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The map shows countries in the upper (northern) part of Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula with international borders, national capitals and major cities. The classification of geographical regions of the United Nations includes the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan (and eventually South Sudan), Tunisia and Western Sahara. The Maghrib or Maghrib is a region of North Africa, the term refers to the five North African nations of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania and Libya. Egypt by some definitions is part of the Middle East, geographically it is a transcontinental country, much of the country stretching along the Nile in North Africa while the Sinai Peninsula is in Western Asia. By some definitions, the world's largest peninsula, the Arabian Peninsula, is located in Southwest Asia with the Red Sea in the southwest, the Persian Gulf in the west and the Arabian Sea in the southeast. By political definition, the countries on the peninsula are: Kuwait, the island nation of Bahrain, Qatar, located on the peninsula itself, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the east, Oman in the southeast and Yemen in the south, Saudi Arabia in the center, Israel and the Palestinian territories on the northwestern coast along the Mediterranean Sea. In the northern part of the peninsula is the Syrian Desert, which also includes northeastern Jordan, southeastern Syria and western Iraq. You can use this map for educational purposes, please contact the Nations Online Project. Bookmark/share this page George Friedman From a geographical point of view, the Middle East and North Africa region extends from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Indian Ocean in the east, and from Turkey in the north to Yemen in the south. The main part of the region is located along five waterways: the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Let's look at the five maps below that give a great look at the region as well as the forces that underpin its geopolitics. Map of the Middle East and North Africa #1: Population density As the first map below shows, a key feature of the Middle East is that much of it is sparsely populated. Click to enlarge this is largely due to desert conditions. People in North Africa mostly reside south of the Mediterranean coast. The bulk of Egypt's nearly 90 million people inhabit areas around the Nile River. Most people in the Middle East live in the northern ally of the region, which runs from Iran through Iraq to Syria and into Turkey. Map of the Middle East and North africa #2: The Arabic-speaking population of the Arab majority of the Middle East represents the core of the Muslim world. The map below shows the extent of the spread of Arabic-speaking populations in the region. It also reflects the spread of Islam. Click to enlarge based in year of our way in the city Mecca on the west coast of modern Saudi Arabia, Islam has swept the entire Arabian Peninsula along with the Levant. She also crossed the Persian Gulf to Mesopotamia and Persia. At the same time, Islam has advanced east to and from Egypt, across the North African coast to modern Morocco. The last destination served as a launching pad for crossing the Iberian Peninsula. Map of the Middle East and North Africa #3: The Ottoman Empire of Arabs dominated many of these lands — to preserve for Persia and Anatolia, who accepted Islam but preserved their unique ethnolinguistic features. Anatolia became part of the Middle East only thanks to the Ottoman hardening of the region's presidency in the early 16th century (see map below). Click to increase otherwise, the Arabs under the Omayyad (661–749) and Abbasid (749–1258) were unsuccessful in capturing the lands of the Byzantes north of the Levant. While the Arabs were able to push into the Caucasus and into Central and South Asia, the Persian revival in the form of the Safavid Empire in the early 1500s limited Arab control outside modern Iran. Turkic peoples of all sorts, who converted to Islam, controlled areas north and northeast of the Middle East. It should be noted that the term Middle East was come up in the early 20th century. Before that, the region was called the Middle East. Even though the term Middle East has become uterus, the United States government and scientific circles still call it the Middle East. Map of the Middle East and North Africa #4: Artificial borders The current borders of the region were largely drawn up by the British and French after World War I and in the wake of the implosion of the Ottoman Empire. Click to enlarge however, the region was extremely divided before the Ottoman conquest in the first quarter of the 16th century, going all the way back to the late ninth century, when the Abbasid dynasty began to shrink. Map of the Middle East and North #5: Cultural Divisions Many competing caliphates, sultanates and emirates ruled different parts of the region. Therefore, many ethnic, sectarian, tribal and ideological fault lines today are not just the result of the present national-state era. Click to zoom in on Shambles As it stands today, the Arab core of the Middle East is devout, with non-Arabs politics dominating the region. The four main powers in the region are (in order to reduce capacity) Turkey, Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi kingdom is the only Arab state left behind by the so-called Arab Spring, and it too is not doing well given its inherent weakness