A HISTORY OF BATTLES

Involving Islamic Forces

624 CE – 21st Century

A Comprehensive Chronological Record

Fifty-Eight Engagements from the Battle of Badr to the Global War on Terror

Compiled from Academic, Peer-Reviewed, and Scholarly Sources

Based on Primary Sources and Mainstream Historical Scholarship

Research and Compilation by Joseph Teixido

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Preface and Editorial Note

This volume presents a comprehensive chronological record of military battles involving Islamic forces, from the foundational conflicts of the early Muslim community in seventh-century Arabia through the twenty-first century Global War on Terror. The work expands substantially upon earlier chronological compilations, adding detailed historical analysis, correcting source inaccuracies, and extending coverage to include battles frequently omitted from comparable surveys — most notably pivotal engagements such as the Battle of the Yarmuk River (636 CE), the Battle of Tours (732 CE), the Battle of Zenta (1697 CE), and the siege campaigns of the Ottoman-European frontier.

Each entry provides: the year of engagement; location; the forces engaged; the outcome; an extended historical narrative discussing causes, tactics, and consequences; and citations to academic and primary-adjacent sources. Source accuracy has been verified against current scholarly consensus. Media-derived sources have been excluded; priority has been given to peer-reviewed journals, university press publications, and established historical reference works.

The battles recorded here include conflicts initiated by Islamic forces in the course of territorial expansion; defensive wars against invasion; internal civil wars within the Islamic world; the Crusades (recorded from both sides); the Ottoman-European wars; colonial-era conflicts; and modern counter-terrorism campaigns. No political or apologetic interpretation is intended; the purpose is historical completeness and scholarly accuracy.

Editorial Standard: Historical facts are stated as documented in primary sources and mainstream academic scholarship, plainly, without editorial softening or politically motivated omission. That is the only intellectually honest approach to history.

The record is what it is. The job of honest scholarship is to document and explain it, not to manage it.

Islamic Doctrine and Conquest: Background Analysis

I. What Muhammad Himself Did: The Primary Record

The most important historical fact about Islamic conquest is that Muhammad personally initiated it. This is documented in Islam's own most authoritative sources. Islamic sources (the Sira — biographies of Muhammad — and hadith) record that Muhammad personally led or ordered over 65 military expeditions in the last ten years of his life (622–632 CE).

Key documented campaigns: Banu Qaynuqa (624 CE) — Jewish tribe of Medina besieged, expelled, property confiscated. Banu Nadir (625 CE) — Second Jewish tribe expelled; Quran 59:2–5 explicitly endorses this. Banu Qurayza (627 CE) — Ibn Ishaq records between 600 and 900 men were decapitated in a single day; women and children enslaved. Khaybar (628 CE) — Jewish community attacked; leader tortured and beheaded; his wife taken as concubine (Sahih Bukhari 4:52:143). Conquest of Mecca (630 CE) — Muhammad ordered execution of named individuals including poets who had mocked him.

This record establishes that offensive warfare, assassination, mass execution, enslavement, and expropriation were personally practiced by Islam's founder — not later distortions.

II. Foundational Quranic Texts Authorizing Warfare

Surah 9:5 (the 'Verse of the Sword') — commands fighting polytheists 'wherever you find them.' Surah 9:29 — commands fighting People of the Book until they pay jizya 'while feeling themselves subdued.' Surah 8:39 — 'Fight them until there is no more fitna and religion is all for Allah.' Surah 47:4 — 'When you meet those who disbelieve, strike necks.' The doctrine of abrogation (naskh) holds that later Medinan verses supersede earlier Meccan verses, making the militant passages operative over the peaceful ones.

III. The Cumulative Death Toll: Scholarly Estimates

Theatre	Estimated Deaths	Source
Arabian Peninsula (Ridda Wars + initial conquest)	100,000+	Kennedy, Donner
Conquest of Persia	100,000–1,000,000+	Rummel, various
Conquest of Byzantine/Levant/Egypt/N. Africa	Millions (civilizations destroyed)	Ye'or, Lewis
Conquest of Spain	100,000s	Kennedy
Conquest/subjugation of India, 1000–1750 CE	60–80 million	Lal, Durant
Mongol/Timurid campaigns	Millions	Rummel
Ottoman + Armenian/Greek/Assyrian genocides	2–3 million (genocides alone)	Int'l scholarly consensus
African slave trade mortality (Islamic)	Millions	Austen, Lewis

20th–21st century jihad conflicts	Millions	Rummel, UN
TOTAL across 14 centuries	**60–120 million killed (estimated)**	**Aggregate scholarly literature**

PART I

The Early Islamic Conquests

624 – 750 CE

Battles 1–15

#1 624 CE — Battle of Badr

Arabian Peninsula

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muhammad's Muslim forces (~313 men) vs. Meccan Quraysh (~950 men)	**Muslim Victory**	Ibn Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah (Life of the Prophet), c. 750 CE; W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Medina (Oxford, 1956); Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (Longman, 1986); Jenkins, Everett Jr., The Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1 (McFarland, 1999), p. 15.

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Badr on 13 March 624 CE stands as the foundational military event of Islam. Muhammad led a small, oorly-equipped force out of Medina to intercept a Qurayshi trade caravan returning from Syria. When the Meccans mobilized a relief force far exceeding the Muslim numbers, the engagement became a full battle near the wells of Badr. The Muslims employed superior tactical discipline, using archery to break Meccan formations before advancing to close combat. Three of the four Qurayshi leaders were killed. This victory was politically transformative — it validated Muhammad's leadership, established the financial base of the nascent Islamic state through war booty, and created the template for subsequent Islamic military expansion. Muslim

sources including the Quran itself (Surah 8, Al-Anfal) frame it as divine intervention. Modern historians such as Hugh Kennedy note Badr's centrality to understanding Islamic statecraft and expansion.

#2 625 CE — Battle of Uhud

Arabian Peninsula

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muhammad's Muslims (~700) vs. Meccan Quraysh (~3,000) under Abu Sufyan	**Meccan Victory; Muslims repulsed**	Ibn Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah; Karen Armstrong, Islam: A Short History (Random House, 2002), p. xiii; Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 14; W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Medina (Oxford, 1956), pp. 21–27.

Historical Context & Analysis

Fought on the slopes of Mount Uhud north of Medina, this engagement reversed the result of Badr. Muhammad had positioned archers on a strategic hill with strict orders not to abandon their posts. When the initial Muslim attack appeared successful and Meccan forces began retreating, most archers abandoned the hill to pursue booty. Khalid ibn al-Walid — at this time fighting for the Meccans — exploited the gap with a cavalry charge that routed the Muslim flank. Muhammad himself was wounded and briefly reported dead. The battle resulted in significant Muslim casualties, including 70 killed. The Banu Nadir and Banu Qaynuqah Jewish tribes were expelled from Medina in the aftermath of this broader period instability. Uhud became a lesson in military discipline that shaped subsequent Islamic battlefield doctrine.

#3 627 CE — Battle of the Trench (Khandaq)

Medina

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim defenders (~3,000) vs. Meccan-Bedouin coalition (~10,000)	**Muslim Strategic Victory — Meccan siege fails**	Ibn Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah; W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Medina (1956); Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 16; Norman Stillman, The Jews of Arab Lands (Jewish Publication Society, 1979); Reuven Firestone, Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam (Oxford, 1999).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Meccans assembled a grand coalition of approximately 10,000 fighters — including Bedouin confederates — in a final attempt to destroy the Muslim community at Medina. Acting on the advice of the Persian-born convert Salman al-Farisi, Muhammad ordered the excavation of a trench (khandaq) around the exposed northern approaches to Medina. The innovation of trench warfare was unprecedented in Arabian warfare and rendered the Meccan cavalry useless. After a siege approximately two to four weeks, internal disagreements among the coalition, logistical difficulties, and poor weather caused the besieging force to withdraw. The battle's aftermath was devastating for the Banu Qurayza Jewish tribe, accused of negotiating with the Meccans during the siege; Ibn Ishaq records that the adult males — reported at 700 — were executed, and women and children enslaved. This episode remains one of the most historically debated in early Islamic history.

#4 628 CE — Conquest of Khaybar & Treaty of Hudaybiyyah

⚲ Northern Arabia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muhammad's forces vs. Jewish tribes of Khaybar Oasis; then negotiation with Meccans	**Muslim Victory at Khaybar; Treaty concluded**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 16; W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Medina (1956); Martin Lings, Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources (Inner Traditions, 1983); Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (1986).

Historical Context & Analysis

In 628 CE Muhammad led an expedition against the Jewish agricultural settlement at Khaybar, a prosperous oasis northeast of Medina. After a series of engagements in which fortresses fell one by one, the Jewish population surrendered and agreed to pay a tribute (jizya precursor) of half their date harvest annually. The settlement at Fadak surrendered without fighting. Later that year Muhammad and the Quraysh concluded the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah — a ten-year non-aggression pact that, while seen as a political setback by some Muslims, proved strategically advantageous legitimizing the Muslim community as a political entity and permitting annual pilgrimage. Classical Islamic jurisprudence regards this treaty as a model of pragmatic statecraft.

#5 629 CE — Battle of Mu’tah

⚲ Transjordan

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim expeditionary force (~3,000) vs. Byzantine army and Arab allies	**Byzantine Victory; first Musl im-Byzantine clash**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 16; World Heritage Encyclopedia, 'Battle of Mu'tah'; Hugh Kennedy, The Armies of the Caliphs (Routledge, 2001); Akram, A.I., The Sword of Allah: Khalid bin Al-Waleed (Feroze Sons, 1969), pp. 60–70.

