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THE ETHNIC BASIS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN COUNTRIES OF MIDDLE EAST

The peoples of the Middle East are differentiated by their national identity. While ethnic and religious identities are important in the Middle East, people often have a strong sense of nationalism (a strong attachment to the state) that is connected to their national identity. These individuals often place more emphasis on their country of origin than their ethnic or religious background.

This article introduces and reviews critically the main regional and subregional institutions currently operating in the Middle East. It concludes with an assessment of how the so-called Arab Uprisings have affected the institutional architecture of the region.

The paper emphasizes two key aspects of nationalism in the region. The first concerns the existence of multiple identities and layers of identity that co-exist in the Middle East and which do not necessarily clash with each other. The second is that nationalism and national identities are not a recent phenomenon in the region.

Great civilizations and religions began in the Arabian peninsula and the region we know as the Middle East. Stretching from Western Europe to the Asian lands of the Far East, the area is home to some of the world's most remarkable Islamic architecture and heritage sites.

Visitors to the Abbasid Palace in Baghdad, Iraq learn about Islamic brickwork design and the curved shape of the ogee. Those who walk through the pointed arch of the recreated Ishtar Gate learn about ancient Babylon and the original gate, scattered among European museums.

Nestled between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, modern Iraq lies on fertile land that includes ancient Mesopotamia. Long before the great civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, advanced cultures flourished in the Mesopotamian plain. Cobblestone streets, city building, and architecture itself have their beginnings in Mesopotamia. Because it lies at the cradle of civilization, the Mesopotamian plain contains archaeological and architectural treasures that date back to the beginning of human history.

About 20 miles south of Baghdad are the ruins of the ancient city of Ctesiphon. It was once the capital of an empire and became one of the Silk road cities. The Taq Kasra or Archway of Ctesiphon is the only remnant of the once glorious metropolis.

It could be argued that Islamic architecture began when the Islamic religion began — and it could be said that Islam began with the birth of Muhammad around 570 A.D. That's not that ancient. Much of the most beautiful architecture in the Middle East is Islamic architecture and not in ruins at all.

The minaret towers and golden dome are typical architectural parts of a mosque. The sunken garden or court area is a common way of cooling large spaces, both holy and residential. Windcatchers or *bâdgirs*, tall open towers usually on roofs, provide additional passive cooling and ventilation throughout the hot, arid lands of the Middle East. The tall *badgir* towers are opposite the minarets of the Agha Bozorg, on the far side of the sunken courtyard.

The Jameh mosque of Isfahan, Iran expresses many of the same architectural details common to the Middle East: the ogee arch, the blue glazed brickwork, and the *mashrabiya*-like screen ventilating and protecting an opening.

After analyzing the national peculiarities of the mentality of the countries of the near-east, one can conclude that they are united by common features such as sacredness and religion, but at the same time each country is distinguished by nationalism and national identities. Islamic art and architecture are still part of everyday life for an important part of the world's population.