



CLASS MATERIAL
B.A. 6th Semester: Spring: 2020

Course Code: AR 306 (History of Modern Arab World)

By Dr. Md. Jahangir Alom

DEPARTMENT OF ARABIC
ALIAH UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA

Iraq

Capital and largest city	:	Baghdad
Official languages	:	Arabic Kurdis
Government	:	Federal parliamentary republic
President	:	Barham Salih
Prime Minister	:	Adil Abdul-Mahdi

Independence from the United Kingdom:

- **Kingdom** **3 October 1932**
- **Republic declared** **14 July 1958**

Total Area : **437,072 kl, 169,234 sq mi**

Population,2018 estimated : **3,84,33600**

Currency **Iraqi dinar (IQD)**

Iraq in Arabic: العراق officially the Republic of Iraq جمهورية العراق is a country in Western Asia. The country borders Turkey to the north, Iran to the east, Kuwait to the southeast, Saudi Arabia to the south, Jordan to the southwest, and Syria to the west. The capital, Baghdad, is in the centre of the country and its largest city.

Ancient History:

Between 65,000 BC and 35,000 BC northern Iraq was home to a Neanderthal culture, archaeological remains of which have been discovered at Shanidar Cave. The historical period in Iraq truly begins during the Uruk period (4000 BC to 3100 BC), with the founding of a number of Sumerian cities, and the use of Pictographs, Cylinder seals and mass-produced goods.

The "Cradle of Civilization" is thus a common term for the area comprising modern Iraq as it was home to the earliest known civilisation, the Sumerian civilisation, which arose in the fertile Tigris-Euphrates river valley of southern Iraq.

It was here in the late 4th millennium BC, that the world's first writing system and recorded history itself were born. The Sumerians were also the first to harness the wheel and create City States, and whose writings record the first evidence of Mathematics, Astronomy, Astrology, Written Law, Medicine and Organised religion.

Middle Age:

The Arab Islamic conquest in the mid-7th century AD established Islam in Iraq and saw a large influx of Arabs and Kurds. Under the Rashidun Caliphate, the prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) cousin and

son-in-law, Ali, moved his capital to Kufa when he became the fourth caliph. The Umayyad Caliphate ruled the province of Iraq from Damascus in the 7th century.

The Abbasid Caliphate built the city of Baghdad in the 8th century as its capital, and the city became the leading metropolis of the Arab and Muslim world for five centuries. Baghdad was the largest multicultural city of the Middle Ages, and was the centre of learning during the Islamic Golden Age. The Mongols destroyed the city during the siege of Baghdad in the 13th century.

In 1257 Hulagu Khan conquered Baghdad. He besieged Baghdad, sacked the city and massacred many of the inhabitants. Estimates of the number of dead range from 200,000 to a million. The Mongols destroyed the Abbasid Caliphate and Baghdad's House of Wisdom, which contained countless precious and historical documents.

Ottoman Iraq:

During the late 14th and early 15th centuries, the Black Sheep Turkmen ruled the area now known as Iraq. In 1466, the White Sheep Turkmen defeated the Black Sheep and took control. In 1508, Iraq fell into the hands of the Iranian Safavids. Owing to the century long Turco-Iranian rivalry between the Safavids and the neighbouring Ottoman Turks, Iraq would be contested between the two for more than a hundred years during the frequent Ottoman-Persian Wars.

During the years 1747–1831 Iraq was ruled by a Mamluk dynasty of Georgian origin who succeeded in obtaining autonomy from the Ottoman, suppressed tribal revolts, curbed the power of the Janissaries, restored order and introduced a program of modernisation of economy and military. In 1831, the Ottomans overthrew the Mamluk regime and imposed their direct control over Iraq.

British forces regrouped and captured Baghdad in 1917, and defeated the Ottomans. An armistice was signed in 1918.

British Administration and Independent kingdom:

On 11 November 1920 Iraq became a League of Nations mandate under British control with the name "State of Iraq". The British established the Hashemite king, Faisal I of Iraq, who had been forced out of Syria by the French, as their client ruler. Britain granted independence to the Kingdom of Iraq in 1932.

