



Governance of Southwest Asia (Middle East)

SS7CG5 The student will explain the structures of the national governments of Southwest Asia (Middle East).

a. Compare the parliamentary democracy of the State of Israel, the monarchy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the theocracy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, distinguishing the form of leadership and the role of the citizen in terms of voting rights and personal freedoms.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Flag Description:

green, a traditional color in Islamic flags, with the Shahada or Muslim creed in large white Arabic script (translated as "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God") above a white horizontal saber.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- *Government Type:*
Monarchy - power is held by king or queen
- *Type of Leadership:* King AND Prime Minister
- *Executive Power:* King
- *Role of Citizen (Elections):*
None; the monarchy is hereditary



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Saudi Arabia had elections for city councils in 2005, giving Saudi men a limited opportunity to select some of their leaders at the local level.
- Women were completely excluded from the election process.
- The eligible electorate consisted of less than 20 percent of the population: male citizens who were at least 21 years old, not serving in the military, and a resident in their electoral district for at least a year.
- Half of the council seats were open for election, and the other half were appointed by the monarchy.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Justice in Saudi Arabia is administered by a system of religious courts according to the kingdom's strict interpretation of the Sharia law.
- **Sharia Law (Islamic law) - the moral code and religious law of Islam based on the Quran and the teachings of Muhammed. It is considered the law of Allah.** Sharia deals with many topics addressed by secular law, including crime, politics, and economics, as well as personal matters such as hygiene, diet, prayer, and fasting.
- **Public punishment includes: stoning, amputation, flogging and hanging.**

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Women are not allowed to drive.
- Women must wear abaya at all times.
- No gambling, alcohol, Western movies/tv
- Restaurants have separate sections for men and women.
- Everything stops for prayer 5 times a day.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- The government tightly controls content in domestic media and controls regional print and satellite television coverage.
- Members of the royal family own major shares in news outlets across the region.
- Government officials have banned/punished journalists who publish articles deemed offensive to the country's powerful religious establishment or the ruling authorities.
- The government also limits the influence of new media, blocking access to some websites that are considered immoral or anti-Saudi.

State of Israel



Flag Description:

white with a blue hexagram (six-pointed linear star) known as the Magen David (Shield of David) centered between two equal horizontal blue bands near the top and bottom edges of the flag



State of Israel



- *Government Type:* Parliamentary Democracy
- *Type of Leadership:* Prime Minister
- Legislative branch is called the Knesset
- *Role of Citizen (Elections):* Members of parliament are elected by the citizens
- Separate judicial branch

State of Israel

- Although there is no formal constitution, a series of basic laws have the force of constitutional principles.
- All citizens aged 18 and over can vote.
- Freedom of the press is respected in Israel.
- All Israeli newspapers are privately owned and freely criticize government policy.
- The Israel Broadcasting Authority operates public radio and television services, and privately owned television networks and radio stations are widely available.
- Most Israelis subscribe to cable or satellite television; internet access is widespread and unrestricted.

State of Israel

- Most Israeli citizens are required to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for a period of between two and three years.
- Israel is unique in that **military service is compulsory for both males and females**. It is the only country in the world that maintains obligatory military service for women.
- All eligible men and women are drafted at age 18. Men serve for three years, women for 21 months.



Islamic Republic of Iran



Flag Description:

three equal horizontal bands of green (top), white, and red; the national emblem (a stylized representation of the word Allah in the shape of a tulip, a symbol of martyrdom) in red is centered in the white band; ALLAH AKBAR (God is Great) in white Arabic script is repeated 11 times along the bottom edge of the green band and 11 times along the top edge of the red band



Islamic Republic of Iran

- *Government Type:* Theocracy - a form of government in which a priests rule in the name of God or a god
- *Type of Leadership:* President and the Ayatollah (Supreme Leader)
- *Executive Power:* Ayatollah
- *Elections:* Supreme Leader is appointed for life by the Assembly of Experts; president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term
- Elections are not free or fair!



Islamic Republic of Iran

- Even though Iran has a president, it is not a democracy. The most powerful figure in the government is the supreme leader –the ayatollah.
- Supreme Leader has control over the security and intelligence services, armed forces, and judiciary.
- The constitution provided for a president and parliament elected by the people, but an unelected clerical body, the Council of Guardians, was empowered to approve electoral candidates and make sure that people follow Sharia (Islamic law). (JUST LIKE IN SAUDI ARABIA)

Islamic Republic of Iran

- Human rights has suffered, with increasing reports of arrest, torture, and execution.
- Religious freedom is limited in Iran. There are Christians, Jews and other religions, but they are not allowed to try to convert Muslims.

Islamic Republic of Iran



- There is limited freedom of press. Journalists who criticize the government can be arrested.
- Internet access is restricted.
- Radio and newspapers have limited freedom of speech.
- Satellite TV is popular (even though it's illegal).
- Public punishment includes: stoning, amputation, flogging and hanging.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- A woman cannot obtain a passport without the permission of her husband or a male relative.
- Women do not enjoy equal rights under Sharia statutes governing divorce, inheritance, and child custody.
- Women must follow dress codes and are sometimes segregated from men in most public places.

