

Part 5. Middle East & North Africa

Cultural, Historical & Economic Geographies

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON LAND AND LIFE

GEOG1100.1: SUMMER 2020

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Today

- Cultural, Historical & Economic Geographies
- Reading: Chapters 6.3-6.4
- Lecture on Part 5. Economic, Development & Geopolitical Issues
- Reading: Chapter 6.5-6.6

Cultural & Historical Geographies

The world's great culture hearths

Language families

- Afro-Asiatic (e.g. Arabic, Hebrew, Berber, Tuareg)
- Altaic (e.g. Turkish)
- Indo-European (e.g. Persian/Farsi, Kurdish)

Religious Hearth

- Monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

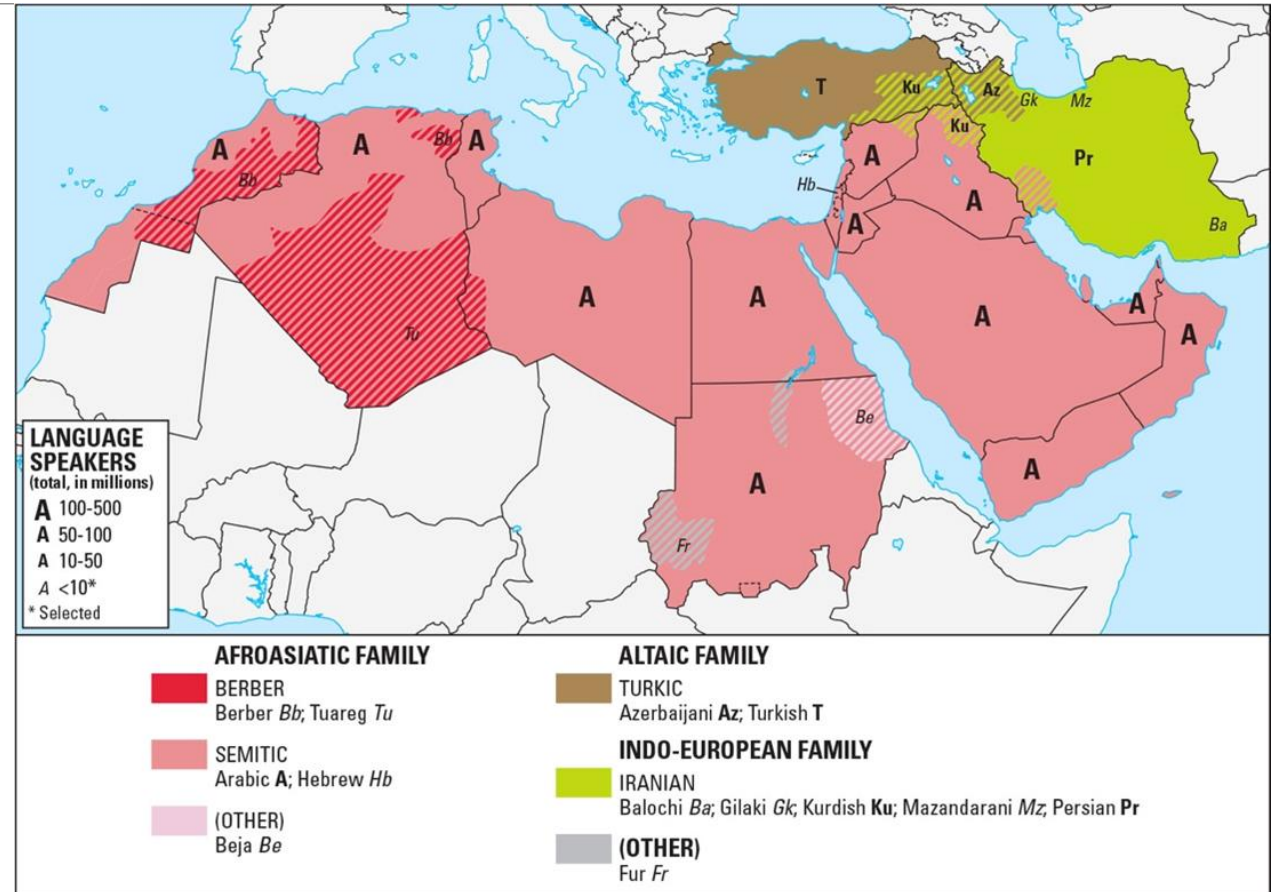


Fig. 6.18 Languages of the MENA

The Promised Land of the Jews

Judaism

- First significant monotheistic faith
- Practiced today by 15 million worldwide
- Torah is the Jewish holy scripture
- Unlike Christianity, Jesus not seen as a savior
- Ethnic, not proselytizing religion
- Western Wall (“Wailing Wall” to Jews) in Jerusalem
 - The most sacred site in the world accessible to Jews
 - But also, the city includes the scared sites to Muslims

More recent development: The controversy of US declaring Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel

(Dec. 2017)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi91aDmYI2E>

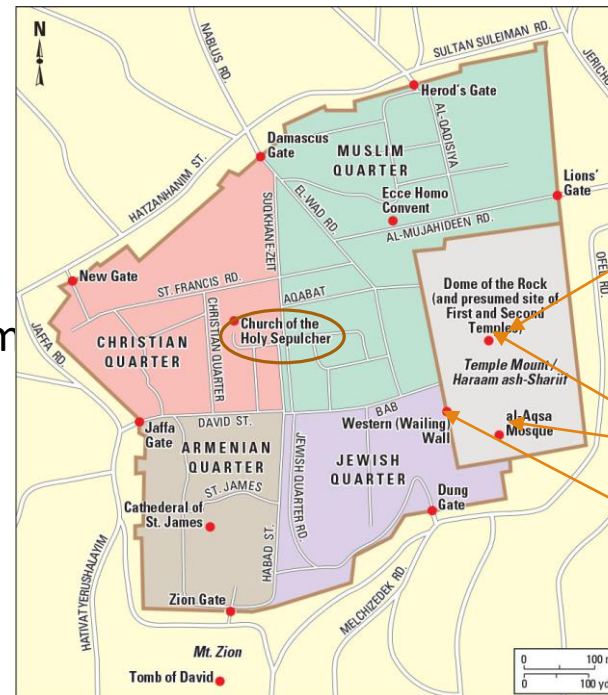


Fig. 6.D Sacred sites and the ethnic quarters of the old city of Jerusalem

Christianity: Death & Resurrection in Jerusalem

Christianity

- Offshoot of Judaism emerged in Palestine
- Jesus Christ
 - His teachings denied the validity of many Jewish doctrines and protesters called for his death
 - Put on trial, was found guilty of being a claimant to Jewish kingship, and was crucified
 - Christians believe Christ was resurrected from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven
 - Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem
- Not majority religion in the land where it was born

