



NELSON
MODERNHISTORY

THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



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SERIES EDITOR: TONY TAYLOR

“ If you want
to make peace
with your enemy,
you have to work
with your enemy.
Then he becomes
your partner. ”

Nelson Mandela



Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

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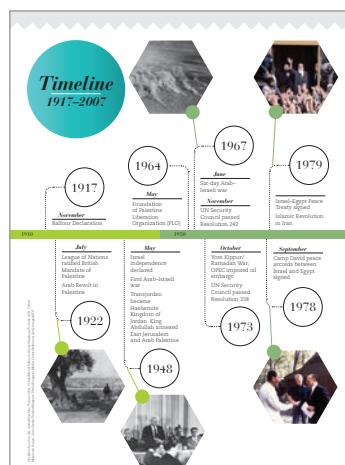
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ABOUT THE SERIES

Using *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East*

The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East has been developed especially for senior secondary students of History and is part of the Nelson Modern History series. Each book in the series is based on the understanding that History is an interpretive study of the past by which you also come to better appreciate the making of the modern world.

Developing understandings of the past and present in senior History extends on the skills you learnt in earlier years. As senior students you will use historical skills, including research, evaluation, synthesis, analysis and communication, and the historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability, to understand and interpret societies from the past. The activities and tasks in *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East* have been written to ensure that you develop the skills and attributes you need in senior History subjects.



ILLUSTRATED TIMELINE

is a bird's-eye view of the topic and summarises the major developments of the period.



KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS, KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS, KEY DOCUMENTS

feature brief biographies, profiles, definitions and summaries of key documents as a ready reference for learning and revision.



SOURCE STUDIES

of visual and text primary sources and secondary literature appear frequently through the text and are combined with questions and activities to aid your evaluation and interpretation of evidence from the past.

CHAPTER INTRODUCTIONS

provide a context to the issues that are addressed.

Yasser Arafat (1929–2004)

Yasser Arafat, a member of the al-Husseini family, was born in Egypt. During the first Arab-Israeli war he fought with Arab forces against the Israelis. Arafat studied engineering at university and moved briefly to Kuwait where he became a successful engineering contractor. In 1959, he co-founded and became leader of the Fatah political party and former paramilitary group. He later became Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). In these positions he played a key role in negotiations for a peace agreement or a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a process that culminated in his receipt, along with Israeli leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, of the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize. Arafat's death, in Paris in 2004, appears to have been the result of natural causes although rumours circulated that this was not the case. Arafat is regarded by most Palestinians as a freedom fighter and national leader while critics tend to characterise him as a terrorist.



Yasser Arafat
Chairman of the PLO
President of the PNA
1929–2004



SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS

are biographical profiles and assessments of key historical figures and frequently include questions and activities.

Arab Higher Committee

The Arab Higher Committee was the central political organ of the Arab community in Palestine. It was established on 25 April 1936 by Jerusalem's Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and others. It included the leaders of Palestinian Arab clans and political parties under the Mufti's chairmanship.

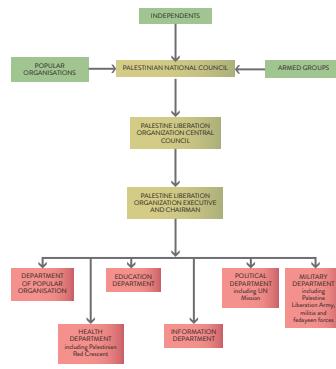
After the committee was outlawed by the British Mandatory administration in September 1937, Haj Amin al-Husseini went into exile in Beirut. Other members of the committee were deported, or moved into voluntary exile in neighbouring countries.

The Arab Higher Committee was reconstituted by the Arab League in 1945, but it proved ineffective during the 1948 war. It was subsequently banned from the Jordanian occupied West Bank. Instead, the Arab League – led by Egypt – decided to set up the All Palestine Government in Gaza on 8 September 1948 under the nominal leadership of Haj Amin al-Husseini. The All Palestine Government was dissolved by Egypt in 1959.

INFORMATION BOXES

contain extended discussions of key events, concepts and historical developments. Many also include questions and activities.

