

Religion and Politics in Conflict: The Modern Middle East



Pre-reading:

Tomorrow we will start a new unit that examines the role of religion in many of the conflicts in the Modern Middle East. The assignment is:

1. Print out the Middle East [map](#).
2. Read "[A Guide to Middle East Politics in 2014.](#)" On the map, for each country discussed, write on the country (or next to it if there is no space): one sentence about the current political system; who they back or support; who they are against. Try to do it neatly so that you can use the map throughout the next unit.

#1

Aim: What are the characteristics of the countries in the Middle East? Who is allied with whom?

Procedures:

1. Quiz on the Reformation
2. Take out maps. Discuss key conflicts and alliances.
3. With computers have students flesh out their maps further with the following:

For each of the countries on your Middle East Map, identify and label:

1. the majority religion and largest minority (include percentages)
2. the main export
3. the current president

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/maps/demotext.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

HW: Please read the two articles on the rise of ISIS (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq. I am hoping that you will note, as you read, how different histories interpret ISIS' rise.

1. For each article, make a timeline of the key events that the author claims leads to its rise.
2. Write a paragraph. What are three significant differences in these two histories?

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isis-eminant-threat-iraq-syria-20146101543970327.html>

<http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/157196>

#2

Aim: Why do ISIS rise as a political/religious movement?

Procedures:

1. Lecture: Key Facts on Iraq

Key Facts: Iraq

History:

- Iraq was formerly part of the Ottoman Empire.
- Iraq gained independence in 1932. First England and then the US tried to control Iraq and its oil. The Baath Party-an Arab nationalist party- came to the power in 1950's. Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq from 1979-2003.
- Iran and Iraq had a bloody war between 1980-1988.
- The US invaded Iraq in 1990 and then again in 2003. US withdrew troops in 2011.

President

- Nuri al Maliki (from 2006-August 2014). Haider al-Abadi took over after Maliki.

Economy

- Oil accounts for 84% of its exports. Fifth largest reserves in world.

Religion

- 65% Shia; 32% Sunni.

2. Discussion of homework

Notes

ISIL: Rising Power in Iraq and Syria (Aljazeera, , June 2014)

- Traces origin to Tawhid and Jihad, a Sunni group in Iraq that arose after US invasion.
- Group took over under Baghdadi when in 2012 group turned attention to Syria.
- In 2014, the group turned its attention back to Iraq.

The Rise of the ISIS Terrorist Army in Iraq and Syria (History News Network, 10-14)

- ISIS captured Mosul and many other cities in northern Iraq in June 2014.
- ISIS' origins: starts with 2003 overthrow of Baath gov't by US which overthrew 500 yrs of Sunni dominance; disenfranchised Sunnis found calling in jihad; the US helped to put down the Sunni insurgency; Maliki promise to include moderate Sunnis.
- Because Obama failed to fund Syrian moderates in 2011, Syrians by 2013 had joined ISIS.

3. Watch: Rise of ISIS (see appendix A)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/rise-of-isis/>

HW: Please read “Understanding Syria” by William Polk (The Atlantic, Dec. 2013)
http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/understanding-syria-from-pre-civil-war-to-post-assad/281989/?single_page=true

1. How does the geography and agriculture shape Syria?
2. What was the main source of conflict between Assad and the Muslim Brotherhood?
3. According to the author, why did the civil war in Syria begin in 2011?
4. What are the costs of the war?

#3

Aim: Why is Syria in a civil war?

Procedures:

1. Finish Frontline film.
2. Discuss the worksheet questions.
3. Lecture on Syria

History:

- Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire, and taken over by the French after WW I.
- Syria emerged as an independent country in 1946.
- Hafiz al-Asad came to power in 1970, a member of the Baath Party.
- Upon the death of his father Bashar as-Asad came to power in 2000.
- Israel took some territory from Syria in the war in 1967: the Golan Heights.

Civil War

- Civil War broke out in March 2011 around broadening democracy.
- The war has turned into a sectarian conflict with Alawites and Christians opposing Sunnis. Alawites control the government and military. Has also become a regional war: Iran and Hezbollah against Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey.
- In 2013, the Syrian military used chemical weapons (Sarin gas) on several towns. President Obama threatened to invade Syria if Syria didn't turn over its chemical weapons. In September 2013, Syria agreed to do so.

Government

- Bashar al-Asad is the president.

Religion

Sunni 74%; Alawite 13%; Christian 10%

Export

- Oil

4. Watch film: No Anymore: A Story of Revolution (2013)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA8HsfRioWE>

5. Discuss

HW: Read “Understanding Lebanese Confessionalism”
<http://www.cjpmo.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=47>

1. When and why was the confessional system set up?
2. What are threats to the stability of the confessional system?
3. In your view does confessionalism deepen distrust between different religious groups or

provide rules by which they can co-exist? Explain your answer.

#4
Aim: How has the war in Syria and the rise of ISIS impacted Lebanon?
Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lecture: Lebanon
History <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, France controlled Lebanon after WWI. It gained independence in 1943.• The country wracked by civil war from 1975-90. The war was complex. After the 1967 war between Israel and in Lebanon). The war was fanned by the Cold War with the US and Europe favoring the Christians and the USSR
Politics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lebanon's confessional system: The president is a Maronite Christian; the speaker of the Parliament is a Shia M• Hezbollah, a Shiite political and military organization, was organized in 1985 in response to Israel's occupation has sent many soldiers to support the Asad government in Syria.• The presidency is currently vacant. The politics of the region have made it difficult for Lebanon to agree on a lea
Refugees <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are about 450,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. There are more than 1 million Syrian refugees in Leba
Religions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 41% Christian; 27% Shia; 27% Sunni• Map: https://www.google.com/search?q=religious+map+lebanon&espv=2&biw=1243&bih=790&tbm=isch&imgkAvqtRzTYRNHM%253Bhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Fen.wikipedia.org%25252Fwiki%25252FDemographic%25252FkAvqtRzTYRNHM%252C%2526usg=__rvFHwFIU1QepBuKxALrKt9cB5_A%3D&ved=0CCsQyjc&ei=KIGHVLvfgeography-of-the-world-globalization-people-and-places%252Fsection_11%252F7cbbc680e34cf88b2e597589599neighbors.html%3B2841%3B1480
Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main exports: jewelry, metals, chemicals• Show film: "the Islamic State vs Hezbollah" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv1l3E3QgMY• Prepare for quiz in next class on Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.
HW: Study for quiz.

#5
Aim: Is there a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syria quiz• Watch the first part of Promises
HW: No HW assigned.

#6
Aim: Is there a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watch more of "Promises."

