



MUNESCO

**Forum:** EB1

**Issue:** The issue of dispute over territorial power with a special emphasis on the Middle East

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**Position:** President chair, co-chair

## Introduction

Throughout the years, the issue of dispute over territorial power has become a major threat to stability in the Middle East by menacing peace and intimidating millions of people inhabiting around this region. Due to its geostrategic position, it has been also long said that this region has been in the interest of imperialistic or strong powers such as the U.S, the British Empire and France. Today, the Middle East is still known as the world's most complicated region in terms of politics and still creates ambiguous questions in everyone's minds that have again complex answers. Regarding these aspects, it is quite vital to interpret the interest of these global powers to comprehend their present actions and future aims for the Middle East.



## Definition of Key Terms

**Dispute:** A disagreement or argument

The Levant: The historical geographical area in the Middle East which includes countries such Jordan, Syria, Israel, Lebanon etc.

Geostrategic: Relating to the strategy required in dealing with geopolitical problems.

Nationalism: The ideology of interest and support of one's own nation and especially by excluding the interest of other nations.

## **Background Information**

Currently, the greater Middle East is defined as the countries in North Africa, the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Israel etc.). Due to its geostrategic position, since centuries, it has been a region of engagement, conflict and war. The first shatters of these long lasting conflicts have started after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and its loss of power in this region during The First World War. After being backed up by many western imperial powers and especially the British Empire, nationalism has sparked up in this region and numerous native ethnic groups have battled for independence from the Ottomans. The Western powers were also benefiting from these actions since they could easily control these newly independent states, gain more power and finally ensure that they were going to be the submissive forces in this region since the Ottoman Empire would lose its power and weaken everyday. After the Ottoman Empire collapsed, lost its control over countries in the Middle East and initially became the Republic of Turkey in 1923, even though conflicts seemed to calm down for the Arabian World; things got even worsen. Arab revolts started across the Levant, every country wanted independence from Britain or France, and the outbreak that even continues today between Jews and Muslim Arabs begun. These all meant the commencement of a new era for the Middle East: the age of unceasing conflicts and territorial disputes for power.

**The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:** Even though the Jews and Arabs in Israel-Palestine are still fighting for land and disputing territories, this quarrel is not actually new as it dates back to the end of World War II. After the devastating war, many European Jews that survived the Holocaust wanted to return to their traditional motherland; Israel, in order to establish a Jewish state on their own and live peacefully after all. In the end, Jews were given a large part of Palestine and this was not greeted well by the Arabs. They thought it was unfair to give Jews a large part of the places they lived originally, so the conflicts begun. A war broke between two sides and in 1948, Israel was recognised by the UN as an independent state and Palestinians were given land to live on. Gaza was controlled by Egypt and the West Bank, by Jordan. Many Palestinians fled the Israeli lands and started living here. Jerusalem was also a situation of concern too. It was divided into two and East Jerusalem got to be the capital of the Palestinian government. In 1967, another war occured and Israeli forces occupied some of the Palestinian areas; causing a state of concern again in regards of territorial dispute. Israel initially left Gaza in 2005 but soon after Hamas took control of this area. Hamas is a political party which most of the world recognises as a terrorist organization. Recently, in 2018, U.S President Donald J. Trump announced that from now on, the U.S would recognize not Tel

Aviv but Jerusalem as the State of Israel's capital. The U.S eventually moved its embassy to Jerusalem however this attitude took the attention of other countries as well since it raised questions in everyone's minds whether this was right or not to do.

**The Gulf War:** The Gulf War is the famous war that began with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and took place between 1990 and 1991. The then Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein ordered Iraqi military troops to invade Kuwait which meant another territorial dispute issue in the Middle East. Arab countries neighbouring Kuwait were concerned of Saddam Hussein's intentions and decided to team up with the U.S to fight Iraq back. Unfortunately, Iraq refused to withdraw its troops from Kuwait and the deadly war began. The allied forces were led by the U.S and the operation was called "Operation Desert Shield". The operation in general lasted only 42 days and ended with victory for the allied international coalition since Iraq withdrew its troops from Kuwait. Although there was victory, in the end, other outbreaking conflicts led to a second Gulf War, this time in 2003, known as the "Iraq War".

