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Finals

**1. Comparing Iran and Afghanistan, why did the US back religious fighters (the mujihadeen) in Afghanistan, but resist the conservative religious leadership that took power in Iran?**

Comparing Iran and Afghanistan, the United States had contrasting approaches towards the two countries. For instance, in Iran, the United States, along with Britain, saw an opportunity to exploit its natural resources, particularly oil, after “Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh, decided to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (now BP), Winston Churchill convinced Harry S. Truman that Mosaddegh had to go. Britain’s MI-6 and the CIA organized a coup against the elected government of Iran and installed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi as ruler of Iran in 1953 to insure a steady flow of oil out of Iran.” (Modern World History, Ch.11). This interference in Iran's politics created a rocky relationship between the United States and Iran.

On the other hand, the United States had a more friendly approach towards Afghanistan, particularly during the Cold War. The U.S. backed the mujahideen in Afghanistan not with the intention of taking over the country's politics, but rather as a response to the actions of the Soviet Union. The U.S. aimed to exert influence in Central Asia and counter Soviet expansionism. By supporting the mujahideen, the United States sought to maintain a significant presence in the region and prevent the loss of power. This approach towards Afghanistan was more reactionary, driven by the need to counter Soviet influence, rather than a deliberate attempt to manipulate the country's politics.

In summary, the United States demonstrated a greater interest in changing Iran's politics for its own benefit, exploiting its resources, while its involvement in Afghanistan was primarily a response to the Soviet Union's actions. The differing approaches can be attributed to the specific circumstances and strategic considerations in each country.

**2. The 1960s were an incredibly volatile period for a variety of reasons around the world that included social movements and the decolonization movement. Please describe the ways that the Cold War affected both.**

The Cold War had a profound impact on social movements and decolonization efforts during the 1960s, with the Civil Rights movement being one of the most notable examples. The United States, aiming to present itself as a champion of freedom and democracy on the global stage, faced criticism and irony during the Civil Rights Era. “When a peaceful protest was met with violence by police, who attacked demonstrators, including children, with fire hoses and dogs. The world looked on in horror as innocent people were assaulted and thousands arrested.” (The Civil RIghts Movement Marches On). Consequently, this portrayal weakened the United States' position in the eyes of the Soviet Union, as it seemed contradictory for a nation facing internal problems to compete globally.

Meanwhile, decolonization was unfolding worldwide, particularly in Asia. Where “efforts by the Vietnamese to liberate themselves from the French after World War II were initially thwarted. This changed in 1954 when Ho Chi Minh’s anti-colonial forces defeated the French in northern Vietnam at the battle of Dien Bien Phu.” (Modern World History Ch.11). Subsequently, during the Cold War, the United States became involved in the war between North and South Vietnam. After years of conflict, “The U.S. finally withdrew in 1973, after 58,000 U.S. troops and over a million Vietnamese had been killed.” (Modern World History Ch.11). While Vietnam sought to decolonize itself from the French, it faced a similar invasion by both the Soviet Union and the United States, further escalating tensions and resulting in the loss of millions of lives. The impact of decolonization during the Cold War era meant that the two superpowers engaged in a race to secure support in the Central Asian region solely for the sake of the Cold War.

In conclusion, the Cold War had a profound impact on social movements and decolonization efforts, specifically seen in the Civil Rights movement and the fight for independence in Vietnam. These events serve as a reminder of the dynamics and contradictions that emerged during this challenging period in history, where global politics, social struggles, and the quest for independence were deeply interconnected.

**3.Central Asia/ The Middle East and North Africa became the focal point for both the U.S. and USSR during the second Cold War which region was the most impacted and why?**

During the second Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union considered Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa as important regions due to their geopolitical significance, especially for gaining influence over nations and obtaining an edge over each other, as well as their abundant natural resources.

Central Asia, particularly countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and its close proximity to Afghanistan, was crucial for the Soviet Union's strategic interests. As stated in "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the US Response," At the end of December 1979, the Soviet Union sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan And immediately assumed complete military and political control of Kabul and large portions of the country. This event began a brutal, decade-long attempt by Moscow to subdue the Afghan civil war and maintain a friendly and socialist government on its border. ” (The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the US Response). The Soviet Union sought control over Afghanistan, considering its border with the Soviet Union as a significant factor in their objective.

In the Middle East, the United States supported the revolution in Iran, “The shah was the United States’ strongest ally in the oil-rich Gulf; he received billions of dollars worth of US arms in order to enable his country to protect US interests and to discourage Soviet adventurism.” (Coleen M, P 423). The United States' involvement aimed to prevent further Soviet expansion and maintain its influence in the region.

In North Africa, both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to exert influence. “In response to the invasion, Bush and his foreign policy team forged an unprecedented international coalition of thirty-four countries, including many members of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the Middle Eastern countries of Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt, to oppose Iraqi aggression.” (A New World Order).

Determining the most impacted region is challenging as the consequences varied across regions and countries. However, it is worth noting that the Middle East experienced intense and long-lasting impacts due to various proxy wars and conflicts, such as the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War. As stated before, these events continue to shape the region and have significant global implications.

**4. During the age of Globalization the United States emerged as the sole superpower. What were the relationships between American economics and the US War on terror. How did the US use this new power in the Middle East? How did the people of the Middle East respond?**

As globalization continues to shape the world and the United States emerges as the sole superpower, the complexity of the US relationship with the Middle East in the context of the war on terror becomes increasingly evident. The events of September 11, 2001, played a significant role in shaping this relationship.

During “the first term of President Bush the younger (2001-2005) brought about an unprecedented enthusiasm for a political transformation of the Middle East. This shift, in part due to the composition of the younger Bush’s administration and in part due to the post-September 11 environment, was a dramatic one.” (Coleen M. page 557). This shift, in part due to the composition of the younger Bush's administration and in part due to the post-September 11 environment, was a dramatic one. The United States “response to these acts and the intensification under President George W. Bush of American diplomatic and military unilateralism; the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq; and the nuclear impasse with Iran.” (Coleen M. page 557).

As the United States emerged as the dominant global power, it became increasingly difficult for other nations to counter its influence in the Middle East. The United States understood its position and wielded its power accordingly. Some people in the Middle East saw the US presence as an opportunity for economic improvement, given the United States' reputation for economic strength. They hoped that their countries could benefit from such influence. However, there were also those who strongly opposed the United States and exhibited significant resistance. For example, “Syria’s President, Bashar al-Assad, was turning a blind eye to the foreign fighter pipeline into Iraq in order to punish the United States for invading the country” (The Believer).

In summary, the emergence of the United States as the sole and the rising era of globalization has shaped its complex relationship with the Middle East, particularly in the war on terror. The events of September 11, 2001, triggered significant shifts in US policy and actions in the region. The people of the Middle East responded differently, with some viewing the US presence as an opportunity for economic advancement while others opposed it, leading to various forms of resistance.