<p>• Give out Israel/Palestinian vocabulary sheet. Have students study the peace deals. See below</p> <p>HW: The Council for Foreign Relations is one of the most respected American voices on foreign policy. They have created a “Crisis Guide: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict.” http://www.cfr.org/israel/crisis-guide-israeli-palestinian-conflict/p13850</p> <p>I would like you to watch two films on the history. Click on and watch “Chapter 1:Timeline” at the top. Then, watch “Chapter 2: The Territorial Puzzle.” You will need to click on each of the sections at the bottom: Israel, West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, Regional Complexities, and Major Conflicts.</p> <p>1. Take notes on each of the chapters.</p> <p>Write down two questions you have about the relationship between Israel and Palestine.</p>
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#7
Aim: Is there a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch more of “Promises.” • Discuss homework. • Review study sheet
HW: The Council for Foreign Relations is one of the most respected American voices on foreign policy. They have created a “Crisis Guide: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict.” http://www.cfr.org/israel/crisis-guide-israeli-palestinian-conflict/p13850 I would like you to read chapter 3 “Diplomatic Efforts.” Take notes on the negotiations that took place on the following dates: 1948/9; 1967-73, 1978, 1983, 1991, 2000, 2002, and 2003.

#8
Aim: Is there a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Use Saudi Initiative as an example.
Procedures: <p>Have students take five minutes to quiz each other on wars on the vocabulary sheet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the Saudi Initiative. Read the Initiative as class. Put students in groups. Have students follow instructions on sheets. • Debrief.
HW: Study for quiz

#9
Aim: Is there a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz (see below) • Show the MEPC assignment. • Explain different issues. • Put students in groups. • Have students read their issue sheets.
HW: <p>For Syria class:</p> <p>In preparation for the Middle East Peace Conference, please read the articles below and write a short summary of each. You have to cut and paste the links.</p> <p>http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-conflict-president-assad-finally-turns-on-isis-as-government-steps-up-campaign-against-militant-strongholds-9679480.html</p> <p>http://www.businessinsider.com/obama-isis-syria-rebels-assad-2014-10</p>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israelis-find-an-unlikely-ally-in-assad-as-syrian-civil-war-moves-closer-to-home-9749462.html>

For Iraq class:

Please read the articles below. For each write a brief summary. For the MEPC, you are al-Abadi. So pay attention to his politics.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/16/world/iraqs-premier-has-narrowed-nations-divide.html?_r=0

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28748366>

<http://theiranproject.com/blog/2014/11/13/iraqi-pm-calls-for-expansion-of-ties-with-iran/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/02/iraq-government-kurdish-budget-oil-export-deal>

#10

Aim: What is the perspective of Iraq/Syria on Middle East issues?

Procedures:

- Take out map with friends/allies/enemies again.
- Syria

Article #1: Syria

- Assad has turned a blind eye toward ISIS until recently; they have focused on attacking mainstream groups. ISIS also focused its attacks on mainstream groups.
- Assad has recently begun to attach ISIS both because ISIS is on the verge of taking Aleppo and to show US that it is an ally against terrorism.

Article #2: Obama Goldlocks Approach

- Obama is wary of supporting Syrian rebels too much and wary of committing ground forces.
- Building a force that is strong enough to beat ISIS but not strong enough to defeat Assad is not good enough.

Article #3:

- al-Nusra front may begin attacks against Israel in the Golan Heights; would gain credibility in the Arab world.
- Israel hopes Assad takes out al-Nusra fighters.

- Take out laptops. Have students work on research on their papers.

HW: Continue research on papers.

#11

Aim: How do Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt impact Middle East politics?

Procedures:

- Take out maps. What geographically distinguishes each of these countries?
- Lecture

Turkey

History:

- Turkey was founded in 1923, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in WW I. Built around a secular Islamic nation.
- It has had democratic system of government since then, with intervals of military takeover.
- In 2005, it began talks with the EU about membership.

President:

- President Erdogan

Economy:

- light manufacture of clothes, textiles, metal and foodstuffs.

Religion:

- 99.8% Sunni Muslim.
- Ethnicity: 70-75% Turkish; 18% Kurds
- Refugees: more than 780,000 Syrian refugees.

Political Relations:

- Iran and Turkey have a close economic relationship (gas for machine parts)
- Israel-Turkey relations have been strained because of Turkey's support for people of Gaza.
- Syria-Turkey relations have been strained as Turkey has supported insurgency.

Egypt

History:

- One of the wealthiest countries in the world between 1000- 1500 CE because of Red Sea trade.
- Continued to be strategic trade center with completion of Suez Canal in 1882.
- Gained full independence from Britain in 1952.

President:

- President al-Sisi (former military officer) was elected in May 2014, after he forced out President Morsi (Muslim Brotherhood).
- The Arab Spring in 2011 forced a military government out of power.

Economy

- Cotton, textiles, metals products, chemicals.

Religion:

- 90% Sunni; 10% Christian.

Political relations:

- Egypt's current government has supported Israel on Gaza and strong relations with the US.
- Saudi Arabia has been a strong financial backer of the new government (opposes Muslim Brotherhood).
- Egypt has traditionally opposed Iran.

Saudi Arabia

History:

- The Saud family organized modern Saudi Arabia in 1932.

- It is home to two of Islam’s holiest shrines: Mecca and Medina.
- It is a monarchy organized around oil wealth and Wahhabism, an orthodox school of Sunni Islam.

President

- King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz al Saud (since 2005)

Economy:

- Petroleum

Religion:

- 85% Sunni; 15% Shiites.

Political relations:

- Has had close relations with “pro-western” Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf States.
- Has had a very close relationship with the US (oil for military technology), which was complicated by 9-11.
- Saudi Arabia has supported a stable, negotiated resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.
- Competes with Iran for leadership in Muslim world.

- Read article: Turkey locked in a Power Struggle with Iran, Saudi Arabia (al Monitor)

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/05/turkey-iran-saudi-arabia-odds-region.html#> Debrief.

- Have students take out laptops and choose one article from “new articles” on portal to include in their research.

HW: Read the two articles below and write brief summaries. Continue to work on your research papers.

Resolution for Palestinian State Fails (NYT)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/31/world/middleeast/resolution-for-palestinian-state-fails-in-security-council.html?rref=world/middleeast&module=Ribbon&version=origin®ion=Header&action=click&contentCo>

Iran, 6 Powers Move Close to Nuke Talks Deal

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/01/02/world/middleeast/ap-iran-nuclear-.html>

#12

Aim: Why does Iran want nuclear capability? Should international organizations stop Iran from achieving nuclear capability?

Procedure:

- Discuss Palestinian article.
- Announce emergency UN session to discuss two questions
 - Does Iran have the right to build nuclear reactors and/or nuclear weapons?
 - The US and Israel are very concerned that Iran is intent on building nuclear weapons, not just nuclear energy. What deal can be reached to satisfy all parties?

- Read “9 questions about Iran’s nuclear program you were too embarrassed to ask.” See appendix 5. Why might Iran want a bomb?

- Announce: we will watch a set of short films from the <http://choices.edu/resources/twtn/twtn-iran-nuclear-issues.php> site. Hand out the worksheet. Watch the films.

- Discuss two main questions.

HW: Please read the two articles below and take notes. Continue working on your research paper.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/09/04/history-lesson-when-the->

[united-states-looked-the-other-way-on-chemical-weapons/](#)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/09/04/history-lesson-when-the-united-states-looked-the-other-way-on-chemical-weapons/http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25810934>

#13

Aim: How should the United States respond to the use of chemical weapons in Syria? Should it use military force or put its faith in diplomacy? Or, is there no need to draw a “red line” at chemical weapons, and should the United States stay out of the Syrian conflict?

