

1: Women in Afghanistan by Brooke Boden - Intro to the Modern Middle East

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The Middle East is a geographical and cultural region located primarily in western Asia, but also in parts of northern Africa and southeastern Europe. Egypt in Africa also borders the Mediterranean and is sometimes considered as part of the Middle East, while Turkey and Cyprus literally connect Europe to Asia and oscillate between being called European and Middle Eastern. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, all located just northeast of Turkey, are at times associated with the Middle East, Europe, Asia, or as their own separate region. Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Oman border these waters, with Iraq and Jordan connecting them to the western part of the region. At the center of the Middle East rests the Persian Gulf, cutting into the region and giving it its hook-like shape. The eastern and northern borders of the Middle East are somewhat difficult to define. There are also several unrecognized or partially recognized states within the Middle East. Palestine, which is made up of the Gaza Strip and West Bank regions in and around Israel, declared its independence in 1988 and is currently recognized as independent by many countries, though it is not an official member of the United Nations and is not considered to be its own country by every G-8 nation except Russia. Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia are all located within the Caucasus region around Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Russia and all declared their independence during the 1990s, with limited recognition internationally. Northern Cyprus declared its independence in 1983 but is only recognized as a sovereign state within the UN by Turkey, with every other member considering it as simply part of Cyprus. Some borders within the Middle East are similarly difficult to define as a result of territorial disputes between countries within the region. Some examples include the island of Abu Musa in the Persian Gulf, which is administered by Iran but claimed by the United Arab Emirates, the Golan Heights plateau, which was part of Syria until it was occupied and annexed by Israel during the Six-Day War, and the region of Kurdistan, which is officially a part of northern Iraq but also has an autonomous status. Weather in this climate is very high during the summer and can reach dangerous levels, with parts of Iraq and Iran having recorded feel-like temperatures of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius). Average temperatures during the summer usually rest at around 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius), while the winters are somewhat milder. This climate also has very little rainfall, resulting in large desert regions. The northern regions of the Middle East in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia are closer to a steppe climate, with colder winters but still very little precipitation. The Syrian Desert, which also stretches into Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, combines both traditional desert and steppe geography, while the Arabian Desert around Yemen, Oman, Jordan, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf contains more of the rolling sand dunes which often characterize desert imagery. The Sahara Desert, which stretches across northern Africa and which is perhaps the best-known desert in the world, reaches into the Middle East by way of Egypt. Despite the proliferation of deserts within the region, the Middle East also has several seas, gulfs, and rivers. The massive Tigris and Euphrates rivers begin in the mountains of eastern Turkey, flowing through Syria and Iraq out into the Persian Gulf. Using the most inclusive possible definition of the region as per the outlines listed previously, the total landmass of the Middle East is roughly 3.5 million square miles. The largest countries in the region are Saudi Arabia (1.3 million square miles) and Turkey (1.8 million square miles). The smallest countries in the Middle East are Bahrain (444 square miles) and Cyprus (3,585 square miles). Neolithic humans here made their first transitions from nomadic to agricultural lifestyles by inventing the wheel, basic agriculture, and the beginnings of the written word roughly 12,000 years ago. Ancient Sumer was the first civilization on Earth, and produced the oldest known piece of literature, the Epic of Gilgamesh, which is now over 4,000 years old. This region was also home to the ancient Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian empires, while farther West the Middle East region saw the unification and rise of Ancient Egypt. Several Persian empires originating in modern Iran also rose to dominance in the Middle East, while the Romans and their successor state in the East, the Byzantine Empire, eventually controlled the region from the Mediterranean coasts up to the Euphrates River. The Middle East is also the origin point for many of the religions and belief systems

