The Middle East and Central Asia

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I. Introduction to the Middle East & Central Asia.
   A. Located in the southwestern corner of Asia.
   B. Crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa for thousands of years.
   C. Focal point for conflict and violence for millennia.
   D. The United States has become increasingly drawn into this violence since the late 1940s.
II. Physical Geography of the Middle East & Central Asia

A. Full of very hot and very dry deserts.
   2. Dasht-e Kavir in Iran.

B. Fertile areas surrounding major rivers.
   1. Tigris River in Iraq.
   2. Euphrates River in Iraq.
C. Very mountainous in areas.

1. Turkey.
3. Iran.
4. The nations of Transcaucasia:
   a. Armenia
   b. Azerbaijan
   c. Georgia
III. Oil in the Middle East & Central Asia

A. Region has 3/5ths of the world’s oil.
B. Makes the region important to the rest of the world because the planet depends on oil to transport goods and needs.
C. Has made the region a focus for conflict in the 20th century.
D. Wars have been fought over oil in the region:

1. Invasion of Iran 1941.
   a. Iran invaded by Soviets and British.
   b. To keep the oilfields there out of German hands.

   a. Iraq under Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990.
   b. Threatened world oil supplies and economy with the move.
D. Wars will likely be fought over oil in the future.
IV. Religion in the Middle East & Central Asia

A. Birthplace of three major religions:

1. Judaism
2. Christianity
3. Islam
4. All of the above are Abrahamic religions.
5. All worship the same god Abraham did.
B. Two major centers of worship lie in this region:

C. Islam
   1. Main religion in the Middle East and Central Asia.
   2. Islam is a divided religion.
      a. Sunni Muslims are the majority in the region.
      b. Shia Muslims live primarily in Iraq and Iran
      c. Two groups often fight each other.
D. Large minorities of Christians live in the region, notably in Lebanon.
E. Many people of the Jewish faith live in Israel.
F. Religion has been a cause of wars in the region, like the Crusades.
Ethnic Divisions in the Middle East & Central Asia.

Many ethnic groups coexist uneasily in the Middle East.

These groups fight constantly among each other, like the following examples:

1. Armenian Genocide of the Great War (1914-1918).
2. Saddam Hussein’s chemical attacks on the Kurds in the 1980s.
VII. Arab-Israeli Conflict

A. Israel is a focal point of conflict for the region.

B. Israel has gone to war with Arab neighbors (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, etc.) many times since 1948.

C. Conflicts between Israeli settlers and Palestinian natives have led to violence in the region for decades.

D. United States and Israel are allies, which has caused poor relations between the U.S. and the Muslim nations of the Middle East.
E. Israeli-American relations in part led to the 9-11 attacks.
VI. The Global War on Terror
   A. Middle East & Central Asia battleground for global war on terror.
   B. Afghanistan
      2. Al Qaeda (responsible for 9-11) had safe haven on Afghan soil.
      3. Taliban (government in charge) allowed Al Qaeda to operate on their soil.
C. Iraq

1. Invaded by U.S. in 2003.
2. Believed Saddam Hussein (leader) was developing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).
3. Feared he would make them available to terrorists.
4. No WMDs were found after the invasion.

D. Americans still fighting in Afghanistan.