Questions/Main ideas:

**Arab-Israeli conflict**

The Middle East covers the territory from Morocco to Turkey, as well as countries bordering the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Persian Gulf.

The strategic regions huge oil resources , have made the area attractive to the developed world throughout the 20th Century

Britain and France maintained a power base in the region prior to WWII because of the mandate system.

The USSR and the US tried to impose their presence in the region after WWII with a view to influencing events in the strategic area.

Hostility between the Jews and Arabs have helped to fuel tension in the region.

Both the Americans and Soviets acted as arms suppliers and negotiators in the area though they never directly confronted one another

**A Jewish Homeland And The Creation Of Israel**

The creation of the new Jewish state, Israel, out of the British mandate of Palestine in 1948, combined with the displacement of Palestinian Arabs in the region created the Middle East Problem

Both groups claim the right to the region and each maintains that its survival is dependent on regional control

Members of the Zionist movement began in Europe in the mid 1800’s in the hopes of creating a Jewish state in Palestine to provide a homeland for the Jews of the world (who had frequently experienced horrific prejudice inside various nation-states.) Creation of the State of Israel

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Israel – Continued**

The British, anxious to enlist Jewish support for WWI, issued the Balfour Declaration, which promised British support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The declaration also stated that no action would be taken to infringe on the rights of non-Jewish Palestinians. In the opinion of the Palestinians this was impossible as they believed they had the right to the territory now controlled by the Jews

The US never formally endorsed Zionism. President Wilson did reluctantly approve of the Balfour Declaration and throughout the 1930’s and 40’s the Jewish community in the Protectorate of Palestine received a great deal of support from American Jews

WWII and the Holocaust created a crisis in Palestine as the number of displace Jews from Europe increased and many groups pressured the British to raise the quotas imposed on immigration to Palestine.

In response to the British refusal to raise immigration quotas and the treatment of those Jews who had fled Nazi persecution in Europe, Zionist Forces began attacking both the British and the Arabs.

Tensions rose as refugees were smuggled into Palestine.

When illegal immigrants were caught, they were interned in camps on the island of Cyprus.

Finally the UN stepped in with the support of the Soviets, who wished to see the British leave Palestine, and an agreement was made to separate Palestine into Arab and Jewish states.

On May 14th, 1948, the new Jewish state of Israel was created and granted membership in the United Nations.

Hostilities erupted immediately and war between the Arabs and Jews ensued.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Arab-Israeli War (1948)**

Israel was surrounded on all sides by Arab states who denied Israel’s right to exist. Israel was alone and was vastly outnumbered

Immediately upon the creation of the two states violence broke out

The Arabs, however, were poorly trained at the art of war and unable to unite behind their field commanders.

The Haganah, Israel’s fighting force, was initially limited in size and had a limited number of weapons but the Zionist forces were eventually supplied by the Soviets via Czechoslovakian communists, and partially funded by Zionist supporters in the US, and the new state of Israel instituted a universal draft

With these weapons, the Zionists were able to defend themselves, and by the end of the conflict had expanded their boarders significantly from the area granted to them by the UN

Dr. Ralph Bunche, and American working with the UN encouraged the Arabs and Israelis to disengage in 1949.

The Arabs blamed the USA for the imposition of this Jewish state in the heart of Arab territory even though the Soviets supplied the weapons to Israel.

From this point on, the USA sided with the Israeli’s while the Soviets sided with the Arabs.

Many Arabs were angered by the loss of territory and resented the rising tide of Arab refugees out of Palestine.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The End Of The Arab-Israeli War And The aftermath**

Dr. Ralph Bunche, and American working with the UN encouraged the Arabs and Israelis to disengage in 1949. The Arabs blamed the USA for the imposition of this Jewish state in the heart of Arab territory even though the Soviets supplied the weapons to Israel. From this point on, the USA sided with the Israeli’s while the Soviets sided with the Arabs. Many Arabs were angered by the loss of territory and resented the rising tide of Arab refugees out of Palestine. Many of the soldiers who had fought in the war left the field of battle thinking they would be returning home (they had never considered the consequences of failure) when the fighting was over As many as 900 000 Palestinian Arabs became refugees. Many would occupy refugee camps run by the UN in the West Bank the Gaza Strip or nearby areas. These camps would become an origin of discontent and terrorism

**The Suez Crisis**

The next confrontation between the Arabs and Israelis was Egypt 1956.