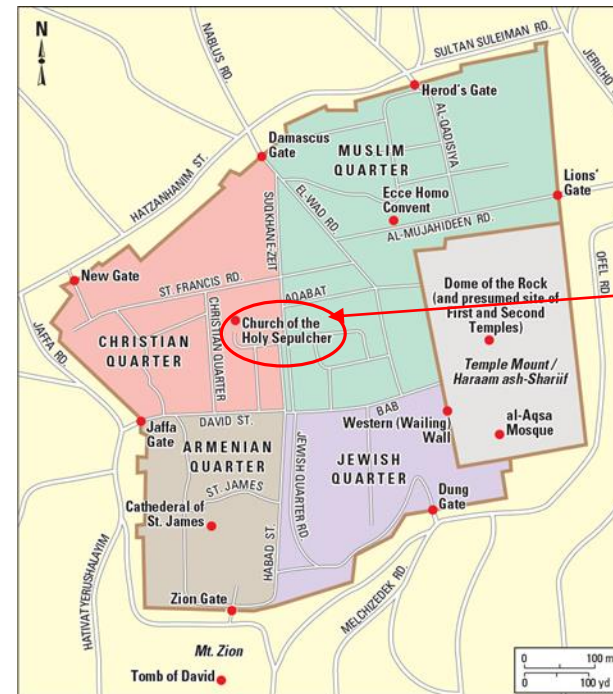


Fig. 6.D Sacred sites and the ethnic quarters of the old city of Jerusalem

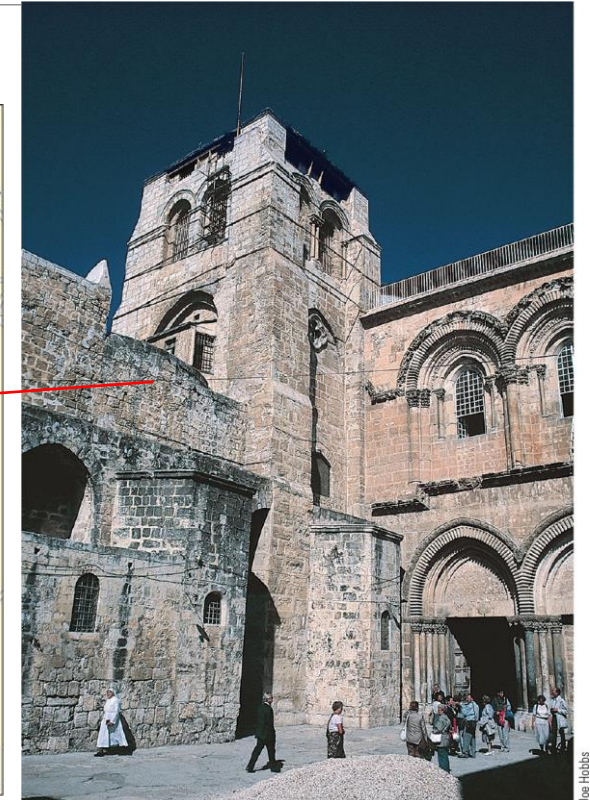


Fig. 6.21 Church of the Holy Sepulcher

The Message of Islam

Islam

- Dominant religion by far in Middle East & North Africa
- Prophet Muhammad from Mecca
- Qur'an is the holy book of Islam
- Five pillars of Islam
 - Profession of the faith
 - Prayer five times daily toward Mecca
 - Almsgiving (similar to the concept of the tithe in the Christian church)
 - Fasting during Ramadan
 - Hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca (2 million Muslims traveling)

<https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/21/world/hajj-fast-facts/index.html>



Fig. 6.22 Hajj rituals in Mecca

Economic Geography



Oil: large reserves

- Oil rich countries are concentrated in the Gulf region.
 - Largest producers: Venezuela (18%) & Saudi Arabia (16%), Canada (11%, tar sands), Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar
 - Largest consumers: the US & China (1/3 of global consumption)
- Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
 - A cartel with aim of taking joint action to demand higher oil profits
 - In 1972, oil producing countries began to nationalize the foreign oil companies
 - Rising oil price → 1973 energy crisis in the US and the LDCs

Other resources:

- Remittances
 - Earned income sent home by guest workers (e.g. South Asian workers)
- Ship traffic through Suez Canal
- Exports of cotton, rice, and other commercial crops

