

OCR – AS GCE
European and World
History Period
Studies
F962 Option B

**Crisis in the Middle East
1948–2003**

ESSAY

Examiner's Specific Advice

In the examination you have to write two essays in 1 hour 30 minutes. It is vital to plan your use of time to ensure that you complete both essays. An equal amount of time should be spent on each essay so that all of the key points are covered in a logical, well-structured and cogent manner.

The ability to meet the assessment objectives for this Unit is crucial if high marks are to be obtained. With this in mind, you should spend about 5 minutes on planning each response. The assessment objectives demand that you demonstrate a good level of knowledge and understanding of the study topic. In particular, you should be able to:

- recall, select and use historical knowledge appropriately and communicate knowledge and understanding of history in a clear and effective manner
- demonstrate your understanding of the past through explanation, analysis and supported judgements of
 - a) key concepts such as causation, consequence, change and continuity
 - b) relationships between key features of the periods studied.

Careful planning helps maintain focus on the assessment objectives and, therefore, aids the maintenance of relevance. Also, effective planning allows concepts to be handled more easily. For example, a mind map or spider diagram plan for an answer to a question on the reasons for the Iran–Iraq war of 1980–81 would allow you to see the links between causal factors before arriving at a judgement about the relative importance of these factors.

The exemplar essays are answers to the type of question set by examiners on one of the key issue areas from Study Topic 10: Crisis in the Middle East 1948–2003.

Exemplar Question

Assess the reasons for the Iran–Iraq war (1980–88).

[50 marks]

**Click here for a
Chronology
relating to this
topic**

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 1

Plan

- Introduction
- Religious differences
- Territorial disputes
- Leadership issues
- Military strengths and weaknesses of both sides
- Conclusion – the war was mainly about land

The Iran–Iraq war of 1980–88 took place for a number of reasons. These included religious differences, disputes over territory, the military superiority of Iraq and Saddam Hussein's personal ambitions. It is difficult to say whether one reason was more important than another as they were all connected (1).

(1) A reasonable start that gives indication that a number of different reasons are going to be discussed.

One reason for the war concerned differences over religion. Although both countries were Islamic, Iraq contained mainly Sunni Muslims and in Iran the people were nearly all Shia. This was made worse when Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran after the 1979 revolution. Iraqi leaders thought Khomeini would encourage Shia in Iran to revolt against their newly elected leader, Saddam Hussein. All of this caused antagonism between the two different countries (2).

(2) An important point is being made here but unfortunately there is some inaccuracy and misunderstanding about religion in Iraq.

Another reason was that both countries fell out over borders. Iran and Iraq were divided by the Shatt al–Arab waterway although in reality Iraq controlled the stretch of river. In 1969 Iran annoyed Iraq by using Iranian warships to escort Iranian merchant ships along the middle part (thalweg) of the river. However, as Iraq was not as militarily strong as Iran at this time, the Iraqis took no action and simply let their resentment build up. This was later to become an important factor in why Saddam Hussein launched an attack against Iran (3).

(3) This is another important factor but it could be explored more fully.

In 1975 an attempt was made to solve the dispute over territory. The Algiers Agreement said that the boundary between the two countries was officially along the thalweg and that neither country had outright control over the waterway. This pleased both countries to some extent although Iraq still believed that it had a historic right to govern the whole of the Shatt. Iran made an extra concession, which was to halt provision of help to Kurdish peoples, who were revolting against the rulers of Iraq (4).

(4) Some implicit analysis is evident here but there is a drift to describing the event rather than assessing its significance.