Republic and Ba'athis Iraq:

In 1958 the year is known as the end of the monarchy. Brigadier General Abd al-Karim Qasim assumed power, but he was overthrown by Colonel Abdul Salam Arif in a February 1963. After his death in 1966 he was succeeded by his brother, Abdul Rahman Arif, who was overthrown by the Ba'ath Party in 1968. Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr became the first Ba'ath President of Iraq but then the movement gradually came under the control of General Saddam Hussein, who acceded to the presidency and control of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), then Iraq's supreme executive body, in July 1979.

After the success of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, President Saddam Hussein initially welcomed the overthrow of the Shah and sought to establish good relations with Ayatollah Khomeini's new government. However, Khomeini openly called for the spread of the Islamic Revolution to Iraq,

arming Shiite and Kurdish rebels against Saddam's regime and sponsoring assassination attempts on senior Iraqi officials. Following months of cross-border raids between the two countries, Saddam declared war on Iran in September 1980, initiating the Iran–Iraq War (or First Persian Gulf War). Iraq withdrew from Iran in 1982, and for the next six years Iran was on the offensive. The war ended in stalemate in 1988 and cost the lives of between half a million and 1.5 million people. In the final stages of Iran–Iraq War, the Ba'athist Iraqi regime led the Al-Anfal Campaign, a genocidal campaign that targeted Iraqi Kurds, and led to the killing of 50,000 – 100,000 civilians.

In August 1990, Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait. This subsequently led to military intervention by United States-led forces in the First Gulf War. The coalition forces proceeded with a bombing campaign targeting military targets and then launched a 100-hour-long ground assault against Iraqi forces in Southern Iraq and those occupying Kuwait.

2003-2007:

On March 20, 2003, a United States-organized coalition invaded Iraq, under the pretext that Iraq had failed to abandon its weapons of mass destruction program in violation of U.N. Resolution 687. During 2006 fighting continued and reached its highest levels of violence, more war crimes scandals were made public, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq was killed by US forces and Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein was sentenced to death for crimes against humanity and hanged.

2008- to present:

In 2008 fighting continued and Iraq's newly trained armed forces launched attacks against militants. The Iraqi government signed the US–Iraq Status of Forces Agreement which required US forces to withdraw from Iraqi cities by 30 June 2009 and to withdraw completely out of Iraq by 31 December 2011.

Following the withdrawal of US troops in 2011 the insurgency continued and Iraq suffered from political instability. In February 2011 the Arab Spring protests spread to Iraq, but the initial protests did not topple the government.

During 2013 Sunni militant groups stepped up attacks targeting the Iraq's Shia population in an attempt to undermine confidence in the Nouri al-Maliki-led government. In 2014 Sunni insurgents belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group seized control of large swathes of land including several major Iraqi cities, like Tikrit, Fallujah and Mosul creating hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons amid reports of atrocities by ISIL fighters.

After an inconclusive election in April 2014, Nouri al-Maliki served as caretaker-Prime-Minister.

On 11 August, Iraq's highest court ruled that PM Maliki's bloc is biggest in parliament, meaning Maliki could stay Prime Minister. By 13 August, however, the Iraqi president had tasked Haider al-Abadi with forming a new government, and the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and some Iraqi politicians expressed their wish for a new leadership in Iraq, for example from Haider al-Abadi. Maliki on 14 August stepped down as PM, to support Mr al-Abadi and to "safeguard the high interests of the country". On September 9, 2014, Haider al-Abadi had formed a new government and became the new prime minister.

Religion:

Iraq is a Muslim-majority country; Islam accounts for an estimated 95% of the population, while non-Muslims (mainly Assyrian Christians) account for just 5%.[2] It has a mixed Shia and Sunni population. The CIA Factbook estimate that around 65% of Muslims in Iraq are Shia, and around 35% are Sunni.

Language:

Prior to the invasion in 2003, Arabic was the sole official language. Since the new Constitution of Iraq approved in June 2004, both Arabic and Kurdish are official languages, while Assyrian Neo-Aramaic and Turkmen language (referred to as respectively "Syriac" and "Turkmen" in the constitution) are recognised regional languages.

Education:

In 2000 the adult literacy rate was 84% for males and 64% for females, with UN figures suggesting a small fall in literacy of Iraqis aged 15–24 between 2000 and 2008, from 84.8% to 82.4%.

Education is mandatory only through the sixth grade, after which a national examination determines the possibility of continuing into the upper grades. The top-ranking universities in the country are the University of Dohuk (1717th worldwide), the University of Baghdad (3160th) and Babylon University (3946th).

