Conflicts in the Middle East

For decades, the Middle East has been the focus of conflicts that have had a global impact. The Middle East commands vast oil resources and key waterways such as the Persian Gulf. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union wanted access to the oil and the waterways. Since the end of the Cold War, Western nations have acted to prevent regional powers from interfering with the region’s oil supply. Meanwhile, the persistent dispute between Israelis and Palestinian Arabs has added to tensions.

Arabs and Israelis Fight Over Land
Modern Israel was established in 1948 in accordance with the United Nations Partition Plan. The Palestinian Arabs regarded the UN action as illegitimate and rejected the state offered to them. Conflicting claims to this land led to repeated violence. After the 1948 war that followed Israel’s founding, Israel and its Arab neighbors fought three more wars, in 1956, 1967, and 1973. In these wars, Israel defeated Arab forces and gained more land. Between the wars, Israel faced guerrilla and terrorist attacks. Repeatedly, the United States tried to bring about peace.

Israel Controls the Occupied Territories
In the 1967 war, in response to hostility by its neighbors, Israeli forces took control of territories occupied by Jordan and Egypt since 1948, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. They also took control of the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. In 1973, these nations attacked Israel on Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days of the Jewish year.
In the 1973 war, Arabs failed to regain the regions they had lost to Israel, called by Palestinians the occupied territories. Israel's government later helped Jewish settlers build homes in settlements in these territories, causing more bitterness among the Palestinians.

**Palestinian Attacks Bring Israeli Response** For decades, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) led the struggle against Israel. Headed by Yasser Arafat, the PLO had deep support among Palestinians. The PLO called for the destruction of Israel. It attacked Israel at home and abroad. The PLO gained world attention with airplane hijackings and the killing of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic games.

In 1987, Palestinians in the occupied territories started to resist Israel with intifadas, or uprisings. Demanding an end to Israeli occupation, young Palestinians stoned and fired on Israeli troops. Suicide bombers blew up buses, stores, and clubs in Israel, killing many civilians. Israel responded by sealing off and raiding Palestinian towns and targeting terrorist leaders. Many Palestinian civilians lost their lives in these raids.

**Seeking Peace** Despite the violence, the United States, the UN, and other nations pushed for peace. Golda Meir, Israel's first woman prime minister, was planning peace talks when Arab nations attacked in 1973. As you have read, Israel and Egypt signed a peace accord in 1979. Israel then returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. In 1994, Jordan's King Hussein made peace with Israel. However, talks between Syria and Israel failed over various issues, including control of the Golan Heights.

In 1993, Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (rah BEEN) signed the Oslo Accords. This plan gave Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank limited self-rule under a Palestinian Authority. The PLO recognized Israel's right to exist and pledged to stop terrorist attacks on Israel. Arafat led the Palestinian Authority until his death in 2004.

A City Sacred to Many

Jerusalem is dotted with many places that are sacred to the Jewish people, Christians, and Muslims. This photograph shows the Western Wall, a Jewish holy place. In the background is the Dome of the Rock, an important Islamic shrine. How might Jerusalem's sacred status make it harder to resolve competing Israeli and Palestinian Arab claims to the city?
Independent Practice

- Have students fill in the Outline Map Israel and the Occupied Territories.
- Viewpoints: To help students better understand the different views on the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, have them read the selection The Creation of the State of Israel and complete the worksheet.

Primary Source: To provide students with one solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have them read the selection Sowing “Seeds of Peace” by Sara Rimer and complete the worksheet.

Monitor Progress

- As students fill in their flowcharts, circulate to make sure they can trace the sequence of events in Middle East conflicts. For a completed version of the flowchart, see Note Taking Transparencies, 200
- Circulate to make sure students are filling in their Outline Maps accurately. Administer the Geography Quiz.

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Over time, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has fueled the anger of radical Islamist groups around the world. The growing popularity of Hamas and Hezbollah, a radical Islamist group based in Lebanon, created more conflict. These groups reject Israel’s right to exist and condemn its ally, the United States, as well as moderate Arab governments involved in the peace process.

By the early 2000s, the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the UN supported a plan known as the “road map” to peace in the Middle East. It supports a two-state solution, with peaceful coexistence between Israel and a stable, democratic Palestinian state. To achieve this, it called for an end to violence and terrorism. Some Israelis and Palestinian leaders accepted the plan, while Iran and radical Islamist groups rejected it.

**Checkpoint**  What obstacles have prevented peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

### Civil War Ravages Lebanon

Historically, Lebanon was a thriving center of commerce. Its population included diverse ethnic and religious groups. After Lebanon won independence, the government depended on a delicate balance among Arab Christian sects, Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and Druze, people with a religion related to Islam. Arab Christians held the most power, but local strongmen controlled their own districts with private armies.