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WAR IN LEBANON It is becoming increasingly clear that the war in Lebanon was not a conflict of belief. Rather than offer either about events that are still happening, most analysts seem to be offering their own personal reflections on the nature of the conflicts involved in the war. These right might be valuable. Bashir Ghazrawi In recent months, there has been a healthy debate in Lebanon over the future of its society. In addition to the concerns of "secularists" and "orthodox" Christians, there is now a growing concern among the more moderate Christians and among the non-religious. This is reflected in the emergence of the "atheistic" Christians, or, as they prefer to call themselves, "atheists." They are a minority group in Lebanon, but they are growing rapidly. They are also becoming more active in politics and in the media. They are challenging the traditional religious leaders and the established political parties. They are demanding greater freedom of expression and greater equality for all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs. They are also challenging the traditional religious leaders and the established political parties. They are demanding greater freedom of expression and greater equality for all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs. American journalists Such is not the case for the French people, and the reason has certainly	Opinions ... mainly the point of disagreement between the two authors. ... they often insist on support from the West. ... they like to highlight the religious dimension of the conflict. Do you think that the conflict in Lebanon is... ... mainly the result of religious differences? ... they are mainly the result of economic and social factors? ... they are mainly the result of political and military factors? ... they are mainly the result of religious differences?
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SOURCE 4.8 Organisational structure of the Palestine Liberation Organization

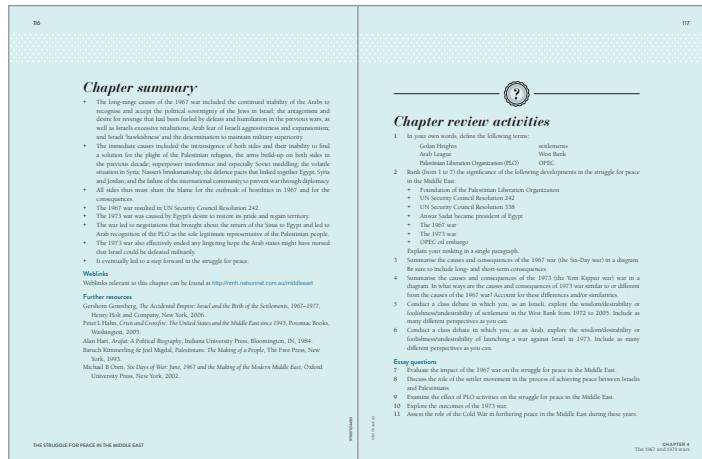
DIAGRAMS AND TALKING SOURCES

are used to visually summarise complex ideas and events.



CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CHAPTER REVIEW ACTIVITIES

conclude each chapter. They include a brief precis of the topic, suggestions for further reading, and a range of learning activities that consolidate knowledge and understanding of the chapter's content. These tasks incorporate a range of historical understandings and skills.



Beyond this book

The Nelson Modern History series includes numerous titles on a range of topics covered in senior History courses around Australia. For further information about the series visit: www.nelsonsecondary.com.au.



KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS

MAHMOUD ABBAS (1935–)



Member of the Fatah political party and, since November 2004, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Became president of the Palestinian National Authority on 15 January 2005.

KING ABDULLAH I OF JORDAN (1882–1951)



Second of three sons of Hussein bin Ali, Sharif and Emir of Mecca. Became ruler of Transjordan and its successor state, Jordan, from 1921 until his assassination in 1951.

YASSER ARAFAT (1929–2004)



Co-founder and leader of the Fatah political party and former paramilitary group. Later, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and first president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) from 1994 to November 2004. Regarded as the symbol of Palestinian aspirations. Alternative spelling of his name is Yasir Arafat.

HANAN ASHRAWI (1946–)



One of the most influential women in the Arab world and an outspoken advocate for the Palestinian cause and for human rights. Official Palestinian spokesperson during the first *intifada* in 1988. Ashrawi has since held a variety of senior posts within the Palestinian Authority.

BASHAR AL-ASSAD (1965–)



President of Syria since 2000, when he succeeded his father, Hafez al-Assad. A member of the Alawite sect of Islam, he was initially seen as a moderniser and secularist. He became more repressive domestically, and is a critic of US Middle East policy.

EHUD BARAK (1942–)



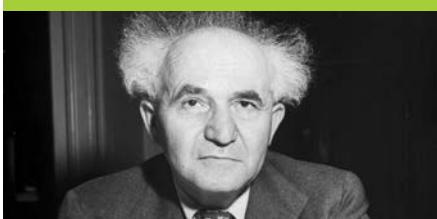
Israeli prime minister from 1999 to 2001. A highly decorated army officer, he served as chief of the General Staff from 1991 to 1995. He implemented the first Oslo Accords and participated in the negotiations towards the Israel–Jordan peace treaty in 1994. Barak was leader of the Israeli Labor Party until January 2011.

MENACHEM BEGIN (1913–1992)



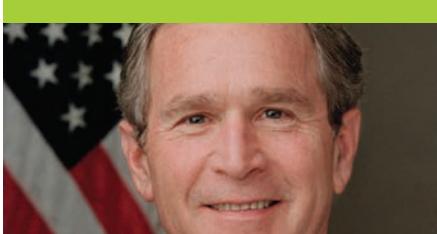
Before Israeli independence in 1948, he led the Zionist militant group Irgun, the Revisionist breakaway from the larger Jewish paramilitary organisation, the Haganah. Founded the Likud Party and became the sixth prime minister of Israel in 1977. Resigned as prime minister in 1982.