Lebanon

Capital and largest city	:	Beirut
Official languages	:	Arabic
Local vernacular	:	Lebanese Arabic
Religion	:	61.1% Muslim, 33.7% Christian, 5.2% Druze
Government	:	Unitary confessionalist parliamentary republic
President	:	Michel Aoun
Prime Minister	:	Hassan Diab
Speaker of the Parliament	:	Nabih Berri
Establishment	:	Greater Lebanon, 1 September 1920
Independence declared	:	22 November 1943
Total Area	:	10,452 km² (4,036 sq mi)
Population, 2018 estimate	:	6,859,408
Currency	:	Lebanese pound (LBP)

Lebanon; Arabic: لبنان, officially known as the Lebanese Republic. (Arabic: الجمهورية اللبنانية, is a country in Western Asia. It is bordered by Syria to the north and east and Israel to the south, while Cyprus is west across the Mediterranean Sea. Lebanon's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin and the Arabian hinterland facilitated its rich history and shaped a cultural identity of religious and ethnic diversity. It is the smallest recognized sovereign state on the mainland Asian continent.

History:

The earliest evidence of civilization in Lebanon dates back more than seven thousand years, predating recorded history. Lebanon was the home of the Canaanites/Phoenicians and their kingdoms, a maritime culture that flourished for almost three thousand years (c. 3200–539 BC). In 64 BC, the region came under the rule of the Roman Empire, and eventually became one of the Empire's leading centers of Christianity. In the Mount Lebanon range a monastic tradition known as the Maronite Church was established. As the Arab Muslims conquered the region, the Maronites held onto their religion and identity. However, a new religious group, the Druze, established themselves in Mount Lebanon as well, generating a religious divide that has lasted for centuries.

Ottoman Lebanon:

During this period Lebanon was divided into several provinces: Northern and Southern Mount Lebanon, Tripoli, Baalbek and Beqaa Valley and Jabal Amel. In southern Mount Lebanon in 1590, Fakhr-al-Din II became the successor to Korkmaz. He soon established his authority as paramount prince of the Druze in the Shouf area of Mount Lebanon. Eventually, Fakhr-al-Din II was appointed Sanjakbey (Governor) of several Ottoman sub-provinces, with responsibility for tax-gathering. He extended his control over a substantial part of Mount Lebanon and its coastal area, even building a fort as far inland as Palmyra. This over-reaching eventually became too much for Ottoman Sultan Murad IV, who sent a punitive expedition to capture him in 1633. He was taken to Istanbul, kept in prison for two years and then executed along with one of his sons in April 1635. Surviving members of Fakhr al-Din's family ruled a reduced area under closer Ottoman control until the end of the 17th century.

In 1920, following World War I, the area of the Mutasarrifate, plus some surrounding areas which were predominantly Shia and Sunni, became a part of the state of Greater Lebanon under the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon. Around 100,000 people in Beirut and Mount Lebanon died of starvation during World War I.[40] In the first half of 1920, Lebanese territory was claimed as part of the Arab Kingdom of Syria, but shortly the Franco-Syrian War resulted in Arab defeat and capitulation of the Hashemites.

Independence:

Lebanon gained a measure of independence while France was occupied by Germany. General Henri Dentz, the Vichy High Commissioner for Syria and Lebanon, played a major role in the independence of the nation. The Vichy authorities in 1941 allowed Germany to move aircraft and supplies through Syria to Iraq where they were used against British forces. The United Kingdom, fearing that Nazi Germany would gain full control of Lebanon and Syria by pressure on the weak Vichy government, sent its army into Syria and Lebanon.

After the fighting ended in Lebanon, General Charles de Gaulle visited the area. Under political pressure from both inside and outside Lebanon, de Gaulle recognized the independence of Lebanon. On 26 November 1941, General Georges Catroux announced that Lebanon would become independent under the authority of the Free French government. Elections were held in 1943 and on 8 November 1943 the new Lebanese government unilaterally abolished the mandate.

Lebanon's unwritten National Pact of 1943 required that its president be Maronite Christian, its speaker of the parliament to be a Shiite Muslim, its prime minister be Sunni Muslim, and the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and the Deputy Prime Minister be Greek Orthodox.