**The Syrian War:** The Syrian War started in 2011 just because of an uprising against the current president; Assad. It quickly turned into a major civil war involving not only its people but also many people from various countries around the world. The conflicts began in 2011 due to high level of corruption and lack of political freedom in matters of state. The uprisers were especially inspired by the "Arab Spring" happening in the neighboring countries. The violence rapidly evolved into a civil war which led to the death of thousands of people. Moreover, because of the war, more than 6 million Syrians had to flee their country as to survive. This of course causes a great deal of conflict in countries who host these refugees such as Turkey, Lebanon, Germany or Greece. The war has also turned into an international conflict rather than a civil war throughout the recent years. Currently, it is known that Russia and Iran are the two main supporters of the Assad regime ; the Syrian Government. Countries such as the U.S, UK and France are definitely against the Assad regime and are willing to fight the government by supporting rebel groups and armies. Right now, there is a U.S led global coalition group which carries out air strikes and similar actions throughout the whole country.



## Timeline of Major Events

1922	Britain gives Egypt independence but continues to control the security, defence, and protection of foreigners within the country.
1922	The Egyptian Nationalist party; Wafd, is found by Saad Zaghlul. They demand control over the Suez Canal, and more civil rights.
1923	The Treaty of Lausanne is signed. The borders of Turkey are finalized.
1925-1927	The Druze state revolts from France. This inspires the Syrians to revolt which causes 6000 deaths within Syria.
1926	Abdul Aziz ibn Saud conquers Medina and Mecca. Modern Saudi Arabia is formed by the unification of the Arabian kingdom Najd and Hijaz.
1926	Abd el-Krim's attempt to rebel in Morocco fails.
1928	The Muslim Brotherhood is formed by Hassan al-Banna. This eventually leads to the political reform of Egypt and the end of the British control in Egypt.
1929	There is an outbreak between Arabs and Jews in Palestine.
1930	France tries to divide the Amazigh and Arab population in Morocco (which is French controlled at the time), but fails when the general public of Morocco reject the motion.
1932	Iraq gains independence from Britain but signs a treaty granting Britain specific privileges; very similar to the treaty bounding Egypt to Britain.
1936	Arabs revolt against the increasing Zionist population and British control in Palestine.
1936	Prince Farouq is declared as the king of Egypt after his father's death. Although Egypt gains "formal independence", Britain continues to control them.
1939	Britain disperses the revolt in Palestine.
1939	World War 2 starts. Britain aims to cooperate with the Arab states by signing the White Paper of 1939, which disabled Britain from creating a Jewish state in Palestine and limits the migration of Jewish people to Palestine.
1941	Iraq is targeted with a "pro-German" coup. As a result, Britain overthrows the government of Iraq by installing pro-British leaders.
1941	Syria and Lebanon are now being controlled by the French Vichy government. Britain invades Syria and Lebanon and puts French supporters in charge.
1943	Lebanon gains independence from France.
1945	The League of Arab States is formed by Egypt, Yemen, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Lebanon in order to achieve Arab independence in Palestine.
1946	Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan gain independence from France and Britain.
1946	A Jewish terrorist group called "Irgun" bombs the British Palestine Administration in Jerusalem. 91 people are killed.

1947	War is declared on the British in Palestine, by the Zionist leaders with the aim of removing the immigration restrictions of the 1939 White Paper.
1948	Jewish forces start removing Arabs from Palestinian property. More than 400000 Arabs are forced out of their homes. The Palestinian refugees move into neighboring Arab states.
1948	Britain withdraws its forces from Palestine. A day after Palestine is declared independent, five neighboring Arab armies attempt an invasion, which results in a violent war. During the war, Israel seizes Arab territory and expels thousands of Palestinian Arabs, causing a major refugee crisis.
1949	Israel joins the United Nations. A resolution placing Jerusalem under international authority. East Jerusalem continues to remain under the rule of Jordan.
1949	The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan Al-Banna, is assassinated.
1950	The West Bank falls under the territory of Jordan, meanwhile the Gaza Strip is taken under Egyptian control.
1951	Libya becomes independent from Italy. Sayid Muhammad Idris al-Sanusi is declared king.
1951	King Abdullah of Jordan is killed by Palestinian nationalists opposed to the annexation of West Bank.
1952	The Egyptian Wafd government signs a treaty with Britain. The “free officers movement” overthrows the monarchy of Egypt and banish King Farouq to Italy.
1953	General Muhammad Naguib becomes the dictator of Egypt.
1953	Sudan holds its first democratic elections.
1954	The British army starts to evacuate from the Suez Canal Zone.
1954	Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser becomes a powerful figure in Egypt While he leads the governing Revolutionary Command Council, he disbands the parliament, leads a plan for agrarian reform, abolishes political parties, and suspends the constitution. The Muslim Brothers are banned as a whole organization. Members of the Muslim Brothers are either forced to flee Egypt, or tortured.
1956	Nasser is chosen as the President of Egypt. The Suez Canal is nationalized. Israel, Britain, and France attempt to invade Egypt to take back the Suez Canal, but fail due to pressures from the Soviet Union and US.
1956	Morocco and Tunisia gain independence from France.
1956	Jordan and Israel sign a truce.
1956	Israel gains control over the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.
1957	Israel withdraws from the Sinai Peninsula and gives Gaza to UN control.
1958	Egypt and Syria merge to form the United Arab Republic (UAR).

