A deep and complex tale of struggle, power, and hope

OPG
WORLD SCHOOL
Presenting the future

THE
MENA
MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA
CONFLICT

ONE STOP GUIDE

CONTENT

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

As a history teacher, I've often told my students that understanding the present requires a firm grasp of the past. The ongoing MENA (Middle East and North Africa) conflict is a complex mix of history, politics, power struggles, and social challenges — and this edition of our magazine aims to make it clearer and easier to understand.

For MUN enthusiasts and young researchers, this topic is very important. It is one of the most discussed issues in global forums. Whether you're preparing for a conference, writing a position paper, or just trying to understand international affairs better, learning about the MENA conflict will give you a strong foundation.

Inside this magazine, you'll find the key events, timelines, important countries involved, and the reasons behind the conflict — all explained in a simple and structured way. Understanding the history behind the conflict is very important. The current situation did not happen overnight. It has been shaped by years of wars, foreign interference, political decisions, and unresolved issues. Without knowing what happened in the past, it is very hard to understand why things are happening today. History gives us the background we need to see the bigger picture.

This magazine is your one-stop guide — whether you are new to the topic or looking to deepen your knowledge. But remember, learning doesn't stop here. Reading the newspaper regularly is also very important. It keeps you updated and helps you connect what you've learned to what's happening in the world right now.

We encourage you to use this issue not just for academic purposes, but to build a more informed and empathetic view of global issues. Conflicts affect real people, real communities, and real lives. The more we understand, the more thoughtful our discussions, solutions, and leadership will be — both in MUN committees and in the world beyond.

Happy reading, and stay curious.

Warm regards,
Swati Shukla
Editor & History Educator

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S DESK

Dear Readers,

Before anything else, I'd like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my History teacher- Ms. Swati Shukla Ma'am for giving me the opportunity to pursue this idea — an idea that began simply with a conversation about how scattered and unreliable research sources can be when it comes to the MENA conflict. Thank you for believing in this vision and guiding me throughout.

A big thank you to our Principal- Ms. Namrata Ma'am and Kirti Ma'am for their constant encouragement and support — your faith in student-led initiatives like this truly inspires us to think bigger and do better.

I also want to extend my appreciation to the amazing junior graphic team — Hriday Dawra, Harshaan Sidhu, Gauri Babbar, Neeyal Ruhial, Saisha Aggarwal, and Tanisha Pandey from Class 10. You all brought this magazine to life with vibrant visuals, thoughtful design, and a touch of creativity that makes this issue engaging and far from boring. It's informative — yes — but it's also something you'll want to flip through, explore, and revisit. This magazine was born out of a simple need — to make research accessible, reliable, and structured. As someone who has spent hours preparing for MUNs and debates, I know how overwhelming it can be when facts are scattered and sources contradict each other. This issue aims to bring clarity amidst that chaos — a one-stop guide backed by real data, historical background, UN reports, and even easy-to-understand maps.

This is not a one-time project. Starting this year, we plan to bring out four issues annually, each focusing on a key global or national theme that matters — for students, for delegates, and for curious minds.

In a world where opinions often overshadow facts, I hope this magazine reminds you of the power of informed thinking. Let it inspire you to dig deeper, question more, and never stop learning. Because true change begins not just with loud voices — but with well-informed ones.

Warmly,
Bhavya Sharma
Editor-in-Chief | Class 12 Humanities

THE

Morocco

Tunisia

Lebanon

Jordan

Syria

Iran

Afghanistan

Iraq

Egypt

Pakistan

Kuwait

Bahrain

Saudi Arabia

UAE

Qatar

Algeria

Oman

Yemen

Libya

Djibouti

Somalia

Sudan

MENA
REGION

Beit
Beit Lahia Hanoun
Jabalya

Gaza City

ISRAEL

Med.
Sea

GAZA

Al Qarara

Bani
Suheila
Khan
Younis   Khuza'a

RAFAH

4 MILES

Rafah

EGYPT   Rafah
             crossing

THE GAZA STRIP

2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The roots of today's conflicts in the MENA region stretch back hundreds of years, to the era of empires and colonialism.

The Ottoman Empire, which controlled much of the region for centuries, fell after World War I. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 between Britain and France divided the Ottoman lands into spheres of influence. These artificial borders created new states, often grouping hostile or conflicting ethnic, religious, and tribal communities together under one roof. This was particularly evident in countries like Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, where Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish populations were thrust into countries with little regard for their historical divisions.

