



# LOOKING BACK. MIDDLE EAST IN LAST 100 YEARS.

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*Middle East Crossroads*

# GEOPOLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- Geopolitics is an interdisciplinary field influenced by geography, political science, and history.
- Originally two traditional schools of geopolitics:
  - German – Kjellen, Ratzel, Haushofer.
  - Anglo-Saxon – Mahan, McKinder, Spykeman.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1997). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York :Touchstone,
- In 20th and 21st century Middle East has been the chessboard of the great powers.



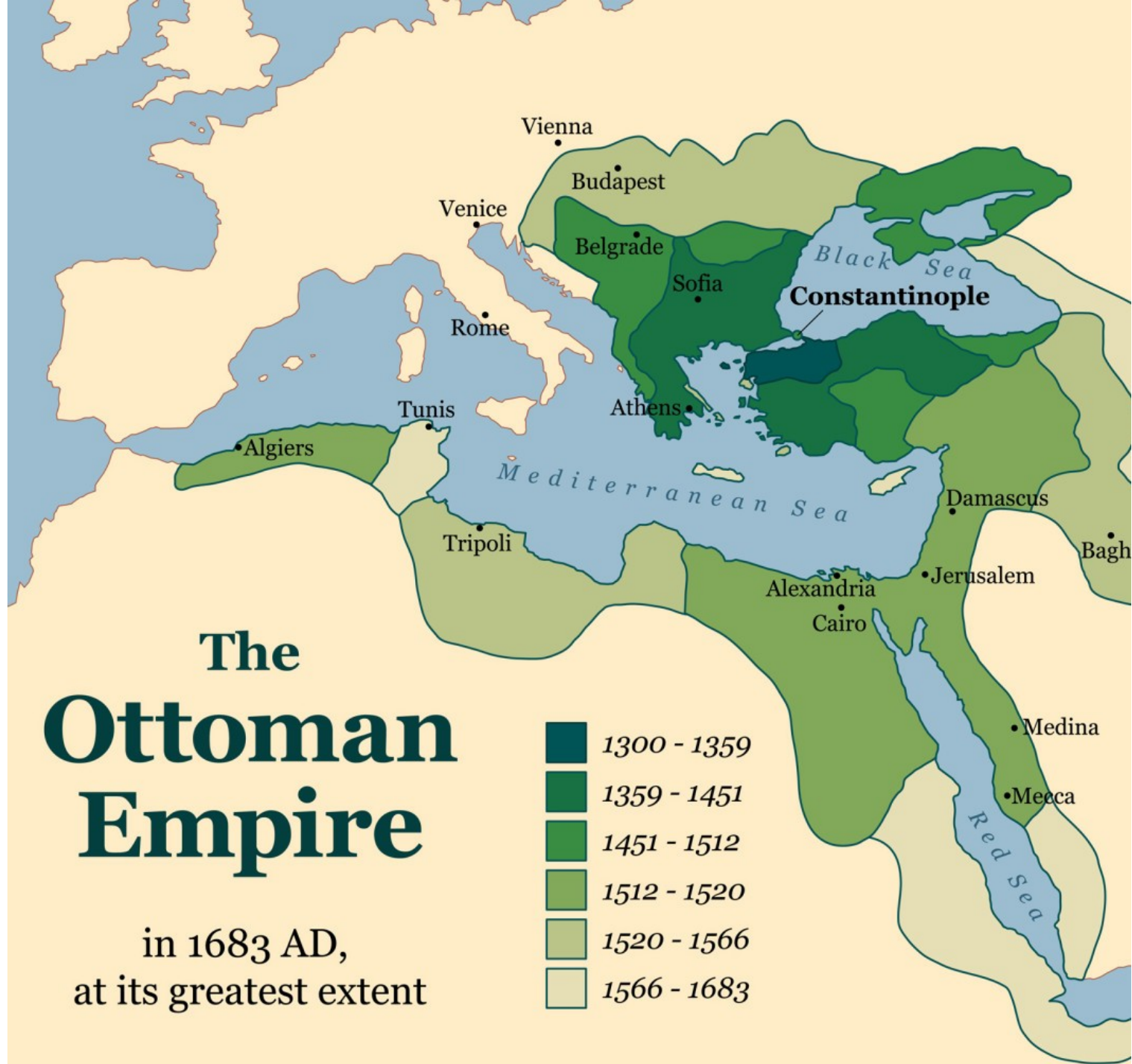
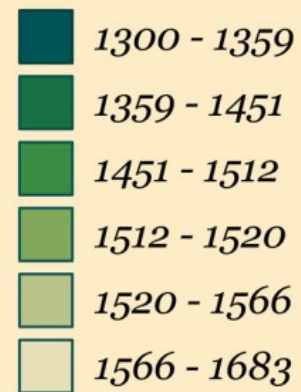
# GEOPOLITICAL MILESTONES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

1. Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the European great powers (19th century, beginning of 20th century).
2. Collapse of European colonial empires → independent states emerge in the Middle East – affected by the Cold War situation (competition between USA and USSR over the Middle East).
3. End of the Cold War (1989), Arab Spring (since 2010) – gradually weakening role of the superpowers in the region. New alliances, new radical groups (al-Kaida, ISIS), growth of the civil society.

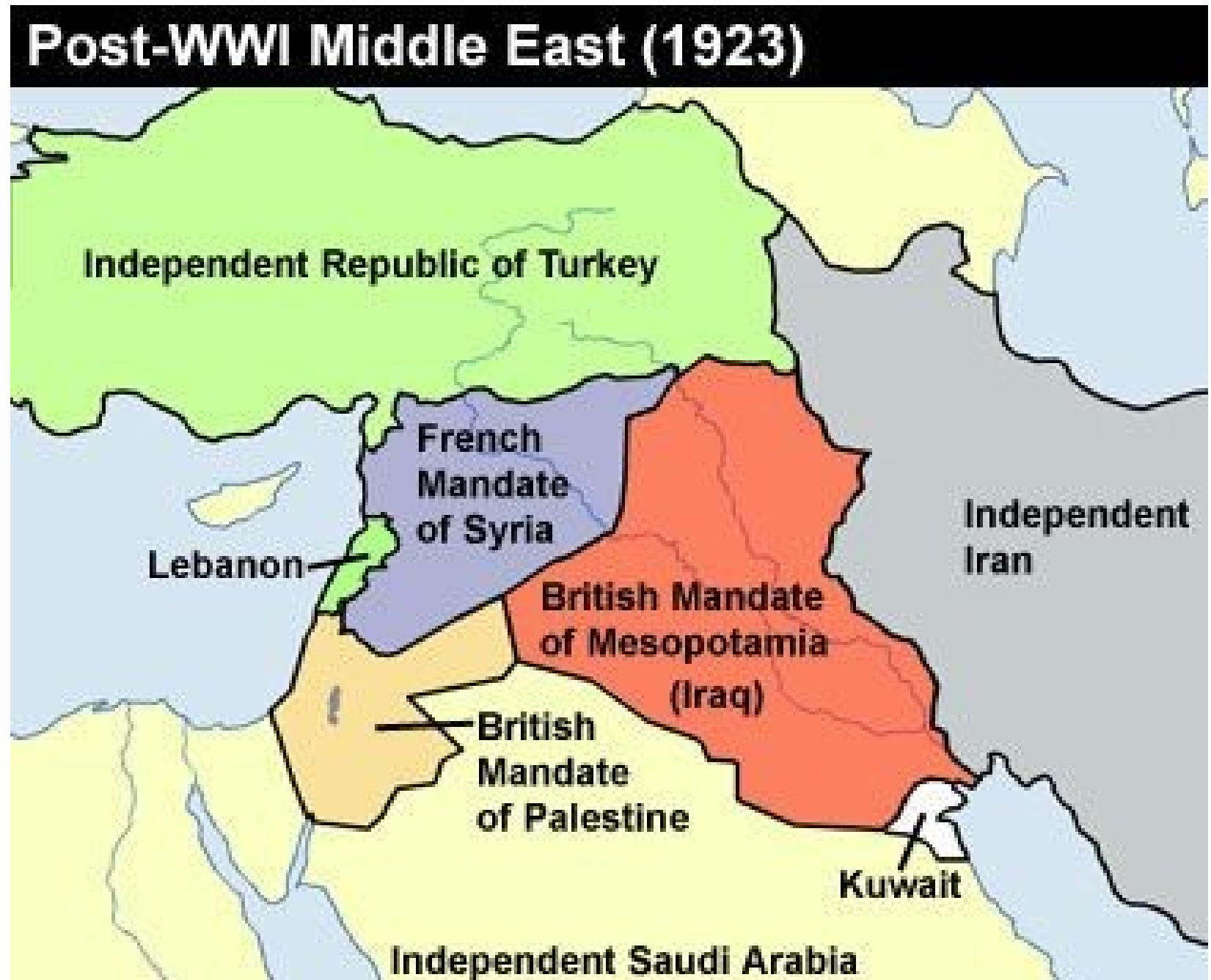


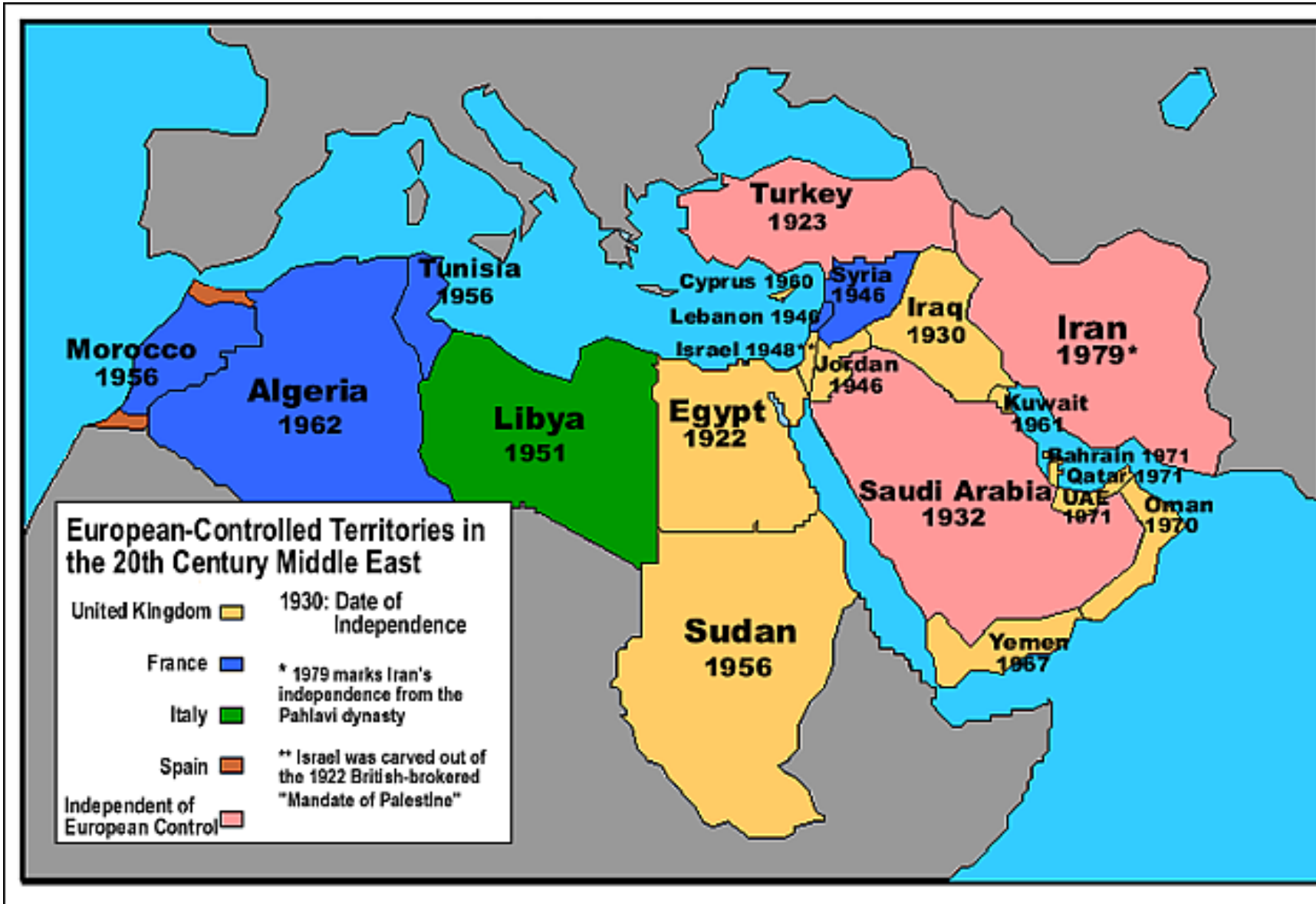
# The Ottoman Empire

in 1683 AD,  
at its greatest extent



# CHANGES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AFTER WW1





# INDEPENDENT STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

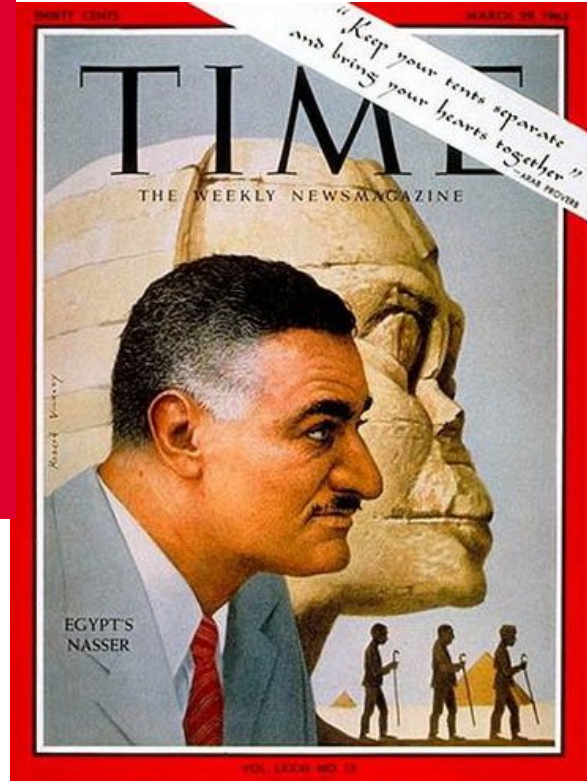
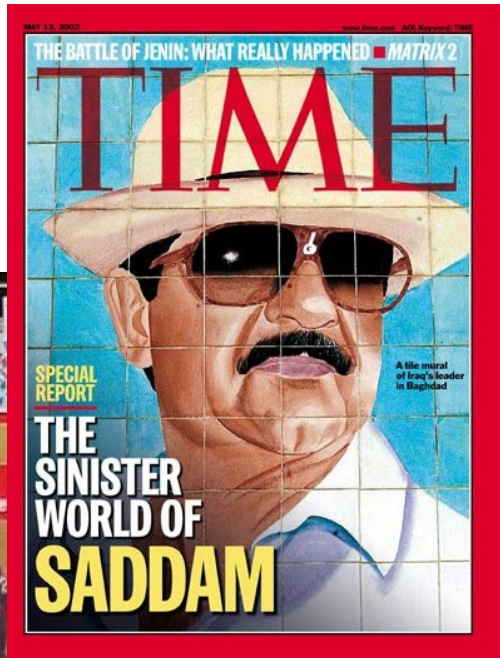
# COLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- Region of the Middle East was one of the Cold War battlefields (political, military, economic, cultural, technological competition).
- Both superpowers made local partnerships some more stable than the others (Egypt cooperated with both blocs, fundamental changes in Iran after the revolution 1978).
- Proxy wars in the region (Afghanistan, Suez Crisis) but also making peace in the Middle East (US contribution to the Israel-Egypt peace treaty).





