

# About the Course

This course will discuss the emergence of the modern Middle East from the fall of the Ottoman Empire, at the end of the First World War to the present. It will discuss the Ottoman legacy in the region and the Western imperial impact on the creation of the Arab state system. The course will discuss the rise and retreat of Arab nationalism, the problems of internal cohesion of the Arab states, issues of religion and state, and the evolution of Islamist politics. It will also focus on the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its impact on the region and will conclude with an in depth analysis of the “Arab Spring” by placing these contemporary revolutionary events in their historical context.

## Weeks and Themes

**Week One:** In our first lesson, we will locate the Middle East in time and space. We will get to know the 19th-century Middle East, the structure of its society and economy as well as the dynamics of its politics. We will then look into the dramatic change that took place in the last quarter of the 18th century, that is the widening gap between Europe and the Middle East as we will dwell on the impact this change had on the future of the region. We will conclude our first lesson with a discussion on the "Eastern Question," which refers to the fate of the Ottoman Empire and the balance of power in Europe.

**Week Two:** Our second lesson is a discussion on the forces of modernity and tradition in the Middle East. The filtering of European ideas into the Middle East engendered a process of reform in the region throughout much of the 19th century. We will analyse two centres of reform in this respect, namely the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. This analysis will take us next to the Islamic responses to the crisis of modernity as a result of the inherent tension between faith and secularism. We will see how various Islamic thinkers tried to find a compromise between these obvious tensions and at times went in more fundamentalist directions.

**Week Three:** In lesson three, we will witness the rise of nationalism in the Middle East, as it became a much more acceptable idea in the late 19th and early

20th century among an intellectual, elitist, urban minority, who were the graduates of western-style schools (remember lesson two and the process of reform!). We will concentrate on the emergence and development of three nationalist movements; Turkish, Egyptian and Arab. Lastly, we will speak about the First World War and how it brought the end of the Ottoman Empire as well as the end of 400 years of Ottoman Turkish rule in the Arab countries. We will also see how the Middle East began to take its current shape following the First World War.

**Week Four:** In our fourth lesson, we will be speaking about the creation of the Middle East state system in accordance with British and French designs after the First World War. First, we will discuss Egypt and how its distinct historical development gave way to a unique liberal experiment in Egypt during the 1920s and 1930s and consequently to a steady shift toward Islam and Arab nationalism. Second, we will discuss the area of the Fertile Crescent in comparison to Egypt and the creation of British (Palestine, Trans-Jordan, Iraq) and French mandates (Syria, Greater Lebanon) in this region. Our attention will then shift to the non-Arab states. We will learn about the creation of the Republic of Turkey on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and the sweeping process of modernising reform under Mustafa Kemal. Lastly, we will take a look at Iran, which was, like Turkey, not a new state created by the Great Powers but a country with a long history and cultural tradition. Our discussion on Iran will include an overview of its history from early 16th century onwards as well as the basic principles of the Shi'a which shaped greatly the political culture in Iran.

**Week Five:** In lesson five, we will concentrate on the beginnings of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We will first look into the European context, which gave rise to the emergence of Zionism and the gradual immigration of Jews to Palestine. The Arab response to the Zionist challenge will be discussed next. We will witness the growing hostility between the two populations and the ensuing Arab revolt, the most significant Arab opposition until then. In the background of this heightened tension and the new dynamics introduced by the outbreak of the Second World War, we will focus our attention next on the solutions offered to solve the festering problem, that is the partition plan.

**Week Six:** Our focus on the sixth lesson will be the period of revolutionary politics in various key Arab states after they gained their political independence. First, we will look into Egypt and the period of faltering modernisation which led in the 1930s to an era of Islamic revival (Muslim Brotherhood). What will follow next is the dramatic change which occurred in Egypt with the 1952 military coup. We will discuss the new path Egypt took with the end of the monarchy, its state policies as well as its foreign policy orientation. Second, we will turn our attention to Iraq, the first of the mandated countries to achieve independence. We will discuss Iraq's historical development from the overthrow of the Hashemites to the rise of Saddam Hussein. Our discussion topics here will include the Iran-Iraq War and the Kurdish opposition to the Ba'athi regime in Iraq. Next, we will delve into Syrian politics in an effort to understand its prolonged instability with an emphasis on the political meaning of the division between urban Sunni-notables and Syria's Alawi minority. Fourth, we will speak about Lebanon, its various religious and ethnic communities and how the struggle over power among them led to civil war. As opposed to the instability we have so far discussed in countries like Syria and Lebanon, we will discuss the reasons behind the surprising stability of the monarchies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia next focusing on the components of their durability.