The biggest event of the 20th century that would go on to shape the region was the creation of Israel in 1948. After World War II, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state. The creation of Israel displaced over 700,000 Palestinian Arabs and sparked a series of wars and conflicts with neighboring Arab countries. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which started with violent clashes in 1948, continues to this day.

THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION of 1952

One of the most significant early movements was the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, which resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic under Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser sought to modernize Egypt, advocating for pan-Arab unity and a socialist agenda. His leadership became a symbol for Arab nationalism across the region. Egypt's wars with Israel in 1956 and 1967, however, showed the limitations of Nasser's ideals and military capabilities. The Six-Day War of 1967 was particularly devastating for the Arab world, as Israel decisively defeated the combined forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, capturing the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. This event deeply affected Arab unity and led to a series of military, political, and economic shifts.

THE RISE OF PAN-ARABISM AND THE DECLINE OF NATIONALISM

Throughout the mid-20th century, Arab nationalism gained traction, with leaders like Nasser calling for the unification of the Arab world. However, the defeat in the Six-Day War led to a decline in pan-Arab sentiment and a focus on individual state interests. Nationalism fractured as countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Egypt pursued their own paths, often in conflict with one another.

The rise of Islamism also began to reshape the region in the 1970s, particularly after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The overthrow of the Shah in Iran and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini introduced a new form of governance based on Islamic law. This revolution would inspire Islamic movements across the region and lead to a new kind of conflict: one defined by the struggle between secular and religious political systems.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

"A deep-rooted struggle over land, identity, and sovereignty."

• Historical Background

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most well-known and long-lasting conflicts in the world. Its roots go back to the early 20th century when both Jews and Arabs claimed the same land —Palestine. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, issued by the British government, supported the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. This led to increasing Jewish immigration to Palestine, which had been under British mandate since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. After World War II, in 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem as an international city. The Jews accepted the partition, but the Arabs rejected it, and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 broke out as soon as Israel declared independence. As a result, Israel expanded its territory, and more than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced, becoming refugees.

Key Events and Wars

• Arab-Israeli War 1948

The immediate result of Israel's declaration of independence was the invasion by neighboring Arab states. Despite being outnumbered, Israel emerged victorious, leading to the displacement of Palestinian Arabs.

"Peace will remain elusive until both justice and coexistence find common ground."

48,219 PALESTINIANS KILLED
1,706 ISRAELIS KILLED

- **Suez Crisis: 1956**
Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal led an invasion by Israel, Britain, and France. Although the military operation was successful, international pressure led to a ceasefire.

- **Six-Day War: 1967**
Israel preemptively struck Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, capturing large territories, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. This war significantly changed the territorial landscape and deepened the conflict, with Israel occupying Palestinian territories.

- **Yom Kippur War: 1973**
Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel to reclaim territory lost in 1967. Though Israel won the war, the Arab countries made diplomatic gains, and peace efforts began in earnest.

Recent Developments:
The conflict has been characterized by multiple wars, uprisings (Intifadas), and failed peace efforts. The Oslo Accords in the 1990s marked the first direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), resulting in partial recognition of Palestinian autonomy. However, issues such as the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, refugee rights, and the establishment of a Palestinian state have remained unresolved.

Ceasefire Agreement of 2025

In January 2025, after more than a year of intense conflict, Israel and Hamas reached a significant ceasefire agreement, effectively ending the hostilities that had been ravaging the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was brokered by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, marking a key moment in the ongoing peace efforts. The agreement involved several important components:

- **Hostage Exchange:**
Hamas agreed to release hostages, including infants, children, women, and elderly men, who had been captured during the October 7, 2023, attacks. In return, Israel committed to releasing Palestinian prisoners, many of whom had been involved in attacks against Israelis. The exchange began on January 19, 2025, as part of the deal to ensure the return of all hostages.

- **Humanitarian Aid:**
The agreement facilitated the entry of aid trucks carrying food, medical supplies, and fuel into the Gaza Strip, helping alleviate the severe humanitarian crisis. The flow of humanitarian assistance through Israeli and Egyptian border crossings was a key element of the agreement.

