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The United States and the
Middle East: 1914 to 9/11

Scope:

This course examines U.S. relations with the nations of the Middle East since 1914. Although the structure of the course is mainly chronological, four central themes recur throughout the lectures.

The first theme is the growing involvement of the United States in the affairs of the Middle East, a consequence of America’s increasing global power. In the first four decades of the 20th century—except for a brief but important flurry of activity in the late 1910s—U.S. interests in the Middle East were almost entirely missionary, philanthropic, educational, and commercial. This started to change with America’s entry into World War II, which caused U.S. officials, for the first time, to see the geopolitical orientation of the Middle East as vital to American national security. During the war, U.S. military forces occupied large portions of the Middle East, turning Iran into a corridor for supplying the Soviet Union and North Africa into a staging area for invading fascist Italy. After 1945, the Middle East remained vital to U.S. security, both as a staging area for a possible war against the Soviet Union, America’s new adversary, and as a source of oil for Japan and the nations of Western Europe, America’s new Cold War allies. For the first decade and a half of the Cold War era, the United States generally deferred to Britain as the preeminent Western power in the Middle East, but following the Suez crisis of 1956—which demonstrated that Britain could no longer play this role—Washington stepped in to take London’s place. For another couple of decades, the United States and the Soviet Union vied for political and strategic advantage in the Middle East. In the mid-1970s, however, the Soviet position in the region began to decline, foreshadowing and, in a small way contributing to, the demise of the Soviet system in the early 1990s. Now the sole remaining superpower, the United States wields unparalleled power and influence over Middle Eastern affairs.

The second theme of the course is Middle Easterners’ ongoing quest for political independence and self-mastery. In the early decades of the 20th century, Turks, Arabs, Jews, Iranians, and Kurds sought to gain political control over portions of the region, often in opposition to the imperial agendas of European powers. By mid-century, most of these groups, with some important exceptions, had succeeded in establishing formal national independence, but Middle Easterners remained preoccupied with combating external domination, real and perceived. After 1945, as the United States grew more involved in the region’s affairs, it increasingly became the object of indigenous resentment. In Iran and the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s, secular nationalists resisted American pressure to side with the West in the Cold War, while Arab nationalists in particular tried to defeat or contain Israel, which they saw as an instrument of Western power. By the 1970s, secular nationalism was a declining force in Arab and Iranian affairs, increasingly giving way to political Islam, whose rejection of Western influence was far more profound. In the decades since, Islamists have been generally unsuccessful at seizing state power (the Iranian revolution is the major exception to this rule), but they have posed a formidable challenge both to the United States and to existing regimes in the region. Of all the Middle Eastern nations, Turkey and Israel have enjoyed the closest relations with the United States, but they, too, have sometimes chafed under Washington’s constraints on their freedom of action.

The third theme is the difficulty the United States has experienced in balancing diverse, and sometimes conflicting, interests and objectives in the Middle East. After 1945, America’s primary objectives in the region were securing Western access to Middle Eastern oil, preventing the Soviet Union from reaping political or strategic advantage in the area, and ensuring Israel’s security. Pursuing the last of these objectives often complicated the pursuit of the other two. Washington’s close relations with Israel generated anti-American sentiment in the Arab world, providing the Soviet Union with opportunities to increase its political influence in the region. Similarly, during the Yom Kippur War of 1973, President Richard M. Nixon’s decision to airlift military supplies to Israel prompted oil-producing Arab states to impose an embargo on oil shipments to the United States and some European countries, causing major dislocations in the global economy. As the Cold War drew to an end, the imperative of containing the Soviet Union gave way to two new objectives: combating international terrorism and preventing “rogue” states—such as Libya, Iran, and Iraq—from challenging U.S. policies in the region. Both of these objectives have acquired fresh urgency following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but Americans disagree over whether the two goals can, or should, be pursued simultaneously. While President George W. Bush argues that the necessity of disarming Iraq (and, perhaps, overthrowing its government as well) cannot be separated from the effort to defeat Osama bin Laden’s al-Qa’ida network, others insist that Bush’s preoccupation with Iraq has diverted precious
energy and resources from the war against al-Qa’ida. As in previous decades, Washington finds no easy formulas for pursuing its diverse objectives in the Middle East.

The fourth theme is the rising antagonism between Americans and Middle Easterners. In the first four decades of the 20th century, the United States had a relatively benign reputation among Middle Easterners, who appreciated that the United States had no imperial ambitions in the Middle East and who were grateful for the educational, philanthropic, and humanitarian services Americans provided in the region. But once the United States emerged as a global superpower and began pursuing policies that antagonized the broad currents of regional opinion, much of that goodwill turned into bitter resentment. On the American side, there has also been a rising tide of suspicion and anger directed at the dominant cultures of the Middle East. Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims have long proliferated in American culture, but in the early years of the 20th century, those images were relatively benign, romanticizing Middle Eastern society as often as they vilified it. It was only in later years, as the substance of U.S.-Middle Eastern relations grew angrier and more violent, that popular images of Middle Easterners became more uniformly threatening.
Scope: The first lecture establishes the thematic and historical underpinnings of the whole course. After setting forth our four main themes—increasing American power, indigenous political aspirations, conflicting interests and goals, and rising mutual antagonism—the lecture briefly outlines the political situation in the Middle East before the First World War, describing the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the growing military, political, economic, and cultural encroachment of the European powers into the empire. We then discuss Americans’ private interactions with Middle Easterners up to 1914, paying particular attention to the activities of American Protestant missionaries. Next, we describe America’s growing international assertiveness following the Spanish-American War of 1898. We end with the outbreak of World War I, an event that will bring Washington into the center of great-power deliberations over the political fate of the Middle East.

Outline

I. Although the structure of the course is mainly chronological, four central themes recur throughout the lectures.
   A. The first theme is the growing involvement of the United States in the affairs of the Middle East, a consequence of America’s increasing global power.
      1. During World War II, U.S. officials came to see the geopolitical orientation of the Middle East as vital to American national security and began, for the first time, to devise deliberate Middle East polices.
      2. After World War II, the United States gradually supplanted Britain as the preeminent Western power in the Middle East; it then vanquished the Soviet Union, emerging at century’s end as the sole remaining superpower, wielding unparalleled power and influence over Middle Eastern affairs.
   B. The second theme of the course is Middle Easterners’ ongoing quest for political independence and self-mastery.
      1. From the 1910s on, Turks, Arabs, Jews, Iranians, and Kurds have fought to acquire or maintain political control over portions of the region, often in opposition to the designs of outside powers.
      2. After 1945, as the United States grew more involved in the region’s affairs, it increasingly became the object of indigenous resentment.
      3. By the 1970s, secular nationalism was a declining force in Arab and Iranian affairs, increasingly giving way to political Islam, whose rejection of Western influence was far more profound. These Islamists have, however, been generally unsuccessful at seizing state power, though they have posed a formidable threat to the United States and to existing regimes in the region.
      4. Though Israel and Turkey have enjoyed the closest relations with the United States, they have sometimes chafed under Washington’s restraints on their freedom of action.
   C. The third theme is the difficulty the United States has experienced in balancing conflicting interests and objectives in the Middle East.
      1. During World War I, for example, Woodrow Wilson’s devotion to the principle of national self-determination conflicted with the imperial agendas of his wartime allies.
      2. After 1945, America’s primary objectives in the region were securing Western access to Middle Eastern oil, preventing the Soviet Union from reaping political or strategic advantage in the area, and ensuring Israel’s security.
      3. During the Cold War, America’s close ties to Israel made it harder to convince Arab countries to side with the United States against the Soviet Union.
      4. As the Cold War drew to an end, the imperative of containing the Soviet Union gave way to two new objectives: combating international terrorism and preventing “rogue” states—such as Libya, Iran, and Iraq—from challenging U.S. policies in the region.
      5. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, however, Americans disagreed over whether seeking “regime change” in Iraq would advance, or detract from, the effort to defeat al-Qa’ida.
   D. The fourth theme is increasing antagonism between Americans and Middle Easterners.
      1. In the early decades of the 20th century, the United States had a relatively benign reputation in the Arab world.
2. As the United States emerged as a superpower, however, and began wielding powers in ways that conflicted with the interests of many Middle Easterners, much of the goodwill turned to bitter resentment.
3. The United States played a key role in bringing the state of Israel into being, a development that infuriated the Arab world, especially as it resulted in the uprooting of an existing Palestinian Arab society.
4. Americans, for their part, have always harbored Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims, but in the early 20th century, those stereotypes were often romanticized and benign.
5. In more recent decades, however, popular American images of Middle Easterners became far more threatening.
6. Americans and Middle Easterners have drawn ever closer to each other in recent years as more Americans have lived and worked in the Middle East and more Middle Easterners have emigrated to the United States.
7. It is hard to avoid the conclusion, however, that in the aftermath of September 11, negative impressions, on both sides, significantly outweigh the positive ones.

II. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, two simultaneous developments—the accelerating decline of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the United States as a world power—created the conditions for increased U.S. involvement in the Middle East.
A. For several centuries before 1900, almost all the societies of the Middle East were under the control of the Ottoman Empire.
B. For the last two or three centuries, the power of the Ottoman Empire had begun to decline relative to that of the European powers.
   1. In the 19th century, a number of those powers, especially Britain and France, had started to encroach on portions of the empire, though in many cases, Ottoman authority remained formally intact.
   2. Iran enjoyed nominal independence, but it was heavily dominated by Russia and Britain.

III. In the 19th century, the U.S. government had no real interest in the politics of the Middle East.
A. The government did, however, have an obligation to protect the lives and property of American citizens who traveled or lived in that region.
B. Of these Americans, Protestant missionaries made up the largest and most prominent single group. They lived and worked throughout the lands of the Ottoman Empire and, to a lesser extent, in Iran.
C. In the second half of the 19th century, most of the attention the U.S. government devoted to the Middle East was aimed at ensuring that local governments did not trample on the rights of these American missionaries.

IV. In the early years of the 20th century, however, the U.S. government began to involve itself in political questions in the Mediterranean region.
A. A case in point was the Moroccan crisis of 1905–1906, in which France and Germany vied for influence in that country.
B. In early 1906, Roosevelt convened an international conference over Morocco in Algeciras, Spain, the outcome of which was a general affirmation of France’s dominant position in Morocco.
C. For Roosevelt, the substance of the dispute was far less important than the opportunity for the United States to signal its growing willingness to take part in great-power deliberations, even in an area as peripheral to American concerns as the Mediterranean region.

V. In the following decade, the United States would thrust itself into great-power diplomacy over the Middle East itself. The occasion for this involvement would be the political disruptions resulting from the First World War.
A. To a considerable degree, World War I has its origins in the Near and Middle East.
   1. The Balkan crisis that sparked World War I was intimately connected to the simultaneous unraveling of two major empires, the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
   2. The combination of growing instability in the Balkans with the existence of a rigid European alliance system eventually sparked the First World War.
B. In the summer of 1914, Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by a Serbian militant with informal links to the Serbian government. The resulting crisis activated the mutual security obligations among the major powers, plunging all of Europe into war.

C. In late 1914, Turkey joined the war on the side of Germany and Austria, causing the conflagration to spread to the Middle East.

VI. World War I had a devastating effect on Middle Eastern societies, less from the battlefield carnage itself than from the immense demographic and economic dislocations the war brought about.

A. Hundreds of thousands of people were uprooted from their homes, forced into exile, or in some cases, subject to mass killings.

B. Millions more fell victim to poverty, famine, and disease because the war effort disrupted trade, transportation, and sanitation systems throughout the Ottoman Empire.

C. These dislocations would contribute to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as a whole.

D. That collapse, in turn, would bring Washington into the center of great-power deliberations over the political fate of the Middle East.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways did the accelerating decline of the Ottoman Empire set the stage for increased American involvement in the Middle East?
2. What developments in 19th-century American life—cultural, political, industrial, and economic—caused Americans to take an increasing interest in Middle Eastern affairs?
Lecture Two

Wilson and the Breakup of the Ottoman Empire

Scope: In this lecture, we discuss President Woodrow Wilson’s actions in the Middle East during and immediately following World War I. We begin with U.S. policy toward the Middle East during the war, paying special attention to three major issues: the Armenian crisis, Zionism, and European imperialism. We then proceed to the immediate postwar period, in which the same three issues continue to define Washington’s approach to the Middle East. In examining both wartime and postwar American policy, we see how Wilson’s attachment to the principle of national self-determination, and the ethnocentrism with which he defined the concept, drove his efforts to shape the postwar settlement in the Middle East. The lecture ends with the U.S. Senate’s rejection of Wilson’s internationalist vision and with America’s withdrawal from active involvement in world politics.

Outline

I. Generally speaking, it was not until World War II that the United States began following systematic and sustained “policies” toward the Middle East. There was, however, one important exception to this rule: the American experience during and immediately following World War I.

A. In the late 1910s, President Wilson did become deeply interested in the political disposition of the countries of the Middle East.

B. He made a brief but intensive effort to influence the postwar settlement that the victorious powers of Europe imposed on the region.

C. Wilson’s effort failed, however, when key segments of the American body politic rejected his ambitious agenda.

II. Throughout World War I, the U.S. government saw events in the Middle East as a sideshow to the main action in Europe. But there were three main issues that forced the United States to pay close attention to the Middle East: the Armenian question, Zionism, and European imperialism.

A. The first issue surrounded the Turkish government’s crushing of an Armenian uprising in 1915, which resulted in the death or displacement of hundreds of thousands of Turkish Armenians. American missionaries played a key role in addressing this humanitarian catastrophe.

1. The Armenians were a Christian people whose ancient homeland had been swallowed up by Turkey and Russia. The Turkish government attack on its Armenian population was, at least at first, a byproduct of warfare on the Turkish-Russian front in World War I.

2. In Turkey, American missionaries established temporary hospitals and shelters and distributed food among the starving refugees.

3. In the United States, missionary organizations and other sympathetic groups conducted a massive campaign to call attention to the Armenians’ plight and solicit donations for their relief.

B. The second issue that drew the United States into Middle Eastern affairs was Zionism.

1. In 1917, Zionist leaders convinced the British government to issue a statement, known as the Balfour Declaration, proclaiming Britain’s support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

2. The U.S. government played a role, albeit a passive one, in the issuing of this declaration.

3. At the urging of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, Wilson told the British he supported the proposed declaration, emboldening them to issue it.

4. In endorsing the Balfour Declaration, Wilson apparently gave little consideration to the possibility that establishing a “national home for the Jewish people in Palestine” might conflict with the concept of national self-determination—a principle that Wilson would soon present to the world as an indispensable ingredient in a just and stable world order.

C. The third issue that drew the Wilson administration into Middle Eastern affairs was that of European imperialism.

1. The Bolsheviks denounced World War I as an imperialist conflict and, to prove their claim, published a document discovered in the Czech archives detailing a secret 1916 agreement between Britain and
France, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, a postwar plan whereby Britain and France would carve up the territory of the Ottoman Empire and add it to their own empires.

2. On entering the war, Wilson was eager to demonstrate that the conflict was not simply a squabble over imperial spoils. In 1918, he issued his famous Fourteen Points, partly to answer the Bolshevik critique.

3. Point Twelve of the Fourteen Points called for the breakup of the Ottoman Empire.

4. Wilson said that Turkey proper should remain a sovereign state, but that the empire’s non-Turkish components should be assured “an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.”

III. Immediately after the war, U.S. policy toward the Middle East continued to be defined by the same three issues, European imperialism, Zionism, and the Armenian question. Each of these issues revealed both the power and the limitations of Wilson’s conception of national self-determination.

A. The issues of European imperialism and Zionism arose simultaneously in 1919, when Wilson sent a special commission to the Middle East, known as the King-Crane Commission, to ascertain the political aspirations of the native inhabitants. The King-Crane Commission reached two major conclusions:

1. It found that the people of Syria were implacably opposed to the establishment of a French mandate over Syria. The Syrians’ first choice was immediate Syrian independence; failing that, they preferred an American mandate over Syria, with a British mandate coming in as a distant third choice.

2. The commission also concluded that the Zionist program could not be implemented without resulting in the “complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine.” This would be a “gross violation” of the principle of national self-determination.

B. Despite the findings of the King-Crane Commission, the Wilson administration endorsed the following League of Nations decisions, suggesting the limitations of Wilson’s commitment to national self-determination.

1. France would be awarded a single mandate over Syria and Lebanon.

2. Britain would receive separate mandates over Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine.

3. Britain would implement the Balfour Declaration in Palestine.

4. Of all the Arab nations east of Egypt, only Saudi Arabia was to receive immediate independence.

C. The Armenian issue resurfaced in 1919–1920, when Britain and France urged the United State to assume two mandates on Turkish territory.

1. The first mandate would be over Constantinople and the Turkish straits.

2. The second mandate would be over a separate Armenian republic to the east, carved out of eastern Turkey.

D. Wilson steered clear of Constantinople and the straits, but he did request U.S. Senate approval for an Armenian mandate. The U.S. Senate rejected this proposal, along with Wilson’s more general vision of active American involvement in world affairs.

E. With the United States refusing to assume the Turkish mandates, the burden reverted to Britain and France.

F. Neither country, however, was interested in occupying Turkey, and the proposed Turkish mandates were abandoned altogether.

G. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne freed Turkey of allied occupation. Turkey, now under the leadership of Mustafa Kamal (later Ataturk), regained control over Armenia and the straits.

H. The postwar settlement that emerged in 1922 is of crucial importance because it established territorial boundaries that, with few exceptions, would become permanent frontiers.

I. By this time, the United States had all but forsworn political involvement in the Middle East, a position it would maintain for the next two decades.

Suggested Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. What three issues forced Americans to pay closer attention to Middle Eastern affairs during World War I?
2. How faithfully did Woodrow Wilson adhere to the principle of national self-determination in the Middle East?
Outcome of San Remo Conference, 1920
Lecture Three
The Interwar Period

Scope: Because official U.S. involvement in the Middle East was minimal during the interwar years, this lecture focuses on nonofficial ties between Americans and the Middle East. We begin with the “Arabesque” craze that swept American popular culture in the 1920s, partly a result of the belated publicity surrounding Col. T. E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”) and his wartime exploits. We learn how films, such as The Sheik; songs, such as “The Sheik of Araby”; and dances, such as the “hootchie-cootchie,” were aimed at satisfying the Jazz Age appetite for all things Arabian. As we proceed to the 1930s, our focus shifts to the activities of private oil prospectors in Saudi Arabia and to the growing activism of American Zionists in response to Hitler’s persecution of German Jews.

Outline

I. Because official U.S. involvement in the Middle East was minimal during the interwar years, this lecture focuses on nonofficial ties between Americans and the Middle East. These ties took the form of popular infatuation with Middle Eastern culture (or at least a stereotyped conception of it) and involvement by private individuals and organizations in Middle Eastern affairs.
   A. World War I had radically changed the face of the Middle East by bringing about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.
      1. The empire’s non-Turkish holdings were stripped away from it and Turkey emerged as a modern republic under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal.
      2. In the 1920s and 1930s, Kemal, who was called Ataturk (“father of the Turks”), launched an ambitious campaign to recast Turkey as a modern, Westernized nation.
   B. The Arab nations that were newly freed from Ottoman control found themselves under the authority of the League of Nations mandates.
      1. France got a single mandate over Syria and Lebanon that remained in place until World War II.
      2. Britain received separate mandates over Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine. Iraq was granted formal independence in 1932, though Britain continued to exercise de facto control over Iraqi decision-making. Transjordan received a similar sort of “independence” in 1946. In Palestine, Britain set about implementing the Balfour Declaration.
      3. Egypt was not placed under a formal mandate but remained subject to military occupation by Britain.
   C. On the other side of the former Ottoman Empire, Iran came under the rule of an army officer, Reza Khan, who took the name of Reza Shah Pahlavi and sought to implement a program to modernize, Westernize, and secularize Iranian society.

II. The Republican administrations of the 1920s understood that the American public had a low tolerance for international activism.
   A. Washington refrained from launching bold initiatives in its own right and, instead, used the private sector, especially American banks, as an instrument of policy.
   B. Congress, too, reflected the public’s isolationist mood by passing the National Origins Act of 1924, which limited or prohibited immigration into the United States from places other than Northern and Western Europe.

III. In the areas of technology and mass culture, however, Americans were becoming more, not less, connected to the outside world.
   A. Radio, cinema, aviation, and cheaper ocean travel afforded Americans greater exposure to foreign lands and cultures.
   B. Another reason for the growing cosmopolitanism of American culture was the recent experience of the world war.
      1. For a brief but vivid period, hundreds of thousands of Americans had traveled abroad for the first time.
      2. American newspapers had been full of lively dispatches about battles, peace conferences, revolutions, epidemics, and famines in faraway lands.
IV. One part of the world that World War I opened up to ordinary Americans was the Middle East.
   A. During the war, a number of Arab tribes had mounted an uprising against the Ottoman Empire. A British army intelligence officer named T. E. Lawrence had helped train and advise the Arab tribes.
   B. In the latter stages of the war, Lawrence was “discovered” by an American publicist named Lowell Thomas, who traveled to Arabia and spent a few months in Lawrence’s company.
   C. After the war, Thomas put together a multimedia presentation about Lawrence’s exploits that was shown in theaters and lecture halls throughout the English-speaking world.
   D. In the United States, the celebrity of “Lawrence of Arabia” helped launch an Arabian craze in the 1920s.
      1. Hip young Americans affected Arab-style dress, crooned Arabesque love ballads, and gyrated to the hootchie-cootchie, a sexually suggestive dance meant to approximate Middle Eastern belly-dancing.
      2. Americans also flocked to “sun and sand” movies, in which swashbuckling heroes rode, fought, and romanced their way across the deserts of Arabia and North Africa.
      3. The biggest star of this genre was an Italian-American actor named Rudolph Valentino, whose elegant gestures and smoldering good looks generated a huge, devoted following, consisting mainly of teenaged girls and young women.

V. To be sure, during the interwar years, America’s engagement with Middle Eastern themes was not entirely frivolous.
   A. In the 1930s, some of the concerns that would define the post–World War II period began forcing Americans to take a serious look at Middle Eastern events.
   B. Two of those issues were Zionism and oil.

VI. During World War I, the Zionist movement had grown rapidly in the United States. After the war, however, American Zionism declined.
   A. The improvement of living conditions for Middle Eastern Jews following the end of the war, combined with the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, convinced many American Zionists that their work was done.
   B. The onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s brought about a further decline in American Zionism. Few American Jews had the resources to devote to Zionist activities.

VII. All this started to change in 1933, when Hitler came to power and began persecuting German Jews.
   A. Between 1933 and 1939, roughly one-third of Germany’s Jewish population fled the country.
   B. Because of the U.S. State Department’s strict interpretation of the National Origins Act, however, only about 8,500 German Jews were admitted into the United States each year, on average.
   C. Other Western countries, too, severely restricted Jewish immigration. They feared that an influx of impoverished and jobless refugees would strain their resources.

VIII. The difficulty of settling German Jews in Western nations brought about a revival of Zionism among American Jews.
   A. Like their counterparts in Europe and Palestine, American Zionists pressured Britain to increase the number of European Jews it allowed to enter Palestine each year.
   B. Initially, Britain responded favorably to this pressure.
   C. In the late 1930s, however, just as the plight of German Jews was becoming truly desperate, Britain began to rethink the wisdom of creating a Jewish state in Palestine, on account of Palestinian Arabs’ strenuous opposition to the project.
      1. The British government’s White Paper of 1939 placed strict limits on Jewish immigration to Palestine
      2. The White Paper also announced that such emigration would end in a few years’ time.
   D. Thus, on the eve of World War II, the Zionist movement appeared to have suffered a crippling blow.

IX. The second major issue that drew Americans into Middle Eastern affairs was oil.
   A. The growing importance of the automobile dramatically increased America’s reliance on foreign oil. By the 1920s, American oil companies were launched on an intensive search for reliable overseas reserves.
1. In 1928, a consortium of American oil companies signed an agreement with three other oil companies—one British, one French, and one Dutch—whereby all four parties pledged to cooperate with one another in exploring for oil in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire.

2. This *Red Line Agreement* made it possible for American oil companies to extract oil from Iraq, at that time, the only country in the former Ottoman Empire with large, proven oil reserves.

B. In the early 1930s, King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia permitted a team of American geologists to conduct a survey of his kingdom.

1. On the basis of this survey, an American oil company, Standard Oil of California (SOCAL), put in a bid with the Saudi government for an oil concession, which was granted in 1933.

2. In 1938, geologists working for SOCAL, which had since merged with a number of other American companies, struck oil in Saudi Arabia.

3. These American oil companies were to enjoy a virtual monopoly on Saudi oil.

4. Given the magnitude of Saudi reserves, and their implication for American economic and strategic security, it was only a matter of time before the U.S. government stepped in to protect the American oil companies’ concession.

5. This involvement would start to become significant during World War II.

**Suggested Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why did Middle Eastern culture, or at least a stereotyped version of it, have such wide appeal in American popular culture in the 1920s?

2. How did international events affect the strength and prominence of American Zionism during the interwar period?
Lecture Four
United States and the
Middle East During World War II

Scope: In this lecture, we see how the entry of the United States into World War II fundamentally altered Americans’ conception of the Middle East. For the first time, U.S. officials saw the geopolitical orientation of the Middle East as vital to American national security—a view of the region that persists to this day. We start by examining U.S. wartime strategy in the Middle East, noting that during the war, U.S. military forces occupied large portions of the Middle East, turning Iran into a corridor for supplying the Soviet Union and North Africa into a staging area for invading fascist Italy. We then consider U.S. responses to the nationalist aspirations of Middle Easterners struggling to free themselves from European imperial domination. Tradition and economic interest predisposed Americans to look favorably on such aspirations, but the imperative of defeating the Axis powers usually trumped Washington’s anticolonialist impulses.

