Heights. Syria quickly agreed to a truce. What came to be known as the Six-Day War ended in a complete military victory for Israel.

22. *How did the Six-Day War change the map of the Middle East?*

The Six-Day War again changed the map of the Middle East. Although Israel would not consider withdrawing from the Golan Heights or Jerusalem, it did not refuse to withdraw from the other territories it had conquered if Arab leaders recognized Israel's right to exist. When recognition was not forthcoming, the Israelis became responsible for governing more than one million Palestinians on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

23. *Why did Arab leaders turn to the Soviet Union for military help following the Six-Day War?*

The Six-Day War also set the stage for the next round of fighting in the Middle East. The crushing defeat of the Arab armies exposed the hollowness of Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism. Arab leaders were more determined than ever to match the military

might of the Israelis. Increasingly, they turned to the Soviets Union. The Soviets, embarrassed by the speedy defeat of their allies, who had relied on them for advice and weapons, and eager to extend their influence in the Middle East, were more than willing to help.

The death of Nasser from a heart attack in 1970 brought to power a more narrowly focused Egyptian leader, Anwar al-Sadat.

What policies did Sadat undertake when he came to power?

Sadat was anxious to signal that he wanted better relations with the United States. In July 1972, Sadat ordered all 20,000 Soviet military personnel expelled from Egypt. Sadat's top priority was to regain the Sinai Peninsula. When American diplomacy failed to persuade Israel to withdraw, Sadat began making preparations for war. At the same time, the

United States reached an understanding with Saudi Arabia to work to exclude the Soviets from the Middle East and to make the United States the sole mediator of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

What happened during the fourth Arab-Israeli war of October 1973?

In the fourth Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, the element of surprise belonged to the Arabs. Egypt and Syria opened a two-front offensive against Israel on Yom Kippur, the most sacred day on the Jewish calendar. Along the Suez Canal, Egypt's army broke



through Israeli lines and spilled into the Sinai Peninsula. At the same time, Syrian troops overwhelmed Israel's defenses on the Golan Heights and were poised to attack northern Israel.

Israel's army quickly recovered from its setbacks. Within days, the Israelis drove a wedge between Egyptian forces in the Sinai and crossed to the west bank of the Suez Canal. Against the Syrians, they soon regained the Golan Heights and swept down toward Damascus, the Syrian capital. By the end of October 1973, after less than a month of fighting, the Israelis agreed to stop their advance.

How did the Cold War affect the U.S. position during the October War?

For the United States, the October War brought America's chief concerns in the Middle East to the boiling point. In the first week of the conflict, Washington's commitment to Israel was put to the test. Israel's prime minister, Golda Meir, pleaded with President Richard Nixon to ship U.S. military supplies to her country. Nixon approved a resupply effort, but did not want to give Israel a lopsided advantage on the battlefield.

Cold War politics ultimately convinced Nixon to step up the flow of arms. From the outbreak of the October War, the Soviet Union showered Egypt and Syria with military assistance. By the second week of fighting, the United States decided to do the same for Israel and began airlifting 1,000 tons of military supplies a day. Superpower tensions rose further when the Soviets vowed to send troops to the region to stop Israel's advance. Nixon warned the Soviets against taking action on their own. He put the U.S. military on worldwide alert to emphasize American resolve.

24 **How did the Arab states try to use oil as a weapon against the United States?**

Most significantly, the October War prompted Arab states to lead an oil embargo against the United States. The Arabs had in fact tried to use oil as a weapon during the 1967 war, but their effort to cut off oil exports to the United States and Britain quickly fizzled.

By 1973, however, changes in the world oil market favored the Arabs. From 1970 to the start of the October War, oil prices had doubled. During the same period, U.S. imports nearly doubled, exceeding one-third of total American consumption. America's allies in Western Europe and Japan were almost entirely dependent on imported oil, mostly from the Middle East. Rising demand allowed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to steadily push up prices for the first time since its formation in 1960.

In mid-October 1973, the Saudi Arabian King, Faisal Ibn Saud, a solid U.S. ally, initiated the oil embargo. He hoped to emphasize to the United States that it would have to do more for the Arab side in the

Arab-Israeli conflict if it wanted to minimize Soviet influence in the region. The Arab oil-producing states raised prices on their exported oil by 70 percent. When President Nixon proposed giving Israel \$2.2 billion in military aid a few days later, the Arabs responded by completely cutting off oil shipments to the United States. At the same time, they reduced their overall production by 10 percent and vowed to lower oil output by 5 percent a month until Israel withdrew from the territories occupied in the 1967 war and restored the rights of the Palestinians.

25. **What was the impact of the oil embargo?**

The impact of the Arab cutbacks on the international oil market was hardly catastrophic. By the end of 1973, world oil production had fallen about 9 percent. Major non-Arab oil producers, such as Iran and Venezuela, increased their exports as new markets opened to them. Nonetheless, the Arab measures set off an economic panic. Oil prices rose as high as \$17 a barrel — six times the price in early October. Gasoline prices in the United States jumped 40 percent. Over the next two years, America's economic output dropped 6 percent, while unemployment doubled and inflation surged.