- **Ceasefire Implementation:**
The ceasefire was set to begin on January 19, 2025, but due to procedural delays, it commenced at 11:15 AM local time. Both parties agreed to halt military operations, including airstrikes and rocket attacks, creating a rare moment of calm in the region.
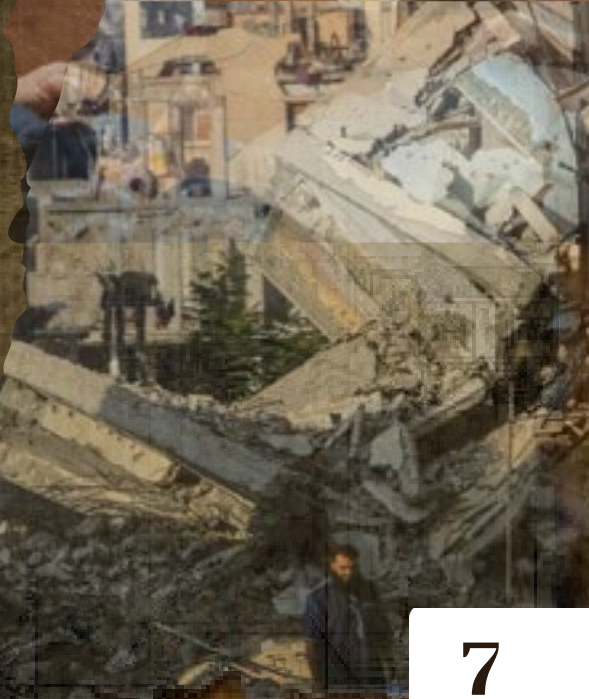
Political Dynamics:

The ceasefire agreement followed intense diplomatic efforts, with the outgoing U.S. administration of President Joe Biden and the incoming administration of President Donald Trump playing pivotal roles. While President Biden's administration had facilitated talks, President Trump's influence was crucial in pushing Israel to accept the agreement, emphasizing the importance of securing the return of hostages before his inauguration. Trump remarked that Gaza would "never again serve as a terrorist safe haven," indicating a shift in the geopolitical landscape.

Non-State Actors:

• Hamas, the Islamist militant group that controls the Gaza Strip, played a central role in the conflict and the ceasefire agreement. Hamas has long been opposed to Israel's existence, advocating for armed resistance. However, the group has also engaged in negotiations, particularly when it benefits their political objectives.

• Hezbollah, another major non-state actor, also maintains a hostile stance against Israel, often complicating peace efforts by influencing events in Lebanon and Syria. Both groups have been involved in various proxy actions supported by regional powers like Iran.

Impact-

This ceasefire agreement marks a rare breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, offering hope for de-escalation and addressing the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza. However, the long-term success of the ceasefire is uncertain, as the underlying issues, such as territorial disputes, the status of Jerusalem, and the rights of Palestinian refugees, remain unresolved. The world continues to monitor the situation closely, hoping that this agreement can lay the groundwork for a more permanent and lasting peace.

To conclude, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most intractable and emotionally charged conflicts in modern history. While the 2025 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas offers temporary relief, the deeper political, historical, and social challenges that have fueled the conflict for decades still exist. The future of peace in the region depends on continued diplomatic efforts, mutual trust-building, and the willingness of both sides to address the root causes of the dispute.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR
1980–1988

The Iran-Iraq War began when Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in September 1980, following the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The revolution, which overthrew the Shah of Iran and brought Ayatollah Khomeini to power, transformed Iran into an Islamic Republic. Saddam Hussein, fearing the spread of the Islamic revolution to his Sunni-led Iraq, saw an opportunity to strike Iran while it was recovering from the revolution.

The Invasion of Iran (1980)-
Saddam Hussein's forces initially made advances into Iranian territory, but Iran quickly mobilized its forces and counterattacked, leading to a prolonged and bloody stalemate.
In addition, Iraq used chemical weapons such as mustard gas and nerve agents, against not only Iranian forces, but Kurdish civilians too in northern Iraq, leading to over 100,000 deaths.

Tanker War-
The conflict spread to the Persian Gulf, with both sides targeting each other's oil tankers, leading to disruptions in global oil supplies.

The End of the War (1988)-
After eight years of intense fighting, both sides suffered heavy losses (an estimated 500,000 deaths) and agreed to a ceasefire brokered by the United Nations. However, the war left Iraq economically weakened and politically isolated.

The war severely strained Iraq's economy and infrastructure, and it set the stage for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which triggered the Gulf War. Iran, on the other hand, emerged from the war with its political leadership strengthened, although the war's costs remained a heavy burden.