Outline

I. The entry of the United States into World War II fundamentally altered Americans’ conception of the Middle East. For the first time, U.S. officials saw the geopolitical orientation of that region as vital to American national security.

A. Upon entering the war, the U.S. government deemed it essential that the Middle East not fall under the control of Nazi Germany and its allies.
   1. Should that happen, Germany and Japan might be able to link up with each other along Asia’s southern rim, cutting off Russia’s supply line to the Persian Gulf.
   2. The Axis powers would also gain control of the region’s enormous oil reserves.

B. To make the most of America’s industrial potential in the war, Roosevelt devised a policy known as Lend-Lease, whereby the United States loaned its wartime allies military equipment without worrying too much about the timing or manner of repayment.
   1. The biggest recipient of Lend-Lease aid was Britain.
   2. The Soviet Union also received a huge amount of aid, about $11 billion worth over the course of the war.

II. To ensure that the territory and resources of the Middle East would remain available to the United States and its allies, Washington took part in several wartime initiatives.

A. It occupied Iran and used it as a corridor—the so-called Persian Corridor—for transporting war materiel from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union.
   1. A huge American military establishment was created in Iran, employing tens of thousands of U.S. troops and Iranian civilians.
   2. The main functions of this operation were to offload cargoes at the docks, assemble trucks and planes in specially designed plants, then ship the materiel to the Soviet Union on trains operated by the U.S. Army.
   3. Russia received millions of tons of American equipment in this way, enough to sustain 60 Soviet combat divisions on the eastern front against Germany.
   4. At the same time, there were occasional social and cultural tensions between the American servicemen stationed in Iran and the local population.
   5. Iran was important to the United States not only for its strategic location but also for its considerable oil reserves, which were crucial to the American war effort.

B. To ensure that Saudi Arabia’s vast oil reserves would be available for the allied war effort (and beyond), the U.S. government established diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia and extended economic aid to it.
   1. These overtures caused friction with the British, who suspected the United States of seeking to monopolize Saudi oil opportunities.
   2. Toward the end of the war, however, the British and American governments worked out an agreement whereby each country pledged to respect the other’s existing oil concessions.
C. The United States and Britain used economic incentives and pressures to preserve Turkey’s neutrality in the war.
   1. Except for a brief period in 1943, the Allies did not want Turkey to enter the war on their side. If Turkey joined the Allied side and was attacked by Nazi Germany, the Allies would have the burden of defending Turkey.
   2. On the other hand, it would be disastrous if Turkey joined the war on the side of Germany, because then it would close the Turkish straits and cut Russia off from the Mediterranean Sea.
   3. The best arrangement, from the Allies’ perspective, was for Turkey to remain neutral. The Americans and the British spent much of the war bribing and pressuring Turkey not to go over to the other side.

D. The United States and Britain used North Africa as a staging area for an invasion of fascist Italy.
   1. In the fall of 1942, the Americans and the British landed troops on the shores of Morocco and Algeria and began moving eastward to confront German forces in Tunisia.
   2. In 1943, the Allies took German-held Tunisia and used it as a launching pad for invading Sicily.
   3. From there, they proceeded to the Italian peninsula and knocked Italy out of the war.
   4. The Allies then advanced up the peninsula into Central Europe, an operation that contributed significantly to Germany’s ultimate defeat.

III. Though primarily preoccupied with winning the war, the U.S. government also had to concern itself with the nationalist aspirations of Middle Easterners struggling to free themselves from European imperial domination.

A. The default position of the United States was to look favorably on such aspirations.
   1. This was in keeping with Wilson’s principle of national self-determination and with America’s tradition of anticolonialism, stemming from its own fight for independence from a colonial power.
   2. America also stood to benefit by decolonization, which would remove the tariff barriers the European powers had erected around their imperial holdings and dissolve their monopolies of industries in the countries they dominated.
   3. The United States wanted to differentiate itself starkly from the Nazi doctrine of racial supremacy and could do so by distancing itself from the legacy of European imperialism, which had itself so often relied on supremacist doctrines.

B. The imperative of defeating the Axis powers, however, usually trumped Washington’s anticolonial impulses. A case in point was a political crisis that occurred in Egypt in 1942.
   1. When Egypt’s King Farouk tried to install a new, pro-German cabinet, British tanks surrounded the royal palace and forced the king to name a pro-British cabinet instead.
   2. The U.S. government supported this violation of Egyptian self-determination, reasoning that Egypt was too strategically valuable to be permitted to fall into Axis hands.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways did the entry of the United States into World War II fundamentally alter Americans’ conception of the Middle East?
2. How did the U.S. government attempt to reconcile its war aims with the nationalist aspirations of Middle Easterners struggling to free themselves from European imperial domination?
Lecture Five
Origins of the Cold War in the Middle East

Scope: This lecture deals with the rise of Cold War tensions in the Middle East in the late 1940s. After establishing the strategic importance of the Middle East to Washington’s efforts to contain the Soviet Union, we examine Harry S. Truman’s responses to three Cold War Crises that erupted in the region: the Turkish straits crisis of 1945–1946, the Iran crisis of 1946, and the crisis stemming from Britain’s financial abandonment of Greece and Turkey in 1947. This last crisis, we learn, resulted in the issuing of the Truman Doctrine—a crystallization of American thinking that would guide Cold War policies for a generation. Finally, we examine the evolution of U.S.-Saudi relations in the late 1940s, culminating in Truman’s formal pledge in 1950 to defend the oil-rich kingdom from possible Soviet attack.

Outline
I. Soon after the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, the Soviet Union emerged as America’s new global adversary. In this new Cold War era, the United States continued to believe that its own security depended on keeping the Middle East in friendly hands.
   A. The United States was not itself dependent on Middle Eastern oil, but Western Europe and Japan were, and Washington needed those areas to be prosperous and stable.
   B. Because the Middle East was adjacent to the Soviet Union, its territory could be used as a staging area for land and air attacks on the Soviet Union in the event that the Cold War turned hot.

II. For all of America’s growing political involvement in the Middle East, Britain continued to be the dominant Western power in the region.
   A. As of 1945, Britain still had League of Nations mandates in Palestine and Jordan.
   B. It had military bases in Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Iraq, and Yemen.
   C. It had several protectorates on the Arabian Peninsula.
   D. It had major oil concessions in Kuwait and Iran.
   E. One major problem with continued British domination of the Middle East was that it ran counter to the nationalist aspirations of most of the region’s inhabitants.

III. At least for the time being, the United States was happy to see Britain retain its position of dominance in the Middle East. Soon after the war, however, the Soviets began probing at the edges of the Middle East, prompting the United States to increase its own involvement in the region.
   A. In 1945–1946, the Soviet Union demanded that Turkey grant it a base in the Turkish straits.
      1. Turkey appealed for British and U.S. support in resisting the Soviet demand.
      2. A tough Anglo-American diplomatic note, combined with less direct signals of Western resolve, prompted Moscow to back down.
   B. In 1946, the Soviet Union refused to withdraw its troops from Iran, as Britain and the United States had already done. The ensuing crisis coincided almost exactly with two of the most iconic moments of the early Cold War.
      1. Just one day after Stalin informed the Iranian government that his troops would not be withdrawing from Iranian territory as originally promised, U.S. foreign service officer George Kennan sent an 8,000-word cable, later known as the Long Telegram, detailing Soviet aggressiveness and advocating a strategy of “containment” whereby the United States and its allies could prevent the Soviets from achieving world domination.
      2. Three days after the deadline for Soviet withdrawal from Iran came and went—without any withdrawal—former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave a speech in Fulton, Missouri, warning that “an iron curtain” had descended across the continent of Europe.
      3. Following an official protest from Washington, Moscow removed its troops.
      4. In this case, however, the Soviet withdrawal appears to have had more to do with shrewd Iranian diplomacy than with American toughness.
C. In 1947, Britain granted independence to the Indian subcontinent and informed the United States that it could no longer take financial responsibility for Greece and Turkey. President Harry S. Truman and his advisors agreed that the United States should assume Britain’s burden.

1. To convince Congress to appropriate the necessary funds, Truman delivered a speech in which he presented an alarming picture of the threat posed by international communism.
2. Truman was able to obtain Congress’s support was by stressing the regional implications of a rebel victory in Greece.
3. Truman’s statement, “It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” became known as the Truman Doctrine and would guide American Cold War policy for the next generation.
4. To ensure availability of Middle Eastern oil, the Truman administration constructed a pipeline across Jordanian, Syrian, and Lebanese territory, gaining Syria’s approval only by quietly encouraging a bloodless coup that deposed Syrian president Shukri Quwatli.

IV. As the Cold War intensified in the late 1940s, the United States drew closer to oil-rich Saudi Arabia. In 1950, the Truman administration took two steps to solidify U.S.-Saudi friendship.

A. President Truman formally pledged that if Saudi Arabia were attacked by the Soviet Union, the United States would come to its defense.
B. The U.S. Treasury Department issued tax regulations—which became known as the Golden Gimmick—that made it less costly for American oil companies to share their profits with the Saudi government.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. In the early postwar years, what role did the U.S. policymakers envision for the Middle East in the new struggle against Soviet communism?
2. What attitudes did U.S. policymakers take toward continuing British domination of the Middle East?
Lecture Six
Truman and the Creation of Israel

Scope: In this lecture, we consider Truman’s role in the creation of the state of Israel in the period 1945–1949. We learn that Truman, against the recommendations of most of his foreign policy advisors, gave crucial support to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, first by endorsing the 1947 United Nations partition plan, then by extending immediate recognition to Israel when it declared its independence in 1948. As we recount these events, we consider competing explanations for Truman’s support for Zionism: To what extent was Truman motivated by humanitarian considerations, by domestic political concerns, or by Cold War strategizing? We then examine some of the consequences of Israel’s creation, in particular, the dispossession of the Palestinian people and the resulting decline in America’s reputation in the Arab world.

Outline

I. In the years 1945–1949, President Harry Truman played a key role in bringing Israel into being and securing its existence. It is safe to say that no other single American action has done more to embitter the Arab world against the United States.

II. Since the early 1920s, Britain had governed Palestine as a League of Nations mandate. On the question of Palestine’s future political status, Britain had followed an inconsistent policy.
   A. In the 1920s and 1930s, Britain had worked to implement the Balfour Declaration, permitting a massive influx of European Jewish immigration into Palestine. This development deeply alarmed Palestinian Arabs, who feared that the Zionist movement would result in their dispossession.
   B. In 1939, Britain reversed course and placed severe restrictions on Jewish immigration into Palestine. These restrictions were imposed just as the plight of German Jews was becoming truly desperate, arousing bitter conflict between the Zionist movement and British forces in Palestine.

III. World War II profoundly transformed the Palestine issue.
   A. The Nazi Holocaust gave enormous impetus to the Zionist movement, convincing Jews throughout the Western world that they could never be fully secure without a state of their own.
   B. The Nazi conquest of Europe, combined with the Zionists’ alienation from Britain, caused the center gravity of the Zionist movement to shift to the United States.
   C. The issue had been exacerbated by the problem of “displaced persons” (DPs), hundreds of thousands of Europeans—refugees, concentration camp survivors, former prisoners of war, and others—who were being housed in American military camps in Europe.
      1. The U.S. State Department favored returning DPs to their countries of origin; for Jewish DPs, however, this would mean going back to live among the very societies that had victimized them.
      2. Immigrating to Britain or the United States was another conceivable option, but both countries had placed strict limits on the number of Jewish immigrants they would accept.
   D. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Zionists intensified their demands that Britain allow increased Jewish immigration into Palestine.
      1. Britain, which was suffering severe postwar shortages of basic commodities, was reluctant to take any action that might destabilize the Middle East and jeopardize the flow of oil.
      2. A special Anglo-American commission studied the Palestine problem and recommended a solution, the Morrison-Grady Plan, which called for the division of Palestine into semiautonomous Arab and Jewish cantons, loosely linked to each other in a binational federal state. Further Jewish immigration into Palestine was to be subject to approval by both Arabs and Jews.
      3. Zionists rejected the plan because it fell short of their objective: unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine, resulting in the establishment of an exclusively Jewish state in all or most of that territory.
      4. Arabs rejected the plan because they viewed Palestine as an integral part of the Arab world; it should either become an independent Arab state or be attached to another independent Arab state. Asking
Palestinians to share their lands with Jewish immigrants from Europe was asking them to pay the price for a tragedy for which they had not been responsible.

IV. The British resisted Zionist pressure, prompting the Zionists to step up their military operations against British forces in Palestine.

A. The Haganah, a military organization representing the Zionist mainstream in Palestine, smuggled thousands of Jews out of DP camps and shipped them illegally to Palestine, in defiance of British restrictions.

B. The Irgun, a right-wing Zionist group, launched commando and, occasionally, terrorist attacks against British targets in Palestine. The bombing of British military and diplomatic headquarters at Jerusalem’s King David Hotel resulted in the deaths of 88 people, many of them civilians.

V. In early 1947, Britain gave up on trying to govern Palestine and turned the matter over to the United Nations. The UN formed a special Palestine commission, which recommended that Palestine be partitioned into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

A. The Zionists accepted the partition plan, albeit with some reluctance, because they wanted a larger share of the country than the UN allotted them.

B. The Arab countries, along with the Arabs of Palestine, flatly rejected the partition plan.

1. They objected that the partition plan would force them to share their country with people they regarded as interlopers from Europe.

2. They objected that the specific terms of the partition were unfair, granting more than half of Palestine’s territory to a group representing only a third of Palestine’s population.

3. The final Arab argument was that the partition plan could not be implemented without uprooting thousands of Palestinian Arabs from their ancestral homes, because the area set aside for the Jewish state contained many Arab villages.

VI. Although the U.S. State Department opposed the partition plan, Truman instructed his UN ambassador to vote in favor of it. In November 1947, the UN General Assembly approved the partition plan.

A. Historians have long debated Truman’s reasons for supporting the partition plan.

1. Some stress Truman’s humanitarian interest in addressing the plight of Jewish Holocaust survivors.

2. Others stress his desire to curry favor with American Jews before the 1948 presidential election.

3. No doubt both motives were present, but there was a third factor in Truman’s thinking that historians have too often ignored: the power of inertia. By the fall of 1947, partition seemed to be the least troublesome solution, the one that would get the whole Palestine mess off of Truman’s desk at the soonest possible date.

B. Once Truman decided in favor of partition, his White House advisors, Clark Clifford and David Niles, both committed Zionists, went to work to ensure its passage in the UN. Possibly without Truman’s knowledge, they began meeting with the UN delegations of other nations and putting massive pressure on them to vote for partition.

1. The Philippines, until 1946 an American colony, switched its position after Truman’s advisors hinted that U.S. aid to the Philippines might be affected by a negative vote.

2. It was likewise hinted to Latin American delegations that construction of the Pan-American Highway, on which the economies of many of these countries depended, might not go forward if they voted the wrong way on partition.

VII. Following UN approval of the partition plan by an extremely narrow margin, fighting broke out between Zionists and Palestinian Arabs. Although the Palestinians at first seemed to have the advantage, in early 1948, the tide of battle began turning in the Zionists’ favor.

A. As the Palestinian military position worsened, Palestinian civilians began fleeing from the area allotted to the Jewish state.

B. As fighting intensified, the State Department convinced Truman to propose that the partition plan be suspended in favor of a UN trusteeship over Palestine, warning that the longer the violence continued, the angrier the Arab world would become at the United States.

C. But there was insufficient support in the UN General Assembly to adopt this change of policy.
VIII. In May 1948, the Zionists declared the independent state of Israel. Against vigorous opposition from his secretary of state, George Marshall, Truman extended immediate recognition to the new state.
   A. Truman recognized Israel for much the same reasons that he supported the partition plan: humanitarianism, domestic politics, and inertia.
   B. An additional reason was Truman’s desire to prevent the Soviet Union from recognizing Israel first and, thus, currying favor with the new state.

IX. Immediately following Israel’s declaration of independence, the armies of the surrounding Arab states invaded Palestine in an effort to prevent Israel from coming into being. But the Israeli forces, better armed and better organized, won a decisive military victory over the Arab states.
   A. By the time armistices were concluded in early 1949, the Israelis not only had successfully held on to the area allotted to them by the UN but had managed to take over a large part of the projected Arab state.
   B. Meanwhile, about 750,000 Palestinian civilians had either fled or been driven from their homes in the territory now held by Israel.

X. Over the next few years, Israel and the Arab states generally abided by the armistice, but they were far from real peace.
   A. Israel refused to repatriate the Palestinian refugees or to relinquish any of the additional territory it had seized.
   B. The Arab states refused to make peace with Israel, or to extend it formal recognition, as long as Israel held to these positions.

XI. Truman himself was unhappy with Israel’s postwar attitude, especially regarding Palestinian refugees. For the next two years, he tried to convince Israel to repatriate at least some of the refugees.
   A. But the Israelis adamantly opposed such a course, and Truman, preoccupied with other foreign crises, eventually gave up on trying to change Israel’s position.
   B. Such passivity was in keeping with Truman’s whole approach to the Palestine crisis.

XII. For all his passivity, however, the fact remained that Truman had played a key role in bringing Israel into being and displacing a preexisting Arab society. Consequently, America’s reputation in the Arab world drastically declined.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Were the aspirations of Zionists and Palestinian Arabs completely irreconcilable, or could some formula have been found that would have been acceptable to both peoples?
2. Even if the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was a foregone conclusion, could President Truman have helped to implement that decision in a way that minimized Arab resentment of the United States?
Lecture Seven
Eisenhower, the Cold War, and the Middle East

Scope: In this lecture, we examine Dwight D. Eisenhower’s response, in the years 1953–1956, to the challenges posed by indigenous Middle Eastern nationalists, who often resisted Eisenhower’s efforts to enlist the countries of the Middle East in the Cold War. We first consider Iran, where in 1953, the Eisenhower administration colluded with the British government to achieve the overthrow of Muhammad Mossadeq’s nationalist regime. We then move to the Arab world, where Washington faced a more formidable adversary in Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, whom Eisenhower was reluctant to confront directly. We examine how the Eisenhower administration tried to win Nasser over by hastening the decolonization process and taking a more “even-handed” position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. But these measures failed to arrest Nasser’s drift toward the Soviet orbit, prompting the administration to adopt a far less tolerant attitude toward the Egyptian leader in the spring of 1956.

Outline

I. During the Eisenhower years, the United States was confronted by the forces of indigenous Middle Eastern nationalism. These nationalist forces posed a serious challenge to Washington’s efforts to enlist the countries of the Middle East in the Cold War.
   A. Eisenhower was regarded, especially by liberal intellectuals, as a doddering old geezer who was not really “on top of things” in governing the country. Eisenhower’s strategy, however, was to let everyone think he was not really in charge so that, if any of his policies failed or were controversial, all the criticism would be directed at his advisors and cabinet members rather than at him.
   B. Eisenhower was also dismissed at the time because his extemporaneous speaking style was artless and convoluted.

II. In the Middle East, the Eisenhower administration’s fundamental objectives were the same as the Truman administration’s.
   A. Eisenhower wanted to maintain Western access to the region’s oil reserves and strategic positions.
   B. He also hoped to deny those assets to the Soviet Union.

III. Yet Eisenhower also thought that the previous administration had been excessively partial to Israel. He resolved to follow a more “even-handed” policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict.
   A. In practice, this meant encouraging the Israelis to make modest territorial concessions in exchange for peace with the Arabs.
   B. The Eisenhower administration did not, however, favor a return to the 1947 partition plan. Rather, it favored a territorial compromise between the partition plan and post-1949 status quo.
   C. Nor did the administration favor the wholesale repatriation of Palestinian refugees. It preferred that most refugees be resettled in other Arab lands.

IV. The Eisenhower administration was ambivalent about the future role in the Middle East of its European allies.
   A. On the one hand, the administration was committed in principle to full political independence for Middle Eastern countries.
   B. On the other hand, it feared that too rapid a withdrawal of European power and influence would leave Middle Eastern states susceptible to Soviet influence.

V. U.S. actions in Iran in 1953 reveal the Eisenhower administration’s determination to keep the region oriented toward the West.
   A. For the last couple of decades, a British company, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), had controlled the extraction, production, and marketing of Iranian oil.
   B. In early 1951, the Iranian parliament voted to nationalize the facilities of the AIOC. Shortly thereafter, Mohammed Mossadeq, the main architect of Iran’s nationalization policy, was elected prime minister.
      1. Mossadeq was ridiculed in the West as a hypochondriac, given to crying fits in public.
2. In his own country, Mossadeq was revered as a charismatic figure whose defiant opposition to British domination, especially his nationalization of the AIOC, captured the imagination of the Iranian public.

C. Britain responded harshly to the nationalization of the AIOC’s facilities.
   1. It imposed an embargo on Iranian oil in an attempt to wreck Iran’s economy.
   2. It advocated a military takeover of the AIOC’s oil refinery in Abadan, on the southern coast of Iran.

D. The Truman administration opposed military intervention, fearing that it might provoke a Soviet invasion in Iran.

E. Meanwhile, Britain’s boycott was devastating Iran’s economy.
   1. This, in turn, caused Mossadeq to lose popularity, compelling him to govern in an increasingly authoritarian manner.
   2. He also began challenging the pro-American shah for supremacy in Iran.

F. Eisenhower took a harsher view of Mossadeq than Truman had done, seeing Mossadeq’s radical policies as destabilizing the country and paving the way for an ultimate Soviet takeover.

G. In the summer of 1953, the CIA sent Kermit Roosevelt to Iran to recruit officers in the Iranian military to stage a coup against Mossadeq.
   1. Roosevelt hired local gangs to stage anti-government demonstrations in the streets of Tehran.
   2. With the city in chaos, the pro-U.S. Iranian army officers seized control of the government, replacing Mossadeq with a pro-shah prime minister.

H. It was a crushing defeat for Mossadeq and Iranian nationalism.
   1. The nationalization of Iranian oil facilities remained formally intact. But a consortium of foreign oil companies was allowed to control and market Iran’s oil, with the AIOC surrendering a large share of the operation to American oil companies.
   2. Iran became a major recipient of U.S. economic aid. The shah himself was now deeply beholden to the United States.
   3. At the time, U.S. officials thought they had won a splendid victory, but once the shah was reinstalled in power, he governed much more repressively than before. Ordinary Iranians came to see him as a puppet of Washington; the ultimate consequences of these perceptions were later to become clear in the Iranian revolution of the late 1970s.

VI. Eisenhower faced a more potent challenge in Arab nationalism. Two issues made it extremely difficult, politically, for Arab leaders to align with the United States in the Cold War.

A. The first issue involved the lingering vestiges of British and French imperialism in the Arab world. The fact that the United States was formally allied with Britain and France aroused considerable popular resentment in the Arab world.

B. The second issue was Zionism. The fact that the United States had played a key role in the creation of Israel aroused even deeper Arab resentment.

C. As the 1950s began, the United States faced a basic dilemma regarding its approach to the Arab world because of its close alliances with Britain and France. It had to keep the Arab states favorably disposed toward the West and keep the region’s oil reserves and strategic positions accessible to the United States while, at the same time, remaining committed to Israel’s survival and security, a position that caused deep resentment in the Arab world.

D. Arab resistance to U.S. Cold War policy became especially potent after 1952, when a group of officers led by Gamal Abdel Nasser took power in Egypt. Over the next two decades, Nasser was to be an extremely forceful and charismatic advocate of radical Arab nationalism and of resistance to Western domination.

E. Initially, however, the Eisenhower administration hoped for a cooperative relationship with Nasser. Instead of pressuring Egypt to join an anti-Soviet pact, the administration sought to address Egypt’s grievances against European imperialism and Zionism.
   1. It convinced Britain to agree to withdraw its troops from the Suez Canal Zone.
   2. It began trying to broker a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel.
   3. These measures, the administration hoped, would cause Egypt and other Arab countries to become favorably disposed toward the West.
F. Britain, however, did not fully cooperate with Eisenhower’s soft-sell approach. In 1955, it formed a Middle Eastern defense organization, known as the Baghdad Pact, which Nasser regarded as threatening to Egypt.
   1. Nasser reacted by publicly advocating a policy of nonalignment in the Cold War and vilifying Arab governments with close ties to the West.
   2. Nasser also purchased arms from the Soviet bloc.

G. Still, the Eisenhower administration was not yet ready to give up on Nasser. In late 1955 and early 1956, it took two actions aimed at renewing Egypt’s ties to the Western camp.
   1. It agreed to finance the Aswan Dam project.
   2. It pushed harder for an Arab-Israeli settlement.

H. In March 1956, however, Nasser indicated that he was not willing to take the lead in reaching a peace agreement with Israel. He feared that doing so would jeopardize his political standing in the Arab world.

I. The Eisenhower administration reacted by adopting a much tougher policy on Nasser.
   1. It curtailed economic aid to Egypt.
   2. It made it difficult for American charitable groups to function in Egypt.
   3. It began dragging out the negotiations over Western financing of the Aswan Dam.
   4. It increased economic aid to pro-U.S. Arab governments.
   5. Although it did not increase U.S. military aid to Israel, it encouraged other Western countries, such as France and Canada, to sell military aircraft to Israel.