1961	Egypt and Syria end their union, UAR separates.
1967	Syria and Israel have the "Six-day War" over land. Israel seizes the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
1968	UN calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the land taken during the Six-day war.
1968	The Revolutionary Command Council of Iraq takes over the government with a coup.
1969	All British and American forces are expelled from the country and their military bases are closed.
1973	Libya attempts to invade the Aouzou strip in Chad, but fails to do so.
1974	Israel and Egypt sign an agreement regarding separation of forces and disengagement.
1978	A civil war starts in Yemen.
1980	Iraq attacks Iran because of a border dispute, starting a war which will be lasting nine years. Although the war will damage both countries, there will be no significant border changes as a result of the war.
1981	The President of Egypt, Sadat, is assassinated by Islamist militants within Egypt's own army. All people linked to the assassination are executed.
1982	Israel invades Lebanon's southern border regions.
1984	Israel bombs the PLO headquarters in Tunisia.
1987	An uprising starts in Palestine.
1988	Iraq attacks Kurds within the country using chemical weapons.
1990	North and South Yemen merge, forming the Republic of Yemen.
1990	Iraq invades Kuwait. US military and Arab forces push Iraq out of Kuwait with "Operation Desert Storm".
2000	The parliament of Egypt allows the Muslim Brothers to participate in the election.
2000	Israel military evacuates from Lebanon.
2001	Taliban now controls 95% of Afghanistan.
2001	Civil war erupts in Afghanistan.
2003	Iraq is invaded by the US, there is a civil war.
2006	Saddam Hussein is executed.
2008	Civil war erupts in Lebanon.

2009	Civil war erupts in Gaza.
2010	The “arab spring” starts, there are several protests all around middle eastern countries.
2011	US troops leave Iraq.
2011-2012	The syrian uprising starts. A major part of the population is protesting against the government.
2011	The Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict, also called the middle east cold war starts.
2014	Civil war erupts in Iraq.
2015	Civil war erupts in Yemen.
2016	The western Iran clashes start. There is conflict between Iranian troops and Kurdish forces.
2016	There is an unsuccessful coup attempt in Turkey.
2017	The Kurdish-Iraq conflict starts.
2017	The Iraq insurgency starts.
2018	Turkey starts the olive branch operation and enters Afrin, Syria.



## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Bahrain

Their current leader is King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. Many protests have been erupting since 2011, which has been damaging the government and leading them to be aided by Saudi Arabia. The majority of the population is Shiite, but the state is being run by the Sunni minority which causes civil unrest.

### Egypt

The nation is currently being lead by Interim President Adly Mansour. The country is still under transition from the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. The military of Egypt is a major power controlling the government. Due to anti-government protests erupting all over the country, the military took down the first elected president of the country, Mohammed Morsi, which lead to polarization between secular and Islamist groups.

### Iraq

Iraq is seen to have high risk of religious/political violence due to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's power sharing arrangement between the Shiite government, and Sunnis and Kurds. Al Quaide is taking advantage of the Sunni resentment to the government and adding members to their group.

### Iran

The leaders of the nation are Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani. US President recently announced the removal of US military from Iran on the nuclear program. Iran currently has tension with western nations.

### Israel

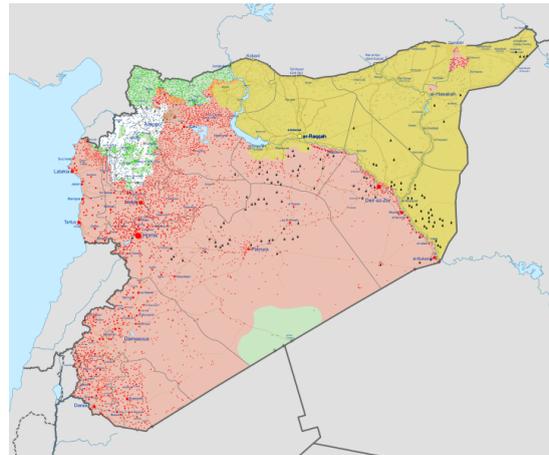
Palestine is once again one of the pressing matters of the Middle East. USA's declaration of Palestine being the capital of Israel, caused major conflict between Arab nations and Israel. USA is continuing to supply Palestine with military and diplomatic support.

