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Chapter 22

Human Geography of Southwest Asia: Religion, Politics, and Oil

The rise of major religions thousands of years ago and the discovery of oil in the past century have drastically shaped life in Southwest Asia.

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Section 1: The Arabian Peninsula

Section 2: The Eastern Mediterranean

Section 1: The Northeast

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Section 1: The Arabian Peninsula

- The Arabian Peninsula is heavily influenced by the religious principles of Islam.
- Oil production dominates the economy of the region.

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Islam Changes Desert Culture

Modern Nations of the Subregion

- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia
- Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Town and Desert

- Bedouin nomads moved from oasis to oasis, built strong family ties
 - fought with other families, developed fighting skills
- Fighting skills helped spread new monotheistic religion of **Islam**
 - religion based on teachings of founder, the Prophet **Muhammad**
 - Muhammad lived in **Mecca**, Islam's holiest city

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Continued **Islam Changes Desert Culture**

Islam Brings a New Culture

- The Five Pillars are required of all Muslims; create common culture
- Faith—all believers must testify:
 - "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah"

- Prayer—pray facing Mecca five times a day; **mosque**—place of worship
- Charity—give money to the less fortunate
- Fasting—in the holy month of Ramadan, don't eat, drink during day
- Pilgrimage—all Muslims should make hajj to Mecca once in their life

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Continued Islam Changes Desert Culture

The Spread of Islam

- Armies of Bedouin fighters move across desert
 - conquer desert lands, put Muslim leaders in control
 - spread Islamic teachings, Arabic language and culture
- Muslim armies spread across Asia, Africa, Europe
 - by Middle Ages, large area of world is Muslim controlled

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Governments Change Hands

Colonial Powers Take Control

- Muslim governments were **theocratic**—religious leaders were in control
 - still true in some modern nations, such as Iran
- In late 1600, Muslim nations weaken
 - Britain, France control most of region after WWI, fall of Ottomans
 - colonial value: Suez Canal is vital link; oil discovered (1932)
- Abdul al-Aziz Ibn Saud takes control of most of Arabian Peninsula
 - becomes Saudi Arabia in 1932

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Oil Dominates the Economy

OPEC

- Oil is principle resource of economy, makes region globally important
 - source of almost all of nations' export money, GNP
- In 1960, oil-producing nations form economic group
 - **OPEC**—Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
 - coordinate petroleum-selling policies, control worldwide oil prices
 - includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Iraq

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Modern Arabic Life

The Change to Urban Life

- Rapid development as technology undermined traditional lifestyles
 - trucks replace camels; malls replace marketplaces
- Villagers, farmers, nomads move into cities
 - 25% urban in 1960; 58% by 1990s; estimated 70% by 2015
 - Saudi population 83% urban
- Oil jobs require skilled workers educational systems can't provide
 - foreign workers brought in

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Continued **Modern Arabic Life**

Religious Duties Shape Lives

- Women often cover their heads, faces with scarf, veil
 - women's roles are slowly expanding: more are educated, working
- Prayers performed dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, before bed
 - attend mosque services on Fridays
- Fasting in Ramadan reinforces spirituality, self-control, humility
 - 'Id al-Fitr marks end of Ramadan with gifts, dinners, charity

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Section 2: The Eastern Mediterranean

- The holy places of three religions are found in this subregion.
- There is a great deal of political tension among nations in this subregion.

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Religious Holy Places

Jewish Presence

- Jerusalem is a holy city to all three major monotheistic religions
- Jerusalem is capital of Israel; center of modern, ancient homeland
- Temple Mount in old city housed earliest temples
 - King Solomon's First Temple
 - Second Temple built in 538 B.C.
- Today Jews pray at **Western Wall** (Wailing Wall)
 - sole remainder of Second Temple (destroyed by Romans in A.D. 70)

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Continued **Religious Holy Places**

Christian Heritage

- Jerusalem is sacred site of Jesus' crucifixion
 - nearby towns, villages were important in Jesus' life
- Christians visit Mount of Olives, Church of Holy Sepulchre
- In Middle Ages, they fought Crusades to regain lands from Muslims
 - Muslims eventually regained control of the area
 - They maintained control until establishment of Israel in 1948

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Continued **Religious Holy Places**

Islamic Sacred Sites

- Jerusalem is third most holy Muslim city after Mecca, Medina
- **Dome of the Rock**—shrine where it's believed Muhammad rose to heaven
 - Jews believe it's site where Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac
- Dome and Al-Aqsa mosque are located on Temple Mount by Western Wall
 - close proximity of holy sites fosters Jewish-Muslim clashes

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A History of Unrest

The Legacy of Colonialism

- Ottoman Empire ruled region from 1520 to 1922, but weakened
- Britain, France got lands after WWI defeat of Ottomans, Germany
 - France took Lebanon, Syria; Britain took modern Jordan, Israel
- Both supposed to rule only until areas are ready for independence
 - France intentionally stoked religious tensions between groups
 - Lebanon became independent in 1943, Syria in 1946

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Continued **A History of Unrest**

British Control Palestine

- **Zionism**—19th-century movement for a Jewish homeland in Palestine
 - Jews buy land, begin settling
- After WWI, British control area; Arabs, Jews cooperate
 - German persecution increases number of Jewish immigrants
 - Arabs begin to resist Jewish state
- Area is divided: Transjordan is ruled by Arab government and British
 - Palestine is ruled by British with Arab, Jewish local governments