July 23 1952 Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser deposed King Farouk of Egypt and became the leading Arab nationalist in the middle east. Nasser wanted to modernize the economy of Egypt and build up its military, so that they could continue the struggle against Israel. Nasser was influenced by the anti-colonial movement that had developed during the 50’s and did not want American or Soviet influences dominating Egypt. Nasser asked the Americans for aid to build the Aswan Dam on the Nile River (in the hopes of providing electricity and irrigation) America initially agreed and then refused when it learned that Nasser had been getting arms from the USSR. Nasser then turned to the Soviets for economic as well as military aid (this would last until 1972)

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Suez Crisis – Continued**

On the 26th of July ‘56 Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal taking it away from the British. Egypt planned to keep the canal open to European shipping. The canal represented a key trade link to the Far East. The British did not want to lose control of the canal. The British, French put a plan together with the Israelis to go to war with the Egyptians, keeping the plan secret from the US. The plan involved the Israelis launching a pre-emptive strike against Egypt. This would be followed by the British and French stepping in to “maintain control” of the “vital” waterway. The real purpose was to regain control of the canal and stop Egypt from being a military threat to Israel. Oct 29th ‘56 The Israelis invaded the Sinai Peninsula. The next day the British and French bombed military targets in Egypt and then followed on the 5th of November with paratroopers and an amphibious force. The British and French failed to retake the canal and the damage the canal suffered cause it to close for a time

**The End Of The Suez Crisis**

The Americans took the matter to the United Nations. They did this primarily because they did not want Britain (or France for that matter) to continue as a major power in the region. The Americans also desired a balance in the issues between the Jews and Arabs that would both allow the US to protect Israel and give the US access to Arab oil. The UN called for ceasefire and withdrawal of forces from Egyptian territory. It also sent a peacekeeping force

The Suez Crisis resulted in the eclipse of British and French forces in the Middle East. The Israelis scored a military victory but were forced to withdraw from Egypt by the threat of American economic sanctions

The USSR (at the time involved in the crisis in Hungary) became the source of economic and military aid to a significant portion of the Arab world

Peace talks between the Arabs and the Israelis ceased

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Six Day War**

In May, 1967, President Nasser of Egypt requested the withdrawal of the UN emergency force that had patrolled the Egyptian side of the truce line that resulted from the Arab-Israeli War in 1956. Nasser mobilized Egyptian military forces, blocked the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and announced that he intended to promote the full restoration of an Arab Palestine. Syria, Jordan and Iraq Joined Egypt and Arab oil producing countries threatened to cut off any country that aided Israel, Nasser believed that he could defeat Israel with the combined might of the Arab world. The Israelis refused to give up. On June 5th ‘67 The Israeli air force launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The Egyptian air force was destroyed and Syrian and Jordanian armies decimated within six days. The Israelis ended by occupying the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Golan Heights in Syria. Three times as much land as it had before and significantly improved its defensive and strategic position. On June 5th ‘67 The Israeli air force launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The Egyptian air force was destroyed and Syrian and Jordanian armies decimated within six days. The Israelis ended by occupying the Sinai Peninsula, the West Band of the Jordan Ricer and the Golan Heights in Syria. Three times as much land as it had before and significantly improved its defensive and strategic position. confident

Because Israel now occupied so much former Arab territory, the Arab states aligned themselves against Israel.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Six Day War - Continued**

The six-day war heightened tension between the Arabs and the Israelis. Guerrilla warfare was used more frequently as several Palestinian political or paramilitary organizations carried out small operations against Israeli targets. Israel responded with massive retaliation on Arab bases and guerrilla bases. UN attempts to negotiate a settlement between the two sides but was unsuccessful. The Israeli victory led them to feel confident Because Israel now occupied so much former Arab territory, the Arab states aligned themselves against Israel.

The Arabs saw this defeat as a setback but were determined to regain their territory.

Another consequence of the war was the Arab discovery of the diplomatic power of an oil embargo.

**The Yom Kippur War  
Part 2 Part 3 Part 4**

On October 2nd, 1973, while the Jews were celebrating the holy day of Yom Kippur, Egyptian and Syrian forces launched a surprise attack on Israel.

Previously, Egypt had attempted to negotiate the return of its lost territory but the victorious Israel was unwilling to negotiate.

Crossing the Suez Canal, Egyptian forces opened the Sinai and southern Israel to attack.

At the same time, Syrian forces moved onto the Golan Heights with 800 tanks.

Israeli defenders suffered heavy losses at first but then gained the upper hand.