Civil War and aftermath:

In 1975, following increasing sectarian tensions, largely boosted by Palestinian militant relocation into South Lebanon, a full-scale civil war broke out in Lebanon. The Lebanese Civil

War pitted a coalition of Christian groups against the joint forces of the PLO, left-wing Druze and Muslim militias. In June 1976, Lebanese President Elias Sarkis asked for the Syrian Army to intervene on the side of the Christians and help restore peace. In October 1976 the Arab League agreed to establish a predominantly Syrian Arab Deterrent Force, which was charged with restoring calm.

In 1982, the PLO attacks from Lebanon on Israel led to an Israeli invasion, aiming to support Lebanese forces in driving out the PLO. A multinational force of American, French and Italian contingents (joined in 1983 by a British contingent) were deployed in Beirut after the Israeli siege of the city, to supervise the evacuation of the PLO. The civil war re-emerged in September 1982 after the assassination of Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel, an Israeli ally, and subsequent fighting. During this time a number of sectarian massacres occurred, such as in Sabra and Shatila, and in several refugee camps. The multinational force was withdrawn in the spring of 1984, following a devastating bombing attack during the previous year.

In September 1988, the Parliament failed to elect a successor to President Gemayel as a result of differences between the Christians, Muslims, and Syrians. The Arab League Summit of May 1989 led to the formation of a Saudi–Moroccan–Algerian committee to solve the crisis. On 16 September 1989 the committee issued a peace plan which was accepted by all. A ceasefire was established, the ports and airports were re-opened and refugees began to return.

In the same month, the Lebanese Parliament agreed to the Taif Agreement, which included an outline timetable for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and a formula for the de-confessionalisation of the Lebanese political system. The war ended at the end of 1990 after sixteen years; it had caused massive loss of human life and property, and devastated the country's economy. It is estimated that 150,000 people were killed and another 200,000 wounded. Nearly a million civilians were displaced by the war, and some never returned. Parts of Lebanon were left in ruins. The Taif Agreement has still not been implemented in full and Lebanon's political system continues to be divided along sectarian lines.

2019-2020 Protests:

On 17 October 2019 the first of a series of mass civil demonstrations erupted; they were initially triggered by planned taxes on gasoline, tobacco and online phone calls such as through WhatsApp, but quickly expanded into a country-wide condemnation of sectarian rule, stagnant economy, unemployment, endemic corruption in the public sector, legislation (such as banking secrecy) that is perceived to shield the ruling class from accountability and failures from the government to provide basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation.

As a result of the protests, Lebanon entered a political crisis, with Prime Minister Saad Hariri tendering his resignation and echoing protestors' demands for a government of independent specialists. Other politicians targeted by the protests have remained in power. On 19 December 2019, former Minister of Education Hassan Diab was designated the next prime minister and tasked with forming a new cabinet. Protests and acts of civil disobedience have since continued, with protesters denouncing and condemning the designation of Diab as prime minister.

Administration Divisions:

Lebanon is divided into eight governorates (muḥāfazāt, Arabic: محافظات; singular muḥāfazah, Arabic: محافظة) which are further subdivided into twenty-six districts (aqdyah Arabic: أقضية; singular: qadā' Arabic: قضاء). The districts themselves are also divided into several municipalities, each enclosing a group of cities or villages.

Religion:

Lebanon is the most religiously diverse country in the Middle East. As of 2014 the CIA World Factbook estimates the following: Muslim 54% (27% Sunni Islam, 27% Shia Islam), Christian 40.5% (includes 21% Maronite Catholic, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Melkite Catholic, 1% Protestant, 5.5% other Christian), Druze 5.6%, very small numbers of Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus and Mormons.

Language:

Article 11 of Lebanon's Constitution states that "Arabic is the official national language. A law determines the cases in which the French language is to be used". The majority of Lebanese people speak Lebanese Arabic, which is grouped in a larger category called Levantine Arabic, while Modern Standard Arabic is mostly used in magazines, newspapers, and formal broadcast media.

Literature:

In literature, Khalil Gibran is the third best-selling poet of all time, behind Shakespeare and Laozi. He is particularly known for his book *The Prophet* (1923), which has been translated into more than twenty different languages and is the second best selling book in the 20th century behind the Bible.

Ameen Rihani was a major figure in the mahjar literary movement developed by Arab emigrants in North America, and an early theorist of Arab nationalism.

