

Knowledge organiser: Y9—Why is the Middle East an Important Region?

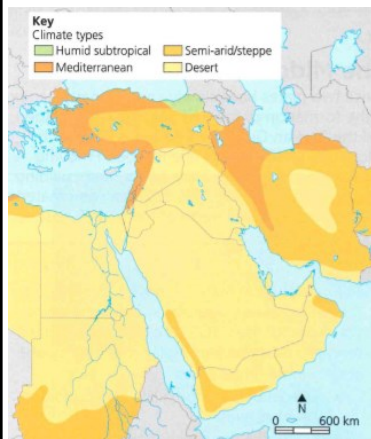
The location of the Middle East



The Middle East is located where the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe meet. It incorporates a wide range of diverse countries, cultures, resources and landscapes.



Physical Geography of the Middle East



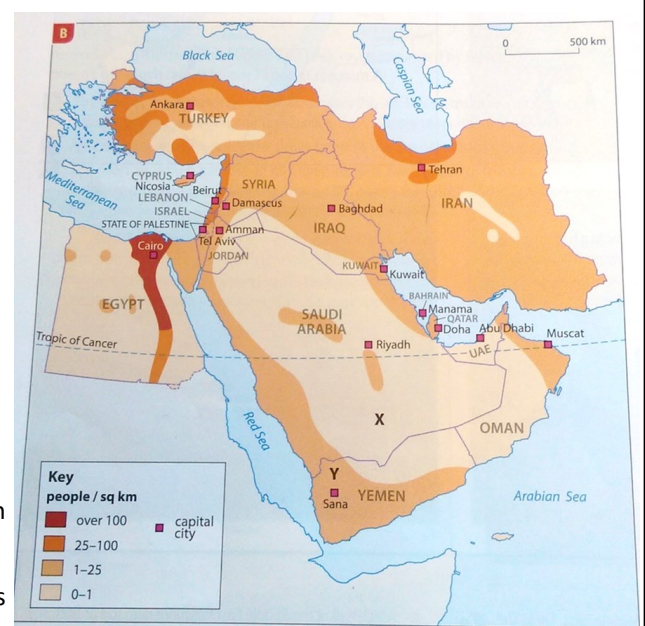
- There are 2 main climate zones. Desert in the south on the Arabian Peninsula and Mediterranean in the North.
- The arid, dry climate creates problems with water scarcity making countries water stressed.
- 2 major plate boundaries have shaped the Middle East.
- The Arabian plate is moving away from the African plate at a constructive plate boundary, creating the Red Sea.

- The Arabian plate is moving north at a rate of 3cm a year, colliding with the Eurasian plate at a destructive boundary. Creating fold mountains in the north of the region.



Human Geography of the Middle East

- Population of approx. 410million
- Uneven population distribution
- Explained by physical geography—deserts are sparsely populated, northern regions and Mediterranean coast more densely populated.
- Majority of Middle East speak Arabic but several countries are not Arabic including Turkey, Iran and Israel.
- Birthplace of 3 main religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- Islam is the most practised religion in the region but varies by country e.g. 70% Israel are Jewish.
- Largest ethnic group are Arabs except in Israel, Turkey and Persian Iran.
- Some ethnic groups eg Kurds have no country but big communities spread over the region.



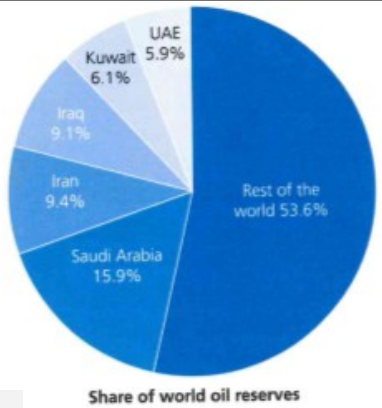
Natural Resources in the Middle East

Arabian plate holds 48% of the world's oil and 43% of gas reserves.

Oil is of major importance to economies in the region with up to 90% of income in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia coming from oil.

Other countries rely on Middle Eastern oil— Over 50% of China's crude oil comes from the Middle East.

Drawback—countries are reliant on oil and they do not have diverse economies.



Share of world oil reserves

Reason for reserves

The Arabian plate was once under an ocean but 570m years ago it rose up due to tectonic movement.



Years of sedimentation and compression under the ocean created oil and gas reserves

Contrasting fortunes—the UAE & Yemen

UAE—7th largest oil & 17th largest gas reserves in the world.

Second largest economy in Middle East—Economy has grown by 231 times since 1971.

Ranked 30th in world on HDI (higher than Europe)

Challenges

- Desert environment
- High unemployment
- Over-relying on oil exports
- Unrest, conflict and war between ethnic groups.

Solutions

- Creating a diverse economy by:
- Developing ports and airports.
 - Encouraging global trade.
 - Tourism
 - Encouraging migration

Poor governance—wealth misused, spending on arms.