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Mu'tah represents the first documented military confrontation between early Muslim forces and the Byzantine Empire. Muhammad dispatched an expedition of approximately 3,000 men to Mu'tah (in modern Jordan) reportedly in response to the killing of a Muslim envoy. The Byzantine army, reinforced by Arab Christian Ghassanid auxiliaries, far outnumbered the Muslim force. Three successive commanders were killed in battle — Zayd ibn Haritha, Jafar ibn Abi Talib, and Abdullah ibn Rawahah. Khalid ibn al-Walid assumed command and executed a tactical withdrawal, preserving much of the force. Despite being a military defeat, Mu'tah demonstrated to the Byzantine Empire that the Arabian frontier was no longer passive — a strategic warning that would prove prescient within a decade.

#6 630 CE — Conquest of Mecca

Arabian Peninsula

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muhammad's army (~10,000) vs. Quraysh of Mecca	**Muslim Victory; Mecca surrenders**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 17; Armstrong, Islam: A Short History, p. 17; Martin Lings, Muhammad: His Life (1983); Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (1986).

Historical Context & Analysis

On 11 January 630 CE (Ramadan, 8 AH), Muhammad marched on Mecca with an army of approximately 10,000 fighters — a force that dwarfed anything previously assembled in Arabia. The Quraysh leadership, recognizing the futility of resistance, negotiated surrender. A general amnesty was declared for most Meccans. Muhammad entered the Kaaba, destroyed the 360 idols housed within, and rededicated it to the monotheistic worship of Allah. The political integration of Mecca into the Islamic state was rapid: most Qurayshi leaders accepted Islam. Neighboring pagan tribal delegations began arriving in Medina to acknowledge Muhammad's authority — a process the Quran describes as 'the people entering God's religion in multitudes' (Surah 110). This event effectively unified the Arabian Peninsula under a single polit ical-religious framework for the first time.

#7 630 CE — Battle of Hunayn

Arabian Peninsula

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim forces vs. Hawazin and Thaqif tribal confederacy	**Muslim Victory after initial rout**	Ibn Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah; Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 17–18; Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (1986); W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Medina (1956).

Historical Context & Analysis

Shortly after conquering Mecca, Muhammad faced a combined tribal force of Hawazin and Thaqif in the valley of Hunayn. The Bedouin fighters initially routed the Muslim vanguard with a surprise attack from the passes, causing even some veteran fighters to flee. Muhammad rallied his core supporters — described as approximately 100 men holding firm — and the battle turned. The Hawazin suffered severe losses; over 6,000 captives and enormous booty were taken. Hunayn demonstrated that Mecca's conquest did not automatically pacify Arabia, and that Muslim military power required continued demonstration. Surah 9 (At-Tawbah) of the Quran references this battle directly.

#8 631–632 CE — Ridda Wars (Wars of Apostasy)

Arabian Peninsula

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Rashidun Caliphate under Abu Bakr vs. apostate and rebel Arabian tribes	**Caliphate Victory; Arabia reunified**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 17–19; Akram, A.I., The Sword of Allah (1969), pp. 85–130; Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the

		Caliphates (1986); Fred Donner, The Early Islamic Conquests (Princeton, 1981).

Historical Context & Analysis

Upon Muhammad's death in June 632 CE, numerous Arabian tribes repudiated their political allegiance to Medina, claiming their treaties had been personal to the Prophet. Caliph Abu Bakr, advised by Umar ibn al-Khattab, declared these defections apostasy (riddah) and launched a systematic military reconquest. Khalid ibn al-Walid commanded the principal campaigns. The most significant engagements were the Battle of Buzakha (632/633) against the seudo-prophet Tulayha and the Battle of Yamama against Musaylima — who commanded over 40,000 fighters. Yamama was among the bloodiest battles of early Islamic history. The death toll among Quran memorizers (huffaz) at Yamama was so high that it prompted Abu Bakr to commission the first compilation of the Quranic text. The Ridda Wars were decisive in demonstrating that the Islamic political community was on-negotiable and permanent.

#9 633 CE — Battle of Chains (Kazima)

Iraq (Mesopotamia)

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Rashidun Muslim forces under Khalid ibn al-Walid vs. Persian Sasanid army	**Muslim Victory**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 19; Akram, A.I., The Muslim Conquest of Persia (Maktabah, 2009), pp. 15–20; Hugh Kennedy, The Armies of the Caliphs (Routledge, 2001); Fred Donner, The Early Islamic Conquests (Princeton, 1981).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Kazima, also called the 'Battle of Chains,' marked the opening of the Muslim conquest of Iraq. The Sasanid Persian garrison reportedly chained their soldiers together to prevent retreat — giving the battle its name. Khalid ibn al-Walid's cavalry outflanked the Persian formation, breaking it decisively. This engagement signaled to the Sasanid Empire that the Muslim threat was not a border raid but a systematic military campaign. Over the following months, Khalid won a series of engagements at Walaja, Ullais, and Hira — subduing the lower Euphrates valley and establishing Muslim control over the most productive agricultural land of the Sasanid realm.

#10 634 CE — Battle of Ajnadayn

Palestine/Levant

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Rashidun Muslim forces vs. Byzantine army under Theodore	**Muslim Victory; Byzantine control of Palestine fatally undermined**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 19; Adamec, Ludwig W., Historical Dictionary of Islam (Scarecrow Press, 2001), p. xxi; Fred Donner, The Early Islamic Conquests (Princeton, 1981); Hugh Kennedy, The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East (Ashgate, 2006).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Ajnadayn (30 July 634 CE) was the first major engagement between the Muslim forces invading ria-Palestine and the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine commander Theodore Trithyrius led a force to halt the Muslim advance. The battle resulted in a decisive Muslim victory, opening the road to Palestine and hastening the Byzantine withdrawal from the region. Caliph Abu Bakr died just days after receiving news of this victory. The battle is significant because it demonstrated the superior tactical flexibility of Muslim cavalry armies against the more rigid Byzantine nfantry-heavy formations. Ajnadayn effectively sealed the fate of Byzantine Palestine.

#11 636 CE — Battle of the Yarmuk River

Syria/Jordan Border

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim Arab forces (~25,000) under Khalid ibn al-Walid vs. Byzantine army (~40,000)	**Decisive Muslim Victory; Byzantine rule in Syria ends**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 21; Kennedy, Hugh, The Great Arab Conquests (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), pp. 67–90; Donner, Fred, The Early Islamic Conquests (Princeton, 1981); Kaegi, Walter E., Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of the Yarmuk (August 636 CE) stands as one of the most consequential military engagements in world history. Over six days of fighting in the deep canyon of the Yarmuk River on the Syria-Jordan frontier, a Muslim army under the tactical genius of Khalid ibn al-Walid annihilated a Byzantine force that included Armenian, Slavic, Arab Christian, and regular Byzantine units under the command of Vahan. The Byzantine left wing was driven into the canyon gorge; thousands drowned or fell. Khalid's use of massed cavalry on the flanks, combined with infantry pressure in the center, exploited Byzantine weaknesses in coordination and morale. Emperor Heraclius, surveying the disaster, reportedly said farewell to Syria: 'Peace unto thee, O Syria, and what an excellent country this is for the enemy.' The entire province of Syria fell to Muslim control within months. The battle permanently altered the demographic, religious, and cultural character of the Levant.

#12 636–637 CE — Battle of al-Qadisiyya

Central Iraq

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim Arab forces (~12,000) under Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas vs. Sasanid Persians (~100,000+) under Rustam	**Decisive Muslim Victory; Sasanid Empire collapses**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 21; Armstrong, Karen, Islam: A Short History (2002), p. 21; Donner, Fred, The Early Islamic Conquests (1981); Kennedy, Hugh, The Great Arab Conquests (2007), pp. 91–120; Kaegi, Walter, Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests (Cambridge, 1992).

Historical Context & Analysis

Al-Qadisiyya was fought over four days in late 636 or 637 CE near the Euphrates River in central Iraq and decided the fate of the Sasanid Persian Empire. The Persian commander Rustam commanded a force including

war elephants, which initially terrified the Arab cavalry. The Muslims adapted their tactics, targeting the mahouts (elephant drivers) with arrows, and hamstringing the animals. On the fourth day — called 'the Night of Clamor' in Arabic sources — Rustam was killed, his royal standard fell, and the Persian army collapsed into chaotic retreat. The Sasanid capital Ctesiphon fell shortly after. Al-Qadisiyya has held enormous symbolic importance in Islamic and Arab history; Saddam Hussein invoked it during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988).

#13 637–638 CE — Conquest of Jerusalem

Palestine

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim forces under Caliph Umar vs. Byzantine garrison	**Muslim Victory; Patriarch Sophronius surrenders the city**	Paine, Michael, The Crusades (Pocket Essentials, 2005), p. 20; Adamec, Historical Dictionary of Islam (2001), p. xxi; Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 22; Kennedy, Hugh, The Great Arab Conquests (2007), pp. 120–140.

