Governments of SW Asia/Middle East
IRAN’s Theocratic Republic
the country views the role of religion (Islam) as a part of the law

Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad
Islamic Republic of Iran

- Iran is a theocratic republic—a government based on religious principals (Islam) and the wishes of its people.
- A constitution that offers its people many of the same freedoms as the US, but are restricted by Islamic laws, and can not speak out against the religion.

The Islamic Republic of Iran was founded in 1979 by the Ayatollah Khomeini (on left) 1902-1989

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Chosen upon death of Khomeini in 1989
Iran’s Supreme Leader

• The head of state is the Supreme Leader, who is always an ayatollah, or recognized religious authority.
  – Is chosen by the Assembly of Experts and holds the position for life.

• The supreme leader has final say over many of the president’s decisions.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Iran’s President

• The president governs based on the religious guidance of the ayatollah.
  – The president may serve two terms of four years each.

• Iran’s legislature is called the Consultative assembly.
  – The people elect the Consultative Assembly and the president by popular vote.
  – Citizens 18 and older may vote for the 290 members of the Consultative Assembly.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
ISRAEL’s Parliamentary Democracy

a democratic government in which

a cabinet is headed by a prime minister

Prime Minister
Benjamin Netanyahu

President
Shimon Peres

Head of Government

Head of State
Israel

• Israel has a **parliamentary democracy**.
• The head of state is the president, who actually does **not have much power**.
• The legislature elects the president.
• The president then chooses the head of the largest political party to be the **prime minister**.
Prime Minister

• The Israeli prime minister is the head of the government and has the MOST political power (more than the president).

• The prime minister must organize a coalition to govern.

Prime Minister
Benjamin Netanyahu
chief executive
head of government
• The Israeli legislature (parliament) is called the **Knesset**.
• Knesset holds most of the power in the Israeli government
• Israelis **eighteen and older elect these officials by popular vote**
• Elections are held in Israel every four years
SAUDI ARABIA’s Absolute Monarchy
a type of government in which a single person is the head of government

King and
Prime Minister
Abdullah Salman
Bin Abd Al-Aziz
Saudi Arabia

- Saudi Arabia's government—one of the few absolute monarchies in the world today—king has complete control
- governed by Islamic Shari’a Law (based on the Quran)
- In 2004, however, the Saudi government began allowing men 21 and older to vote for half of their local officials
- Men may also vote for one-third of the members of the legislature.
- King’s cabinet—the Council of Ministers—consists mostly of members of the royal family
- King chooses 2/3 of the Saudi legislature—the Consultative Council
Saudi Arabia is ruled by a hereditary monarchy—government led by a king from a family that has ruled the country for several generations. Here are some key points:

- **King of Saudi Arabia** has been a member of the al-Saud family since the 1920s.
- The king and his advisors, many of whom are his family members or influential business and religious leaders in the country, make the laws.
- There is no written constitution, and the king rules for life.
- People of Saudi Arabia do not choose the king.
- When a king dies, the Saudi family announces who the next king will be from among their male family members.
- Conservative religious leaders also have a great deal of influence in decisions made by the monarchy.
Religion and Southwest Asian Governments

• In the United States and many western nations, religion and politics tend to be separate

• In much of the Middle East, however, religion and politics are often mixed

• Many political parties in the Middle East are religious
  – many parties represent different branches of Islam

• Since the majority of the people in the region are Muslim, religion also influences the way people vote

• Israel is a democratic state, but was founded as a Jewish homeland