J. All these measures, the administration hoped, would leave Egypt so impoverished and isolated that it would have to rethink its defiant position.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways did the forces of indigenous Middle Eastern nationalism pose a challenge to U.S. efforts to wage the Cold War?
2. What broad political strategy did the Eisenhower administration use to meet the challenge of Arab nationalism in particular?
Lecture Eight

The Suez Crisis and Arab Nationalism

Scope: In this lecture, we discuss the Eisenhower administration’s responses to the Suez crisis of 1956 and to the subsequent surge in Nasser’s regional popularity. We begin by describing the diplomatic maneuvers leading to Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in July 1956. Then, after outlining the Eisenhower administration’s initial reaction to Nasser’s move, we examine Britain’s, France’s, and Israel’s military invasion of Egypt and Eisenhower’s surprisingly forceful—and successful—opposition to that operation. Next, we discuss Eisenhower’s attempts to fill the perceived vacuum created by Britain’s failure and to forge a coalition of pro-U.S. Arab regimes capable of countering Nasser’s growing regional influence. We end with the U.S. intervention in Lebanon in 1958 and Eisenhower’s subsequent decision to mend fences with Nasser.

Outline

I. The Suez crisis is a crucial turning point in world history, because it marks Britain’s demise as the preeminent Western power in the Middle East and the assumption of that role by the United States—a role Washington continues to play to this day.

II. In the spring and early summer of 1956, Nasser continued to take actions that rankled the Eisenhower administration.
   A. He extended diplomatic recognition to communist China.
   B. He hinted that he might turn to the Soviet Union for funding of the Aswan Dam project if Western terms were unsatisfactory.

III. In July 1956, the administration withdrew its offer to finance the Aswan Dam project.
   A. Nasser responded by announcing that he was nationalizing the British-owned Suez Canal Company and would use toll revenues to finance the Aswan Dam.
   B. Britain regarded Nasser’s action as intolerable and began advocating a military intervention to reverse it.
   C. The United States strongly opposed military intervention, believing that a British attack on Egypt would enflame the entire Muslim world against the West. To avoid military action, the Eisenhower administration sponsored a series of international conferences aimed at finding a compromise solution to the crisis.
   D. Although the British paid lip service to finding a diplomatic solution, they began secretly conspiring with the French and the Israelis to achieve the overthrow of Nasser. The French and the Israelis had reasons of their own for opposing Nasser.
      1. The French were angered by Nasser’s support for a nationalist rebellion then taking place against French colonial rule in Algeria.
      2. The Israelis feared that Nasser was building up his army in preparation for war against them.

IV. In the fall of 1956, Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt.
   A. The U.S. government received no prior notice of the British-French-Israeli plan.
      1. According to the plan, Israel would attack Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula and begin advancing across the peninsula.
      2. Once Israel had seized most of the peninsula, Britain and France would demand that Israel and Egypt withdraw their forces from the canal area.
      3. If either party refused the ultimatum—as Egypt was sure to do because the canal lay within its own sovereign territory—British and French forces would seize the canal, ostensibly to protect it from damage in the fighting.
   B. Eisenhower strongly opposed the action.
      1. He publicly spoke out against the attack.
      2. He instructed his representatives to condemn the attack in the UN. The Soviets voted with the United States in the UN, an odd spectacle in those Cold War days.
3. Following Nasser’s closure of the Suez Canal, which disrupted oil shipments from the Middle East to Western Europe, Eisenhower refused to send oil from the Western Hemisphere to Europe until the attack on Egypt ended.

4. Eisenhower threatened to support UN economic sanctions against Israel unless it withdrew its forces from Egypt.

C. These measures forced Britain, France, and Israel to end their attack on Egypt. Nasser’s regime was saved.

V. The Suez crisis revealed that Britain could no longer be considered the primary Western power in the Middle East. This situation posed a serious problem for the United States.

A. Although Eisenhower had strongly opposed Britain’s attack on Egypt, he believed that the rapid erosion of British influence in the Middle East would enable the Soviet Union to increase its own influence in the region.

B. To prevent this from happening, in early 1957, Eisenhower launched an initiative that became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

1. Eisenhower got Congress to pass a resolution that authorized the executive branch to give more economic and military aid to Middle Eastern countries.

2. The resolution also declared the intention of the United States to intervene militarily to protect any Middle Eastern country that was the victim of “overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.”

C. Although Eisenhower did not really expect any Middle Eastern countries to be attacked by the Soviet bloc, he thought that by offering such protection, he could convince nations in the region to ally with the United States. This, in turn, would discredit Nasser’s stance of nonalignment in the Cold War.

1. On a material level, the United States would offer military and economic aid to those Arab countries that openly supported the United States and resisted Nasser’s program of nonalignment.

2. On a psychological level, the United States sought to reassure pro-U.S. regimes with a promise of U.S. aid in the event of a conflict. The United States also sought to isolate Egypt, Syria, and any other Arab country that refused to state, publicly and unequivocally, that it regarded international communism as a menace.

VI. The Eisenhower Doctrine was not a great success.

A. Middle Eastern governments were generally eager to accept U.S. aid under the new program.

B. But regional public opinion, especially Arab opinion, was hostile to the Eisenhower Doctrine, seeing it as an effort to impose Cold War thinking on the Arabs by pressuring them to join an anti-Soviet alliance.

C. Consequently, few Arab governments publicly endorsed the Eisenhower Doctrine.

1. The governments of Iraq and Lebanon endorsed the doctrine in defiance of domestic opinion, decisions that led to enormous turmoil in their countries.

2. The governments of Jordan and Saudi Arabia declined to endorse the doctrine, though they convinced the United States to give them substantial aid anyway.

VII. Contrary to his own expectation, Eisenhower did end up having to intervene militarily in the Middle East.

A. The Lebanese government had been one of the few Arab governments to endorse the Eisenhower Doctrine. But this decision was so controversial among the Lebanese people that it helped spark a civil war in the country.

B. In July 1958, Iraq’s pro-Western monarchy was overthrown, and fearing that his own regime would be next, Lebanon’s president requested that the United States send troops to Lebanon to prevent his government from being overthrown. Eisenhower reluctantly complied by sending 14,000 Marines to land on the coast of Lebanon.

C. By now, the Eisenhower administration was convinced that challenging Nasser was counterproductive.

1. In late 1958, it quietly abandoned the Eisenhower Doctrine and decided to seek an accommodation with Nasser.

2. This decision was facilitated by an unexpected deterioration in relations between Nasser and the Soviet Union.
3. The result was a modest U.S.-Egyptian rapprochement lasting for the rest of Eisenhower’s term and into that of his successor.

VIII. It is important to distinguish between the Eisenhower Doctrine’s ultimate objective and the strategy employed to achieve that objective.

A. The objective was to prevent a Soviet takeover of the Middle East and, given that such a takeover never occurred, it has to be said that the objective was achieved.

B. The strategy to achieve the objective—discrediting Arab figures deemed “soft on communism” by promoting other Arab figures who were conspicuously anticommunist—failed miserably.

IX. What was definitely accomplished under Eisenhower—more by default than strategy—was that the United States became the dominant power in the Middle East.

Suggested Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. Why was Eisenhower so strongly opposed to British, French, and Israeli actions during the Suez crisis of 1956?
2. How did Eisenhower react to the sharp decline in British influence in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Suez crisis?
Lecture Nine
Kennedy—Engaging Middle Eastern Nationalism

Scope: In this lecture, we examine John F. Kennedy’s attempt to deemphasize overt Cold War themes in U.S. policy toward the Middle East—an effort aimed at gaining the trust of Middle Eastern nationalists and, thus, paradoxically, at improving America’s Cold War position. In three major policy areas, Kennedy performed a careful balancing act. He tempered public support for the shah of Iran with quiet encouragement of Iranian reformers; he sought good relations with radical nationalists, such as Nasser, as well as with conservative monarchs, such as Jordan’s King Hussein; and he combined pledges of support for Israel’s security with pressure on Israel to make concessions to its Arab neighbors. In each case, Kennedy achieved some measure of success in the first two years of his presidency, only to falter in his third and final year, leaving a far less promising situation to his successor.

Outline
I. President John F. Kennedy made a remarkably serious effort to reach an accommodation with the forces of indigenous nationalism in the Middle East.
   A. He did so not for sentimental reasons but out of a conviction that victory in the Cold War would be impossible unless anti-Western grievances in the region could be successfully addressed.
   B. Paradoxically, Kennedy sought to win the Cold War in the Middle East by downplaying Cold War themes and stressing local concerns instead.
II. In inter-Arab politics, Kennedy attempted to strike a balance between placating radical Arab nationalists and supporting conservative Arabs.
   A. Kennedy believed that Eisenhower had made a big mistake in pressuring Nasser and other Arab nationalists to side with the United States in the Cold War. These crude measures had succeeded only in alienating Arab nationalists, pushing them further into the Soviets’ embrace.
   B. Kennedy believed that the best way to deal with Arab nationalists was to treat them with respect, allow them to make their own foreign policy decisions, and offer them generous assistance in developing their countries internally.
   C. In some ways, Kennedy’s approach to Arab nationalism resembled Eisenhower’s treatment of Nasser in the mid-1950s.
      1. But Kennedy differed from Eisenhower in that he simultaneously tried to move much closer to Israel (a subject to which we shall return).
      2. Another difference was that Kennedy saw his approach to Arab nationalism as part of a broader effort to portray the United States as a friend and supporter of the emerging nations of the Third World.
   D. Like Eisenhower before him, Kennedy saw Nasser as the most important leader in the Arab world, and he placed extremely high priority on establishing cordial relations with Egypt.
      1. He began a private correspondence with Nasser in which he treated him with great deference.
      2. He markedly increased U.S. economic aid to Egypt.
   E. For a while, Kennedy’s approach to Arab nationalism seemed to be working.
      1. Nasser was flattered by Kennedy’s attention and toned down his anti-American rhetoric.
      2. Nasser also pledged to refrain from stirring up Arab-Israeli animosities and to allow the status quo regarding the Palestine issue to continue for the time being.
   F. But Kennedy’s strategy of ingratiating Nasser began to come undone in September 1962, when a civil war broke out in Yemen, pitting a deposed conservative monarchy against a new republican government. The Yemeni civil war quickly expanded into a proxy war between republican Egypt and monarchical Saudi Arabia.
   G. The Egyptian-Saudi proxy war over Yemen placed Kennedy in a bind.
      1. He needed to reassure Saudi Arabia that the United States was committed to its security.
      2. But he also wanted to maintain good relations with Nasser.
   H. Kennedy tried to follow a balanced policy.
1. He sent a squadron of Air Force jets to patrol the skies over Saudi Arabia and serve as a symbol of U.S. support.
2. At the same time, he formally recognized the republican government of Yemen and pressured the Saudi government to limit its support to the Yemeni royalists.

I. Kennedy’s balanced approach pleased neither Egypt nor Saudi Arabia. Each country accused the United States of siding with the other.

III. Kennedy also tried to strike a balance between ensuring Israel’s security and pressuring Israel to make concessions to its Arab neighbors.

A. Whereas Eisenhower had kept Israel at arm’s length, Kennedy established much friendlier relations with Israel.
   1. To some extent, this decision reflected Kennedy’s desire to please Jewish voters in the Democratic Party’s constituency.
   2. But Kennedy also sincerely believed that the best way to bring peace and stability to the Middle East was to reassure the Israelis that the United States would always strongly support them. Only if Israel received such assurance would it be willing to make the concessions necessary for peace.

B. There were two principal issues on which Kennedy hoped to influence Israeli behavior.
   1. He wanted Israel to permit the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, something Israel had refused to do since 1948, on the grounds that this would threaten the Jewish character of Israel. Not only had the Arab states called for Israel’s repatriation of Palestinians, but in late 1948, the UN General Assembly had passed Resolution 194, calling on Israel to repatriate all Palestinian refugees who wished to return to their homes in present-day Israel and who were willing to live peacefully under Israeli jurisdiction.
   2. Kennedy also wanted to prevent Israel from converting its civilian nuclear power program into a weapons program, realizing that Israel’s acquisition of nuclear weapons capability would further embitter Arab-Israeli relations.

C. To induce the Israelis to make concessions in these areas, Kennedy agreed to sell them advanced antiaircraft guns. Kennedy refrained, however, from establishing a formal quid-pro-quo between the arms sale on the one hand and the refugee and nuclear issues on the other, on the grounds that a formal linkage might offend Israel’s dignity.

D. Unfortunately for Kennedy, this lack of a formal linkage permitted Israel to pocket the inducement without making significant concessions on the refugee and nuclear issues.
   1. Israel refused to consider repatriation of Palestinian refugees on the grounds that this would result in the establishment of a hostile fifth column inside Israel. For their part, the Arab states showed little enthusiasm about Kennedy’s repatriation scheme.
   2. On the nuclear question, Israel appeared to be cooperating with Kennedy, assuring him that the Dimona nuclear reactor was purely for civilian purposes. But by evading U.S. attempts to conduct meaningful inspections, Israel continued to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

IV. In U.S.-Iranian relations, Kennedy tried to strike a balance between pressuring the shah to make internal reforms and shoring up his position within the country.

A. Kennedy worried that the shah’s authoritarian methods were generating unmanageable opposition in Iran.
   1. Accordingly, Kennedy quietly urged the shah to create more space for internal dissent and to institute land reform programs.
   2. At the same time, Kennedy saw to it that Iran’s internal security forces were well supplied, in case the reforms failed to prevent internal unrest.

B. After some resistance, the shah introduced electoral and land reforms, but they failed to placate the domestic opposition.
   1. Leftist students regarded the reforms as too modest and staged massive demonstrations throughout the country. The government brutally suppressed the demonstrations, further alienating the students.
   2. Conservative Shiite clerics saw the reforms as too radical and joined the students in protesting against the government.

V. Thus, by the time of Kennedy’s death in late 1963, most of his Middle East initiatives were already stymied.
Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What was John F. Kennedy’s criticism of Eisenhower’s approach to Middle Eastern nationalism?
2. What obstacles did Kennedy himself face in seeking to improve America’s political position in the Middle East?
Lecture Ten
Johnson—Taking Sides

Scope: In this lecture, we see how Kennedy’s effort to balance competing interests in the Middle East, already faltering by late 1963, collapsed altogether under Lyndon B. Johnson, who gave up on even attempting a balanced approach. Returning to the three policy areas discussed in the previous lecture, we see how Johnson assumed a frankly partisan stance, siding openly with the shah of Iran against his internal opposition, with the conservative Arab regimes against Nasserist Egypt, and with Israel against the Arab states as a whole. We end by taking note of America’s emerging strategic alliances with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, alliances that would become more extensive and formalized under President Richard M. Nixon.

Outline

I. Kennedy’s effort to balance conflicting interests in the Middle East, already faltering by late 1963, collapsed altogether under Lyndon B. Johnson.
   A. Johnson instead assumed a frankly partisan stance.
   B. He sided openly with the shah of Iran against his internal opposition, with the conservative Arab regimes against Nasserist Egypt, and with Israel against the Arab states as a whole.

II. Whereas Kennedy had pressured the shah of Iran to conduct internal reforms, Johnson returned to the posture of nearly uncritical support that had characterized U.S.-Iranian relations in the Eisenhower years. Johnson refrained from pushing for internal reforms and, instead, lavished Iran with military aid.
   A. Johnson’s lack of interest in Iranian internal reform may seem out of character given his own passion for domestic reform in the United States. But Johnson was also a great admirer of strength and loyalty.
      1. Whenever a foreign leader showed he was willing to stand up and be counted on the side of the United States, Johnson’s impulse was to give that leader unstinting support.
      2. The shah shrewdly played on this facet of Johnson’s character, constantly reminding Johnson that Iran was a loyal ally in the Cold War.
   B. The Johnson administration supported the shah for geostrategic reasons as well. By the mid-1960s, it was clear that Britain would soon have to relinquish its protectorates and military bases on the Arabian Peninsula.
      1. Who would fill the resulting vacuum in the oil-rich and strategically located Persian Gulf? Would it be the Soviets, radical nationalists, or some pro-Western power?
      2. The shah made it clear that he would be happy to fill that vacuum. From Washington’s perspective, he was far preferable to any of the alternatives.
      3. This seemed, then, to be a good time to curry favor with the shah, rather than hector him about the nature of his internal rule.
   C. Moreover, by the mid- to late 1960s, the scale of Iran’s weapons purchases from the United States was so great that it had a discernible impact on the U.S. economy, creating thousands of defense-related jobs for American workers.

III. In Iran, there was widespread opposition to the shah’s close relations with Washington.
   A. This opposition became especially intense after the United States and Iran concluded the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 1964. Under SOFA, U.S. military personnel suspected of breaking Iranian laws were to be court-martialed by the U.S. military rather than tried in Iranian courts.
   B. A broad coalition of left-leaning secularists and conservative Shiites bitterly denounced the agreement as a throwback to the colonial era.
      1. A little-known Shiite cleric named Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini caused a national sensation by condemning SOFA in a fiery speech.
      2. The shah arrested Khomeini and had him deported. Khomeini ended up in Iraq, where he was to remain until the late 1970s.
      3. Iran’s internal security forces began arresting, jailing, and torturing suspected dissidents, a regime of repression that would continue for the remainder of the shah’s rule.
IV. U.S.-Egyptian relations rapidly deteriorated after Kennedy’s death. Johnson and Nasser had a visceral dislike for each other, and a series of slights or perceived slights brought relations between the two countries to a new low.

A. In 1964, after the United States participated in an operation to rescue white hostages in the Congo, Congolese students attacked and destroyed a U.S. Information Service library in Cairo.
   1. Nasser was unwilling to admit that his own police force had lost control of the situation.
   2. He refused to condemn the attack or to apologize to the U.S. government.

B. Around the same time, the Egyptian air force shot down a private plane belonging to an American businessman who happened to be a close friend of Johnson.
   1. The incident was an accident.
   2. The resulting series of diplomatic “misunderstandings” culminated in Nasser’s declaring that if the Americans had a problem with Egypt they could “go drink from the sea,” the Egyptian equivalent of “go jump in a lake.”

C. In response to Nasser’s verbal attacks on the United States, the Johnson administration curtailed its food aid to Egypt, further enraging Nasser.

D. As U.S.-Egyptian relations deteriorated, the Johnson administration drew closer to the conservative Arab regimes.
   1. The administration sold tens of millions of dollars worth of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and Jordan.
   2. The administration also became more supportive of Saudi Arabia in its proxy war against Egypt over Yemen.
   3. By 1966, the administration had committed itself to a “two pillars” policy of beefing up support for both Iran and Saudi Arabia.

V. Another beneficiary of Johnson’s new approach to Middle East policy was Israel.

A. Johnson viscerally identified with the Israelis, seeing them as latter-day pioneers on the model of his own Texas forebears.

B. During Johnson’s administration, the United States first began selling Israel fighter aircraft and tanks, weapons with both offensive and defensive capabilities.

C. Like Kennedy, however, Johnson was concerned about Israel’s ongoing efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. He, too, hoped to convince the Israelis to forego the nuclear option by providing them with state-of-the-art conventional weapons.

D. But Johnson was no more successful than Kennedy had been at keeping Israel from developing the bomb. Although the Israeli government insisted that it had no intention of acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, the U.S. intelligence community learned otherwise.

E. The problem for the Johnson administration was what to do with this knowledge.
   1. Forcing an end to Israel’s nuclear program would require a public showdown between the Johnson administration and Israel.
   2. This, in turn, would provoke a bitter domestic struggle between the administration and Israel’s American supporters. At a time when Johnson was increasingly preoccupied with the war in Vietnam, a public fight over Israel was the last thing the president needed.

F. Aside from occasional protests and pointed queries, the Johnson administration did not make an issue of Israel’s ongoing nuclear weapons program.

G. Shrewdly, Israel provided Washington with official assurances that made it easier for the Americans to evade the issue.
   1. Israel’s standard statement on the question—“Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East”—sounded definitive but actually contained significant loopholes.
   2. It is believed that Israel acquired its first usable nuclear bomb sometime in early 1968.

H. By that time, of course, the political and strategic landscape of the Middle East had been dramatically altered by the Six-Day War, the subject of our next lecture.

Suggested Reading:
Questions to Consider:

1. Why did Lyndon B. Johnson resume the Eisenhower administration’s policy of extending virtually uncritical support for the shah of Iran?

2. To what extent was the deterioration in U.S.-Egyptian relations in the mid-1960s the result of personal friction between Johnson and Nasser and to what extent was it the result of fundamental differences between U.S. and Egyptian national interests?
Lecture Eleven
The Six-Day War

Scope: In this lecture, we discuss the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which dramatically altered the political, strategic, and psychological landscape of the Middle East. We begin by outlining the disputed status of the Strait of Tiran, showing how the interaction of that issue with inter-Arab rivalry created the crisis that ultimately led to war. We then recount Nasser’s challenge to Israel’s maritime rights in the Strait of Tiran and consider U.S. efforts to manage the resulting crisis. After briefly describing Israel’s lopsided victory in the ensuing war, we discuss the diplomatic and political fallout from the war, paying particular attention to the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and to the war’s devastating impact on Nasserist Arab nationalism.

Outline

I. The Six-Day War dramatically altered the political and strategic landscape of the Middle East, creating a situation “on the ground” with which the peoples of the Middle East, and the international community as a whole, continue to grapple. It also helped bring about a profound transformation in the nature of Arab opposition to U.S. policy.

II. To understand the causes of the Six-Day War, it is necessary to go back to the Suez War of 1956.

A. At the conclusion of that war, the international community pressured Israel to withdraw its forces from Egypt.

B. But Israel gained important concessions in return.
   1. It got a termination of an Egyptian blockade against Israeli shipping through the Strait of Tiran.
   2. It got an end to cross-border raids into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip.

C. These gains were secured by the stationing of UN peacekeeping forces on the Sinai Peninsula and in the Gaza Strip.

D. By the 1960s, the Arab world was divided into two mutually antagonistic camps.
   1. A conservative camp, consisting of such countries as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, was strongly pro-American.
   2. A radical camp, consisting of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, was officially neutral in the Cold War but had a distinct pro-Soviet bias.
   3. Each camp used the Arab-Israeli issue as a way of discrediting the other.
   4. This war of words intensified after a Syrian-Israeli aerial clash in April 1967; Nasser’s failure to come to Syria’s aid prompted Jordan’s King Hussein to denounce Nasser as a cowardly fraud.

III. In May 1967, Nasser requested the removal of the UN peacekeepers from Sinai and Gaza.

A. Nasser’s motives appear to have been twofold.
   1. He wanted to pose a credible threat of retaliation in the event Israel launched an attack on Syria, which Nasser feared might be imminent. The peacekeepers stood in the way of a ground offensive against Israel.
   2. Nasser wanted to silence critics in the Arab world who had accused him of using the presence of the UN peacekeepers as an excuse for avoiding conflict with Israel.

B. Nasser realized, however, that a total withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping force would leave a military vacuum in Gaza and Sharm al-Shaykh, a vacuum Nasser would have to fill with his own forces.
   1. And, having occupied Sharm-al-Shaykh, Nasser would face enormous pressure to reinstate the blockade on Israeli shipping through the Strait of Tiran.
   2. But if he blocked the strait, the Israelis would go to war against Egypt, because they had made it clear that free passage through the strait was a vital interest for which they were willing to fight.

C. Knowing his forces were unprepared for war, Nasser tried to follow a middle course.
   1. Rather than demanding a total withdrawal of peacekeepers, Nasser asked the UN to remove its peacekeeping force only from Egypt’s land border with Israel.
   2. Unfortunately for Nasser, U Thant, the secretary general of the UN, was unwilling to conduct a partial withdrawal of peacekeeping forces.
3. To save face, Nasser agreed to withdrawal of the UN peacekeepers from all of the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza.

IV. After the peacekeepers departed, Nasser sent Egyptian forces into the Sinai.
   A. Once his forces were in the Sinai, Nasser faced enormous public pressure to reinstate the blockade against Israeli shipping through the Strait of Tiran.
   B. In late May 1967, Nasser announced the closure of the strait to all Israeli shipping and to vessels of any nationality carrying strategic materials to Israel.
   C. Nasser’s closure of the strait made it extremely likely that Israel would go to war against Egypt to reopen the strait.
   D. If Nasser knew that blockading the strait would bring an inevitable Israeli attack, and if he knew that his army was not ready for war, why did he carry out this action?
      1. In the first place, Nasser concluded that the political price of not blockading the strait would have been exorbitant: He would have been ridiculed throughout the Arab world and would potentially lose his position as the standard bearer of Arab nationalism.
      2. In the second place, Nasser evidently assumed that an Israeli attack would not be as devastating as it turned out to be. He had no idea how unprepared for war his army actually was.

V. The Johnson administration was anxious to prevent a war.
   A. Although U.S. intelligence estimates indicated that Israel would almost certainly win such a war, there were nagging doubts that the intelligence estimates were mistaken and that the United States would have to come to Israel’s aid.
      1. Johnson warned the Israeli government that if Israel fired the first shot and got into trouble in the ensuing war, it would be impossible for the United States to bail Israel out.
      2. Johnson also promised that if Israel refrained from going to war, he would try to organize an international flotilla to challenge Nasser’s closure of the Strait of Tiran.
   B. The Israelis agreed to hold their fire and give Johnson a chance to organize the flotilla.

VI. The Egyptians received similar advice from the Soviet government: If Egypt started a war, the Soviet Union could not come to its aid. Nasser agreed not to fire the first shot.