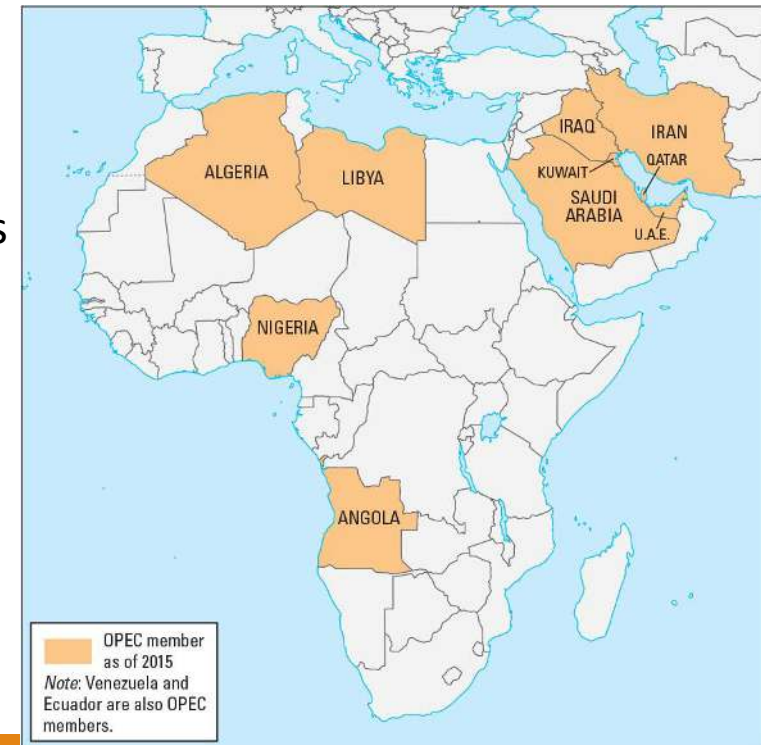
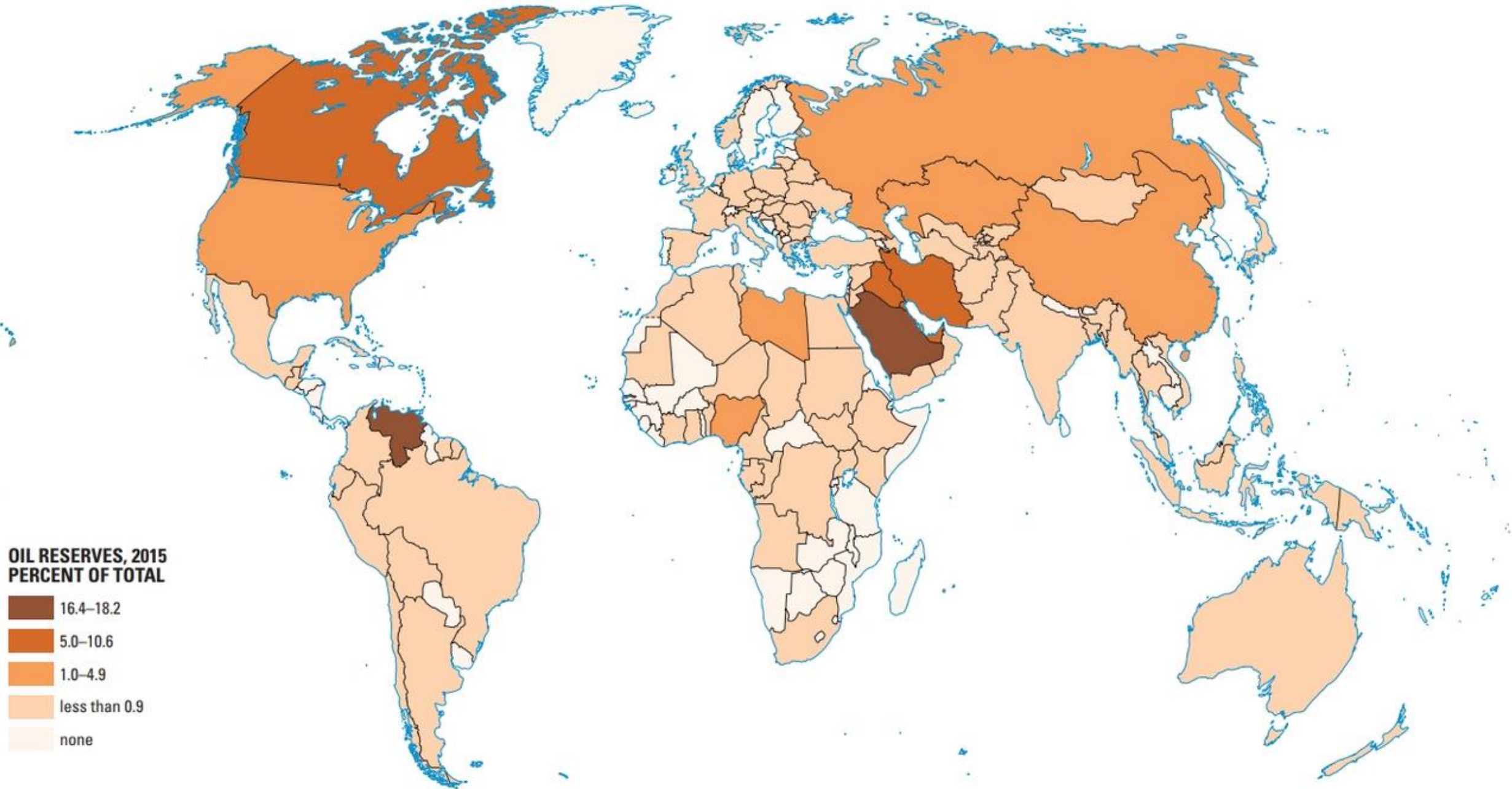


Fig. 6.28 OPEC countries



• **Figure 6.25** One-third of the world's proven oil reserves are in just two countries: Venezuela and Saudi Arabia.

Religions of the MENA: Origin of the Conflicts?

Background of the Israel-Palestine conflict:

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

The Middle East's Cold War: Sunni vs. Shi'itea?

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

→ In many aspects, most conflicts in the MENA region are not about competition between different religious groups but more to do with complex geopolitical interests over territories, power and resources (oil and water).

