



The Middle East



Israel and Palestine

Territorial Boundaries



1947: UN Partition - 2 States; complete failure bc Arabs aim to take over with war.



1967: 6-Day War - occupy West Bank, Gaza, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights.



2020: Current borders, Palestinians have varying degrees of control over West Bank + Gaza Strip. Dispute over Golan Heights. Sinai Peninsula back to Egypt.



- West Bank occupied by Israel and divided into 3 areas:
 - Area A: Palestinian Authority led by Fatah governs and controls its security with its own security forces
 - Area B: PA civilian government control but Israel handles security
 - Area C: Israel fully controls, this is 60% of total Palestinian land
- Gaza Strip: PA gives \$ to Hamas to govern here. Israel blockade so economy is in terrible shape.
- Golan Heights: Western Syria, Israel uses it to conduct airstrikes vs Iranian militias in Syria
- Jerusalem: seen by Israel as Jewish homeland
 - West Jerusalem - fully Israel
 - East Jerusalem - claimed by Palestine as future capital bc holy sites, Israel annexed so officially Israel

2-State Solution and its Barriers

2 State Solution: Israeli State and a Palestinian State (including West Bank and Gaza) that governs itself with no Israeli occupation.

Barriers

Settlements

- 500k Israeli citizens in 130 settlements
- Change facts on the ground
- Illegal under international law
- Water/resource rights
- Results in intifadas

Hammas/PIJ - Gaza

- Rockets at Israel
- PA funds martyrs
- Iran-supported
- Propels right-wing shift in israel

East Jerusalem/Citizenship

- Considered future capital of Palestine yet they have no control
- Question of Israeli citizenship for Palestinians living in occupied land

Right-Wing Shift

- The rise of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party



- Netanyahu = Likud: anti-2 state solution/anti-land for peace
 - Increased settlements, annexation of territory → disincentivizes Palestine from coming to table
 - Corruption allegations ---> 4 elections with no result→ pushing for annexation of Jordan Valley to distract and pull right wing entirely to side
- Gantz = Blue and White: last election→ came into unity coalition govt
 - Netanyahu = 18 months PM, then Gantz 18 months, parliamentary immunity until loses PM seat
 - Flipflopping on annexing more territory

The Role of the United States

-
- Prior = peace broker i.e. Oslo Accords
 - Moved US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem
 - Harmed prospects for peace bc Jerusalem disputed so no longer seen as a truly impartial broker
 - Cut humanitarian aid to UNRWA in Palestine
 - Deal of the Century:
 - Palestinian State possible, allows Israel to keep existing territory and settlements but doesn't explicitly allow new annexation, economic aid to Palestine, gang ridden slum = capital of Palestine
 - Dead on arrival

Risks of Israeli Annexation



New Intifadas

- Hamas/PIJ rocket tests already
- PA now cutting \$ to Hamas, could force Israeli troop occupation

Weaker ties with Arab World

- Increases in coop for cyber, health, anti-Iran before
- Palestine = matter of nationalism for the people so would force ties to be very lowkey

European Sanctions

- Europe - largest trade partner, need European banks to process transactions
- Facing sanctions from pro-Palestine states like Germany and maybe whole EU

A white rectangular frame with a thin border, centered on a dark blue background. The frame is composed of four lines: a top horizontal line, a bottom horizontal line, a left vertical line, and a right vertical line. The word "Afghanistan" is centered within this frame.

Afghanistan



19

Number of years since the
war on terror began in
Afghanistan



100,000

Civilian death toll in 10
years alone



2,300

Number of US soldiers
killed in Afghanistan

Context

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyp7a_RI-oU

- Communist government dealing with dissent → Soviets back them and invade to support → US secret support to mujahideen warlords to kick out Soviets
- After Soviets gone, US ends support → later mujahideen gain support in rural areas, take power, and create Taliban regime - sharia law
- Taliban regime sheltered Osama Bin Laden → sparked invasion and setting up of US-backed government
- Pakistan support thru ISI, esp in border safe havens, to hedge against India

Government Failures: US and Afghanistan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKVDXblpW9Q>

- Corruption within Afghan government
 - Afghan army lacks training, pay, and weapons → can't hold districts on their own without US drones, troop/air support
- 2014: US shifts to training, support role but 2017: Trump troop surge again → both actions don't work
- Economic struggles, lack of reconstruction, youth unemployment → drive recruitment
- Govt factionalism more recently - Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, \$1 billion aid cut until dispute resolved - divided commission created

Recent Events



Pre-Deal

- Taliban winning and taking control of most districts - battlefield upper hand
- US offers negotiation option

Reduction of Violence Deal:

- Doha deal to reduce violence - successful, but not outright ceasefire
- Troop withdrawal conditional upon ending terrorist sheltering, negotiating with Afghan govt i.e. prisoner swaps
- Negotiating team = older, establishment factions