Mikha'il Na'ima is widely recognized as one of the most important figures in modern Arabic letters and one of the most important spiritual writers of the 20th century.

Several contemporary Lebanese writers have also achieved international success; including Elias Khoury, Amin Maalouf, Hanan al-Shaykh, and Georges Schehadé. Raméz A. Baassiri, a

writer and billionaire of Lebanese origin, wrote a book on Entrepreneurship titled "Interrupted Entrepreneurship: Embracing Change in the Family Business" on family business cycles. The book published with Forbes Books, was voted the 88th best book of all time by Book Authority.

Education:

Listed by the World Economic Forum's 2013 Global Information Technology Report, Lebanon has been ranked globally as the fourth best country for math and science education, and as the tenth best overall for quality of education. In quality of management schools, the country was ranked 13th worldwide.

All Lebanese schools are required to follow a prescribed curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education. Some of the 1400 private schools offer IB programs,[286] and may also add more courses to their curriculum with approval from the Ministry of Education. The first eight years of education are, by law, compulsory.

Lebanon has forty-one nationally accredited universities, several of which are internationally recognized. The American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Université Saint-Joseph (USJ) were the first Anglophone and the first Francophone universities to open in Lebanon, respectively. Universities in Lebanon, both public and private, largely operate in French or English.

The top-ranking universities in the country are the American University of Beirut (#237 worldwide, #2 in the Middle East as of 2019), Lebanese American University (#580s worldwide as of 2019), Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth (#500 worldwide as of 2019), Université Libanaise (#3,826 worldwide) and Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (#600s worldwide as of 2019).

Oman

Capital and largest city	:	Muscat
Official languages	:	Arabic
Religion	:	Islam
Government	:	Unitary parliamentary absolute monarchy
Sultan & Prime Minister	:	Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said
Deputy Prime Minister :		Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said
Independence	:	July 1970
Total Area	:	309,500 km²
Population	:	2018 estimate 4,82,3473
Currency	:	Rial (OMR)

Oman in Arabic: عمان, officially the Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان, is an Arab country in the Southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The nation is bordered by the United Arab Emirates to the northwest, Saudi Arabia to the west, and Yemen to the south and southwest, and shares marine borders with Iran and Pakistan.

From the late 17th century, the Omani Sultanate was a powerful empire, struggling with Portugal and Britain for influence in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. At its peak in the 19th century, Omani influence or control extended across the Strait of Hormuz to modern-day Iran and Pakistan, and as far south as Zanzibar (today part of Tanzania, also former capital). As its power declined in the 20th century, the sultanate came under the influence of the United Kingdom. Historically, Muscat was the principal trading port of the Persian Gulf region. Muscat was also among the most important trading ports of the Indian Ocean.

Oman is an absolute monarchy. The Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said has been the hereditary leader of the country since 1970. Sultan Qaboos is the longest-serving current ruler in the Middle East, and sixth-longest current-reigning monarch in the world. 5 regions (mintaqat): Ad Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah, Al Wusta, Ash Sharqiyah, Az Zahirah. Date of Independence.

In July 1970 received independence from the Imamate and Sultan Qaboos came to power and achieved full international recognition. The country's name was changed from the Sultanate of Masqat and Oman to the Sultanate of Oman. Oman's National Day is celebrated on 18 November. This public holiday celebrates independence from Portugal control in 1650. This holiday is the start of a two day break, as 19 November is also a public holiday to mark the birthday of the Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said al Said.

Ancient History:

Dereaze, located in the city of Ibri, is the oldest known human settlement in the area, dating back as many as 8,000 years to the Late Stone Age . Archaeological remains have been discovered here from the Stone Age and the Bronze Age. Findings have included stone implements, animal bones, shells and fire hearths, with the latter dating back to 7615 BC as the oldest signs of human settlement in the area.

The present-day name of the country, Oman, is believed to originate from the Arab tribes who migrated to its territory from the Uman region of Yemen. Many such tribes settled in Oman, making a living by fishing, herding or stock breeding, and many present day Omani families are able to trace their ancestral roots to other parts of Arabia.

From the 6th century BC to the arrival of Islam in the 7th century AD, Oman was controlled or influenced by three Persian dynasties: the Achaemenids, Parthians and Sassanids. A few scholars believe that in the 6th century BC, the Achaemenids used a strong degree of control over the Omani peninsula, most likely ruling from a coastal center such as Sohar.