Procedures:

- Discuss first homework reading. What is the history of chemical weapons in Syria?

Background: show

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/27/world/middleeast/blasts-in-the-night-a-smell-and-a-flood-of-syrian-victims.html?pagewanted=3>

A century of chemical weapons:

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/100000002455598/a-century-of-chemical-weapons.html>

Read: Three Options. (see appendix #6 below) Debate.

- what are the arguments in each?
- what are the strengths and weaknesses of each?
- Which one would you argue for?

Kerry video on deal:

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

Summary: Was the final made a better or less good plan?

Interview with Assad:

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/100000002076313/an-interview-with-bashar-al-assad.html?playlistId=100000001997657>

HW: Work on MEPC paper.

#14

Aim: To prepare students for MEPC.

Procedures:

- Announce an emergency meeting of the country’s groups. From the country’s perspective, please answer the following:
 - In the Coalition against ISIS, the war is progressing, but very slowly. The United States, Saudi Arabia and Turkey propose that alongside fighting ISIS, a major goal of the Coalition is to train and arm more moderate Sunni groups in Syria who will be able to take power from the Assad government.
 - Israel and the United States propose that the Palestinian demand for 1967 borders in unrealistic given the number of Israeli settlers now in the West Bank; they are willing to

<p>create a Palestinian state that includes Gaza, parts of the West Bank, and give some additional land in northern Israel to “swap” for parts of the West Bank that Israel intends to keep.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In secret negotiations between Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iran, a deal is agreed on for a first step toward Sunni-Shiite peace. The deal is that Iran will slowly cut its military support for Assad in Syria in exchange for Saudi Arabia and other Sunni countries actively stopping Sunni fighters and funds going to ISIS in Iraq. - With winter approaching, the 1.2 million refugees are in a humanitarian crisis. Israel’s war on Gaza over the summer destroyed many houses and building and basic infrastructure for water and heating oil. Turkey proposes an end to the blockade of Gaza and that Coalition countries provide \$80 million of dollars in emergency aid to the Gaza refugees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students work in groups to answer their negotiating questions. What evidence supports their answers? • Have students write their opening statements.
<p>HW: Read the two articles below. For each write a brief summary.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is a Saudi-Iranian compromise the key to peace in the Middle East? 2. What possible compromise would you suggest? <p>Defeating the Islamic State Requires a Saudi-Iranian Compromise (Carnegie) http://carnegie-mec.org/2014/09/03/defeating-islamic-state-requires-saudi-iranian-compromise/hpip</p> <p>Iran and Saudi Arabia: A Power Struggle and a Way Forward (National Interest) http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/iran-saudi-arabia-power-struggle-way-forward-9964</p>

#15
Aim: What are Saudi Arabia’s main goals in Middle East politics?
<p>Procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss homework. • Watch: “House of Saud”: 117-end https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-HyrIAL5Bc • Give back drafts.
<p>HW: Thank you for your hard work on the first draft of your paper. It will serve you well in the Middle East Peace Conference.</p> <p>The one area that I thought everyone need work on was finding actual text from your country supporting your answers to questions. So, if you are representing Syria, you should find speeches, text, articles, or decrees by Assad or other government officials since Assad stepped into office (in 2000). If you are representing Iraq, find speeches, text, articles or decrees by Maliki or al Abadi over the last eight years. How do you do this? In google, type in: "speech Syria Assad + your topic" or "speech Iraq Maliki + your topic." Keeping changing the words and you will find materials. Your homework is to find three pieces of text by the government that supports your answers.</p> <p>The final draft of your paper is due on Friday.</p>

#16
Aim: What would a Saudi-Iranian deal look like?
Procedures:

- Read “Slow progress in Saudi-Iranian ties” See appendix #7
- Discuss: what might a deal look like?
- In groups finish writing opening speeches; write at least one proposal for Friday.
- Review procedures for MEPC.

HW: Edit papers.

#17

Aim:

Procedures:

- Hold the Middle East Peace Conference
- **Middle East Peace Conference 2015**

Date: Friday, January 16, 2015

Time: Arrive at 9:00 a.m.; dismissal at 2:00 p.m.

Place: Westport Building

John Jay College

500 W. 56th St. (corner of 56th Street and 10th Avenue.)

Attendance check in: 9:00 a.m.

All students should report to their lunch rooms (see below) for attendance.

Issue Groups: 9:30-11:30; 12:15-2:00

One State, Two States, No State A. (Moderators: Anne Lattner, Teddy Ostrow) (Room:108)

One State, Two States, No State B. (Moderators: Eli Schneider, Kate Macken) (Room:109)

Nuclear and Chemical Weapons (Moderators: Jim McKenna, Isa Smith) (Room:110)

Dealing with ISIS A. (Moderators: Christine Paterson) (Room: 113)

Dealing with ISIS B. (Moderators: Natasha Mehta) (Room:114)

Gaza (Moderators: Alexa Bryn, Jake Mervis) (Room: 115)

A Saudi-Iranian Agreement? A. (Moderators: Tara Rana) (Room: 116)

A Saudi-Iranian Agreement?B. (Moderators: Bayard Faithfull, Emily Bierman) (Room: 117)

Refugees (Moderators: Samantha Lozada, Louis Vaccara) (Room: 118)

Lunch: 11:30-12:15

Rooms for lunch:

Egypt (Room:108) (Schneider)

Lebanon (Room:109) (Paterson)

Iraq (Room:110) (Lattner)

Syria (Room:113) (Faithfull)

Iran (Room:114) (Rana)

Israel (Room:115) (Mehta)

Palestinians (Room:117) (Lozada)

Saudi Arabia (Room:118) (Bryn)

Turkey (Room:119) (Feder’s student teacher)

United States (Room:120) (McKenna)

HW: None

#18
Aim: Reflect on the MEPC
Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with discussion of proudest moments and frustrations with the MEPC. • Read two articles below on events on Syria and Iran over the weekend. (appendix #8) • Have students complete the review sheet below. (appendix #9)
HW:

Appendix #1

Name _____

Worksheet for “The Rise of ISIS” from Frontline (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/rise-of-isis/>), October, 2014

Please hand in the worksheet at the end of the class.

1. Discuss 4-5 examples of President Obama’s persecution of Sunnis in Iraq after the withdrawal of US troops in 2011.

2. “Syria made ISIS ISIS.” Explain.

3. Several US officials criticized President Obama for not intervening in Iraq and Syria earlier (in 2013) once Sunni extremists grew in strength. What is their argument?