VII. Although Nasser’s posture was now defensive, his public rhetoric, and that of other Arab leaders, was extremely bellicose.
   A. All the rivalries that had recently fractured the Arab world were momentarily forgotten as everyone focused on the coming battle with Israel.
   B. Jordan’s King Hussein signed a mutual defense pact with Nasser, placing Jordan’s army under Egypt’s command.
   C. These developments terrified the Israeli public, arousing fears that the Jews once again faced extermination. There was enormous pressure on the government to do something about the threat.
   D. Moreover, by this time, Israel had conducted a full military mobilization, which disrupted all industrial activity in the country. It was doubtful that the Israeli economy could endure that state of affairs for more than a few weeks.

VIII. Meanwhile, Washington’s efforts to organize an international flotilla were getting nowhere. Few countries were willing to allow their navies to take part in an effort to force the Strait of Tiran.
   A. As alternative solutions receded from view, Washington grew somewhat less insistent that Israel refrain from going to war.
   B. Through informal intermediaries, Israeli leaders gained the impression that Johnson, while still hoping to avoid a war, would not strongly object if Israel fired the first shot—provided that the United States was not dragged into the conflict.
IX. On June 5, 1967, Israel launched a surprise air attack on Egypt, destroying its air force on the ground.
   A. Deprived of air cover, and confused and demoralized by incoherent orders, the Egyptian army was defenseless against an Israeli ground assault in the Sinai. Israeli forces quickly occupied the entire peninsula.
   B. When Jordan entered the war on Egypt’s side, Israeli forces seized and occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
   C. Israel then turned its attention to Syria, taking from it the strategic Golan Heights.
   D. By the time a cease-fire was reached on June 11, Israel had tripled the territory under its control.

X. There was a marked difference between Johnson’s reaction to Israel’s behavior in 1967 and that of Eisenhower in 1956.
   A. Whereas Eisenhower had forced Israel to withdraw from Egypt, Johnson merely called for, and achieved, a “cease-fire in place.”
   B. This allowed Israel to remain indefinitely in possession of the territories it had seized.

XI. In November 1967, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242, which was subsequently accepted by Egypt, Jordan, and Israel.
   A. Resolution 242 essentially called for a “land-for-peace” settlement.
      1. The Arab states must recognize Israel’s right to exist in security.
      2. Israel must withdraw from territories seized in the Six-Day War.
   B. Still, Resolution 242 was an extremely ambiguous document.
      1. It did not say explicitly which should come first: the Arab states’ recognition of Israel or Israel’s withdrawal from Arab territory.
      2. Moreover, at the insistence of Israel and the United States, the clause dealing with Israeli withdrawal did not contain the definite article. Israel was to withdraw from “territories occupied in the recent conflict,” rather than from “the territories.”
      3. On the other hand, the preamble to the resolution referred to “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.”
   C. These ambiguities would plague subsequent attempts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, down to the present day.

XII. The Six-Day War was a devastating defeat for Nasserist pan-Arabism.
   A. Under nationalist leadership, the Arabs had been single-handedly defeated by the tiny state of Israel. It was a blow from which Arab nationalism never fully recovered.
   B. The decline of Nasser’s brand of secular Arab nationalism left a vacuum that was to be filled by two movements previously marginalized in Arab politics: Palestinian nationalism and political Islam.
   C. There was a growing feeling in the Arab world—and in other Islamic countries—that secular nationalism had failed to deliver the goods and that some alternative form of political organization had to be found.
   D. In the decades to come, these two movements—Palestinian nationalism and political Islam—would play an increasingly prominent role in Arab opposition to American policy in the Middle East.
   E. The Six-Day War also completed the reorientation of U.S. Middle East policy that Lyndon Johnson had begun shortly after taking office in late 1963.

Suggested Reading:
Questions to Consider:

1. Could the Johnson administration have done more to avert the Six-Day War in 1967?

2. How, and why, did Johnson’s reaction to the Israeli attack on Egypt in 1967 differ from Eisenhower’s reaction to the Israeli attack on Egypt in 1956?
Lecture Twelve

The Nixon Doctrine and the Middle East

Scope: In this lecture, we discuss the Nixon Doctrine of 1969 and its specific applications to the Middle East. A general response to the relative decline in American power occurring in the 1960s, the Nixon Doctrine called for greater reliance on regional “cops on the beat”—powerful pro-Western governments that could protect American interests in various parts of the world, thus obviating the need for direct U.S. military intervention. Two Middle Eastern nations, Iran and, to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia, quickly came to be seen as Washington’s “cops on the beat.” Although Nixon initially intended to keep the Arab-Israeli conflict on a separate policy track, by the early 1970s, Israel, too, had become an American ally within the meaning of the Nixon Doctrine.

Outline

I. During Richard Nixon’s first term, the United States forged quasi-alliances with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. These relationships were buttressed by a new policy formulation known as the Nixon Doctrine.
   A. On taking office in early 1969, Nixon was determined to control foreign policy from the White House.
   B. Nixon appointed Henry Kissinger as national security advisor. Ostensibly, Kissinger’s role was to receive input from all the executive departments concerned with foreign policy—State, Defense, the CIA, and so on—then make recommendations to the president.
   C. In reality, Nixon and Kissinger largely ignored the executive departments, conducting foreign policy in secret. Nixon appointed William P. Rogers as secretary of state, a lawyer with little knowledge of foreign relations who would be unlikely to interfere in Nixon’s and Kissinger’s deliberations.

II. Nixon also realized, on taking office, that a new era had begun in which America’s power relative to that of other nations had declined.
   A. Western Europe and Japan had recovered from the devastation of World War II and were emerging as powerful economic rivals of the United States.
   B. Communist China had acquired nuclear weapons.
   C. The Soviet Union had achieved rough nuclear parity with the United States.
   D. The domestic American reaction to the Vietnam War made it difficult for the U.S. government to contemplate future military interventions.

III. Nixon realized that the United States must somehow adjust to these new realities.
   A. One way he tried to do this was by placing limits on the sorts of international commitments the United States would assume. In a 1969 speech, Nixon declared that America’s allies would have to play a larger role in their own defense. This proclamation became known as the Nixon Doctrine.
      1. Initially, the doctrine was meant to apply mainly to Southeast Asia, an attempt to find some grand strategic framework in which to couch Nixon’s new policy on Vietnam.
      2. Over the next few years, however, the Nixon Doctrine began taking on a broader meaning, indicating a genuine pattern for Nixon’s approach to world politics.
   B. Under the Nixon Doctrine, the United States became increasingly reliant on powerful pro-Western governments willing and able to protect American interests in various parts of the world.

IV. The principal Middle Eastern power to be cultivated under the Nixon Doctrine was Iran. In 1968, Britain had announced that it would withdraw its military forces from the Persian Gulf in three years’ time.
   A. The new Nixon administration was determined to prevent the Soviet Union from filling the vacuum left by Britain.
   B. At the same time, the shah of Iran was growing more assertive in the Persian Gulf, seeking to turn Iran into a regional hegemony.
C. The shah’s ambitions dovetailed with Nixon’s foreign policy. By supporting Iran’s claims to regional domination, Nixon could ensure that the Persian Gulf remained in pro-Western hands, without the necessity of direct U.S. involvement.

1. Nixon vastly increased the amount and quality of military aid to Iran, telling the shah that he could purchase from the United States any type of military equipment except for nuclear weapons.
2. In thus embracing Iran, Nixon turned a blind eye to the shah’s brutal human rights record.

V. Another Middle Eastern country to gain importance under the Nixon Doctrine, albeit to a lesser extent than Iran, was Saudi Arabia.

A. In some formulations of Middle East policy, Iran and Saudi Arabia were described as the twin pillars on which Washington depended to ensure the status quo, though Iran was always the bigger pillar of the two.

B. By the late 1960s, the emergence of a seller’s market for oil permitted Saudi Arabia to raise the price of oil substantially.

1. One of the main beneficiaries of this development was the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, an oil cartel consisting of the major oil-rich Middle Eastern states, along with some non-Middle Eastern states, such as Indonesia and Venezuela.
2. With increased oil revenues, the Saudi government was able, in the 1970s, to purchase billions of dollars worth of arms from American contractors, especially in the area of air defense.
3. This arrangement, known as the “recycling of petrodollars,” was highly favored by Washington, Riyadh, and American oil companies.

VI. Initially, Nixon intended to keep the Arab-Israeli conflict on a separate policy track from the Nixon Doctrine.

A. For the first two years of his presidency, Nixon tried to keep his distance from the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the assumption that the prospects for success in that area were slight, while the domestic political dangers were great.

1. Nixon initially designated the Arab-Israeli conflict to be one of the few policy areas that his secretary of state, William Rogers, would be allowed to handle.
2. Policy areas of greater interest to Nixon, including Vietnam and Sino-American relations, were to be managed from the White House by Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger.

B. Nixon’s elevation to the presidency coincided with an upswing in Arab-Israeli hostilities. Major challenges came from Egypt to the west and, to the east, from a new phenomenon in world affairs—an independent Palestinian movement.

1. In early 1969, just as Nixon was taking office, Nasser greatly stepped up Egypt’s sporadic artillery attacks and commando raids against Israeli positions in the Sinai, on the eastern side of the Suez Canal.
2. Israel’s initial reaction was to conduct massive air raids against Egyptian artillery positions, surface-to-air missiles, antiaircraft guns, and radar stations. By the end of the year, Egypt’s entire air-defense system was in ruins.

VII. The U.S. State Department was alarmed by the escalating violence, and Secretary of State Rogers made the most of this opportunity.

A. In December 1969, Rogers unveiled a major Arab-Israeli peace initiative that became known as the Rogers Plan. It called for an Israeli withdrawal from virtually all of the territories occupied in 1967 in exchange for peace and recognition from the Arab states.

1. Israel immediately rejected the plan because it violated the principle of direct bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Arab states.
2. Egypt did not reject the Rogers Plan outright but declined to endorse it, either, because the plan demanded specific concessions from Egypt that Nasser deemed unacceptable.
3. Kissinger quietly undermined the Rogers Plan, viewing the plan as giving far too much to the Arabs.

B. The failure of the Rogers Plan, along with a subsequent increase in Arab-Israeli tensions, eroded Nixon’s confidence in Rogers’s stewardship of Middle East diplomacy.
VIII. In January 1970, the War of Attrition sharply intensified. Though Egypt and Israel agreed to a cease-fire in August 1970, a month later, a major crisis occurred that would further weaken Rogers’s position and have a far-reaching impact on U.S.-Israeli relations.

A. A radical faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) hijacked several commercial airplanes and forced them to land in Jordan.

B. Seeing this as a challenge to his authority, Jordan’s King Hussein moved to crush the PLO, which had established a state-within-a-state in Jordan.

C. A column of Syrian tanks crossed into northern Jordan, apparently in support of the PLO. Nixon and Kissinger believed that Moscow was behind the Syrian intervention.
   1. Hussein appealed to the United States for help but was willing, if necessary, to be bailed out by Israeli intervention.
   2. Both logistically and politically, it would have been extremely difficult for the United States to intervene militarily in the Jordan crisis.
   3. Israel, however, was willing to intervene on Jordan’s behalf. In a menacing gesture, a squadron of Israeli jets flew to northern Jordan and swooped low over the advancing Syrian tanks.
   4. The Syrian tanks withdrew, permitting Hussein to defeat and, eventually, expel the PLO. The defeat of the PLO came to be known by Palestinians as Black September, a name later taken by a new Palestinian paramilitary group that sought to avenge this defeat and call attention to the Palestinian’s plight through a series of spectacular terrorist attacks.

D. The Black September crisis had a profound effect on U.S. policymaking toward the Middle East. Nixon was extremely pleased with Israel’s behavior in the Jordan crisis and gained a new appreciation for Israel’s potential as a strategic ally of the United States.
   1. He saw to it that Israel received increased military and economic aid.
   2. He allowed Kissinger, who favored a more pro-Israeli position, to wrest control of Middle East policy away from Rogers.
   3. Nixon and Kissinger took a more permissive attitude toward Israel’s occupation of Arab lands seized in the 1967 war.

E. Thus, by the early 1970s, Israel, too, had become an American ally under the terms of the Nixon Doctrine.

Suggested Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. To what transformations in the international position of the United States was Nixon attempting to respond when he issued the Nixon Doctrine in 1969?
2. What circumstances caused Nixon eventually to embrace Israel as a strategic partner under the terms of his doctrine?
Timeline

1898...............................Spanish-American War takes place
1906.................................Algeciras Conference held
1914.................................World War I begins; Turkey joins World War I on the side of Germany and Austria
1915–1916..........................Turkey crushes Armenian uprising
1917.................................Britain issues Balfour Declaration
1918.................................Woodrow Wilson issues Fourteen Points; World War I ends
1919.................................Woodrow Wilson sends King-Crane Commission to Middle East
1920.................................U.S. Senate rejects American mandate over Armenia
1923.................................Treaty of Lausanne ends Allied occupation of Turkey
1924.................................Congress passes National Origins Act
1923.................................Hitler takes power in Germany
1938.................................German government launches Kristallnacht; American geologists discover oil in Saudi Arabia
1939.................................Britain issues White Paper on Palestine; World War II begins
1941.................................United States enters World War II; United States joins Britain and Soviet Union in occupying Iran
1942–1943..........................Allies undertake North Africa campaign
1945.................................World War II ends
1945–1946..........................Turkish straits crises occur
1946.................................Iran crisis occurs
1947.................................Harry S. Truman issues Truman Doctrine; UN General Assembly passes partition plan on Palestine
1948.................................Israel declares independence; first Arab-Israeli War begins
1949.................................Arab-Israeli armistices concluded
1950.................................U.S. Treasury Department issues Golden Gimmick
1951–1953..........................Iranian oil nationalization crisis occurs
1953.................................Central Intelligence Agency helps overthrow Mohammed Mossadeq
1954.................................Britain agrees to evacuate Suez Canal Zone by 1956
1955.................................Egypt concludes major arms purchase deal with Soviet bloc; Eisenhower administration offers to help fund Aswan Dam
1956.................................Eisenhower administration withdraws Aswan Dam funding offer; Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalizes Suez Canal Company; Suez War occurs
1957.................................Eisenhower issues Eisenhower Doctrine
1958.................................U.S. Marines intervene in Lebanon
1962.................................Yemeni civil war begins
1963.................................John F. Kennedy assassinated
1964.................................. U.S. and Iranian governments conclude Status of Forces agreement, provoking demonstrations in Iran; Arab League establishes Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

1965.................................. Ayatollah Khomeini expelled from Iran

1967.................................. Six-Day War occurs; UN Security Council passes Resolution 242; Yemeni civil war ends

1969.................................. Richard M. Nixon issues Nixon Doctrine; PLO emerges as independent Palestinian organization under leadership of Yasser Arafat; U.S. government unveils Rogers Plan

1969–1970........................ Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition occurs

1970................................. Black September crisis occurs; Nasser dies; Anwar Sadat becomes president of Egypt

1972................................. Sadat expels Soviet advisors from Egypt

1972–1975........................ Nixon administration gives covert support to Kurdish forces in Iraq

1973................................. Yom Kippur War occurs

1973–1974 ....................... Arab states embargo oil shipments to United States

1975................................. Iran and Iraq conclude agreement over Shatt al-Arab; Egypt and Israel conclude disengagement agreement in Sinai Peninsula

1977................................. Sadat visits Jerusalem

1978................................. Egypt and Israel conclude Camp David Agreement; Iranian revolution begins

1979................................. Shah flees Iran; Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran; Egypt and Israel sign peace treaty; Iranian students seize U.S. embassy; Soviet Union invades Afghanistan

1980................................. Jimmy Carter issues Carter Doctrine; United States launches unsuccessful attempt to free hostages in Iran; Iran-Iraq War begins

1981................................. Iran frees U.S. hostages

1982................................. Israel completes withdrawal from Sinai Peninsula; Israel invades Lebanon; Sabra and Shatila massacres occur; U.S. Marines land in Lebanon

1983................................. Lebanon and Israel conclude peace treaty; truck bomb kills 241 U.S. Marines in Lebanon

1984................................. Lebanon repudiates peace treaty with Israel; Ronald Reagan withdraws Marines from Lebanon

1985–1986........................ U.S. officials agree to sell arms to Iran in exchange for release of American hostages in Lebanon

1986................................. Reagan administration’s dealings with Iran become public

1987................................. Palestinian intifada breaks out in West Bank and Gaza

1988................................. Iran-Iraq War ends; Palestine National Council “declares” independent Palestinian state in West Bank and Gaza; United States begins political dialogue with PLO

1989................................. Soviet Union withdraws from Afghanistan; Osama bin Laden forms al-Qa’ida

1990................................. U.S.-PLO dialogue suspended; Iraq invades Kuwait

1991................................. Gulf War takes place; Madrid Conference held

1992................................. Pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan falls; anti-Soviet Afghan factions begin fighting among themselves


1993................................. First World Trade Center bombing occurs; Israel and the PLO sign Declaration of Principles (Oslo Agreement)
1996............................. Khobar Towers military complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, destroyed in explosion; Taliban take over in Afghanistan; Osama bin Laden returns to Afghanistan and issues jihad against United States

1998............................. Al-Qa‘ida operatives bomb U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; Bill Clinton orders air strikes against bin Laden training camps in Afghanistan and against Sudanese pharmaceutical company

2000............................. Israeli-Palestinian summit meeting at Camp David fails; Second Palestinian intifada begins; U.S.S. Cole bombed off coast of Yemen

2001............................. Terrorists attack World Trade Center and Pentagon; U.S. forces intervene in Afghanistan
Glossary


**Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC)**: British oil company that dominated the extraction, production, and marketing of Iranian oil from 1913 to 1954 (known as Anglo-Persian Oil Company until 1935).

**Aqaba, Gulf of**: Waterway lying between the Sinai and Arabian Peninsulas.

**Aswan Dam project**: Egyptian public works project designed to regulate the flow of the Nile, begun in 1960 and completed in 1970.

**Azerbaijan**: Province of northern Iran.

**Aziz, Tariq**: Iraqi foreign minister during the Gulf War of 1991.

**Baghdad Pact (1955–1959)**: A British-sponsored defense pact whose members were Britain, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan.


**Balfour Declaration (1917)**: Public statement issued by British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour, declaring Britain’s support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

**Barzani, Mustafa**: Iraqi Kurdish leader, 1930s–late 1970s.

**Black September (1970)**: Jordanian-Palestinian clash resulting in the expulsion of the Palestine Liberation Organization from Jordan.

**Brandeis, Louis**: American Zionist leader; Supreme Court justice, 1916–1941.


**The Dardanelles and the Bosporus (known jointly as the Turkish Straits)**: Maritime passageways from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean.

**Dimona nuclear reactor**: Facility in the Negev Desert at which Israel developed its nuclear weapons capability.


**Eisenhower Doctrine (1957)**: U.S. policy, embodied in a congressional resolution, designed to help Middle Eastern nations resist international communism.

**Fortas, Abe**: Supreme Court justice, 1965–1969.

**Fourteen Points (1918)**: Set of principles for establishing a just and stable postwar international order, unveiled by President Woodrow Wilson in a speech to the U.S. Congress.

**Gemayal, Amin**: President of Lebanon, 1982–1988.

**Gemayal, Bashir**: Leader of the Lebanese Phalange Party; president of Lebanon, 1982.

**Glaspie, April**: U.S. ambassador to Iraq at the time of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

**Golden Gimmick (1950)**: Ruling by the U.S. Treasury Department, allowing American oil companies to deduct from their U.S. taxes the amount they paid in royalties to the Saudi government.


Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party): Afghan party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.


Hussein-McMahon Correspondence (1915): Exchange of letters between Henry McMahon, British high commissioner in Egypt, and Sherif Hussein, governor of Mecca, establishing the nature and extent of British support for postwar Arab independence.


Intifada II (2000–): Resumption of Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.


Khobar Towers bombing (1996): Deadly explosion at U.S. military headquarters in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, applauded by Osama bin Laden but probably the work of pro-Iranian Saudi militants.

King-Crane Commission (1919): Commission of inquiry sent by President Woodrow Wilson to ascertain the political aspirations of the native inhabitants of the former Ottoman Empire.


Lausanne, Treaty of (1923): Treaty concluded by Turkey, the Soviet Union, and the victorious allies in World War I, freeing Turkey from Allied occupation.

Lawrence, T. E. (“Lawrence of Arabia”): British military intelligence officer who assisted the Arab uprising against the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

Lend-Lease (1941–1945): U.S. program to loan money, weapons, and war materiel to the Allies during World War II.

madrasas: Religious schools in Pakistan at which future members of the Afghan Taliban were indoctrinated in an austere interpretation of Islam.

Maktab al-Khidmat (Office of Services): Pakistan-based agency devoted to recruiting volunteers for the anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan, 1980s.


Mossadeq, Mohammed: Prime minister of Iran, 1951–1953.

Mujahidin: Broad coalition of Islamic groups opposing Soviet domination of Afghanistan, late 1970s–early 1990s.


Nixon Doctrine (1969): Set of principles embodied in a speech delivered by President Richard M. Nixon, urging America’s allies to play a larger role in their own defense.

North, Oliver: Marine lieutenant colonel; National Security Council aide who, in the mid-1980s, implemented the sale of U.S. military equipment to Iran and the diversion of arms profits to the Nicaraguan contras.

Ocalan, Abdullah: Turkish-Kurdish leader of the Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers’ Party), 1980s and 1990s.
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC): Consortium of oil-exporting countries formed in 1960; members are Algeria, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO): Umbrella organization for a wide variety of Palestinian groups, established in 1964.

Partition Plan (1947): UN General Assembly decision dividing Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish.

Peres, Shimon: Israeli Labor Party politician; headed Israeli nuclear program in the 1960s; served as prime minister from 1984 to 1986 (alternating with Yitzhak Shamir) and from 1995 to 1996; served for several stints as foreign minister.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP): Radical Marxist faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Peres, Shimon: Israeli Labor Party politician; headed Israeli nuclear program in the 1960s; served as prime minister from 1984 to 1986 (alternating with Yitzhak Shamir) and from 1995 to 1996; served for several stints as foreign minister.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP): Radical Marxist faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization.


Public Law (PL) 480: U.S. aid program, permitting countries to purchase American commodities with their own currencies.

Red Line Agreement (1928): Agreement concluded by American, British, French, and Dutch oil companies pledging to cooperate in exploring for oil in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire.

Resolution 194 (1948): UN General Assembly resolution declaring that Palestinian refugees have the right to return to their former homes in present-day Israel.


Rogers Plan (1969): Arab-Israeli peace plan proposed by U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, calling on Israel to withdraw from the territories it seized in 1967 and for the Arab states to recognize and make peace with Israel.

Rogers Plan II (1970): Cease-fire agreement, brokered by U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, ending a resumption of fighting between Egypt and Israel over the Sinai Peninsula.


Roosevelt, Kermit: CIA agent who organized an army coup against Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq in 1953.

San Remo Conference (1920): Conference at which the victorious allies in World War I (excluding the United States) awarded Middle Eastern mandates to European powers.

SAVAK: Internal police force of Mohammed Pahlavi, shah of Iran.


Shamir, Yitzhak: Conservative Israeli politician; served as prime minister from 1983 to 1984, from 1986 to 1990, and from 1990 to 1992; served for several stints as foreign minister.

Sharm al-Shaykh: Egyptian port city located at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, overlooking the Strait of Tiran.

Shatt al-Arab: Tidal river, disputed by Iraq and Iran, feeding into the Persian Gulf.


Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916): Secret agreement between Britain and France dividing up the territory of the soon-to-be-defeated Ottoman Empire.


Thomas, Lowell: American publicist who popularized the exploits of Colonel T. E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”).


Tiran, Strait of: Maritime passageway from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Red Sea.

Truman Doctrine (1947): Foreign policy declaration, delivered by President Harry S. Truman in a speech to the U.S. Congress, pledging American support for “free peoples” resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

Valentino, Rudolph: American movie star and sex symbol of the 1920s, often appearing in Arabesque settings and roles.


Weizmann, Chaim: Scientist and Zionist leader; first president of Israel, 1948–1952.

World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders (formed 1998): Broad coalition of anti-Western Islamic terrorist groups formed by Osama bin Laden.


Yousef, Ramzi: Pakistani-born operative working for Osama bin Laden’s al-Qa’ida network; mastermind of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.
The United States and the Middle East: 1914 to 9/11
Part II
Professor Salim Yaqub
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The United States and the
Middle East: 1914 to 9/11

Scope:

This course examines U.S. relations with the nations of the Middle East since 1914. Although the structure of the course is mainly chronological, four central themes recur throughout the lectures.

The first theme is the growing involvement of the United States in the affairs of the Middle East, a consequence of America’s increasing global power. In the first four decades of the 20th century—except for a brief but important flurry of activity in the late 1910s—U.S. interests in the Middle East were almost entirely missionary, philanthropic, educational, and commercial. This started to change with America’s entry into World War II, which caused U.S. officials, for the first time, to see the geopolitical orientation of the Middle East as vital to American national security. During the war, U.S. military forces occupied large portions of the Middle East, turning Iran into a corridor for supplying the Soviet Union and North Africa into a staging area for invading fascist Italy. After 1945, the Middle East remained vital to U.S. security, both as a staging area for a possible war against the Soviet Union, America’s new adversary, and as a source of oil for Japan and the nations of Western Europe, America’s new Cold War allies. For the first decade and a half of the Cold War era, the United States generally deferred to Britain as the preeminent Western power in the Middle East, but following the Suez crisis of 1956—which demonstrated that Britain could no longer play this role—Washington stepped in to take London’s place. For another couple of decades, the United States and the Soviet Union vied for political and strategic advantage in the Middle East. In the mid-1970s, however, the Soviet position in the region began to decline, foreshadowing and, in a small way contributing to, the demise of the Soviet system in the early 1990s. Now the sole remaining superpower, the United States wields unparalleled power and influence over Middle Eastern affairs.