Portuguese colonization

A decade after Vasco da Gama's successful voyage around the Cape of Good Hope and to India in 1497–98, the Portuguese arrived in Oman and occupied Muscat for a 143-year period, from 1507 to 1650.

The Ottoman Turks captured Muscat from the Portuguese again between 1581–88. Rebellious tribes eventually drove out the Portuguese, but were themselves pushed out about a century later in 1741, by the leader of an Omani tribe, who began the current line of ruling sultans. In 1749 when the Al Said dynasty came to power. It continues to rule Oman to this day.

Reign of Sultan Qaboos (from 1970 to now)

After deposing his father in 1970, Sultan Qaboos opened up the country, embarked on economic reforms, and followed a policy of modernisation marked by increased spending on health, education and welfare. In 1981 Oman became a founding member of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council. Political reforms were eventually introduced. Historically, voters had been chosen from among tribal leaders, intellectuals, and businessmen. In 1997 Sultan Qaboos decreed that women could vote for, and stand for election too, the Majlis al-Shura, the Consultative Assembly of Oman. Two women were duly elected to the body.

In 2002, voting rights were extended to all citizens over the age of 21, and the first elections to the Consultative Assembly under the new rules were held in 2003. In 2004, the Sultan appointed Oman's first female minister with portfolio, Sheikha Aisha bint Khalfan bin Jameel al-Sayabiyah. She was appointed to the post of National Authority for Industrial Craftsmanship, an office that attempts to preserve and promote Oman's traditional crafts and stimulate industry.

The Sultan continued to rule by decree. Nearly 100 suspected Islamists were arrested in 2005 and 31 people were convicted of trying to overthrow the government. They were ultimately pardoned in June of the same year.

Inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings taking place throughout the region, protests also occurred in Oman during the early months of 2011. Although they did not call for the ousting of the regime, demonstrators demanded political reforms, improved living conditions, and the creation of more jobs. They were dispersed by riot police in February 2011. Sultan Qaboos reacted by promising jobs and benefits. In October 2011, elections were held to the Consultative Assembly, for which Sultan Qaboos promised greater powers.

Administrative Divisions:

The Sultanate is administratively divided into eleven governorates. Governorates are, in turn, divided into 60 wilayats.

Ad Dakhiliyah

Ad Dhahirah

Al Batinah North

Al Batinah South

Al Buraimi

Al Wusta

Ash Sharqiyah North

Ash Sharqiyah South

Dhofar

Muscat

Musandam

Economy

Oman has a relatively diversified economy, but remains dependent on oil exports. Tourism is the fastest-growing industry in Oman. Other sources of income, agriculture and industry. Agriculture, often subsistence in its character, produces dates, limes, grains, and vegetables, but with less than 1% of the country under cultivation, Oman is likely to remain a net importer of food.

Oil:

A geological survey of the country in 1925 by the D'Arcy Exploration Company found no conclusive evidence of oil. Twelve years later, however, when geologists began intensively searching for oil in neighbouring Saudi Arabia, Oman's Sultan Said bin Taimur granted a 75-year concession to the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC).

Having landed at Duqm in February 1954, IPC geologists were faced with tribal conflicts. They reached the jebel in October 1954 and began to survey the surrounding terrain. Supplies had to be transported from Duqm.

Shell and Partex opted to remain in Oman to continue the search for oil. Their optimism was soon to pay off, however: they struck commercial oil at Yibal in April 1962 and from these inauspicious beginnings an oil-producing nation was born.

In 1963 the Natih field was discovered, followed closely by success at Fahud. The first export of Omani oil took place on 27 July 1967. Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) is the major exploration and production company in the Sultanate. It accounts for about 70% of the country's crude-oil production and nearly all of its natural-gas supply.

Tourism

Tourism in Oman has grown considerably, and it is expected to be one of the largest industries in the country.

Oman has one of the most diverse environments in the Middle East with various tourist attractions and is particularly well known for cultural tourism. The capital of Oman was named the second best city to visit in the world in 2012 by the travel guide publisher Lonely Planet. Muscat also was chosen as the Capital of Arab Tourism of 2012.