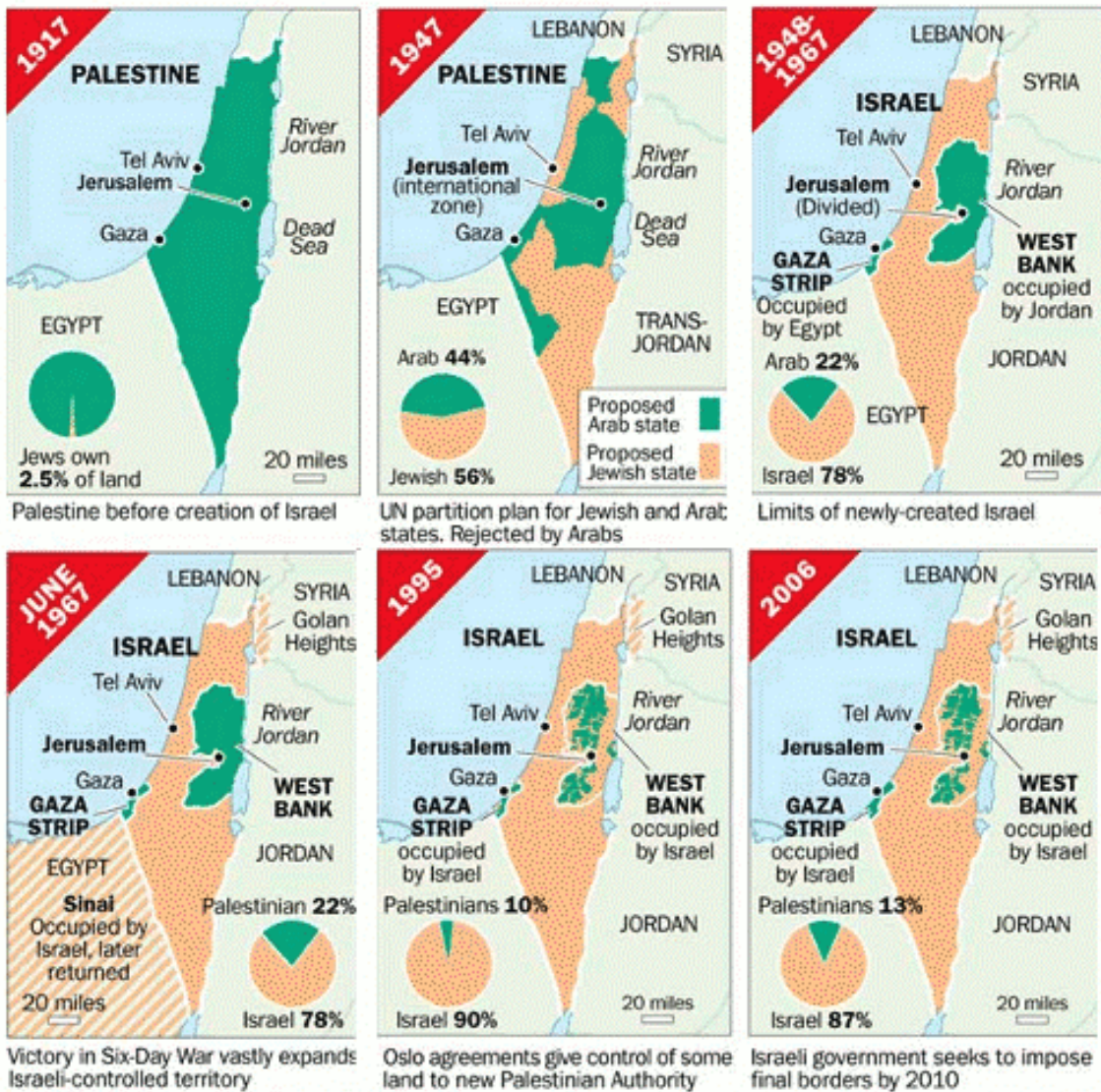
4. In March 2013, al Qaeda launches the “breaking the walls” campaign and begins to call itself ISIS. This was followed by a massacre of protestors in Hawija. How do these and other events lead to the Sunni “insurgency?”

5. How did ISIS capture Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city?

6. In what ways was it significant for ISIS to claim as its goal the founding of a “caliphate?”

7. Why was Erbil a turning point for US intervention in Iraq?

Appendix #2
Israel/Palestine:



Wars/Conflicts

1948/9- Following Israel's proclamation of statehood in May, 1948, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel. By July, 1949, Israel reached an armistice that expanded its borders.

1967- In 1967, Israel clashed again with its neighbors (known as the "Six-Day War"). In the fighting, Israel took the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank from Jordan (and control of Jerusalem), and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.

1973- In 1973, Syria and Egypt tried to re-take land lost in 1967, but failed.

1982- Israel attacked Lebanon in response to Palestinian Liberation Organization attacks on northern Israel. Israeli troops advanced as far as Beirut. Israel occupied sections of southern Lebanon until 2000.

1987-93- The First Intifada- Palestinians, especially youth, engaged in an uprising against Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

2000-2005- The Second Intifada- Palestinians again revolted against occupation, this time with a combination of street protests and suicide bombers.

2006- Israel and Hezbollah fought a war in southern Lebanon.

2008/9- Israel bombs Gaza to destroy Hamas' power and rocket attacks on southern Israel.

2012- Israel bombs Gaza to destroy Hamas' power and stop rocket attacks on southern Israel. In March 2011, Israel deployed the Iron Dome defense system.

2014- Israel bombed and invaded Gaza to stop rocket attacks on southern Israel and to destroy tunnels between Gaza and Egypt where weapons were smuggled.

Political Parties

Israel

Labour- Is a center-left party that has been open to negotiations for two-states.

Likud- Is a right-wing party that is nationalist and has opposed peace deals.

Kadima- Is a party that split off from Likud of moderates.

Palestinians

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)- Founded in 1964, the PLO is an organization whose purpose is the "liberation of Palestine." Yasser Arafat was its chairman from 1969-2004.

Palestinian Authority- Is an interim organization, created by the Oslo Accords, which gives Palestinians some self-government in the West Bank. Fatah is the main political party that has run the PA in the West Bank.

Hamas- Founded in 1987, this Palestinian organization is based on Islamist principles (wants to create an Islamic state) and liberate Palestine, including removing all of current-day Israel. In

2006, Hamas defeated Fatah in parliamentary elections; after conflict, Hamas took control of Gaza.

Peace Deals

McMahon-Hussein Correspondence- in 1915, British High Commissioner Henry McMahon promised Sharif Hussein, ruler of Mecca, Arab independence after WWI.

The Balfour Declaration- in 1917, Britain promised a Jewish homeland in the region of ancient Israel.

UN Partition Plan- In 1947, the UN voted to partition the Palestine Mandate into an Arab and a Jewish state.

UN Resolution 242- The UN called for the return of lands taken in the 1967.

Camp David Accords- In 1978, leaders of Israel and Egypt, with US support, agreed to a peace deal in which Israel would return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and Egypt would recognize Israel's right to exist.

Oslo Accords- In 1993, this was a peace deal between Israel and the PLO. It was intended as an interim agreement that would lead to a permanent settlement with Israel giving up land for peace and security. In the agreement, Palestinians gained the right to self-govern in the West Bank and Gaza under the Palestinian Authority and the PLO renounced violence against Israel.

Camp David II- In 2000, President Bill Clinton came very close to negotiating a two-state solution with Palestinians getting most of the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinians withdrew from the deal at the end because they felt it did not go far enough.

West Bank Wall- In 2002, in response to suicide bombings, Israel began the construction of a wall that would divide Israel and the West Bank.

Arab Peace Initiative- In 2002, crown prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia proposed a peace deal in which Israel would withdraw from territories captured in 1967, recognize East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, and create a "just solution" for refugees. Arab countries would commit to peace with Israel.