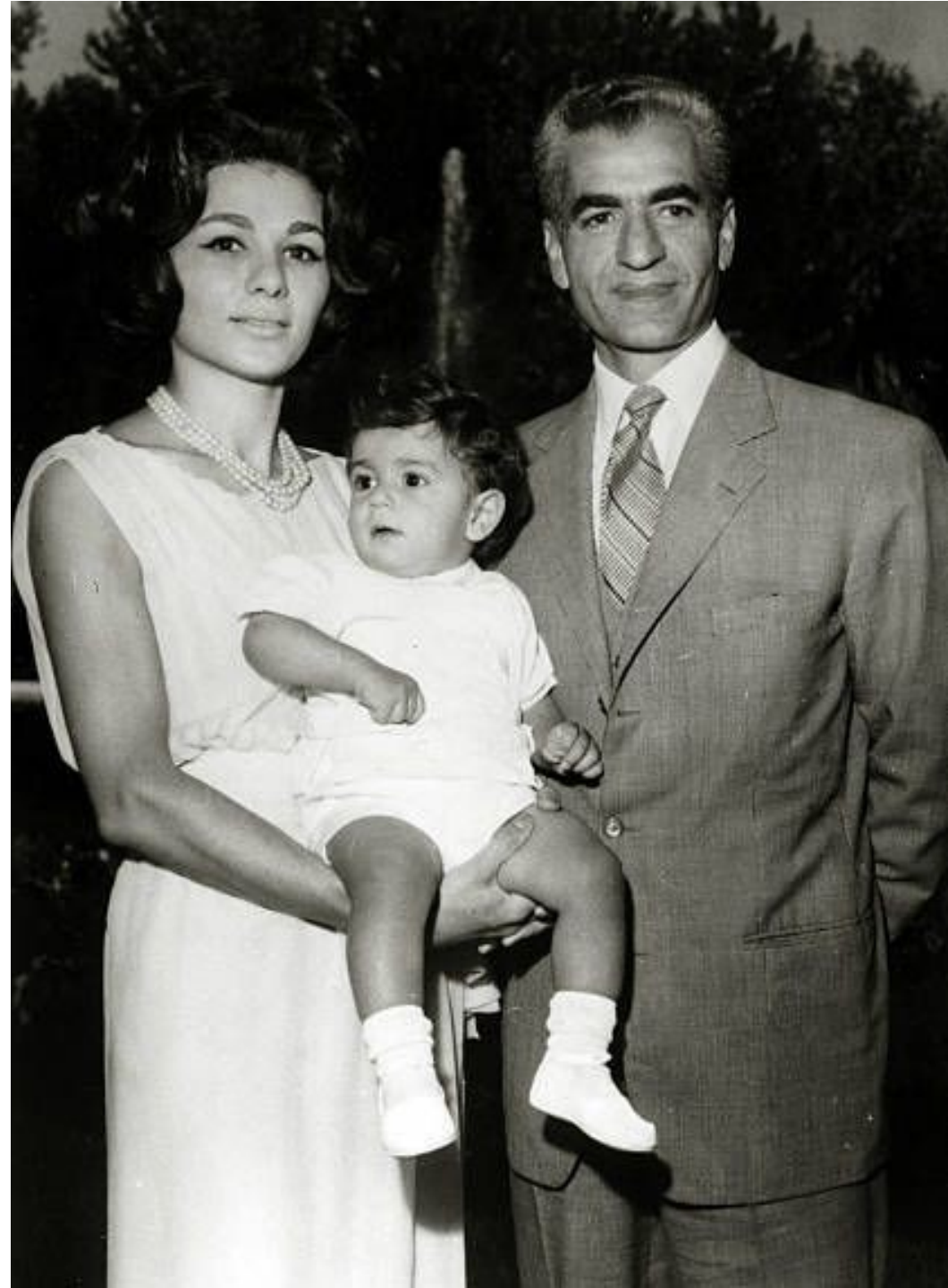
# GENERATION OF THE CHARISMATIC ARAB LEADERS





# CRISIS OF THE SECULAR REGIMES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- Until 1960s secularism played important role in many countries of the Middle East.
- Great popularity of secular ideologies and secular leaders (Turkey, Iran).
- Islam was still the most widespread religion
- The assumption that, as in the West, Islam will be pushed out of the public sphere and replaced by secular ideologies and consumer culture.



# CRISIS OF THE SECULAR REGIMES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- The secular regimes were no longer able to fulfill their promises → corruption, military defeats, excessive vassalism towards the Eastern or Western bloc, excessive secularization, slow modernization.
- Especially after the defeat of Arab states in the Six Day War in 1967, many Arabs were disillusioned.
- Many Muslims started to look for old-new political alternatives - this opens the chance for POLITICAL ISLAM (ISLAMISM) which constantly criticizes the secular regimes from the opposition.



# RISE OF ISLAMIC GROUPS

- 1978/1979 Iranian revolution.
- 1985 birth of Hizballah.
- 1987 birth of Hamas.
- 1994 birth of Taliban.
- Late 1980s birth of al-Kaida – global jihadism.
- 2006 birth of ISIS.

RONALD REAGAN MEETS WITH THE TALIBAN



"THESE GENTLEMEN ARE THE MORAL EQUIVALENTS OF AMERICA'S FOUNDING FATHERS." - Ronald Reagan. 1985





# ARAB SPRING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES



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# ARAB SPRING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- Initial strengthening of civil society and democracy, which in most cases did not last (the most successful transition to democracy in Tunisia).
- Stable but often very brutal autocracies plunged into chaos (Syria, Yemen, Libya), or the exchange of one dictatorial regime for another (Egypt).
- In the ensuing chaos, radicals have been strengthening.
- The power of the USA is weakening, it slightly strengthens the influence of Russia (Syria), China, the regional power Turkey is trying to become a local hegemon.
- Refugee waves, humanitarian disasters, devastation or stagnation of economies, rising inequality and poverty.