Supplied by the Americans, the Israelis drove back the Syrians. They also launched a counter-attack against the Egyptians but were held back from crossing the Suez canal by diplomatic pressure.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Camp David Accord**

Orchestrated by the Carter administration

Pledged economic support to Israel and Egypt, $3 billion to Israel, $1.5 billion to Egypt as well as another $500 million in economic support to the latter. Called for Egyptian sovereignty in Sinai and peaceful relations between the two nations

Allowed Egypt to work inwardly while Israel’s national security increased. Several key issues remained unresolved. Faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization continued their guerrilla raids against Israel. Such organizations remained a threat to Israeli security. The refugee problem was also unsolved, with 4 million displaced individuals.

The West Bank territories, Arab-inhabited land under Israeli occupation, became a critical issue. Both claim the territory.

**Causes Of The Iraq-Iran War: Iraq**

The oil rich Persian Gulf fostered rivalry between Iran and Iraq, both seeking hegemony in the area.

In 1969, Iran aided Kurdish guerillas in Iraq, while Iraq supported Arab dissidents in Iran.

Two primary issues causing conflict was control of Shatt-al-Arab, a waterway carrying the Euphrates and Tigris into the gulf, and the command of oil resources in the region.

After seizing Iraq’s administration, Saddam Hussein identified Iran and Saudi Arabia as his chief adversaries.

As both “Chief Adversaries” were aided by the US, he turned to The USSR

He concluded a treaty with Soviets for aids, particularly arms. He also made an agreement with France for a nuclear reactor and research facility. They also became the world’s second largest exporter of oil, which financed military and industrial expansion.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Causes Of The Iraq-Iran War: Iran**

The Islamic revolution of 1979 deposed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi and brought power to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeni.

The previous Shah had maintained close ties with the USA, embarking to westernize his country, the so-called “White Revolution”.

The westernization failed massively and widened the gap between the rich and poor. The move toward democracy was marked by a dictatorial and suppressive reign.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeni imposed an Islamic republic, set to rid Iran of Western and secular influence.

Hussein, who despised Khomeni, wish to overthrow him and establish an Iraqi government.

Iraq clearly initiated the war, but Iran had been guilty of persistent provocation by trying to galvanize Iraqi minority groups.

There was also a divide between Iranian Shi’a faith and Iraq’s Sunni faith.

**The Events Of The Iran-Iraq War**

In September 1980 Iraq launched an attack on Iran that resulted in much destruction of Iran’s oil facilities and Iraqi occupation of SW Iran

A year later Iran launched a counter-offensive and recaptured Iraq-occupied territory. In 1984 Iran captured the Fao peninsula, which cut Iraq’s access to the Gulf.

They proved unable to seize Basra, Iraq’s second largest city. This resulted in 50 000 to 70 000 Iranian deaths.

By 1988, Iran was losing both war and their ability to influence the world’s opinion. Javier Perez de Cuellar, the UN secretary general, announced a ceasefire beginning August 20 1988. A 350-strong observer force would be sent to monitor the truth.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Results Of The War**

War devastated both countries and led to the largest US naval buildup since WWII.

Iranian morale devastated by the Iraqi offensive in 1987. Much of their industry and oil production was crippled by Iraqi air attacks.

While only exporting $6 billion of oil a year they required $10 billion for food, supplies, necessities

Iraq owed $40 billion to Western Europe alone, not counting what owed to rich Gulf creditors.

Use of chemical warfare and missiles by both sides gave a new dimension to regional conflict.

Saddam Hussein launched a program to develop nuclear weapons, hoping to be the first nuclear power in the Middle East, much to the chagrin of everyone.

**The Gulf War: Tension Builds**

Becoming a dominant military power in the Persian Gulf region after the Iraq-Iran war, Hussein charged Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates with exceeding oil production quotas established by OPEC.

Hussein massed troops along the borders of Kuwait, hoping to intimidate them into paying indemnity.

Emboldened by America’s apathy, Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990. On 6 August, a Security Council resolution imposed economic sanctions on Iraq.

Hussein was impervious to international pressure and declared Kuwait Iraq’s 19th province on 28 August.

Diplomatic talks proved futile and the US assembled a coalition of forces from 25 countries. For the first time since Korea, the UN approved collective security against an aggressor state.

Javier Perez de Cuellar met Hussein on 13 January to try to resolve the situation diplomatically. It failed, and on the 15th the Gulf War began.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**More Desert Storm**

Hussein sought hegemony in the Middle East and intended to establish himself as a leader of the Arab world.

He maintained that the Gulf crisis could not be resolved unless the United States and Israel were willing to resolve the Palestinian issue.

Defeat plunged Iraq into internal feuding.

Shi’a forces in S. Iraq and Kurdish groups in the North challenged Hussein’s authority.