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Continued **A History of Unrest**

Creating the State of Israel

- After WWII, many Jewish Holocaust survivors settle in Palestine
 - UN divides Palestine into two states: one Jewish, one Arab
- Israel is created in 1948; repels invasion by Arab states
- Palestinian Arabs flee
 - Palestinian land on West Bank, Gaza Strip is controlled by Israel
- **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** uses politics, military to:
 - regain land in, and return of refugees to, Israel

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Modernizing Economies

Refugees and Civil Wars

- Creation of Israel produces numerous Palestinian refugees
 - today they number 3.6 million across the region; some in camps
 - many struggle for food, shelter, jobs; lack education
 - Jordan has the largest Palestinian refugee population
- Civil wars in Lebanon, Cyprus cause economic problems
 - Lebanon war in 1975–76 led to Israel invading Lebanon in 1982

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Continued **Modernizing Economies**

Modern Infrastructure

- Region's nations have potential for development
 - climate for citrus crops, sites for tourism
 - location connects them to markets in Europe, Asia, Africa
- Many nations lack infrastructure to support growing economy
 - irrigation is needed for agriculture
 - communication systems, power sources needed for industry
- Israel has built sophisticated industries, like computer software

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Modern Life

Eating Out, Eating In

- People don't eat in restaurants as much as in U.S.
 - some restaurants have separate male, female sections
 - cafés are usually for men only
- Most meals are eaten at home, with dinner between 8–11 pm

- Meals include hummus (ground chickpeas), baba ganouzh (eggplant dip)
 - cracked wheat tabbouleh salad; chicken, lamb rather than beef
 - dessert of fruit, kolaicha (sweet cake)

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Continued **Modern Life**

A Variety of Cultures

- Lebanon has mostly Shi'ite Muslims and some:
 - Druze, a secretive religious group living in mountainous areas
 - Maronite, Eastern Orthodox Christians
- Lebanon's cultural, religious variety makes unity difficult
- Culturally, Israel is Jewish, but is also home to other groups
 - Bedouins, Druze, Sunni, Circassians (from Caucasus region)
 - some Christians, Baha'i

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Section 3: The Northeast

- The nations in this subregion are Muslim but most are not part of the Arab culture.
- The nations in the Northeast range from developed to very poorly developed.

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A Blend of Cultures

Nations of the Region

- Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan

Early Civilizations

- Iraq's Fertile Crescent between Tigris, Euphrates a cultural hearth
 - early civilizations include Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria, Chaldea
 - all built empires in **Mesopotamia**, the "land between the rivers"
- Hittite empire covered modern Turkey, introduced iron weapons
- Persian empire developed in what is now Iran
 - introduced innovations in governmental organization

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Continued **A Blend of Cultures**

Ethnic and Religious Variety

- Subregion's ethnic groups include Turks, Kurds, Persians, Assyrians
 - languages (Turkish, Farsi) are different from Arabic
- All groups (except Assyrians) are Islamic, but tensions exist
 - after Muhammad's death, Muslims divided into two branches
 - 83% of all Muslims are **Sunni**; most Iranians are **Shi'ite**

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Clashes Over Land

Homelands and Refugees

- **Kurds**—stateless ethnic group located in Turkey, Iraq, Iran
 - promised homeland after WWI, but never got it
- Iran has world's largest refugee population
 - Iraqi Shi'ites flee persecution
 - decades of war create Afghan refugees

Control of Oil Fields

- In 1980s, Iran, Iraq fight war over Persian Gulf oil fields
- Iraq invades Kuwait in 1990; driven out in Persian Gulf War

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Clashes Over Leadership

Overthrow of the Taliban

- **Taliban**—fundamentalist Muslim political group rules Afghanistan
 - protects Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda terrorist network
- After 9–11 attacks, U.S. attacks Afghanistan in October 2001
 - Operation Enduring Freedom targets terrorist assets, infrastructure
 - Taliban removed from power by March 2002
 - Hamid Karzai heads transitional government
 - Osama bin Laden and some Taliban leaders escape

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Continued **Clashes Over Leadership**

Overthrow of Saddam Hussein

- After Gulf War, UN orders Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to disarm
 - ordered to destroy chemical, biological weapons
- President George W. Bush turns focus to Iraq in 2002
 - Bush believes Hussein has weapons of mass destruction
 - U.S., U.K. attack Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom, March 2003
 - major fighting ends in May 2003; Hussein captured in December 2003

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Reforming Economies

Making Progress

- Turkey is developing water resources, hydroelectric plants
 - supply energy, boost cotton and other agricultural production
 - only nation in region that produces steel
 - location between Europe, Asia is ideal for trade
- Changes in Iran's government bring economic progress
 - current government supports change
 - oil money funds development

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Continued **Reforming Economies**

Progress Interrupted

- Economic sanctions on Iraq after Gulf War limited trade
 - created shortages of food, medicine
- Afghanistan is one of world's poorest nations
 - most people farm or herd animals
 - mineral resources remain undeveloped due to civil wars, turmoil
 - post-Taliban transitional government is rebuilding economy

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Modern and Traditional Life

Division and Struggle

- Region's nations face internal struggles
 - some seek modern lifestyle, others want to preserve traditions
- In Afghanistan, Taliban had strict rules of behavior
 - new government is restoring civil liberties, improving education
- Taliban-like groups in Turkey, Iran, Iraq have not gained power
 - differences have led to conflicts, political problems