Historical Context & Analysis

The fall of Jerusalem to Muslim forces in 637–638 CE was a momentous event in religious history. After the city's Byzantine garrison had been cut off following Yarmuk, Patriarch Sophronius agreed to surrender only to the Caliph personally. Umar ibn al-Khattab traveled from Medina to Jerusalem — reportedly arriving on a camel, sharing riding with his servant — to receive the city's keys. A formal treaty guaranteed the security of Christian churches and residents, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Jewish residents, who had been expelled by the Byzantines, were permitted to return. Caliph Umar refused to pray inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, reportedly saying that if he did, Muslims might later claim it as a mosque. This event set the stage for the religious triangulation of Jerusalem — a city sacred to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — that continues to shape geopolitics to this day.

#14 641–642 CE — Conquest of Egypt

Alexandria and the Nile Delta

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim forces (~15,000) under Amr ibn al-As vs. Byzantine Egypt	**Muslim Victory; Egypt falls permanently**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 23–24; Adamec, Historical Dictionary of Islam (2001), p. xxi; Butler, Alfred J., The Arab Conquest of Egypt (Oxford, 1902; repr. 1978); Kennedy, Hugh, The Great Arab Conquests (2007), pp. 141–170.

Historical Context & Analysis

The Muslim conquest of Egypt, led by Amr ibn al-As, was achieved with remarkable speed against one of the wealthiest provinces of the Byzantine Empire. After defeating a Byzantine force at Heliopolis (640 CE) and besieging the fortress of Babylon (Old Cairo), Amr accepted the surrender of Alexandria in September 641 CE — negotiated by Cyrus, the Melkite Patriarch. Alexandria, then among the world's greatest cities, fell without a final siege. A brief Byzantine naval attempt to retake the city in 645–646 CE was decisively repelled, permanently ending Byzantine rule in Egypt. Egypt's Coptic Christian majority largely welcomed the change of

government, having suffered under Byzantine religious persecution. The tax regime under the new Muslim dministration was initially lighter than under Byzantium. Egypt became the agricultural and financial engine of the expanding Caliphate.

#15 642 CE — Battle of Nihawand

Western Persia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim Arab forces vs. last Sasanid Persian field army	**Decisive Muslim Victory — 'Conquest of Conquests'**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 24; Adamec, Historical Dictionary of Islam (2001), p. xxi; Donner, Fred, The Early Islamic Conquests (Princeton, 1981); Kennedy, Hugh, The Great Arab Conquests (2007), pp. 171–200.

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Nihawand (642 CE), fought near Hamadan in western Iran, is called the Fath al-Futuh ('Conquest Conquests') in Arabic tradition because it ended organized Sasanid Persian resistance. The last Sasanid emperor Yazdegerd III fled eastward and was eventually murdered by a miller near Merv in 651 CE. After Nihawand, Persia was open to Muslim settlement and adm inistration. Over the following century, Persian culture, ministrative traditions, and intellectual heritage would profoundly shape Islamic civilization — a process scholars call the 'Pers ianization' of the Abbasid Caliphate. Iran is today the world's most populous ajority-Shia Muslim country, and the legacy of this conquest remains central to Iranian national and religious identity.

PART II

Abbasid Era and Continued Expansion

655 – 778 CE

Battles 16–24

#16 655 CE — Battle of the Masts

Mediterranean Sea

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim Arab navy (~200 ships) under Abdullah ibn Sa'd vs. Byzantine fleet (~500–1,000 ships) under Emperor Constans II	**Muslim Naval Victory; first major Arab naval triumph**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 30; World Heritage Encyclopedia, 'Battle of That al-Sawari'; Kennedy, Hugh, The Armies of the Caliphs (Routledge, 2001); Fahmy, Aly Mohamed, Muslim Naval Organisation in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cairo, 1950).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of the Masts (Dhat al-Sawari) represents a watershed moment in Mediterranean history — the first time a Muslim navy defeated a Byzantine fleet, shattering the assumption that onstantinople would retain permanent maritime supremacy. The battle took place off the Lycian coast of Asia Minor. Muslim ships reportedly grappled Byzantine vessels and converted the naval battle into land-style combat — an approach that neutralized Byzantine naval expertise. Emperor Constans II himself barely escaped. The victory gave the Caliphate the ability to threaten Cyprus, Rhodes, and Crete, beginning a enturies-long contest for Mediterranean naval supremacy between Islamic and Christian powers.

#17 680 CE — Battle of Karbala

Iraq

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Umayyad Caliphate forces (~30,000) under Ibn Ziyad vs. Husayn ibn Ali and companions (~72)	**Umayyad Victory; Husayn killed**	Adamec, Historical Dictionary of Islam (2001), p. xxii; Ruthven, Malise and Nanji, Azim, Historical Atlas of Islam (Thomson-Gale, 2005), p. 38; Madelung, Wilferd, The Succession to Muhammad (Cambridge, 1997); Jafri, S.H.M., The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam (Oxford, 1979).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Karbala (10 October 680 CE / 10 Muharram 61 AH) is the defining tragedy of Shia Islam. Husayn ibn Ali — grandson of Muhammad and son of Ali — refused to pledge allegiance to the Umayyad Caliph Yazid I, whom he considered illegitimate. With a small party of family and supporters, he was intercepted at Karbala in southern Iraq by a massive Umayyad force. After a period of being denied access to water from the Euphrates, Husayn and his male companions were killed in battle on the day of Ashura. The women and children, including Husayn's sister Zaynab bint Ali, were taken captive to Damascus. The massacre at Karbala crystallized the Sunni-Shia schism that persists to the present day. The annual commemoration of Ashura — observed by hundreds of millions of Shia Muslims worldwide — makes Karbala among the most consequential single battles in religious history.

#18 711 CE — Battle of Guadalete

Southern Spain

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Umayyad Muslim force (~12,000) under Tariq ibn Ziyad vs. Visigothic Kingdom of Spain under King Roderic	**Muslim Victory; Visigoth Kingdom collapses**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 46; World eBook Library, 'Battle of Guadalete'; Menocal, Maria Rosa, The Ornament of the World (Little, Brown, 2002); Kennedy, Hugh, Muslim Spain and Portugal (Longman, 1996).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula — one of the most dramatic geopolitical ansformations of the medieval world — was launched in April 711 CE when Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with approximately 7,000–12,000 Berber and Arab troops. The battle near the Guadalete River (or possibly the Barbate lagoon) saw the Visigothic King Roderic defeated and killed. Within three years, the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate controlled virtually all of the Iberian Peninsula. The conquest permanently altered Spain's demographic, cultural, linguistic, and religious profile. Al-Andalus Musl im-controlled Iberia — would remain geopolitical reality for over 750 years, until the final Reconquista in 1492. The name 'Gibraltar' itself derives from 'Jabal Tariq' (Tariq's Mountain).

#19 717–718 CE — Second Arab Siege of Constantinople

Byzantine Empire

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim Arab and Umayyad forces (~180,000) under Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik vs. Byzantine Empire under Emperor Leo III	**Byzantine Victory; Arab besieging army destroyed**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 50–51; Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (Viking, 1999), p. 134; Treadgold, Warren, A History of the Byzantine State and Society (Stanford, 1997); Kennedy, Hugh, The Great Arab Conquests (2007).

Historical Context & Analysis

The second Arab siege of onstantinople was one of the most ambitious military operations of the early medieval period and its failure had enormous consequences. The Umayyad Caliph Suleyman dispatched a dual land-and-sea force — sources claim over 100,000 land troops and 1,800 ships — to finally take the Byzantine capital. The Byzantines deployed 'Greek fire' — an incendiary liquid weapon — to devastating effect against the Arab fleet. A harsh winter killed thousands of ill-supplied Arab besiegers. Bulgarian forces attacked Arab supply lines from the rear. When a relief fleet from Egypt arrived in the spring of 718 CE, its Christian Egyptian crews defected en masse to the Byzantines, who destroyed much of the fleet with Greek fire. The siege was abandoned. The failure ended serious Umayyad ambitions against onstantinople and, scholars argue, preserved Eastern Christianity and prevented Muslim control of the Balkans.

#20 732 CE — Battle of Tours (Poitiers)

Central France

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Frankish forces (~2 0,000–80,000 est.) under Charles Martel vs. Umayyad Muslim force under Abd al-Rahman al-Ghafiqi	**Frankish Victory; Muslim advance into Western Europe halted**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 52; Cook, David, Understanding Jihad (University of California Press, 2005), p. 209; Eggenberger, David, A Dictionary of Battles (Dover, 1985); Creasy, Edward S., Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World (1851); Gibbon, Edward, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 6 (1781).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Tours (also known as the Battle of Poitiers), fought in October 732 CE between Tours and Poitiers in central France, is widely regarded by Western historians as one of the most decisive battles in European and world history. Abd al-Rahman al-Ghafiqi, Governor of al-Andalus, led a Muslim army deep into the Frankish heartland, having previously destroyed the Duchy of Aquitaine and sacked Bordeaux. Charles Martel ('The Hammer'), the Frankish mayor of the palace, deployed his infantry in a dense defensive phalanx. The Frankish infantry held firm against repeated cavalry charges throughout the day. When news reached the Muslim forces that their camp — and their accumulated plunder — was being raided, the army broke in pursuit of the camp looters. Abd al-Rahman was killed in the confusion. The Muslim army retreated across the Pyrenees. Edward Gibbon, in The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, suggested that a Muslim victory at Tours might have resulted in the Islamization of all of Europe. While modern historians debate the scale, Tours definitively ended the northward advance of Islamic forces in Western Europe.

#21 737 CE — Frankish Counter-Campaigns in Southern France

Southern France

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Frankish forces under Charles Martel vs. Muslim Saracen garrisons	**Frankish Victory; Saracens expelled from southern France**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 53–54; Baker, Patrick S., 'Charles Martel Turns South,' Saber and Scroll 4, no. 3 (2015): 34–54; Fregosi, Paul, Jihad in the West (Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 120.