Iraq’s defeat opened the possibility of a US-brokered settlement of the Palestinian issue.

**Environmental Warfare**

Roughly 1.1 billion liters of crude oil spilled into the Persian Gulf as a result of Iraq’s sabotage of Kuwait’s Sea Island oil terminal.

Posed a deadly threat to plant and animal life which inhabits the region.

Environmentalists we quite frustrated that the clean-up strategy couldn’t be initiated until the war ended.

Incredibly large environmental cost.

**Superpower Involvements In The Middle East**

Although both US and USSR had vested interest in the region, reasons for Middle East tensions cannot be reduced to a simple East-West equation.

Regional disputes were characterized by shifting alliances and a lack of any long term commitment to either superpower.

USSR had even less success in maintaining its presence in the Middle East than the US.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**American Policy**

Four specific goals in relations with region:

Contain Soviet influence. Retain access to the oil resources of the Gulf region. Limit Arab radicalism. Maintaining Israel’s security and well-being

USA’s commitment to Israel has come into conflict with its attempts to deal with the Soviets and the Arabs, making it complex for diplomats and residents of the region alike. Acting on Reagan’s policies, the USA supported Israel’s attack on Lebanon in May 1982. Weakening Palestinian nationalism would facilitate the absorption of the West Bank into Greater Israel. Lebanon demonstrated that Israel’s stability was questionable and aggressive stance on national security could make it a liability. With America losing credibility and prestige to the Arab world, they contributed to the collapse of regional order.

**Soviet Party Policy**

Soviets had less success in maintaining a presence in the Middle East than in any other region.

Divided Middle East into two areas: Central East which included Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, sometimes Pakistan and the Near East which includes Israel and the Arab countries. Utmost concern was American presence in the area and the Southern border. The deployment of American missiles in Turkey and Iran threatened Soviet security. Communism had been unsuccessful in eroding the national and religious forces that dominate the Middle East. Made entry into Middle East in 1955 by signing an arms agreement in Egypt. Tie maintained until Anwar Sadat terminated the relationship in 1974. Soviets backed the Arab states in both the 1967 and 1973 conflicts with Israel. Although opposing Iraq’s attack on Iran, they remained a major arms supplier.

Soviet Union did not have a single reliable long-term ally in the entire Middle East region. Most countries leaned to the West when advantage suited them.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Soviet Party Policy – Continued**

The Middle East has not been an area of intense superpower conflict for two reasons: Region dominated by regional disputes which transcend East-West conflict. The superpower’s priorities, although very different, are compatible. America agreed to refrain from installing missiles in the Gulf region so long as USSR did not interfere with American access to oil. Critical ongoing problem was Palestine. The possibility of a peace settlement is elusive until the Palestinian problem and Israeli security is resolved. Yassir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin agreed to the Oslo peace accord on 13 September 1993. Accord called for the withdrawal of Israel from Gaza and the extension of autonomy to the entire West Bank. The issues of refugees, borders, and Palestinian statehood were reserved for future settlement. Peace accord seen as a resolution towards tension in the Middle East and Rabin and Arafat shared a nice Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Palestinian-Israeli Conflict**

Signing the Oslo Peace Accord was initially met with enthusiasm by Palestinians. In 1994 Arafat and the PLO returned to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Palestinian authority was established immediately and by 1996 support for the peace accord had risen to 80%. Yassir Arafat, leader of the Fatah organization won control of the new Palestinian legislative council with 77% of seats. This would be the zenith of the Oslo accord. By the time of the Camp David accord orchestrated by Clinton in July 2000, Palestinian support for the agreement fell below 60%. To save his leadership, Arafat walked out of meetings with Clinton. Declining popularity of Oslo accord was due to developments within the Palestinian authority. They were angry about the lack of progress in gaining independence for Palestine and removing the Israelis from occupied territories. Both old and young groups recognized Arafat as leader, the older group followed his lead more closely. The younger group that from 1987-1993 pursued the first intifada. Arafat was the link between the old, authoritarian group and the young radicals. At that time, he was the only leader with sufficient credibility to speak for Palestinians, but is also blamed for decisions that have aborted the peace process. Israel helped the Palestinians create a security force primarily as a device to rein in Hamas. Arafat promised peace to Israelis, but did not discourage violence from his followers.

Palestine was still resentful of losing three important demands in Oslo: Jerusalem, return of refugees, and Israeli evacuation of occupied land. The young Palestinians believed violence was the only option. Thus, suicide bombings ensued, harming Israel’s economy.

Suggestions for peace are varied.

Future of the Middle East remains an enigma.

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