ARMENIANS

After their dispersion from Anatolia with the genocide of 1915-1916, Armenians have gone to great lengths to preserve their heritage as non-Arab Christians. Throughout the Middle East, Europe and the Americas, Armenians have worked hard to run their own institutions, such as schools, where they can speak their language, use their own alphabet and maintain Armenian communities. The Armenian Church serves as a communal gathering place for music and dance, while clubs and summer camps are social center for Armenian youth. With about 7 million people, the Armenian diaspora is about twice the size of the population of post-Soviet Armenia.

KURDS

When the Ottoman Empire was carved up after WWI to create new nation-states after WWI, the Kurdish homeland was divided between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. With over 30 million Kurds worldwide, today's Kurds are one of the world's largest stateless ethno-linguistic groups. Historically a rural and mountainous people of various dialects and tribal allegiances, they have struggled as minority populations to express their identities and exercise a meaningful degree of sovereignty. Some, like the Kurdistan Workers Party in Turkey, have taken up armed struggle for independence. Many others have emigrated – the population of Kurds in Istanbul is estimated at 3 million. As a consequence of turmoil in Iraq, the Kurds of the northern Iraq have established a quasi-state with dream of future independence.

DRUZE

Practicing a tradition shrouded in secrecy, the Druze reside in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. They believe that women are spiritually superior, allowing them to join the uqqal, those enlightened in the mysterious, syncretic traditions. Although the group is very insular, they are the only Arabs in Israel that are subject to serve in the Israeli Defense Force and actually view it as a point of pride. In Syria, the Druze have given their allegiance to the Assad regime, thus their autonomy and security alignment following the Syrian uprisings is uncertain.

MARONITES

The Maronites constitute the second largest Christian community in the Middle East. Once a rural people, they currently occupy the urban centers in north Lebanon. Maronites held extensive political influence over the predominantly Arab nation, an advantage originating from their alliance with France. Following the 1975 Civil War, the 1988 Ta'if Agreement was designed to strip away their power. The current Lebanese President is a Maronite; however, the other high-ranking officials like Prime Minister and Speaker of the Parliament are reserved for other religious groups.

LAZ

Ethnolinguistically related to Georgians, the Laz are a Black Sea peoples of Turkey's mountainous, northeast corner. Identified by Pliny in the first century, the Laz have retained their place and identity in the face of changing Byzantine, Persian, Ottoman and Turkish Republican control. The Laz have reputations as distinguished seamen and accomplished cooks. The 20th century introduction of tea cultivation to this tiny, temperate and rainiest region of the Middle East (100" annually) has diversified the economy and placed the Laz at the center of Turkish tea production. Preserving Laz identity, however, is difficult without a written literature, without official status in Turkey, and with outmigration and assimilation into the Turkish population at large. Nominally Muslim, Laz are estimated to number 250,000.

MARSH ARABS

The Marsh Arabs make their home in the Marshes formed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. They live in reed homes, grow rice, raise water buffalo, and fish from their dugout canoes. The draining of the marshlands by the Saddam regime in the late 1990s forced 300,000 to 500,000 Marsh Arabs off their traditional territory, with only about 1,600 living there in 2003. About 75% of the marshes have been restored, but only 40,000 live there today. Due to the saline soil, poor water quality and riparian countries, the population and environment are slow to return.

BALUCH

Straddling the border of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Baluch are traditionally a nomadic people herding their animals in the mountains of Baluchistan. Recently many Baluch people have immigrated in a diaspora to various cities throughout the world, especially the Gulf States and India, though most of the approximately 9 million Baloch still reside in Baluchistan. Since Baluchi culture remains strongly tied to tribal traditions allowing ancient customs to remain intact in the modern world.

PALESTINIAN DIASPORA

Roughly 5 million Palestinians live outside their homeland, across the Middle East, in Europe and in the USA. Most are refugees, Palestinians and their descendants forcefully removed from their homes and neighborhoods by Israelis since 1947. 1.3 million Palestinian refugees live in nearly 60 refugee camps throughout Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza strip; another 3.4 million registered refugees do not live in the camps. As the only Arab state to grant all Palestinians citizenship rights, Jordan is home to the largest Palestinian population, about 1.3 million people. Known to work hard and value education, Palestinians have the highest per capita rate of university graduates in the Arab world.