Disengagement for Gaza- In 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon withdrew Israeli settlers and army from Gaza and turned authority over to Palestinians.

For more background see:

<http://www.icsresources.org/content/factsheets/ArabIsraeliTimeline.pdf>

<http://pov-tc.pbs.org/pov/pdf/promiese/promises-timeline.pdf>

Appendix#3

The Saudi Peace Initiative (a role play)

(adapted from PBS' Global Connection

at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/educators/nations/lesson2.html>)

Context: In 2002, Saudi Arabia put forward an initiative to attempt to resolve the Middle East conflict. Each of you will play a role in discussing the initiative.

Delegations at the “conference” to discuss the Saudi Peace Initiative.

Moderate Israelis

Radical Israelis

Moderate Palestinians

Radical Palestinians

Arab Leaders

US leaders

Steps:

1. Please read the role sheet for your delegation carefully. In the conference, you will need to follow your “role” and take a position on the Saudi Peace Initiative from that “role.”
2. Discuss each part of the Saudi Initiative. See the Saudi Initiative one the back. Which parts of the Saudi Initiative does your group support or object to? Why?
3. Each group will make a brief (30 second presentation) of its role and views on the on the Saudi Initiative.
4. Each group will discuss internally which groups might support its position, or at least be open to negotiation. What can you offer as enticement? What can you threaten with?
5. There will be a ten-minute negotiation period. Each delegation can send out two representatives at a time to conduct negotiations. Delegations are encouraged to use the Saudi Initiative as model, and then negotiate.
6. Any delegation that gets at least four other groups to sign on a comprehensive peace plan wins.

Moderate Israelis

Perspective: The creation of two states, Israel and Palestine, provides many advantages. Having to use military force against the Palestinian population in Israel and the occupied territories is expensive and casts Israel in a bad light internationally. By negotiating for a sovereign Palestine,

it opens up trade and better political relations with Arab neighbors, and reaffirms the democratic character of Israel.

Goals:

- Negotiate for a two-state solution. The 1967 borders can serve as a rough guide.
- Have boundaries that are defensible for Israel.
- Parts of the West Bank that have large Israeli settler communities should become part of Israel. Israel can give “land swaps” of Israeli land in other areas.
- West Jerusalem should serve as the Israeli capital.
- Palestinian refugees should not be allowed the “right of return” to Israel, but instead to the new Palestinian state.

Historical figures: former President of Israel Shimon Peres; former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

Radical Israelis

Perspective: Some radicals are motivated by religious belief, like the settler parties. They believe that God granted all the land described in the Bible to Israel. It is a religious duty to occupy as much Palestinian land as possible. Other radicals are motivated by politics. They argue that Arab neighbors have attacked Israel many times. Creating a Palestinian state next to Israel only makes it easier for neighbors to attack Arab states to attack Israel again.

Goals:

- 1967 is not a guide for borders. Either Palestinians should continue to live under Israeli control or a small, weak Palestinian state should be created out of Gaza and some of the West Bank.
- Israel must be able to defend itself. UN troops should help Israel create a buffer between the Palestinian state and Israel.
- All of Jerusalem belongs to Israel.
- Arab neighbors should offer permanent homes to Palestinian refugees.

Historical figures: Benjamin Netanyahu, current Prime Minister of Israel; Eli Yishai, leader of the Shas Party (supports Israeli settlers)

Moderate Palestinians

Perspective: The Palestinians deserve a sovereign state that will support its interests, instead of living under Israeli occupation (since 1967). Though Palestinians would prefer a contiguous state with larger boundaries, the reality is that Israel is powerful, and the US has consistently supported

Israel. The best that Palestinians can hope for is a state with clear boundaries (the 1967 boundaries provide a clear guideline) and East Jerusalem as its capital.

Goals:

- the borders before 1967 offer a clear guideline. Palestine should be composed of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- Palestinians are willing to trade peace with Israel for land.
- Palestinian refugees should be able to return either to Israel or to the new Palestinian state.

Historical figures: Mahmoud Abbas, leader of the Palestinian Authority; Yasser Arafat, former chairman of the PLO.

Radical Palestinians

Perspective: After World War I, the Middle East was colonized by France and England. Israel is another part of that colonization; it was designed by Europeans and puts formerly European Jews in the Middle East. Israel should not exist. Palestinians should unite to end the state of Israel, with support of Arab neighbors. We want an Arab state to control all of current Israel and Palestine; as in past Muslim states, Jews can co-exist with Muslims in one state.

Goals:

- The entire region of what is now Palestine and Israel should be one state, under democratic, not religious control.
- Palestinians should not negotiate for two states; one state is the goal.
- If any negotiation is to take place over land, 1967 does not provide a guideline. The 1947 borders should be a starting place.
- All Palestinian refugees have the right of return, and rights to lands that were confiscated from them in 1948.

Historical characters: Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas leader; Ramadan Shallah, leader of Islamic Jihad.

The United States

Perspective: Israel is our most important ally in the Middle East. But the US also has strong allies in Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians

threatens our alliances. For the sake of our alliances, a peace deal would help to end many problems. A peace deal, in our perspective, must, first, protect Israel and, second, resolve the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Goals:

- Negotiate a two-state solution. 1967 can serve as a guide, but our approach to borders is that they are flexible and can be changed as needed.
- Palestinians and Arab countries must promise peace with Israel.
- Palestinian refugees should not be granted the right to return to Israel because it would destabilize Israel. Refugees should be welcomed to the new Palestinian state.

Historical characters: Former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Arab Countries

Perspective: The lack of resolution to the Palestinian situation highlights Arab weakness. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians destabilizes our countries and forces us to use resources to care for tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees. In our perspective, there should be a Palestinian state with borders large enough to sustain its population and to absorb refugees from other countries.

Goals:

- Create a two-state solution with 1967 as a guideline. Palestine must be a viable state; in other words, it must be big enough, and with enough good land and water, to care for its people.
- Jerusalem is a holy site for three major religions. Either it should be divided or become an international city under the control of the UN.
- Refugees must be allowed to return to the new Palestinian state.

Historical characters: King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; King Abdullah II of Jordan.

The Arab Peace Initiative (2002)

The Council of Arab States at the Summit Level at its 14th Ordinary Session,

Reaffirming the resolution taken in June 1996 at the Cairo Extra-Ordinary Arab Summit that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the strategic option of the Arab countries, to be achieved in accordance with international legality, and which would require a comparable commitment on the part of the Israeli government,

Having listened to the statement made by his royal highness Prince Abdullah bin

Abdul Aziz, crown prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in which his highness presented his initiative calling for full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967, in implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, reaffirmed by the Madrid Conference of 1991 and the land-for-peace principle, and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations in the context of a comprehensive peace with Israel,

Emanating from the conviction of the Arab countries that a military solution to the conflict will not achieve peace or provide security for the parties, the council:

1. Requests Israel to reconsider its policies and declare that a just peace is its strategic option as well.
2. Further calls upon Israel to affirm:
 - I- Full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights, to the June 4, 1967 lines as well as the remaining occupied Lebanese territories in the south of Lebanon.
 - II- Achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194.
 - III- The acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since June 4, 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.
3. Consequently, the Arab countries affirm the following:
 - I- Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel, and provide security for all the states of the region.
 - II- Establish normal relations with Israel in the context of this comprehensive peace.
4. Assures the rejection of all forms of Palestinian patriation which conflict with the special circumstances of the Arab host countries.
5. Calls upon the government of Israel and all Israelis to accept this initiative in order to safeguard the prospects for peace and stop the further shedding of blood, enabling the Arab countries and Israel to live in peace and good neighbourliness and provide future generations with security, stability and prosperity.
6. Invites the international community and all countries and organisations to support this initiative.