Total casualties: 1,000,000+ killed
Estimated 500,000+ on both sides

THE GULF WAR

The Gulf War was sparked by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of overproducing oil and driving prices down, hurting Iraq's oil-dependent economy. Hussein also claimed that Kuwait was part of Iraq and sought to annex the small, wealthy nation.

Key Events-

• Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait (1990): In response to Iraq's invasion, a coalition of 34 countries, led by the United States, intervened to expel Iraqi forces.
• Operation Desert Storm (1991): A massive aerial bombing campaign led by U.S. forces crippled Iraq's military infrastructure. This was followed by a ground assault that rapidly defeated the Iraqi forces and liberated Kuwait.

The Aftermath

Iraq was left with severe economic damage, and the conflict weakened Saddam Hussein's regime. The U.S. also imposed sanctions on Iraq, setting the stage for future military actions.

The Gulf War established the U.S. as a dominant military power in the region and led to the imposition of sanctions on Iraq, which contributed to the country's suffering throughout the 1990s. Saddam Hussein remained in power, but Iraq was left politically isolated and economically weakened.

**Kuwait: 1,000+ civilians killed
Iraq: 3,664 Iraqis killed
Israel and Saudi Arabia: 75 civilians killed**

THE IRAQ WAR

2003-2011

The Iraq War was launched by the United States in March 2003 under President George W. Bush, following the belief that Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, was developing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and had ties to terrorism. Despite the lack of evidence, the U.S. and its allies invaded Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein and prevent Iraq from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Key Events-

Invasion and Fall of Saddam Hussein (2003): U.S.-led forces quickly overthrew Saddam Hussein's regime, but no WMDs were found, raising questions about the legitimacy of the invasion.

The Insurgency and Civil War (2003–2007): The power vacuum created by Saddam's removal led to a brutal insurgency, as Sunni insurgents, Shiite militias, and al-Qaeda in Iraq fought for control.

The Rise of ISIS (2014): The instability created by the Iraq War facilitated the rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), a violent extremist group that seized vast territories in Iraq and Syria.

U.S. Withdrawal (2011): After years of insurgency and sectarian violence, the U.S. withdrew its troops from Iraq in 2011, leaving a fragile government behind.

1.2 MILLION+ DEATHS
268,000 INJURED

Impact- The Iraq War created severe instability in the country, leading to ongoing violence, sectarian divisions, and the rise of ISIS. The war was costly, both in human lives and financially, and had long-term consequences for the broader Middle East, fueling further conflicts in the region.

The Syrian Civil War

2011-Present

The Syrian Civil War began in 2011 as part of the wider Arab Spring protests. Initially, Syrians took to the streets to demand democratic reforms and the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, who had ruled the country since 2000. The Assad government responded with violent crackdowns on protestors, leading to an escalation of violence and the eventual outbreak of civil war.

Key Events:

The Escalation (2011–2013):
What began as peaceful protests soon turned into an armed conflict between the Assad government and various rebel groups, including both moderate and Islamist factions.

• **International Intervention (2013–Present):**
Iran and Russia supported Assad's government, while the U.S. and Turkey backed various rebel groups. ISIS also emerged as a major player, initially battling both Assad's forces and the opposition.

• **The Siege of Aleppo (2016):**
The city of Aleppo became a focal point of the war, with both sides fighting for control, leading to widespread destruction and civilian casualties.

• **Chemical Attacks and Global Tensions:**
The use of chemical weapons by Assad's forces in 2013 led to international condemnation, and the U.S. launched missile strikes in response.

Impact-

The Syrian Civil War has caused one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history, with hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of displaced persons, and a fractured country. It remains a proxy war, with global powers pursuing competing interests, and continues to destabilize the region.

617,910 killed

The Yemen Civil War

The Yemen Civil War began in 2014 when Houthi rebels, a Shiite militia, seized control of the capital, Sanaa, and overthrew the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The Houthis are supported by Iran, while Saudi Arabia has led a coalition to restore Hadi's government.

Key Events-

The Saudi-led Intervention (2015):

Saudi Arabia, fearing the rise of Iranian influence on its southern border, launched a military intervention to defeat the Houthis. The war has been marked by airstrikes, blockades, and ground fighting, leading to widespread suffering.

Humanitarian Crisis:

Yemen has faced one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with famine, disease, and a lack of basic services affecting millions of people.

