

Module: Cultural Geography
Topic Content: Cultural Influence on Place Names

Cultural Influence on Place Names



Click next to begin.

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Menu



Maps can illustrate the worldview of cultural regions. This is reflected in the different names given to certain regions and geographic features, depending on where the map is made. Click each of the points on the map to learn more.

Module: Cultural Geography
Topic Content: Cultural Influence on Place Names

Israel, Palestine, Gaza, West Bank

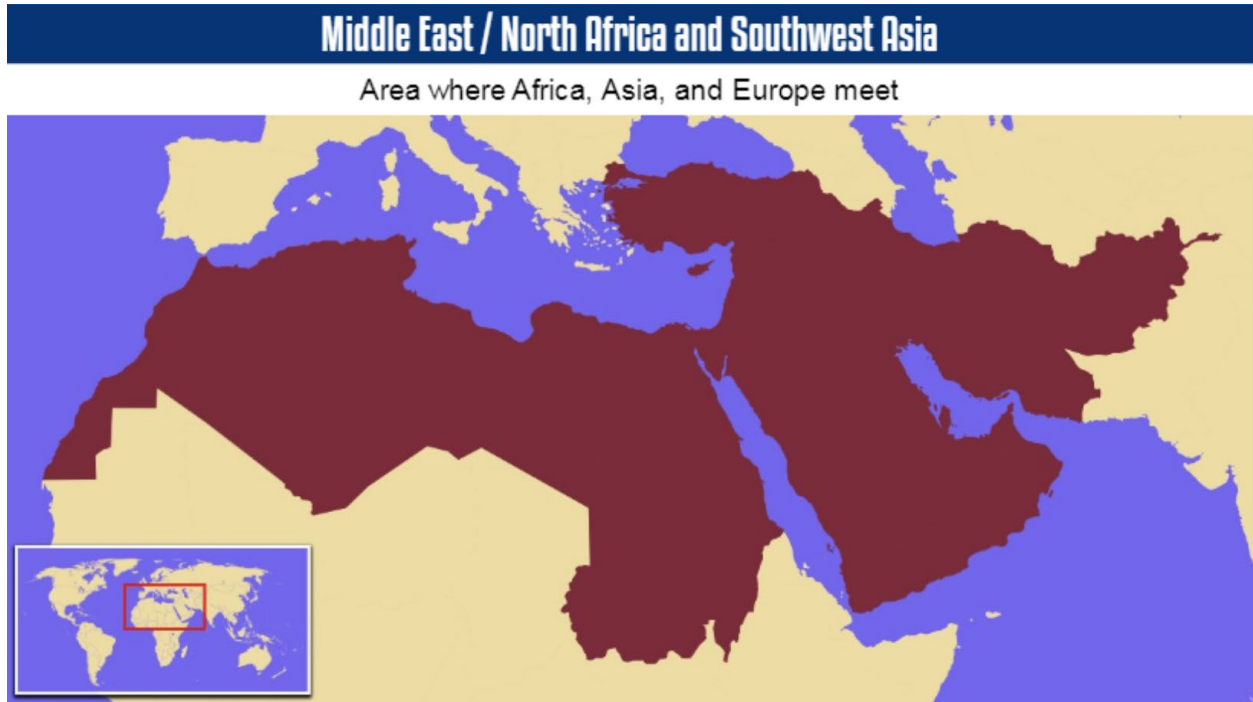


After World War II, the United Nations divided Palestine between the Arab population and the growing Jewish population. The Arab population rejected the proposal, but the state of Israel declared independence in 1948. This triggered war between Israel and a coalition of Arab nations.

Conflict has beset the region ever since, and territorial disputes continue to this day, particularly over Gaza and the West Bank. Palestinian Arabs have declared Gaza and the West Bank to be an independent state; however, Israel does not currently acknowledge the state of Palestine, and continues to occupy large portions of the West Bank.

Module: Cultural Geography
Topic Content: Cultural Influence on Place Names

Middle East / North Africa and Southwest Asia



Middle East is a commonly used term which refers to a roughly defined area where Africa, Asia, and Europe meet. The name was originally used by Europeans to describe the halfway point to Asia. Due to its Eurocentric roots, many feel that the term Middle East is associated with colonialism, and prefer to call the region North Africa and Southwest Asia.