Appendix #4

Quiz

Name _____

Fill in the blank (2 points each)

1. The name of the Palestinian uprising of youth in 1987 who challenged Israeli occupation _____
2. Israel fought this Lebanese political organization in southern Lebanon in 2006 _____
3. In what year did the most recent war between the Israeli bombed Hamas in Gaza _____
4. The name of Britain's promise to the ruler of Mecca that Arabs would get an independent state after WWI _____
5. The name of Britain's promise to Jews that they would get a homeland in ancient Israel after WW I _____
6. The name of the UN Resolution calling for Israel to return lands conquered in 1967 _____

Short answer (3 points each)

Name all the different pieces of land taken by Israel in the 1967 war.

What was the deal reached in the Camp David I?

What were the different agreements reached in Oslo in 1993?

Appendix #5

9 questions about Iran's nuclear program you were too embarrassed to ask
by Max Fisher, November 25, 2013 (edited to four questions)

1. What is Iran's nuclear program?

This question is the entire conflict. Iran says its nuclear activities are peaceful, but a lot of countries worry that they're cover for a nuclear weapons program. The dispute, on the most basic level, is over what sort of nuclear program Iran gets to have -- if any at all -- and what happens if it defies the world's demands.

Iran has been developing nuclear fuel and technology for years, which it says is just for power plants and scientific research. They've got a few big facilities, some of which are out in the open and some of which are hidden away in underground bunkers. The program, and this is where it gets controversial, includes some stuff that would be awfully useful if Iran wanted to go a step beyond a peaceful program and develop a nuclear bomb.

2. So is Iran building a nuclear bomb or not?

It's not clear. The United States and several other countries believe that Iran is trying to develop the technology and fissile material necessary to build a nuclear weapon. There's an important

distinction here: Western intelligence agencies have not concluded that Iran has decided to definitely build a bomb. Rather, they've reported lots of signs -- secret facilities, weapons-related research programs -- that suggest that Iran is trying to develop the technology and materials necessary to build a nuclear bomb very quickly. This is called "breakout capability," as in Iran would have the ability to quickly "break out" into a full-fledged nuclear weapons state.

The United Nations' nuclear watchdog hasn't definitively concluded that Iran is doing this, but it has reported some very worrying signs and says it can't state confidently that the program is peaceful. Iran has also dodged inspections and built secret facilities, which is not exactly reassuring anybody.

The world is so worried about Iran's nuclear intentions that, starting in 2006, even China and Russia joined with the rest of the United Nations Security Council -- a small, powerful body of world powers -- in ordering Iran to "suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development." Iran has not complied, insisting that its program is a point of national prestige and independence. It's been punished severely with economic sanctions, including on its vast oil and gas industry.

The unresolved conflict over Iran's nuclear program has left the once-wealthy country increasingly impoverished, harming especially its large middle class. It's also bad for European economies, which are losing out on all the business they'd do with this large, resource-rich country. It's terrified Iran's neighbors, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia, who are worried what Iran would do with a nuclear weapon. And it's been a major part -- but far from the only part -- of Iran's long-standing tension with the West, especially the United States, in which war is a remote but real possibility.

3. Wow, Iran's nuclear program is causing some major problems, especially for them. Why do they insist on it?

There are two very different explanations for why Iran is so adamant about its nuclear program. There's probably truth to both.

The first explanation is that the nuclear program has huge symbolic importance for Iran. You have to understand that Iran's national pride runs deep, and with good reason: It has been an active center of cultural, scientific, religious and political thought for many centuries. It's also still upset, again with reason, about decades of Western interference during the 19th and 20th centuries. The nuclear program is a way in which Iran affirms, to itself and to the world, that it is an advanced and sovereign nation. It's also a way of defying what it sees as continued Western efforts to control, exploit or weaken Iran.

That's what Iranian leaders mean when they talk about the nuclear program as a point of "national dignity," as they often do.

The second explanation is much more straightforward, but it's not one that Iranian leaders acknowledge: defense. If Iran is pursuing some sort of nuclear weapons capability, then logically this would be at least partially for defensive reasons. Most analysts believe that Iran would want a nuclear weapon to deter perceived foreign threats. Consider Tehran's view for a moment: Israeli and American leaders have been talking for years about bombing Iran or invading it outright. The Bush administration named Iran part of its "axis of evil," alongside Iraq, which it invaded months later.

Iranian leaders appear to sincerely believe that the United States is bent on their government's destruction. For example, the United States helped Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in his brutal, years-long war against Iran, in which he killed thousands of Iranians, including with chemical

weapons. You hear Iranians frequently mention Iran Air flight 655, a civilian airliner that the U.S. military accidentally shot down in 1988, killing 290 civilians. In Iran, this is still frequently viewed as deliberate. Imagine you're an Iranian leader seeing all this. You might want a nuclear deterrent.

4. Lots of countries have nuclear programs. Why would it be so bad if Iran did, too?

Scroll back up and reread the second answer. Maybe, 10 years ago, Iran could have convinced the world that it should be trusted with a peaceful nuclear program. But it has burned through that trust so completely that even China, which hates the idea of Western-imposed restrictions on any country, voted to forbid Iran from having any uranium-enrichment program at all.

Still, Iran has a point when it says that the world has unfairly restricted it from even peaceful nuclear energy. The 1968 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which almost every country in the world follows and which basically sets the global nuclear rules, says, "Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes."

Appendix #6

Three Views on How to Respond to Syria's Use of Chemical Weapons

1. Type of Weapons Assad Uses Shouldn't Affect U.S. Policy

[Stephen M. Walt](#) is Robert and Renee Belfer professor of international affairs at Harvard University.

Even if proven, the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government does not tip the balance in favor of U.S. military intervention. To think otherwise places undue weight on the weapons Assad's forces may have used and ignores the many reasons that U.S. intervention is still unwise.

Of course it is not good that Assad's forces may have used chemical weapons, but it is not obvious why the choice of weaponry changes the calculus of U.S. interests in this case. The brutal nature of the Assad regime has been apparent for decades, and its forces have already killed thousands with conventional means. Does it really matter whether Assad is killing his opponents using 500-pound bombs, mortar shells, cluster munitions, machine guns, icepicks or sarin gas? Dead is dead, no matter how it is done.

Proponents of action argue that the U.S. must intervene to defend the norm against chemical weapons. Using nerve agents like sarin is illegal under international law, but they are not true "weapons of mass destruction." Because they are hard to use in most battlefield situations, chemical weapons are usually less lethal than non-taboo weapons like high explosive. Ironically we would therefore be defending a norm against weapons that are less deadly than the bombs we would use if we intervene. This justification would also be more convincing if the U.S. government had not ignored international law whenever it got in the way of something Washington wanted to do.

