

LESSON PLAN: Democracy in the Middle East

Student Handout:

Where is democracy in the Middle East?

Review the recent evidence of democracy in the Middle East below:

- September 2002 – **Morocco** holds parliamentary elections bringing 30 women into Parliament. This is followed by nation-wide municipal elections a year later.
- January 2004 - **Afghanistan** ratifies constitution that affirms adherence to Islam, but provides for national elections (held in October 2004) and sets up a two-chamber parliament in which women would have a significant role.
- January 9, 2005 - **Palestinian** citizens elect Mahmoud Abbas as their president.
- January 30, 2005 - the people of **Iraq** hold their country's first open, direct, multiparty legislative elections in more than 50 years.
- February 2005 - **Egyptian** President Hosni Mubarak announces competitive, multi-party elections for president in September.
- February 2005 - Inspired by earlier events in the Georgian Republic and Iraq and angered by the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, **Lebanese** citizens take to the streets in protest of Syrian military occupation accelerating the withdrawal of Syrian troops.
- April 2005 - **Saudis** vote in their first ever municipal elections, seen as a bid to answer calls for greater democracy. Though the elected officials will have little influence over national policy, they will have some in local affairs.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the action of democracy you see in each example.
2. Identify the political right exercised in each of the countries (refer to the U.S. Bill of Rights or the Universal Declaration of Rights)
3. Explain why these events are indications that political freedom exists in these countries.
4. Can these countries be declared democracies or, if not what other evidence would be needed?

Research Tasks:

1. With your group members go to the CIA World Factbook at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/> and look up the following information on your assigned country.
 - Government Type
 - Constitution (does it have one? Describe the relationship between the people and the government)
 - Legal system
 - Suffrage (voting rights age and gender?)
 - Powers of executive, legislative, and judicial branches and how they are put in power
 - Political Parties (does it have any? Level of participation in the government?)

Write the information you gather on the left hand side of the Democracy Assessment chart. Use extra paper if necessary.

2. Once you complete your research, as a group determine the level of democracy you believe the country has using the following "Pillars of Democracy" from the U.S. State Department. You may rate the country as very democratic, somewhat democratic, only slightly democratic or not democratic. Place your ratings on the right hand column on the Democracy Assessment chart.

THE PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY

- ✓ Sovereignty of the people.
 - ✓ Government based on consent of the governed.
 - ✓ Majority rule.
 - ✓ Minority Rights
 - ✓ Guarantee of basic human rights.
 - ✓ Free and fair elections.
 - ✓ Equality before the law.
 - ✓ Due process of law.
 - ✓ Constitutional limits on government.
 - ✓ Social, economic, and political pluralism
 - ✓ Values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation, and compromise.
3. When your group has completed the left hand side of the chart, make a sign for your country on a piece of paper that shows the country's name and its flag. Now have one of member from your group stand on the continuum line, as instructed by your teacher, hold the country sign and provide the following information on your country:
 - Country name
 - Government type
 - Status of constitution
 - Extent of suffrage
 - Structure of government (describe the powers of executive, legislative and judicial and who controls these).
 - Status of political parties
 - Rate the country's level of democracy and provide an explanation. (very democratic, somewhat democratic, only slightly democratic or not democratic)
 4. Debriefing questions for entire class:
 - a. What aspects of the countries presented surprised you?
 - b. What aspects did you expect to see?
 - c. Which countries' leaders have made progress in democratizing their nation? Which have not?
 - d. Which countries seem to need the most attention for the United States to fulfill the goals of growing democratic movements and institutions outlined in President Bush's inaugural speech?
 - e. What might be some of the difficulties the United States would face if it pursued an aggressive policy of encouraging democracy in these countries?

Student Handout: Democracy Assessment Chart

Country name _____

Descriptions	Facts	Pillars of Democracy	Level of Democracy
Government type		Sovereignty of the people	
Constitution		Government based on consent of the people	
Legal system		Majority Rule	
Suffrage		Minority Rights	
Powers of Branches		Guarantee of basic human rights	
• Executive		Free and Fair elections	
• Legislative		Due process of law	
• Judicial		Constitutional limits on government	
Political Parties		Social, economic, and political pluralism	
		Values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation and compromise	
Summarize level of democracy			