ISRAELI SETTLERS

Since 1967, Israel has occupied the Palestinian territories of East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Through the creation and protection of Jewish settlements, the state of Israel has supported the systematic annexation of these territories. Currently, ½ million Israeli settlers live in nearly 200 government supported colonies throughout the region, with nearly 200,000 settlers in Jerusalem. As illegal occupiers in the heart of the Palestinian homeland, settlers live their daily lives heavily armed. Many commute to Israel for work. The settlements and their connecting transportation corridors have severely fragmented the West Bank and constricted opportunities for Palestinian sovereignty.

ISRAELIS

Though a self-declared Jewish State, Israel is a diverse country. Established in 1948 by an immigrant Jewish population, Israeli society now reflects cultures and influences from around the world. About 75% of Israel's nearly 8 million inhabitants are of Jewish heritage – two-thirds of whom are Sabra (Israeli-born) and one-third of whom are olim (Jewish immigrants) from Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. Another 20% of Israel's population is Arab, mostly Palestinian, but also Druze, Copt and Maronites. Hebrew and Arabic are the official languages, Russian and English widely spoken, and radio broadcasts can be heard in Amharic, Ladino, Yiddish, Armenian, Bucharian and Georgian. Notwithstanding its diversity, the State of Israel maintains a discriminatory policy toward its Palestinian citizens. This oppressive treatment contradicts the progressive image Israel projects by having the most gay friendly city in the world and site of the largest gay pride parade in all of Asia – Tel Aviv.

BERBERS

The Amazigh, commonly known as Berbers, are the farmers and transhumant semi-nomads of the Maghreb that predate the arrival of the Arabs by thousands of years. Despite centuries of Arab assimilation and "Arabization, " there is still an estimated total population of 36 million Amazigh, nearly 90% of whom live in Morocco and Algeria. In recognition of its Berber heritage, Tamazight – the generic name for all Berber languages – has been nationally recognized in Morocco and Algeria and is being taught in school. Scholars and activists are working toward a standardized version of Tamazight to pull together its hundreds of different dialects.

TUAREG

Known as the "Blue People" from their traditional indigo garments, the Tuareg are nomadic pastoral Berbers of Saharan West Africa. As many as 1.5 million live in Southern Algeria and Libya – an estimated additional 4 million live further south. Economically, the Tuareg have historically relied on the camel and trans-Saharan trade; today, many have settled into city life. Though the Tuareg people have modernized, they still retain a large part of their heritage in crafts, art, language, and storytelling. Due to their cultural traditions of generosity, kindness, and respect they consider themselves "Knights of the Sahara." In contrast to much of the Islamic world, Tuareg men veil their faces, women do not.

TOURISTS

With about 27 million tourists annually, Turkey is the seventh most popular destination in the world. In 2010, Egypt, Morocco Syria, Jordan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates each had 7 million or more tourists and, considering pilgrims to Islam's holiest places, Saudi Arabia had over 10 million. Mediterranean beaches of North Africa, historic sites in Turkey and Egypt, high end hotels and high profile events in the Gulf States and easy access to major European cities make places through the Middle East and North Africa popular tourist destinations. While tourism has been negatively affected by social unrest, tourism is around the region is expected to increase significantly over the next decades.

BLOGGERS

With increasing accessibility to the internet, many in the Middle East are making their voices through the web. Governments have used imprisonment and country wide internet suspension to suppress vocal and active bloggers critical of state authorities. Since the internet is not confined to one country, it has the power to connect people across ethnic and political boundaries. The Arab uprisings since 2010 showcase the power that the internet and bloggers have to connect people and coordinate protests.

