### Module Overview

Faced with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, Sultan Mahmud II initiated a set of social changes. Mahmud’s successors followed with the Tanzimat, or “reorganization,” a sweeping set of reforms designed to modernize and Westernize the Ottoman Empire. Efforts to turn back the Tanzimat reforms prompted a rebellion by the Young Turks, proponents of industrialization and Turkish nationalism. Ottoman decline led North African leaders to assert their autonomy. Egypt’s Muhammad Ali set out to transform Egypt’s agriculture and commerce. Fearful of the emergence of a powerful Egypt, the European powers frustrated Muhammad Ali’s political and economic ambitions. The construction of the Suez Canal further cemented Europe’s interest in controlling Egypt. In the face of increased Western intrusions, Arab nationalism began to develop.

At the start of the 19th century, several economic and political patterns prevailed south of the Sahara. Along the coastlines and the desert’s southern edge were urban centers and independent kingdoms, many of whose economies depended on trade. In the interior, most Africans lived by farming and herding. Some of these areas began to change in the 1800s. The slave trade was outlawed, resulting in efforts to replace it with new economic enterprises, as well as efforts to continue it illegally by procuring captives from East Africa. These commercial changes coincided with the rise of new regional states, altering Africa’s political landscape.

Sultan Mahmud II was only one of the many Middle Eastern rulers in the past and the present who have sought to understand the West. Whether they have seen the West as a threat or an ally, one of the most difficult decisions that peoples in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have had to make is what to adopt and what to reject. Much of this hinges on what they judge to be Western and what they judge to be modern.

Modernity is not tied to any single culture. It is multicultural and multi-ethnic. To be modern is to participate in a global community.

Modernity, however, is often confused with being Western. This SLP will focus on the difference between Western Culture and modern culture.

# Module 4 - Background

## Attempting Modernity in the Middle East 1800–1912

### Required Reading

**SLP Reading**

Lewis, B. (1997). The West and the Middle East. Foreign Affairs: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/1997-01-01/west-and-middle-east>

# Module 4 - SLP

## Attempting Modernity in the Middle East 1800–1912

This article by Bernard Lewis asks important questions about why Middle Eastern countries are often ambivalent about modernization. In the process, he reviews the key elements that create modernity, the theme of this course. Many of the elements of the modern world system he discusses will now be familiar. Others, such as the role of individualism, the separation of church and state, and women’s rights, we have not had time to discuss. By creating this overview and asking what is uniquely part of Western culture and what is beyond culture, Lewis provides a capstone to the last three modules. His erudite musings help us ask: What is modernity? How did it come about? And where is it going?

Read the information in the following article:

Lewis, B. (1997). The West and the Middle East. Foreign Affairs. January/February.  
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/1997-01-01/west-and-middle-east>

Answer the following questions:

What parts of the modern world does Lewis assign an origin in Western culture?

What does Lewis mean by civil society?

What part of the modern world developed in Islamic regions?

What aspect of global modernity does Lewis believe has emerged from its identification with one or more cultures?

### SLP Assignment Expectations

In the Module 4 SLP, you are expected to:

* Answer the questions clearly, using full sentences with correct grammar and spelling.
* Write one or two paragraphs on each question.