The Arab states also created fractures in the Western alliance. Most Western European countries and Japan backed away from support of Israel. In turn, they were spared deeper cuts in their oil imports.

U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, undertook what came to be known as "shuttle diplomacy." Jetting between countries of the region, Kissinger negotiated two agreements to end the fighting between Israel and Egypt as well as Israel and Syria. Achieving another important U.S. goal, the Soviet Union was left out of the negotiations. Kissinger's efforts were enough to convince King Faisal Ibn Saud to call off the embargo in March of 1974.

How did the October War lay the groundwork for peace?

While the October War was the most destructive conflict yet between Arabs and Israelis, it also laid the groundwork for the first steps toward peace. The early battlefield successes of the Arab armies had soothed

the humiliating sting of the 1967 war. Arab pride, especially in Egypt, was partially restored.

The initiative for peace came from Sadat. In 1977, he visited Israel and spoke before Israel's parliament. Meanwhile, U.S. officials worked behind the scenes to set the stage for serious negotiations.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter invited Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to the presidential retreat at Camp David for peace talks. The negotiations were scheduled to last three days. Instead, they dragged on for two weeks.

What were the Camp David Accords?

Thanks largely to Carter's persistence, the talks produced a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. In exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt became the first Arab country to recognize Israel. U.S. foreign aid sweetened the deal for both countries. Israel received \$3 billion in immediate military assistance, while Egypt was given \$1.5 billion. (Israel and Egypt have remained the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid.)

What were known as the Camp David Accords, however, scarcely addressed other aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arab leaders condemned Sadat for neglecting the Palestinian cause and expelled Egypt from the Arab League. In 1981, Sadat himself was assassinated by Political Islamist extremists. (The term Political Islamist is used to describe political movements based on the principles of Islam.)

How did the Camp David Accords affect the position of the Soviet Union in the Middle East?

The Camp David Accords brought Egypt securely into the U.S. camp in the Middle East. At the same time, the treaty gave the Soviets greater leverage among their own circle of allies, such as Syria and Iraq. To counter the Soviets, U.S. officials placed greater weight on their relations with other long-time friends in the region.



"Of course, I'd resign at once if I thought that they really meant it!"

Aside from Israel, the United States counted on close ties with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Turkey was linked to the United States through membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and ample U.S. foreign aid. The Saudis, while opposing Israel, relied heavily on American firms to market their oil exports and invest their profits.

26. Why did the United States support the shah of Iran?

The United States was bound to Iran and its shah, or king, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, by both military and oil interests. The shah was tied to Washington through his own complicated past. In 1953, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped the shah topple a nationalist prime minister who threatened his power and to nationalize the foreign oil industry. At the time, Pahlavi was a timid, inexperienced ruler. Over the next two decades, U.S. support bolstered his confidence and ambitions.

By the early 1970s, the shah imagined that he could rekindle the greatness of ancient Persia in modern Iran. To celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire, he spent at least \$100 million to host a lavish banquet that featured a 165-person catering staff from Paris and 25,000 bottles of French wine. The rise in oil prices in 1973 permitted the shah to increase his spending, particularly on weapons. By the mid-1970s, Iran accounted for half of U.S. arms exports.

27. **How did U.S. policymakers fail to understand the feelings of the Iranian people?**

Both the shah and U.S. policymakers, however, underestimated the anger simmering just below the surface of Iranian society. The shah's efforts to modernize Iran's educational system and redistribute land sparked protests among the country's Islamic clergy. His push toward industrialization tempted millions of peasants to abandon the countryside. Iran's cities were soon overcrowded, while the gap between the rich and the poor widened. Corruption in the shah's government and the activities of SAVAK (the secret police) in suppressing dissent also increased opposition to his rule.

"Iran, because of the great leadership of the shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled regions of the world."

—President Jimmy Carter

Radical Islamist leaders were in the best position to exploit the instability in Iranian society. They emerged at the helm of a broad opposition movement that included democrats, nationalists, and communists. In 1978, they began organizing demonstrations against the shah. The shah responded with force, ordering the army and police to smash the protests. In September, they opened fire on a huge crowd in Tehran, Iran's capital, killing or wounding as many as 2,000 demonstrators.

The shah, who was suffering from cancer, soon lost the will to hold on to power. In January 1979, he left the country. Two weeks later, the spiritual leader of Iran's Islamist movement, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, returned to Iran from exile.

28. **What were the goals of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini?**

Khomeini intended to transform Iran into a pure Islamic state. His revolution aimed at purging the country of Western popular culture. Movies and music from the West were prohibited. Alcohol was banned. Women were ordered to cover themselves in public from head to toe.

Khomeini branded the United States as the

"great Satan." (He referred to the Soviet Union as the "lesser Satan.") When Carter permitted the shah to enter the United States for medical treatment, Khomeini claimed that Washington was plotting a counter-revolution. In November 1979, Iranian students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. For over a year, they held the U.S. embassy staff as hostages. Carter's attempt at a military rescue failed, leaving eight American troops dead.