DAVID BEN-GURION (1886–1973)



Regarded as Israel's founding father, Ben-Gurion was the first, and longest-serving, prime minister, holding office from 1948 to 1953 and from 1955 to 1963.

GEORGE W BUSH (1946–)



President of the United States from 2001 to 2009. The September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States occurred during his first year in office. He immediately declared the War on Terror, an international military campaign that included the war in Afghanistan, launched in 2001, and the war in Iraq, launched in 2003.

JIMMY CARTER (1924–)



President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. A passionate champion for peace, he was instrumental in the Camp David Accords of September 1978 and, in 2002–2003, the Geneva Accord. He later became a critic of US Middle East policy and also of Israeli policy.

WILLIAM (BILL) CLINTON (1946–)



President of the United States from 1993 to 2001. He brought together Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at the 1993 Oslo Accords signing ceremony, gathered key regional leaders together at Wye River in 1998 and was involved in the unsuccessful Camp David talks in 2000. Despite these successes, Clinton was ultimately unable to bring peace to the region before the end of his presidency in 2001.

MOSHE DAYAN (1915–1981)



One of Israel's most famous military leaders and politicians. Dayan was chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces during the 1950s and a member of Israeli parliament (the Knesset) from 1959 until his death. He was appointed as defence minister in 1967 and played a pivotal operational role in the Six-Day war. As foreign minister in Menachem Begin's Government, he was heavily involved in the Camp David Accords.

THEODOR HERZL (1860–1904)



Author of the pamphlet *The Jewish State* (1896), which proposed the creation of a Jewish homeland that many believe led to the birth of the modern Zionist movement. Herzl organised the first world congress of Zionists in Basel, Switzerland in August 1897, and became the first president of the World Zionist Organization.

KING HUSSEIN BIN TALAL (1935–1999)



Grandson of King Abdullah I of Jordan (1882–1951), Hussein was King of Jordan from 1952 to 1999. He survived many challenges and threats to his rule, from both Israelis and Palestinians, during his 47-year reign. He recognised Israel in 1994, becoming the second Arab head of state to do so. Father of present-day King of Jordan, Abdullah II.

SADDAM HUSSEIN (1937–2006)



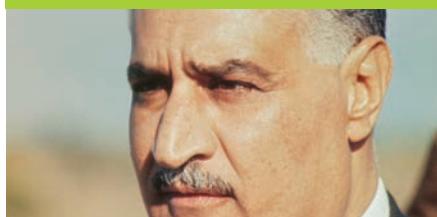
Fifth president of Iraq. Led Iraq during the Iran–Iraq war, in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and subsequent withdrawal in the First Gulf war in January 1991. In 2003, a US/UK coalition invaded Iraq and deposed Saddam, accusing him of possessing weapons of mass destruction and having links to al-Qaeda. He was captured in December 2003, tried for crimes against humanity, and sentenced to death. He was executed by hanging on 30 December 2006.

GOLDA MEIR (1898–1978)



Born in Kiev and raised in the US, Meir became the only female prime minister of Israel. She was elected in March 1969 and resigned in 1974 following the 1973 Arab–Israeli war.

GAMAL ABDUL NASSER (1918–1970)



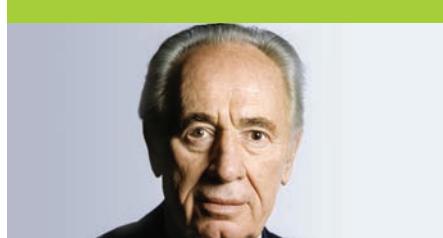
An Egyptian army officer who took part in the military coup that overthrew King Farouk in 1952. Became president of Egypt in 1954. Following the 1956 Suez war, he advocated Arab unity against the colonial powers and became the champion of the Arab world. However, the Arab defeat by Israel in the war of June 1967 weakened his prestige.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU (1949–)



Born in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu joined the Israel Defense Forces in 1967 and fought in the wars of 1967 and 1973. As a member, and chairman, of the Likud Party, in 1996, he became the youngest prime minister of Israel and the first Israeli leader to be born after the creation of Israel. Known for his hardline stance against the notion of land for peace. Netanyahu was again elected prime minister in 2009 and 2015.

YITZHAK RABIN (1922–1995)



Member of the Palmach (elite unit of the early Israel Defense Forces), becoming chief of staff in 1964. He was the fifth prime minister of Israel, serving two terms. During his second term as prime minister he signed the Oslo Accords (1993), made peace with Jordan (1994) and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres (1994). Rabin was assassinated by right-wing Jewish fundamentalist Yigal Amir in November 1995.