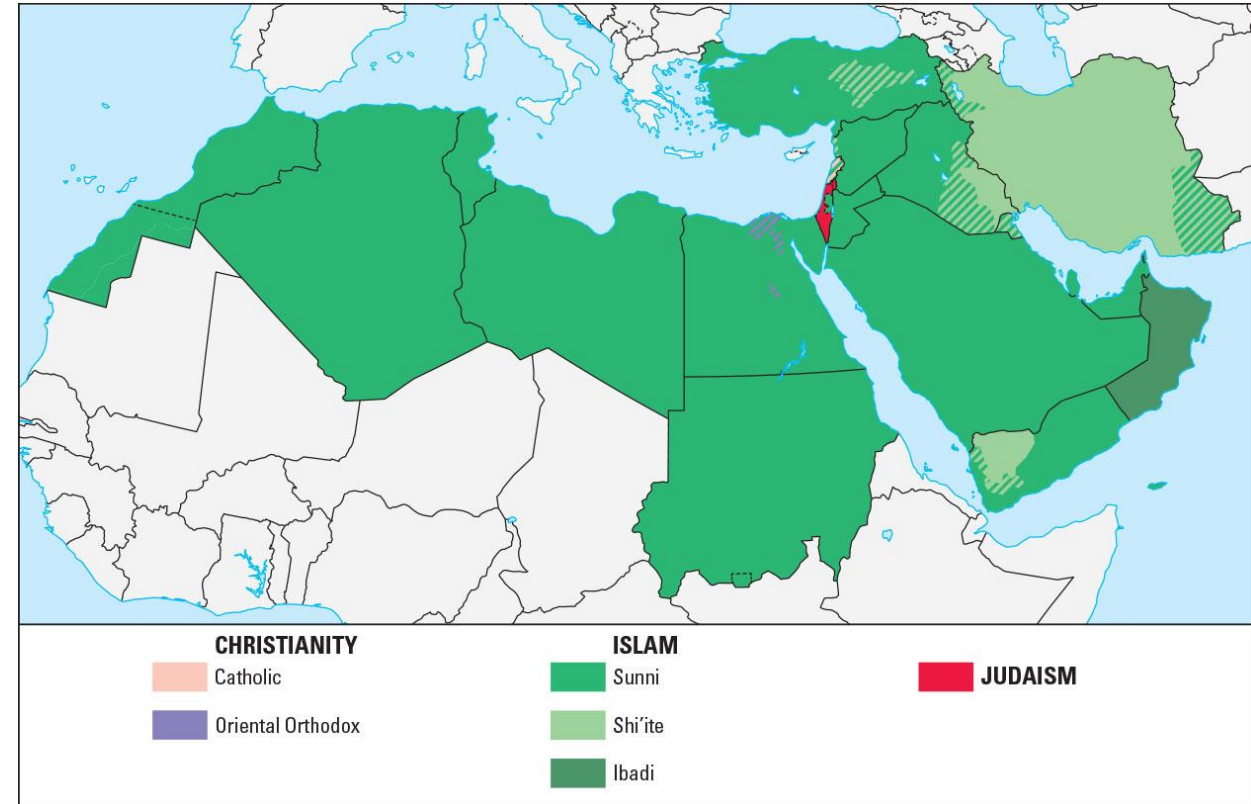


Fig. 6.19 Religions of the MENA

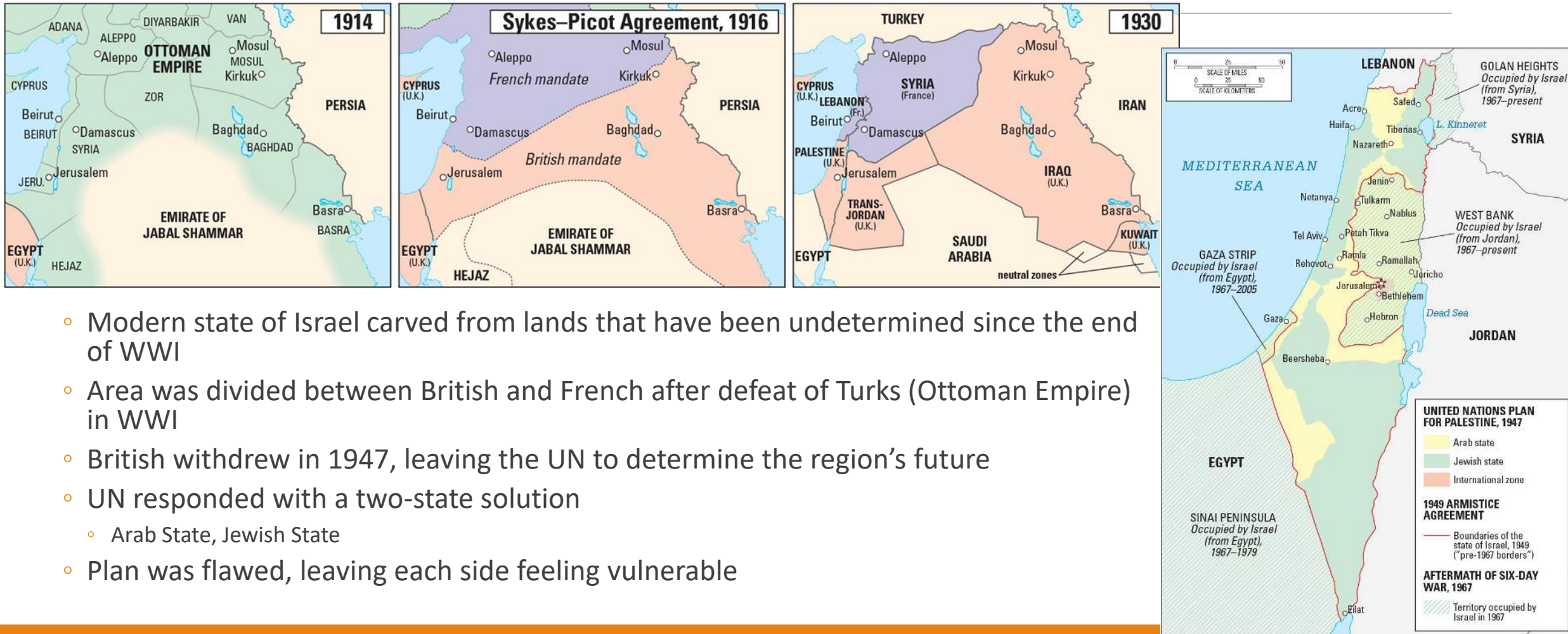
Regional Issues and Landscapes: Israel and Palestine

Arab-Israeli Conflict

- One of the world's longest-lasting and most intractable disputes
- Primarily a conflict over ownership of land, but has far-reaching repercussions throughout the rest of the world
- According to the UN, this conflict is the largest force behind global tensions
- Resolution of this conflict would probably result in a more peaceful world



Regional Issues and Landscapes: Israel and Palestine (cont'd.)