**Growing Tensions**  By the 1970s, the Arab-Israeli conflict was contributing to problems in nearby Lebanon. As Palestinian refugees fled into Lebanon after each new conflict with Israel, Lebanon’s Muslim population grew to outnumber Christians. Tensions rose as PLO guerrillas disguised as refugees then crossed the border to attack Israel.

### History Background

**Shites and Sunnis**  The split between Sunni and Shiite Muslims dates back to the middle 600s a.d., just a few decades after Islam first appeared. Muhammad’s son-in-law, named Ali, was the fourth caliph, or spiritual and temporal ruler, of Islam after Muhammad. He died in a struggle between his followers and others. The Shites believe that only Ali and his descendants are the legitimate leaders of the Islamic world. Shites number between 60 and 80 million people, which is about one in every ten Muslims. They are a majority in Iran and Iraq, though there are sizable Shiite communities in other nations. Shites have rarely had political power outside of modern Iran. Shiite religious leaders have guided Iran’s government since the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Some Israelis and Palestinians, such as the men in this photograph, have chosen peaceful dialogue rather than violence as a way to bridge their differences. Dialogue between the two sides offers the best hope for ending this regional conflict.

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**Vocabulary Builder**

**diverse**  adj. multiple, varied, different

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**Thinking Critically**

1. **Graph Skills**  How does economic output in the West Bank and Gaza Strip compare with that in Israel?
2. **Draw Conclusions**  How might violence by both sides tend to prolong the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

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**Civil War Ravages Lebanon**

**Instruct**

- **Introduce**: Vocabulary Builder  Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Ask them to recall the overflow of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. Ask students to speculate why one conflict in a region with diverse groups living in close contact can fuel other conflicts so easily.

- **Teach**  Discuss the delicate political balance among ethnic and religious groups in independent Lebanon. Use the Numbered Heads Strategy (TE, p. T229) and ask **How did the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affect the delicate balance of power in Lebanon?**  (It added Palestinian Muslims to Lebanon, such that they outnumbered Christians. Attacks on Israel from Lebanon brought Israeli counterattacks.)

- **Quick Activity**  Organize students to debate the following statement: Israel had the right to attack PLO bases in Lebanon as a way of protecting itself.

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**Independent Practice**

Ask students to find news articles describing the current situation in Lebanon. Have students write a paragraph comparing recent developments to the situation described in the text. How has it changed? How has Lebanon’s situation remained the same?

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**Monitor Progress**

Read aloud the red heading and the black headings that follow. Ask students to briefly summarize each subsection.

**Answers**

- Obstacles included land claims by Palestinians within Israel, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and conflicting claims to Jerusalem.

**Thinking Critically**

1. Economic output is much lower in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
2. Violence by each side would tend to increase distrust and calls for vengeance toward the other side.
Iraq’s History of Conflict

Instruct

- **Introduce** Display a current newspaper describing the situation in Iraq. Then ask students what they know about Iraqi history, including the time prior to Saddam Hussein and the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. Remind students of Iraq’s oil wealth. Ask them to predict how this might play a role in conflicts in Iraq.

- **Teach** Review Saddam Hussein’s rise to power. Discuss why Saddam Hussein seized land from Iran, invaded Kuwait, and defined UN restrictions. Invite students’ thoughts on the U.S.-led invasion of 2002, and on the events that have followed in Iraq. Ask students what they think will happen next in Iraq.

- **Quick Activity** Display Color Transparency 197: Ethnoreligious Groups in Iraq. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to guide a discussion on the reasons that ethnoreligious distribution has contributed to Iraq’s history of conflict.

Independent Practice

Direct students’ attention to the photos on this page and the next. Have them write a caption that could fit with the two pictures if they were displayed together. Captions should explain how Iraq’s situation changed from one picture to the other.

Monitor Progress

Check Reading and Note Taking Study Guide entries for student understanding.

Answer

- It added Muslims, such that Muslims outnumbered Christians. This upset the balance of power among Lebanon’s ethnic groups. It also led to conflict with Israel.

Civil War and Conflict With Israel

In 1975, Lebanon was plunged into civil war. Christian and Muslim militias, or armed groups of citizen soldiers, battled each other. In 1982, Israel invaded southern Lebanon to stop cross-border attacks. Syria occupied eastern Lebanon. UN peacekeepers tried to end the fighting but withdrew after hundreds were killed by suicide bombers. After 16 years, Lebanese leaders finally restored order. Beirut, the ruined capital, was slowly rebuilt.

Deep divisions remained in Lebanon. Rival militias controlled different regions. In 2006, Hezbollah attacked Israel from southern Lebanon, sparking a war that lasted just over a month. The war killed civilians in both Israel and Lebanon and caused widespread damage across Lebanon. Despite the costs, Hezbollah, backed by Syria and Iran, remained popular among Lebanon’s Shiite Muslims. In 2008, a new power-sharing agreement was reached in Lebanon. The agreement increased Hezbollah’s power, but contained a pledge that no faction would use its weapons within Lebanon.