ANWAR SADAT (1918–1981)



The third president of Egypt, serving from 1970 until his assassination in October 1981 by a disaffected Islamist army officer. His most significant contribution to the Arab–Israeli conflict is his role in signing a peace treaty with Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, on 26 March 1979. Sadat and Begin were joint recipients of the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize.

ARIEL SHARON (1928–2014)



Ariel Sharon joined the Haganah in 1942 at age 15 and served in the IDF for more than 25 years. While serving as Israel's defence minister, Sharon was involved in the Lebanon war and was found indirectly responsible for the massacre that occurred at Sabra and Shatila in 1982.

Sharon was prime minister of Israel from 2001 to 2006. He led a disengagement plan that resulted in Israel's complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August 2005.

ARAB LEAGUE

Also known as the League of Arab States, the Arab League is an organisation of Arab countries formed in 1945, with Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan), Saudi Arabia and Yemen as its founding members. Currently, there are 22 member countries (Syria was suspended in 2011). The League was formed to address common concerns and to further the interests of Arab countries.

FATAH

Initially a militant breakaway group from the PLO, founded in 1959 by Yasser Arafat. Now the largest faction of the PLO, led by Mahmoud Abbas.

HAGANAH

Jewish paramilitary organisation (the name means 'defence' in Hebrew), created in Palestine during the period of the British mandate. While beginning as a largely untrained, underground militia with the role of protecting Palestinian Jews, it evolved into a strong, skilled force that later became the core of the Israel Defense Forces. The elite commando section of the Haganah was called the Palmach.

HAMAS

Founded in 1987, a militant group established by members of the Muslim Brotherhood and fundamentalist factions of the PLO. Its charter states that it is dedicated to the destruction of Israel and the creation of an Islamic state in Palestine.

HEZBOLLAH

A Shia Muslim militia group and political party formed in Lebanon in 1985 with the goal of driving Israel out of Lebanon.

IRGUN TSVA'I-LEUMI (KNOWN AS IRGUN)

Military arm of the Revisionist Zionist movement, created in 1937. Led by Menachem Begin after 1942, it carried out attacks against the British in Palestine prior to 1948. Irgun was disbanded in 1948 and merged with Israel Defense Forces.

ISLAMIC JIHAD

A Shia Muslim extremist organisation. Among its goals are the creation of a Muslim state in Lebanon.

LEHI

Also known as the Stern Gang. A militant group led by Avraham Stern, which broke away from the Irgun to undertake terrorist attacks against military and civilian targets during the British mandate period in Palestine.



CHAPTER ONE

Making the modern Middle East, 1918–1947

This chapter briefly introduces the Middle East and explores what happened in the region between the First and Second World Wars. The map of the Middle East was drastically reshaped in the first quarter of the 20th century. By 1925, European powers controlled almost all the region, either directly or indirectly, and the influence of Europe extended to all the countries of North Africa and the Middle East bordering the Mediterranean Sea. For roughly the second quarter of the 20th century, most of the region was ruled by Great Britain and France as mandated territories. Iran (known as ‘Persia’ until 1935) and Egypt were nominally independent. This was a turbulent period, bookmarked at each end by the greatest wars the world had ever experienced.

The events that took place in Palestine were not isolated; they were part of a larger process that affected all of the countries of the region in similar ways. The Arabs of the Middle East struggled, with differing degrees of success, to end foreign rule and create constitutional governments consistent with their Arab and Islamic identities. In all cases, armies were viewed as an important inspiration and instrument of change.

◀ A riot at Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem, during the 1938 Arab Revolt in the British mandate of Palestine

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- + What are the main characteristics of the Middle East?
- + What are the origins of the modern conflicts in the region?
- + Who were the major figures involved in shaping events in the Middle East between the two world wars?
- + What were the major questions surrounding the future of Palestine between 1918 and 1939?

The Middle East

The term ‘Middle East’ was coined in 1902 by Alfred Thayer Mahan, a United States naval strategist, in an influential article in which he argued that the United States should not allow Russia or Germany to expand their influence into the region between the Eastern Mediterranean and India. Soon, the term was used in the West to refer more to the political and economic systems of the territories, rather than to their geographic boundaries.

The Middle East is a bridge or gateway between Europe, Asia and Africa. The peoples of the Middle East have been accustomed to people passing through their region for many centuries. Throughout history, they have fought wars to preserve their independent identities, their religions and their ways of life.

The Middle East is a complex region. Among other things, the region is:

- + geographically diverse – containing deserts, mountainous areas, rich coastal areas and major rivers, sparsely populated regions and densely populated cities
- + ethnically and linguistically complex – inhabited by Arabs, Persians, Kurds, Jews and nomadic peoples, speaking many languages and dialects
- + home to multiple faiths, including varieties of Islam and Christianity, Druze and Judaism
- + the site of great power play at the intersection of Asia, Europe and Africa.