and the fact that it is responsible for (Sunni) Arab regional security. Most Arab states in the region switch to non-state actors. This situation allows the proliferation of jihadist groups. Iran and its Shiite allies are also trying to take advantage of the growing chaos in the region to expand their geopolitical sectarian interests. Meanwhile, Turkey is trying to relegation in areas previously occupied by the Ottoman Empire. Elsewhere, the only non-Muslim power in the region, Israel, is trying to manage a new anarchy at all its borders. Grab George Friedman's exclusive e-book, The World Explained in Maps World, explained on Maps, reveals a panorama of geopolitical landscapes affecting today's governments and global financial systems. Don't miss this chance to prepare for the year ahead with direct facts about the current geopolitical climate of every major country and region. You won't find political rhetoric or media hype here. The world explained on Maps is an important guide for every investor as 2017 takes shape. Get your copy now - for free! The Middle East is a geographical and cultural region located primarily in western Asia, but also in parts of north Africa and southeastern Europe. The western border of the Middle East is defined by the Mediterranean Sea, where Israel, Lebanon and Syria rest opposite Greece and Italy in Europe. Egypt in Africa also borders the Mediterranean and is sometimes seen as part of the Middle East, while Turkey and Cyprus literally connect Europe to Asia and fluctuate between being called European and Middle Eastern. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, all located northeast of Turkey, are sometimes associated with the Middle East, Europe, Asia or as their own separate region. South of the Mediterranean, the Red and Arabian Seas surround the southern part of the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman border these waters, and Iraq and Jordan connect them to the western part of the region. In the middle of the Middle East rests the Persian Gulf, crashing into the region and giving it its hook-like shape. Gulf countries include the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Iran. The eastern and northern borders of the Middle East are somewhat difficult to define. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan border Iran in the east, but Pakistan's shared history with India makes it sometimes seen as part of South Asia instead of the Middle East. Some countries bordering Iran and northern Afghanistan, such as Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, are sometimes incorporated into the northern borders of the Middle East, but other times are seen as their own Central Asian region alongside Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. There are also several unrecognized or partially recognized states within the Middle East. Palestine, which consists of regions of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in and around Israel, declared its independence in 1988 and is now recognized as an independent by 134 countries, although it is not an official member nations and are not considered their countries of each G-8 country, except Russia. Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh and South Ossetia are located within the Caucasus region around Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia and all proclaimed their independence during the 1990s, with limited recognition internationally. Northern Cyprus declared its independence in 1983 but is recognized only as a sovereign state at the UN by Turkey, with every other member regarding it as just part of Cyprus. Some borders within the Middle East are just as difficult to identify as a result of territorial disputes between countries in the region. Some examples include the Gulf island of Abu Musa, which is administered by Iran, claimed by the United Arab Emirates, a Plateau of the Golan Heights that was part of Syria until it was occupied and annexed by Israel during the Six-Day War, and the Kurdistan region, which is officially part of northern Iraq but also has autonomous status. Geography of the Middle East Most middle eastern region is characterized by a warm desert climate. The weather in this climate is very high over the summer and can reach dangerous levels, with parts of Iraq and Iran fixing feel like temperatures over 160 degrees Fahrenheit (71 degrees Celsius). Average temperatures during summer usually rest at around 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 degrees Celsius), while winters are somewhat milder. This climate also has very little precipitation, resulting in large desert regions. Areas of the Middle East surrounding the Mediterranean, such as Israel and Lebanon, instead boast a warm Mediterranean climate similar to parts of Greece and Italy, while Turkey's territory stretches over different adpices and continental climates. The northern regions of the Middle East in Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia are closer to the steppe climate, with colder winters but still very little rainfall. As a result of its adring climate in the Middle East is home to several of the largest deserts in the world. The Syrian desert, which also extends 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 sand dunes that often characterize desert images. Indeed, Rub 'al-Khali, or Empty Quarter, in the heart of the Arabian Desert is the largest sand-only desert on the planet and gets as little as 1.2 inches (30 millimeters) of rain a year. The