Religion

Islam (official; majority are Ibadhi, lesser numbers of Sunni and Shia) 85.9%, Christian 6.5%, Hindu 5.5%, Buddhist 0.8%, Jewish 0.1, Other 1%, Unaffiliated 0.2%

The Oman government does not keep statistics on religious affiliation, but virtually all Omanis are Muslims, of whom three quarters follow the Ibadi School of Islam, which is very close to mainstream Islam. Historically, Ibadhi has been one of the noteworthy Omani religious sects, and the Sultan is a member of the Ibadhi community.

Language

Arabic is the official language of Oman. It belongs to the Semitic branch of the Afroasiatic family. Baluchi (Southern Baluchi) is widely spoken in Oman. Endangered indigenous languages in Oman include Kumzari, Bathari, Harsusi, Hobyot, Jibbali and Mehri. Oman was also the first Arab country in the Persian Gulf to have German taught as a third language.

Education

The adult literacy rate in 2010 was 86.9%. Before 1970, only three formal schools existed in the entire country, with fewer than 1,000 students. Since Sultan Qaboos' ascension to power in 1970, the government has given high priority to education in order to develop a domestic work force, which the government considers a vital factor in the country's economic and social progress. Today, there are over 1,000 state schools and about 650,000 students.

Oman's first university, Sultan Qaboos University, opened in 1986. The University of Nizwa is one of the fastest growing universities in Oman. Other post-secondary institutions in Oman include the Higher College of Technology and its six branches, six colleges of applied sciences (including a teacher's training college), a college of banking and financial studies, an institute of Sharia sciences, and several nursing institutes. Some 200 scholarships are awarded each year for study abroad.

Assembly officially "acknowledged" the proclamation and decided to use the designation "Palestine" instead of "Palestine Liberation Organization" in the UN.

In 2007, the Hamas takeover of Gaza Strip politically and territorially divided the Palestinians, with Abbas's Fatah left largely ruling the West Bank and recognized internationally as the official Palestinian Authority, while Hamas has secured its control over the Gaza Strip. In April 2011, the Palestinian parties signed an agreement of reconciliation, but its implementation had stalled until a unity government was formed on 2 June 2014.

Palestine is a geographic region in Western Asia between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. It is some times considered to include adjoining territories. Situated at a strategic location between Egypt, Syria and Arabia, and the birthplace of Judaism and Christianity, the region has a long and confused history as a crossroads for religion, culture, commerce, and politics. The region has been controlled by numerous peoples, including Ancient Egyptians, Canaanites, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Ancient Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, the Sunni Arab Caliphates, the Shia Fatimid Caliphate, Crusaders, Ayyubids, Mameluks, Mongols, Ottomans, the British and modern Israelis and Palestinians.

Ancient History:

The region was among the earliest in the world to see human habitation, agricultural communities and civilization. During the Bronze Age, independent Canaanite city-states were established, and were influenced by the surrounding civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Minoan Crete, and Syria. According to Biblical tradition, the Philistines arrived and mingled with the local population, and the United Kingdom of Israel was established in 1020 BCE and separated within a century to form the northern Kingdom of Israel, and the southern Kingdom of Judah.

The region became part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire from c. 740 BCE, which was itself replaced by the Neo-Babylonian Empire in c. 627 BCE. According to the Bible, a war with Egypt culminated in 586 BCE when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II and the local leaders of the region of Judea were deported to Babylonia. In the 330s BCE, Macedonian ruler Alexander the Great conquered the region, which changed hands several times during the wars of the Diadochi and later Syrian Wars.

Middle Ages:

Palestine was conquered by the Islamic Empire, beginning in 634 CE. In 636 CE, the Battle of Yarmouk during the Muslim conquest of Syria marked the new Muslim dominion over the region, which became known as Jund Filastin within the province of Bilâd al-Shâm (Greater Syria). The majority of the population was Christian and was to remain so until the conquest of Saladin in 1187. The invasion appears to have had little impact on social and administrative continuities for several decades.

The word 'Arab' at the time referred predominantly to Bedouin nomads, though Arab settlement is attested in the Judean highlands and near Jerusalem by the 5th century, and some tribes had converted to Christianity. The local population engaged in farming, which was considered demeaning, were called Nabaṭ, referring to Aramaic-speaking villagers. In 661 CE, with the assassination of Ali, Muawiyah I became the uncontested Caliph of the Islamic World after being crowned in Jerusalem. The Dome of the Rock, completed in 691, was the world's first great work of Islamic architecture.