Failures and US considerations

- Radicals dissatisfied by negotiation - Haqqani Network; terrorist communication continues
- Increased recruitment and attacks by ISIS-K
- At least 20 terrorist groups
- Possible plans to withdraw entire troop presence without conditions met

Syria

A disaster of unimaginable proportions

Timeline of Syria

2000-2011: Economic instability, corruption, high unemployment under Bashar al-Assad

2007-2010: severe drought in Syria's breadbasket causes mass migration to cities, led to population shock and unrest

2010-2011: Arab Spring occurs, Syrian people join in uprising

2011: Bashar al-Assad uses deadly force to crack down on protests, they spread, civil war ensues

2011-present: Massive fighting that has devastated Syria

2014: Rise of ISIS

2015: Russian airstrikes in support of Bashar al-Assad

2019: Fall of ISIS after concerted global effort to defeat them

Current state: Bashar al-Assad has essentially won



500,000+

Dead or missing



**5.6 million fled the
country**

6.2 million displaced
internally



Who's involved, and why?

Many Competing Factions

-
- Bashar al-Assad's Government
 - Supported by Russia and Iran (Russia and China blocked many UN resolutions)
 - Russia is a strong ally that already had bases in Syria
 - Assad's government is Shia-led, so other Shia groups, like Lebanon's Hezbollah, are also in the fight
 - Rebels (Free Syrian Army)
 - Supported through equipment from the west—US, UK, and France
 - Turkey allied
 - Israel allied mostly against Iran
 - Saudis against Iran and Qatar
 - Many other groups (including jihadists like Nusra, are ostensibly fighting against Assad)
 - ISIS
 - Huge land grab in the mid-2010s
 - Syrian Kurds fought against them with the help of US and West
 - Turkey doesn't like these Kurds

State of the War

The End of the War != End of Crisis



Widely accepted that “Assad has won”

Rebels still hold insignificant territory, but not enough to challenge the regime

Idlib last remaining major rebel stronghold

Syria is now predictably facing an economic crisis

As of March 2019, 83% of Syrians are below poverty line

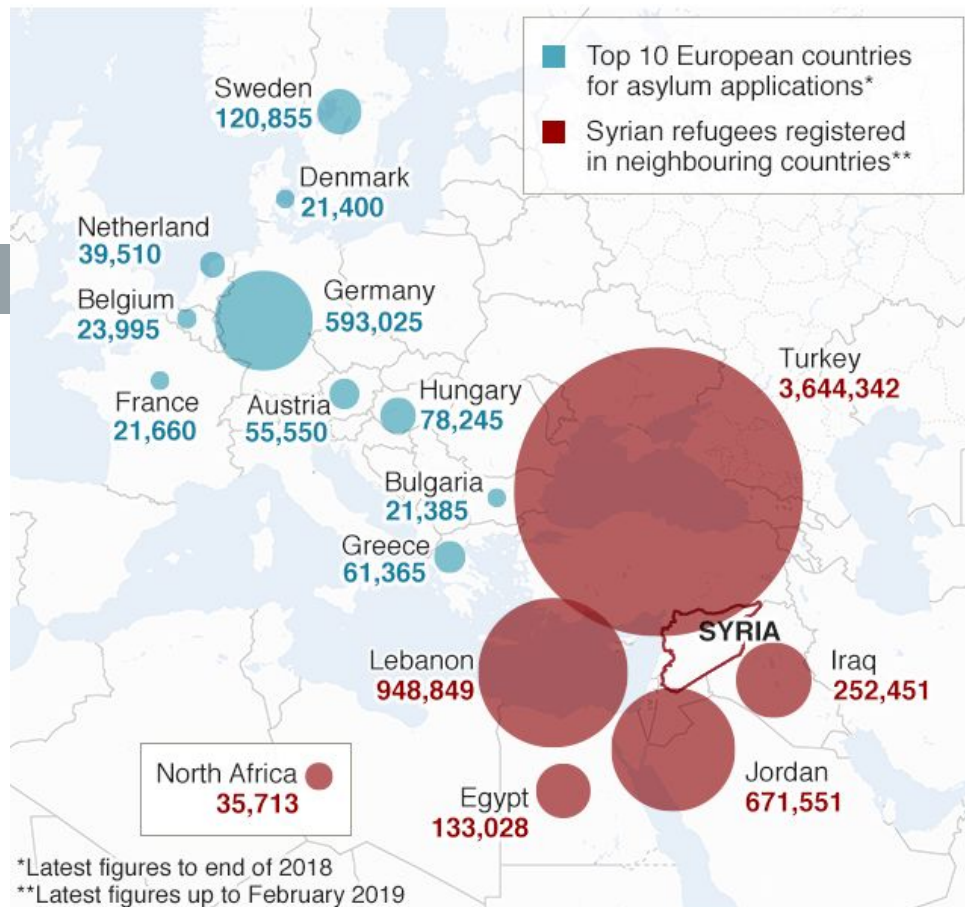
Inflation coupled with price increases for goods

Might be better termed as “Assad has survived”

Regime weak and subservient to outside interests

Massive migration problem

Where have all the Syrian refugees gone?



