ISRAEL & ITS NEIGHBORS, JORDAN, LEBANON, AND SYRIA
DEMOGRAPHICS

- Israel has 8 million people
- Lebanon has 4 million; Syria has 22 million; Jordan has 6 million
- Israel has a life expectancy of 81; between 72-74 in the other countries
- Population density in Israel is almost 900
  + Other countries: about 160
Creation of Israel has always played a major role in the economic situation of these countries

Israel is by far the richest

Israel has by far the best land; exports much more than its neighbors (most exports go to Europe)
Christians, Jews & Muslims all claim heritage in this region...Area is holy to each; they lived in relative peace for centuries
HISTORY

- Ottoman Empire controlled region from as early as the 1500s until the end of WWI
- Were on the losing side of WWI—lost control of most of the Middle East to the British & French after WWI
- After WWI, Jews advocated the creation of a Jewish state in the land known as “Palestine”
- WWII—Jewish people were victims of the Nazi Holocaust; many migrated from Europe
- 1947—the U.N.(with British, French & American support) partitioned Palestine into two regions
HISTORY

- Two regions
  + Jewish state known as Israel (included most of the coast & good land)
  + Arab state (which later became parts of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan & Egypt)
- Most of the region was Arab
- 13 countries voted against the U.N. plan (all Arab countries)
- Today there is no Palestine---but Arabs that live in the area still refer to them as “Palestinians”
1948: Israel officially became a country
Since then, Palestinians have protested, fought and committed acts of terrorism in effort to re-create a state of Palestine; Israelis have done the same acts towards Palestinians
GEOGRAPHY OF ISRAEL

- Since 1948, all Israeli land was open to Jewish settlement.
- The “Occupied Territories” were lands in Israel set aside for Arabs to settle...they are called:
  - West Bank
  - Golan Heights
  - Gaza Strip
Country of Israel has four regions

- Jewish controlled area
- Three “Occupied Territories”
  - West Bank, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip
  - Each land was originally supposed to be solely for Palestinians...the only region that is solely for Palestinians today is the Gaza Strip (just since 2005)
- Jews live in the other regions
In 2005, Israel agreed to pull all Jewish settlers out of the Gaza Strip (thousands of Jews refused to leave---they were eventually forced to leave)

Jews can still live in the Golan Heights & West Bank
Therefore, the major problem with the potential creation of an Arab-based Palestine is geography.

- What land becomes Palestine?
- Do you create a fragmented Palestine? (the Occupied Territories are fragmented)
PALESTINE AS A STATE

The creation of Israel and the status of Palestinians and their land is the key political issue in the region.

- Basis for violence and terrorism
- Lebanon, Syria & Jordan are all Arab, Muslim countries---all dislike Israel
Violence in Israel involves three groups:

- Israeli Military
- Hamas
- Hezbollah
Politics in this region typically involves terrorist organizations.

Three major groups:
- **ISRAELI MILITARY**
  - Acts as a military, but conducts covert operations against Palestinian threats.
- **HAMAS**
  - Sunni organization; is considered to be the government of Palestinians.
- **HEZBOLLAH**
  - Shiite organization; based in Lebanon.
Most recent conflict involved Hamas and Israel

Hamas for years has fired rockets from the West Bank into Jewish areas---Israel wants them to stop

Led to war in January, 2009...over 1,100 Palestinians killed (only 13 Israelis killed)

Hamas wants open border crossing from and into the West Bank (Israeli laws make it very difficult to travel from or into an Occupied Territory)
Every country that surrounds Israel is almost entirely Arab

Israel has NO allies in the Middle East

Israel has nuclear weapons (only country in region that definitely has them)

Creates a situation where peace and stability are critical issues

Many Arabs blame the U.S. for Israel’s creation (and for subsequent terrorism)

Many attribute anti-Americanism in the Middle East to this issue
IMPACT ON UNITED STATES

- Creates a situation where governments, and terrorist organizations (al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc) have a reason to dislike the USA
- We openly support Israel---we do not endorse their use of violence
Lebanon suffered through a bad civil war in the 1970s and 1980s

Lebanon & Syria have a history of dislike towards each other

- 2005: Prime Minister of Lebanon assassinated; many blame the Syrians

Syria’s authoritarian government is facing an “Arab Spring” revolt—killing and imprisoning those involved. In disfavor with neighboring Arab countries for the harsh treatment of government protestors

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/middle-east-protests/
Any country with any interest in the Southwest Asia and North Africa is affected by the conflicting alliances and goals, and the potential for violent consequences. Because of oil, this means many highly and newly developed countries.