The second theme of the course is Middle Easterners’ ongoing quest for political independence and self-mastery. In the early decades of the 20th century, Turks, Arabs, Jews, Iranians, and Kurds sought to gain political control over portions of the region, often in opposition to the imperial agendas of European powers. By mid-century, most of these groups, with some important exceptions, had succeeded in establishing formal national independence, but Middle Easterners remained preoccupied with combating external domination, real and perceived. After 1945, as the United States grew more involved in the region’s affairs, it increasingly became the object of indigenous resentment. In Iran and the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s, secular nationalists resisted American pressure to side with the West in the Cold War, while Arab nationalists in particular tried to defeat or contain Israel, which they saw as an instrument of Western power. By the 1970s, secular nationalism was a declining force in Arab and Iranian affairs, increasingly giving way to political Islam, whose rejection of Western influence was far more profound. In the decades since, Islamists have been generally unsuccessful at seizing state power (the Iranian revolution is the major exception to this rule), but they have posed a formidable challenge both to the United States and to existing regimes in the region. Of all the Middle Eastern nations, Turkey and Israel have enjoyed the closest relations with the United States, but they, too, have sometimes chafed under Washington’s restraints on their freedom of action.

The third theme is the difficulty the United States has experienced in balancing diverse, and sometimes conflicting, interests and objectives in the Middle East. After 1945, America’s primary objectives in the region were securing Western access to Middle Eastern oil, preventing the Soviet Union from reaping political or strategic advantage in the area, and ensuring Israel’s security. Pursuing the last of these objectives often complicated the pursuit of the other two. Washington’s close relations with Israel generated anti-American sentiment in the Arab world, providing the Soviet Union with opportunities to increase its political influence in the region. Similarly, during the Yom Kippur War of 1973, President Richard M. Nixon’s decision to airlift military supplies to Israel prompted oil-producing Arab states to impose an embargo on oil shipments to the United States and some European countries, causing major dislocations in the global economy. As the Cold War drew to an end, the imperative of containing the Soviet Union gave way to two new objectives: combating international terrorism and preventing “rogue” states—such as Libya, Iran, and Iraq—from challenging U.S. policies in the region. Both of these objectives have acquired fresh urgency following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but Americans disagree over whether the two goals can, or should, be pursued simultaneously. While President George W. Bush argues that the necessity of disarming Iraq (and, perhaps, overthrowing its government as well) cannot be separated from the effort to defeat Osama bin Laden’s al-Qa’ida network, others insist that Bush’s preoccupation with Iraq has diverted precious
energy and resources from the war against al-Qa‘ida. As in previous decades, Washington finds no easy formulas for pursuing its diverse objectives in the Middle East.

The fourth theme is the rising antagonism between Americans and Middle Easterners. In the first four decades of the 20th century, the United States had a relatively benign reputation among Middle Easterners, who appreciated that the United States had no imperial ambitions in the Middle East and who were grateful for the educational, philanthropic, and humanitarian services Americans provided in the region. But once the United States emerged as a global superpower and began pursuing policies that antagonized the broad currents of regional opinion, much of that goodwill turned into bitter resentment. On the American side, there has also been a rising tide of suspicion and anger directed at the dominant cultures of the Middle East. Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims have long proliferated in American culture, but in the early years of the 20th century, those images were relatively benign, romanticizing Middle Eastern society as often as they vilified it. It was only in later years, as the substance of U.S.-Middle Eastern relations grew angrier and more violent, that popular images of Middle Easterners became more uniformly threatening.
Lecture Thirteen
The Yom Kippur War and Kissinger's Diplomacy

Scope: In this lecture, we examine America’s response to the Yom Kippur War of 1973. We begin by discussing Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s determination to regain the Sinai Peninsula from Israel and his unsuccessful efforts to achieve this goal through diplomacy. We then discuss Sadat’s decision to join with Syria in waging war against Israel, paying particular attention to Egypt’s and Syria’s divergent war aims. After describing the ensuing Yom Kippur War, we recount Henry Kissinger’s efforts to gain control over the crisis while excluding the Soviet Union from Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Finally, we discuss Kissinger’s diplomacy in the immediate postwar period and explore its legacy for future Middle East peacemaking efforts, especially the Camp David peace process of the late 1970s.

Outline

I. The Yom Kippur War was a major turning point in America’s relations with Middle Eastern states.
   A. The United States emerged from that crisis as the one nation on which both the Arabs and the Israelis had to rely to achieve their political objectives in that conflict.
   B. The Yom Kippur War also resulted in a marked decrease in Soviet influence in the Middle East.

II. Anwar Sadat inherited Nasser’s determination to ensure the recovery of the Arab territories lost in the 1967 war.
   A. Initially, Sadat tried to regain the lost territory by purely diplomatic means.
      1. In February 1971, he announced that Egypt would be willing to conclude a peace treaty with Israel if Israel fully withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula and from all other Arab territories taken in 1967.
      2. Israel rejected Sadat’s initiative, insisting that any return of Arab lands would have to take place after the Arab states had made peace with Israel, not as a precondition for peace.
   B. Over the next two years, Sadat repeatedly threatened that Egypt would go to war if it could not recover its lost territory by diplomacy.
      1. Sadat, however, did not receive sufficient military aid from the Soviet Union to resume hostilities with Israel.
      2. Consequently, the Nixon administration dismissed Sadat’s threat.

III. In the summer of 1972, Sadat expelled thousands of Soviet advisors from Egypt.
   A. Sadat was, at one and the same time, clearing the way for war and making a bid for closer relations with the United States.
      1. On one level, Sadat was trying to get Moscow’s attention, to shock the Soviets into giving Egypt more military aid.
      2. On another level, Sadat hoped to signal to Washington that he was prepared for closer relations with the United States.
   B. Sadat’s gambit succeeded with the Soviets but failed with the Americans.
      1. The Soviet Union quickly agreed to furnish Egypt with new and more powerful weapons, making war possible.
      2. The United States declined to exploit the opening provided by Sadat, making war all but inevitable.

IV. In 1973, Sadat forged a military alliance with Hafiz al-Asad, the president of Syria.
   A. The two leaders planned a coordinated offensive against Israel, with Egypt attacking Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and Syria attacking Israeli forces in the Golan Heights.
   B. Whereas Asad intended to regain the entire Golan Heights by force, Sadat’s military objectives were confined to securing a narrow strip of land on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. The rest of the Sinai was to be recovered by subsequent diplomacy.
   C. Sadat did not reveal to Asad how limited his military objectives were. He had his military commanders draw up a two-part plan for the Sinai operation that could be shared with the Syrians.
1. The first part called for the Egyptian army to cross the canal and secure a narrow strip on its eastern bank.
2. The second part envisioned a subsequent advance to a series of mountain passes in the Sinai, about 25 miles east of the Suez Canal.
3. Asad was not told that only the first part of the plan was to be implemented.

V. The Yom Kippur War began on October 6, 1973.
   A. In a daring and ingenious maneuver, Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal and established a bridgehead on the eastern bank
   B. The Syrian army entered the Golan Heights and seemed in danger of crossing into Israel itself.
   C. Caught off guard by the attack, Israel appealed to the United States for immediate assistance.

VI. Because of Nixon’s preoccupation with Watergate, Kissinger dominated the U.S. response to the Yom Kippur War.
   A. Kissinger devised a three-part strategy for dealing with the crisis.
      1. He wanted to ensure that Israel was sufficiently powerful to repel the Egyptian-Syrian attack and even, to some extent, take the offensive.
      2. Yet Kissinger also sought to avoid the total humiliation of Egypt and Syria. Now convinced that Arab grievances must be addressed in some fashion, he hoped to preserve the option of a postwar diplomatic initiative.
      3. Kissinger was determined to prevent the Soviet Union from increasing its political influence in the Middle East—indeed, to reduce the influence it already had.
   B. The United States sent Israel a massive airlift of military equipment.
      1. The airlift helped turn the tide of battle in Israel’s favor.
      2. It also prompted the oil-producing Arab states to impose an embargo on oil shipments to the United States.

VII. Even before the U.S. airlift, the Egyptian-Syrian offensive had started to lose steam.
   A. After securing a narrow strip of land on the eastern bank of the canal, the Egyptian army halted as planned.
   B. Israel was able to divert forces to the Golan and take the offensive against Syria.
   C. Israel then pushed back the Egyptian forces, crossing to the western side of the Suez Canal and stranding Egypt’s Third Army on the eastern bank.

VIII. After stalling for time to allow the Israelis to consolidate their position, Kissinger worked out a cease-fire agreement with the Soviet government. On October 22, that agreement was passed in the UN Security Council as Resolution 338.
   A. Israel initially ignored the cease-fire and continued its offensive against Egypt, prompting Sadat to issue an appeal for a joint U.S.-Soviet military intervention on Egypt’s behalf.
   B. The Soviet Union indicated its willingness to intervene in the Middle East, unilaterally if necessary.
   C. Nixon, by now distraught over the escalating Watergate crisis, was absent when other top administration officials met to decide how to respond to the Soviet challenge. The administration agreed that a firm reply to the Soviet threat of unilateral intervention was necessary and responded by placing U.S. nuclear forces on heightened alert. Moscow backed down.
   D. Meanwhile, Israel continued to besiege Egypt’s Third Army.

IX. Sadat finally broke the impasse by withdrawing his request for superpower intervention and declaring his willingness to negotiate with the Israelis directly over the disengagement of troops in the Sinai.
   A. Egyptian-Israeli disengagement talks began on October 28. It was the first time in 25 years that Egyptian and Israeli officials formally communicated with one another.
   B. Sadat also invited Kissinger to play a direct mediating role in any further negotiations between Egypt and Israel.
      1. This invitation reflected Sadat’s assessment that the United States, on account of its close ties to Israel, held the key to a satisfactory Middle East settlement.
2. The Soviets could provide Egypt with arms, but only the United States could induce Israel to return captured Arab territory.

X. Over the next two years, Kissinger brokered a series of bilateral agreements between Egypt and Israel, setting the stage for the Camp David peace process of the late 1970s.

A. Syria, by contrast, got little more from Kissinger’s diplomacy than a restoration of the pre–Yom Kippur War status quo.

B. Kissinger saw little point in doing Asad any favors.
   1. Asad was refusing to make the sorts of diplomatic concessions that Sadat was making.
   2. Whereas Sadat was now distancing himself from his former Soviet patrons, Asad retained close relations with Moscow.

XI. The overriding objective of Kissinger’s diplomacy throughout the Yom Kippur War had been to limit or reduce Soviet influence in the Middle East. By this criterion, Kissinger’s policies were a major success.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Could the Nixon administration have done more to avert the Yom Kippur War?
2. What did Anwar Sadat hope to accomplish by resuming hostilities against Israel in October 1973? How successful was he?
Lecture Fourteen
Carter and Camp David

Scope: This lecture deals with President Jimmy Carter’s efforts, in the late 1970s, to broker an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. It begins by discussing Carter’s initial determination to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and all its major Arab adversaries, including the Palestinians. We then consider Anwar Sadat’s dramatic trip to Israel in 1977 and the resulting redirection of the peace process onto a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli track. From here, we proceed to Carter’s hosting of the Camp David summit meeting of 1978 and the ensuing peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. Finally, we assess the achievements and shortcomings of the Camp David process, taking note of the divergent ways in which Arabs, Israelis, and Americans have interpreted that experience.

Outline

I. Jimmy Carter came into office determined to bring peace to the Middle East. Although Carter did achieve a remarkable success with the Camp David agreement, that agreement proved to be far narrower in scope than Carter had hoped.
   A. Carter’s ineffectiveness in foreign policy was both reflected in and exacerbated by a sharp political division between his two foreign policy advisors, Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski.
      1. Vance was Carter’s secretary of state. He believed greater emphasis should be placed on negotiation, as opposed to military force, and he was deeply committed to slowing down the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union.
      2. Brzezinski was Carter’s national security advisor. He was deeply anti-Soviet and, though he gave lip service to Carter’s goals of fostering peace and human rights abroad, he believed that nothing could be accomplished along those lines unless the Soviet Union was first contained and weakened.
   B. Both men agreed, however, on the urgent necessity of working out a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

II. Initially, Carter favored a comprehensive approach, whereby all the outstanding issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict could be addressed simultaneously at an international conference.
   A. Such a conference would include Israel, the Arab states, and the great powers of the world.
   B. Carter was also willing to grant the Palestinians a role in such a conference.

III. Carter’s openness to Palestinian participation reflected some significant changes that had occurred in the diplomatic status of the PLO and in American thinking about the Palestinian issue.
   A. When Arafat first took over the PLO in the late 1960s, the organization was committed to destroying Israel and establishing a Palestinian state in its place.
   B. By the mid-1970s, however, the dominant factions of the PLO were instead contemplating a political settlement whereby a Palestinian state was established on the West Bank and Gaza and existed alongside Israel.
   C. Important segments of the American political establishment took note of this development and began speaking, cautiously, about the necessity of addressing Palestinian concerns.
      1. In 1975, the Brookings Institution, a mainstream think tank in Washington with somewhat liberal leanings, issued a report that called for Israel’s withdrawal from virtually all the territory occupied in 1967 and recognition of the Palestinians’ right to self-determination.
      2. One of the authors of the report was Zbigniew Brzezinski, who later become Carter’s national security advisor.
   D. Carter shared this perspective, though he was not yet willing to advocate a Palestinian state or to deal directly with the PLO.
      1. Kissinger had pledged to the Israelis that the United States would not deal with the PLO as long as it refused to recognize Israel.
      2. By the time Carter came to office, the PLO was close to satisfying this demand but had not quite done so.
IV. In the spring of 1977, Carter proposed holding an international conference in Geneva to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict comprehensively.
   A. Carter did not invite the PLO to attend, but he agreed that Palestinians not affiliated with the PLO could take part in the conference.
   B. The Soviets and most Arab states welcomed the Geneva formula, but Israel strongly objected to it.
      1. Israel feared it would be outnumbered at a multilateral conference and forced to make bigger concessions than it wished. It preferred to deal with the Arab states individually, preventing them from using their numerical advantage collectively.
      2. Israel was also determined to keep the Soviet Union out of Arab-Israeli diplomacy.
      3. Israel’s objections were strongly echoed by pro-Israel groups within the United States, and there was enormous domestic pressure on Carter to abandon any plans for a Geneva conference.
      4. Carter started backing away from his own proposal.

V. Anwar Sadat became convinced that, because of Israel’s ability to pressure the U.S. government, no Geneva conference would be possible. He decided to return to the bilateral process that had begun under Kissinger.
   A. In the fall of 1977, Sadat announced that he was willing to go to Jerusalem to talk to the Israelis directly. Menachem Begin, Israel’s prime minister, invited Sadat to visit Israel.
   B. Sadat’s gesture negated two cardinal principles of Arab diplomacy since 1967.
      1. The first principle was that there could be no negotiations with Israel until Israel first withdrew from all the Arab territories seized in 1967.
      2. The second principle was that any such negotiations must be conducted by the Arab states collectively, not by any single Arab state unilaterally.
   C. Thus, every Arab government, along with the PLO, opposed Sadat’s visit.
   D. Sadat went to Jerusalem anyway, causing enormous excitement throughout the world.
   E. Carter himself was greatly encouraged by this development. He dropped his plans for an international conference and threw his support behind Sadat’s bilateral initiative.

VI. In the months following Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem, however, Egypt and Israel made little substantive progress in their efforts to achieve peace.
   A. To jump-start the process, in the summer of 1978, Carter invited Sadat and Begin to come to Camp David and negotiate with each other, with Carter himself serving as intermediary.
   B. Sadat and Begin accepted Carter’s invitation.

VII. Sadat came to Camp David determined to recover not just the Sinai Peninsula but all of the Arab lands Israel had seized in 1967.
   A. Another of Sadat’s objectives was to receive satisfaction on the issue of Jewish settlements.
      1. Since 1967, the Israeli government had encouraged Israeli citizens to establish residential colonies in the occupied territories.
      2. In the view of most international lawyers (and of the Carter administration itself), these settlements were a violation of international law, because the Fourth Geneva Convention forbids nations to send their own civilians to settle in foreign territories they are occupying.
   B. Sadat knew that if he came back from Camp David with the Sinai and nothing else, he would be condemned as a traitor to the Arab cause.
   C. The Israelis, however, drove such a hard bargain that Sadat came to fear that he might not even regain all of the Sinai.
   D. Carter achieved an important breakthrough when he convinced Sadat to treat the Sinai issue separately from the fate of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Consequently, Sadat ended up settling for something far less than a full Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967.

VIII. The resulting Camp David agreement consisted of two parts.
   A. The first part, which was very detailed and specific, stipulated that Israel would withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for a peace treaty and normalized diplomatic relations with Egypt.
B. The second part, which was much more vague, concerned the disposition of the Israeli-occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
   1. It called for Egypt, Israel, and Jordan to negotiate a transitional self-governing authority to replace the existing Israeli military government in those occupied territories.
   2. This authority would last not more than five years, during which time, negotiations would take place to determine the final status of the territories, recognizing the “legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.”
   3. This last phrase was subject to conflicting interpretation. To Sadat, the “legitimate rights of the Palestinian people” meant eventual Palestinian statehood. To Begin, the term meant limited autonomy for the Palestinians in the territories, with the Israelis retaining overall control.
   4. The issue became moot in any event, because Jordan refused to endorse this formula, and no negotiations took place even over a transitional government, let alone over the final status of the occupied territories.

C. Nor was there any firm agreement on the question of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.
   1. Carter claimed that he had received an oral promise from Begin to freeze the construction of settlements while the status of the occupied territories was pending.
   2. Begin denied he had made such a promise and continued to build settlements.

IX. There was a wide gulf between American and Arab assessments of Sadat.
   A. For his willingness to make peace with Israel, Sadat became a hero in the United States.
   B. For his willingness to cut a deal that benefited Egypt alone while leaving the Palestinians under Israeli occupation, Sadat was seen as a traitor in the Arab world. He was assassinated in 1981.

Suggested Reading:


Questions to Consider:

1. What were Jimmy Carter’s initial aspirations for Arab-Israeli peacemaking, and to what extent did the Camp David agreement fulfill those aspirations?
2. Why would there be, in the years following Camp David, such a wide discrepancy between American and Arab assessments of Anwar Sadat?
Lecture Fifteen
The Iranian Revolution and the Hostage Crisis

Scope: In this lecture, we examine the Iranian revolution of 1978–1979, in which a quarter century of simmering resentment against the United States suddenly boiled over. We begin with the breakdown of public authority in Iran in 1978 and with the Carter administration’s incomprehension and vacillation in the face of the crisis. We then discuss the establishment of the revolutionary Iranian government and see how the administration’s attempts to gain influence with that regime inadvertently aroused the suspicions of Iranian students, who seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. We learn how the extended captivity of the American hostages, along with Carter’s disastrous attempt to rescue them, all but ensured Carter’s failure in his bid for reelection in 1980. But we end with a somewhat more positive assessment of Carter, noting his ultimate success in bringing the hostages home safely.

Outline

I. By the time Carter became president in early 1977, there was probably nothing he could have done to prevent the shah of Iran from being toppled by his own people. Nevertheless, Carter’s initial toleration of the shah’s abuses, and his vacillation after the Iranian revolution began, made the inevitable fall much more damaging to the United States, and to Carter personally, than it needed to be.
   A. From the start of his presidency, there had been a glaring contradiction between Carter’s policy toward Iran and his professed devotion to human rights.
   B. During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter had pledged to promote human rights throughout the world. To make good on this promise, Carter established a special office in the State Department with the sole function of promoting human rights, to the point of recommending economic sanctions against countries that violated human rights.
   C. But the human rights office was resented by career officials in the State Department, many of whom were able to get Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to grant exemptions for the countries with which they were concerned.

II. Although the shah’s atrocious human rights record was no secret, Carter decided early on that Iran’s strategic importance made it necessary to maintain the shah in power.
   A. Thus, Carter chose not to make an issue of human rights violations in Iran.
   B. Worse still, he gave extravagant political and moral support to the shah, enraging many ordinary Iranians.

III. In the summer of 1978, a wave of anti-government demonstrations swept Iran.
   A. The shah’s attempts to suppress the demonstrations only caused them to intensify.
   B. The Carter administration was caught off guard by the rebellion.
   C. The U.S. embassy in Iran was poorly informed about Iranian politics; its contacts were limited to Iranian government officials, who were themselves out of touch with local events.

IV. As the Iranian crisis deepened, the divergent approaches of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski became pronounced.
   A. Vance believed that attempting to crush the demonstrations would be futile. He wanted the shah to appease the opposition by implementing political reforms and, perhaps, even reducing his own role to that of a figurehead.
   B. Brzezinski thought that the shah could hold on to power if he launched a more massive crackdown.
   C. Carter was torn between these two positions.
      1. He could not bear the thought of bluntly telling the shah he had to surrender power.
      2. But neither could he stomach urging the shah to launch a bloodbath.
   D. Carter hesitated, and the shah’s position continued to deteriorate.
V. In January 1979, the shah fled the country, ultimately ending up in Mexico. The Iranian army quickly collapsed, clearing a path for the revolutionaries to seize state power.

VI. In February 1979, the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini, whose fundamentalist supporters had gained dominant positions in the revolution, triumphantly returned to Iran.
   A. Initially, however, Khomeini’s grip over the revolution was tenuous. The revolutionary government over which he presided included figures who did not share his fundamentalist views.
   B. Throughout 1979, therefore, the Carter administration had some hope of establishing tolerable relations with the new Iranian regime.
      1. The CIA established contact with some figures in the new Iranian government, including Abol Hassan Bani Sadr, a French-educated minister in the new government. The long-term objective was to maintain friendly relations with an important official who might someday supplant Khomeini as the leader of Iran.
      2. Gaining confidence, the Carter administration began building up the embassy staff, which had been drastically reduced in the early days of the revolution.

VII. In the fall of 1979, Carter made a major political blunder.
   A. He allowed the shah, who was seriously ill with cancer, to enter the United States to receive advanced medical treatment.
   B. Khomeini’s student supporters suspected that the reports of the shah’s illness were a cover story, concocted to get the shah into the United States so that he could meet with U.S. intelligence officials and plot his own return to Iran.
      1. Back in 1953, in the midst of the U.S.-sponsored effort to overthrow Mossadeq, the shah had lost his nerve and fled the country for Rome, only to return in triumph after the coup succeeded.
      2. Iranian students believed that the shah once again was biding his time abroad, waiting for the CIA to prepare the way for his return.
      3. Convinced that the CIA was using the U.S. embassy as a headquarters for plotting the shah’s return, students seized the embassy and its staff to prevent them from being used for this purpose.
   C. Khomeini, sensing opportunity to consolidate his power in Iran, publicly endorsed the seizure of the embassy, ensuring a protracted captivity for the American hostages.
      1. The students who seized the embassy discovered shredded documents that, when restored, told of CIA agent Vernon Cassin’s contacts with Bani Sadr and of the CIA’s assessment of Bani Sadr as a potentially long-term asset for the United States.
      2. By the time the document was made public in 1980, Bani Sadr had become president of Iran. Though he probably hadn’t known of Cassin’s CIA connections, Bani Sadr was discredited by the revolution and was soon forced to resign.

VIII. As the hostage crisis lingered on into 1980, Carter faced growing domestic pressure to do something about the situation.
   A. Disturbances in Iran disrupted oil shipments to the West, leading to a 60 percent hike in oil prices and a steep rise in inflation.
   B. These problems led to an increased sense of vulnerability in the West and to a fear that the Soviet Union might take advantage of the West’s distress. Such fears appeared vindicated in December 1979 when 80,000 Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan.
   C. In April 1980, Carter authorized the U.S. military to proceed with a complex and daring plan to rescue the hostages.
      1. Brzezinski strongly supported the rescue mission, believing it to be essential to American credibility and honor.
      2. Vance was opposed to the operation, fearing that it would fail and could very well be catastrophic.
      3. Logistical difficulties forced Carter to abort the mission in its early stages. A subsequent collision claimed the lives of eight servicemen.
      4. The debacle deepened the public impression that Carter had lost control of foreign policy.
IX. The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980 forced the Iranian government to take a more pragmatic view of the hostage crisis.
   A. The Iranians could not give full attention to the war effort as long as the hostage crisis remained unresolved.
   B. The Iranians signaled their willingness to cut a deal with the Americans.

X. The change in Iran’s position came too late to save Carter’s presidency.
   A. In November 1980, Carter lost the presidential election to Ronald Reagan, who had portrayed Carter as weak and ineffectual.
   B. Carter spent his final weeks as president trying desperately to get the hostages freed before he left office. Using Algeria as an intermediary, he worked out a deal with the Iranian government.
      1. The United States would turn over to Iran about $8 billion in Iranian assets frozen in American banks and pledge not to interfere in Iran’s internal affairs.
      2. Iran would release the hostages.
   C. The Iranians, however, refused to release the hostages while Carter was still president, releasing them a few minutes after Reagan was sworn in.
   D. Nevertheless, it was Carter’s tireless efforts that got the hostages home safely.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Assuming there was nothing Carter could have done to prevent the shah’s overthrow, is there anything Carter could have done to soften the impact—on the United States and on himself—of the shah’s inevitable fall?
2. Why did the Iranian students feel it was necessary to take physical control over the U.S. embassy in Tehran?
Lecture Sixteen
Era of Limits—Energy Crises of the 1970s

Scope: In this lecture, we revisit the years 1973–1979—an era book-ended by two drastic increases in the price of Middle Eastern oil—with a special focus on the energy issue. For the first time in the post–World War II era, Americans had to face the fact that petroleum—the lifeblood of their precious way of life—was a finite resource increasingly under the control of Middle Eastern governments. Ordinary Americans responded to this realization with bewilderment, anger, and an exaggerated sense of impotence and victimization. Under the surface, however, the oil shocks of the 1970s were forcing the societies of the industrialized West to make crucial adjustments that would soon render them less dependent on Middle Eastern oil. By decade’s end, it was the oil-producing nations of the Middle East, much more than the nations of the industrialized West, that faced a new and daunting era of limits.

