Chapter 7A:
North African and Southwest Asian Realm
Population Distribution

Map Analysis Activity:

*Exploring Population Patterns*

1. Account for the patterns of population seen in the map. Why might people distribute themselves in these patterns? Consider natural and/or human determinants.
2. How might these patterns indicate a society’s economic and technological development?
Naming this Pivotal Realm: A “Dry World”? 

A “Dry World”?  
- Dominance of Aridity  
- However, most of the realm’s people cluster near fresh water sources  
  - River valleys, basins & deltas  
  - Moist coastlines  
  - Well-watered mountain basins  
  - Groundwater sources  

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Naming this Pivotal Realm

Is This the “Middle East”?
• Reflects biases of the Western world
• From the European perspective:
  – Realm was between the Near East in Turkey & the Far East of
    China & Japan

An “Arab World”?
• Implies ethnic and linguistic uniformity that does not exist
  – Turkey, Iran & Israel are just a few that are distinctly not Arab
Naming this Pivotal Realm

An “Islamic World”?

• Contested geographies beyond the realm
  – Today, the largest Muslim state is Indonesia
  – Suggests that there is no Islam beyond the realm’s borders, when the Islamic faith extends far outside it

• Contested geographies within the realm
  – Christian minority populations in all the realm’s regions
  – Judaism has its base in the realm
  – Smaller religious communities abound

• Ranging impact of Islam on the realm’s cultural geographies
Naming this Pivotal Realm: 

*States and Nations*

- Despite some cultural similarities
  - Islam & its expressions
- Fractious political & social geographies exist
  - Internal divisions
  - Nations without states
  - Territories in progress
  - Boundary framework from the colonial era
  - Populations unevenly dispersed in countries, regions & the realm overall
Hearths of Cultures:
*Dimensions of Culture*

- Realm of cultural crossroads, exhibits:
  - *Cultural geography*: wide-ranging & comprehensive field studying spatial aspects of human cultures
  - *Culture hearths*: crucibles of civilization & sources of dynamic ideas, innovations, & ideologies
  - *Cultural diffusion*: set of processes that extended the spread ideas & innovations far & wide
  - *Cultural landscapes*: the forms & artifacts placed on the natural landscape by sequential human occupants

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Map Analysis Activity: 
**Humanizing map representations**

1. Explain each of the features: Hearth & Sphere of Interaction. What do each imply? What might really be happening on the ground?
2. How do ideas *really* flow over distances & even oceans?
3. Offer some explanations of what the map’s implied, flowing ‘cultural ideas’ might be.
Hearths of Cultures: Rivers and Communities

Mesopotamia

- **Fertile Crescent**: region of significant agricultural productivity
  - Knowledge of crop & animal domestication
- **Hydraulic civilization theory**: urban control over irrigated hinterland meant power over others & food as a weapon

- Irrigation was key to prosperity & power
  - Successful settlements developed into cities
Hearths of Cultures: Rivers and Communities

Egypt and the Nile

• Cultural evolution with the Nile River’s environmental security
  – Surrounded by inhospitable desert
  – River was highway for trade & interaction
  – River provided irrigation with predictable rhythms

• Advanced urban civilization
Hearths of Cultures: 
*Decline and Decay*

- Another theory for decline of civilizations
  - *Climate change* and shifting environmental zones
    - Along with overpopulation & human destruction of natural vegetation
    - Agricultural planning & irrigation technology were not innovations, as much as they were survival tactics for changing environmental conditions
- As old societies disintegrated, power emerged elsewhere & came to imperialize the area
  - Persians, Greeks & Romans at various time periods
Stage for Islam: The Faith

- Unifying monotheism
  - Precepts shared with Judaic and Christian beliefs
  - Brought new set of values & new way of life
    - Five Pillars of observance
      - Proscribed alcohol, smoking & gambling
    - Mosques became places for social gathering
  - Mecca became the spiritual center for a divided, widely dispersed people
    - Collective focus on Islam was new
Stage for Islam:
The Arab-Islamic Empire

- Faith spread like wildfire
  - Formation of Arab armies that invaded, conquered & converted
- Islam's vast reach
Stage for Islam: Routes of Diffusion

• Spread of Islam illustrates:
  – Spatial diffusion as the way ideas, inventions & cultural practices spread over space & time
  – Takes place in two forms:
    • Expansion diffusion: propagation waves originate in a strong & durable source area spreading outward
      – This mostly explains Islam’s spread
    • Relocation diffusion: migrants carry an innovation, idea, or object from the source to distant locations & it diffuses from there
Stage for Islam: *Islam on the March*

- Expansion diffusion types:
  - *Contagious diffusion* as a person-to-person
  - *Hierarchical diffusion* from higher orders, like kings, down to their subjects
- Today relocation diffusion continues Islam’s expansion
- Enormous dimensions of *Islamization*, as the establishment of Islam

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Stage for Islam:  
**Islam and Other Religions**

• *Levant* source area of major faiths  
  – Area extending from Greece eastward along the Mediterranean coast to northern Egypt  
  – Older Christianity & Judaism came from the area

• Conflict between faiths  
  – Islam submerged some Jewish communities  
  – Christians waged “holy wars” against Muslims during the Crusades  
    • Christian minorities in the region  
  – Jewish state in conflict with Muslim neighbors
The Flowering of Islamic Culture...

