

Middle East / North Africa

Survey of World Regions



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
Discover the power of ideas

UNT Introduction

- The Middle East is a region much discussed, but little understood
- Many complex issues
 - **Historical:** extending back thousands of years
 - **Cultural:** involving some very different cultures living in close proximity
 - **Economic:** extreme wealth together with extreme poverty, and crucial energy resources for the world's economy

UNT Introduction

- **Q:** What do you know about the Middle East? Do you have any personal connection of any kind with the region?
 - Where is the Middle East on the world map?

The Middle East in a Global Context



Our regional focus today

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats?

Q: What observations can we make about the region as we see it on this map?

The North Africa/Southwest Asia Region (as Defined in Your Textbook)



Q: Can we make further observations based on this “zoomed-in” view?

UNT Introduction

- As much as any other region, the Middle East represents a global crossroads of travel and cultural interaction
 - This was true historically, dating back thousands of years
 - It is also very much true today
 - The Middle East is a contested region, and part of its importance comes from its strategic location on the world map

TNT Introduction

- Think back to one graphic from our North American module, earlier in the course
 - International air travel: top 30 global airports

Airports in the Middle East play an important role in the global air travel network

TNT Introduction

- We cannot cover all of the relevant issues for this complex region in a single class
- We will focus on one of the most visible and important issues connected with the region: the Arab-Israeli conflict
- The obvious geographic focus of this conflict: Israel (a region also historically known as Palestine)

Israel in Regional Context

TNT Introduction to the Conflict

- Q:** What do you know about the Arab/Israeli conflict?
 - Is this a religious conflict?
 - What is the real focus of contention?

LAND

Religion is obviously extremely important, but in tangible terms the conflict comes down to **who controls what territory** (thus we must understand geography to understand the conflict)

TNT Introduction to the Conflict

- One more introductory note:** many people are eager to persuade you to believe one thing or another
 - My aim today is not to persuade you to believe what I believe
 - True goal here: simply survey some of the basic facts of this situation
 - I'd be very happy here to have a good discussion and have you decide what you believe and which side (if any) that you might support

INT Introduction to the Conflict

- **Background**
 - The modern state of Israel dates to 1948
 - But of course there is much that came before
 - Jewish claim on the land going back to the time of the Biblical patriarch Abraham (circa 1900 BC)
 - Reign of King David (circa 1000 BC)

Israel at the time of King David and his son, King Solomon (circa 1000 BC)



The map shows the Empire of David and Solomon, with a legend indicating:

- North: Kingdom of Ashdod and Gaza
- Middle: Kingdoms of Judah and Israel
- South: Kingdoms of Edom and Moab
- West: Kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon
- East: Kingdoms of Ammon and Philistia

 Major cities like Jerusalem, Hebron, and Shechem are marked. The Mediterranean Sea is labeled 'THE GREAT SEA'.

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 - Reign of King David (circa 1000 BC)
 - Israel conquered by the Greeks and then the Romans (circa 400 BC, 63 BC)
 - The diaspora (Jews dispersed to Russia, eastern Europe, and Africa – AD 425 and onward)
 - And now Israel as it exists today

INT Introduction to the Conflict

- **Background**
 - Through all of these periods and events, space has been the important central focus of dispute
 - In terms of this dispute, it is important to be clear about the key territories that make up the region as it exists today



Labels on the map:

- Israel
- The Gaza Strip
- The West Bank

 A text box states: "West" here refers to west of the Jordan River

INT Modern Context

- **Israel as we know it today emerged out of powerful forces acting on the Jewish people**
 - Anti-Semitism in Europe
 - Pogroms in Russia
 - Holocaust in Germany

Systematic oppression, displacement, and ultimately murder of the Jewish people

Modern Context

- **Israel as we know it today emerged out of powerful forces acting on the Jewish people**
 - **Q:** What was the reason Hitler gave for sending European Jews to concentration camps?
 - **Lebensraum:** “lived space”, or making room for the expansion of the German people
 - **Geography** was thus a key part of the Nazi logic

Modern Context

- **Israel as we know it today emerged out of powerful forces acting on the Jewish people**
 - Modern-day Israel thus came from the desire of Jews worldwide to live in peace in their historical homeland of Israel
 - This movement gained much momentum from the Jewish Holocaust of WW 2 (1939-1946), but preparations can be traced back to the 1800s

Zionism

- **“Zionism” is a political ideology focused on bringing Jews together in the Israeli homeland**
 - **1882:** first wave of European Jewish immigration to Palestine (modern-day Israel)
 - To understand the context for Zionism’s impact on Israel, consider these population figures from just before 1882

Palestine’s Population by Religious Group, 1878

Group	Population
Muslim	403,000
Jews	16,000
Christian	46,000
Palestine Total	465,000

Other Claims

- **The preceding table shows that the Jewish people are only one important group with a claim to land in modern Israel**
 - Modern-day Arabs are the latest generation of people groups who have lived in Israel since the diaspora of the Jews (circa AD 425)
 - The lengthy and continuous history of Arabs in Israel also gives Arabs a compelling and meaningful land claim we cannot easily dismiss

The 20th Century

- **A variety of political events and agreements came together to create the foundation of modern Israel**
 - **World War 1:** defeat of the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), bringing Palestine under British rule (as of 1916)
 - **Balfour Declaration (1917):** promise of help to the Jewish population
 - **1920s:** Jewish National Fund purchased land from absentee Arab owners, evicted Arab residents

TNT The 20th Century

- A variety of political events and agreements came together to create the foundation of modern Israel
 - World War 2: the Holocaust and a surge in Jewish emigration to Israel (still British rule)
 - Immediately after World War 2, the population of Palestine had changed to look like this:

Group	Population
Muslim	1,269,000
Jews	608,000

TNT The 20th Century

- So the creation of modern Israel had an immediate and important impact on the region
 - Re-introduction of Jews to Israel in large numbers
 - But what to do about the Arabs who occupied the land for centuries?

TNT The 20th Century

- A partition plan was created to divide up the land immediately following WW 2
 - As the plan put it, replace the British Mandate with “an independent Arab State, an independent Jewish State, and the City of Jerusalem” (Jerusalem being under the control of the United Nations)
 - This plan was of course not without controversy

The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine



Q: Are there any issues you can see from the boundaries shown on this map?

Why give separate status for Jerusalem?

TNT The 20th Century

- The partition plan led to the withdrawal of the British and the proclamation of the state of Israel (1948)
 - Since that time, Arabs and Jews have been engaged in a variety of armed conflicts
 - A few from the first formative decades of Israel's existence:
 - Arab-Israeli War (1948-49)
 - Six Day War (1967)
 - War of Attrition (1969-70)
 - Munich Massacre (1972)

The region after the Six Day War (1967)



TNT The 20th Century

- **The conflict obviously continues**
 - Some change in the territory controlled by Israel, but disagreement persists over the ultimate borders and organization of the territory
- **A few recent issues:**
 - Building of a security wall around the West Bank,
 - Status of Israeli settlements in contested territories,
 - Relationship between Israel and neighboring Arab populations (especially those living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank)

TNT The 20th Century

- **One of the biggest ongoing points of contention relates to Jerusalem**
 - A video case study can help us gain a better view of the region and the issues we've started to explore
 - The city of Jerusalem is a microcosm of the wider issues that impact the state of Israel
 - Issues that are difficult when considering a larger region take on even greater complexity when we try to solve within a single urban setting

TNT Case Study: Jerusalem

- **We will view a video now focused on the issues that divide Jerusalem**
 - As you view, identify the key groups mentioned in the video, and the cases each makes in support of their views

Sacred Space, Secular States?