which help define modern civilizations today. The region was home to the ancient Kingdom of Israel and thus fostered the Jewish religion. Jesus is believed to have been born in Nazareth, which is located in what is now the northern region of Israel, and indeed early Christianity traces its origins back to the Middle East. Several other belief systems also trace their origins to the Middle East, such as the pantheon of Ancient Egyptian gods, the deities of Ancient Sumer, and the Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism of Ancient and Classical Persia. Following the establishment of Islam, much of the Middle East came under control of Arab dynasties, followed by a series of Turkic peoples. The first of these was the Seljuks, followed by the influx of Mongol invasions during the 13th century, and finally by the Ottomans, who established an empire based in Constantinople now Istanbul in the middle of the 15th century. The Ottoman Empire controlled much of the Middle East for several centuries, though there were competing powers such as the Persian Safavids and the growing colonial powers Britain, France, and Russia. The Ottoman Empire was dismantled during the course of World War I, resulting in a vacuum of power in the Middle East in which the British and French occupied further stretches of territory up until the end of World War II, where after a series of conflicts both European powers began to retreat from the region. The 20th century saw the formation of several new nations within the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran which had been previously known as Persia, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Revolutionary activity in Syria resulted in harsh governmental retaliations leading into the prolonged Syrian Civil War, a larger conflict is still ongoing and has killed between 500,000 and 700,000, displaced over 7 million. Demographics of the Middle East Stretching the definition of the Middle East to include its widest borders as per the parameters outlined earlier, the population of the region rests at around 1 billion people. Despite the historical rise and prominence of Islam in the Middle East, the many belief systems which originated in the region allow it to maintain a highly diverse religious makeup today. This being said, Islam is still dominant and is the official state religion in most countries of the region. The two largest denominations of Islam in the Middle East are Sunni and Shia, though Sunni is the more dominant sect in most countries of the region. Orthodox Christianity is the most prominent Christian denomination in the Middle East, with several major groups including the Armenian, Coptic, and Greek Orthodox churches. Israel is unique for being the only country in the world with a majority Jewish population, though it officially has no state religion. Arabic is the most common language in the Middle East. Iraq has two official languages, with Arabic spoken by the majority of its population and Kurdish spoken by in the autonomous Kurdistan region. Persian is the second-most spoken language in the Middle East, and it has specific dialects in the region. The most common form of Persian is Farsi, which is the sole official language of Iran and is spoken by the vast majority of the population there. The Tajiki dialect of Persian is the official language of Tajikistan, with Russian recognized as a regional language, and Dari is the Persian dialect spoken primarily in Afghanistan. Afghanistan actually has two official languages: Dari and Pashto, a Central Asian language related to but separate from Persian. Turkish is the third-most popular language in the Middle East. It is the sole official language of Turkey and one of the two official languages of Cyprus, alongside Greek. Several Middle Eastern nations also have their own languages specific to their country. Urdu is one of the two Hindustani languages alongside Hindi and is the national language of Pakistan, though English is also an official language. Uzbek, a Central Asian Turkic language, is the official language of Uzbekistan, with Russian and Karakalpak also a Turkic language recognized as regional languages. Turkmen, another Turkic language from Central Asia, is the sole official language of Turkmenistan, though Russian has some limited recognition. Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian are the sole official languages for their respective countries. Israel is the only country in the world to have Hebrew as a national language, but there are actually two official languages in the country: Aside from official and national languages, there are also a wide variety of minority languages which are a product of the diverse cultures, patterns of migration, and economic activities of the Middle East.

As this book ends its history in , all of the political efforts and military battles waged by America and its allies in expelling the Taliban from Afghanistan to exile in Pakistan, and then trying to keep the Taliban from re-grouping, are missing.