Sahara Desert, which stretches across north Africa and which is perhaps the most famous desert in the world, reaches the Middle East by way of Egypt. Despite the proliferation of deserts within the region, the Middle East also has several seas, bays and rivers. He shares the Mediterranean with Africa and the Black and Caspian Seas with Eastern Europe. The famous Suez Canal and the Gulf of Suez run between the African territory of Egypt and its Sinai region bordering Israel in Asia, while the equally famous Nile River flows from the Mediterranean through Egypt and well into the African continent. The dead sea borders Israel in the West and Jordan to the East and is among the salt lakes in the world, and is also the lowest point on the Earth's surface, while the Red Sea is shared by both the Western Middle East and parts of East Africa. The massive Tigris and Euphrates rivers begin in the mountains of eastern Turkey flowing through Syria and Iraq into the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf, along with the Gulf of Arden and Oman, connect central and southern parts of the Middle East from the Arabian Sea and eventually the Indian Ocean. Using the most inclusive possible definition of the region according to the outlines listed earlier, the total land mass of the Middle East is approximately 3.82 million square miles (9.9 million square kilometers). The largest countries in the region are Saudi Arabia (800,000 square miles or 2.1 million square kilometers), Iran (580,000 square miles or 1.5 million square kilometers), Egypt (384,000 square miles or 995,000 square kilometers) and Pakistan (340,000 square miles or 881,000 square kilometers). The smallest countries in the Middle East are Bahrain (295 square miles or 765 square kilometers), Cyprus (3,568 square miles or 9,241 square kilometers), Lebanon (3,950 square miles or 10.2 thousand square kilometers) and Qatar (4,473 square miles or 11.6 thousand square kilometers). The history of the Middle East Middle East is often referred to as the Cosse of Civilization, and a brief look at the history of the region clearly explains why this is true. This part of the world, and especially the Mesopotamia region around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, is home to many of humanity's first achievements. The Neolithic people here made their first transitions from nomadic to agricultural lifestyle, inventing the wheel, mainstream agriculture and the beginnings of the written word some 12,000 years ago. Ancient Schumer was the first civilization on Earth, and produced the oldest known work of literature, the Epopia of Gilgamesh, which is now more than 4,000 years old. The region was also home to the ancient Accadian, Babylonian and Assyrian empires, while further west the Middle Eastern region saw the unification and rise of ancient Egypt. Several Persian empires coming from modern Iran also rose to dominance in the Middle East, while the Romans and their successor state in the East, the Byzantine Empire, ultimately controlled the region from the Mediterranean coast to the Euphrates River. The Middle East is also a point of origin for many religions and beliefs that help define modern civilizations today. The region was home to the ancient Kingdom of Israel and thus promoted the Jewish religion. Jesus is believed to have been born in Nazareth, which is in what is now Israel's northern region, and indeed early Christianity traces its origins back to the Middle East. The region is also the birthplace of Islam, as the Prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca (now the capital of Saudi Arabia) in about 570 years of ours. Several other belief systems also trace their origins in the Middle East, such as the pantheon of ancient Egyptian gods, the deity of ancient Schumer, and the Zoroasterism and Manichaeism of ancient and classical Persia. After the establishment of Islam much of the Middle East came under the control of Arab dynasties, followed by a number of Turkic peoples. The first of these was the Seljuks, followed by the influx of Mongol invasions during the 13th century, and finally the Ottomans who created an empire based in Constantinople (now Istanbul) in the mid-15th century. The Ottoman Empire has controlled much of the Middle East for several centuries, although there have been competing states such as the Persian safavids and the growing colonial powers of Britain, France and Russia. The Ottoman Empire was dismantled during World War I, resulting in a power vacuum in the Middle East in which the British and French occupied further stretches of territory until the end of World War II, where after a series of conflicts, both European powers began to retreat from the region. In the 20th century, several new countries in the Middle East were formed, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran (formerly known as Persia), Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Israel. During this century, the region has also seen a number of major conflicts, such as the Arab-Israeli war, the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War. The recent history of the Middle East during the 21st century has also been marred by violence. The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 prompted an invasion of Afghanistan and later Iraq as part of the ongoing war on terror, while a series of revolutions that began in 2010 called the Arab Spring included large protests and the overthrow of dictatorial regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Revolutionary