• Glorious expansion of Islamic culture
  – Science, art, architecture and other fields
• Wave of Islamic diffusion into the Maghreb & into Iberia
  – Moorish invasion of Spain
  – Controlled most of southern Iberia
  – Al-Andalus
    • Islamic castles, mosques, schools, gardens & public buildings
  – Pushed out by Catholic armies eventually
Islam Divided

• Division of Islam into sects
  – Split over who should be Muhammad’s successor
    • Shi’ites wanted a blood relative
    • Sunnis saw any devout follower as qualified
  – Sunnis dominant in number & in expansion of Islam

The Strength of Shi’ism

• After vigorous promotion, the Persian kingdom made Shi’ism the only legal religion in its empire
  – Created a large culture region for the sect
• Schism between sects underlies many of the realm’s conflicts
Islam Divided:

The Ottoman Empire and Its Aftermath

- Ottoman Empire in Turkey
  - Pushed into southeastern Europe, Persia, Mesopotamia, & North Africa
  - Eventually taken over by Europeans
- Laid out boundaries without regard to cultural or physical features of the landscape
- Some boundaries were poorly defined causing later conflict
A Future Kurdistan?

• At the intersection of Turkey, Iraq & Iran
  – Fractured & fragmented nation
  – Occupied that isolated, mountainous frontier zone for over 3000 years

• Kurds as a *stateless nation*, a peoples without control over their territory
  – They are a divided people whose disunity has thwarted their dream of a nation-state
  – They will likely be without a territory for economic productivity into the future
The Power and Peril of Oil

• Big Five all located in the realm
  1. Saudi Arabia
  2. Iran
  3. Iraq
  4. Kuwait
  5. United Arab Emirates

• Ream’s three discontinuous zones of oil & natural gas
  – North Africa
  – Persian Gulf
  – Around the Caspian Sea
The Power and Peril of Oil: *Producers and Consumers*

- Global oil production
  - Saudia Arabia as world’s largest oil exporter
  - Realm’s production exceeds all other global sources
- Effect of oil revenues
  - Has elevated some into the higher-income category
  - Has also made them all globally interdependent

*The Colonial Legacy*

- Colonial boundaries laid without knowledge of underlying resource geographies
  - Another source of division & distrust among neighbors
The Power and Peril of Oil: 
A Foreign Invasion

• Discovery of oil necessitated a foreign presence
  – Realm’s states in need of skills, capital & equipment
  – Transporting oil abroad required strategic arteries

• Effects of foreign intervention
  – Intervention in economic activities & political affairs
  – Penetration of Islamic society by Western ways
  – Intensification of contrasts:
    • Traditional v. modern & rich v. poor

• To some, this violated the basic tenets of the Islamic faith
**Choke Points: Danger on the Sea Lanes**

- **Choke point**: narrowing of an international waterway causing marine traffic congestion
  - Essential routes for cheaper & more efficient trade
  - May be natural or artificial narrowing
  - Also increases risks & vulnerabilities

- Scourge of piracy on global trade
  - Reduced speeds allow pirates to board vessels
    - They plunder, or worse, kill crews & take them over
  - Least-safe waterways: Strait of Malacca & Bab el Mandeb Strait
1. **Urban Transformation**
   - Most visible manifestation is urban modernization
     - Glass skyscrapers as engineering marvels

2. **Variable Incomes**
   - Fluctuating petroleum prices create states with vacillating income levels
     - Many oil-exporters stay in upper-middle-income category
The Power and Peril of Oil:

The Geography of Oil’s Impact

3. Infrastructure
   – Transportation & governance structures
   – Stark differences between oil-haves & oil-have-nots
     • Spending creates an image of comfort & affluence

4. Industrialization
   – Some far-sighted governments are investing oil revenues back into the economy
   – Building industries that will outlast oil exports
     • Manufacturing & high-technology
5. Regional Disparities
   – Strong contrasts within & among countries

6. Foreign Investment
   – Realm’s governments & private entrepreneurs have invested oil wealth in other countries
     • Creates a network of international links between economies & Islamic communities abroad

7. Foreign Involvement
   – Oil industry relies on foreign input & exports
     • To some, this is an very unwelcome byproduct
The Power and Peril of Oil:  
*The Geography of Oil’s Impact*

8. *Intra-Realm Migration*  
   – Oil production requires additional labor inputs  
   – The first order of migrants are from the realm itself