These factors have all combined to make the Middle East a region where peace and peaceful coexistence is a challenge. While many of the factors that have shaped the region have very long-term origins, events in the years between the First and Second World Wars laid the foundations to the conflicts and tensions that have dominated the region from the second half of the 20th century.

Why should Australians be interested in the Arab–Israeli conflict?

Australia has been involved, and has had a national interest, in the events that shaped the conflict almost from its beginning in the early 20th century – either as part of the British Empire or supporting its latest great and powerful friend, the United States of America. During the First World War, Australian troops helped secure Palestine for the British Empire. Again, in the Second World War, Australian forces were key defenders of Egypt and Palestine. At the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Australia’s minister for external affairs, Herbert V Evatt, was Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), a committee created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1947 to make recommendations on Palestine. Evatt also supported the internationalisation of Jerusalem. It might not be stretching too far to say that without the participation of Australian forces in the Middle East, Israel might not have been proclaimed in 1948, or, if it had, might not have survived.

In 1946, the United Nations appointed an Anglo–American Commission of Enquiry into the future of Jewish displaced persons in Europe and the future of Palestine. A former Governor-General of Australia, Sir Isaac Isaacs, wrote with great insight that Palestine would present an explosion that could bring calamity to the entire region of the Middle East as well as millions of Jews, Muslims and Christians throughout the world and, closer to home, to the British Empire.

He saw the danger not as between moderate Arabs and responsible Jewish leaders, but from what he called the conflicting and unjustifiable extreme demands of political Zionism on the one hand and Arab nationalism on the other. In essence, that has remained the core of the ongoing conflict since.



FROM THE DIVISION OF IRAN TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1907	Anglo-Russian convention divided Iran into spheres of influence
1908	Young Turk Revolution
1914 AUGUST	First World War began (ended November 1918)
1914	Egypt was declared a British protectorate
1915	Hussein-McMahon correspondence began
1916	Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France
	Sharif Hussein began the Arab Revolt
1917 NOVEMBER	Balfour Declaration
	Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
1919	Covenant of the League of Nations created the mandate system
1920	San Remo conference gave the mandate of Palestine to Britain and outlined conditions for its administration
1920	Arab states attempted and failed to gain independence; British and French used troops against locals
1921	British installed Faisal as King in Iraq and his brother Abdullah as King in Transjordan. Jewish militia group, the Haganah, formed in Palestine
1922 JULY	League of Nations ratified British Mandate of Palestine
	Transjordan to be administered separately from Palestine
1923	Turkey achieved independence after civil war; Ankara declared as capital and Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) as president
1924	Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud gained control of Saudi Arabia. Declared kingdom in 1932 and ruled until 1953
1932	Iraq declared independence
1933	Adolph Hitler assumed power in Germany, introduced racial laws against Jews, prompting increased Jewish immigration to Palestine
1936 APRIL	Arab Higher Committee formed
	Arab Revolt in Palestine
1937 JULY	Peel Commission Report recommended partition of Palestine
1938	Major oil discoveries in Saudi Arabia
1939	British White Paper negated promises of the Balfour Declaration and recommended a unitary state in Palestine
1939 SEPTEMBER	Second World War began (ended September 1945)

The First World War and the Ottoman Empire

The First World War marked a turning point in Middle Eastern history. The peoples of the Middle East played an important part in fighting the war in Europe and a considerable amount of fighting took place in the region. The Ottomans, the French and the British drew upon the local populations for fighting men. In Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, the percentages of civilian and military casualties were higher than in Europe. Almost 20 per cent of the region's pre-1914 population of 3.5 million died during the war. In addition to losses caused by war, a famine in Syria, Lebanon and northern Palestine between 1915 and 1918 contributed to this great loss of life. In addition, Palestine was heavily deforested to meet military requirements.

The First World War brought about the end of the Ottoman, Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. The most immediate political impact stemmed from the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which had dominated the region for centuries. In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress (known as the 'Young Turks'), a movement dedicated to political reform, had led a successful rebellion against the absolute monarch of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdul Hamid II. A new, democratic form of government was the result. Following the First World War, the Turkish War of Independence (1919–23), a war between this reformist movement and occupying British and French forces, led to the establishment in October 1923 of the Republic of Turkey, a Western-oriented state with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as its first president.



Australian War Memorial #H10583

SOURCE 1.1 The main street of Gaza, Palestine, after its capture by Allied troops from the Turkish Army, 1917



Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

SOURCE 1.2 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had been an officer in the Ottoman army, commanding troops who fought the Anzacs during the battle of Gallipoli in the First World War. He led the Turkish resistance movement that defeated the Allied forces in the Turkish War of Independence. Atatürk introduced political, economic and cultural reforms designed to transform Turkey into a modern, secular and democratic republic.