Outline

I. From 1973 to 1980, the United States faced a fundamental challenge in meeting its own energy needs and those of its allies. For the first time in the post–World War II period, Americans had to face the fact that oil was a finite resource increasingly under the control of Middle East governments.

II. In the first couple of decades of the post–World War II period, the world had experienced an oil glut, allowing for a buyer’s market. Western oil companies could decide for themselves what the price of oil would be, and the oil-producing states had little say in the matter.

III. By the late 1960s, however, global demand for oil began to outstrip available supply, creating a seller’s market. Oil-producing states had increasing influence over the price of oil.
   A. By the early 1970s, the major oil companies had conceded that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) could set the price of oil.
   B. OPEC countries began significantly raising their oil prices in an effort to increase their national revenues.
   C. By now, the level of American oil consumption had overtaken domestic American supply, and the United States was, for the first time, a net importer of oil.
      1. The United States no longer had excess capacity that could be quickly supplied to the world market in the event of an oil emergency.
      2. Any major disruption in the world oil supply could have dire economic consequences.

IV. That disruption occurred during and after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, when several oil-producing Arab states deliberately curtailed their oil shipments.
   A. This oil embargo consisted of two main elements.
      1. There was a general reduction in the amount of oil the Arab countries exported to all of their buyers.
      2. There was a total cutoff of oil shipments to the United States and to some countries in Western Europe.
   B. Separate from the oil embargo itself, but clearly made possible by it, was a drastic increase in the price of the oil that remained on the market.

V. Western oil companies and governments were able to redistribute the oil after it was shipped and, thus, see to it that the targeted countries did get oil after all. But the sheer complexity of this task, combined with the general reduction in the amount of Arab oil on the market, caused enormous disruptions throughout the entire industrialized world.
   A. In cities across the globe, including in the United States, motorists waited in long lines to buy gas.
   B. Other commodities became scarce as well, a result of panic buying.

VI. The Arab oil embargo ended in the spring of 1974; the supply was no longer as restricted as before.
   A. But oil prices remained extremely high, and this fact had ramifications for the entire world economy. After all, oil was the commodity on which virtually all other economic activities depended.
B. It now seemed as if the overall health of the world’s economy depended on decisions made by oil-producing states, primarily in the Middle East.

C. A new class of global actors—oil ministers from wealthy Middle Eastern states—rose to international prominence. One of the most famous of these personalities was Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the oil minister of Saudi Arabia.

D. Actually, the Middle Eastern nation taking the most aggressive position on oil prices was Iran, a non-Arab country whose leader was regarded as a staunch U.S. ally.
   1. Iran had not taken part in the oil embargo of 1973–1974. But in the immediate aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, the shah was in the forefront of OPEC’s effort to raise oil prices.
   2. The shah had grandiose ambitions to dominate the Persian Gulf region, which would, in turn, require a massive military buildup.
   3. A drastic increase in oil prices would provide the shah with the necessary revenues for purchasing arms.

E. The Saudis, by contrast, thought that prices should increase at a slower rate.
   1. They realized that their security and prosperity ultimately depended on the economic strength of the West, especially that of the United States.
   2. Weakening the Western and U.S. economies would, in the Saudis’ view, be self-defeating in the long run.

VII. In the years following the Arab oil embargo of 1973–1974, there was enormous concern in this country over the extent to which the United States had become vulnerable to economic control by wealthy Arabs.

   A. Americans feared that the Arab states would continue to use their oil wealth to punish the United States for its Middle East policies.

   B. Americans also believed that wealthy Arabs were buying up American properties at an alarming rate.

   C. This fear of the coercive power of oil-rich Arabs was a persistent theme in American popular culture of the mid- to late 1970s, looming large in movies, TV shows, novels, and cartoons.

VIII. The perception that wealthy Arabs were buying America was also greatly exaggerated.

   A. Although Arab governments and companies were buying up some American properties, these transactions represented a tiny fraction of overall foreign investment in the United States.

   B. By far the biggest sources of foreign investment were such countries as Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands.

IX. Still, OPEC’s new assertiveness did pose a serious challenge to American society.

   A. Americans had to face the fact that oil supplies were finite and largely in foreign hands. Regaining some measure of energy independence became a major preoccupation for the United States.

   B. There were two main ways in which the United States could lessen its dependence on Middle Eastern oil.
      1. It could try to wean itself from dependence on fossil fuels altogether.
      2. Failing that, it could seek out alternative, non-Middle Eastern sources of oil.

   C. Carter faced stiff opposition from environmentalists alarmed by his insistence on building nuclear power plants to serve as a source of energy. In the spring of 1979, an accident at the nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island served to heighten such concerns.

X. Although the United States made little progress on weaning itself from dependence on fossil fuels, it had considerable success in finding alternative sources of oil.

   A. In the immediate aftermath of the Arab oil embargo, Congress approved the construction of an oil pipeline from Alaska to the contiguous 48 states. The pipeline made Alaskan oil available to the U.S. market, substantially reducing America’s dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

   B. Meanwhile, Western oil companies found an alternative source of oil beneath the North Sea.
XI. By raising its prices so high, OPEC had inadvertently encouraged its customers to start looking elsewhere for their energy needs.

A. The cumulative effect of these developments was a significant drop, by the early 1980s, in the global demand for Middle Eastern oil. OPEC was obliged to lower its prices.

B. Moreover, the industrialized societies had learned crucial lessons about how to cope in the event of an embargo. They would be far less vulnerable to such pressure in the future.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What vulnerabilities in the global oil market did the oil-rich Arab states exploit when they launched their embargo in late 1973?

2. How, and with what success, did the United States and other Western nations seek to minimize their dependence on Middle Eastern oil in the 1970s?
Lecture Seventeen

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

Scope: In this lecture, we consider the Soviets’ invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and their occupation of that country over the next decade. First, we establish that the Carter and Reagan administrations responded to the Soviet offensive by forging closer ties with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and by sending military aid to the Afghan Mujahidin. We then focus more closely on the Reagan administration’s covert program of recruiting tens of thousands of young men from across the Muslim world to join the anti-Soviet struggle in Afghanistan. This is the lecture in which Osama bin Laden makes his debut, as the scion of a wealthy Saudi family who comes to Afghanistan to partake of the Afghan jihad, working loosely in tandem with an unsuspecting CIA. We close with the Soviet Union’s withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and with the civil unrest that continued to wrack that country into the mid-1990s.

Outline

I. In Afghanistan in the 1980s, the United States waged a highly successful proxy war against the Soviet Union. In so doing, however, Washington inadvertently helped to unleash new and unexpected forms of opposition to the United States.

II. For the first three decades after World War II, Afghanistan was officially nonaligned in the Cold War.
   A. Although the Soviet Union, which bordered Afghanistan to the north, wielded heavy influence in the country, Afghanistan’s overwhelmingly Muslim population jealously guarded its independence.
   B. In 1978, a pro-Soviet government came to power in Afghanistan, led by Nur Muhammad Taraki.
      1. This development, in turn, gave rise to an Islamic resistance movement known as the Mujahidin.
      2. The communist regime in Afghanistan tried to put down the Mujahidin, but their rebellion continued to grow.
      3. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s national security advisor, feared that the Soviets might use Afghanistan as a stepping stone for encroaching on the Persian Gulf.
      4. In the summer of 1979—six months before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—Brzezinski convinced Carter to start sending covert aid to the Afghan Mujahidin.
   C. The Soviets were equally determined to prevent Afghanistan from going Islamic.
   D. This could give rise to Islamic revolutions in Muslim Soviet republics bordering Afghanistan.
   E. The Soviets further worried about the lack of stability in the Afghan government.
      1. Taraki, the Afghan president, was in a power struggle with his prime minister, Hafizullah Amin.
      2. Amin was ruthless and dictatorial and attempted to turn his country into a socialist state at a very rapid rate.
      3. In the fall of 1979, Taraki flew to Moscow to talk to the Soviet government about how to get rid of Amin. Amin got wind of the plans, and when Taraki returned to Afghanistan, Amin had him killed.
   F. By late 1979, the Soviets were convinced that their client state in Afghanistan was either unable or unwilling to crush the Mujahidin. They also became convinced that Amin was secretly working for the CIA and was on the verge of aligning Afghanistan with the United States.
      1. In December, they launched a massive invasion of Afghanistan, establishing a new, more reliable puppet regime.
      2. Carter treated the Soviet invasion as a grave threat to U.S. security, the first step in a Soviet move to drive into the Persian Gulf and forcibly take control of the region’s oil resources. He imposed economic and political sanctions against the Soviet Union, requesting that the U.S. Olympic team boycott the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.
      3. In January 1980, he issued what became known as the Carter Doctrine: “An attempt by outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”
      4. In Afghanistan itself, the Carter administration stepped up its support of the Mujahidin, supplying the rebels with arms and equipment.
III. U.S. assistance to the Mujahidin dramatically increased, especially after Ronald Reagan became president in early 1981.

A. The Mujahidin received billions of dollars worth of aid from the United States.
   1. Among the most valuable items the Mujahidin received were shoulder-held Stinger missiles, capable of shooting down Soviet helicopters.
   2. The Mujahidin’s use of the Stinger missiles had a devastating effect on the occupying Soviet forces, exacting a heavy toll in Soviet casualties.

B. In the effort to give support to the Mujahidin, the United States worked closely with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.
   1. Both were anxious to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining a foothold in the area.
   2. Both were eager to extend their influence beyond their own borders.
   3. Saudi Arabia’s principal role was to provide financial assistance to the anti-Soviet effort.
   4. Most of the aid that the Mujahidin received, whether from the United States or Saudi Arabia, was funneled through Pakistan and dispensed by the Pakistani government.
   5. In Pakistan, the Reagan administration turned a blind eye to Zia al-Haq’s human rights abuses and efforts to acquire nuclear weapons.

IV. The Reagan administration also worked to swell the ranks of the Mujahidin.

A. In the mid- to late 1980s, the CIA assisted the Saudi and Pakistani governments in recruiting tens of thousands of young men, from across the Muslim world, to come to Pakistan, where they would be armed and trained to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.

B. For the young Muslim men who responded to this recruiting drive, the great appeal of the Afghan War was the opportunity to take part in *jihad*, an activity in which all Muslims are encouraged to engage.
   1. The word *jihad* literally means “religious struggle.”
   2. It can be interpreted to signify either an outward, physical struggle or an inward, spiritual one.
   3. This divergence in the meaning of *jihad* lies at the heart of the great debate going on within Islam today.

C. One of the young Muslims recruited to join the Afghan struggle was Osama bin Laden, the son of a wealthy construction magnate who had close ties to the Saudi government.
   1. Bin Laden’s function was that of a financier and unofficial emissary, sent to Pakistan to signal the Saudi government’s commitment to the Mujahidin.
   2. Although bin Laden probably was not, as some have claimed, directly allied with the CIA, he does seem to have worked in tandem with it.
   3. In Pakistan, he served as a fundraiser for an organization called *Maktab al-Khidmat* (Office of Services), a recruiting and training agency that the CIA was also funding.

D. Another figure the CIA cultivated was a blind Egyptian cleric named Shaykh ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Rahman, who was brought to Pakistan in the 1980s to deliver inspirational sermons to the anti-Soviet recruits. He was later implicated in the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.

V. At the time, few Americans had any idea that their government was associating with such unsavory bedfellows. In the news and entertainment media, the Mujahidin were celebrated as a band of valiant freedom fighters, heroically resisting the armed might of a superpower.

A. The Mujahidin were indeed displaying enormous courage, determination, and readiness for sacrifice.

B. But many Mujahidin were committed to an extremely reactionary brand of Islam, no less fanatical than what could be found in neighboring Iran.

VI. By the late 1980s, Afghanistan had become the Soviet Union’s Vietnam.

A. Tens of thousands of Russian soldiers had been killed or maimed in the fighting, and the Soviet army was crippled by defeatism and drug abuse.

B. Billions of rubles had been squandered on an increasingly pointless war.

C. Back home, ordinary Soviet citizens began openly questioning the wisdom and morality of their government’s behavior.
VII. Eventually, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev concluded that the situation was intolerable. In 1988–1989, he withdrew the Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

A. The Soviets left behind a puppet government in Kabul that they tried to keep afloat with military and economic aid. The United States continued to funnel aid to the Mujahidin.


C. In 1996, the Taliban gained control of most of Afghanistan, bringing a semblance of order to the country. It would prove, however, to be a grim order indeed.

1. The Taliban was a party formed primarily of Afghan refugees who had been raised in refugee camps in Pakistan.

2. Most had been trained in religious schools in Pakistan known as madrasas, in which they had been indoctrinated in an extremely austere interpretation of Islam.

3. Once back in Afghanistan, the Taliban set about bringing order to the country by imposing a strict interpretation of Islamic law.

4. The Taliban received strong backing from the Pakistani government, which saw the party as a useful instrument for extending Pakistani influence into the country.

Suggested Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. Why did the Soviet government find it necessary to invade Afghanistan in late 1979?
2. Does the United States bear any responsibility for having promoted Osama bin Laden?
Lecture Eighteen
Reagan and the Middle East

Scope: This lecture discusses Ronald Reagan’s Middle East policies, paying particular attention to Reagan’s efforts to thwart and contain the forces of militant Islam, especially in Lebanon. We begin by examining Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the resulting stationing of U.S. Marines in that country. We learn how the Reagan administration’s misreading of Lebanese and regional politics increased the vulnerability of the Marines, 241 of whom were killed in a truck bombing in 1983, and how a chastened Reagan withdrew the Marines from Lebanon in early 1984. We go on to discuss the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847, then recount the bizarre machinations of Iran gate, in which the Reagan administration tried to secure the release of American hostages held in Lebanon by selling arms to Iran. We conclude with the sensational exposure of the arms-for-hostages deal and the resulting decline in Reagan’s reputation.

Outline

I. Reagan came to office determined to combat Soviet influence throughout the world.
   A. He charged that virtually all of the world’s terrorist groups, including Middle Eastern ones, were being controlled from Moscow.
   B. It was widely expected that Reagan’s actions in the Middle East would be overwhelmingly focused on blocking Soviet moves. But Reagan’s policies in the Middle East did not quite bear out this expectation.
   C. To be sure, many of Reagan’s actions in the Middle East were directed against the Soviet Union.
      1. He embraced Israel as a “strategic partner” in the Cold War, willing and able to confront radical and pro-Soviet forces in the region.
      2. He sought to contain Syrian influence, on the assumption that Syria was a proxy for the Soviet Union.
      3. He repeatedly skirmished with Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi, a recipient of Soviet military and economic aid.
   D. Nevertheless, most of Reagan’s energy in the Middle East was devoted to containing or thwarting a very different sort of foe: militant Islam.
   E. A surprising number of the Middle Eastern crises Reagan faced were associated with Lebanon.

II. In 1982, Israel launched a massive invasion of Lebanon. The purpose of the invasion was to destroy the PLO, which had its headquarters in Beirut.
   A. At the time, Israel claimed its intervention in Lebanon had been prompted by the PLO’s rocket attacks on northern Israel. In fact, for a full year preceding the Israeli invasion, a cease-fire had been in place between Israel and the PLO.
   B. By the early 1980s, the PLO threat to Israel was primarily political.
   C. The Israelis were unable to destroy the PLO, but they did succeed in securing its evacuation from Lebanon to Tunisia.
      1. Menachem Begin and his defense minister, Ariel Sharon, initially misled the Reagan administration and the Knesset, saying that Israeli forces would advance only far enough into Lebanese territory to put PLO rockets out of range of northern Israel.
      2. On that basis, the Reagan administration gave tacit approval to the Israeli move into Lebanon.
      3. Begin and Sharon quickly reneged on their pledge, and within days, Israeli forces had laid siege to Beirut, bombing the capital throughout the summer in an attempt to force the PLO to surrender.
      4. Reagan demanded that Begin stop the bombardment and sent a special envoy to Beirut, who brokered a settlement whereby the PLO agreed to withdraw its forces from Lebanon and establish a new headquarters in Tunisia and Israel agreed to withdraw from Lebanon.
      5. Left behind were tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, living in refugee camps scattered throughout Lebanon.
   D. Following the September 1982 assassination of Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gemayal, a Christian warlord whom Israel had been secretly arming for years, Lebanese Christian militiamen allied with Israel entered two Palestinian camps, Sabra and Shatila, massacring hundreds of civilians.
E. To prevent further such attacks and to maintain security in Lebanon generally, the Reagan administration stationed Marines in Beirut.

III. Meanwhile, the administration encouraged Israel and Lebanon to conclude a formal peace treaty.
   A. This aroused the bitter opposition of two parties: Lebanese Shiites and the Syrian government.
      1. Lebanese Shiites had borne the brunt of the Israeli invasion and were outraged at the notion of a peace treaty with Israel.
      2. Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad was opposed in principle to separate peace treaties with Israel, insisting that the Arab states must bargain collectively. Moreover, because Syrian troops were already stationed in Lebanon, Asad felt entitled to wield influence over Lebanese foreign policy.
   B. George Shultz, Reagan’s secretary of state, ignored these considerations and pressed Lebanon to conclude the peace treaty. Seeing Asad as little more than a Soviet puppet, Shultz had little interest in accommodating his concerns.
   C. The Israeli-Lebanese treaty was signed in May 1983.
      1. The treaty contained language that effectively allowed Israel to exercise military control over southern Lebanon.
      2. The agreement stipulated that the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon would be conditional on the withdrawal of Syrian troops as well, a deal that Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad could not tolerate.

IV. Asad set out to make life miserable for the Americans.
   A. He provided support to the militant Shiite group Hizbullah, which along with other Lebanese groups, began sniping at, shelling, and harassing the U.S. Marines.
      1. Hizbullah was deeply hostile to the United States because of America’s support for Israel during its invasion of Lebanon.
      2. Hizbullah also hated the U.S. government because the United States had an antagonistic relationship with Iran, from which Hizbullah drew both inspiration and material aid.
   B. In October 1983, a suicide bomber—apparently a Shiite militant supported by Syria—drove a truck laden with explosives into the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 Marines.

V. Democrats in Congress demanded that the Marines be pulled out of Lebanon.
   A. Initially, Reagan refused to withdraw the Marines, saying there was still a chance to pacify the country and implement the peace treaty between Lebanon and Israel.
   B. In early 1984, the Lebanese government, seeing the chaos that had resulted from the peace treaty with Israel, formally repudiated the treaty.
   C. Around the same time, the Reagan administration bowed to reality and withdrew the Marines from Lebanon, essentially abandoning it to the Syrians and their radical Shiite allies.

VI. But this was not the end of Reagan’s troubles in Lebanon.
   A. A number of American citizens continued to live in Beirut. In the mid-1980s, several of these Americans were kidnapped and held hostage, mostly by members of Hizbullah and other militant Shiite groups.
   B. The Reagan administration was under constant pressure from the hostages’ families to negotiate for their release. Publicly, the administration insisted that such negotiations were out of the question.

VII. Secretly, however, the Reagan administration was indeed negotiating with the hostage-takers or, at least, with figures who were allied with them.
   A. In the mid-1980s, U.S. officials, using Israel as an intermediary, secretly made contact with the Iranian government and reached a general understanding over the American hostages in Lebanon.
      1. The United States would sell shipments of arms to Iran.
      2. Iran would pressure the hostage-takers in Lebanon, with whom they were allied, to release some of the American captives.
   B. Meanwhile, the arms-for-hostages deal got mixed up with the politics of Central America.
      1. For some years, Reagan had been looking for a way to circumvent Congress’s prohibition on providing U.S. aid to the contra rebels, who were fighting to unseat Nicaragua’s leftist regime.
2. Thus, someone in the Reagan administration came up with the idea of taking the profits from the arms sales to Iran and diverting them to the *contras* in Nicaragua.

VIII. In the summer of 1985, Lebanon became the site of a prominent hostage drama.

A. Lebanese Shiites, with ties to Hizbullah, hijacked a TWA flight en route from Athens to Rome.
   1. The majority of passengers on board were Americans.
   2. One of the passengers, a U.S. Navy diver, was brutally beaten and killed.
   3. The hijackers demanded the release of 700 Shiite young men who had been taken from their villages in southern Lebanon, which Israel was still occupying.

B. After two weeks, a deal was worked out, facilitated by Syrian President Asad, whereby Israel released the Shiite prisoners and the hijackers released the TWA passengers.

IX. In the fall of 1986, the American public learned of the Reagan administration’s secret dealings with Iran and of its diversion of arms profits to the *contras*. The revelations caused an uproar.

A. Reagan denied that he had knowingly sold arms for hostages or been aware of the diversion to the *contras*.
   1. All he had done, he said, was to authorize general contacts between members of his administration and “moderates” in the Iranian government, to explore the possibility of improved relations between the two countries.
   2. The Reagan administration was never able to say, however, who those “moderates” were.

B. In the summer of 1987, Congress held hearings on the Iran-contra scandal, bringing a parade of colorful witnesses before American television audiences.

C. The resulting damage to Reagan’s reputation was sufficiently grave that his presidency briefly seemed in jeopardy.

X. Reagan was rescued, however, by a dramatic improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations in 1987 and 1988, which allowed him to end his presidency on a far more statesmanlike note.

**Suggested Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Why did the Reagan administration’s actions regarding Lebanon arouse so much opposition from Lebanese Shiites and the Syrian government?
2. What approaches, other than selling arms to Iran, might the Reagan administration have followed to secure the release of American hostages in Lebanon?
Lecture Nineteen
The First Palestinian Intifada

Scope: In this lecture, we discuss the American response to the first Palestinian intifada, or “uprising,” against Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We examine how the intifada, which erupted in late 1987, convinced the Reagan administration that the status quo was untenable and prompted it to revive the moribund Arab-Israeli peace process. We then discuss how the PLO took advantage of this opening and launched a bold diplomatic initiative, to which Washington responded by opening a political dialogue with the PLO, much to the dismay of the Israeli government. The U.S.-PLO dialogue accomplished little, however, and was suspended in mid-1990, just a year and a half after it began.

Outline

I. The first Palestinian intifada paved the way for an unprecedented political dialogue between the United States and the PLO. Shortcomings on both sides, however, prevented that dialogue from yielding tangible results.

II. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 had forced the PLO to relocate to Tunisia, hundreds of miles to the West.
   A. This geographical distance made it difficult for the PLO to influence events in Israel/Palestine and was, thus, a clear setback for the PLO.
   B. Five years later, events in the occupied territories gave the PLO an opportunity to recoup its fortunes.
   C. By 1987, an international consensus emerged: Israel should withdraw from all, or virtually all, of the territory it had seized in 1967, and an independent Palestinian state should be established in those territories.
   D. The PLO had come to accept the idea of a Palestinian state existing alongside Israel. Palestinians hoped that, by agreeing to give up their claim to 78 percent of their original homeland, they would be able to establish a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital.
   E. Two nations resisted this international consensus: Israel and the United States.
      1. Israel was extremely reluctant to relinquish control over the West Bank and Gaza, primarily, in my view, for security reasons.
      2. A further ideological reason for Israeli resistance was the fact that significant portions of the Israeli population saw the West Bank and Gaza as lands given to the Jewish people by God.
      3. Because the United States regarded Israel as a strategic asset in the effort to contain the Soviet Union, it was extremely reluctant to pressure Israel to relinquish the occupied territories.
      4. There were also powerful pro-Israel lobbies in the United States that had been successful in securing a high level of U.S. economic and military aid to Israel and in ensuring Washington’s diplomatic support for Israel’s positions.

III. By 1987, the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza were becoming fed up with their lot.
   A. For 20 years, they had lived under direct occupation by the Israeli army, which controlled virtually every aspect of their lives.
   B. Meanwhile, the Israeli government was encouraging Israeli Jews to build settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, often on lands confiscated from Palestinians.

IV. In December 1987, an uprising against Israeli rule erupted in the occupied territories.
   A. The Palestinian uprising, or intifada, took everyone by surprise. It was directed not by the PLO leadership in Tunisia but by a loose network of local Palestinian committees.
   B. These local committees attempted to restrict the uprising to demonstrations and stone throwing, a strategy designed to limit the scope of Palestinian violence, thus making Israel’s attempts to suppress the rebellion seem cruel and excessive.
   C. The Israeli government’s attempts to put down the uprising were harshly criticized internationally.
      1. The American news media, which had previously been reluctant to find fault with Israel, were openly critical of Israel’s tactics and began portraying the Palestinians in a more favorable light.
2. Opposition to Israeli government policy also arose in Israel itself.

V. Since the collapse of the U.S.-brokered Lebanese-Israeli treaty back in 1983–1984, Secretary of State Shultz had shown little enthusiasm for Arab-Israeli peace initiatives. But the intifada forced Shultz back into the game of Arab-Israeli diplomacy.