Impact- The Yemen war is a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with devastating consequences for the civilian population. It has further destabilized the region and contributed to the rise of extremist groups like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)

377,000 KILLED

13

The role of
NON STATE ACTORS

While states play a central role in these conflicts, non-state actors—groups that aren't tied to any specific country but have significant political and military power—have been instrumental in fueling tensions and violence in MENA. These groups often operate in the shadows of governments and wield influence far beyond their size.

ISIS: A TERRORIST CALIPHATE

One of the most significant non-state actors in the MENA region over the last decade was ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Originally an offshoot of al-Qaeda, ISIS rose to power in 2014 when it seized large parts of Iraq and Syria. The group declared the creation of a self-styled caliphate, with its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, claiming religious and political authority over all Muslims.

ISIS's brutal tactics shocked the world—public beheadings, mass executions, and the destruction of cultural heritage sites. The group was responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians and the displacement of millions. At its peak, ISIS controlled large swaths of territory, including cities like Mosul and Raqqa. However, an international coalition, including the U.S., Kurdish forces, and other regional actors, eventually defeated ISIS in 2019. Yet, the group's influence remains as it continues to operate in rural areas of Iraq and Syria, where it can still inspire violence.

ISIS was more than just a terrorist group—it was a symptom of deeper issues. It thrived in the chaos of Syria's civil war, fueled by sectarian divisions, and the lack of effective governance in both Iraq and Syria. Despite its defeat, ISIS's legacy of extremism continues to shape the region.

Hezbollah

The Shiite Power in Lebanon

Another influential non-state actor is Hezbollah, a Shiite militant group based in Lebanon. Created in the 1980s in response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon, Hezbollah has grown into a powerful force, both militarily and politically. It is supported by Iran, which provides weapons and funding, and has a strong ideological link to the Shiite theocratic regime in Tehran.

Hezbollah has been involved in several conflicts with Israel, most notably the 2006 Lebanon War, which ended in a stalemate but demonstrated Hezbollah's strength as an armed group. The group's involvement in Syria since 2012, where it fought alongside Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government, further entrenched its position as a major regional player. Hezbollah's military capabilities, including missiles and drones, have made it a threat to Israel and a destabilizing force in the region.

Hezbollah is not only a military force—it is deeply embedded in Lebanese politics, where it holds significant sway and is one of the country's main political factions. The group's actions have long been a source of tension with other Lebanese political forces, as well as with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which see Hezbollah as an Iranian proxy
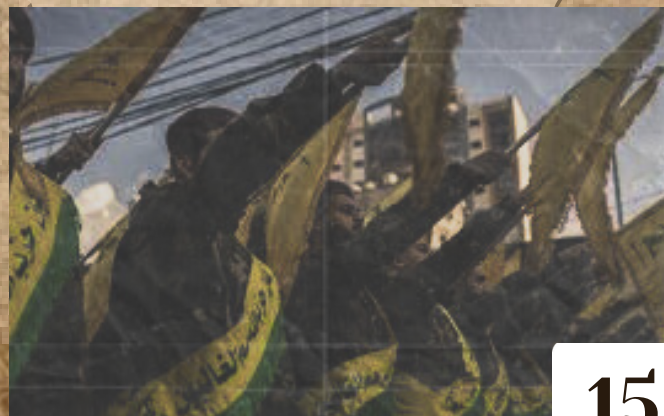
Hamas

The Palestinian struggle

Hamas, a Sunni Islamist group based in the Gaza Strip, is another non-state actor that plays a significant role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hamas emerged in 1987 during the First Intifada (Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation) as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Unlike the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Fatah, Hamas rejects negotiations with Israel and aims to establish an Islamic state in historic Palestine, which includes modern-day Israel.

Hamas controls the Gaza Strip and has been in a constant state of conflict with Israel. The group's rocket attacks on Israeli cities and Israel's airstrikes on Gaza have led to repeated cycles of violence, with both sides suffering heavy casualties. Hamas has received support from Iran, and its actions have complicated the broader peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Proxy Wars

Many of the conflicts in MENA are not just about local struggles—they are also proxy wars between regional and global powers. Iran and Saudi Arabia, two of the most powerful countries in the region, are locked in a bitter rivalry for regional dominance. This rivalry has played out in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, where each side supports opposing factions to gain strategic advantage.