### Russia

Along with USA and Turkey, Russia has been very involved with the situation in Syria. Russia has previously showed support to the Assad regime. The Russian government wants to restore the Assad regime in Syria, since they are allies.

### Syria

5.4 million Syrian refugees are scattered among the middle east with a major part of their populations in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. The refugees are expected to return to Syria as the country reconstructs itself. Syria is continuing to recover from the civil war.



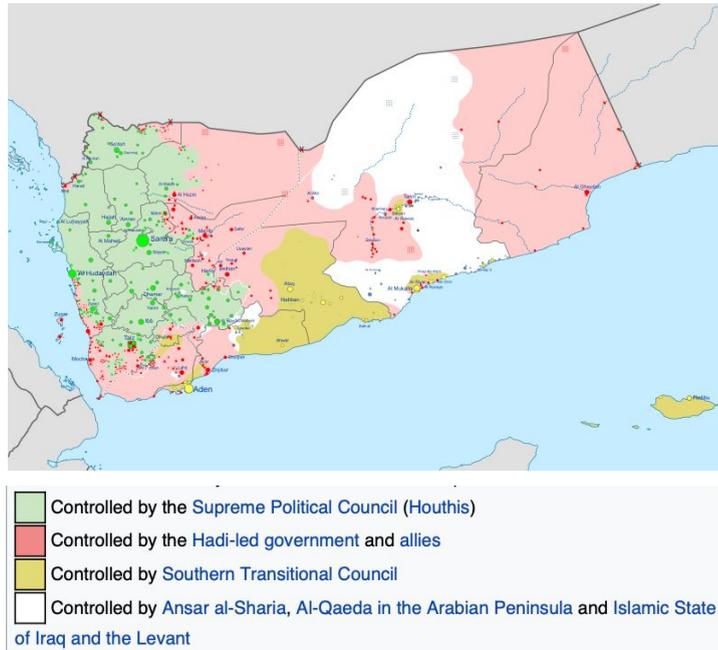
■ Syrian Arab Republic 
 ■ Syrian opposition 
 ■ Syrian Democratic Forces  
■ Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant 
 ■ Tahrir al-Sham<sup>[27]</sup>

## USA

USA has been involved with the middle east for quite a while now. There are still American troops in Syria. USA's military aims to have peace in Syria while blocking the Lebanese Shiite population and the Iranian government from controlling the area. It is very important to the US government that the future Syrian government is an ally. The U.S has been long interested in this particular region due to several reasons. These reasons include: keeping peace in the Middle East and ensuring that Israel survives, preventing terrorism and its consequences to spread around the world, and accessing to oil, in other words; having an economic and political power in the region. Since the end of World War II, the U.S has intervened oftenly in the internal relations of Middle Eastern countries. The U.S has aimed to fight several terrorist groups and organizations by sending military troops frequently to the areas in need. It has supported the welfare of Israel since its founding, intervened in the famous 1979 Iran Revolution, sent troops to Syria to fight the Assad regime recently and have been part of many operations. With this being said, it is clearly vital to understand the U.S's stance and aims in order to illustrate the past and recent Middle Eastern political change and position.

## Yemen

The Yemen civil war is ongoing. The country is currently divided into a few major groups; the Supreme Political Council, the Hadi-led government, the Southern Transitional Council, and Ansar al-Sharia, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.



## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### UN General Assembly, Resolution 181, 1947

The UN General Assembly called for Palestine into two separate states; Arab and Jewish, with Jerusalem under “international supervision”. The Arabs rejected this plan, insisting it was biased against them. Although Jews made up half of the population, they only owned 7% of the land, and this resolution gave them 55% of the land. The UN passed this resolution and Britain decided to withdraw.

### UN Security Council, Resolution 242, 1968

UN Security Council approved resolution 242. All Israeli forces were called to withdraw from territory occupied during the Six-Day War, and their right to live in security and peace was restored. The UN also called for a resolution regarding the refugee problem, which PLO rejected. While Israel rejected the Resolution 242 as a whole, Egypt and Syria accepted it.