A third reason for the war was the differences between the main leaders. Hussein became President of Iraq in July 1979. He gave the impression that he was in favour of making deals with the 'west'. He displayed his western sympathies by purging the Revolutionary Command Council of those he believed to be sympathetic towards Syria which, in turn, had been critical of Hussein's rise to power. The Iraqi president also clamped down on

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the Iraqi Communist party and broke relations with the USSR as a result of its invasion of Afghanistan. Khomeini, who came to power at the same time, thought that Hussein's actions were so pro-western that they must have also been anti-Islamic. Hussein's rule in Iraq was viewed as being purely secular and Hussein himself as the 'greatest obstacle to the advance of Islam in the region'. Hussein responded to this by making the ayatollah out to be an antiquated, superstitious old man who lacked the qualities to rule his country effectively. Hussein called Khomeini 'that mummy', which sums up his opinion of his fellow Muslim leader. Needless to say these personal differences became a major factor in why the two nations went to war (5).

(5) There is a lot of interesting material packed into this paragraph but once again there needs to be more on assessing the relative importance of the factor under discussion.

A final factor in influencing the start of the war concerned military differences. The revolution in Iran resulted in the virtual disintegration of what was considered to be the 'invincible Imperial Iranian Army'. Most of its senior ranking officers were executed to prevent the likelihood of a military backlash against the new Khomeini government. The new Iranian army revolved around the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guard) led by religious mullahs who had very little military experience. Against this, Iraq, under Hussein, had built up its armed forces so that it had nearly 200,000 professional troops, over 2,000 tanks and about 450 aircraft. Its technological superiority, confirmed by Iraqi military intelligence, convinced the Iranians that by 1980 Iraq was in a very strong position to invade Iran and gain all number of concessions that would enable Iraq to become the most powerful nation in the Middle East. It was not a great surprise therefore, that in September 1980, Iraq attacked Iran and the war was underway (6).

(6) Again, a good amount of supporting material is in evidence but the analysis and evaluation is rather thin.

In conclusion, the war between Iraq and Iran was mainly over territorial disputes. Iraq wanted to regain its authority over the borderlands to show Iran that it was a force to be reckoned with in the Middle East. When the revolution in Iran occurred, this weakened its military power and gave Iraq the opportunity to flex its muscle. A war quickly followed that was to last eight years but with neither side gaining much from it (7).

(7) A sensible judgement is made but the line of argument outlined is not one that has been consistently followed in the bulk of the essay.

Examiner's Assessment

The essay uses accurate and relevant evidence, which demonstrates some command of the topic but there is some inaccuracy and lack of clarity, for example, over the religious influence in each country. The answer includes relevant historical terminology, although it is not used extensively. Most of the answer is well organised and clearly structured. Generally the writing is mostly legible and clearly communicated. Thus, for AO1a, 14 marks would be awarded.

There is some uneven understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and of concepts relevant to their historical context. Although reasons are identified, they are listed rather than fully evaluated. There is little obvious judgement about relative

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importance of issues or linkages between factors until the conclusion. For AO1b, 16 marks would be achieved.

This gives an overall mark of 30 out of 50, placing the answer solidly in the middle of Level III, the equivalent of a Grade C.

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 2

Plan

- Introduction – established and alternative views
- Ideological differences – for or against the West?
- Religious dispute – splits in Islam
- Territorial protection and gains
- Personal animosity
- Hussein to blame argument
- Conclusion – territorial and hegemony factors were key

A common view is that the Iran–Iraq war of 1980–88 was a result of a very long history of feuding between Persian and Arab peoples interlinked with divisions between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Although these long-term contextual factors are important to acknowledge, it would be misleading to make them central to any argument about what caused the war. As the historians Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe have pointed out, it is more appropriate to consider the conflict as 'a modern interstate war fought for the thoroughly modern reasons of national interest and regional hegemony' (8).

(8) An interesting, engaging and intelligent start that highlights the debate over the origins of the war.

When the war broke out in September 1980 it was not clear that long-standing ideological differences were to blame. Historically, Iraq was seen as the nation that would unite the Arabs in the Gulf against the negative influence of the West. In contrast, Iran, with its imperial system of government prior to the revolution, was considered to be supportive of the West and a close ally of the USA. Rather ironically, it was Iran that many Middle Eastern states looked up to, to protect oil interests in the Gulf, and this added to the gall of the Iraqis. However, in 1979, with radical changes in the governments, ideological stances shifted with Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini implementing an Islamic regime that was anti-Western and Saddam Hussein moving away from revolutionary, anti-capitalist ideas towards policies that aligned his country more closely with the West. This change caused antagonism between the leaders but had little to do with more fundamental long-term ideological differences (9).