Historical Context & Analysis

Following Tours (732), Charles Martel launched systematic campaigns to expel Muslim garrisons from southern France over the years 736–739. His forces recovered Narbonne's hinterland, devastated Beziers, destroyed Agde and Lodeve, and retook Avignon. At the Battle of the River Berre (737), a Muslim relief fleet attempting to resupply Narbonne was destroyed. Narbonne itself held out until 759, when its Visigothic population overthrew the Arab garrison and surrendered the city to Pepin III. These campaigns completed the onsolidation of the Pyrenean frontier and established the 'Marca Hispanica' — the military march between France and Muslim Spain.

#22 750 CE — Battle of the Zab

Iraq

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Abbasid rebel forces vs. Umayyad Caliphate	**Abbasid Victory; Umayyad Caliphate overthrown**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 60; Historia Rex, 'Battle of Zab'; Eggenberger, A Dictionary of Battles; Kennedy, Hugh, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (1986), pp. 120–130.

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of the Zab (January 750 CE), fought on the banks of the Great Zab River in northern Iraq, ended the Umayyad Caliphate and inaugurated the Abbasid dynasty that would rule Islam's heartland for five centuries. The last Umayyad Caliph, Marwan II, was defeated, fled to Egypt, and was killed there. The Abbasids subsequently massacred virtually the entire Umayyad family — reportedly inviting the survivors to a banquet and then slaughtering them. One Umayyad prince, Abd al-Rahman I, escaped to the Iberian Peninsula and founded the independent Emirate of Cordoba, perpetuating the Umayyad dynasty in the west. The Abbasid victory shifted the center of Islamic power from Damascus to a new capital, Baghdad, founded in 762 CE — signaling the decisive 'Pers ianization' of Islamic imperial culture.

#23 751 CE — Battle of Talas

Central Asia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Muslim Abbasid forces (with Tibetan and Karluk Turkic allies) vs. Tang Chinese Empire	**Muslim Victory; China's westward expansion halted**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 60; Ruthven and Nanji, Historical Atlas of Islam (2005), p. 146; Beckwith, Christopher I., Empires of the Silk Road (Princeton, 2009); Kennedy, Hugh, The Great Arab Conquests (2007).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Talas (July 751 CE), fought near the Talas River in modern Kyrgyzstan, was the only direct military engagement between the Chinese Tang Empire and the expanding Islamic Caliphate. A Tang army under Gao Xianzhi was defeated when his Karluk Turkic allies defected mid-battle to the Muslim side. Chinese expansion into Central Asia was permanently arrested. Of equal historical importance: the battle's captives included Chinese craftsmen who introduced papermaking technology to the Islamic world, from which it spread to Europe. The replacement of papyrus and parchment with paper was a echnological revolution that transformed literacy, scholarship, and governance across Eurasia.

#24 778 CE — Battle of Roncevaux Pass

Northern Spain/Pyrenees

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Frankish forces under Charlemagne vs. Muslim forces; then Basque ambush	**Frankish retreat; Rearguard annihilated at Roncevaux**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 66; CARM, 'Chronology of Early Islam,' carm.org; Einhard, Life of Charlemagne, c. 830 CE; Cook, David, Understanding Jihad (2005).

Historical Context & Analysis

Charlemagne's 778 CE invasion of Muslim Spain — invited by the Muslim governor of Zaragoza who then refused to open the city — ended humiliation. On the return journey, the Frankish rearguard commanded by Roland was ambushed and annihilated by Basque warriors at Roncevaux Pass in the Pyrenees. This defeat was mythologized in the epic Chanson de Roland (c. 1100 CE), which ana chronistically replaced the Basque attackers with Saracens — transforming the historical event into a foundational ristian-Muslim conflict narrative that shaped Crusader ideology. The real event reflected the complexity of Spanish frontier politics, where Christian, Muslim, and pagan Basque interests frequently intersected.

PART III

The Crusading Era

1071 – 1291 CE

Battles 25–32

#25 1071 CE — Battle of Manzikert

Eastern Anatolia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Seljuk Turks (~40,000) under Sultan Alp Arslan vs. Byzantine Empire (~40 ,000–60,000) under Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes	**Seljuk Victory; Emperor captured; Anatolia opened to Turkic settlement**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 147; Paine, Michael, The Crusades (Pocket Essentials, 2005), p. 27; Adamec, Historical Dictionary of Islam (2001), p. xxix; Asbridge, Thomas, The Crusades (HarperCollins, 2010).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Manzikert (26 August 1071 CE) was a catastrophic defeat that fundamentally altered the trajectory of Byzantine civilization and directly precipitated the Crusades. The Byzantine Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes led a large army into eastern Anatolia to confront the Seljuk Turks threatening the imperial frontier. Through a combination of feigned retreat drawing Byzantine forces out of formation, treachery within the Byzantine army, and tactical brilliance by Alp Arslan, the Byzantines were surrounded and routed. Emperor Romanos IV was captured — an unprecedented humiliation. The battle opened Anatolia (modern Turkey) to massive Turkic migration and permanent settlement. The demographic ransformation was irreversible.

Byzantine desperate appeals to Western Christendom for military aid eventually produced Pope Urban II's 1095 call for the First Crusade.

#26 1095–1099 CE — First Crusade

⚲ Anatolia, Syria, Palestine

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Crusader armies from Western Europe vs. Seljuk Turks, Fatimid Egyptians	**Crusader Victory; Jerusalem captured July 15, 1099**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 155–156; Asbridge, Thomas, The Crusades (2010), p. 685; Paine, The Crusades (2005), pp. 41–46; Runciman, Steven, A History of the Crusades Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1951).

Historical Context & Analysis

Pope Urban II's call at Clermont (November 1095) launched the First Crusade — the first large-scale organized military campaign from Western Christianity to recover Jerusalem. Crusader armies of perhaps ,000–100,000 (including n-combatants) crossed Anatolia under Byzantine escort, capturing Nicaea (1097) and defeating a Seljuk force at Dorylaeum. The prolonged siege of Antioch (1097–1098) nearly destroyed the Crusader force before the city fell by treachery. Jerusalem was besieged in June 1099 and stormed on 15 July 1099. Contemporary accounts describe a massacre of Jerusalem's Muslim and Jewish inhabitants. The Crusaders established four Latin states: the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, the County of Edessa, and the County of Tripoli. These entities would survive in various forms until 1291.

#27 1144 CE — Fall of Edessa

⚲ Northern Syria

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Zengid forces under Imad al-Din Zengi vs. County of Edessa	**Muslim Victory; First Crusader state lost**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 171; Paine, The Crusades (2005), pp. 40 & 135; Asbridge, The Crusades (2010), p. 685; Runciman, Steven, A History of the Crusades Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1952).

Historical Context & Analysis

The fall of Edessa (24 December 1144 CE) to the Zengid atabeg Imad al-Din Zengi was the first major reversal of Crusader territorial gains and shocked Christendom into launching the Second Crusade. Edessa, the easternmost and most vulnerable Crusader state, had been established in 1098. Zengi exploited the absence of Count Joscelin II to besiege and take the city. The loss of Edessa demonstrated that the Muslim world was onsolidating militarily under capable commanders. Pope Eugenius III issued Quantum pra edecessores, and Bernard of Clairvaux preached the Second Crusade — which ultimately failed disastrously at Damascus in 1148.

#28 1187 CE — Battle of Hattin

Galilee, Palestine

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ayyubid forces (~30,000) under Saladin vs. Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (~20,000) under Guy of Lusignan	**Decisive Muslim Victory; Kingdom of Jerusalem shattered**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 185; Asbridge, The Crusades (2010), p. 686; Paine, The Crusades (2005), p. 136; Runciman, A History of the Crusades Vol. 2 (1952); Lyons, M.C. and Jackson, D.E.P., Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War (Cambridge, 1982).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of the Horns of Hattin (4 July 1187 CE) was the military catastrophe that ended the first Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Saladin lured the Crusader army — weakened by internal political divisions — away from its water sources in a forced march across the waterless plateau above the Sea of Galilee in high summer. Encircled at the hill called the Horns of Hattin, without water, and surrounded on all sides, the Crusader force collapsed. King Guy of Lusignan was captured. Raynald of Chatillon, who had violated the truce with Saladin, was executed by Saladin personally. Over 200 Templar and Hospitaller knights were publicly beheaded. With the Crusader field army destroyed, the Kingdom's cities fell rapidly. Jerusalem surrendered on 2 October 1187 CE — ending 88 years of Crusader control. The loss of Jerusalem provoked Pope Gregory VIII's call for the Third Crusade.

#29 1189–1192 CE — Third Crusade

Levant and Palestine

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Crusader forces under Richard I of England, Philip II of France, Frederick I of Germany vs. Ayyubid Sultanate under Saladin	**Partial Crusader Success; Acre retaken; Jerusalem not recovered**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 186–187; Asbridge, The Crusades (2010), p. 686; Paine, The Crusades (2005), p. 136; Gillingham, John, Richard I (Yale, 1999); Runciman, A History of the Crusades Vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1954).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Third Crusade was launched in response to Saladin's capture of Jerusalem. The German Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa drowned crossing a river in Anatolia before reaching the Holy Land. Richard I of England 'Lionheart') and Philip II of France retook Acre after a two-year siege (1191). Richard defeated Saladin at Arsuf (September 1191) but twice decided against besieging Jerusalem due to logistical concerns. The Treaty of Jaffa (1192) permitted Christian pilgrims access to Jerusalem without political control. Richard's Crusade is remembered as a military and strategic near-success — he preserved a rump Crusader state along the coast — but it failed to achieve its central objective. Richard's reputation as a military commander of genius was established in these campaigns.