Source: Eurostat / UNHCR

The Migrant Crisis

-
- Over 1 million people crossed into Europe in 2015
 - Neighboring states like Jordan and Lebanon are also struggling under the strain
 - Has led directly to far-right parties in Europe
 - AfD in Germany
 - Orban in Hungary
 - Kurz in Austria
 - Poland
 - Italy
 - And more
 -



Yemen

A Familiar Tale

2011: Arab Spring caused a shift in power from authoritarian Ali Abdullah Saleh to Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi

2014-2015: Houthi rebels, dissatisfied with Hadi, take over Sanaa, the capital

2014-2015: Saudi Arabia led coalition begins fighting against Houthis

Receives logistical support from US, UK, France

What was supposed to be a quick war (familiar terminology) ended up in half a decade of turmoil (still ongoing)

Houthis are backed by Iran (they are Shia)

2017-present: Saudi blockade of Yemen after a missile launched towards Riyadh

2018: Major coalition offensive

2019: UAE withdraws from coalition



The World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis

100,000+ fatalities

Tens of thousands of children dead from malnourishment (blockade big factor)



80%

24 million people in need of
humanitarian assistance



10 million

“One step from famine”

20 million food-insecure

The Power Players

Saudi Arabia

Iran

The Conflict

-
- The two essential hegemons of the region
 - Saudi represents Sunnis, Iran represents Shias
 - Therefore, other countries will rally around Saudi and Iran as their de facto representative in the region
 - Events
 - 2003: the U.S. overthrew Sunni Saddam Hussein in Iraq—allows for increased Iranian influence there
 - 2011: Arab Spring and subsequent instability allows Saudi Arabia and Iran to flex muscles in proxy conflicts
 - Syria and Yemen come to mind
 - Iran is seen as winning these conflicts and expanding its influence
 - 2017: MBS becomes Saudi Crown Prince
 - Tries to expand influence worldwide
 - Khashoggi killing and other human rights violations
 - Israel is “backing” Saudi against Iran
 - In essence a regional Cold War

The State of Saudi Arabia



The arrival of MBS has rejuvenated Saudi influence

Vision 2030—a huge effort to revolutionize Saudi to become a large player in 2030

MBS allowing women to drive, jailing opposition

Plans in jeopardy due to COVID + price war on oil with Russia, which sent oil prices plummeting

Economic crisis ongoing

MBS largely an enigma on world stage

Rock star to killer to everything else

The State of Iran



In late 2019, widespread unrest in Iran made it the worst state for the regime in recent memory

Deadly crackdown by the government

US left JCPOA in 2018, and with the killing of General Suleimani in January 2020, Iran is no longer following the agreement

Iran had followed the agreement up until that point

Iran is dealing with an economic and currency crisis of its own

Due to COVID and US sanctions

Turkey

The Middle Eastern NATO Member

Recent Break with the West

-
- President Erdogan has ruled for over two decades
 - Authoritarian, strongman, illiberal democracy
 - Halted accession to the EU
 - Conservatism and religious extremism have come to the forefront
 - Used a 2016 coup to crush dissent and opposition
 - Strained relationship with the west
 - Corruption and purging of public servants
 - President Trump essentially allowed a Turkish invasion against the Syrian Kurds, who were US allies in fight against ISIS
 - Emblematic of democratic backsliding and a worrying trend

Source List

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>

<https://theconversation.com/climate-change-and-drought-a-spark-in-igniting-syrias-civil-war-38275>

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>

<https://www.cnn.com/2013/08/27/world/meast/syria-civil-war-fast-facts/index.html>

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2019/06/friends-foes-frenemies-syria-players-fighters/>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/assad-may-have-won-the-syrian-war-but-now-hes-battling-the-economy/2020/01/22/6c9e1d36-360c-11ea-a1ff-c48c1d59a4a1_story.html

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/11/assad-hasnt-won-anything-syria/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

Source List

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/how-the-far-right-has-reshaped-the-refugee-debate-in-europe/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423#:~:text=The%20conflict%20has%20its%20roots,Abdrabbuh%20Mansour%20Hadi%2C%20in%202011.>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42008809>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/storythreads/2020-05-27/the-radical-remake-of-saudi-arabia>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/09/saudi-russia-oil-price-war-was-very-big-mistake-qatar-energy-minister.html>

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/assessing-saudi-vision-2030-a-2020-review/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/world/middleeast/iran-protests-deaths.html>

Source List

<https://www.cfr.org/background/what-status-iran-nuclear-agreement>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48119109>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/10/28/turkey-syria-the-kurds-and-trumps-abandonment-of-foreign-policy>

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-rise-and-fall-of-liberal-democracy-in-turkey-implications-for-the-west/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13746679>