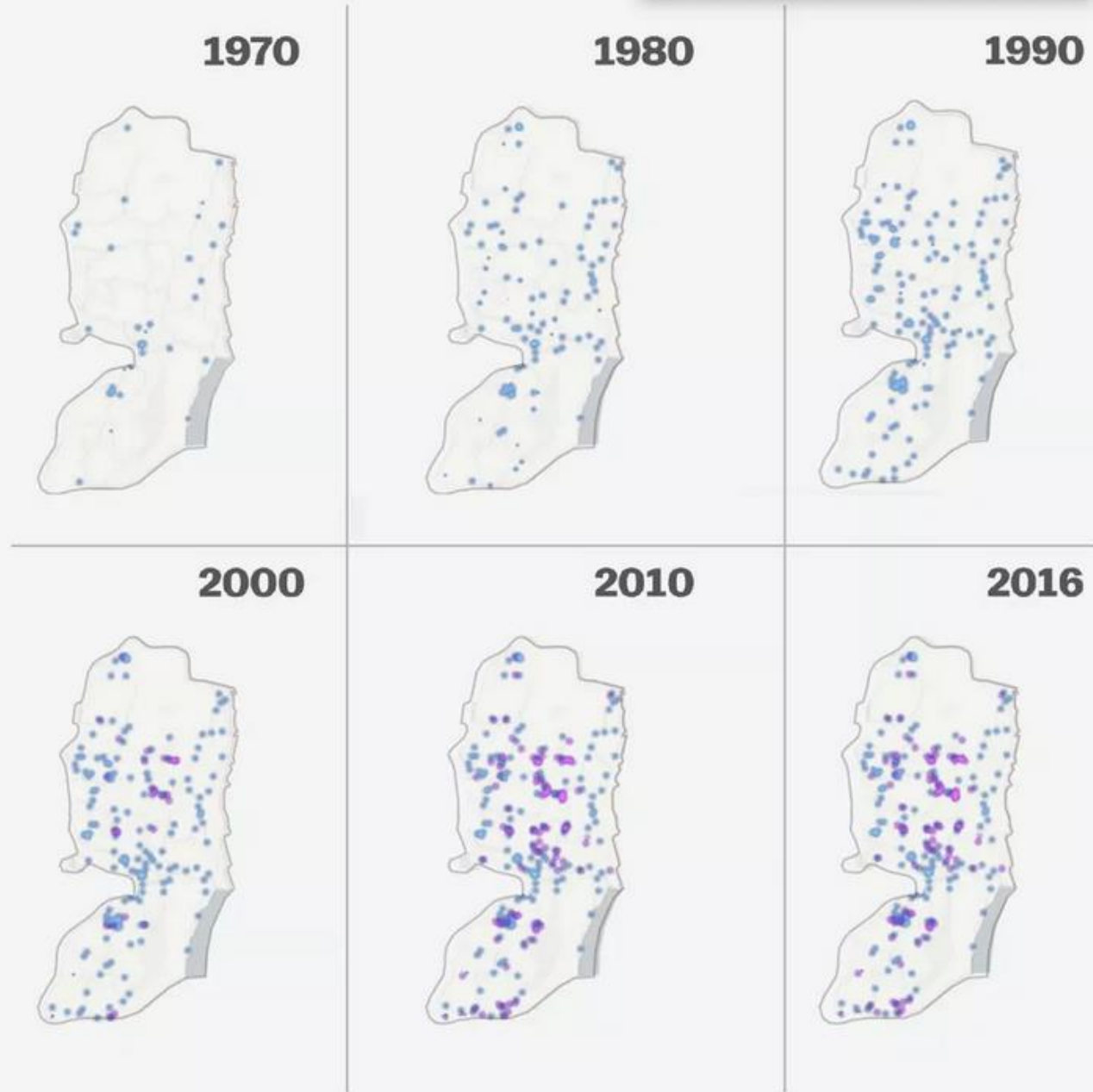
- Modern state of Israel carved from lands that have been undetermined since the end of WWI
- Area was divided between British and French after defeat of Turks (Ottoman Empire) in WWI
- British withdrew in 1947, leaving the UN to determine the region's future
- UN responded with a two-state solution
 - Arab State, Jewish State
- Plan was flawed, leaving each side feeling vulnerable



<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israeli-settlement-expansion-goes-unchecked>

Growth of settlements and outposts in the West Bank

■ Settlement ■ Outpost



Regional Issues and Landscapes: Israel and Palestine (cont'd.)

Israel

- Declared existence in May 1948
- Important wars between Israel and Palestine:
 - 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War
 - The Six-Day War of 1967
 - The 1973 Arab-Israeli War
 - Camp David Accords returned Sinai to Egypt
- United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338:
 - Called on Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories



Regional Issues and Landscapes: Israel and Palestine (cont'd.)

On the brink of peace

- In 2000, President Clinton attempted to broker a historic peace:
 - The creation of an independent Palestinian country; a “land swap”
 - Peace talks broke down over:
 - The status of Palestinian refugees abroad
 - Control of historic city of Jerusalem
 - Within weeks of the breakdown of these peace talks, the sides were again engaged in a state of war
- Israel: building separation barrier (above the ‘Green Line’)
- Palestine: emergence of Hamas vs. PA

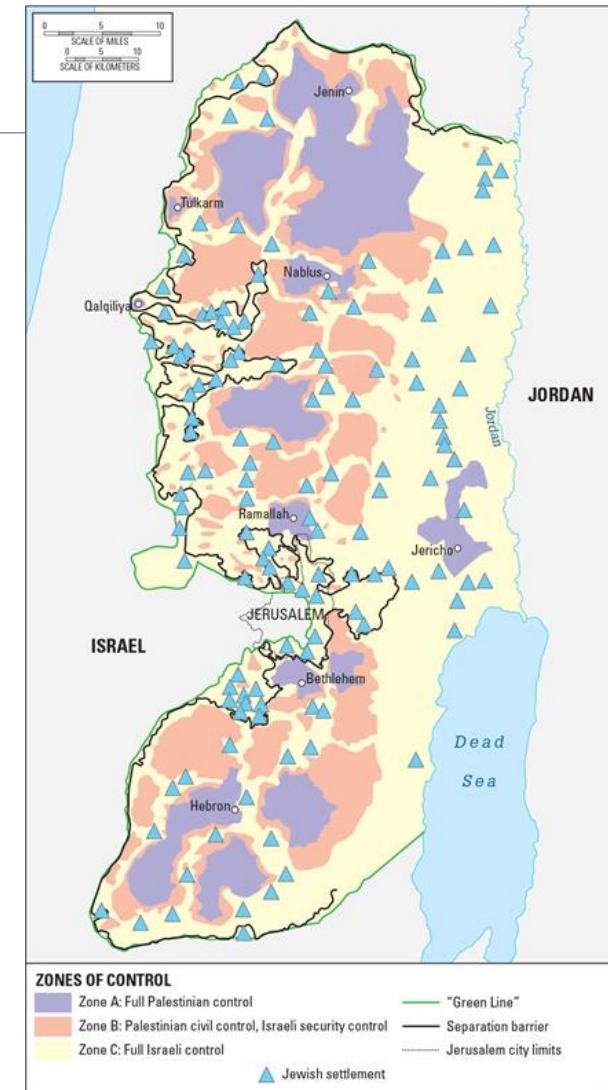


Fig. 6.44 The West Bank: Zones of control

Israel and Palestine Conflict



Shia and Sunni conflict



Middle East & North Africa

Geopolitical Issues

Geopolitical Issues 1: Chokepoints

Strategic narrow passageways on land or sea that may be easily closed off by force or even the threat of force

- Important for commerce (esp. oil) shipping, military & passenger journeys
- Examples
 - Suez Canal (Egypt)
 - Strait of Tiran (Egypt)
 - Strait of Hormuz (Iran: passage of the world's oil supply)
 - Bab el-Mandeb (Oil passage, Yemen in conflict)
 - Turkish Straits: Bosphorus & Dardanelles (Turkey)
 - Strait of Gibraltar (Britain)