Iran and Russia vs. Saudi Arabia and the West

The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, quickly turned into a proxy war. On one side, you have Bashar al-Assad's regime, which is backed by Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah. On the other side, various rebel groups, some supported by the U.S., Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, have fought to overthrow Assad's government. Iran and Russia have provided military support to Assad, while the West and Turkey have provided aid and weapons to the opposition. This conflict is more than just a battle for control of Syria—it's part of a larger struggle for influence in the region. Iran sees the survival of Assad's regime as essential to maintaining its influence in the Levant, while Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have supported efforts to remove Assad as part of their broader strategy to limit Iran's reach.

Yemen and the Saudi-Iranian Rivalry

In Yemen, the conflict has become another proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Houthi rebels, a Shiite militia backed by Iran, seized the capital, Sanaa, in 2014, and began advancing toward other parts of Yemen. In response, Saudi Arabia and several other Gulf states launched an air campaign in 2015 to support the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The war has caused a massive humanitarian disaster, with millions of people displaced, thousands killed, and the country's infrastructure destroyed. While the conflict is framed as a civil war, it is heavily influenced by the larger regional struggle between Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia and Shia-majority Iran.

The Saudi-Iran rivalry has had significant repercussions for **global oil markets,** given that both countries are major oil producers. Disruptions in oil production or transportation due to conflicts -such as the 2019 attack on Saudi oil facilities- can cause global oil prices to spike, which impacts the global economy.

Moreover, instability in the region makes trade routes, like the **Strait of Hormuz, vulnerable to disruptions, as about 20% of the world's oil passes through this strategic waterway.**

Impact: Any disruption in the flow of oil and natural gas from the region leads to volatility in global markets. This can cause rising fuel prices and influence energy policies in countries outside the MENA region. Additionally, conflicts in MENA can lead to economic sanctions, such as those imposed on Iran and Venezuela, which further strain the global economy

Iran's nuclear program

Iran's nuclear ambitions have been at the center of global attention since the early 2000s. The West, particularly the United States, has expressed concern that Iran may be seeking to develop nuclear weapons, which would significantly alter the strategic balance in the region. This issue led to the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - JCPOA), which was intended to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. However, the U.S. withdrawal from the deal in 2018 under President Donald Trump, and Iran's subsequent violations of the agreement, have reignited fears of nuclear proliferation.

Impact-

If Iran develops nuclear weapons, it would likely lead to a nuclear arms race in the region, with countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt potentially pursuing their own nuclear programs. The prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran is a major factor behind the ongoing tensions between Iran and its regional adversaries, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia. It also complicates the broader MENA conflicts, as nuclear weapons would escalate any regional dispute into a potential catastrophe.

Israel's nuclear program

Although Israel has never officially confirmed or denied its nuclear capabilities, it is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons. Israel's nuclear arsenal has been a major factor in the country's defense strategy and its ability to deter hostile neighbors. The existence of nuclear weapons in the region, particularly in the context of unresolved conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian issue, adds an unpredictable element to regional security.

Impact- Israel's nuclear arsenal acts as a deterrent, but it also fuels tensions with neighboring countries, especially those that do not recognize Israel's right to exist, such as Iran. The idea of nuclear weapons in the MENA region also raises fears of accidental escalation or the potential for nuclear conflict.

The Environmental Impact of Conflicts in the Mena Region

The wars in this region have caused serious harm to the environment. In countries like Yemen, the ongoing war has destroyed water systems that are already needed for survival in a desert climate. Airstrikes, blockades, and fighting have also destroyed farmland, leaving people without food and worsening the hunger crisis.

In Syria, the situation is similar, with farms being ruined and water systems broken, making it even harder for people to survive. The use of chemical weapons, as seen in Syria, has also polluted the land and water, making them unsafe for people and animals. The constant fighting has also caused oil spills and air pollution, which are harming the environment in the long run. The destruction of natural habitats due to bombs and fighting is also pushing endangered wildlife to the brink of extinction.

