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**The Middle East Today**

**A. Iranian Revolution and Hostage Crisis (1979)**

Shah Reza Pahlevi was the monarch of Iran from September 1941 until February 1979. While in power, he had land reform (buying land from land owners and selling it cheaper to peasants), women’s rights, and a literacy program. However, the people were not happy (you’ll see why in the video). As part of the Iranian Revolution, the U.S. embassy was stormed, and fifty-two American diplomats and citizens were held hostage for 444 days from November 4, 1979, to January 20, 1981. It stands as the longest hostage crisis in recorded history.

*What was life like before the Iranian Revolution?*

*Based on the Video – List two reasons for the Iranian Revolution.*

**B. Iran Today**

Today, the government is a theocracy (government who is regarded as divinely guided). Iran is considered an Islamic fundamentalist country. Islamic Fundamentalism is a religious ideology to return to the fundamentals (basics) of Islam. Islamic fundamentalists believe that the problems of the world stem from secular (non-spiritual) influences. Iran requires women in wear a hijab in all public places, Muslim or not. Male and female are segregated in public schools and buses. Women’s voices are banned from the radio and female singers and actresses are no longer seen on television. Women are not allowed to study “male” professions such finance and engineering. A former leader also believes that the Holocaust was a lie and that Israel should be destroyed.

The United Nations has placed sanctions on Iran since it has failed to prove that its nuclear power is for peaceful reasons. Iran Nuclear Deal - Iran would re reduce its nuclear facilities and would be inspected throughout the years to make sure they are complying with the order. In return, all nuclear-related economic sanctions would be lifted freeing up tens of billions of dollars in oil revenue and frozen assets. In 2018, the United States removed themselves from the arrangement.

*How would you describe life in Iran after the revolution?*

*What other countries did the leader try to remove another culture? What actions did they take?*

*What is the purpose of the Iran Nuclear Deal?*

**C. Arab Spring**

The Arab Spring refers to the democratic uprisings that occurred and spread across the Arab world in 2011. The movement originated in Tunisia in December 2010 and quickly took hold in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. In Egypt, in January 2011 protesters gathers in Tahrir Square to protest lack of freedom of speech and police brutality and it spread throughout the country. Within a month President Hosni Mubarak stepped down however, Egypt’s government was not stable until 2014.

In 2018, the Saudi government was accused of killing a journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in Turkey. Saudi Arabia denied any involvement in his disappearanceIn March 2019, after weeks of mass protest against his rule and only a week after vowing he would carry on, the leader of Algeria announced he would not seek a fifth term as president.

According to experts, social media played a significant role during the [Arab Spring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring) because it facilitated communication and interaction among participants of political protests. Protesters used social media to organize demonstrations (both pro- and anti-governmental), disseminate (spread) information about their activities, and raise local and global awareness of ongoing events.

*What events can Tahrir Square be compared to?*

*What role did social media play in the Arab Spring?*

**D. Syria**

“In the year since protests sparked by the Arab Spring began in Syria… entire neighborhoods have been destroyed by government… Syria is a dictatorship ruled by President Bashar al-Assad… The upheaval in Syria began in March 2011, when residents … took to the streets to protest the torture of students who had put up antigovernment graffiti. The government responded with force, and demonstrations quickly spread across the country. Assad has since overseen a series of crackdowns, sending tanks into cities as security forces opened fire on demonstrators…The United Nations … have condemned the crackdown and that the Syrian government's actions amounted to crimes against humanity. One reason Syria is so important is that the outcome could have a serious impact on Iran …. Syria is one of Iran's closest allies. And it's through Syria that Iran funnels money and weapons to militant Muslim groups, which the U.S. considers terrorist organizations. Assad's fall … would be a major defeat for Iran, and a boom to the U.S. and Israel because it would cut off a major supply line to terrorist groups.”

*What role do you think uprisings in other Arab countries played in Syria's revolution?*

*How might a change of power in Syria alter the balance of power in the Middle East?*