2. The West Must Finally Respond in Syria

Radwan Ziadeh is the spokesman for the [Syrian National Council](#), and a fellow at the [Institute for Social Policy and Understanding](#).

From the beginning of the Syrian revolution, I was convinced that the Assad regime's reaction to the peaceful demonstrations quickly spreading across the country would be directly affected by the response in turn of the international community. Therefore, I continuously pushed for international resolutions that would hold Assad accountable for the ever-increasing killings and atrocities perpetrated by his forces in Syria.

The United Nations Security Council, which certainly could have exerted some legitimate influence over Assad's behavior, remained completely closed because of Russian and Chinese veto power. This made Assad feel immune to any international action against him, which in turn gave him more confidence with every step he took toward committing additional levels of violence against the Syrian people

So, Assad began tentatively using the Syrian air force; he feared that extensive bombardment would elicit a violent reaction from the international community, as happened to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya. Assad's sporadic, and then later regular, aerial bombardment of civilian populations and infrastructure was met with only rhetorical condemnation from the international community and reports from international non-governmental organizations detailing human rights violation.

Later, Assad resorted to using ballistic missiles, like Scuds, in a vain attempt to intimidate the Syrian people and retake lost territory. NATO counted the number of missiles raining down on Aleppo, rather than preventing them from falling on civilians. This encouraged Assad to kill more civilians; he is reported to have begun firing diluted chemical weapons on Khan al-Assal, Sheikh Maksoud, Ghouta and elsewhere. The international reaction was that the West had no interest in getting sucked into a civil war.

Then, as the revolutionaries began advancing quickly in the Damascus suburbs and Latakia, Assad's desperation grew. His base of support pressured him to kill and intimidate more civilians. There is no other reason for Assad's now broad use of chemical weapons except as a desperate attempt to completely crush the revolution and make any international response impossible because of the burgeoning chaos within the country.

Thus far, Assad has emerged unscathed from every reprehensible escalation of violence he has committed against his own people. The United States, in concert with an international coalition of the willing, must bring a hasty end to the Syria conflict and prevent horrific chemical attacks like those inflicted on Eastern Ghouta last week. Targeted airstrikes should be conducted and a no-flight zone enforced in order to protect civilians from further regime bombardment. Maybe then, the age of impunity in Syria could finally end and a new era of hope and accountability could begin.

3. Assad Has Called Obama's Bluff

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former case officer in the C.I.A., is a senior fellow at the [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#).

President Obama drew a "[red line](#)" on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The dictator Bashar al-Assad, sensing Obama's determination to avoid further military conflict, has crossed that line, for the obvious tactical reason that such arms are ideal in a terror war against a civilian population in revolt. Weapons of mass destruction are the great equalizers: for Syria's minority Alawite Shi'ite dictatorship, they are an essential tool to break the stalemate against the much more numerous Sunni opposition.

America's credibility in the region — which is overwhelmingly built on Washington's willingness to use force — will be zero unless Obama militarily intercedes now to knock down the Assad regime. Firing cruise missiles or even more punishing strikes from fighter-bombers against Syria's chemical-weapons depots and plants will be as effective in countering Assad's lethal calculations, and his capacity to deploy further weapons of mass destruction, as was President Bill Clinton's cruise-missile barrage against Osama bin Laden after the embassy bombings in Africa in 1998.

If the president intends to maintain American influence, which means maintaining a credible threat to go to war to stop Iran's quest for nuclear weapons, then Washington's response to Assad's challenge must be devastating. The entire regime must be targeted: elite military units, aircraft, armor and artillery; all weapons-depots; the myriad organizations of the secret police; the ruling elite's residences; and other critical Alawite infrastructure.

President Obama may not believe that Middle Eastern conflicts are a proper test of his or America's mettle; that sentiment is irrelevant now. He put the country's reputation on the line in Syria. The president has said many times that he doesn't bluff. Assad, with Tehran and Moscow behind him, has called his hand. The choice now is either war or headlong retreat. The president should ask for Congress's assent, and go to war.

Appendix #7

Slow progress in Saudi-Iranian ties

Author: Esperance Ghanem Posted October 29, 2014, AL-Monitor

BEIRUT — The Middle East is going through many developments, most notably the fluctuations of Saudi-Iranian ties, which affect the future of the countries in the region including that of Lebanon. Over the past few months, positive developments have emerged including the visit to Jeddah in August by Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein-Amir Abdollahian.

Progress in Saudi-Iranian relations was further emphasized by a meeting between Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister Saud Al-Faisal and his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif at the UN General Assembly in New York in September, which culminated in discussions on the importance of cooperation to combat terrorism and resolve the region's qualms.

Is the Saudi-Iranian relationship still heading toward collaboration in the face of the dialogue, to address the existing problems throughout the Middle East, or is the relationship moving toward confrontation, particularly in light of the accusatory discourse among the two countries? For instance, Saud attacked the Iranian position during talks held in Jeddah with his German counterpart. He said Tehran was “part of the problem in the region, not of the solution,” and he accused it of “occupying Syria, Iraq and Yemen,” calling for the withdrawal of “the Iranian occupation forces” in these countries. Iran's response was expressed by its foreign minister, who demanded that Saudi Arabia “withdraw its forces from Bahrain.”

However, in spite of this progress and the positive messages between the two sides on Iraq, the Houthis' unwillingness to take power and the threat posed by al-Qaeda's growing strength in South Yemen left the door open for compromises. The Lebanese diplomatic sources concluded that it is necessary to achieve progress in several areas, before a qualitative and lasting shift in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran can be established:

- The decision to resolve disputes via peaceful negotiations, and making serious concessions, should be a significant strategic decision.
- It should not merely be a tactical decision aimed at buying time and improving positions, paving the way for an assault on the other side after an improvement in the balance of power.
- Agreement on a lasting solution between the Iranian-backed opposition and the Saudi-backed monarchy in Bahrain.
- A comprehensive and fair political solution to the Syrian crisis, in which everyone participates in the authority with criteria agreed upon by all parties, after eliminating terrorism.

As for Lebanon, which is linked to all of these regional balances, it is still suffering from its inability to hold presidential elections as long as Lebanese parties connect the fate of these elections to regional circumstances, and as long as the Christians are not in agreement. The diplomatic sources said Saudi Arabia was not in a hurry to see a Lebanese head of state elected if there was no agreement on a president.

Furthermore, Iran is not supporting a specific candidate, as long as the March 8 Alliance — which is close to Tehran — is not able to guarantee the majority needed to elect the president, i.e., 86 of 128 votes. Thus, the Lebanese case remains a card in the hands of Saudi Arabia and Iran and is subject to a tug-of-war as long as a solution is not reached that includes all regional issues.

It is worth noting the importance of strengthening the approach of negotiations and mutual understanding between Iran and its allies on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia and its allies on the other, to eliminate extremism in the region and restore stability to governments and countries. Saudi-Iranian relations are essential, but are not enough in isolation in light of the presence of regional and international players such as Turkey, which still aspires to impose a balance of power in its favor, and Israel, which can only benefit from feeding grueling conflicts among its neighbors.