"Our relations with the United States are the relations of the oppressed and the oppressor."

—Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

How did the Iranian Revolution affect the world oil market?

The Iranian Revolution touched off another panic in the oil market. Before the revolution, Iran had been the world's second largest oil exporter (trailing only Saudi Arabia). By the end of 1978, the foreigners who managed much of Iran's oil industry had been evacuated and Iranian oil exports had stopped flowing. Again prices soared, nearly tripling in a few weeks. Americans were forced to wait in long lines for gasoline.

Why did war break out between Iran and Iraq?

The crimp in world oil supplies was compounded by the outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq in September 1980. Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, hoped to take advantage of the confusion in the Iranian army to seize a disputed waterway spilling into the Persian Gulf. He also aimed to silence Iran's campaign to spread its own brand of Islamist revolution elsewhere in the Middle East.

Saddam Hussein's strategy called for delivering a quick knockout blow, concentrating on Iran's oil facilities. Instead, Iraq's invasion stalled. Iran counter-attacked but lacked the strength to defeat Hussein's impressive military. For the next eight years, the war seesawed back and forth. Iraq had an advantage in air power, missiles, and even chemical weapons. Saddam Hussein also benefited from the financial backing of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other



Arab oil producers. Iran, however, could count on millions of dedicated volunteers. Tens of thousands were killed in human-wave attacks on Iraqi positions, often with plastic keys to heaven dangling from their necks.

29. **What was the U.S. position in the Iran-Iraq war?**

The administration of President Ronald Reagan remained officially neutral during the war, but was particularly wary of an Iranian victory. The United States began playing a more active role in 1986, when Iran stepped up attacks against Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. The United States extended Iraq credit to buy advanced American weapons and shared military intelligence. Washington also permitted Kuwaiti ships to sail under the American flag and provided them military escorts.

At the same time, the United States, which was leading an international arms embargo against Iran, secretly sold thousands of anti-tank weapons and tons of military spare parts to Iran. The purpose of these sales was to improve relations with Iran and to persuade Iran to pressure pro-Iranian groups to release the U.S. hostages they held in Lebanon. Three hostages

were released, but additional ones were taken. The willingness of the United States to deal secretly with Iran while publicly denouncing the same government raised questions about the sincerity of U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East.

By the time Iraq and Iran agreed to a cease-fire in 1988, their war had claimed more than one million lives. Iraq had gained the upper hand on the battlefield in the final months of the conflict,

in part through the use of chemical weapons, but neither side could claim victory.

30. **How did the United States deal with the uncertainty of the Middle East oil industry?**

At the same time, the United States and other developed nations learned to live with the uncertainty of the Middle East's oil industry. The oil price hikes of the 1970s spurred energy conservation in wealthy countries. The fuel efficiency of the average American car more than doubled between 1975 and 1985. By 1983, oil consumption in the non-communist world had dropped by 11 percent from 1979 levels. Higher prices also led oil companies to develop new resources in the North Sea, Alaska, and other sites outside the Middle East. Coal, natural gas, and nuclear power gained a greater share of the energy market. From \$34 a barrel at the beginning of the 1980s, oil prices slid to around \$18 a barrel by the end of the decade.

How did war in Lebanon affect Lebanon and its neighbors?

While the Iraq-Iran War dominated events in the

Persian Gulf during the 1980s, Lebanon was the main focus of attention in the eastern Mediterranean. Lebanon had long been home to a patchwork of Christian and Muslim groups. Beirut, Tripoli, and other Lebanese ports were centers of Middle Eastern trade and commerce. Beginning in 1975, however, the country was torn by civil war.

Before the fighting died down in the late 1980s, nearly 150,000 people had been killed. Moreover, the war drew in most of Lebanon's neighbors, as well as the United States. Syrian leaders, who believed Lebanon belonged under their wing, sent in troops to occupy most of the eastern part of the country. During much of the conflict, Syrian forces controlled the balance of power among Lebanon's competing militias.

In 1982, Israel drove into Lebanon to root out the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). PLO units had set up bases in Lebanon after they were expelled from Jordan in 1970. Israel pushed the PLO north of Beirut, bombarding the Lebanese capital and prompt-

ing the United States to negotiate a settlement that allowed Palestinian fighters to evacuate to Tunisia and Algeria.

Why did the United States deploy troops in Lebanon?

In hope of stabilizing Lebanon, the United States sent in American troops as part of an international peacekeeping force. The Americans, however, were soon caught in the middle of the civil war. In 1983, a suicide bomber drove a truckload of explosives into the U.S. marine barracks at the Beirut airport. Two hundred and forty-one troops were killed. A few months later, President Reagan pulled out the U.S. peacekeeping force.

In the United States, the Beirut bombing reinforced the Middle East's reputation as a dangerous and hostile region. Most Americans favored limiting our country's involvement in the area. Within a few years, however, the United States was about to plunge deeper than ever into the Middle East.