Boardworks High School United States History

International Diplomacy

Contemporary United States (1968–Present)

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Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page





By the end of this section, you will learn about the origins of the conflict in the Middle East and how far it has been solved:

- The Arab-Israeli conflict
- Carter's human rights foreign policy
- Camp David Accords
- Iran hostage crisis.









Although it was primarily divided along religious lines, the Middle East also became a Cold War arena. President Truman recognized the state of Israel the day it declared its independence and the U.S. became its strongest ally.



America's ties to Israel also became stronger after Egypt and Syria began to drift politically toward the Soviet Union in the 1950s, especially after the Suez Crisis.

The Soviets sent both countries enormous amounts of military aid and funding for the Aswan High Dam in Egypt.



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In 1967, Syria and Israel engaged in skirmishes along Israel's northeast border, the Golan Heights. Egyptian intelligence warned that Israel was massing troops on its border.

Although this information later proved to be false, Egypt responded by deploying troops in the Sinai Peninsula and closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping again.



On May 30, Jordan and Egypt signed a defense pact. Israel prepared for war and, in a massive preemptive strike, launched air attacks against the air forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq on June 5, starting the Six Day War.







Israel then launched ground attacks on Egypt, Syria and Jordan. These assaults succeeded quickly due to the preemptive air strikes. All four nations signed a ceasefire on June 11.

The Six Day War left Israel with a much larger territory, including Sinai, the Gaza strip, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Over a million Arabs were now under direct Israeli control in the new territories.





What were the effects of the Six Day War for the Middle East and for the U.S.?



On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel, now called the **Yom Kippur War**. They chose the date to coincide with Yom Kippur, Judaism's holiest day, in the expectation that Israel would be vulnerable then. Complacent after the Six Day War, Israel was unprepared.

Egypt attacked the Sinai Peninsula while Syria invaded the Golan Heights. The invasions were initially successful, but the Israeli forces soon rallied and the war became a stalemate.



A ceasefire was called on 22 October, but fighting continued.



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The U.S. supported Israel and the Soviet Union supported Egypt and Syria in the war. Tensions mounted as the Soviets accused Israel of violating the ceasefire and threatened to intervene.

The U.S. declared it if the Soviets intervened, then it would too. Both superpowers put pressure on their allies to agree to a new ceasefire on October 25, 1973. Very little territory changed hands after the war.





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How did the war damage the U.S. economically?





As a response to American support of Israel during the Yom Kippur war, many Arab nations declared an oil **embargo** to America. This caused a significant increase in the price of oil.



The embargo lasted from October 1973 to March 1974 and caused an energy crisis in the U.S. as supply was reduced, but demand remained the same, causing oil prices to soar and gas to be rationed.

This represents the first time Arab nations had used oil as a political and economic weapon.



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James "Jimmy" Carter was elected president in 1976. He moved away from realpolitik and focused his foreign policy on promoting human rights. He criticized and refused to deal with countries that violated human rights.



"Our policy is based on a historical vision of America's role. Our policy is rooted in our moral values, which never change. Our policy is designed to serve mankind."

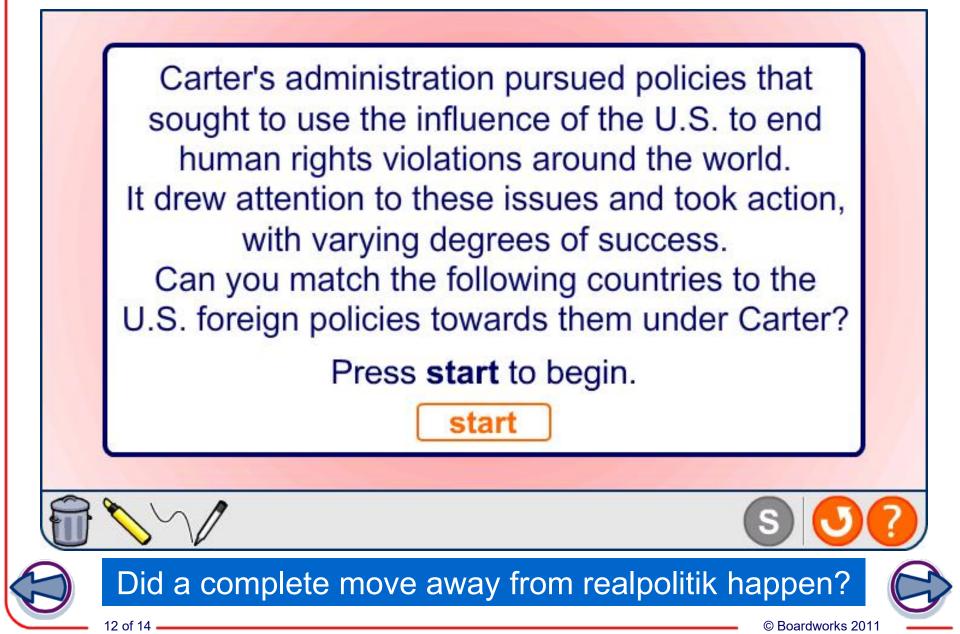


Which previous president's foreign policy does Carter's moral approach remind you of?



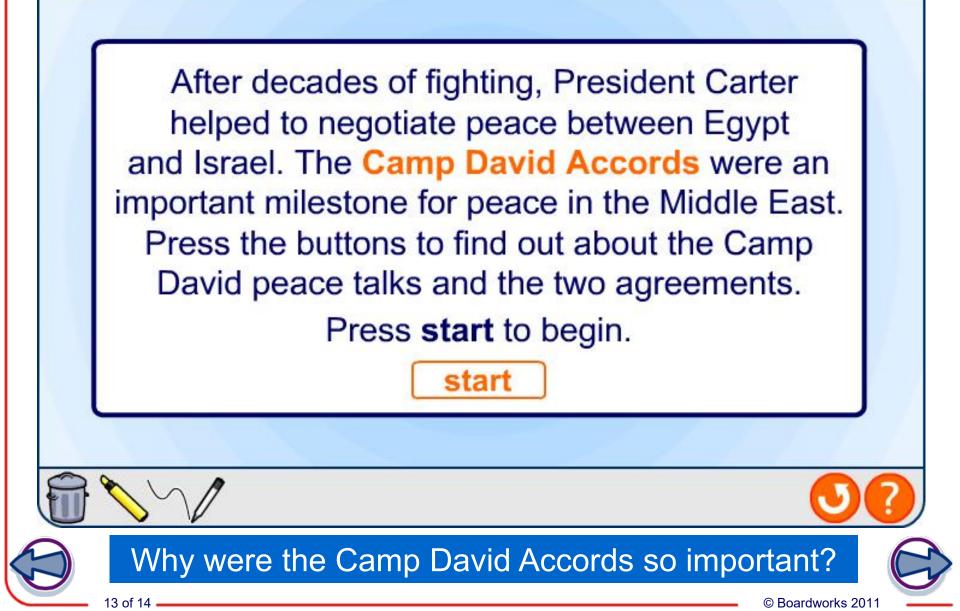












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In 1979, a revolution in Iran overthrew the existing regime and replaced it with a religious government. The **shah**, the former ruler, was an American ally, so was let into the country. In response, armed revolutionaries seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 66 people hostage.

They wanted to trade the shah for the release of the hostages. After failed negotiations and rescue attempts, there was a year-long standoff.



The hostages were released on January 20, 1981, just after President Reagan had been sworn into office.



How did the crisis highlight the limits to U.S. power?