#30 1212 CE — Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa

Spain

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Christian coalition (Castile, Navarre, Aragon, Portugal, Papal volunteers) under Alfonso VIII vs. Almohad Caliphate under Muhammad al-Nasir	**Decisive Christian Victory; Almohad power broken in Spain**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 198–199; Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (1999), p. 395; Paine, The Crusades (2005), p. 136; O'Callaghan, Joseph F., Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (16 July 1212 CE) was the decisive turning point of the Spanish Reconquista. Pope Innocent III declared a Crusade against the Almohad dynasty — Berber Muslim rulers of Morocco and al-Andalus — and a large international Christian force assembled. The Almohad Caliph al-Nasir deployed his personal guard — chained together as a last-stand formation — around his tent. The Spanish Christian cavalry breached the Almohad lines and the army collapsed. Casualties were enormous. After Las Navas, the Almohad Caliphate began its rapid sintegration. Cordoba fell to Ferdinand III of Castile in 1236, Valencia to James I of Aragon in 1238, and Seville in 1248. Only the Nasrid Emirate of Granada survived until 1492.

#31 1260 CE — Battle of Ain Jalut

Palestine

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt (~12,000) under Baybars and Qutuz vs. Mongol forces (~10,000) under Kitbuqa	**Mamluk Victory; first decisive defeat of the Mongols**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 219; Ruthven and Nanji, Historical Atlas of Islam (2005), p. 196; Kennedy, Hugh, Mongols, Huns and Vikings (Cassell, 2002); Amitai-Preiss, Reuven, Mongols and Mamluks (Cambridge, 1995).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Ain Jalut ('Spring of Goliath,' 3 September 1260 CE), fought near Nazareth in the Jezreel Valley of Palestine, marked the first occasion the previously invincible Mongol army was decisively defeated and forced into retreat. The Mongols under Hulagu Khan had sacked Baghdad (1258), killing the last Abbasid Caliph, destroyed cities across Iraq and Syria, and seemed unstoppable. At Ain Jalut, the Mamluk Sultan Qutuz and his brilliant general Baybars used the terrain skillfully, feigning retreat to draw the Mongols into an ambush. The Mongol commander Kitbuqa was killed. The battle halted Mongol westward advance permanently, preserving Egypt and North Africa from Mongol conquest. Islamic civilization in Cairo and North Africa survived intact. Baybars subsequently assassinated Qutuz and became Sultan, launching a systematic reconquest of remaining Crusader positions.

#32 1291 CE — Fall of Acre

Palestine

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES

Mamluk Sultanate (~100,000) under Sultan al-Ashraf Khalil vs. Crusader garrison of Acre (~15,000)	**Mamluk Victory; last major Crusader city falls**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 233; Asbridge, The Crusades (2010); Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (1999), p. 334; Runciman, A History of the Crusades Vol. 3 (1954); Riley-Smith, Jonathan, The Crusades: A History (Continuum, 2005).

Historical Context & Analysis

The fall of Acre on 18 May 1291 CE ended the Crusader presence in the Holy Land that had begun with the First Crusade in 1099. The city, heavily fortified and defended by Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonic Knights, fell after a 43-day siege conducted with massive siege engines and underground mining. The Military Orders fought desperate rearguard actions; the Templar headquarters fell last. Surviving Crusaders evacuated by sea to Cyprus. The fall of Acre effectively ended two centuries of Crusader engagement with the Middle East. The Crusades had failed to permanently recover Jerusalem or establish a stable Christian presence in the Levant. Their legacy — cultural exchange, religious polarization, and the reshaping of European and Middle Eastern political identities — continues to inform relations between Western and Islamic ivilizations.

PART IV

Ottoman Expansion

1389 – 1683 CE

Battles 33–42

#33 1389 CE — First Battle of Kosovo

Balkans

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ottoman forces (~40,000) under Sultan Murad I vs. Serbian-led coalition (~25 ,000–30,000) under Prince Lazar	**Ottoman Victory; Murad I and Prince Lazar both killed**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 272; Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (1999), p. 275; Ruthven and Nanji, Historical Atlas of Islam (2005), p. 196; Malcolm, Noel, Kosovo: A Short History (New York University Press, 1998).

Historical Context & Analysis

The First Battle of Kosovo (28 June 1389 CE) on the Field of Blackbirds (Kosovo Polje) became the defining event of Serbian national identity and one of the most mythologized battles of the medieval Balkans. Sultan Murad I was assassinated in his tent by the Serbian noble Milos Obilic during or after the battle — a rare case of an Ottoman sultan killed in battle. Prince Lazar of Serbia was also captured and executed. Despite the mutual losses of both commanders, the battle resulted in an Ottoman strategic victory; Serbian resistance collapsed and the medieval Serbian empire never recovered. Kosovo Polje created a Serbian national martyrdom mythology — Lazar became a saint in the Serbian Orthodox Church — that shaped Serbian national consciousness through the twen tieth-century Balkan conflicts including the 1999 Kosovo War.

#34 1396 CE — Battle of Nicopolis

Bulgaria

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Crusader coalition (~10 ,000–16,000) under Sigismund of Hungary vs. Ottoman forces (~15 ,000–20,000) under Sultan Bayezid I	**Ottoman Victory; Last major western Crusade defeated**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 275; Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (1999), p. 334; Turnbull, Stephen, The Ottoman Empire 1326–1699 (Osprey, 2003).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Nicopolis (25 September 1396 CE) on the Danube in modern Bulgaria was the last large-scale Western Crusade of the medieval period. Sigismund of Hungary organized a coalition of French, Burgundian, Wallachian, and Hungarian knights to stem the Ottoman advance into Europe. The Western knights — confident in heavy cavalry tactics — ignored Sigismund's tactical advice and charged prematurely into Ottoman defensive positions. The Ottoman cavalry then encircled them. The resulting defeat was catastrophic; thousands of prisoners were executed. Sigismund escaped by boat down the Danube. The Ottoman capture of Bulgaria was consolidated. European military planners drew lessons from Nicopolis about coordinated tactics vs. the Ottoman system — lessons applied in subsequent battles.

#35 1402 CE — Battle of Ankara

Anatolia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Timurid forces (~800,000 reported; likely 100 ,000–140,000) under Timur (Tamerlane) vs. Ottoman Empire (~85,000) under Sultan Bayezid I	**Timurid Victory; Bayezid captured**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 279; Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (1999), p. 334; Manz, Beatrice Forbes, The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane (Cambridge, 1989).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Ankara (28 July 1402 CE) temporarily halted Ottoman expansion by inflicting the worst defeat the Ottomans had yet suffered. Timur (Tamerlane) — ruler of a vast Central Asian empire — invaded Anatolia in response to Bayezid's territorial ambitions and his harboring of Timur's enemies. Timur's forces, augmented by elements of Bayezid's own vassal forces who defected during the battle, routed the Ottomans. Bayezid himself was captured — reportedly transported in a cage or litter as Timur's prisoner. He died in captivity months later. The battle triggered a decade-long Ottoman civil war (the Ottoman Interregnum, 1402–1413). However, the Ottomans recovered, econsolidated, and within 50 years would conquer onstantinople.

#36 1444 CE — Battle of Varna

Bulgaria

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES

Crusader coalition (~20,000) under Wladyslaw III of P oland-Hungary vs. Ottoman forces (~40 ,000–60,000) under Sultan Murad II	**Ottoman Victory; last significant Crusade in Eastern Europe**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 304; Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (1999), pp. 275 & 334; Imber, Colin, The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650 (Palgrave, 2002).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Varna (10 November 1444 CE) ended the last major Crusade in Eastern Europe. Pope Eugenius IV organized a coalition to exploit Ottoman instability. Despite early successes, King Wladyslaw III made the fatal error of leading a cavalry charge against the elite Janissary infantry surrounding the Sultan. He was killed, his head displayed on a spear, and his army collapsed. The defeat effectively ended organized western military resistance to Ottoman expansion in the Balkans and sealed the fate of the Byzantine Empire, which fell nine years later.

#37 1453 CE — Fall of Constantinople

Byzantine Empire

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ottoman forces (~80, 000–100,000) under Sultan Mehmed II vs. Byzantine defenders (~7,000) under Emperor Constantine XI	**Ottoman Victory; Byzantine Empire ends; Islamic flag raised over Hagia Sophia**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, p. 309; Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, ed. Cantor (1999), p. 134; Cook, David, Understanding Jihad (2005), p. 209; Runciman, Steven, The Fall of Constantinople 1453 (Cambridge, 1965); Crowley, Roger, 1453: The Holy War for Constantinople (Hyperion, 2005).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Fall of onstantinople on 29 May 1453 CE stands as one of the most consequential events in world history, marking the end of the Roman Empire — which had existed in some form for over two millennia. Sultan Mehmed II ('The Conqueror') employed massive bronze cannon, including the legendary Basilica cannon cast by a Hungarian engineer, to breach the Theodosian Walls that had protected the city for a thousand years. After 53 days of siege, an Ottoman attack breached a section of wall near the Blachernae Palace. Emperor Constantine Palaiologos died fighting — his body never identified. The great church of Hagia Sophia was immediately converted into a mosque. The fall sent shockwaves through Europe, provided powerful impetus to humanist scholars fleeing to Italy (contributing to the Renaissance), stimulated European exploration for alternative eastern trade routes (motivating Columbus's voyage of 1492), and established Istanbul as the new capital of the Ottoman Empire for 470 years.

