Regional Characteristics

Regional Identification:

Geography: The ME & NA consists of 22 nations: 18 Arab and 4 non-Arab countries. They are Algeria, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen.

History: from 5500 B.C.: irrigated cultivation extended from the Fertile Crescent to the Mesopotamia to A.D. 1991: the Persian Gulf War. The region has witnessed the rise and fall of many nations and empires including Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Parthian, Sassanian, Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid, Seljukian, Mongolian, Safavid, and Ottoman.

Regional Importance:

- The Crossroad: a unique geopolitical position located at the tricontinental hub of Europe, Asia, and Africa and the major transportation route from West to East.
- The Cradle of Civilization: more than 5000 years of civilization including major developments in agriculture, urbanization, science, technology, literature, culture, and philosophy
- The Birthplace of three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and many other religions like Zoroastrianism and Bahai
- The Arc of Crisis: a history of political and military conflict
- Large Population: more than 300 million in the region
- Rich natural resources: 60 percent of the world's petroleum resources; 25-50 percent of world's daily petroleum production; a large share of world's production of minerals such as iron ore, zinc, copper, lead
- Trade and commerce: major importer of food, capital and consumer goods, and military equipment and technology and major exporter of minerals and human capital

Regional Similarities:

- Common history: from the Persian Kingdom to Arab Caliphate to Ottoman Empire to European Colonialism to independent nations.
- Common language and culture: Arabic in most countries, Farsi or Persian in Iran, Turkish in Turkey, and Hebrew in Israel
- Religion of Islam: all countries except Israel and Cyprus practice Islam as their predominate religion which consists of two major sects of Shii (in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon) and Sunni (in others) for more than 20 percent of the Third World population
• Developing or Third World Nations: most countries suffer from low standard of living, high income and wealth inequality, slow economic growth, dependence on foreign trade and technology, government inefficiency, and lack of socio-political freedom
• Military Conflict: historically the region as a whole suffers from frequent political instability and sever military conflict including the most recent cases of Arab-Israeli Wars (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982), Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), and Persian Gulf War (1991)

**Economic Profile:**

**Area of Land:**
- Large: Sudan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia
- Small: Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar

**Area of Arable Land**
- Large: Iran, Sudan, Morocco
- Small: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar

**Population**
- Large: Egypt, Iran, Morocco
- Small: Qatar, Bahrain, UAE

**Percentage of Rural Population**
- Large: Yemen, Sudan, Morocco
- Small: Kuwait, Israel, Lebanon

**GNP Per Capita**
- Large: Qatar, UAE, Kuwait
- Small: Sudan, Yemen, Egypt