(9) A well-developed section on ideological differences, although the assessment of Hussein's link with the West is a little exaggerated.

Age-old religious and ethnic rivalries also contributed to the outbreak of the war. Both countries were Islamic but, as throughout the Islamic world, there were deep divisions between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. When Hussein took over as President of Iraq, the government consisted of Sunni Muslims but between fifty-five and sixty per cent of the population were Shia. The Shia had often voiced their concern about the lack of opportunities for

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them to progress in Iraq and Hussein was concerned that the Shia government of Khomeini would provoke Iraqi Shia to revolt. Another concern of Hussein's was the possibility that Kurdish peoples in the north of Iraq would also be prompted to attempt to overthrow the 'new' regime. The Kurds had long fought for independence from Iraq and had been supported by Iran to achieve their aims. However, as a result of the Algiers agreement of 1975, this threat subsided and cannot, therefore, be considered crucial to the starting of the war in 1980 (10).

(10) A sound analysis here of the role of religion and a clear evaluation of the factor is made at the end.

Of great significance were territorial disputes. Leaders of Iran and Iraq believed it was in the interests of their peoples to protect boundaries but also to make territorial gains if the opportunity arose. The most important dispute over land concerned the control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The river acted as a boundary between Iraq and Iran but, based on a treaty made in 1937, the whole of the waterway was meant to be under the sole control of Iraq. In 1969, Iran broke the agreement by sending its naval fleet to protect Iranian merchant shipping which was beginning to dominate the central channel (thalweg) of the Shatt. The Iraqi government did not retaliate as it feared the then superior Iranian warships would be impossible to combat. What this did was lead to a burning resentment within the Iraqi government, which, even after the attempt to resolve matters through the 1975 Algiers agreement, carried on until the end of the 1970s (11).

(11) A well-made point about the Shatt al-Arab waterway, although there is no mention of the strategic importance of the river and why it was so crucial to gain control of it.

Another dispute of note that arose in the 1970s concerned islands located off the coast of the United Arab Emirates. In 1971 the Greater and Lesser Tumbs and Abu Musa came under the control of Iran. Iraq protested but to no avail. However, under Hussein, Iraq made renewed efforts to claim jurisdiction over the strategically important islands and this added to the antagonism which had already started to mount (12).

(12) This issue can easily be overlooked by students but is included here to add weight to comments about the importance of territorial issues.

Some historians believe that the war had a lot to do with the personal animosity between Ayatollah Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. When the ayatollah came to power after the Iranian revolution of 1979 Hussein saw this as a backward step and a threat to peace in the Gulf. Khomeini was seen as a man out of touch with world affairs and Hussein referred to him as a 'mummy'. The ayatollah thought Hussein was a dangerous opportunist and 'the main threat to the advance of Islam in the region'. Hussein's government was considered too secular and unholy to be recognised by Iran to the extent that Iranian-backed Shia assassins were sent to kill key members of the ruling Iraqi Baath party. What was probably more important than personal hatred though was the personal belief of each individual that they had a duty to gain hegemony (dominance) in the Gulf. Each leader appeared to think that not only would hegemony improve the world status of their country but it was only Iran or Iraq that had the resources and skill to protect the Gulf against exploitation by the West. What they disagreed on most was the means by which hegemony could be achieved (13).

(13) A well-developed argument concerning the personal antagonism between the two leaders.

It has been said that the war was 'more immediately the result of poor political judgement and miscalculation on the part of Saddam Hussein'. Given the superior military strength of Iraq by 1980 it would seem unfair to claim Hussein had made serious errors of judgement. The ayatollah had purged the Iranian army of around 12,000 officers and fifty per cent of air force pilots disappeared. The Iranian armed forces became focused around the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guard) led by mullahs who had very little combat experience. All of this was known by Iraqi intelligence. The Iraqi forces on the other hand had expanded, resulting in a standing army of about 190,000 supplemented by over 2,000 tanks and 450 fighter aircraft. It is not surprising, therefore, that in September 1980, Hussein launched an attack on Iran with the intention of landing a quick knockout blow (14).

