

## **V. America and the War on Terror (1947- )**

### A. America decides to police the Middle East.

1. The United States came to act as an international police power in the Middle East for three main reasons.
  - a) to stop the spread of communism
  - b) to help the newly formed nation of Israel
  - c) to secure access to the oil of the region
2. The Truman Doctrine of 1947 had first been announced with the intention of protecting Greece & Turkey, two countries in southeastern Europe.
3. Turkey was in fact both at the far edge of Europe and in the Middle East. Unlike Europe, its population was mostly Muslim and did not have a democratic government. It was directly threatened by the expansion of Russia, however, which wanted access to the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the United States believed it was a worthy temporary ally in the Cold War.
4. Other countries of the Middle East such as Afghanistan and Iran were also bordered by communist Russia, and generally were willing to receive American aid, even though their countries were traditional monarchies and did not share American values such as individual rights and freedom of religion.
5. Following the Holocaust in World War II, many Jewish people had come to America for religious freedom, and many had settled in their ancient homeland of Israel. When they declared the independence of the country of Israel in 1948, the United States decided to support them.
6. In order to be a *world* police power, the United States needed the ability to transport people and supplies to any point in the world. This meant having a large, powerful navy and air force. And *that* meant having access to a lot of oil — the lifeblood of industrial civilization. Since the Middle East was known to contain vast reserves of oil, the United States chose to become temporary allies of monarchies such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as its other allies in the region.

### B. American Support of Israel

1. Middle Eastern countries that accepted American aid against communism tended to appreciate America's help in keeping them safe, but they still resented America's decision to help Israel.
2. The formation of modern Israel in 1948 was an echo of the formation of the ancient kingdom of Israel. The Jewish people, who had long ago been conquered and dispersed from their homeland by great empires including the Roman empire and the Muslim caliphate (the empire of the "caliphs," or followers of Muhammad), and they were now returning to reclaim their ancient home.
3. They had settled in pockets throughout the Middle East and Europe, always suffering some form of religious persecution because their belief was different than both Christianity and Islam.
4. With the advent of the World Wars, however, the violence against Jews reached its highest level. The Holocaust involved the murder of over 6 *million* Jews, many of them citizens of countries like Germany and Italy who were killed by their own governments.
5. Some Jews began to dream of a restored homeland, a nation where they could live without fear of persecution.
6. When Britain and France conquered the Middle East in World War I and brought an end to the last Muslim caliphate (which was called "the Ottoman Empire"), the British rulers of the region agreed to allow Jewish settlement in the area they called Palestine.

7. The Jews came in larger and larger waves of immigration, and were mostly welcomed by Palestinian Arabs, who sold them land they thought was useless (such as swamps and deserts). The success of the Jews in drying the swamps and irrigating the deserts and in general thriving under difficult conditions alarmed their hosts who were unable to prevent further immigration or discourage the Jews through violence against them.
8. The Palestinian Arabs believed the British would eventually transfer control of Palestine over to them, but instead found the British unwilling to resolve the increasingly violent dispute between them and the Jews, and the Jews declared their own state in 1948.
9. Over the next generations, Israel's Arab neighbors launched multiple wars to try to destroy Israel, but because of America's support Israel was by far the militarily strongest country in the region, and they could not defeat it.
10. In 1979, under American influence, Egypt's leader Anwar Sadat agreed to an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. American police power had brought peace to the region.

### C. Modern Terrorism

1. On 9-11-2001, Muslim terrorists from the Middle East attacked the United States by taking over commercial airplanes and flying them into buildings including the World Trade Center in New York.
2. In order to understand the rise of terrorism as a problem in the modern world, we must understand first what terrorism is, and why it is connected so strongly to the Middle East and to the religion of Islam.
3. Terrorism is a tactic of war. It is a method of fighting where attackers from one side direct violence not against the warriors/military of the other side, but against the non-military members of society. The goal of this tactic is to strike fear in the enemy population. When people are afraid, they try to avoid that which makes them afraid.
4. Terrorists from the Middle East hope to cause widespread fear in America, which will result in the people of America wanting to change America's conduct as a world police power. Specifically, they want America to stop policing their region.
5. We have seen that the people of the Middle East did not want communism, so America's aid as a temporary ally against communism could not be the cause of terrorism.
6. We have also seen that America's aid of Israel led to peace between Israel and Egypt in 1979.
7. Why then is terrorism so common in the modern world?

### D. The Iranian Revolution and the Rise of Terrorism

1. In 1979, America helped Israel and Egypt to achieve peace. Later that year, however, terrorism was used against the United States in Iran, showing enemies of America that the tactic of terrorism could be successfully used against even the world police power.
2. The monarchy of Iran had been an ally of the United States against communist Russia, but Iran's religious leaders believed that even though Russia was the "lesser Satan" (i.e. a religious enemy) the United States was the "Great Satan."
3. In 1979, the Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini took over Iran after a revolution against the monarchy. Iran became a *theocracy*—a government controlled by religious leaders.
4. Then Iranian terrorists attacked the American embassy in Iran and took American hostages (prisoners).
5. American president Jimmy Carter did not know what to do. The hostages were held for 444 days, and America did not attack Iran.
6. The Iranian Hostage Crisis became the first great success story of terrorism encouraged by religious leaders of Middle Eastern countries against America.