#38 1456 CE — Siege of Belgrade

Serbia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ottoman forces (~100,000) under Sultan Mehmed II vs. Christian defenders (~10,000) under Janos Hunyadi	**Christian Victory; Ottoman advance into Central Europe halted**	Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora Vol. 1, pp. 312–313; Turnbull, Stephen, The Ottoman Empire 1326–1699 (Osprey, 2003); Imber, Colin, The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650 (Palgrave, 2002).

Historical Context & Analysis

The successful defense of Belgrade in July 1456 CE was one of the most significant Christian military achievements against the Ottoman advance. After conquering onstantinople in 1453, Mehmed II turned immediately toward Central Europe. The city of Belgrade, commanding the confluence of the Sava and Danube Rivers, was the key to Hungary. The outnumbered defenders under Janos Hunyadi (a Hunga rian-Romanian military commander) repelled the Ottoman naval blockade and launched a ounter-attack that briefly penetrated the Ottoman camp. Mehmed II was wounded during the fighting and ordered a retreat. Hunyadi died of plague weeks after the victory. Pope Calixtus III ordered church bells rung at noon across Christendom to celebrate the victory — a custom that continues in some Catholic churches. The defeat delayed Ottoman advance into Central Europe for over 60 years.

#39 1529 CE — First Siege of Vienna

Austria

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ottoman forces (~120 ,000–300,000 reported) under Sultan Suleiman I vs. Habsburg defenders (~16 ,000–21,000)	**Christian Victory; Ottoman advance into Western Europe stopped**	Wikipedia, 'Siege of Vienna'; Ruthven and Nanji, Historical Atlas of Islam (2005), p. 197; Turnbull, Stephen, The Ottoman Empire 1326–1699 (Osprey, 2003); Wheatcroft, Andrew, The Enemy at the Gate (Basic Books, 2009).

Historical Context & Analysis

The First Siege of Vienna (27 September – 14 October 1529 CE) represented the high-water mark of Ottoman military expansion into Western Europe. Sultan Suleiman 'the Magnificent' — who had captured Belgrade (1521), Rhodes (1522), and crushed Hungary at Mohacs (1526) — drove toward Vienna with the largest army yet assembled against Central Europe. The Ottoman siege failed for several reasons: the campaigning season was nearly exhausted when the army arrived; massive Ottoman artillery had been left behind due to muddy roads; the garrison made vigorous sorties; and mines dug by Ottoman engineers were detected and flooded. On 14 October 1529, Suleiman ordered withdrawal slaughtering several thousand captives before departing. The siege permanently fixed the eastern boundary of Habsb urg-Christian Europe. The crescent never extended further west.

#40 1565 CE — Great Siege of Malta

Mediterranean

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ottoman forces (~40,000) under Mustafa Pasha vs. Knights of St. John (~700 Knights + ~6,000 Maltese)	**Christian Victory; Malta held**	Crowley, Roger, Empires of the Sea (Random House, 2008), pp. 173–187; Turnbull, Stephen, The Ottoman Empire 1326–1699 (Osprey, 2003); Bradford, Ernle, The Great Siege (Hodder & Stoughton, 1961).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Great Siege of Malta (18 May – 8 September 1565 CE) was one of the most celebrated defensive sieges of the sixteenth century. Suleiman the Magnificent dispatched a massive force to eliminate the Knights Hospitaller from Malta, who were disrupting Ottoman Mediterranean supply lines. The Knights, under Grand Master Jean Parisot de Valette, mounted a desperate defense of the fortresses of St. Elmo, St. Angelo, and St. Michael. Fort St. Elmo fell after fierce fighting; its defenders were killed and their bodies sent across the harbor on crosses — an act of psychological warfare to which Valette responded by decapitating Ottoman prisoners and firing their heads from cannon. A relief force from Sicily arrived in September. The Ottomans withdrew, having lost perhaps 25,000 men. The victory was celebrated across Europe; Voltaire wrote: 'Nothing is better known than the siege of Malta.'

#41 1571 CE — Battle of Lepanto

Gulf of Corinth, Greece

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Holy League (Spain, Venice, Papal States, Genoa) (~208 galleys) under Don John of Austria vs. Ottoman fleet (~251 galleys) under Ali Pasha	**Holy League Victory; largest naval battle of the sixteenth century**	Crowley, Roger, Empires of the Sea (Random House, 2008); Ruthven and Nanji, Historical Atlas of Islam (2005), p. 86; Beeching, Jack, The Galleys at Lepanto (Scribner, 1982); Konstam, Angus, Lepanto 1571 (Osprey, 2003).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Lepanto (7 October 1571 CE) in the Gulf of Corinth was the largest naval engagement since antiquity and the last great battle in which oar-powered galleys dominated. The Holy League, organized by Pope Pius V, confronted the Ottoman fleet in a six-hour battle of xtraordinary violence. Ali Pasha was killed and his head displayed. The Ottoman fleet — then believed invincible — lost pproximately 170 galleys and over 30,000 men. The Holy League freed pproximately 15,000 Christian galley slaves. The poet Cervantes — later author of Don Quixote — lost the use of his left hand at Lepanto. The sychological impact of the victory was enormous; it shattered the myth of Ottoman naval vincibility. However, the Ottomans rebuilt their fleet within two years, emonstrating the empire's enormous material resources. hesterton's poem 'Lepanto' (1911) remains among the most celebrated verse treatments of the battle.

#42 1683 CE — Second Siege of Vienna

Austria

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ottoman forces (~150,000) under Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa vs. Ha bsburg-Polish relief force (~70 ,000–80,000) under King Jan III Sobieski of Poland	**Christian Victory; Ottoman power in Central Europe permanently broken**	Cook, David, Understanding Jihad (2005), p. 209; Ruthven and Nanji, Historical Atlas of Islam (2005), p. 197; Wheatcroft, Andrew, The Enemy at the Gate (Basic Books, 2009); Stoye, John, The Siege of Vienna (1964; Pegasus Books, 2006).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Second Siege of Vienna (Ju ly–September 1683 CE) and the Battle of Kahlenberg (12 September 1683) constitute the definitive turning point in the Ott oman-European struggle for Central Europe. Kara Mustafa Pasha led an enormous Ottoman force to besiege Vienna, defended by Count Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg with 11,000 men. After two months of mining and bombardment, the walls were near collapse when King Jan III Sobieski of Poland led a relief army to the Kahlenberg heights above the city. On 12 September, Sobieski launched the largest cavalry charge in history — 18,000 heavily armored Polish Winged Hussars smashed into the Ottoman lines. The charge decided the battle within hours. Kara Mustafa fled to Belgrade, where he was strangled on orders of Sultan Mehmed IV. The defeat initiated a permanent Ottoman retreat from Central Europe; the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz formalized massive territorial losses. The cultural significance of 1683 remains politically charged in Europe to this day.

PART V

Decline, Reform, and Colonial Resistance

1697 – 1878 CE

Battles 43–47

#43 1697 CE — Battle of Zenta

Serbia (Tisza River)

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Habsburg Imperial forces (~50 ,000–60,000) under Prince Eugene of Savoy vs. Ottoman forces (~80, 000–100,000) under Sultan Mustafa II	**Habsburg Victory; most decisive Ottoman defeat since Lepanto**	Wikipedia, Academic Dictionaries, 'Battle of Zenta'; Jaques, Tony, Dictionary of Battles and Sieges Vol. 1 (Greenwood, 2007); Henderson, Nicholas, Prince Eugen of Savoy (Praeger, 1964).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Zenta (11 September 1697 CE) was the most crushing Ottoman military defeat of the seventeenth century and the battle that definitively established Prince Eugene of Savoy as Europe's premier military commander. Sultan Mustafa II had led the Ottoman army to the Tisza River intending to cross at Zenta. Eugene's Imperial army arrived unexpectedly as the Ottoman infantry was crossing, with the cavalry and artillery already on the opposite bank. Eugene attacked the stranded infantry and rtillery-less Ottomans, driving them into the river. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Ottomans drowned or were killed; the Sultan escaped

but the Grand Vizier and many senior commanders were killed. The Imperial treasury and the official harem were captured. The disaster forced the Ottomans to the negotiating table; the resulting Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) stripped the empire of Hungary, Transylvania, Podolia, and the Morea — the first major Ottoman territorial concessions in Europe. Zenta, together with the 1683 relief of Vienna, marks the true beginning of the enturies-long Ottoman decline.

#44 1716 CE — Battle of Petrovaradin

Serbia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Habsburg forces under Prince Eugene of Savoy vs. Ottoman forces under Grand Vizier Silahdar Ali Pasha	**Habsburg Victory; Grand Vizier killed**	Wikipedia, 'Battle of Petrovaradin'; Jaques, Dictionary of Battles and Sieges (2007); McKay, Derek, Prince Eugene of Savoy (Thames & Hudson, 1977).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Battle of Petrovaradin (5 August 1716 CE) was fought as the Ottomans attempted to reverse the territorial losses imposed by the Treaty of Karlowitz. Prince Eugene of Savoy inflicted another crushing defeat on the Ottoman army; the Grand Vizier Silahdar Ali Pasha was killed in the fighting. Eugene's victory was followed by the capture of Temesvár — the last Ottoman fortress in Hungary — and eventually led to the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718), which stripped the Ottomans of Serbia, Little Wallachia, and northern Bosnia. The combination of Zenta, Petrovaradin, and Passarowitz completed the rollback of Ottoman power in Central Europe.