Module: Cultural Geography
Topic Content: Cultural Influence on Place Names

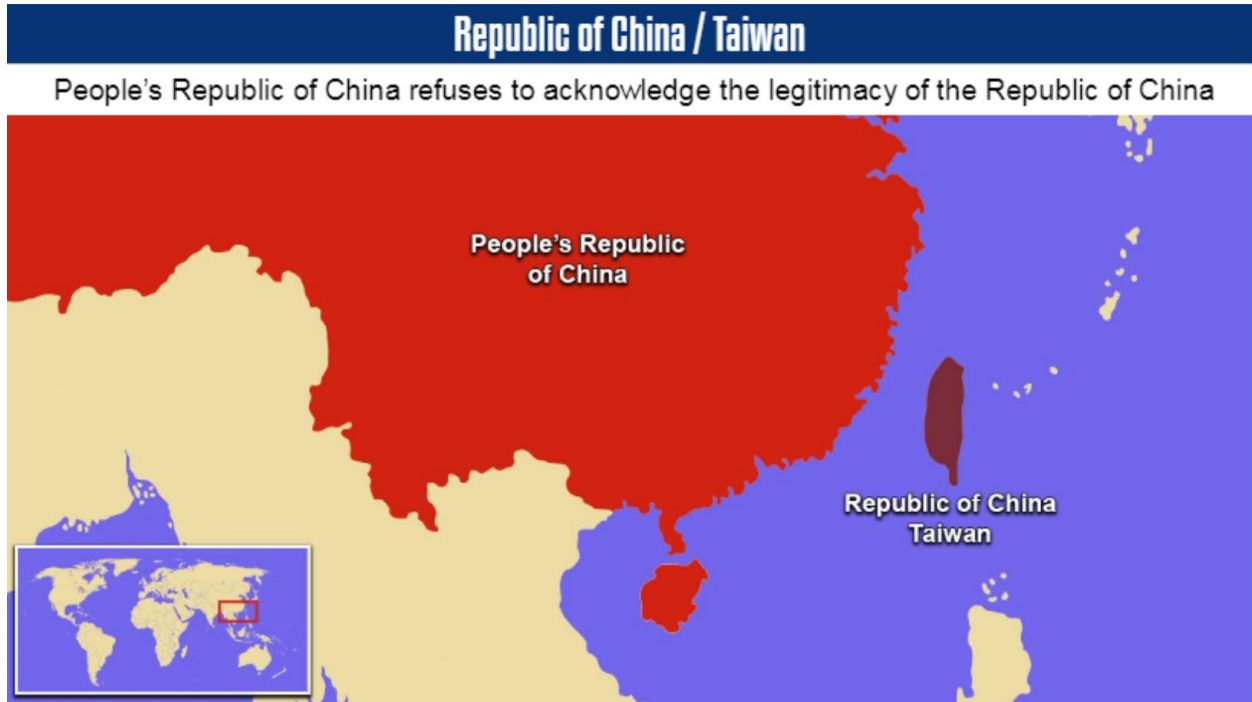
Persian Gulf / Arabian Gulf



The Persian Gulf, as it is historically known, is a large body of water located in Western Asia, between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula. In the 1960s, Arab nationalists began pushing for the name to be changed to the Arabian Gulf. Arab nations in the region adopted the new name, but Iran refused, preferring the original name. In fact, using the term Arabian Gulf is viewed as an affront to the country.

Module: Cultural Geography
Topic Content: Cultural Influence on Place Names

Republic of China / Taiwan



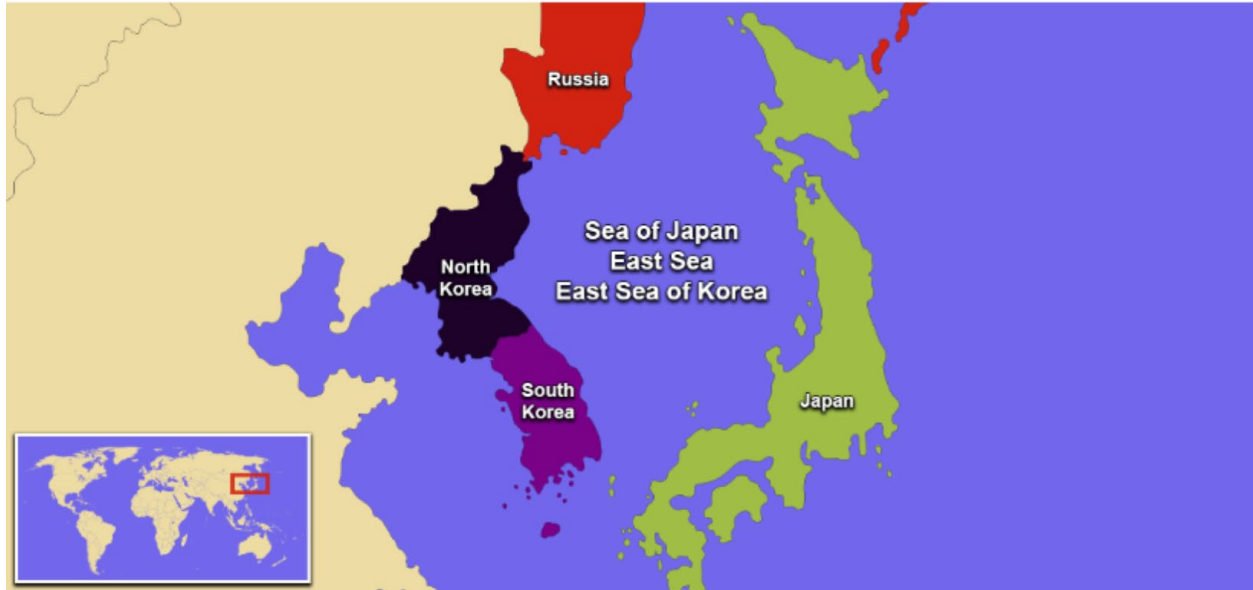
In 1949, after a civil war, the Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China. The former government, known as the Republic of China, retreated to the island of Taiwan, located off the coast of mainland China. The People's Republic of China refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Republic of China, and continues to refer to the island as the province of Taiwan.

Module: Cultural Geography
Topic Content: Cultural Influence on Place Names

Sea of Japan / East Sea / East Sea of Korea

Sea of Japan / East Sea / East Sea of Korea

Sea of Japan is the preferred name in the international community



The Sea of Japan is a body of water bordered by the Japanese archipelago, the Korean Peninsula, and eastern Russia. Sea of Japan is the preferred name throughout most of the international community; however, North and South Korea reject the term. South Korea prefers the name East Sea, while North Korea prefers East Sea of Korea.