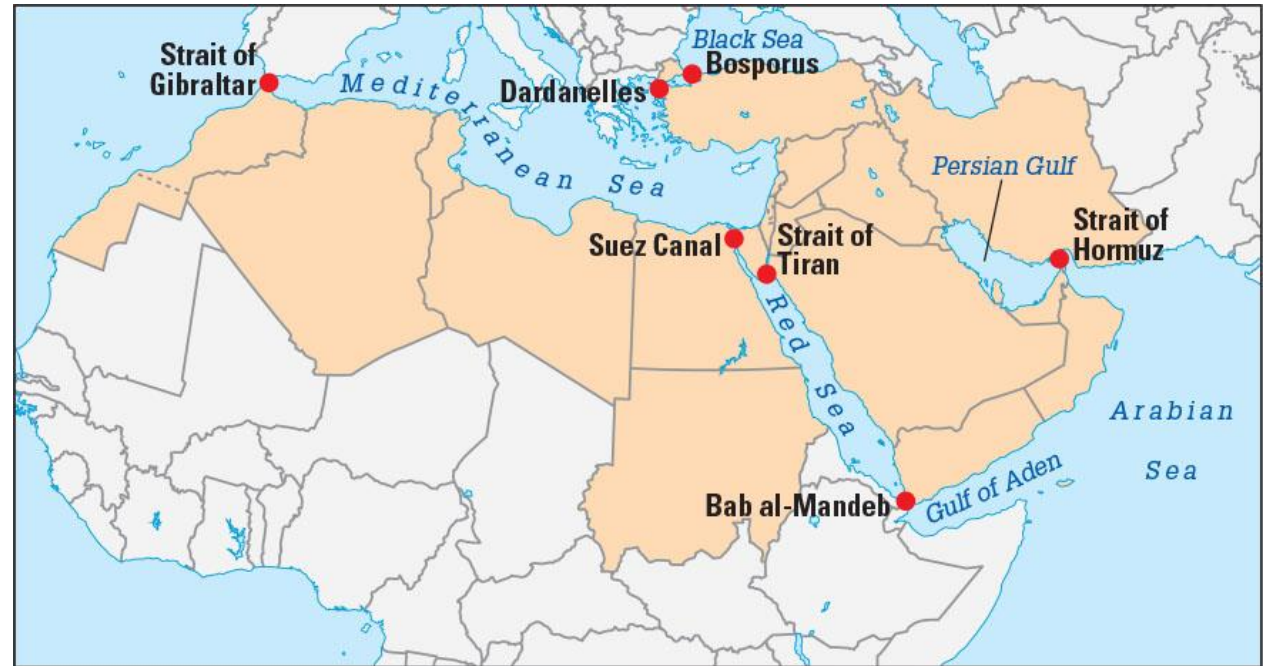


Fig. 6.29 Chokepoints in the MENA



Suez Canal, Egypt

Opened in 1869, 172 km.

Several wars happened for the ownership!

Strait of Hormuz





• **Figure 6.F** Principal pipelines in the heart of the Middle East. Vulnerable chokepoints and volatile political relations have led to the construction, closure, and often indirect routing of many pipelines.

Geopolitical Issues 2: Access to Oil

Oil is marketed primarily in western Europe, China and Japan

American interest in oil

- Support for Israel while courting Israel's oil-rich enemies long time (esp. Saudi Arabia)
- "Carter Doctrine" (1979 in the wake of Iranian Revolution & the Soviet invasion on Afghanistan)
 - U.S. would use any means necessary to defend its vital interests in the Persian Gulf region (maintaining a secure supply of Gulf oil)
 - U.S. supported the *mujahidin* fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan → the fractions of the Islamist rebels become al-Qa'ida and the Taliban
- Gulf War (1990): U.S. led coalition of Western and Arab allies against Iraq's invasion on Kuwait
- U.S. invasion of Iraq (2003): Was it really about weapons of mass destruction or the control of oil?

Geopolitical Issues 3: Access to Freshwater

Hydropolitics

- 90% of usable freshwater in the region crosses one or more international borders
- Role of water in Palestinian-Israeli conflict
- **Nile Water Agreement**
 - Signed by 10 countries in 1926
 - Guaranteed Egyptian access to water (75% of the river flow)
 - Treaty defied by many upstream countries in recent years
- Upstream country is usually able to maximize its water use at expense of a downstream country (e.g. Turkey)



• **Figure 6.31** Israel's National Water Carrier transports water from Lake Kinneret to Israel's thirsty cities. The Mountain Aquifer is also a major source of Israeli drinking water. The Two Seas Canal would generate hydroelectricity, bring desalinated water to Jordan and potentially stabilize the water level of the drying Dead Sea.