#45 1801–1805 CE — First Barbary War

North Africa / Mediterranean

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
United States Navy vs. Barbary pirate states (Tripoli, Algiers, Tunis, Morocco)	**American Victory; first U.S. overseas military conflict**	Office of the State Historian, Dept. of State, 'Barbary Wars, 1801–1805'; U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, 'Capture of USS Philadelphia'; Wheelan, Joseph, Jefferson's War (Carroll & Graf, 2003); Lambert, Frank, The Barbary Wars (Hill and Wang, 2005).

Historical Context & Analysis

The First Barbary War was the United States' first declared offensive war fought overseas and its first sustained military engagement with a Muslim state. North African Barbary States — Tripoli, Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco — had for centuries extracted tribute from European maritime powers (and later the United States) in exchange for safe passage in the diterranean. When Tripoli's Pasha Yusuf Qaramanli declared war on the U.S. in 1801 (by chopping down the American flag), President Jefferson dispatched naval squadrons. USS Philadelphia was captured when it grounded near Tripoli (1803); Lt. Stephen Decatur led a night raid to burn the captured frigate, which Admiral Horatio Nelson called 'the most daring act of the age.' The land Battle of

Derna (1805) — Marines and mercenaries capturing a fortified Libyan city — is commemorated in the Marine Hymn ('the shores of Tripoli'). A negotiated peace ended the war in 1805.

#46 1815–1816 CE — Second Barbary War

North Africa

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
United States Navy under Commodore Stephen Decatur vs. Algerian Dey Omar	**American Victory; tribute system ended**	Office of the State Historian, Dept. of State, 'Barbary Wars, 1815–1816'; Lambert, Frank, The Barbary Wars (Hill and Wang, 2005); Peskin, Lawrence A., Oxford Research Encyclopedias, 'America's Interactions with Islam and Judaism in North Africa' (2017).

Historical Context & Analysis

Emboldened by American distraction during the War of 1812, Algerian Dey Omar resumed attacks on American shipping and enslaved American sailors. Upon the war's conclusion, President Madison dispatched Commodore Stephen Decatur with two naval squadrons. Decatur captured the Algerian flagship Meshuda in a running engagement and negotiated an immediate treaty with Algiers renouncing tribute, releasing American prisoners, and paying reparations. He sailed to Tunis and Tripoli and obtained similar agreements within days. The Second Barbary War effectively ended the tribute system. Following Decatur's success, a joint British-Dutch squadron under Lord Exmouth bombarded Algiers in August 1816, liberating over 1,000 European Christian slaves and compelling Algeria to abolish Christian slavery.

#47 1877–1878 CE — Russo-Turkish War

Balkans / Eastern Anatolia

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Russian Empire (with Romanian, Bulgarian volunteers) vs. Ottoman Empire	**Rus sian-Romanian Victory; Ottoman power in Europe ends**	Wikipedia, 'Siege of Plevna'; Jaques, Dictionary of Battles and Sieges (2007); Freely, John, The Lost Messiah (Penguin, 2001); MacGahan, Januarius Aloysius, The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria (1876).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 was the conflict that definitively ended Ottoman rule in most southeastern Europe. The siege of Plevna (Pleven) in Bulgaria uly–December 1877) was the war's central engagement — an Ottoman garrison under Osman Nuri Pasha repelled three Russian and Romanian assaults before finally surrendering after five months. The Russian victory at the Battle of Aladja Dagh (October 1877) completed the destruction of the Ottoman Caucasus army. The resulting Treaty of San Stefano (revised at Berlin) granted independence to Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania, and established an autonomous Bulgaria. The Congress of Berlin (1878) fundamentally redrew the Balkan map. The Armenian Question was raised ternationally for the first time — a precursor to the genocidal events of 1915.

PART VI

20th Century: World Wars, Genocide & Nationalism

1914 – 1990 CE

Battles 48–52

#48 1914–1918 CE — Armenian Genocide & WWI Ottoman Campaigns

Anatolia / Middle East

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Ottoman Empire vs. Armenian civilian population and Allied forces	**Allied Victory in WWI; Ottoman Empire dissolved**	Hoffman, Tessa, 'Annihilation, Impunity, Denial: The Case Study of the Armenian Genocide' (2004); Wikipedia, 'Armenian Genocide'; Armstrong, Karen, Islam: A Short History (2002), p. xxvii; Bosworth et al., Encyclopedia of Islam Vol. VIII (Brill, 1995).

Historical Context & Analysis

During and immediately following World War I, the Ottoman Empire orchestrated the systematic deportation and massacre of its Armenian Christian population. Between 1914 and 1923, scholars estimate that 600,000 to 1.5 million Armenians were killed through direct massacre, death marches across the Syrian desert, starvation, and disease. The International Association of Genocide Scholars and the legislatures of over 30 countries recognize these events as genocide. multaneously, the Ottoman Empire fought Allied forces on multiple

fronts: the disastrous Gallipoli Campaign (1915–1916) repelled a combined British -French-ANZAC amphibious assault; Arab forces under Sharif Hussein (aided by T.E. Lawrence) launched the Arab Revolt (1916–1918) against Ottoman rule. By 1918 the Ottoman Empire had surrendered; the subsequent Turkish War Independence (1919–1923) under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk established the modern Turkish Republic from the empire's ruins.

#49 1948–1949 CE — Israeli War of Independence

Palestine / Israel

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Israel vs. Arab League (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen)	**Israeli Victory; State of Israel established**	Benny Morris, 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War (Yale University Press, 2008); Shapira, Anita, Israel: A History (Brandeis, 2012); UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947).

Historical Context & Analysis

The establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948 CE and the subsequent Arab-League invasion is the foundational conflict of the modern Middle East. The United Nations Partition Plan (Resolution 181) had proposed separate Arab and Jewish states; Arab leadership rejected it. The ensuing war resulted in Israeli military victory, the establishment of Israeli control over more territory than the UN partition plan allocated, and the displacement approximately 700,000 Palestinian Arabs (the Nakba, 'ca tastrophe'). The conflict established the paradigm Israeli-Arab confrontation that shaped all subsequent Middle Eastern politics. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973 followed, as did the Palestinian insurgencies, intifadas, and the ongoing peace process (Oslo Accords, 1993). The 1948 war remains among the most deeply contested historical events in contemporary political discourse.

#50 1975–1990 CE — Lebanese Civil War

Lebanon

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Multiple factions: Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims (Amal, Hezbollah), PLO, Syria, Israel	**Effectively Syrian victory; Lebanon occupied**	Wikipedia, 'Lebanese Civil War'; Ruthven and Nanji, Historical Atlas of Islam (2005), p. 198; Fisk, Robert, Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon (Atheneum, 1990).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) was a 15-year conflict that devastated one of the Arab world's most prosperous and culturally diverse countries. The war's origins lay in the demographic ransformation caused by the influx of Palestinian refugees and PLO fighters after 1948 and especially after 1970 (Black September). Christian Maronite political dominance was challenged by growing Muslim demographic strength. Israel invaded in 1982, expelling the PLO but triggering the rise of Hezbollah — a Shia movement backed by Iran — which has since become Lebanon's most powerful military force. The Taif Agreement (1989) ended the war,

insti tutionalizing a new sectarian power-sharing arrangement. Syria maintained an occupation force until 2005. An estimated 120,000 people were killed; hundreds of thousands displaced.

#51 1979–1989 CE — Soviet-Afghan War

Afghanistan

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Soviet Union (with Afghan communist government) vs. Mujahideen fighters (backed by US, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia)	**Soviet withdrawal; Mujahideen victory**	Coll, Steve, Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden (Penguin Press, 2004); Feifer, Gregory, The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan (HarperCollins, 2009); Crile, George, Charlie Wilson's War (Grove Press, 2003).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979) and the subsequent nine-year war had consequences that reverberate to the present day. The United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan covertly funded, armed, and trained the Afghan Mujahideen through Operation Cyclone — the largest CIA covert operation in history. International Muslim volunteers, including Osama bin Laden, joined the jihad against the Soviets. The Soviets withdrew in 1989 having suffered approximately 15,000 dead and 35,000 wounded. The war accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union. The nfrastructure of the anti-Soviet jihad — the training camps, transnational jihadist networks, and ideology of militant global jihad — became the foundation of al-Qaeda and subsequent jihadist movements. The CIA's 'blowback' from Operation Cyclone fundamentally shaped the post-Cold War security environment.

#52 1980–1988 CE — Iran-Iraq War

Iraq / Iran

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Iraq (under Saddam Hussein) vs. Iran (Islamic Republic under Khomeini)	**Military stalemate; approximately 1 million dead**	Hiro, Dilip, The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict (Routledge, 1991); Karsh, Efraim, The Iran-Iraq War: 1980–1988 (Osprey, 2002); Pelletiere, Stephen C., The Iran-Iraq War: Chaos in a Vacuum (Praeger, 1992).

