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Anderson, E. W. & L. D. Anderson. An Atlas of Middle Eastern Affairs 2 nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2014.

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**Anderson, E. W. & L. D. Anderson. *An Atlas of Middle Eastern Affairs*
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If a criterion of success of works such as the atlas under review here is the extent to which it demonstrates the diversity, complexity, and hybridity of the region that it studies, its authors have arguably done well. The atlas is divided into six sections. In Section A, “The Middle East in context,” they discuss in historical and general terms the importance and geographical scope of the region known as the Middle East as well as the history of this contentious term, the Middle East. Based on a number of various factors, they include in the Middle East most Arab countries (including the Maghreb countries in North Africa, but excluding Somalia, Djibouti, and the Comoro Islands) in addition to Turkey, Cyprus, Israel, Iran, and Afghanistan. In Section B, “The Middle East background: geographical and historical,” they sketch the geographical and historical diversity and developments in the Middle East to flesh out their opening statement in this section: “States and territories of the Middle East can be envisaged as actors in a continuing drama. Each has a unique character and each exhibits different abilities. For example, the power to influence other states may depend on location, history, area of territory, size of population, economic strength, military strength, external support or the contribution of significant individuals” (p. 11).

The book begins with the geography and climate of the Middle East and the constraints that they bring about (for example, on agriculture, movement, and settlement) and the opportunities that they provide. The authors discuss at some length the main sources of water in the region and the diversity of its soil and vegetation, and how all these influence the “human landscape” in its different parts. Next, they briefly introduce the history of the ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Persia, the rise of Christianity and Islam, the Ottoman Empire, the European colonization in the Middle East, the two world wars in the 20th century and their consequences in the region, the Cold War, 11 September 2001 and the ensuing “war on terror,” and the uprisings of the so-called “Arab Spring” which began in 2010.

In Section C, “Fundamental concerns,” the authors discuss four crucial issues that can account for the volatility of the Middle East. These include oil, water, and state boundaries (this last issue is discussed under two headings, “International boundaries” and “Transboundary issues”). They give a special and deserved emphasis on how oil is transported from its Middle East producers to consumers elsewhere. Useful maps here give a good idea of the main oil and natural gas transboundary pipelines and the main choke points that can cause disruption to the shipping routes. This part also provides an overview of the history of the oil and natural gas industries, including production, consumption, and revenues, as well as how these have influenced and been influenced by factors such as world politics, oil corporations, the discovery of new sources of energy, and the emergence of new economic powers.

Water is discussed next. Less statistics are given here, but the factors that make water a potential source of conflict are adequately discussed. These include the general aridity of the region, the necessity of transboundary water management, and the overpopulation and rapid economic development. Some of the solutions that have been adopted to overcome the water problem in the region are discussed. The next “fundamental concern” is boundaries. This part provides a general and useful overview of the various kinds of state boundaries that exist in the Middle East and the main conflict to which these boundaries, land and maritime, have given rise. Other issues include borders control, customs, movement, human and sex trafficking, arms and drug smuggling, and, of course, terrorism.

In Section D, Middle Eastern states are discussed in more length. The basic information about each state is given, including its location, area, geography, population, economy, culture,

and religion. This is followed by brief discussions of the key issues, recent events, and status of each of these states. Other countries that are not part of the Middle East, as defined by the authors, but that have strong interactions with its countries are discussed next. These include Somalia, which has emerged as a global flashpoint due to its association with terrorism and piracy, the countries south of Sahara in Africa, some central Asian states, and Greece. Special focus, however, is given to Pakistan which shares many Middle Eastern characteristics and has strong relationships with the region. The focus here is on the issues of terrorism, the conflict with India over Kashmir, and Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan and the United States. Perhaps missing here is Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia. The section ends with a brief discussion of the main "Rimland seas" in the region, including the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Red Sea.

Section E discusses five key geopolitical issues in the Middle East. What seems to distinguish this from other sections in the atlas, notably Section C, is that the issues discussed here have contemporary and ongoing relevance. These include war and conflict in the Middle East, such as the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the 1991 Gulf War, the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, the various forms of U.S. involvement in the region, the presence of weapons of mass destructions (special focus is given here to Israel and Iran), and, expectedly, terrorism. Political issues include democracy and freedom in the Middle East, the Arab Spring and the role of the Muslim Brotherhood, the problem of the Kurds in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, and the status of the Shia Muslims in the region. A separate part discusses the all-important "Israeli-Palestinian question," with a brief history of the conflict and the problems that the Israeli occupation has caused, as well as the ever-elusive peace process.

The atlas ends with a useful "Further reading" section which could have been more useful if the works were grouped under more specific headings.

The authors of this atlas were able to strike a difficult balance between detailed information and analysis readers would expect to find in monographs on the one hand, and the brevity of typical encyclopedia entries on the other hand. This notwithstanding, some parts of the atlas seem to be either too detailed or surprisingly brief and insufficient. An example of the first downside is Section A, where the authors discuss the geography and topology of the region, or in Section C where they discuss in much detail technical issues that contribute to the water problem in the Middle East. Useful as these discussions may be, general readers and students may find them unduly detailed and perhaps even difficult to follow. An example of the deficiency in some parts of the atlas – which deficiencies result from the authors' obvious leaning towards geography, topology, natural resources and related topics – is the treatment of some historical events. The rise and expansion of Islam is a case in point. Arguably, this is the single most important event that influenced the demography and culture of the region, a fact that cannot be highlighted if it is glossed over in half a page, as the authors do in page 32.

Despite these few weaknesses, the work remains valuable and useful. Rich in helpful maps and clear analyses, it is apt to be useful for readers seeking an introductory work on the history, geography, topology and demography of the Middle East and students without prior knowledge of the region.

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