BRITISH AND FRENCH PLANS FOR OTTOMAN TERRITORY

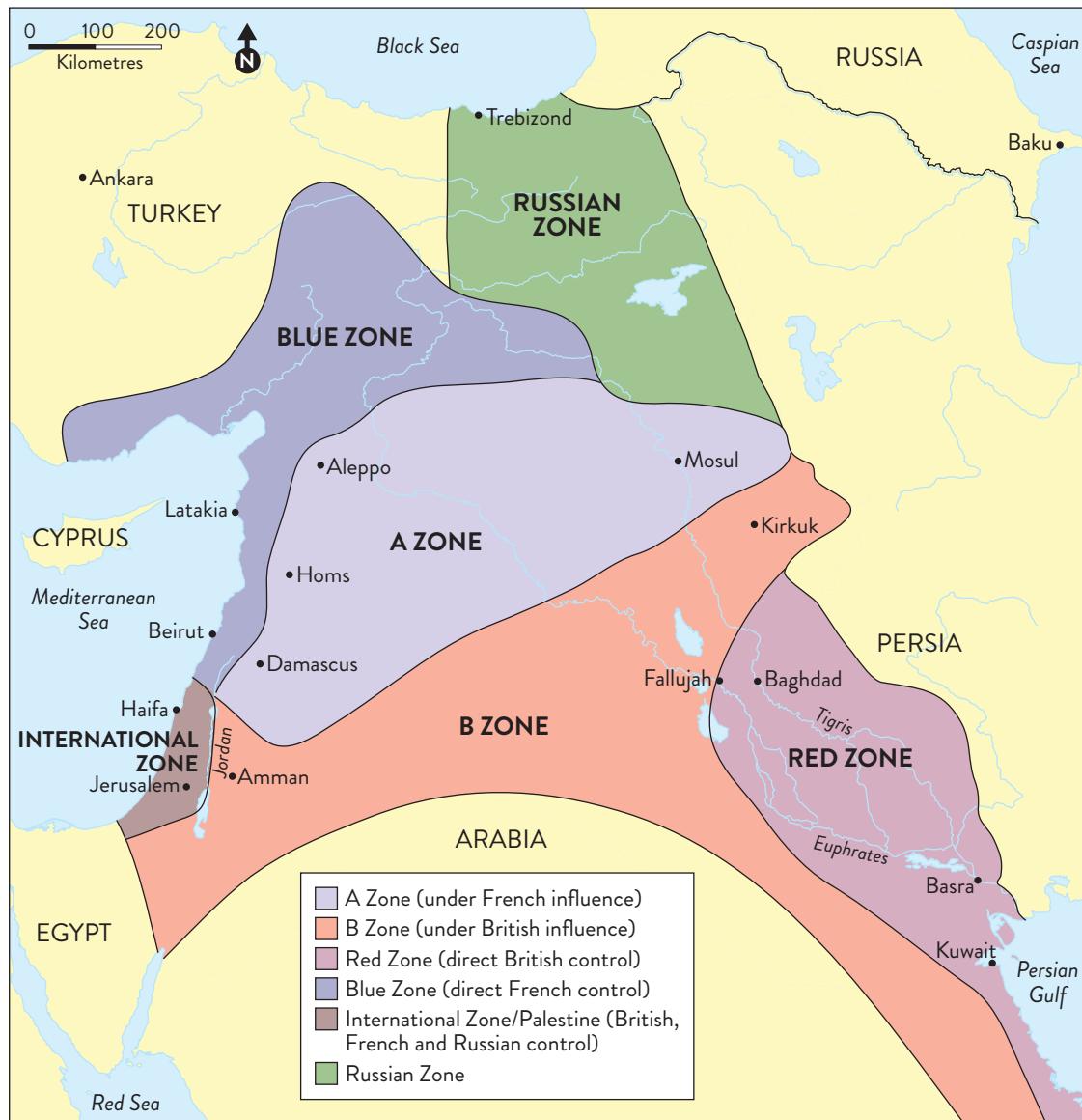
While the First World War was underway, the British, French and Italians carried out negotiations among themselves about how the Ottoman Empire's vast territories would be administered in the event of their victory. The British and French had rival ambitions in the region, and in 1916 they reached an agreement to divide the area into respective **spheres of influence**. This was known as the Sykes–Picot Agreement. The French agreed that the British sphere of influence would include Palestine and the **vilayet** of Mosul (in present-day Iraq). In return, the British agreed that they would support French influence in Syria and Lebanon.