The Iran–Iraq war was mainly the result of each nation wanting to protect its territory and to be seen as the dominant power in the Gulf. Religious, ethnic and ideological disputes, which had long been a source of dispute, were important but only in terms of how they fed into the struggle for hegemony at a time when the Gulf was seen as being threatened by outside forces (15).

Examiner's Assessment

The answer consists of a wide range of accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. The candidate has made accurate and confident use of appropriate historical terminology such as hegemony. The essay is clearly structured and coherent and ideas are communicated in an accurate and legible manner. For AO1a, 22 marks would be awarded.

A clear and accurate understanding of most key concepts relevant to the causes of the Iran–Iraq war is displayed. The answer is mostly consistently and relevantly analytical with mostly developed and substantiated explanations. There is a clear understanding of the significance of issues in their historical context, as witnessed by the inclusion of material on changing ideology and religion. There is an attempt to make clear judgements about the relative importance of factors, although discussion of links is rather thin. For AO1b, a mark of 22 would be gained.

Overall, this is a well-written and clearly focused response. The argument is well framed and an intelligent judgement is made in the conclusion. Gaining a total of 44 marks out of 50, the essay is a good example of a solid Level I response. This essay is worth a grade A.

(14) A thorough, detailed survey of the importance of military capabilities, although the argument is not totally convincing.

(15) A solid conclusion that makes a judgement that follows on logically from what has been developed in the main part of the answer.

Click here for a Mark Scheme that accompanies the exemplar answers provided above

Click here for further sample Questions to test your skills

[Mark Scheme]

Examiners use Mark Schemes to determine how best to categorise a candidate's essay and to ensure that the performances of thousands of candidates are marked to a high degree of consistency. Few essays fall neatly into the mark levels indicated below: some answers will be particularly well argued but offer little supporting detail; others may be factually full but poorly organised or contain few judgements. Examiners therefore seek to find the 'best fit' when applying the scheme. Each essay has a final mark based on two Assessment Objectives (AO1a and AO1b) worth 24 + 26 = 50 marks. As the standard of the two essays lies between Level I and Level IV, only the descriptors and marks for these levels have been tabulated below.

	AO1a Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV
Assessment Objectives	Recall, select and use historical knowledge appropriately, and communicate knowledge and understanding clearly and effectively
Level IA 21–24 marks	Uses a wide range of accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate and confident use of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and coherent; communicates accurately and legibly.
Level IB 18–20 marks	Uses accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate use of a range of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and mostly coherent; writes accurately and legibly.
Level II 16–17 marks	Uses mostly accurate, detailed and relevant evidence, which demonstrates a competent command of the topic. Generally accurate use of historical terminology. Answer is structured and mostly coherent; writing is legible and communication is generally clear.
Level III 14–15 marks	Uses accurate and relevant evidence, which demonstrates some command of the topic but there may be some inaccuracy. Answer includes relevant historical terminology but this may not be extensive or always accurately used. Most of the answer is organised and structured; the answer is mostly legible and clearly communicated.
Level IV 12–13 marks	There is deployment of relevant knowledge but level/accuracy of detail will vary; there may be some evidence that is tangential or irrelevant. Some unclear and/or under-developed and/or disorganised sections; mostly satisfactory level of communication.