Poor infrastructure makes places inaccessible

Poorly developed agriculture & reliance on food imports

Gender inequality—49% women illiterate.

Yemen's causes of poverty
54% live in poverty
45% malnourished
66% population aged under 24

Over reliance on declining oil reserves

Rapid population growth.
High unemployment

Conflict—civil war between north and south.

Water stress—7th most stressed country in the world.
Poor management of water supplies.

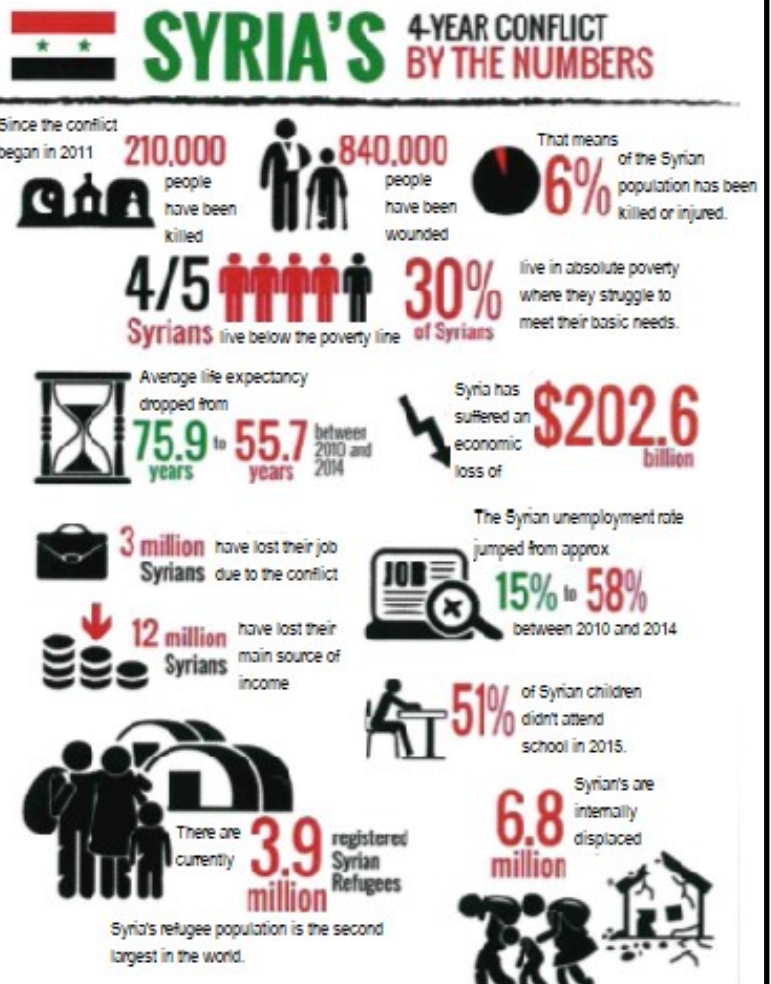
Conflict in the Middle East

REASONS FOR CONFLICT

- Borders – the French and British changed borders, causing unrest for ethnic groups.
- Oil – This encouraged rich countries to interfere with politics causing problems.
- Religion – The main religion divide is between Shia (Iran) and Sunni (Saudi Arabia) Muslims.
- Iraq War – The Iraq War in 2003 saw the government be overthrown, taking Sunni Muslims from power and putting Shia Muslims in power. It exacerbated existing ethnic divisions.
- Arab Spring – in 2011 there were protests in many counties about the government.

Case Study—The Syrian conflict

- Began in 2011
- Inspired by Arab Spring pro-democracy demonstrations against the government began.
- International involvement from USA, Russia & Saudi Arabia providing military, financial and political support.
- The government's Shia minority (backed by Shia Iran) is fighting Sunni majority (backed Sunni Saudi Arabia)



KEY VOCABULARY

<p>Arab Spring A series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s.</p>	<p>Region An area that has similar characteristics with within a country or within a part of the world.</p>
<p>Diversification The process of creating a much wider variety of business opportunities or jobs in a region.</p>	<p>Water stressed When the demand for water exceeds the available amount of water.</p>
<p>Forced migration The movement of people away from their homes due to political conflict, natural disaster or environmental hazards.</p>	<p>Distribution The way in which something is shared out among a group or spread over an area.</p>
<p>Desalination A process that can remove the salt from salt water.</p>	<p>Exports A product or service that is sold abroad.</p>
<p>Peninsula A long piece of land that sticks out from a larger area of land into the sea or into a lake</p>	<p>Relief The height and shape of the land.</p>

Wider Reading

[Oak Academy extra learning resources](#)



[Website with basic geographical facts about the Middle East](#)



[Seneca Website with a range of maps and graphs](#)



[BBC—Why has the Syrian war lasted 11 years](#)



[BBC Video—How could desalination help the Middle East’s water crisis.](#)



[Britannia Encyclopaedia—geographical information](#)