See Article History Alternative Titles: Lying along important trade routes connecting southern and eastern Asia to Europe and the Middle East , Afghanistan has long been a prize sought by empire builders, and for millennia great armies have attempted to subdue it, leaving traces of their efforts in great monuments now fallen to ruin. In the last quarter of the 20th century, Afghanistan suffered the ruinous effects of civil war greatly exacerbated by a military invasion and occupation by the Soviet Union . The Taliban regime collapsed in December in the wake of a sustained U. Soon thereafter, anti-Taliban forces agreed to a period of transitional leadership and an administration that would lead to a new constitution and the establishment of a democratically elected government. The capital of Afghanistan is its largest city, Kabul. So, too, fared much of the country, its economy in shambles and its people scattered and despondent. By the early 21st century an entire generation of Afghans had come to adulthood knowing nothing but war. Land Afghanistan is completely landlocked—the nearest coast lies along the Arabian Sea , about miles km to the south—and, because of both its isolation and its volatile political history , it remains one of the most poorly surveyed areas of the world. It is bounded to the east and south by Pakistan including those areas of Kashmir administered by Pakistan but claimed by India , to the west by Iran , and to the north by the Central Asian states of Turkmenistan , Uzbekistan , and Tajikistan. Its overall area is roughly twice that of Norway. The outstanding geographic feature of Afghanistan is its mountain range, the Hindu Kush. This formidable range creates the major pitch of Afghanistan from northeast to southwest and, along with its subsidiary ranges, divides Afghanistan into three distinct geographic regions, which roughly can be designated as the central highlands, the northern plains, and the southwestern plateau. On the eastern frontier with Pakistan, several mountain ranges effectively isolate the interior of the country from the moisture-laden winds that blow from the Indian Ocean. This accounts for the dryness of the climate. Physiographic regions The central highlands—actually a part of the Himalayan chain—include the main Hindu Kush range. Its area of about , square miles , square km is a region of deep, narrow valleys and lofty mountains, some peaks of which rise above 21, feet 6, metres. The northern plains region, north of the central highlands, extends eastward from the Iranian border to the foothills of the Pamirs, near the border with Tajikistan. It comprises some 40, square miles , square km of plains and fertile foothills sloping gently toward the Amu Darya the ancient Oxus River. This area is a part of the much larger Central Asian Steppe , from which it is separated by the Amu Darya. The average elevation is about 2, feet metres. The northern plains region is intensively cultivated and densely populated. In addition to fertile soils, the region possesses rich mineral resources, particularly deposits of natural gas. The southwestern plateau, south of the central highlands, is a region of high plateaus, sandy deserts, and semideserts. The average elevation is about 3, feet metres. Most of Afghanistan lies between 2, and 10, feet and 3, metres in elevation. Along the Amu Darya in the north and the delta of the Helmand River in the southwest, the elevation is about 2, feet metres. Page 1 of

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The Taliban have strengthened their grip in Afghanistan over the past three years, according to a new report released by the US government's own ombudsman of the war.