Read More: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/saudi-arabia-regional-ties-close-lebanon.html>

Appendix #8

Iran Says Israeli Strike in Syria Killed One of Its Generals

By ANNE BARNARDJAN. 19, 2015

BEIRUT, Lebanon — An Iranian general was among the dead in an Israeli airstrike that also killed several Hezbollah fighters in southern Syria over the weekend, the official Iranian news media announced on Monday.

The announcement compounded the tension and unpredictability in the region stemming from the strike, which placed Israel in a direct battlefield confrontation on Syrian soil with its longtime enemies Iran and Hezbollah. The death of the general, Mohammad Ali Allahdadi, also added to the evidence of Iran's deep military involvement in Syria's civil war.

General Allahdadi's death was announced on the website of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards and by news media affiliated with Hezbollah and the Iranian government.

The Iranian announcement said that he had been inspecting the region of Quneitra, near the disputed Golan Heights, which is occupied by Israel.

The announcement also said the general had been advising Syrians on how to fight terrorism, which is how Damascus characterizes its battle against an insurgency that began nearly four years ago with peaceful protests for political reforms. It now includes fighters from the Islamic State and the Qaeda-linked Nusra Front.

Iran's government has long said it is advising and training Syrian loyalist forces, and Iran's proxy Hezbollah has openly declared that it is fighting in Syria. Syrian insurgents have long insisted that Iranian troops are directly involved on the battlefield.

A deliberate killing of an Iranian general would represent an escalation in the hostility between Israel and Iran.

Israel has not commented officially on the strike. On Monday, Eyal Ben-Reuven, a retired Israeli major general with extensive experience on the northern front with Lebanon and Syria, said in a conference call with international journalists that the presence of such a high-ranking Iranian figure alongside Hezbollah commanders near the Golan Heights area suggested that they may have been "planning an operation against Israel on a high level."

"It's a significant point because before, when Hezbollah retaliates, sometimes we knew that Iran tried to push to a high level of retaliation and Hezbollah tried to prevent it," General Ben-Reuven said. "Now it's common interests between Hezbollah and Iran to retaliate."

He and other Israeli analysts said they continued to believe that Hezbollah wants to avoid a serious engagement with Israel because it is so heavily committed in Syria. Still, Israel's security cabinet was to meet Tuesday morning to discuss concerns about escalation in the north, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported.

U.S. Support for Syria Peace Plans Demonstrates Shift in Priorities

By ANNE BARNARD and SOMINI SENGUPTAJAN. 19, 2015

BEIRUT, Lebanon — American support for a pair of diplomatic initiatives in Syria underscores the shifting views of how to end the civil war there and the West's quiet retreat from its demand that the country's president, Bashar al-Assad, step down immediately.

The Obama administration maintains that a lasting political solution requires Mr. Assad's exit. But facing military stalemate, well-armed jihadists and the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the United States is going along with international diplomatic efforts that could lead to more gradual change in Syria.

That shift comes along with other American actions that Mr. Assad's supporters and opponents take as proof Washington now believes that if Mr. Assad is ousted, there will be nothing to check the spreading chaos and extremism. American warplanes now bomb the Islamic State group's militants inside Syria, sharing skies with Syrian jets. American officials assure Mr. Assad, through Iraqi intermediaries, that Syria's military is not their target. The United States still trains and equips Syrian insurgents, but now mainly to fight the Islamic State, not the government.

Now, the United States and other Western countries have publicly welcomed initiatives — one from the United Nations and one from Russia — that postpone any revival of the United States-backed Geneva framework, which called for a wholesale transfer of power to a "transitional

governing body.” The last Geneva talks failed a year ago amid vehement disagreement over whether that body could include Mr. Assad.

One of the new concepts is a United Nations proposal to “freeze” the fighting on the ground, first in the strategic crossroads city of Aleppo. The other is an initiative from Russia, Mr. Assad’s most powerful supporter, to try to spur talks between the warring sides in Moscow in late January. Diplomats and others briefed on the plans say one Russian vision is of power-sharing between Mr. Assad’s government and some opposition figures, and perhaps parliamentary elections that would precede any change in the presidency.

But the diplomatic proposals face serious challenges, relying on the leader of a rump state who is propped up by foreign powers and hemmed in by a growing and effective extremist force that wants to build a caliphate. Many of America’s allies in the Syrian opposition reject the plans, and there is little indication that Mr. Assad or his main allies, Russia and Iran, feel any need to compromise. The American-backed Free Syrian Army is on the ropes in northern Syria, once its stronghold, and insurgents disagree among themselves over military and political strategy.

And perhaps most of all, the Islamic State controls half of Syria’s territory, though mostly desert, and it has managed to strengthen its grip even as the United States and its allies try to oust it from neighboring Iraq.

At the same time, such statements have further alienated Washington from ordinary anti-Assad Syrians and rank-and-file insurgents, reinforcing the idea that the West has decided to tolerate Mr. Assad.

The view that the United States supports Mr. Assad is spreading even among the groups receiving direct American financing, groups deemed moderate enough to receive arms and work with a United States-run operations center in Turkey. A fighter with Harakat Hazm, one such group, said Wednesday that America was “looking for loopholes to reach a political solution and keep al-Assad.”

Tarek Fares, a secular Syrian Army defector who long fought with the loose-knit nationalist groups known as the Free Syrian Army but who has lately quit fighting, joked bitterly about American policy one recent night in Antakya, Turkey. “This is how the Americans talk,” he said. “They say, ‘We have a red line, we will support you, we will arm you.’ They do nothing, and then after four years they tell you Assad is the best option.”

Appendix #9

Name _____

MEPC 2015 Reflection and Review

1. What did you learn about the interests and perspective of your country?

2. In the participation that your group made last Friday, what were you most proud of? Give specific examples of proposals you made or contributions to proposals.

3. What were the most frustrating aspects of the MEPC? Give specific examples.

4. Anyone who has ever worked at the United Nations can testify to how difficult decision-making is with so many different countries. What did you learn about the pros and cons of making decisions with many different nations? Give specific examples.

5. There were most likely times on Friday that you wish you knew more about your own country or the other countries involved. What additional research would have helped you to succeed more in the MEPC? Give specific examples.

6. Over the course of this semester we have examined the rise of “universal religions” and spent time on the rise of Christianity and Islam. We have studied three case studies where religions played some role in conflicts: the Crusades, the Protestant Reformation, and the Ottoman-Spain rivalry. Based on your study of the current Middle East, to what extent do religions or religious identity drive the conflicts in the Middle East? Are national or economic power less, equally, or more important?

Article analysis

Based on your study of the Middle East over the last two weeks, you should be somewhat of an expert. Please write an analysis of each of the two articles. What has happened? Why? What is the role of religions in creating alliances or conflicts?

1. Analyze: **“U.S. Support for Syria Peace Plans Demonstrates Shift in Priorities.”**

2. Analyze: **“Iran Says Israeli Strike in Syria Killed One of Its Generals.”**