9. *Migration from Other Realms*  
   – Not all inputs can met by intra-regional migrants  
   – Also driven by difference in wages between realms

10. *Diffusion of Revivalism*  
    – Oil revenues as investment into Islamist communities & structures throughout the world  
    – Relocation diffusion of revival of Islam
Fragmented Modernization: The Uneven Impact of Oil

- **Fragmented modernization** is a pattern where a few regions experience most of the development while the rest are left unaffected.
- Cultural-geographic forces in the realm have greater influence than economic-geographic:
  - Realm of great degree of existing variety & diversity
  - Oil has amplified inequalities & disparities
    - Both *within* and *between* countries
Fragmented Modernization: Autocratic Regimes

• Colonial legacy on governance
  – European rule endorsed by the *League of Nations*, the forbearer of the *United Nations*
  – Europeans were determined not to let go & eventual independence was earned through conflict
    • None of the formerly European administered areas were prepared to function as democracies

• Autocratic default
  – Newly independent & autocratic states were then cemented by foreign geopolitical plots
Fragmented Modernization: Autocratic Regimes

• Foreign support of autocratic regimes in the realm to secure access to oil supplies
  – Elsewhere, regimes part of Cold War alignments

• Varying politics of government
  – Republics or monarchies
  – Secular or Islamic

• Autocratic common denominator
  – Long “top-down” rule of some political leaders
  – Sometimes violence, repression & economic disenfranchisement

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Fragmented Modernization: Religious Revivalism

• Religious revivalism, or religious movements with objectives to return to foundations of its faith, influence state policy & society
  – A return to religion is a way to regain hope & dignity

• Often a product of several viewpoints:
  – Traditional Islamic values are eroding
  – Society is being corrupted by foreign presences
  – Islamic power is declining in secular states

• Revivalism into fanaticism: a step further
  – Pits Muslim against Muslim in areas of the realm
Fragmented Modernization: Terror in the Name of Islam

• Essential awareness
  – Most Muslims are not fundamentalists
  – Not all fundamentalists are militants
  – Not all militants are terrorists
  – Terrorism as a tool of war is not exclusive to Islam

• *Jihad*, or “holy war,” is a deeply reactionary movement looking at the past not the future
  – Pursued by some Muslim militants with an extreme fundamentalist interpretation of the Quran

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Fragmented Modernization: *Terror in the Name of Islam*

- *Taliban* in Afghanistan is a kind of Islamic militia
  - Follow *Wahhabism*, an orthodox form of Sunni Islam
  - Have a rigid view of Islamic law
  - Seek to return to an essentially premodern society
- *al-Qaeda* in parts of northern Pakistan have a global agenda
  - A multinational network with a tightly knit core
  - Aim is to establish Islamic rule across the realm & banish all foreign influence
The Popular Uprisings of 2011: An Arab Spring?

- Arab Spring: desire for democracy & end to cronyism, corruption, repression & economic mismanagement
  - From Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, & Bahrain

Revolutionary Dominoes

- **Domino effect**: spread of political destabilization rapidly to parts of the realm with similar conditions
  - Ruled by long established autocratic regimes
  - Failure to bring economic progress & repressed their people
  - Had lost touch with the people, especially the youth

- Aided by modern communication systems: television & the Internet

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The Popular Uprisings of 2011: An Arab Spring?

**A New Generation**

- Youthfulness of the realm’s populations
  - Many state population have more than ½ under 25
  - Contrast to archaic nature of realm’s governments & many have known only one leader in their lifetime

- Uprisings predominately led by youths
  - Used Internet’s social networks to organize protests

- Uncertain future: lack of suitable social & political structures for the transition

- Varying role of some countries’ Shi’ite minority
Regional Issue:
Religious Revival or Democratic Reform?

ISLAMIC REVIVAL IS THE ONLY WAY

- The Islamic faith took root throughout the world, now outnumbering Christians
- Muslims brought science & enlightenment, but have been demoralized in return
- “Whoever supports the infidel against Muslims is himself an infidel”
- Salvation lies in a return to the strictest rules of Islam

ISLAMIC COUNTRIES NEED DEMOCRATIC REFORM

- No coincidence that the social & economic indicators of Muslim-dominated countries are low ranking
- Realm’s Muslims are caught between despotic regimes & extremist revivalists in a downward spiral
- In need of freedom with both political & religious reform

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The Popular Uprisings of 2011: An Arab Spring?

*Religion and Revolution*

- Arab Spring as a populist movement
  - Grievances ranged from economic issues to religious repression
  - Initially, religious revivalists did not lead in protests
  - Later, was seen as an opportunity to oust autocratic regimes that ruthlessly persecuted fundamentalists

**What do you think?**

- What do you think will happen in the realm’s future? What will prevail: democratic, revivalist, autocratic or a mix of regimes?

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