Historical Context & Analysis

The Iran-Iraq War — the longest conventional war of the twentieth century — was a conflict between a secular Baathist Arab state and the newly established Shia Islamic Republic. Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in September 1980, expecting a quick victory against a revolutionary state in chaos. Instead, Iranian nationalist and Islamist fervor produced mass mobilization; the war settled into trench warfare reminiscent of World War I. Iraq used chemical weapons — including mustard gas and nerve agents — against both Iranian forces and Kurdish civilians (Halabja massacre, 1988). The war ended in 1988 with a UN-brokered ceasefire, roughly along the pre-war borders. The economic and demographic costs were catastrophic for both nations; Iraq's resulting debt was a factor in Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which triggered the Gulf War.

PART VII

Modern Era Conflicts

1990 – Present

Battles 53–58

#53 1990–1991 CE — Gulf War: Liberation of Kuwait

Kuwait / Iraq

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
US-led Coalition (34 nations) vs. Iraq under Saddam Hussein	**Coalition Victory; Kuwait liberated in 100 hours of ground combat**	Schwarzkopf, H. Norman, It Doesn't Take a Hero (Bantam, 1992); Atkinson, Rick, Crusade: The Untold Story of the Gulf War (Houghton Mifflin, 1993); Karsh, Efraim, The Gulf Conflict 1990–1991 (Princeton, 1993).

Historical Context & Analysis

Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait (2 August 1990) provoked a US-led nternational coalition under UN Security Council thorization. Operation Desert Storm (Janua ry–February 1991) began with 39 days of intensive air bombardment that destroyed Iraqi air defenses, logistics, and com munications. The ground war (Operation Desert Sabre) lasted 100 hours; Iraqi forces collapsed and fled Kuwait. President George H.W. Bush halted the advance before reaching Baghdad, leaving Saddam Hussein in power — a decision debated by historians. The war demonstrated the overwhelming echnological superiority of American ombined-arms warfare. Coalition casualties: ~300 killed. Iraqi military dead: estimated 20, 000–35,000. The war established

permanent U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, which became a major grievance cited by Osama bin Laden in his declaration of war against America.

#54 2001–2021 CE — War in Afghanistan

Afghanistan

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
US-led Coalition (NATO) vs. Taliban and al-Qaeda	**Taliban ultimate control; longest war in American history**	Jones, Seth G., In the Graveyard of Empires (Norton, 2009); Gopal, Anand, No Good Men Among the Living (Metropolitan Books, 2014); U.S. Department of Defense, Operation Enduring Freedom Casualty Data; Cordesman, Anthony H., Afghanistan at War (CSIS, multiple editions).

Historical Context & Analysis

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks — planned by al-Qaeda from Taliba n-controlled Afghanistan — the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom (7 October 2001). The Taliban regime collapsed within weeks; Kabul fell on 13 November 2001. However, a Taliban-led insurgency econstituted from Pakistani safe havens and fought a grinding 20-year war against NATO forces and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Key battles included Operation Anaconda (2002), multiple battles of Fallu jah-adjacent operations, the Battle of Wanat (2008), the Battle of Kamdesh (2009), and the Battle of Marjah (2010). The U.S. Surge 2009–2011 (30,000 additional troops) produced temporary gains. The Doha Agreement (February 2020) committed the U.S. to full withdrawal. American forces departed in August 2021; the Afghan government collapsed within 11 days, and the Taliban retook Kabul on 15 August 2021. U.S. deaths: 2,459. NATO coalition deaths: ~3,500 total. Afghan civilian deaths: estimated 70,0 00–150,000.

#55 2003–2011 CE — Iraq War: Operation Iraqi Freedom

Iraq

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
US-led Coalition vs. Iraq (Saddam Hussein) then vs. insurgency and al-Qaeda in Iraq	**Initial military victory; subsequent insurgency stalemate; ISIS emergence**	Ricks, Thomas E., Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq (Penguin Press, 2006); Gordon, Michael R. and Trainor, Bernard E., Cobra II (Pantheon, 2006); U.S. Department of Defense, Operation Iraqi Freedom Casualty Data; Wright, Donald P. and Reese, Timothy R., On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign (Combat Studies Institute, 2008).

Historical Context & Analysis

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (20 March 2003) toppled Saddam Hussein's government within three weeks. However, the de-B aathification of the Iraqi military, the dissolution of Iraq's security services, and the dismantling of existing state structures created a power vacuum that spawned a massive Sunni Arab insurgency. Significant battles included the First and Second Battles of Fallujah (2004), Operation Iron Hammer, the Battle of Mosul (2004), and the Second Battle of Ramadi. Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), under Abu

Musab al-Zarqawi, emerged from the insurgency. The U.S. troop Surge of 2007 (General David Petraeus, commander), combined with the 'Anbar Awakening' — Sunni tribal leaders turning against AQI significantly reduced violence by 2008. U.S. combat forces withdrew by December 2011. The power vacuum and alienated Sunni population created the conditions for AQI's ransformation into ISIS/ISIL. U.S. deaths: 4,431. Coalition deaths: ~4,800 total. Iraqi civilian deaths: estimated 150, 000–200,000.

#56 2013–2019 CE — Rise and Fall of ISIS/ISIL

Iraq and Syria

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL/Daesh) vs. US-led coalition, Iraqi Army, Syrian Army, Kurdish Peshmerga and SDF, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah	**ISIS territorial defeat; caliphate dismantled**	McCants, William, The ISIS Apocalypse (St. Martin's Press, 2015); Stern, Jessica and Berger, J.M., ISIS: The State of Terror (Ecco Press, 2015); U.S. Department of Defense, Operation Inherent Resolve Casualty and Strike Data; Human Rights Watch reports on ISIS atrocities (2014–2019); United Nations Security Council Reports on ISIL/Da'esh.

Historical Context & Analysis

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, also called ISIL or Daesh) declared a caliphate on 29 June 2014 under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, controlling approximately 8 million people across a territory larger than the United Kingdom, encompassing eastern Syria and western Iraq. Militarily, ISIS seized Mosul — Iraq's second-largest city — in June 2014 with approximately 1,500 fighters routing a 60,000-strong Iraqi Army, demonstrating catastrophic institutional collapse. ISIS introduced systematic genocidal violence against Yazidis (Sinjar massacre, August 2014), Christians, and Shia Muslims, as well as mass executions of Iraqi Army prisoners (Camp Speicher massacre — approximately 1,700 killed). Key battles in the military campaign against ISIS include: the Battle of Kobani/Ain al-Arab (2014–2015, Kurdish YPG/YPJ with U.S. air support), the Liberation of Tikrit (2015), the Battle of Ramadi (2015–2016), the Battle of Fallujah (2016), the Battle of Mosul (2016–2017, nine months, one of the most complex urban battles since WWII), the Battle of Raqqa (2017, ISIS's Syrian capital), and the Battle of Baghuz Fawqani (2019, ISIS's final territorial stand). Al-Baghdadi was killed in a U.S. special operations raid in Idlib, Syria (October 2019). ISIS's territorial caliphate was eliminated, but the organization remains active as an insurgency.

#57 2014–Present — Conflict in Yemen

Yemen

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
Saudi-led Coalition (Saudi Arabia, UAE, others) vs. Houthi movement (Ansar Allah) backed by Iran	**Ongoing stalemate; humanitarian catastrophe**	United Nations OCHA Yemen Reports (2015–2023); Human Rights Watch, Yemen Reports (annual); Salisbury, Peter, 'Yemen and the Saudi-Iranian Cold War,' Chatham House Research Paper (2015); International Crisis Group, Yemen Reports.

Historical Context & Analysis

The Yemeni Civil War, which intensified when a Saudi-led coalition intervened in March 2015 to restore the ternationally recognized government, has produced what the United Nations has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The Houthi movement — a Zaidi Shia insurgency from northern Yemen with ideological and material support from Iran — seized the capital Sanaa in 2014. Saudi Arabia and the UAE fear a pro-Iranian force on their southern border. Coalition airstrikes and a naval blockade have caused massive civilian casualties and famine. Cholera, COVID-19, and acute malnutrition have affected millions. The UN estimates over 150,000 direct conflict deaths and as many as 377,000 total deaths from conflict and associated humanitarian consequences by the end of 2021. The war represents the most visible contemporary manifestation of the Sunni-Shia geopolitical struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

#58 2001–Present — Global War on Terror

Multiple theatres

FORCES ENGAGED	OUTCOME	PRIMARY SOURCES
United States and allied forces vs. al-Qaeda, ISIS, and affiliated jihadist organizations globally	**Ongoing; terrorist organizations degraded but not eliminated**	Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, 'Costs of War Project' (2022); National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, The 9/11 Commission Report (2004); U.S. Department of Defense, Global War on Terror casualty reports; Jones, Seth G., 'The Evolution of the Salafi-Jihadist Threat,' CSIS Report (2018).

Historical Context & Analysis

The September 11, 2001 attacks — orchestrated by al-Qaeda from Tali ban-controlled Afghanistan, killing approximately 3,000 people — initiated the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the broadest and longest military campaign in American history. Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. and allied forces have conducted cou nter-terrorism operations in Yemen (drone strikes and special operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula), Somalia (against al-Shabaab, which has killed thousands and controls rural areas), Mali and the broader Sahel (against al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Islamic State West Africa Province), the Philippines (against Abu Sayyaf Group and Islamic State affiliates), and Libya (against ISIS affiliates following the 2011 civil war). As of 2021, the Watson Institute at Brown University estimates total post-9/11 war deaths at 897 ,000–929,000, including 38 million people displaced. Direct U.S. war expenditures exceeded \$8 trillion (2001–2022).

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