

Lesson 5: The Middle East

1. Video Lesson

2. Competencies

After successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Mention the major conflict that occurred in the Middle East since 1945;
- List down the objectives, activities and member states of the Arab League; and
- Identify the causes behind the establishment of the OPEC and the measures taken by it

3. Brain Storming Question

- Which states were included in the Middle East?
- Which powers controlled the Middle East until the end of World War II?
- What were the causes of the Arab-Israeli dispute?

Lesson Presentation

A. Geographical Setting of the Middle East



B. Arab Nationalism

Much of the Middle East had been under the control of the Ottoman Turks until the end of World War I. Soon after the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned between the

British and the French. Five new mandate states were created: Britain took over Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan (now Jordan), while France took Syria and Lebanon. The Middle East was more united under the Turks than under the West. Soon after World War II, British control over the Middle East came to an end. In 1946, the mandate was replaced by a treaty of alliance, and Transjordan was made independent. Since World War II, the Middle East has been encountered with two main types of conflict: internal and interstate.

C. Zionism and the Creation of the State of Israel

The Jewish people were expelled from the land of Palestine by the Romans in 70 AD. This episode is known in history as “Diaspora” (Greek for “dispersion”). But the Jews had long maintained the idea of regaining control of the area, which they considered home. In 1897, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), a Jewish journalist living in Austria, founded the Zionist Movement that advocated re-establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. This idea became the foundation of a movement known as Zionism. Zionism is both a religious and political movement among the Jewish people with the aim of creating a Jewish state in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel in Palestine, then an area controlled by the Ottoman Empire.

After World War II, the world became aware of the murder of millions of Jews in the Holocaust, and opinion began to favor creating an independent Jewish state. Arabs in Palestine and elsewhere continued to resist the idea, but on November 29, 1947, the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution which called for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. The Arab states refused to accept the U.N. resolution, but the Jewish leaders in Palestine proclaimed the independent state of Israel in 1948.

D. The Arab-Israeli Wars and the Peacemaking Efforts

The declaration of the state of Israel led to the Israeli-Arab War of 1948, in which Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia attacked Israel. After the 1948 war, the most serious military confrontations between the Jews and the Arabs were the Suez Crisis of 1956, when Israel, with France and Britain, invaded the Sinai after Egyptian provocations. In 1967, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan massed their armies on Israel’s borders, and several Arab states called for war. Assuming the Arabs would attack, Israel struck first, in June 1967. In the Six-Day War that followed, Israel demolished the armies and air forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. It also gained control of the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights of Syria, and all of the previously partitioned city of Jerusalem.

Under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Palestinians stepped up border raids and terrorist attacks inside Israel. In October 1973, the Arabs attacked Israel on the Jewish holiday known as Yom Kippur, and caught Israel by surprise. In the late 1970s, peace initiatives by Egypt’s new leader, Anwar Sadat, were coupled with mediation by U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Egypt entered direct negotiations with Israel’s Prime Minister, Menachem Begin. The two countries reached an agreement known as the Camp David Accords in 1978 and, in 1979, signed a formal peace treaty.