EGYPTIAN FELLAHIN

Farmer-peasants that have lived and worked the Nile River valley since Pharaonic times are still 60% of the Egyptian population. Egyptian agriculture is highly productive, but totally reliant on irrigation and limited to a shrinking base of arable land. For these reasons agriculture is expensive, overcrowded, and in constant struggle with uncertain land tenure, state land grabs and ongoing urban development. With IMF and World Bank supported agriculture reforms in the 1990s, the Fellahin are an increasingly threatened segment of society. Despite higher than national average poverty rates, hunger and unemployment, the Fellahin continue to produce multiple crops from their tiny fields – less than one hectare– in an attempt to feed Egypt's growing population.

COPTIC EGYPTIANS

The largest and one of the oldest Christian groups in the Middle East, this native minority of Egypt is estimated at 10-12 million. Within two hundred years after the time of Jesus, most of Egypt was Christian. Today, only the Copts retain the ancient Egyptian language – in the the church as an ecclesiastical language – that was spoken in Egypt until the 17th century when it was displaced by Arabic. They retain a pre-Arab sense of identity, bolstered by a strong sense of their contributions to the foundations of Christianity. Though integrated in Egyptian society, as an ethno-religious minority in Egypt, Copts struggle against marginalization and discrimination, they are, for example, systematically excluded from public and security offices.

AL AKHDAM

Translating to "the servants" in Arabic, the Akhdam arrived from Eastern Africa and predate Islam. More than a million Akhdam occupy the bottom of Yemen's social ladder in a generally poor country. As outcastes, they are forced to survive on the streets, tending to live within the slums of Yemen's bigger cities. More recently, African refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia have arrived in Yemen. These migrants cross the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, in search of economic opportunities. Many refugees fall victim to traffickers with intentions to extort them, and the migrants are often physically and sexually attacked as well.

BEDOUIN

The Bedouin are known for their hospitality, Islamic traditions, and making a living raising and breeding livestock across the world's hottest and most arid regions. Having thrived for millennia in such harsh lands is testament to a highly developed environmental understanding. Over the last half century, however, pastoral nomadism is in decline. Governments from Morocco to Israel to Saudi Arabia have established settlement programs and restricted the movement of pastoral nomads for security, political and economic purposes, removing the Bedouin from their traditional resource base. Such livelihood difficulties, combined with urban attractions and technological developments, are drawing younger generations away from their traditions. Despite their venerated, often romanticized, place in the Arab imagination, the Bedouin is largely relegated to a symbolic relic of Arab identity.

FALCONRY

Used in Kuwait's flag and the UAE's national emblem, the falcon is a traditional hunting companion of the Bedouin and a vital part of Arabian identity. The national pastime of Abu Dhabi, falconry is designated an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

EXPATRIATE WORKERS

Since the 1980s, Arabian oil states have become reliant on imported skilled and unskilled workers to fill national labor needs. With 8.5 million foreign workers, the Gulf region's greatest number of foreign workers are in Saudi Arabia, where they represent about 1/3rd of the population. In Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, however, expatriates are about 70% of the workforce and a majority of the population. Only 20% of the population of the UAE are Emiratis. Most Gulf expatriates are from India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere in Asia. With the world's highest net migration rate, for example, the UAE has the greatest gender imbalance in the world, no at 2.2 males for each female. There is growing concern over the long-term impacts reliance on expatriates on local identities.

STILL AN AWESOME HUMAN MOSAIC

In 1972, *National Geographic Magazine* published "Peoples of the Middle East," an insert map that it distributed to all subscribers (see inset map). As in all regions of our dynamic world, much has changed. From technologies and clothing styles to demographics and political participation, the Middle East and North Africa looks different.

From bloggers to tourists, new social groups and distinctions have emerged since 1972. Increased human mobility, changes in communication technologies, the shifting loci of power and capital, and other phenomena associated with contemporary globalization have increased trans-regionalism and restructured people's relationships with place. Some contradictions have been resolved, others highlighted.

This revised map attempts to capture some of this change as part of an effort to bring our image of the Middle East and North Africa into the 21st century. Please take a moment to consider how your views of this region have evolved as you compare the two maps.

PEOPLES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

...40 Years On

CREATED COLLECTIVELY BY

GEOGRAPHY 319 SPRING 2012

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Cartography by Jon Bowen,
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This map was created in 1972 by the National Geographic Society.