**Checkpoint** How did an influx of Palestinians contribute to conflict in Lebanon?

Iraq’s History of Conflict

Since the 1950s, ethnic and religious divisions, oil resources, and border disputes have led to conflict in Iraq. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union competed for influence in Iraq, which had vast oil reserves and was strategically located on the Persian Gulf.

Iraq was carved out of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. Its population included Sunni and Shiite Arabs as well as Kurds. Although Shiites formed a majority in Iraq, Sunni Arabs controlled the government. Kurds, who lived in the north, distrusted the government and wanted self-rule. Divisions among these groups fed tensions in Iraq.

The Iran-Iraq War

In 1980, Iraq dictator, Saddam Hussein, took advantage of turmoil in neighboring Iran following its Islamic revolution by seizing a disputed border region. His action sparked a long, costly war. Iraq used superior weapons and poison gas to stop waves of Iranian soldiers. After both sides attacked foreign oil tankers and oil fields in the Persian Gulf, the United States sent naval forces to protect shipping lanes. The war ended in a stalemate in 1988. For both Iran and Iraq, the human and economic toll was enormous.

During the war, Saddam Hussein brutally repressed a Kurdish revolt in the north. He also used chemical weapons on Kurdish civilians. His actions sparked outrage and charges of genocide.

The 1991 Gulf War

In 1990, Iraq invaded its oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait. Saddam Hussein claimed that Kuwait was historically part of Iraq. In fact, he wanted control of Kuwait’s vast oil fields and greater access to the Persian Gulf.

The United States saw Saddam’s move not only as illegal, but also as a threat to its ally, Saudi Arabia, and to the oil resources of the region. It formed an international coalition to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. In the 1991 Gulf War, the U.S.-led coalition operated under the UN banner. It quickly crushed Iraqi forces and freed Kuwait.
Despite defeat, Saddam Hussein remained in power. He brutally crushed revolts by Shiite Muslims and the minority Kurds. He used torture and terror to impose his will.

**Saddam Defies the UN** To protect the Shiites and Kurds, the UN set up no-fly zones, or areas where Iraqi aircraft were banned. The UN also tried to discover if Saddam Hussein was building weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), or nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. It imposed economic sanctions on Iraq to limit its oil sales and its use of oil profits. For years, Saddam Hussein defied the UN.

**U.S. Forces Invade** After the 2001 terrorist attacks, the United States claimed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was supporting terrorists. It formed a coalition that invaded Iraq in 2003. Coalition forces toppled Saddam, who was later tried and executed for war crimes by a new Iraqi government.

Backed by U.S. and coalition forces, Shiite, Kurdish, and Sunni leaders wrote a constitution and held national elections in 2005. Efforts to rebuild Iraq were hampered by guerrilla attacks and suicide bombings. Insurgents, or rebels, from rival Shiite and Sunni groups targeted civilians and government workers.

**Civil War Threatens Iraq** By 2005, ethnic and religious divisions had pushed the country to the brink of civil war. The United States and Britain worked to train the Iraqi military and police. In 2007, the United States increased troop levels in a “surge” to end the fighting. The violence and death tolls declined.

Iraq’s Shiite-led government faced many obstacles. It needed to promote reconciliation among bitterly divided factions. Sunnis claimed that the new government failed to represent their interests. Kurds in the north still sought autonomy. Much of the country’s oil industry had been destroyed. An estimated 2 million Iraqi refugees remained outside the country.

Despite the troubles, Iraqi leaders grew more confident. They expanded their security forces and agreed to a withdrawal of all U.S. troops by 2011.

**Checkpoint** Why has conflict persisted in Iraq since the defeat of Saddam Hussein?

### Section 3 Assessment

**Terms, People, and Places**

1. What do each of the terms, people, and places listed at the beginning of the section have in common? Explain.

**Reading Skill:** Recognize Sequence

2. Use your finished flowchart to answer the Focus Question: What are the causes of conflict in the Middle East?

**Comprehension and Critical Thinking**

3. Draw Conclusions: Why has the Arab-Israeli conflict been so difficult to resolve?

4. Identify Central Issues: What were the causes of Lebanon’s civil war?

5. Synthesize Information: Why did the UN impose economic sanctions in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War?

6. Writing About History: Make an Outline. To write a research report, you need to make an outline that organizes information that you have gathered. Suppose that you are writing a research report on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Make an outline that organizes the information in this section about that conflict.

7. Writing About History: Outlines should follow logical structures of main ideas and supporting ideas. These ideas should include the key causes for the Arab-Israeli conflict, such as competing claims to land.

For additional assessment, have students access Progress Monitoring Online at Web Code: nba-3231.

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**Progress Monitoring Online**

For: Self quiz with vocabulary practice

Web Code: naa-3231