My name is Brooke Boden. I major in public health and after I graduate I plan on pursuing a graduate program in nursing with the ultimate goal of becoming a neonatal nurse. In my spare time I enjoy reading and riding horses. Wikipedia When I was in 10th grade my English class consisted almost solely of reading novels and writing papers on them. That year was especially uncommon when it came to the novels we read as they did not consist of the stuffy classic American novels we had previously read, instead we read more modern novels which told tales about different countries and different cultures. That year I read many novels and learned many things I never knew before, but nothing stood out to me more than *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. Throughout my life all I ever really learned about the Taliban was that they were bad and a threat to America. Growing up there was always the constant worry of what the Taliban was doing. I began to realize how little American society focused on what the people in Afghanistan were going through in particular the war that the Taliban waged against women. What really makes this novel stand out is that it has such a vast timeline in which we can see how drastically Afghanistan changes for women. When I first read this novel I was astounded by the things that happened. Violating any of these rules could result in public beatings, and a crime against a husband could even result in execution. In this chapter, Mariam and Laila finally decide they can no longer cope with the brutality of their husband and decide to run away. Throughout their escape attempt they face many perils at the form of their government, all which showcase the brutality and extreme procedures the Taliban had in place, "This, Laila had known, would be the first risky part, finding a man suitable to pose with them as a family member. The freedoms and opportunities that women had enjoyed between and were a thing of the past now After reading this chapter of their struggle and understanding how serious laws regarding women were enforced, I was intrigued about the reality of what women really faced in Afghanistan. When I first began my research into the political situation of women in Afghanistan, I found an overabundance of stories and facts supporting the story Khaled Hosseini told. There were so many horror stories recounted that I felt sure that this novel was not dramatized in the least. In order to save her son her only choice was to go out without a male escort, in doing so she was shot for not obeying orders. This was only one of many stories I read. However, as previously discussed with the Taliban all of these rights were taken away. Abu-Lughod offers a critical look on this idea and how it relates to colonialism. She questions the motive of the US in getting involved in Afghanistan and comments on the cultural ignorance of what oppression really is. She points out that many times countries take up "the woman cause" in order to have a reason for asserting power. One point in particular I found interesting was when she talked about burkas. Many people in the US view headdresses as oppressing, and in the case of Afghanistan, many saw it as a case of degradation, and while I do believe the Taliban enforced burkas partly due to this reason, the Taliban were not the first to enforce burkas. One region in Afghanistan had already adopted the practice of wearing burkas prior to Taliban rule and as the article pointed out, burkas were more of a way of feeling protected and secure rather than for oppression. Afghan Women Pre-Taliban Source: However, in regards to how he symbolizes the burka throughout the novel, I feel as if he dramatized and made it seem more oppressing than it really was, especially after comparing it to what I read in the article. Overall, I think this is one of my favorite books and it really helped in lifting the ignorance I had when it came to the Middle East. Throughout my analysis and research online into the accuracy, I feel as if it gives a thorough representation to what women really went through during this time. Attached below is Chapter 36 from the novel and my comments along with it: *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Department of State, n.

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What Is The Middle East And What Countries Are Part Of It? The Middle East is a geographical and cultural region located primarily in western Asia, but also in parts of northern Africa and southeastern Europe. The western border of the Middle East is defined by the Mediterranean Sea, where Israel.

The taller Buddha of Bamiyan. Buddhism was widespread before the Islamic conquest of Afghanistan. Archaeological exploration done in the 20th century suggests that the geographical area of Afghanistan has been closely connected by culture and trade with its neighbors to the east, west, and north. Artifacts typical of the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron ages have been found in Afghanistan. Urban civilization is believed to have begun as early as BCE, and the early city of Mundigak near Kandahar in the south of the country may have been a colony of the nearby Indus Valley Civilization. More recent findings established that the Indus Valley Civilisation stretched up towards modern-day Afghanistan, making the ancient civilisation today part of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. In more detail, it extended from what today is northwest Pakistan to northwest India and northeast Afghanistan. The region at the time was referred to as Ariana. Ancient Eastern Iranian languages may have been spoken in the region around the time of the rise of Zoroastrianism. By the middle of the 6th century BCE, the Achaemenids overthrew the Medes and incorporated Arachosia, Aria, and Bactria within its eastern boundaries. An inscription on the tombstone of Darius I of Persia mentions the Kabul Valley in a list of the 29 countries that he had conquered. Much of it soon broke away from them and became part of the Indo-Greek Kingdom. In the mid-to-late first century CE the vast Kushan Empire, centered in Afghanistan, became great patrons of Buddhist culture, making Buddhism flourish throughout the region. The Kushans were overthrown by the Sassanids in the 3rd century CE, though the Indo-Sassanids continued to rule at least parts of the region. They were followed by the Kidarite who, in turn, were replaced by the Hephthalites. Much of the northeastern and southern areas of the country remained dominated by Buddhist culture. The land was collectively recognized by the Arabs as al-Hind due to its cultural connection with Greater India. Before Islam was introduced, people of the region were mostly Buddhists and Zoroastrians, but there were also Surya and Nana worshipers, Jews, and others. Later, the Samanids extended their Islamic influence south of the Hindu Kush. It is reported that Muslims and non-Muslims still lived side by side in Kabul before the Ghaznavids rose to power in the 10th century. Afghanistan became one of the main centers in the Muslim world during this Islamic Golden Age. The Ghaznavid dynasty was overthrown by the Ghurids, who expanded and advanced the already powerful Islamic empire. His troops are said to have annihilated the Khorasanian cities of Herat and Balkh as well as Bamyan. In the early 16th century, Babur arrived from Fergana and captured Kabul from the Arghun dynasty. Between the 16th and 18th century, the Khanate of Bukhara, Safavids, and Mughals ruled parts of the territory. Before the 19th century, the northwestern area of Afghanistan was referred to by the regional name Khorasan. Two of the four capitals of Khorasan Herat and Balkh are now located in Afghanistan, while the regions of Kandahar, Zabulistan, Ghazni, Kabulistan, and Afghanistan formed the frontier between Khorasan and Hindustan. He defeated Gurgin Khan and made Afghanistan independent. Mahmud led the Afghan army in to the Persian capital of Isfahan, captured the city after the Battle of Gulnabad and proclaimed himself King of Persia. In 1722, Nader Shah and his forces captured Kandahar, the last Hotak stronghold, from Shah Hussain Hotak, at which point the incarcerated year-old Ahmad Shah Durrani was freed and made the commander of an Afghan regiment. Soon after the Persian and Afghan forces invaded India. By 1747, the Afghans chose Durrani as their head of state. In October 1773, Durrani died of a natural cause and was buried at a site now adjacent to the Shrine of the Cloak in Kandahar. He was succeeded by his son, Timur Shah, who transferred the capital of Afghanistan from Kandahar to Kabul in 1773. Fateh Khan, leader of the Barakzai tribe, had installed 21 of his brothers in positions of power throughout the empire. After his death, they rebelled and divided up the provinces of the empire between themselves. During this turbulent period, Afghanistan had many temporary rulers until Dost Mohammad Khan declared himself emir in 1826. By this time the British were advancing from the east and the first major conflict during "The Great Game" was initiated. The large