	AO1b Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV
Assessment Objectives	Demonstrate an understanding of the past through explanation and analysis, arriving at substantiated judgements of key concepts and of the relationships

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	between key features of the period studied
Level IA 24–26 marks	<p>Clear and accurate understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Clear and accurate understanding of issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Answer is consistently and relevantly analytical with developed and substantiated explanations, some of which may be unexpected.</p> <p>The argument evaluates a range of relevant factors and reaches clearly substantiated judgements about relative importance and/or links.</p>
Level IB 22–23 marks	<p>Clear and accurate understanding of most key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Clear understanding of the significance of issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Answer is mostly consistently and relevantly analytical with mostly developed and substantiated explanations.</p> <p>Substantiated judgements about relative importance of and/or links between factors will be made but quality of explanation in support may not be consistently high.</p>
Level II 19–21 marks	<p>Mostly clear and accurate understanding of many key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Clear understanding of the significance of most relevant issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Much of the answer is relevantly analytical and substantiated with detailed evidence but there may be some description.</p> <p>The analysis of factors and/or issues provides some judgements about relative importance and/or linkages.</p>
Level III 16–18 marks	<p>Some uneven understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and of concepts relevant to their historical context.</p> <p>Answers may be a mixture of analysis and explanation but also simple description of relevant material and narrative of relevant events OR answers may provide more consistent analysis but the quality will be uneven and its support often general or thin.</p> <p>Answer considers a number of factors but with very little evaluation of importance or linkages between factors/issues.</p> <p>Points made about importance or about developments in the context of the period will often be little more than assertions and descriptions.</p>
Level IV 13–15 marks	<p>Understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and the topic is variable but in general is satisfactory.</p> <p>Limited and patchy understanding of a few relevant issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Answer may be largely descriptive/narratives of events and links between this and analytical comments will typically be weak or unexplained OR answers will mix passages of descriptive material with occasional explained analysis.</p> <p>Limited points made about importance/links or about developments in the context of the period will be little more than</p>

	assertions and descriptions.
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Further sample questions

- (1) Assess the reasons for the creation of the state of Israel.
- (2) Compare and contrast the reasons for the Arab–Israeli wars of 1948–49, 1967 and 1973.
- (3) Assess the consequences of the 1973 Yom Kippur war.
- (4) To what extent did the presidential rule of Nasser have a negative impact on the Arab world to 1981?
- (5) To what extent was Nasser a more successful president of Egypt than Sadat?
- (6) Explain why it took so long for the Palestinian question to be resolved.
- (7) To what extent was the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 the most important reason for the Iran–Iraq war (1980–88)?
- (8) Assess the consequences of the Iran–Iraq war (1980–88) to 2003.
- (9) Explain why Western powers intervened in Iraq in the period from 1991 to 2003.

Chronology: Key Events in *the Middle East, 1917–2003*

November 1917	<u>The Balfour Declaration</u> (1).
1945	End of the Second World War.
May 1948	The outbreak of the first Arab–Israeli war and the start of the Palestinian refugee issue.
1954	Gamal Abdel Nasser becomes president of Egypt.
October 1954	<u>Suez Crisis</u> (2).
1964	Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) is founded.
June 1967	Six Day War.
1968	Fatah is formed, led by Yasser Arafat.
1970	President Nasser dies and is replaced by Anwar Sadat.
October 1973	<u>Yom Kippur War</u> (3).
November 1977	President Sadat makes historic visit to Jerusalem.
1979	Treaty of Washington is signed: <u>Revolution occurs in Iran and Ayatollah Khomeini returns from exile</u> (4).
September 1980	Start of the Iran–Iraq War.
October 1981	President Sadat is assassinated by Islamic militants.
June 1982	Israel invades Lebanon.
January 1985	Israel withdraws some troops from Lebanon.
April 1986	<u>US air strike on Libyan capital of Tripoli</u> (5).
August 1988	Ceasefire between Iran and Iraq.

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1990	Saddam Hussein orders Iraqi troops to invade Kuwait.
1991	Iraqi occupation is ended by coalition led by the USA.
September 1993	<u>Israel and PLO sign the Oslo accords</u> (6).
1995	Palestinian self-rule is established.
March 1996	Palestinian Islamists launch suicide bombings against Israel.
2000	<u>Camp David accords are announced</u> (7).
September 2001	<u>Al-Qaeda</u> (8) launches attacks on New York and Washington.
March 2003	Coalition led by USA launches war against Iraq.

(1) The declaration was a written statement issued on 2 November 1917 by the British foreign secretary A.J. Balfour which said that Britain agreed to 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object' as long as the rights of non-Jewish people in the area were upheld.

(2) A conflict between President Nasser's Egypt and an Anglo-French alliance over the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Nasser in July 1956.

(3) Yom Kippur is the Jewish period of religious observance and fasting. On 6 October 1973, as Israelis were celebrating Yom Kippur, Egyptian forces moved 15 miles (24 km) inside Israeli territory and Syrian troops went into the Golan Heights. This led to Israeli retaliation and a mini-war that lasted until a ceasefire was agreed to on 24 October.

(4) Khomeini had been a staunch critic of the Shah and had been imprisoned and then forced into exile. He wandered from Turkey to Iraq, on to Paris and France before being 'recalled' as a result of the peaceful 'revolution' of 1979.

(5) The US air strike was retaliation for the bombing of a West Berlin nightclub that US servicemen frequented. US intelligence services suspected that the Libyan dictator Colonel Gaddafi was involved.

(6) Under this agreement the Palestinians recognised Israel's right to exist and Israel recognised the PLO as the only true representatives of the Palestinian people. Also, the Palestinians claimed they would not revert to terrorism again to achieve their aims.

(7) Camp David, a retreat of the US president situated in Maryland, had long been the 'neutral' location for Middle East peace talks to take place. On this occasion the talks broke down over the ownership of holy places (the 'bones in the throat dispute').

(8) Al-Qaeda ('the base') is an extremist Islamic terrorist group, led by Osama Bin Laden who claimed responsibility for the attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001.

Teaching Activities

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Try the following with your students:

1. Ask students to research the origins of the Arab–Israeli wars (see sample question 2) and instruct them to present their findings in the form of a table as follows:

Origins	1948–49	1967	1973
Long-term			
Short-term			
Trigger			

This should be followed up with a discussion about the most important/least important factors that led to each war.

2. Using the table constructed in question 1 above, ask students to identify patterns of similarity and differences between the causes of each war. This can then be followed up with a discussion about why there were three Arab–Israeli wars and why, more generally, history seems to repeat itself. This could lead to a wider debate about the use of history and the question of whether we can learn from ‘mistakes’ made in the past.
3. Teach students about the importance of contingency factors in determining the causes, course and consequences of events such as wars. Ask students to research any of the conflicts mentioned in the Chronology and to state how far they believe contingency factors to be influential in shaping the causes, course and consequence of the conflict chosen.
4. Ask students to use the Chronology and their own knowledge to identify patterns of change and continuity in Middle Eastern affairs over the whole period. Their observations can be recorded in a table and should be followed up with discussion about why it has been so difficult for peace and stability to be maintained in the Middle East.

Resources

- S.K. Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator* (Bloomsbury, 1999)
M. al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)
A. and P. Cockburn, *Saddam: an American Obsession* (Verso, 2002)
R. Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (Andre Deutsch, 1990)
J. Keay, *Sowing the Wind: Seeds of Conflict in the Middle East* (John Murray, 2003)
W. Laqueur and B. Rubin (eds), *The Israel-Arab Reader* (Penguin, 2001)
B. Milton-Edwards and P. Hinchcliffe, *Conflicts in the Middle East since 1945* (2nd edn, Routledge, 2004)
S. Ross, *Teach Yourself the Middle East* (Hodder Education, 2004)
K. Schulze, *The Arab–Israeli Conflict* (Longman, 1999)
M. Scott-Baumann, *Crisis in the Middle East: Israel and the Arab States 1945–2007* (Access to History, 2009)

Weblinks

www.middleeastopinion.com/history-&-policy/comment/reply/58

www.leadingtowar.com/?gclid=CNT9i9f00Z8CFQeEIAodSTCFzg

www.mideastweb.org/history.htm

www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook54.html

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