A. There was increasing pressure on the Reagan administration to start talking with the PLO and to encourage Israel to do the same.

B. But Shultz was unwilling to deal with the PLO until it first recognized Israel’s “right to exist,” renounced terrorism, and endorsed UN Security Council Resolution 242.

C. Each of these conditions posed a problem for the PLO.

1. Although the PLO was willing to recognize Israel in principle, it did not want to extend such recognition until it was assured of getting a Palestinian state in return.

2. The PLO was willing to “denounce” terrorism, but it balked at “renouncing” it, because that would entail an admission of guilt.

3. The PLO considered Resolution 242 an insufficient basis for negotiations, because the resolution failed to recognize Palestinian national rights.

D. As long as the PLO took these positions, Shultz continued to refuse to speak to it.

VI. Briefly, Shultz tried to include Palestinian perspectives by working through Jordan.

A. He proposed bilateral talks between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

1. The parties would negotiate over Israel’s withdrawal from the territories and over the granting of short-term autonomy to the Palestinians, with the final status of the territories to be worked out later on.

2. The Palestinians in the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation could not be affiliated with the PLO, and the delegation as a whole would be dominated by the Jordanian government.

B. In the summer of 1988, however, King Hussein killed Shultz’s proposal by formally renouncing Jordan’s claim to the West Bank. If there was to be any agreement over that territory, Hussein said, it would have to be concluded by Israel and the Palestinians.

VII. Hussein’s renunciation of Jordan’s claims to the West Bank gave the PLO a golden opportunity to insert itself into the peace process.

A. In November 1988, Arafat convened a special session of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the PLO’s parliament-in-exile.

1. At the PNC session, Arafat made a speech in which he accepted Resolution 242 and declared the existence of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza.

2. Although Arafat did not explicitly recognize Israel, such recognition was implicit in the fact that the declared Palestinian state was confined to the occupied territories.

3. The PNC overwhelmingly endorsed Arafat’s statement.

B. The declaration of a Palestinian state was purely symbolic, because the Palestinians had no means of actually establishing an independent state.

1. Still, Arafat hoped that his statement would convince Shultz to enter into a political dialogue with the PLO.

2. But Shultz rejected a dialogue, saying that Arafat’s statement still failed to meet U.S. conditions.

VIII. At a special session of the United Nations convened in Geneva, Arafat tried again.

A. He made a speech in which he condemned terrorism and recognized the right of all states in the region, including Israel, to live in peace.

B. This was almost exactly what Shultz wanted to hear, but Arafat infuriated Shultz by interspersing these remarks with other, more defiant statements, designed to appease hard-liners in the PLO.

C. The following day, Arafat held a press conference and, one-by-one, fulfilled Shultz’s conditions.

1. He recognized Israel.

2. He accepted Resolution 242.

3. He said that the PLO renounced all forms of terrorism.
D. Shultz had no choice but to agree that the conditions had been met. Much to Israel’s chagrin, he announced that the United States would open a dialogue with the PLO.

IX. Little, however, came of this breakthrough. Both the George H. W. Bush administration (which took office a month later) and the PLO squandered the opportunity presented by the new dialogue.
A. The Bush administration failed to treat the dialogue as a significant diplomatic exchange, assigning a relatively low-level official to be the chief U.S. interlocutor with the PLO.
B. Meanwhile, the administration continued to shield Israel diplomatically from international criticism and scrutiny for its suppression of the Palestinian intifada.
   1. By 1990, the situation in the occupied territories was becoming even more dire as tens of thousands of Russian Jews emigrated to Israel and were encouraged by the Israeli government to settle in the West Bank and Gaza.
   2. Following an upsurge of violence in which several hundred Palestinians were injured by Israeli soldiers, 14 of 15 members of the UN Security Council voted in favor of a resolution that would have authorized the council to investigate the situation in the occupied territories. The United States vetoed the resolution on the grounds that it was unfair to Israel.
C. Yasser Arafat discredited himself by failing to maintain discipline in the PLO.
   1. In 1990, a PLO splinter group launched an abortive raid against Israel, with the apparent purpose of murdering Israeli civilians.
   2. Arafat distanced himself from the attack but failed to condemn it outright.
D. The Bush administration suspended its dialogue with the PLO.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. At the time the Palestinian intifada erupted in late 1987, what obstacles stood in the way of a political dialogue between the United States and the PLO?
2. Why did the U.S.-PLO dialogue that began in late 1988 fail to achieve tangible results?
Scope: In this lecture, we recount the first Bush administration’s response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. We start by briefly describing Washington’s “tilt” toward Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, a history that left the Bush administration ill-equipped to recognize the Iraqi government’s aggressive designs on its neighbors. We then discuss Bush’s remarkably successful effort to forge an international coalition to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. Next, we recount Operation Desert Storm and explore the implications of its success for America’s international position in the dawning post–Cold War world. Finally, we examine Bush’s controversial decisions to refrain from overthrowing the Iraqi government and to deny support to the internal Iraqi rebellions that erupted immediately after the war.

Outline

I. The Gulf War revealed the remarkable ability of the United States, in the dawning post–Cold War era, to act decisively in the Middle East. But the war also revealed America’s commitment to the territorial status quo in the region.

II. The Gulf War grew out of the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. Seeing the Iraqi regime as a lesser evil than the Iranian one, the Reagan administration tilted in favor of Iraq.
   A. The administration provided Iraq with tens of millions of dollars in agricultural credits.
   B. It gave Iraq satellite intelligence information on the position of Iranian forces.
   C. The administration provided naval protection in the Persian Gulf to Kuwaiti tankers, whose oil shipments financed the Iraqi war effort.
   D. When Iraq used chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers and Iraqi Kurdish civilians, U.S. criticism was tepid and not accompanied by sanctions.

III. In 1988, the Iran-Iraq War ended. Soon thereafter, tensions arose between Iraq and Kuwait.
   A. Kuwait demanded repayment of the 15 billion dollars Iraq had borrowed from Kuwait to wage the war. Saddam Hussein refused, saying that Iraq had already paid its debt in blood.
   B. Saddam charged that Kuwait was producing too much oil, driving the price down and reducing Iraqi oil revenues. He also charged that Kuwait was extracting oil from Iraqi oil fields on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border.
   C. In late July 1990, Saddam demanded that Kuwait hand over to Iraq the islands of Bubiyan and Warba, located at the head of the Persian Gulf.
   D. He mobilized tens of thousands of troops on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border.

IV. The U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, met with Saddam and urged him not to use force against Kuwait.
   A. At the same time, Glaspie said that the United States had no position on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute.
   B. This may have given Saddam the impression that the United States would not come to Kuwait’s defense.

V. On August 2, 1990, Iraqi troops surged across the border into Kuwait, quickly occupying the country and forcing the Kuwaiti ruling family into exile.
   A. Saddam announced that Kuwait was being permanently annexed to Iraq.
   B. The seizure of Kuwait now gave Saddam control over 20 percent of the world’s oil reserves.
   C. His forces seemed capable of moving on into Saudi Arabia, which contained an additional 20 percent of the world’s oil.

VI. The Bush administration was shocked by the invasion of Kuwait.
   A. After some initial hesitation, President Bush took an unyielding position against the Iraqi action, calling it an act of naked aggression that could not be permitted to stand.
   B. The Bush administration worked closely with the UN Security Council to pass a resolution condemning the invasion and demanding an immediate withdrawal from Kuwait.
C. The Security Council also imposed economic sanctions against Iraq.
D. Over the next few weeks, the Bush administration lined up a diverse coalition of nations prepared to reverse Saddam’s action by force if necessary.
E. Under UN authorization, a massive international military force began materializing in Saudi Arabia.

VII. In an attempt to break up the anti-Iraq coalition, Saddam tried to link the Kuwait crisis to the Palestine issue.
   A. Saddam said that he would consider withdrawing from Kuwait if Israel also withdrew from the territories it had occupied in the 1967 war.
   B. Saddam’s proposal was enthusiastically received throughout the Arab world.
   C. Bush refused to consider any direct quid pro quo.
   D. He did, however, make a vague promise to look into the Palestine-Israel question once the Iraqi invasion had been reversed.

VIII. In the fall of 1990, Bush doubled the number of U.S. troops in the region from 250,000 to 500,000. This move signaled that the coalition was moving from a defensive posture (preventing Iraq from attacking Saudi Arabia) to an offensive posture (driving Iraq out of Kuwait).

IX. In late November 1990, the UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991.
   A. The council authorized the use of force against Iraq should it fail to withdraw by that date.
   B. The prospect of an offensive war created enormous anxiety in the United States, generating large antiwar demonstrations throughout the country.
   C. Meanwhile, both houses of Congress approved the use of force against Iraq, the Senate by a vote of 52 to 47 and the House of Representatives by a vote of 250 to 183.
   D. The January 15 deadline came and went, without any Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

X. On January 16, the United States and its coalition partners launched Operation Desert Storm.
   A. The first phase of the operation was a series of air attacks against Iraqi military positions in both Kuwait and Iraq.
   B. The coalition also attacked industrial and infrastructural targets inside Iraq.
      1. The aim was not just to destroy Iraq’s fighting ability but to incapacitate its infrastructure and economy, as well.
      2. For years thereafter, the Iraqi society and economy would be crippled as a result of the damage it suffered in those early weeks of 1991.
   C. Despite the beating Iraq was taking in the air war, it still refused to withdraw from Kuwait.
   D. On February 23, the coalition forces launched a ground war to directly expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait.
   E. Iraqi forces put up virtually no fight, surrendering by the score to coalition forces.
   F. On February 27, exactly 100 hours after the offensive had begun, Bush announced the liberation of Kuwait.

XI. In the immediate aftermath of the ground war, the Iraqi army was in such disarray that coalition forces probably could have overthrown the Iraqi government with little difficulty.
   A. But Bush declined to do so, on the grounds that the UN mandate would not permit such an expansion of the original mission.
   B. During the Gulf War, however, Bush had publicly encouraged the Iraqi army and people to overthrow Saddam.
   C. In the immediate aftermath of the war, two separate Iraqi rebellions, one by Shiites in the south and the other by Kurds in the north, broke out.
      1. Despite his earlier encouragement of rebellion, Bush now had second thoughts. He feared that an overthrow of the Iraqi government could cause the whole country to split apart.
      2. As Saddam moved to crush the two rebellions, Bush did nothing to come to their aid.
3. The situation for the Kurds was especially dire. Following the collapse of their rebellion, hundreds of thousands of desperate Kurds began fleeing to the Turkish and Iranian borders, creating a humanitarian crisis of vast proportions.

4. Eventually, the U.S. military did intervene and set up refugee camps for the Kurds in northern Iraq.

5. To prevent the Iraqi army from attacking the Kurds, the U.S. government declared a “no-fly zone” in northern Iraq.

6. A similar no-fly zone was later established in southern Iraq, to prevent the Baghdad regime from attacking Shiite dissidents.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Could Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait have been ended by means other than war?
2. Why did the first Bush administration decide against removing the regime of Saddam Hussein after defeating Iraq in the Gulf War?
Lecture Twenty-One
The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process

Scope: This lecture deals with the Oslo peace process of the 1990s and its collapse at decade’s end. The lecture begins by discussing the factors that led Israel and the PLO to seek direct talks with each other in the spring of 1993 and examines the terms of the preliminary agreement they reached later that year. We then consider the ensuing interactions between Israelis and Palestinians, with a special focus on U.S. efforts to manage the peace process and stave off collapse. Next, we look at the disastrous Camp David summit meeting of July 2000 and assess the conflicting explanations for its failure. Finally, we discuss the eruption of the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000, the sharp deterioration in Israeli-Palestinian relations, and Washington’s anemic efforts to bring the conflict under control.

Outline

I. In the 1990s, hopes were raised for a final resolution of the century-old conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.
   A. By 2001, those hopes had been dashed.
   B. In retrospect, this is not surprising, given the shaky foundations on which the peace process was established and the reckless manner in which all parties to the dispute conducted their diplomacy.

II. Since occupying the West Bank and Gaza in the Six-Day War, Israel has resisted the idea of relinquishing them.
   A. Before the Six-Day War, both areas were sources of Palestinian commando and terrorist raids against Israel, and the Israelis were adamant about not returning to that state of affairs.
   B. For some Israelis, the imperative of holding on to the occupied territories was ideological as well, based on the belief that the West Bank and Gaza were given to the Jewish people by God.
   C. Even after it entered into negotiations with the PLO in 1993, and even after it permitted Yasser Arafat to establish a quasi-government in the occupied territories, the Israeli government remained determined to exercise de facto control over the territories.

III. In 1991, President Bush launched a major effort to address the Palestine-Israel dispute. The moment was ripe for such an initiative.
   A. Yasser Arafat had been weakened politically, which made him more susceptible to American pressure.
      1. Arafat’s support for Iraq in the Gulf War infuriated oil-rich Arab states in the Persian Gulf, causing them to cut off financial aid to the PLO.
      2. By 1991, the Soviet Union was collapsing, eliminating another previous source of funding and diplomatic support for the PLO.
   B. But Israel, too, had been damaged politically, and many Israelis were eager to bring an end to the conflict.
      1. The Palestinian intifada had convinced many Israelis that the status quo was untenable.
      2. They believed that some sort of political accommodation with the Palestinians was necessary.

IV. In the fall of 1991, the United States and the moribund Soviet Union sponsored an international conference in Madrid to discuss the Middle East conflict.
   A. Attending the conference were Israel, several Arab states, and a Palestinian delegation that was officially separate from the PLO but whose membership the PLO had approved.
   B. By prearrangement, after a few days of public speeches, the conference broke up into a series of bilateral negotiations, in which Israel dealt separately with the Jordanians, the Syrians, and the Palestinians.
   C. These bilateral talks continued sporadically for the next year and a half.

V. When Bill Clinton became president in early 1993, the bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian delegation had reached an impasse.
   A. The Israelis were unwilling to consider a full withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, the principal demand of the Palestinian delegation.
B. Meanwhile, however, Israeli and PLO officials were holding secret contacts in Oslo, Norway. The Israelis were willing to meet directly with the PLO because Arafat, ironically, was prepared to be much more flexible than the non-PLO delegation.
   1. Arafat had suffered diplomatic isolation and financial difficulty since the Gulf War.
   2. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was losing a previous source of funding and diplomatic support for the PLO.
   3. Approaching his mid-60s, Arafat was starting to worry about his political legacy.

C. In Norway, the Palestinians and the Israelis worked out a formula for resolving their dispute that built on the Camp David agreement of the late 1970s.
   1. Israel would withdraw its occupation forces from the Gaza Strip and from the West Bank town of Jericho, allowing for Palestinian self-rule in those areas.
   2. From this nucleus, the Palestinians would elect a self-governing authority that would gradually assume responsibility for administering Gaza and unspecified areas of the West Bank.
   3. After a transitional period not exceeding five years, there would be negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians over the final status of the territories.

D. Although Clinton had played no role in the secret negotiations, he embraced the results and served thereafter as the principal mediator for the process launched at Oslo.
E. From the start, however, some Palestinian critics accused Arafat of having “given away the store,” cutting a deal with the Israelis that effectively forfeited long-standing Palestinian national claims.

VI. In my view, the fundamental weakness of the Oslo formula was that all the essential issues in dispute, such as borders, the status of Jerusalem, the fate of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories—the issues that would actually determine the nature and extent of Palestinian sovereignty—were postponed for negotiation during the “final status” phase.

A. This permitted Israel, during the negotiation phase, to take unilateral actions that would prejudice the outcome of the negotiations.
   1. Israel withdrew its occupation forces from most of the cities and towns in the West Bank and Gaza. A new Palestinian Authority, led by Yasser Arafat, gradually asserted its control over the Palestinian population centers.
   2. But Israel remained in control of much of the surrounding countryside, where it could determine the nature and extent of industrial and agricultural development.
   3. The Jewish settler population continued to increase.
   4. Israel constructed a web of bypass roads, accessible only to settlers, that carved up Palestinian territory and prevented contiguous development.

B. Meanwhile, Arafat’s Palestinian Authority proved to be corrupt and authoritarian, imprisoning and even torturing Palestinians who criticized it.

VII. Throughout the 1990s, the most visible critics of Oslo were religious extremists on both sides.

A. On the Israeli side, right-wing Zionists attacked Oslo as a betrayal of the Zionist dream of gaining possession of all of Palestine and, in late 1995, a young right-wing Jew assassinated Prime Minister Rabin.
B. On the Palestinian side, the most violent opponents of Oslo were Muslim fundamentalists, especially members of a party known as Hamas.
   1. In the mid-1990s, in an effort to derail the peace process, Hamas sponsored a series of terrorist attacks against civilian targets inside Israel.
   2. The campaign was eventually brought under control by Arafat’s Palestinian Authority.
C. By the year 2000, most Palestinians lived under direct Palestinian Authority administration, but Israel had withdrawn from only about 40 percent of the territory.

VIII. In July 2000, Clinton convened a summit meeting at Camp David between Arafat and Ehud Barak, Israel’s new prime minister.

A. Arafat was reluctant to go to the summit because of the lack of consensus in the Palestinian community over how to proceed with the peace process.
B. In what would prove to be a major blunder, Arafat went to Camp David anyway.
C. Precisely what happened at Camp David is unclear, but apparently, the following developments occurred:
   1. Barak offered to withdraw from more than 90 percent of the West Bank and Gaza.
   2. The tracts of land he proposed annexing to Israel, however, were configured in such a way that the resulting Palestinian state would be broken up into separate enclaves.
   3. Barak’s proposal also called for the retention in the territories of a large number of Jewish settlers.
   4. Although Barak was willing to discuss Palestinian administrative autonomy over portions of East Jerusalem, he insisted that Jerusalem as a whole remain under Israeli sovereignty.

D. Barak’s proposal fell far short of what the Palestinians saw as the minimum requirements for a settlement.

E. Arafat rejected these proposals but failed to make a substantive counteroffer.

F. In a public statement issued immediately afterwards, President Clinton endorsed Barak’s proposal and chastised Arafat for failing to accept it.

IX. In September 2000, Ariel Sharon’s visit to East Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque helped spark the second Palestinian intifada.

A. Sharon was an extremely notorious figure to Palestinians, not only because he had been associated with massacres of Palestinian civilians in 1982, but also because he had been one of the strongest promoters of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

B. The second intifada was far more violent than the first. Instead of just throwing stones, Palestinian activists resorted to using guns and bombs as well.

C. This, in turn, led to a significant hardening of Israeli political opinion.

D. In February 2001, the hawkish Likud bloc prevailed in the elections, and Ariel Sharon became Israel’s prime minister.

X. Thereafter, the situation went from terrible to worse.

A. Sharon stepped up the policy, begun by his predecessors, of engaging in targeted assassinations of suspected Palestinian militants.

B. Palestinian militant organizations stepped up their suicide bombings against Israeli civilians.
   1. Most of the suicide bombings were conducted by members of the Islamic party Hamas, which was committed to Israel’s destruction.
   2. But a new organization, the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade, with loose ties to Arafat himself, also engaged in suicide bombings.
   3. Although formally committed to a two-state solution, the Martyrs’ Brigade believed that the only way to convince Israel to withdraw from the territories was to make Israeli civilians bleed.

C. This was a disastrous strategy.
   1. The Palestinians’ increasing reliance on terrorism damaged their reputation in the world.
   2. It also hardened Israel’s determination to crush the intifada and tighten its control over the occupied territories.
   3. Initially, the second Bush administration was critical of Sharon’s hard-line approach. But the attacks of September 11, combined with Arafat’s failure to put an end to the suicide bombings, swung administration opinion sharply in Sharon’s direction.

Suggested Reading:
Questions to Consider:

1. Why did the early 1990s appear to be a particularly propitious time for Palestinian-Israeli diplomacy?

2. Do you agree with the lecturer’s assessment of the weaknesses of the Oslo peace process? Are there alternative explanations for the demise of Oslo?
Lecture Twenty-Two

The United States and the Kurds

Scope: This lecture differs from the others in that, instead of recounting a brief event or historical process, it traces American relations with a single Middle Eastern people over a long span of time. After introducing the Kurdish groups and their various political aspirations over the last several decades, the lecture establishes that U.S. policy since the end of World War I has almost always been to oppose Kurdish efforts to gain greater autonomy within, or at the expense of, established Middle Eastern states. We then note the prominent exceptions to this rule: U.S. attempts to weaken Saddam Hussein by encouraging Kurdish uprisings in Iraq, first in the 1970s and again in the 1990s. Finally, we contrast these episodes with Washington’s consistent support for the Turkish government’s efforts to thwart the political and cultural aspirations of Kurds in Turkey, paying particular attention to events in the 1990s.

Outline

I. The political aspirations of the Kurdish people have presented the United States both with opportunities for weakening its regional adversaries and with difficulties in stabilizing its regional allies.

II. The Kurds are a non-Arab Muslim people whose traditional homeland, Kurdistan, lies in parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.
   A. Since the 1910s, various Kurdish separatist groups have attempted to achieve national independence or increased autonomy in the areas they inhabit.
   B. Over the last several decades, the United States has always opposed efforts by Kurds to achieve national independence.
   C. It has usually opposed Kurdish efforts to gain greater autonomy within, or at the expense of, established Middle Eastern states.

III. A major exception to the latter rule has been Washington’s occasional encouragement of the Kurds of Iraq.
   A. In the early 1970s, Nixon and Kissinger supported the shah of Iran in his bid to dominate the Persian Gulf
   B. To dominate the gulf, Iran needed to weaken its historic rival Iraq, which was trying to strengthen its own position in the area.
      1. In particular, the shah wanted to gain control over Shatt al-Arab, the tidal river at the head of the Persian Gulf. A previous treaty, dating back to the 1930s, had granted control over Shatt al-Arab to Iraq.
      2. The shah wanted to revise the treaty, and the Americans supported him in this goal.
   C. Nixon and Kissinger were especially eager to weaken Iraq, because it was a client state of the Soviet Union.
      1. To weaken Iraq, Nixon and Kissinger joined with the shah in encouraging the Iraqi Kurds to rebel against the Iraqi government and demand greater autonomy.
      2. Nixon and Kissinger did not want the Iraqi Kurds to succeed in gaining greater autonomy; that might encourage Kurds in countries friendly to the United States, such as Turkey and Iran, to start agitating for their own rights.
      3. The purpose, rather, was to harass and weaken the Iraqi government, decreasing its ability to challenge the shah’s bid for regional hegemony.
   D. The CIA gave the Kurds only about $16 million. This payment was mainly symbolic, designed to convince the Kurds that Washington was on their side, strengthening their determination to fight on.
   E. The Kurds got much more substantial aid from the Iranian government.
   F. The Kurdish rebellion did succeed in weakening the Iraqi government.
      1. In 1975, Iraq’s leader, Saddam Hussein, signed an agreement with the shah granting Iran joint control over Shatt al-Arab.
      2. In exchange for the Iraqi concession, the shah agreed to stop aiding the Iraqi Kurds.
      3. Deprived of Iranian aid, the Kurds were easy prey for Saddam, who brutally crushed the rebellion.
4. The Kurds appealed to Kissinger for aid, but to no avail.

G. In 1991, in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, Iraqi Kurds rose in rebellion once again. On this occasion as well, lack of U.S. support permitted the Iraqi government to crush the rebellion. (See Lecture Twenty.)
   1. In this case, however, Washington had not encouraged the Kurds in particular; they had acted on the basis of President Bush’s general exhortation to the Iraqi people.
   2. Even so, Washington’s subsequent establishment of a “no-fly zone” in northern Iraq helped create a situation of de facto autonomy for the Kurdish inhabitants of that region.

H. For the next few years, the Kurds of northern Iraq lived in relative tranquillity, but from 1994 to 1997, two rival Kurdish parties waged a bitter fratricidal war against each other.
   1. One party was the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, or PUK, led by Jalal Talabani.
   2. The other party was the Kurdistan Democratic Party, or KDP, headed by Masoud Barzani.
   3. In 1998, the Clinton administration brokered a truce between the PUK and the KDP.

I. In the aftermath of September 11, as the second Bush administration was preparing for war with Iraq, there was enormous uncertainty about the fate of Iraqi Kurdistan.

IV. When it came to the Kurdish population of Turkey, the U.S. government had consistently opposed Kurdish efforts to achieve greater autonomy within, or at the expense of, the Turkish state.

A. Unlike Iraq, Turkey had been a long-standing ally of the United States, indeed, the only Middle Eastern member of NATO.
   1. Under no circumstances would the United States countenance a separatist or autonomous movement that might compromise the territorial integrity of its ally.
   2. At the same time, the prominence of the Kurdish issue in Iraq made it harder for Washington to give Turkey carte blanche with its own Kurdish population.

B. The most recent flare-up of Kurdish activism in Turkey had its origins in the early 1980s, with the formation of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), led by a left-wing Kurdish activist named Abdullah Ocalan.

C. The PKK staged violent attacks both against the Turkish army and police and against conservative elements in the Kurdish community itself.

D. The escalation of PKK resistance in the late 1980s brought on a wave of Turkish government repression, involving sweeps of Kurdish villages, mass arrests, and outright killings of suspected PKK activists and their sympathizers.

E. Before the Gulf War of 1991, the Turkish government’s harsh response to Kurdish activism received little attention in the United States, despite the fact that much of this repression was accomplished with U.S.-supplied weaponry.

F. After the Gulf War, however, the Kurdish issue began receiving much more international and American attention.
   1. The United States continued to supply Turkey with the military hardware to conduct this effort. At the same time, the U.S. State Department sometimes angered Turkey by criticizing its human rights record.
   2. Some members of Congress were far more critical of Turkey, but they could never muster the votes to cut off military aid to Turkey or to condition that aid on better treatment of the Kurds.

G. In the 1990s, the Turkish government did succeed in neutralizing the PKK as a military force and, in 1998–1999, captured Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader.
   1. Ocalan’s capture both symbolized and consolidated the Turkish government’s victory in its 15-year war against the PKK.
   2. In 2002, the Turkish government authorized limited broadcasting in the Kurdish language, a decision aimed at meeting some of the European Union’s requirements for Turkish admission into that body.

H. The political status of the Kurds continued to be a pressing issue for both Turkey and the United States. When it came to determining the future of Iraq, one of the dilemmas the second Bush administration faced after 9/11, as it prepared for war with Iraq, was how much support to give Iraqi Kurds in their struggle for autonomy.
1. On the one hand, the administration needs as many indigenous Iraqi allies as it can find.
2. On the other hand, the Turks have made it clear that they will not tolerate the creation of an independent Kurdish state on their southeastern border, given that such action could re-ignite the Kurdish issue inside Turkey.

I. Thus, the Kurdish issue would continue to shape the international politics of the region.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What has been the general U.S. policy on Kurdish attempts to achieve greater autonomy within established Middle Eastern states? Under what circumstances has the United States departed from that policy?
2. How has the unresolved status of Iraq’s Kurdish population complicated U.S. efforts to achieve “regime change” in Iraq?
Lecture Twenty-Three

The United States and Osama bin Laden

Scope: This lecture charts Osama bin Laden’s emergence in the 1990s as a sponsor of anti-American terrorism. We begin by reconstructing bin Laden’s activities following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, paying particular attention to his formation of the al-Qa’ida network. We then discuss the joint U.S.-Saudi decision, reached in the aftermath of the Gulf War, to keep U.S. troops stationed on Saudi soil, a deployment condemned by bin Laden and fellow Islamic purists. Next, we follow bin Laden’s escalating terror campaign against the United States and its Middle Eastern allies and the Clinton administration’s sporadic efforts to counter it. In recounting these events, we consider the ambivalent position of the Saudi government, a regime deeply complicit in the creation and promotion of bin Laden, but one now on the receiving end of his increasingly audacious attacks.

Outline

I. How to explain the spectacular emergence of Osama bin Laden in the closing years of the 20th century? It would be presumptuous to venture a complete and final answer to such a question, but a partial and provisional answer can be found if one searches along two dimensions: the political and the logistical.

A. The political dimension, which stretches back for over a century, concerns the development in the Middle East of a feeling of powerlessness and rage in the face of Western domination, a feeling that bin Laden was able to exploit.

1. Much of the resentment generated by the legacy of Western imperialism was eventually transferred to the United States, which emerged from World War II as a superpower in its own right.

2. The fact that the United States played a crucial role in bringing Israel into being and, in later years, provided de facto support for Israel’s occupation of Arab lands added another layer of anti-American grievance.

3. There also arose a feeling among Middle Easterners that previous formulas for resisting foreign dominance had failed—in particular, that secular nationalism had proved inadequate and that some alternative form of political organization had to be found.

4. Many Middle Easterners became convinced that their governments had gotten into trouble because they had abandoned their traditional Islamic heritage.

5. These developments—resentment against the United States, disillusionment with secular nationalism, and the growing appeal of political Islam—created a climate generally more hospitable to a movement such as bin Laden’s.

B. The logistical dimension, which goes back just a couple of decades, concerns the particular historical circumstances that allowed bin Laden to transform Afghanistan into a launching pad for his escalating attacks.

II. Osama bin Laden made his debut on the world stage during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, working loosely in tandem with the CIA. Bin Laden was intoxicated by his victory against the Soviets and thereafter turned his sights on other foes.

A. In 1989, bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia and created the al-Qa’ida network. In the early 1990s, he turned against the Saudi government.

1. Following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Saudi government had allowed the United States to station troops on Saudi soil.

2. Bin Laden charged that it was blasphemous to allow non-Muslim soldiers to set foot in Saudi Arabia, which contains the two holiest cities in Islam.

B. In 1991, bin Laden moved to Sudan, where he established training camps for his growing band of militant supporters. In the early 1990s, a series of attacks took place that seemed isolated at the time but, in retrospect, appear to have been committed by people with links to bin Laden.

1. One of those attacks was the successful downing of two U.S. military helicopters in Somalia in 1993, killing 18 American soldiers.
2. Another was the first bombing of the World Trade Center, also in 1993. The mastermind was a Pakistani operative named Ramzi Yousef, who had been an associate of bin Laden during the Afghan War.

3. In 1995, a car bomb exploded outside a U.S. military facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. One of the four suspects in the bombing claimed to have been inspired by bin Laden.

4. In 1996, a far more devastating explosion took place outside the Khobar Towers military complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 servicemen and wounding hundreds more. Bin Laden praised the attack but denied having anything to do with it himself, and it does appear that the culprits were Saudi Shiites with ties to the Iranian government.

C. In 1996, the Clinton administration pressured the Sudanese government to expel bin Laden from the country.
   1. Unexpectedly, the Sudanese government offered to turn bin Laden over to the United States.
   2. But the Clinton administration, believing it did not have sufficient evidence to indict bin Laden, declined the offer.
   3. Instead, Sudan encouraged bin Laden to leave the country voluntarily. In May 1996, bin Laden and his militant supporters returned to Afghanistan, which was in the process of falling under Taliban control.

D. In the summer of 1996, bin Laden issued a call for jihad against the United States, on the grounds that it was trespassing on the sacred soil of Islam.

E. In early 1998, bin Laden repeated the call for jihad, accompanying it with a lengthy denunciation of the U.S. government’s policy on the Palestine issue and its imposition of economic sanctions against Iraq.

III. The Israel/Palestine issue has been discussed in a previous lecture. As for the sanctions against Iraq, they were first imposed by the United Nations in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, but they remained in place after the Gulf War, mainly at the behest of the United States and Britain.

A. The purpose of the sanctions was to prevent Iraq from importing any materials that could be used for producing weapons of mass destruction.

B. The sanctions’ impact on Iraq’s military programs is debatable, but there is no doubt that the sanctions contributed to a severe humanitarian crisis for the Iraqi people. This was especially true in the mid-1990s, before the United Nations modified the sanctions regime to allow Iraq to sell some of its oil and use the revenues for buying food, medicine, and other humanitarian supplies.

C. The question of who bore responsibility for this humanitarian crisis was bitterly contested.
   1. The U.S. government and its supporters charged that Saddam was to blame, because he hindered the work of UN weapons inspectors and failed to distribute the available resources fairly and efficiently.
   2. Anti-sanctions activists insisted that the United States and Britain were to blame because they persisted in a sanctions regime that targeted the Iraqi people while leaving Saddam unharmed.
   3. Arab public opinion generally sided with the anti-sanctions activists.

D. By invoking the Palestine and sanctions issues, bin Laden was clearly trying to broaden his appeal to attract secular Arabs and Muslims—people likely to be unmoved by the charge that American infidels were occupying the sacred soil of Islam.

IV. The Clinton administration took the bin Laden threat seriously. The Monica Lewinsky scandal, however, made it difficult for Clinton to fashion a credible response.

A. In August 1998, al-Qa’ida operatives bombed two American embassies in Africa, causing many deaths and injuries.

B. Two weeks later, Clinton ordered rocket attacks against bin Laden training camps in Afghanistan and against a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan alleged to be involved in the production of chemical weapons.
   1. The Clinton administration’s failure to prove its allegation against the Sudanese pharmaceutical factory aroused intense anti-American feeling in the Muslim world.
   2. There was widespread suspicion in the Muslim world that Clinton had concocted the bin Laden threat to get Monicagate off the front pages.
V. Over the next couple of years, bin Laden continued to sponsor attacks against the United States.

   A. In December 1999, an al-Qa’ida operative was apprehended at the border between Canada and Washington State with 130 pounds of explosives in his car. He later revealed to authorities that he had been planning to bomb L.A. Airport.

   B. In October 2000, a boat packed with explosives severely damaged the U.S.S. Cole as it was being refueled off the coast of Yemen. Bin Laden praised the operation, though his precise role in it remains unclear.

   C. In the summer of 2001, a bin Laden recruiting videotape was widely circulated throughout the Middle East. The appearance of the tape convinced many U.S. officials that al-Qa’ida was on the verge of striking again.

   D. Yet there was no way of telling—or so it seemed at the time—where and how al-Qa’ida would strike next.
      1. Al-Qa’ida had acted in so many different places, using so many different techniques, and in connection with so many different Arab and Muslim causes that it was difficult to know where to look for clues.
      2. Such range suggested al-Qa’ida’s organizational and technological sophistication, its ability to harness the techniques of globalization in its campaign to thwart the globalizing West.

   E. Al-Qa’ida also clearly benefited from the complacency of the U.S. government, whose response to the attacks had been sporadic and misdirected and whose component agencies were poorly organized for sharing information.

   F. The attacks of September 11 put an end to that complacency. Henceforward, Washington’s responses to Middle Eastern threats would be far more vigilant, focused, willful, and systematic.

   G. The attacks also set the stage for some remarkable transformations in America’s entire foreign policy posture.

Suggested Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What has been the basis for Osama bin Laden’s political appeal in the Arab and Muslim worlds?
2. Why did the Clinton administration have such limited success in addressing the challenge posed by bin Laden?
Lecture Twenty-Four

September 11 and Its Aftermath

Scope: The last lecture deals with the events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath and revisits the overarching themes of the course. After recounting the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we discuss Washington’s immediate reaction to 9/11, paying particular attention to the intervention in Afghanistan and the worldwide campaign against al-Qa’ida. We end our narrative at the beginning of 2002, as the administration of George W. Bush begins to unveil a more ambitious strategic agenda, with far-reaching implications for subsequent U.S. policy toward the Middle East—and beyond. Finally, we return to the four themes with which we began the course, showing how they continue to define America’s relations with the countries and peoples of the Middle East.

Outline

I. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, were a profoundly shocking event to the U.S. government and public, forcing both of them to recognize a level of American vulnerability that neither had thought existed.
   A. About 3,000 people were killed that day, the most in a single day since the Civil War.
   B. Not since the War of 1812 had the U.S. capital come under attack.

II. Immediately after the attacks, Bush made the crucial decision that his administration would not simply go after the immediate sponsors of the attacks but would also hold accountable nations that harbored terrorist groups. This position became known as the Bush Doctrine.
   A. The most immediate target of the Bush Doctrine was the Taliban government of Afghanistan, which was harboring Osama bin Laden and al-Qa’ida.
   B. The Bush administration demanded that the Taliban turn over Osama bin Laden, but the Taliban refused, prompting the United States to launch a military attack on both the Taliban and al-Qa’ida.
   C. To defeat both foes, the administration teamed up with the Northern Alliance.
      1. Offering money and arms as inducements, U.S. paramilitary forces, known as Special Forces A-Teams, convinced the Northern Alliance to take them into Taliban-held territory and show them the locations of Taliban and al-Qa’ida bases.
      2. The Special Forces then relayed this information to the U.S. Air Force, which attacked the bases using precision-guided weapons.
   D. In November and December 2001, the Taliban and al-Qa’ida were ousted from their major strongholds in Afghanistan. A pro-U.S. Afghan government, led by Hamid Karzai, was established in Kabul.
   E. Despite this overall success, there were a number of sour notes in the Afghan affair.
      1. First, despite the reliance on precision targeting, a large number of Afghan civilians were killed.
      2. Second, one of the Northern Alliance leaders with whom the Special Forces were allied was later revealed to have committed a serious war crime.
      3. Third, it turned out that Karzai had limited popularity inside Afghanistan and was unable to venture outside of Kabul without being accompanied by American bodyguards.
      4. Finally, the Bush administration failed to capture or kill bin Laden, who in late 2001, appeared to have slipped over the border from Afghanistan to western Pakistan.

III. By early 2002, the Bush administration was clearly broadening the scope of its “war on terror” to take on foes without demonstrable ties to the attacks of September 11.
   A. The first sign of this shift came in Bush’s January 2002 State of the Union address, in which the president declared that America was menaced by an “axis of evil” consisting of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.
   B. Over the next several months, the Bush administration issued a series of policy statements declaring its determination to take preemptive and unilateral military action against adversaries seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction.
      1. In practice, the United States had already frequently resorted to both preemption and unilateralism.
      2. What was new was the attempt to institutionalize those concepts in a formal national security posture.
3. Indeed, the posture of prevention and unilateralism became so formalized and prominent that it, too, came to be called the Bush Doctrine.

IV. For the remainder of this lecture, we shall return to the four themes with which the series began and see how they continued to define U.S.-Middle Eastern relations during and shortly after 9/11.

A. The first theme of the course is that of growing American involvement in the Middle East.
   1. The fact that al-Qa’ida chose to target the United States in the first place, mainly because of its deployment of troops on Saudi soil, was an indication of American prominence in the region by the end of the 20th century.
   2. Such a troop deployment would have been inconceivable in the era of Woodrow Wilson.

B. The second theme is Middle Easterners’ ongoing quest for political independence and self-mastery. The emergence of Osama bin Laden in the 1990s bore out this theme, albeit in a complex way.
   1. On the one hand, bin Laden’s rise was an extreme manifestation of Middle Easterners’ drive for self-mastery.
   2. On the other hand, it was a conspicuous symbol of their failure to achieve it.

C. The third theme is the difficulty of balancing among diverse and, sometimes, conflicting interests and objectives in the Middle East.
   1. By 2002, the Bush administration was arguing that disarming Iraq (and perhaps overthrowing its government as well) could not be separated from the effort to defeat the al-Qa’ida network.
   2. The administration’s critics, on the other hand, maintained that the preoccupation with Iraq was diverting precious energy and resources from the war against al-Qa’ida and, worse still, so alienating Muslim opinion as to provide al-Qa’ida with fresh opportunities for recruitment.

D. The fourth theme is the increasing antagonism between Americans and Middle Easterners.
   1. Public opinion surveys conducted in the months after 9/11 revealed high levels of resentment against the United States on the part of ordinary Arabs and Muslims, as well as a stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge bin Laden’s complicity in the attacks, despite the mounting evidence for such complicity.
   2. For many Americans, meanwhile, the attacks of September 11 confirmed some of the most fearful stereotypes about Arab and Muslim terrorists.

V. The increasingly angry rift between Americans and Middle Easterners has lent credence to scholarly interpretations, such as those by Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, that stress deep-seated cultural antagonisms between the two peoples.

A. Cultural differences exist, and they do account for some of the friction between Americans on the one hand and Arabs and Muslims on the other.

B. But some of the most bitter disputes between these two peoples occur within a shared moral framework, as each party accuses the other of sins recognized on both sides.
   1. It is tragic that Americans and Middle Easterners apply their shared values so selectively and use them as weapons against one another.
   2. What really angers Middle Easterners, according to recent surveys, is not the values of American society but the policies of the U.S. government, which are often seen as violating the very values they profess to uphold—human rights, democracy, national self-determination, and concern for the interests of poor and weak peoples.
   3. The shared values endure, however, and with them, a faint hope that these two peoples might someday achieve a mutually beneficial and respectful political friendship.

Suggested Reading:
Questions to Consider:

1. What American vulnerabilities did the September 11 hijackers exploit in launching their attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon? Where were these vulnerabilities mainly of a technical nature, or were they fundamental features of American society?

2. To what extent has America’s response to the September 11 attacks reflected the themes that have characterized U.S. relations with the Middle East over the eight decades?
Biographical Notes

Yasser Arafat (b. 1929). Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and president of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the 1960s, Arafat headed al-Fatah, a Palestinian resistance group. In 1969, Arafat took al-Fatah into the PLO and became chairman of the larger organization. In the 1970s and 1980s, Arafat built up support within the PLO for a two-state settlement of the Israel-Palestine dispute, a process culminating in the PLO’s recognition of Israel and renunciation of terrorism in 1988. In 1993, Arafat negotiated an accord with Israel that led to limited Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, an achievement for which he was awarded, along with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize. In 1996, Arafat was elected president of the Palestinian Authority. A failed 2000 summit meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Barak, however, led to renewed violence between Palestinians and Israelis.

Hafiz al-Asad (1930–2000). Syrian general and minister of defense, who became president of Syria after a coup in 1970. Throughout his long rule, one of Asad’s main goals was regaining the Golan Heights, which Israel had seized in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Neither in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 nor in negotiations with Israel in the 1990s did Asad succeed in recovering the Golan. In 1976. Asad sent Syrian peacekeeping troops to Lebanon and, thereafter, was heavily involved in the political affairs of that country. In Syria, Asad was an authoritarian ruler whose brutal crushing of a Muslim Brotherhood uprising in 1982 received widespread condemnation. Following his death in 2000, Asad was succeeded as president by his son Bashar.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881–1938). Founder and first president of the modern Turkish republic. In the 1900s and 1910s, under the name Mustafa Kemal, he served as an officer in the Ottoman army. His distinguished military leadership during the First World War, while failing to prevent Turkey’s ultimate defeat, gained him a wide following among the Turkish army and public. Following the Ottoman Sultan’s capitulation to the Allies in 1918, Kemal established a rival Turkish government that, over the next four years, succeeded in freeing Turkey from Allied occupation, though Turkey’s imperial holdings were lost. In 1922, Kemal abolished the sultanate and, in the following year, became president of the new Turkish republic, a position he held until his death in the late 1930s. Under the new surname Ataturk (“father of the Turks”), he launched ambitious programs to Westernize, modernize, and secularize Turkey.

Menachem Begin (1913–1992). Prime minister of Israel from 1977 to 1983. Born in Russia, he led a Zionist youth movement in Poland before World War II and, in 1942, settled in Palestine, where he led militant opposition to the British Mandate authorities. After the establishment of the state of Israel, Begin sat in the Knesset and led the right-wing opposition to the Labor Party. In 1977, Begin’s Likud party was victorious in national elections, and Begin became prime minister. In 1978, he negotiated the Camp David peace accords with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, agreeing to withdraw Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for Egyptian recognition of Israel. Begin shared the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize with Sadat. The failure of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, however, led Begin to resign from office in 1983.

Osama bin Laden (b. 1957). Saudi leader of al-Qa’ida, a Muslim terrorist organization he founded in 1989. The son of a wealthy businessman, in the 1980s, bin Laden participated in the Muslim resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Following the stationing of American troops in Saudi Arabia in 1990, bin Laden turned against the Saudi government. Over the next several years, based first in Sudan, then in Afghanistan, bin Laden’s al-Qa’ida organization sponsored a series of escalating attacks on Saudi and American targets. Among the operations linked to al-Qa’ida are the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole, and the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. After 9/11, the United States intervened in Afghanistan and successfully defeated the Taliban and al-Qa’ida forces. Bin Laden himself eluded capture, however, and continues to issue threats against the United States and its allies.

John Foster Dulles (1888–1959). An international lawyer who began his career in public service as counsel to the American delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. He was an early U.S. delegate to the UN General Assembly and, in 1951, negotiated the peace treaty between the United States and Japan. In 1953, Dulles became Eisenhower’s secretary of state; in this role, he strenuously fought communism and worked to promote U.S. security through the maintenance of strategic alliances and reliance on nuclear deterrence. Dulles helped fashion the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, which aimed at strengthening Middle Eastern states’ resistance to communism through the furnishing of economic and military aid.
Hussein I (1935–1999). Became king of Jordan in 1953 after his grandfather was assassinated by a Palestinian extremist and his father was declared unfit to serve. Hussein himself faced several assassination attempts, because his pro-Western positions set him at odds with radical Arab nationalists. Though relatively conciliatory toward Israel, Hussein led Jordan into the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, in which Israel seized the West Bank from Jordanian control. In 1970, Hussein defeated PLO forces stationed in Jordan and, in the following year, expelled most of those forces from the country. In 1988, Hussein forfeited Jordan’s claims to the West Bank and, in 1994, signed a peace treaty with Israel.

Saddam Hussein (b. 1937). President of Iraq from 1979 to 2003. Trained as a lawyer in Egypt, he was instrumental in the 1968 revolution that brought his Ba’th party to political power in Iraq. During the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, Hussein gained notoriety for using chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers and Iraqi Kurdish civilians. In 1990, he ordered the invasion of Kuwait, but his forces were subsequently compelled to withdraw from Kuwait in the Gulf War of 1991. After the Gulf War, Hussein faced continued international pressure to disarm Iraq of all weapons of mass destruction; this pressure included the imposition of economic sanctions against Iraq and the threat of military attack by a U.S.-led coalition.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900–1989). An Iranian Shiite cleric who served as Iran’s political leader from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. Khomeini received religious training in theological schools and, in the 1950s, was named ayatollah (sign of God), a position of supreme religious leadership. In the mid-1960s, Khomeini was exiled from Iran for his harsh criticism of the shah’s policies. First in Iraq, then in France, Khomeini continued his political and religious critiques of the shah, developing a strong following inside Iran. After the shah fled Iran in 1979, Khomeini returned to establish an Islamic republic, consolidating his position by supporting the Iranian students’ seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Khomeini was Iran’s supreme leader for the next decade, during which he waged a bloody and draining war with Iraq.

Henry Alfred Kissinger (b. 1923). U.S. secretary of state from 1973 to 1977. Born in Germany, Kissinger emigrated to the United States in 1938. An influential political scientist, he taught at Harvard University and consulted widely before becoming Richard Nixon’s assistant for national security affairs (1969–1973), then secretary of state. Kissinger’s foreign policy achievements included negotiating the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union and engineering America’s rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for negotiating the cease-fire with North Vietnam, part of a more general U.S. disengagement from Indochina. In the same year, Kissinger negotiated a cease-fire to end the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Kissinger continued to serve under President Gerald Ford; since 1977, he has lectured, written, and consulted.

Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970). First president of the republic of Egypt. In 1942, as a young army officer, he founded the secret Society of Free Officers to oppose corruption and foreign domination in Egypt. In 1952, he led the army coup that deposed King Farouk. In 1954, he became premier and, in 1956, was unopposed as candidate for president. His policy of Arab socialism emphasized land reform and economic development; he advocated Arab national pride and took a neutral position in the Cold War. After nationalizing the Suez Canal Company in 1956, Nasser successfully resisted an invasion by Great Britain, France, and Israel. He served as president of the United Arab Republic, a union between Egypt and Syria that lasted from 1958 to 1961. In 1967, Nasser expelled UN peacekeeping forces in the Sinai Peninsula and closed the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping, touching off the Six-Day War, in which Israel seized the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt. In his last years in office, Nasser drew closer to the Soviet Union.

Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1919–1980). Became shah of Iran in 1941, after Britain and the Soviet Union deposed his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was suspected of collaboration with Germany. During a 1953 conflict with Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadeq, Muhammad Shah briefly fled the country, but he was restored to power by a U.S.-backed coup. His “White Revolution” of the 1960s offered moderate reforms, but the unequal distribution of oil wealth alienated many of his subjects, and Muslim clergy criticized his pro-Western stance. In the 1970s, the shah relied increasingly on SAVAK, his secret police, to repress discontent. Rioting drove the shah from Iran in 1979, and the exiled religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to govern the country. The shah died in exile in Egypt.

Yitzhak Rabin (1933–1995). An Israeli general and twice prime minister of Israel. Before the establishment of Israel, Rabin fought in the Jewish militia and the British army in Palestine. He served in the Israeli army from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and became army chief of staff in 1964, a position he held during the 1967 Six-Day War, in which his leadership was widely celebrated. In March 1974, Rabin, a member of the Labor Party, became Golda
Meir’s labor minister, then, upon her resignation, prime minister until 1977. While serving as defense minister in a Labor-Likud coalition government from 1984 to 1990, Rabin led a harsh crackdown on the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories. Rabin became prime minister again in 1992 and, in 1993, approved the peace agreement with the PLO, an achievement for which he shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize. Rabin was assassinated in 1995 by an Israeli student with links to right-wing extremists.

Anwar al-Sadat (1918–1981). President of Egypt from 1970 to 1981. As a young man, Sadat was friendly with Gamal Abdel Nasser and shared his commitment to Egyptian nationalism. During World War II, he collaborated with the German army and was imprisoned for two years by the British. He was involved in the army coup that deposed King Farouk in 1952 and went on to hold several positions in Nasser’s government, including vice president from 1969. When Nasser died in 1970, Sadat became president and led Egypt to limited success in the 1973 war with Israel. In 1978, he concluded the Camp David peace accords with Israel and was awarded, along with Menachem Begin, the Nobel Peace Prize that year. Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by Muslim extremists.

Ariel Sharon (b. 1928). Prime minister of Israel. Sharon was an effective military leader in the 1948 and 1956 Arab-Israeli Wars and gained fame with his successes in the 1973 conflict with Egypt. Sharon then left the army and helped establish the right-wing Likud party. Following Likud’s electoral victory in 1977, he held a number of government posts. In 1982, as defense minister in the government of Menachem Begin, Sharon engineered the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, during which he was harshly criticized for allowing the massacre of Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by Lebanese Christian forces. Sharon held a series of cabinet posts in the 1980s and 1990s. His armed visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestinian East Jerusalem in 2000 set off a violent insurrection in the West Bank and Gaza. In 2001, Likud prevailed in national elections and Sharon became prime minister. Sharon has since pursued a hard line with the Palestinians, forcibly reoccupying much of the Palestinian territory vacated by his predecessors.
Bibliography

Essential Reading:


**Supplementary Reading:**