activity in Syria has led to harsh government retaliation that has led to syria's ongoing civil war, a larger conflict still ongoing and has killed between 250,000 and 470,000, moved more than 7.5 million within Syria and forced more than 4 million people to flee the country as refugees. New militant terrorist organizations have also seized the region in recent years, especially the Taliban in Afghanistan; Al Qaeda, which carried out the attacks on September 11, 2011; Islamic State (IS), also known as ISIS (Islamic State) and Syria), ISIS (Islamic State of Syria and the Levant) or Daesh, which has proclaimed its own state and caliphate with the intention of forcibly implementing its own interpretation of Islam and sharia law. Middle East demographics stretching middle east definitions include its broadest boundaries by parameters outlined earlier, with the region's population of about 690 million people. The most populous countries in the Middle East include Pakistan (~193 million), Egypt (~90.6 million), Iran (~79 million) and Turkey (~78.7 million), while the least populated countries are Cyprus (~1.1 million), Bahrain (~1.4 million), Qatar (~2.4 million) and Armenia (~3 million). Despite the historical rise and popularity of Islam in the Middle East, many of the belief systems that have emerged in the region allow it to maintain a very diverse religious makeover today. Indeed, of the entire global Muslim population, only approximately 20% live in the Middle East. This is said to still dominate Islam and is the official state religion in most countries in the region. More than 90% of people in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Yemen adhere to Islam, while Muslims account for between 50-89% of the population in Bahrain, Lebanon, Katterfi, Syria, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates. Islam's two largest denominations in the Middle East are Sunni and Shia, although Sunni is the more dominant sect in most countries in the region. The countries, which have Shiite majorities in the Middle East, are Bahrain, Iraq and Iran. Shiite Islam is specifically the official religion of Iran, which is the country with the highest percentage of its supporters in the world (90-96%) and with the world's largest population (30-35%). Orthodox Christianity is the most prominent Christian denomination in the Middle East, With several main groups, including the Armenian, Coptic and Greek Orthodox churches. Christianity is the dominant religion in Armenia, Cyprus and Georgia, and the Christian minority population is at least 10% in Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar, Syria, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates. Lebanon is particularly noted for being almost even split between Islam and Christianity. , being approximately 54% Muslim and 40% Christian and having a Christian as their president. Israel is unique in being the only country in the world with the majority Jewish population, although it does not officially have a state religion. Approximately 75% of its population adheres to Judaism, about 17% observing Islam. Among Israel's Jewish population, approximately 66% are secular, 26.5% Orthodox, 3.2% conservative and 3.9% reform. Arabic is the most common language in the Middle East. It is the only official language in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, united Arab Emirates and Yemen. Iraq has two official languages spoken by most of its population and Kurdish, spoken in the autonomous region of Kurdistan. The Persian language is the second most common language in the Middle East, and it has specific dialects in the region. The most common form of Persian is Farsi, which is the official language of Iran and is spoken there by the vast majority of the population. The Tajiki dialect of the Persian language is the official language of Tajikistan, with Russian recognized as a regional language, and Dari is a Persian dialect spoken mainly in Afghanistan. Afghanistan actually has two official languages: Dari and Pashto, a Central Asian language associated with (but separate from) Persian. Turkish is the third most popular language in the Middle East. It is turkey's only official language and one of cyprus' two official languages, along with Greek. Several Middle Eastern countries also have their own languages specific to their country. Urdu is one of two Hindu languages (along with Hindu) and is pakistan's national language, although English is also the official language. Uzbek, a Central Asian Turkic language, is the official language of Uzbekistan, with Russian and Karakalpak (also Turkic), recognized in regional languages. Turkmen, another Turkic language from Central Asia, is the only official language in Turkmenistan, although Russian has some limited recognition. Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian are the only official languages for the respective countries. Israel is the only country in the world that has Hebrew as a national language, but in fact the country has two official languages: Hebrew and Arabic. In addition to official and national languages, there is also a wide range of minority languages, which are the product of different cultures, models of migration and economic activity of the Middle East. These spoken languages include (but are not limited to) Berber, Circais, English, French, Gagauz, Hindi, Romani, Russian, Somalia, and several modern Aramaic dialects. Other resources

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