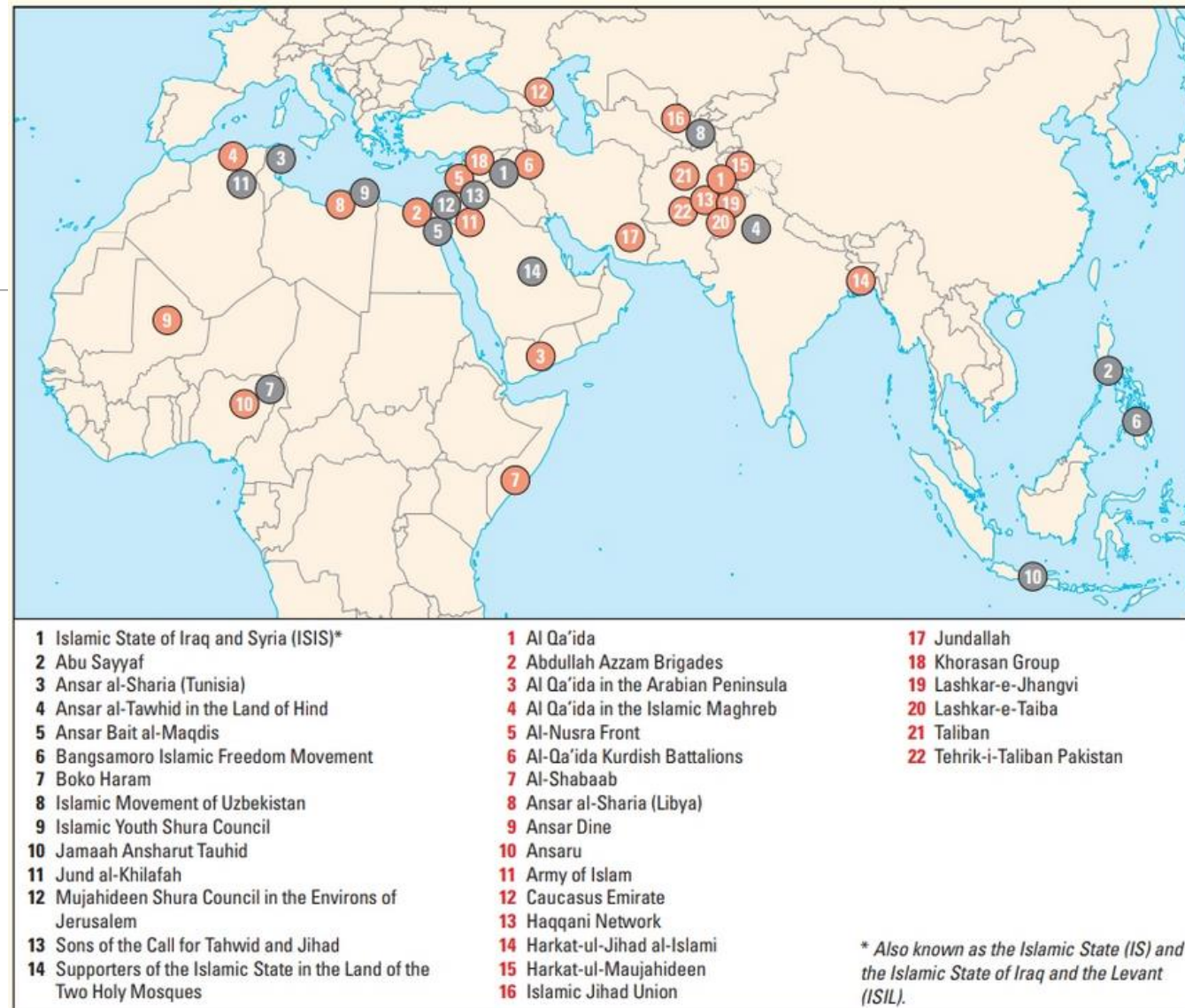
Fig. 6.32 The Nile River

Geopolitical Issues 4: Terrorism

War on Terror responding 9/11 attack

Islamist militant groups

- Hizbullah (Shi'ite in Lebanon), Hamas (Sunni in Gaza)
- Al-Qa'ida (Sunni rooted from Pakistan)
 - Numerous terrorist attacks on U.S. embassies, military facilities, and civilians
 - September 11, 2001 – NY World Trade Center attacks
 - Now, has become a geographically diffused organization
 - Still, clear aim to take on the West (esp. the US) in order to remove US and Western influences in the Islamic Holy Land (Saudi Arabia & Jerusalem)
 - A branch of Al-Qa'ida (al-Qa'ida in Iraq) became ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)/ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)



• **Figure 6.1** Although al-Qa'ida has many affiliate terror groups, the relatively newly formed ISIS has quickly acquired a number of pledges to its cause. Some of ISIS's affiliated terror groups originally supported al-Qa'ida but later switched allegiances.

The Arab Spring

The beginning: Tunisia, December 2010

- Young Vegetable vendor's death provoked largely young and disaffected population
- **Jasmine Revolution**: Tunisian President forced to flee

The Pharaoh Falls: Egypt, Spring 2011

- Factors:
 - Youth bulge: 60 percent of population under 25
 - Unemployment and underemployment
 - Government repression
 - The wide gap between the rich and poor
- President Mubarak fled from Cairo, but was soon imprisoned and put on trial

The Libyan Domino:

- Libya had been led by Muammar Qaddafi
 - Favored tribes on the central coast and in the center and west
 - Inspired by the Arab Spring, the Berbers and eastern tribes rose up against him
 - Qaddafi captured and executed in October of 2011

The Arab Spring continued in Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen

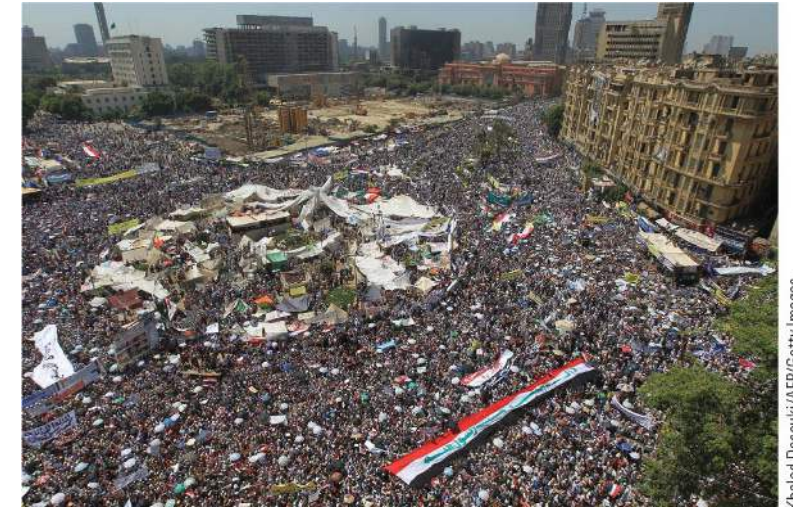


Fig. 6.46 Cairo's Tahrir Square in Feb. 2011

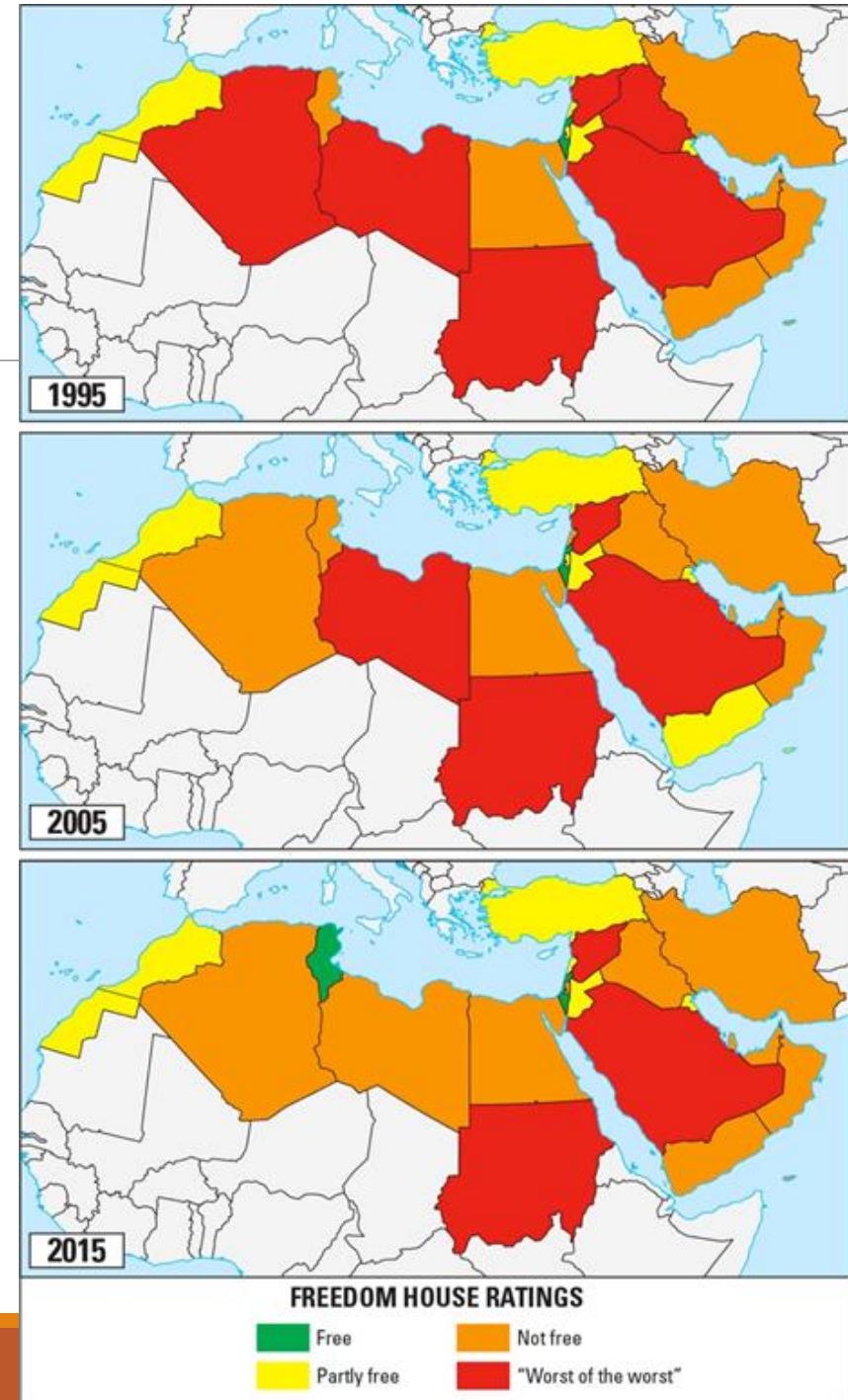
The Arab Spring: Hallmarks of the Revolution and the Fall

Notable Characteristics:

1. The role of social networking and other social media
2. The traditional geography of revolt in public spaces
(e.g. Cairo's Tahrir square, Tripoli's Green Square, & Bahrain's Pearl Square)
3. Women with an unprecedented strong role
4. Traditional Islamic classification of sacred times of day

Note: Religion and militant Islamism did not otherwise feature prominently

➔ Transitioned to an "autumn" period of danger and uncertainty



Syria: the Maelstrom & ISIS

Syria embroiled in savage civil war since 2011

“Syrian Opposition”: Groups opposed to al-Assad regime

- backed by Western and Gulf Arab states

The Conflicts in Syria: who are involved and why?

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

ISIS:

Between 2012 to 2014 ISIS gathered strength among Sunni insurgents

- Ethnic cleansing
- Refugees

- New recruiting method using SNS: attracts youth from Western world to join ISIS

- Much more extremist and destructive than al-Qa’ida

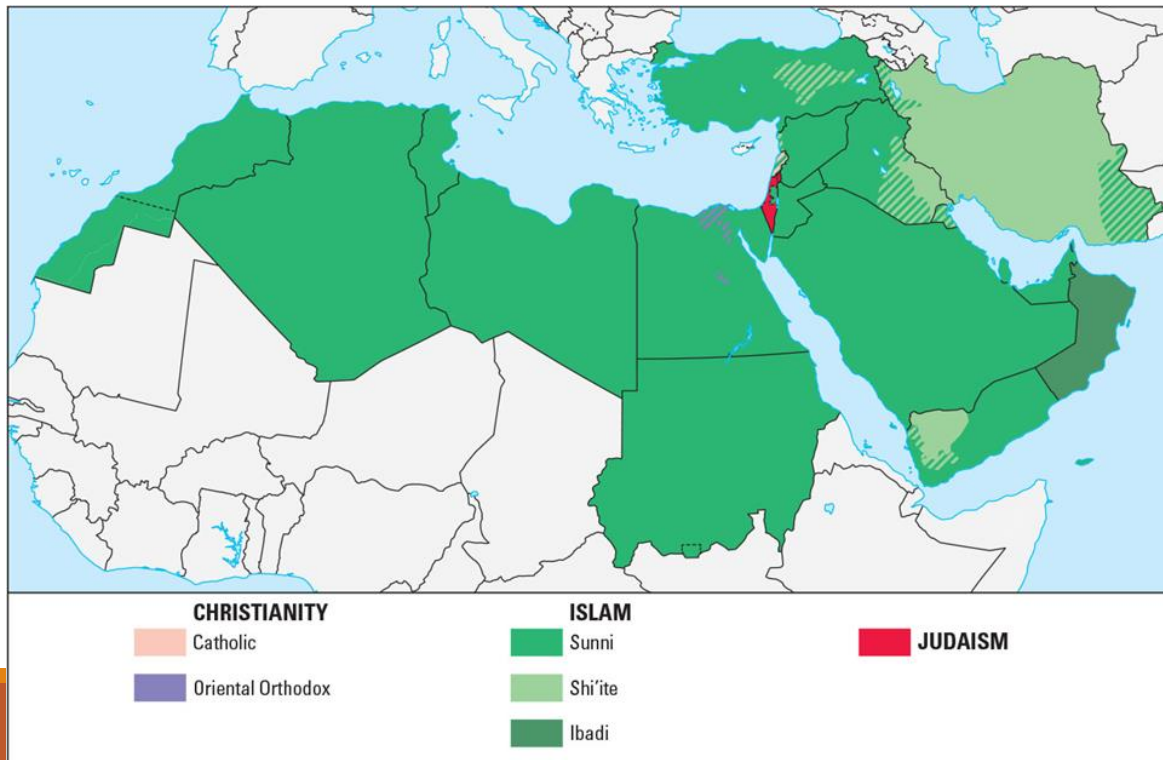
- Much-espoused view of ISIS is not Islamic at all

Geopolitical Issues: Implacable Iran

- Iranians are Indo-European (not Arab)
- A Shi'ite state

The Middle East's Cold War: Sunni vs. Shi'itea?

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



- Supporter of Arab (Alawite – offshoot of Shi'ite) government in Syria

- Allies w/ Hizbullah (Lebanon), Hamas (Gaza) & Russia as a main backer

- Enemies against/ Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt & the US as a main backer

Iran's Nuclear program

- o US (w/ Israel and the West) response options: Harsh sanctions/ Military strikes/ Diplomacy

Next Week

Sub-Saharan Africa