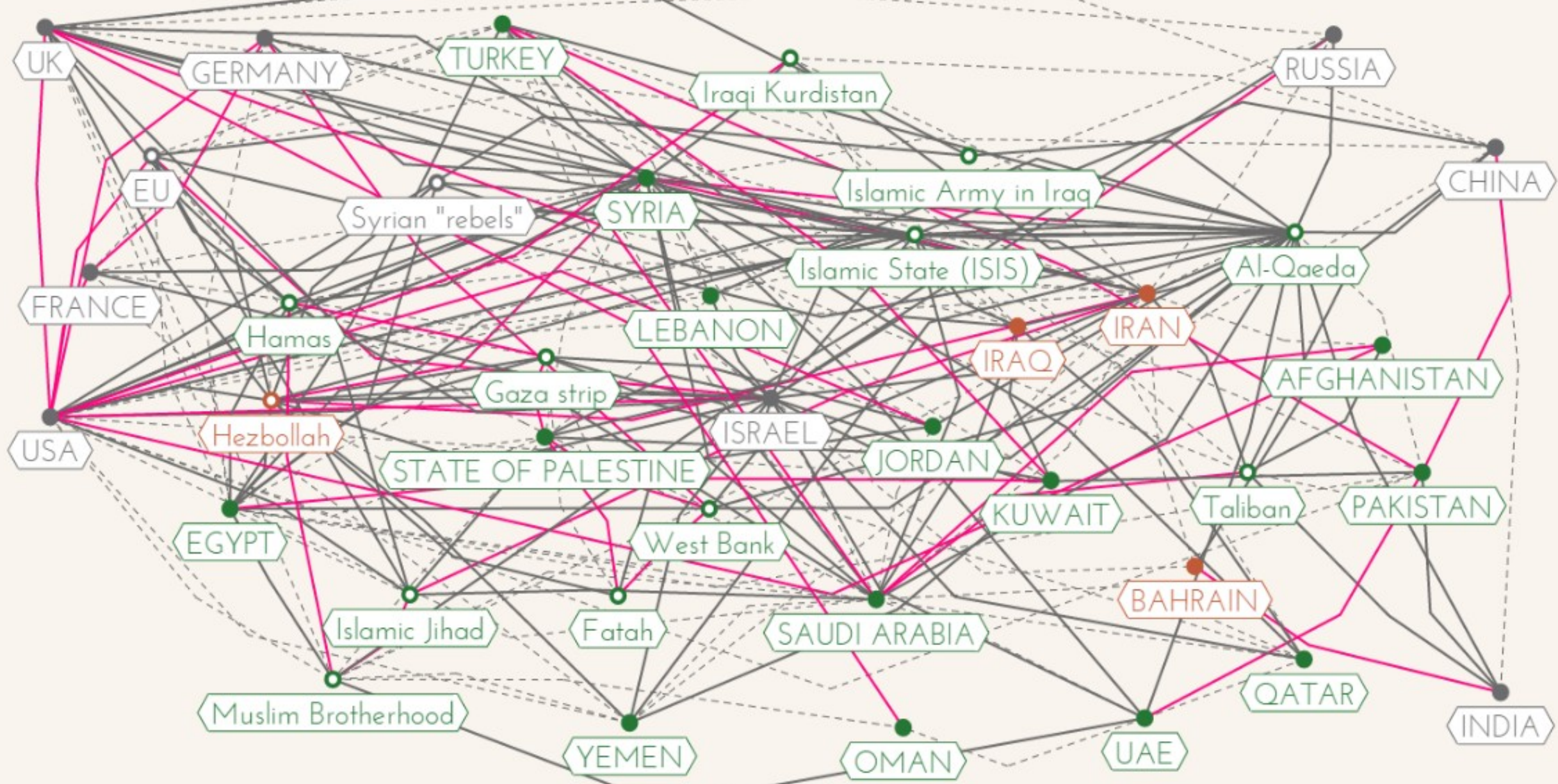
# THREE GEOPOLITICAL BLOCS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- **1. „Saudi“** – inaccurately „sunni“ bloc – to preserve the conservative regimes in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt) + Israel
- **2. „Iranian“** – inaccurately „shia“ bloc – Iran, Syria, Hizballah in Lebanon, government in Iraq.
- **3. Qatar and Turkey**

# The Middle East

Key players & notable relationships

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION