

LESSON PLAN: Democracy in the Middle East

Student Handout:

Opening Activity – Spreading Freedom throughout the World

Historical Background: The Middle East has had contact with Europe and the West for centuries. While much of this contact revolved around trade, it wasn't always a harmonious relationship. The European Crusades of the 12th through 14th centuries saw Europeans and Muslims waging war on each other in epic battles over territory and conquest. After World War I, with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East fell into the hands of the European victors. National borders, originally based on ethnic and political boundaries were re-arranged to suit the Europeans economic and political needs for the 20th Century.

The discovery of oil deposits in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq led to a quasi-colonialism that saw much economic activity but not much political reform. The old ruling families of the Arabian Peninsula were given authority by the Europeans to "keep things in order." Sometimes this worked and other times new leaders emerged who were opposed to western nations' wishes.

The establishment of the Jewish state in Israel brought a democratic government to the region, and strong political and cultural resentment by many Muslims in the region.

The emergence of the Cold War created a paradoxical dance with Muslim governments being both friend and foe to U.S. and European policies adding another complex dimension to international relations in the region. During this time democratic government became established in only a few countries like Israel and later Turkey. Democracy found difficulty establishing itself in Lebanon and only took on vague characterizations in Egypt and Morocco. In fact, it was never an official political priority by any of the countries in the Middle East or the West until most recently. A sequence of events in the early months of 2005, beginning with elections in Iraq and Palestine and open and successful political protest in Lebanon against Syrian influence, led many to believe a new chapter was being written in the Middle East. President George Bush, in his 2nd inaugural address, introduced a new role for the United States in fostering global democracy, with its beginnings in the Middle East.

Recent Events: A sequence of events in the early months of 2005, beginning with elections in Iraq and Palestine and open and successful political protest in Lebanon against Syrian influence, led many to believe a new chapter was being written in the

Middle East. President George Bush, in his second inaugural address, introduced a new role for the United States in fostering global democracy, with its beginnings in the Middle East.

Excerpts from President Bush's Second Inaugural Address:

- *We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.*
- *So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.*
- *Today, America speaks anew to the peoples of the world: All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.*

1. Review the quotes and comment on the following questions:
 - a. Restate the quote in your own words.
 - b. Describe the policy the president is proposing for the United States.
 - c. What is the goal of this policy? How does it relate to U.S. national interests?
 - d. What actions will the U.S. need to take to implement this policy?
 - e. How does this policy compare to the "containment policy" conducted during the Cold War? *
 - f. Speculate on why the president feels this is a good policy for the U.S. to follow at this time. Do you agree or disagree and why?

* The Containment Policy was a foreign policy doctrine developed by U.S. foreign diplomat George Kennan and adopted by President Harry S. Truman in 1947 during the early years of the Cold War. It called for the U.S. to prevent global expansion by the Soviet Union (and eventually other communist nations) through a policy of "patient but firm and vigilant containment." Kennan believed preventing the expansion of Soviet influence would either bring about its break-up or a mellowing of its power. The U.S. applied the policy to justify American involvement in the Korean and Vietnam wars. It is also said to be responsible for detente (an easing of tensions between the Soviet Union and the U.S. in the 1970's) and the eventual collapse of the Soviet system in 1991. For more information on the Containment Policy go to www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/17601.htm and http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/remember/jan-june05/diplomats_3-18.html