

# The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran

## Section 3



### MAIN IDEAS

1. Iraq's history includes rule by many conquerors and cultures, as well as recent conflicts and wars.
2. Most people in Iraq are Arabs, but Kurds live in the north.
3. Iraq today must rebuild its government and economy, which have suffered years of conflict.

## Key Terms and Places

**embargo** limit on trade

**Baghdad** capital of Iraq

## Section Summary

### HISTORY

The world's first civilization was in Iraq, in the area called Mesopotamia. Throughout history, many cultures and empires conquered Mesopotamia, including Great Britain in World War I. In the 1950s, Iraqi army officers overthrew British rule.

Iraq's recent history includes wars and a harsh, corrupt leader. In 1968, the Ba'ath Party took power. In 1979 the party's leader, Saddam Hussein, became president. He restricted the press and people's freedoms. He killed an unknown number of political enemies.

Saddam led Iraq into two wars. In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran. The Iran-Iraq War lasted until 1988. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Western leaders worried about Iraq controlling too much oil and having weapons of mass destruction. An alliance of countries led by the United States forced Iraq from Kuwait. After the war, Saddam Hussein did not accept all the terms of peace, so the United Nations placed an **embargo** on Iraq. This hurt the economy.

**Circle the location of the world's first civilization.**

**Why was Saddam Hussein considered a harsh leader?**

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**Underline the word that means a limit on trade.**

**Section 3, continued**

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After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. government officials believed that Iraq aided terrorists. In March 2003, the United States invaded Iraq. Saddam Hussein went into hiding and Iraq's government fell. Saddam Hussein was later found and arrested.

**Why did the U.S. government invade Iraq?**

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**PEOPLE AND CULTURE**

Most of Iraq's people belong to two ethnic groups. The majority are Arab, who speak Arabic. The others are Kurd, who speak Kurdish in addition to Arabic. Kurds live in a large region in the north of Iraq.

**Circle the ethnic group that most people in Iraq belong to.**

Most people of Iraq are Muslim. About 60 percent are Shia Muslims and live in the south. About one third are Sunni Muslims and live in the north.

**IRAQ TODAY**

Today Iraq is slowly recovering from war.

**Baghdad**, Iraq's capital of 8 million people, was badly damaged. People lost electricity and running water. After the war, the U.S. military and private companies helped to restore water and electricity, and to rebuild homes, businesses, and schools.

**The U.S. census for the year 2000 reports that about 3,700,000 people live in the city of Los Angeles. How does the population of Baghdad compare with this?**

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In January 2005 the people of Iraq took part in democracy for the first time. They voted for members of the National Assembly. This group's main task was to write Iraq's new constitution.

**Underline the main task of Iraq's National Assembly.**

Iraq is trying to rebuild a strong economy. Oil and crops are important resources. It may take years for Iraq to rebuild structures such as schools, hospitals, and roads. It may be even harder to create a free society and strong economy.

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Analyzing** Think about the task of writing a constitution for a whole country. Based on what you know about Iraq, create an outline for the nation's constitution that addresses issues that you think will be important to the new government.