Cultural Impact

The cultural heritage of the MENA region has also been severely affected by the constant cycle of conflict. Ancient sites, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Syria, Iraq, and Libya, have been destroyed or severely damaged by bombing and military operations. Historical monuments, mosques, churches, and other significant structures have been reduced to rubble, erasing centuries of rich cultural history. The displacement of millions of people, coupled with the destruction of communities, has led to the loss of traditional practices, languages, and cultural identities. Refugee communities, often in neighboring countries, struggle to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to new and unfamiliar environments. This loss of culture not only affects the communities but also robs future generations of their historical roots.
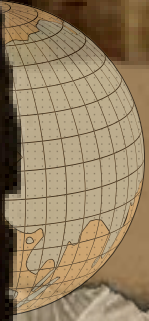
Long -Term Effects

The long-term effects of these conflicts are multifaceted. Economically, the destruction is massive. Infrastructure like roads, schools, hospitals, and businesses has been wiped out, making it difficult for countries to rebuild. **The cost of repairing everything** will take many years and billions of dollars. In addition, millions of people have been forced to leave their homes, creating a refugee crisis that will continue for years. These refugees often struggle to survive in new countries, and many may never return to their homes. The psychological damage to people, especially young children who have grown up in war zones, is also massive. Many of them have witnessed violence firsthand and lost family members. This will create long-term **mental health issues that will be passed down to future generations.** Additionally, the wars have created instability, allowing extremist groups to spread their influence, making it even harder to bring peace to the region.

In the future, the MENA region will need a lot of help to rebuild, both physically and emotionally. It will take many years to fix the environment, restore cultural heritage, and heal the wounds of the people. Even if peace agreements are made, the region will need global support to recover from the damages done during these conflicts. It's clear that the environmental, cultural, and long-term effects of these wars will continue to shape the region for many years to come.

THE WESTERN SAHARA WAR

The western sahara has always been one of the most tensed disputed areas of the MENA region, due to its deep history and political ambiguity.

Western Sahara was a colony of Spain up until 1975, as after a resolution by the united nations general assembly asking spain to decolonize western sahara, Spain relinquished its control over the region to a joint administration to Morocco and Mauritania. However, this led to widespread dispute between the two nations and the 'Sahrawi' people, who are the indigenous ethnicity of the region, and claimed themselves to be the rightful owners of the land.

In late 1975, the moroccan government organised the 'green march', a peaceful protest of 350,000 moroccan citizens into the western sahara to establish a moroccan presence. However, this protest quickly turned into a guerilla warfare between morocco and the sahrawis.

It was between the sahrawi national movement, the 'Polsario Front', and the nations of Mauritania and Morocco, that the western sahara war was fought. The western sahara was reached a ceasefire agreement in 1991, with the MINURSO (united states mission for the refferendum in western sahara) promising a referendum on the political independence of western sahara. This referendum, however, was stalled over the ambiguity of politcal statuses and rights of the people of the region and the region itself. This stall has provoked the Polisario Front into repeted threats.

The MENA Conflict Word Search

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L I H C D K O H K A O G H C L
A U M W X T R A U L P S E A B
N P S J T E S K K U P K Z L X
W G N O S Q G H K S E Q B I X
D I M S M V P J I N L T O P F
C A A H O S T I L I A D L H Y
N N J N W H G R M N T Z L A A
T L D J I W O E L E S E A T R
S U K K E S L U H P U Q H E S
J A I G M A K F T O N P W W E
W S M I S H P S H H R H M S N
X H O U C H T X N L I M V N A
S P R X L R Q B C Y Q S U O L
S E I R A S R E V D A V U Z C
J K A L E D B A Z A L E P P O
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Aleppo

Caliphate

Hostil

Mosul

peninsula

Abdel

Aleppo

Hezbollah

Houthis

Nasser

Shiite

Adversaries

Arsenal

Hormuz

Jerusalem

Ottoman

Sinai

24

"Food for Thought"

Because good research doesn't end with answers — it begins with better questions.

1. How different would the MENA region look today if the colonial borders had never been drawn the way they were?
2. Can peace ever be truly achieved without addressing historical injustices?
3. Is it possible for non-state actors like Hamas or Hezbollah to coexist within a peaceful political framework?
4. How much influence should global superpowers have in regional peace processes — and when does it become interference?
5. If history repeats itself, what lessons from the Iran-Iraq War or the Gulf War are we still ignoring today?
6. Does the idea of 'national interest' justify long-term humanitarian consequences?
7. How can youth like us contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding — even when we're far away from the conflict zones?
8. What role does the media play in shaping our understanding of conflicts — and how do we know what to trust?
9. Can nuclear deterrence ever bring true stability, or does it only delay the inevitable?
10. Is peace just the absence of war, or is it something more — like justice, dignity, and equity?

Keep questioning. Keep exploring. Because change begins with curiosity.