### Executive Council, The Gulf War resolution, 91-3-EC-80, 1991

The UN executive council passes the Gulf War resolution with the following clauses;

*“Joins with Christians and other faith communities in the USA and in the Middle East in ministries of pastoral care and in renewed and strengthened medical and physical relief efforts to address the needs of all people in the Middle East.*

*Calls upon the United States government and other allied coalition nations to work through the United Nations and other international structures to alleviate the human needs created by the war, to work for economic justice in the region and to assist in building more just and peaceful relations among all the peoples and nations in the Middle East.*

*Calls upon all members of the United Church of Christ to be a leaven for sober reflection in the midst of our nation and continue to pray and work for the coming of a just peace based on friendship and mutual security.”*

<https://www.globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/1991ec-gulf-war.html>

#### **UN General Assembly, Resolution 731 & 748, 1992**

UN imposed sanctions on Libya for bombing Flight 103 while it was flying over Scotland and for bombing a French UTA plane over Niger.

#### **UN General Assembly, Jerusalem: City of life, 1997**

The UN adopts a resolution placing Jerusalem under the protection of UN, and urging the two major countries to come to an agreement and asking for the parties to adjust their policies regarding international and interreligious relations, theologies, and their practice of pilgrimage and tourism in the sacred land of Jerusalem.

#### **UN Security Council, 2001**

The Security council fails a draft resolution regarding the adjustment of US policies in the middle east. USA votes against this resolution.

#### **The Arab League peace plans, 2011-2012**

The Arab League tried to establish peace in Syria twice, between November 2011 and January 2012. The AL decided to send a “monitoring team” which was withdrawn in 2012 due to the continuance of violence.

### **Possible Solutions**

The main reason of the Israel-palestine conflict is thought to be the clash of religion between the Jewish and Muslim population in the area, and the long history of war between the regions. This issue can't be solved without sacrifices being made on both sides in terms of territory. The hatred between the arab and jewish population can be reduced by making adjustments in the education system; raising the younger generations with awareness of other cultures can influence public opinion. Western countries such as the US acting in their self-interests and manipulating the situation inevitably fuels the conflict. Israel has previously left UNESCO in 2018, stating that the organization was discriminating Israel. To reach an international solution, Israel is encouraged to re-join UNESCO.

Yemen is still in the process of re-building, but is struggling to do so because of the current conflict. Several nations are involved in Yemen, including USA, Saudi Arabia, and many more; therefore all foreign forces causing damage are strongly encouraged to withdraw their military from the territory. For a truce to be reached between the Houthis and the government, the formation of a third neutral party is advised. An arrangement to remove terrorist organizations such as Al-qaeda and ISIL is vital for the well-being of the people of Yemen. The country has suffered through a lot, and so did the people of Yemen. The number of people who have died from Cholera and starvation has increased dramatically in Yemen.

Both the government and Houthis should be provided with support from the World Food Programme, and medical aid from Doctors Without Borders.

The Syrian conflict has still not reached a solution. Many countries including USA, Russia, and Turkey have entered the Syrian territory to end the war, but it is also worth mentioning that they are most likely acting in self-interest. It is debatable whether the withdrawal of these nations are more profitable, or further engagement in war is. An agreement between Turkish troops and Kurdish forces, would cause progress in the war against ISIS, but is very unlikely since Kurdish forces want to form a new nation; Kurdistan, in Turkish territory, for which Turkey is strongly opposed to. Even when the war ends, what happens after the war remains unclear. Whether Assad should continue to rule is a major question. Some argue that an international negotiation with Assad would solve the crisis. The people of Syria are divided all over the world, causing a refugee crisis; which resolves with the people of Syria returning to their nation, the intaking of Syrians to European countries, or the formation of sanctuaries worldwide. While part of the population believe that Assad is the right leader, others might not even be willing to return to a country under Assad's regime.

## Useful Links For Further Research

1. <http://teachmideast.org/articles/timeline-of-the-middle-east-in-the-20th-century/>
2. <https://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/un%20general%20assembly%20resolution%20181.aspx>
3. [https://www.globalministries.org/mee\\_resolutions](https://www.globalministries.org/mee_resolutions)
4. <https://www.thoughtco.com/current-situation-in-the-middle-east-2353040>
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14541327>
6. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/middle-east-2018-issues-watch-171220074428325.html>
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6. Manfreda, Primoz, and Primoz Manfreda. "Current Situation in the Middle East." Thoughtco., Dotdash, [www.thoughtco.com/current-situation-in-the-middle-east-2353040](http://www.thoughtco.com/current-situation-in-the-middle-east-2353040).
7. "Resolutions Related to the Middle East." Global Ministries, [www.globalministries.org/mee\\_resolutions](http://www.globalministries.org/mee_resolutions).
8. "Timeline of the Middle East in the 20th Century." TeachMideast, [teachmideast.org/articles/timeline-of-the-middle-east-in-the-20th-century/](http://teachmideast.org/articles/timeline-of-the-middle-east-in-the-20th-century/).