defensive wall around the city was removed in the early s by the order of King Nadir. In , the British marched into Afghanistan and arrested Dost Mohammad , sent him into exile in India and replaced him with the previous ruler, Shah Shuja. This was a standard divide and rule policy of the British and would lead to strained relations, especially with the later new state of Pakistan. Shia -dominated Hazarajat and pagan Kafiristan remained politically independent until being conquered by Abdur Rahman Khan in Zahir Shah , the last king of Afghanistan, who reigned from to A key force behind these reforms was Mahmud Tarzi , an ardent supporter of the education of women. The institution of slavery was abolished in Faced with overwhelming armed opposition, Amanullah Khan was forced to abdicate in January after Kabul fell to rebel forces led by Habibullah Kalakani. He abandoned the reforms of Amanullah Khan in favor of a more gradual approach to modernisation but was assassinated in by Abdul Khaliq , a fifteen-year-old Hazara student. Until , Zahir Shah ruled with the assistance of his uncle, who held the post of Prime Minister and continued the policies of Nadir Shah. Daoud Khan sought a closer relationship with the Soviet Union and a more distant one towards Pakistan. The King built close relationships with the Axis powers.

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6: Taliban and US envoy met, spokesman for insurgent group says - CNN

The Middle East is a transcontinental region centered on Western Asia, Turkey (both Asian and European), and Egypt (which is mostly in North Africa). Saudi Arabia is geographically the largest Middle Eastern nation while Bahrain is the smallest.

7: Taliban control of Afghanistan on the rise, US inspector says - CNN

Southwest Asia (Middle East), was home to some of the wealthiest and most prosperous civilizations of ancient times. People traveled from near and far to visit and trade in the region.

8: Afghanistan - Wikipedia

Middle East 08 Nov GMT Dozens of combatants killed in Hodeidah fighting Houthi rebels incur higher death toll with 47 fighters killed as the battle for the strategic port city rages on.

9: Middle East News – the latest from Al Jazeera

Human habitation in Afghanistan dates back to the Middle Paleolithic Era, and the country's strategic location along the Silk Road connected it to the cultures of the Middle East and other parts of Asia.

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