**Week Seven:** Our seventh lesson is part one of our discussion on the escalation and de-escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1948 to 1973. First, we will be looking into the principles of Israel's security doctrine, which shaped its course of action in the conflict with its neighbours. We will then speak about the Suez Crisis of 1956 not only in its regional context but also in the context of Cold War politics. Second, we will focus on the revival of the Palestinian identity by a collective Arab effort and the establishment of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). We will discuss next how Israel and the Arab states came in conflict once again, which resulted in the outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967. In post-1967 era, we will speak about an inner-Arab conflict between the PLO and the Jordanian monarchy, which resulted in the expulsion of the former from Jordan. Our last topic will be the War of Attrition, during which Egypt and Israel once again came into conflict in a prolonged fight.

**Week Eight:** Our eighth lesson is part two of our discussion on the escalation and

de-escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, covering the period from 1973 to the present. The Yom Kippur War (also known as the October War) between Israel and the coalition of Arab states will be our first topic of discussion. We will focus next on the 1982 Lebanon War and the subsequent Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon followed by a discussion on the underlying reasons for the outbreak of the First Palestinian Intifada. We will then discuss the peace process that was set in motion by the Oslo Accords in 1993 to end the conflict as well as its eventual failure and resuscitation once again in the Camp David Summit in 2000.

**Week Nine:** In our last lesson, we will be looking at the developments in the Middle East from 1967 onwards to the present. First, we will discuss the victory of the narrow state interest over the wishes of the Arab collective. We will then have an in-depth look into Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Assad's Syria and the process of national identity formation in Jordan and among the Palestinians. Our next discussion will be on the Islamic revival in the Middle East, which stemmed from the disappointment with secular nationalism. We will learn about the complaints of the Islamists and their arguments against the marginalization of religion in politics and society. We will trace the development of this Islamic revival in Egypt, Syria and Iraq and its impact on the series of popular uprisings known as the Arab Spring, which have engulfed the region since late 2010. What had transpired in the meantime in the non-Arab states of Turkey and Iran will be our last discussion.

## **I. The Middle East in the Modern Era**

1.1. What and Where is the Middle East?

1.2. What is the Modern Era?

1.3. Middle East in the 19th Century

1.3.1. The Structure of Society

1.3.2. Economy

1.3.3. Politics

1.4. The Changing Balance of Power with Europe

1.5. The "Eastern Question"

## **II. Modernity, Tradition and the Age of Reform**

2.1. The Ottoman Empire

2.1.1. Traditional World View and Opposition to Reform

2.1.2. The Tanzimat

2.2. Muhammad Ali in Egypt

2.3. Islamic Reform or Modernism?

## **III. The Rise of Nationalism, the Demise of the Empire**

3.1. Turkish Nationalism

3.2. Arab Nationalism

3.3. Egyptian Nationalism

3.4. World War One and the Demise of the Empire

## **IV. The Creation of the Middle East State System**

4.1. Egypt

4.2. The Fertile Crescent

4.2.1. The French Mandates: Greater Lebanon

4.2.2. The Establishment of Syria

### 4.3. The British Mandates

#### 4.3.1. The Palestine Question

#### 4.3.2. Trans-Jordan

#### 4.3.3. The Kingdom of Iraq

### 4.4. The Saudis and the Hashemites in the Arabian Peninsula

### 4.5. The Non-Arab States

#### 4.5.1. The Republic of Turkey

#### 4.5.2. Iran

## **V. The Beginnings of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

### 5.1. On Context and Discourse: The European and the Middle Eastern Contexts

### 5.2. The Palestinian Opposition and the Arab Rebellion

### 5.3. World War II in the Middle East

### 5.4. The Story of Partition

### 5.5. Conflicting Narratives of 1948

## **VI. Arab Independence and Revolution**

### 6.1. Egypt: Crisis and Revolution

### 6.2. Iraq from the Overthrow of the Hashemites to Saddam Hussein

### 6.3. Syria's Prolonged Instability

6.4. Lebanon's Civil Wars

6.5. The Surprising Stability of the Arab Monarchies

6.5.1. Jordan

6.5.2. Saudi Arabia

## **VII. The Escalation and De-Escalation of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Part 1**

7.1. From 1949 to the Suez War

7.2. The Revival of the Palestinian Identity

7.3. The Deterioration to War in 1967

7.4. The Palestinian Struggle from Jordan

7.5. Black September

7.6. The War of Attrition, 1968-70

## **VIII. The Escalation and De-Escalation of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Part 2**

8.1. The October Surprise

8.2. The War in Lebanon in 1982

8.3. The Palestinian Intifada

8.4. The Oslo Accords

8.5. Camp David and the Second Intifada

8.6. Israel's Disengagement from Gaza and the Rise of Hamas

## **IX. Middle Eastern Stateness, Islamic Revival and the "Arab Spring"**

9.1. The Post-1967 Middle East and the Victory of the Narrow State Interest

9.2. The Islamic Revival

9.3. The Arab Spring

9.4. The Non-Arab States

9.4.1. The Turkish Republic from 1938 to Present

9.4.2. Iran: From the Pahlavi Dynasty to the Islamic Revolution of 1979