The Umayyads, who had spurred a strong economic resurgence in the area, were replaced by the Abbasids in 750.

The Fatimids, with a predominantly Berber army, invaded the region in 970, a date that marks the beginning of a period of unceasing warfare between numerous enemies, which destroyed Palestine, and in particular devastating its Jewish population. Between 1071-73, Palestine was captured by the Great Seljuq Empire, only to be recaptured by the Fatimids in 1098, who then lost the region to the Crusaders in 1099. Their control of Jerusalem and most of Palestine lasted almost a century until defeat by Saladin's forces in 1187, after which most of Palestine was controlled by the Ayyubids.

The Mongol Empire reached Palestine for the first time in 1260, beginning with the Mongol raids into Palestine under Nestorian Christian general Kitbuqa, and reaching an apex at the pivotal Battle of Ain Jalut.

In 1486, hostilities broke out between the Mamluks and the Ottoman Empire in a battle for control over western Asia, and the Ottomans captured Palestine in 1516.

In 1830, on the eve of Muhammad Ali's invasion, the Porte transferred control of the sanjaks of Jerusalem and Nablus to Abdullah Pasha, the governor of Acre.

Two years later, in 1832, Palestine was conquered by Muhammad Ali's Egypt, but in 1840, Britain intervened and returned control of the Levant to the Ottomans in return for further capitulations. Beginning in the 1860s, Palestine underwent an acceleration in its socio-economic development, due to its incorporation into the global, and particularly European, economic pattern of growth, and its beneficiaries were Arab-speaking Muslims and Christians who emerged as a new layer within the Arab elite. The end of the 19th century saw the beginning of Zionist immigration and the revival of the Hebrew language and culture. The movement was publicly supported by Great Britain during World War I with the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

British Mandate and Partition:

The British began their Sinai and Palestine Campaign in 1915. The war reached southern Palestine in 1917, progressing to Gaza and around Jerusalem by the end of the year. The British secured Jerusalem in December 1917. They moved into the Jordan valley in 1918 and a campaign by the Entente into northern Palestine led to victory at Megiddo in September.

The British were formally awarded the mandate to govern the region in 1922. The non-Jewish Palestinians revolted in 1920, 1929, and 1936. In 1947, following World War II and The Holocaust, the British Government announced its desire to terminate the Mandate, and the United Nations General Assembly adopted in November 1947 a Resolution 181(II) recommending partition into an Arab state, a Jewish state and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem. The Jewish leadership accepted the proposal, but the Arab Higher Committee rejected it; a civil war began immediately after the Resolution's adoption. The State of Israel was declared in May 1948.

In the course of the Six-Day War in June 1967, Israel captured the rest of Mandate Palestine from Jordan and Egypt, and began a policy of Israeli settlements. From 1987 to 1993, the First Palestinian Intifada against Israel took place, which included the Declaration of the State of Palestine in 1988 and ended with the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords and creation of the Palestinian National Authority.

In 2000, the Second Intifada (also called al-Aqsa Intifada) began, and Israel built a separation barrier. In the 2005 Israeli disengagement from Gaza, Israel withdrew all settlers and military presence from the Gaza Strip, but maintained military control of numerous aspects of the territory including its air space and coast. Israel's ongoing military occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues to be the world's longest military occupation in modern times.

In November 2012, the State of Palestine was upgraded to non-member observer state status in the United Nations

Current usage:

The region of Palestine is the Palestinian people and the culture of Palestine, both of which are defined as relating to the whole historical region, usually defined as the localities within the border of Mandatory Palestine. The 1968 Palestinian National Covenant described Palestine as the "homeland of the Arab Palestinian people", with "the boundaries it had during the British Mandate".

However, since the 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence, the term State of Palestine refers only to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This discrepancy was described by the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas as a negotiated concession in a September 2011 speech to the United Nations: "... we agreed to establish the State of Palestine on only 22% of the territory of historical Palestine - on all the Palestinian Territory occupied by Israel in 1967."

The term Palestine is also sometimes used in a limited sense to refer to the parts of the Palestinian territories currently under the administrative control of the Palestinian National Authority, a quasi-governmental entity which governs parts of the State of Palestine under the terms of the Oslo Accords.