sphere of influence

An area in which one nation holds dominant power over another

vilayet

Turkish word, an administrative division, or province, in the late Ottoman Empire



SOURCE 1.3 Proposed division of the Middle East according to the Sykes–Picot Agreement between Britain and France, 1916

At the same time, the British had been making contradictory promises, which they had no intention of keeping, to local Arab leaders. The British Government believed it needed the support of the local Arab population to defeat the Ottomans and secure the strategically important area of Palestine in order to protect the Suez Canal, which was regarded as Britain's 'lifeline' to India, Australia and the Far East. In 1916, the British Government, with the help of a then virtually unknown army officer, Colonel TE Lawrence (later known as Lawrence of Arabia), promised to recognise the independence of the local Arabs of the Hejaz region as a united Arab country covering most of the Arab Middle East, in exchange for Arab support of the British against the Turks. This proposal was outlined in correspondence (later known as the 'McMahon–Hussein Correspondence') between the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir William McMahon, and the Sharif (local ruler) of Mecca, Abdullah bin al-Hussein. It was not clear, however, whether or not the British included Palestine in the area they promised to the Arabs. The British claimed they did not, while the Arabs claimed they did.

THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

Zionism

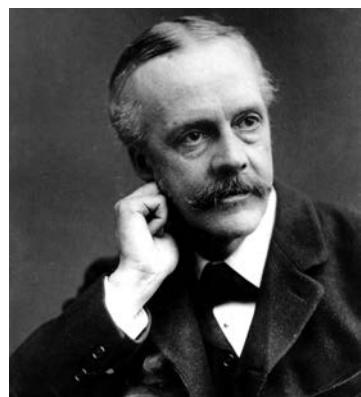
A Jewish nationalist ideology that found modern expression in the 19th century as a movement to create a Jewish state in Palestine. Since 1948, the goal of Zionists, within and outside Israel, has been to ensure the state's security, prosperity and continuity

To complicate things even further, on 2 November 1917, the British Government made commitments that also appeared to conflict with the promises it had made to Arab leaders. Britain felt it needed the support of the Jews of Russia to help keep Russia in the war. Accordingly, the British Cabinet issued a statement that became known as the Balfour Declaration. In response to repeated requests by British **Zionists**, headed by a Manchester University professor of chemistry, Chaim Weizmann, the British Government stated that it looked with favour on the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and would use its best endeavours to bring it about, provided that the rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine were not affected, and that the rights of Jews in other countries were also not affected. (See text of the Declaration, below.) This statement clearly complicated the future situation in Palestine.



Arthur Balfour (1848–1930)

Arthur Balfour was a wealthy British Conservative politician who had been prime minister of Britain from July 1902 to December 1905. He was Britain's foreign secretary during the First World War. He resigned as foreign secretary following the Versailles Conference in 1919. Balfour met Chaim Weizmann during one of his electoral campaigns, not long after Weizmann became a chemistry lecturer at the University of Manchester, and the two remained friends until Balfour's death in 1930.



Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

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Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952)

Chaim Weizmann was an active and highly prominent Zionist leader and Israeli statesman who served as President of the British Zionist Federation, the World Zionist Organization and later as the first president of Israel from 1949 to 1952.

Weizmann was born near Pinsk in Belarus (at that time part of the Russian Empire). In 1904, after gaining a PhD in organic chemistry, he and his family moved to England where he was appointed to the chemistry department at the University of Manchester. In 1917, as president of the British Zionist Federation, he worked with Arthur Balfour on the Balfour Declaration. On 3 January 1919, he and the Hashemite Prince Faisal signed an agreement that attempted to establish favourable relations between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. In 1947 he supported the UNSCOP plan to partition Palestine, and met with US President Harry Truman to gain his support for the establishment of Israel.



Corbis/EO Hoppe

Hashemite
An important Arab family, descended from the prophet Muhammad. They ruled Mecca from the 10th century and are best known today as the rulers of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

partition
The division of a nation or territory into two or more separate nations

British wartime commitments to Zionists

British Cabinet discussion on support for Zionism, 31 October 1917

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs [Lord Balfour] stated that he gathered that everyone was now agreed that, from a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it was desirable that some declaration favourable to the aspiration of the Jewish nationalists should now be made. The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as, indeed, all over the world, now appeared to be favourable to Zionism. If we could make a declaration favourable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry out extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and America ... as to the meaning of the words 'national home', to which the Zionists attach so much importance, he understood it to mean some form of British, American or other protectorate, under which full facilities would be given to the Jews to work out their own salvation and to build up, by means of education, agriculture and industry, a real center of national culture and industry ... It did not necessarily involve the early establishment of an independent Jewish State.

Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting No. 261, Minute No. 12, 31 October 1917

The Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1917

Foreign Office

November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

continued

continued

'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour

The Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1917, United Nations

Memorandum by Arthur Balfour, Paris, respecting Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, 11 August 1919

The contradiction between the letter of the Covenant [of the League of Nations] and the policy of the Allies is even more flagrant in the case of the 'independent nation' of Syria. For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country, though the American Commission has been going through the form of asking what they are. The four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, and future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700 000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.

Memorandum by Arthur Balfour, Paris, respecting Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia,
11 August 1919, HM Stationery Office, London

Questions

- 1 Carefully read the Balfour Declaration and consider the following:
 - a Why did the declaration use the words 'national home' rather than 'state', and why 'a' and not 'the'?
 - b What rights of the 'non-Jewish communities in Palestine' did the declaration state were to be protected?
 - c What does the phrase 'will use their best endeavours' imply?
 - d Why was the declaration issued in November 1917?
- 2 What does Balfour's memorandum indicate about British attitudes towards the Arabs of Palestine?
- 3 What do you think would have happened if the Jews and Arabs of Palestine and elsewhere had been made aware of Balfour's memorandum at that time?

armistice

An agreement made by opposing sides in a war to stop fighting for a certain time; sometimes called a 'truce'

In late 1917, British forces, including Australian contingents, defeated Ottoman forces in Palestine and Syria. In December 1917, British Empire forces, led by General Edmund Allenby, captured Jerusalem, and the region remained under British military administration until the end of the war. In the **armistice** signed in November 1918 ending the war, Britain's 'Occupied Enemy Territory' included the area from the Egyptian border of Sinai, into Palestine and Lebanon as far north as Acre and Nablus and as far east as the River Jordan. A temporary British military governor administered the region.



Getty Images/Topical Press Agency

SOURCE 1.4 British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour (left) with the future British prime minister, Winston Churchill, in 1915



Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd

SOURCE 1.5 General Edmund Allenby entering Jerusalem in December 1917, following the surrender of Jerusalem to the British Army

The League of Nations mandates

While the British and French had made plans about the future of the territories of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East during the First World War, final agreements were not reached until 1920. As part of the Treaty of Versailles, which established the League of Nations in 1919, the Middle Eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire were to be entrusted as **mandates** to Britain and France. These arrangements were formalised in April 1920 at a conference in San Remo, Italy, when it was decided that Britain should be granted mandate over Palestine and Iraq, and that France be granted mandate over Syria and Lebanon. The Palestine mandate borders drawn up at San Remo also included the area known as Transjordan.

The role of the mandatory powers was to teach or prepare the populations under their rule to govern themselves. When it was believed they were capable of doing so, they would be granted self-rule and/or independence. Although mandatory powers were required to report annually to the League Council on their performance, the British and French had little sympathy for Arab aspirations to rule themselves and essentially regarded their mandates as colonies. The tactic adopted by the French Government in Lebanon and Syria was that of 'divide and rule'. The British had a similar attitude in Iraq, Palestine and Jordan. Both powers used military force against local populations when they showed signs of serious unrest. Most League mandates ended in 1945 when they became trusteeships under the newly created United Nations.

The Arabs, not surprisingly, regarded the San Remo decisions as a betrayal of the wartime promises made to them by the Allies and refused to cooperate with the British and French.

mandate

In this context, mandated territory is land assigned to another country under the authority of the League of Nations

Arab nationalism

Nationalism, as understood in Europe, was not part of the way Arabs viewed themselves in the 19th century. The vast majority of Arabs identified themselves primarily by kinship and religion. Boundaries defined by ‘national’ identification were unknown. In the late 19th century, however, as the Middle East and Palestine experienced social and political changes, some, mainly Christians influenced by contact with Europeans, began to think in nationalist terms and sought ways of achieving political independence, as Arabs, from the Ottoman Empire. The success of Turkish nationalists, who created modern Turkey through revolution in 1908, encouraged hopes of independence among Arabs. Arabs in Palestine were also influenced by the strong nationalist sentiments of the Zionists. The First World War provided Arabs with the first real opportunity to achieve their nationalist goals.

Jewish nationalism (Zionism)

The central idea of Zionism is that Jews have a historical birthright to Israel as a homeland or state. This historical claim is based in part on a narrative of continuous Jewish occupation of the region over the past 4000 years, and in part on a religious tradition in which *Yaweh*, the God of the ancient Israelites – and the same God worshipped by Christians and Muslims – promised the land (which they believe included modern Palestine/Israel) to Moses and his descendants, the Jews. Zionist narratives reflect these beliefs, and portray the (re)establishment of a Jewish state in the ancient homeland of Israel as a heroic epic against overwhelming odds (European and Arab), involving great sacrifice and hardships.

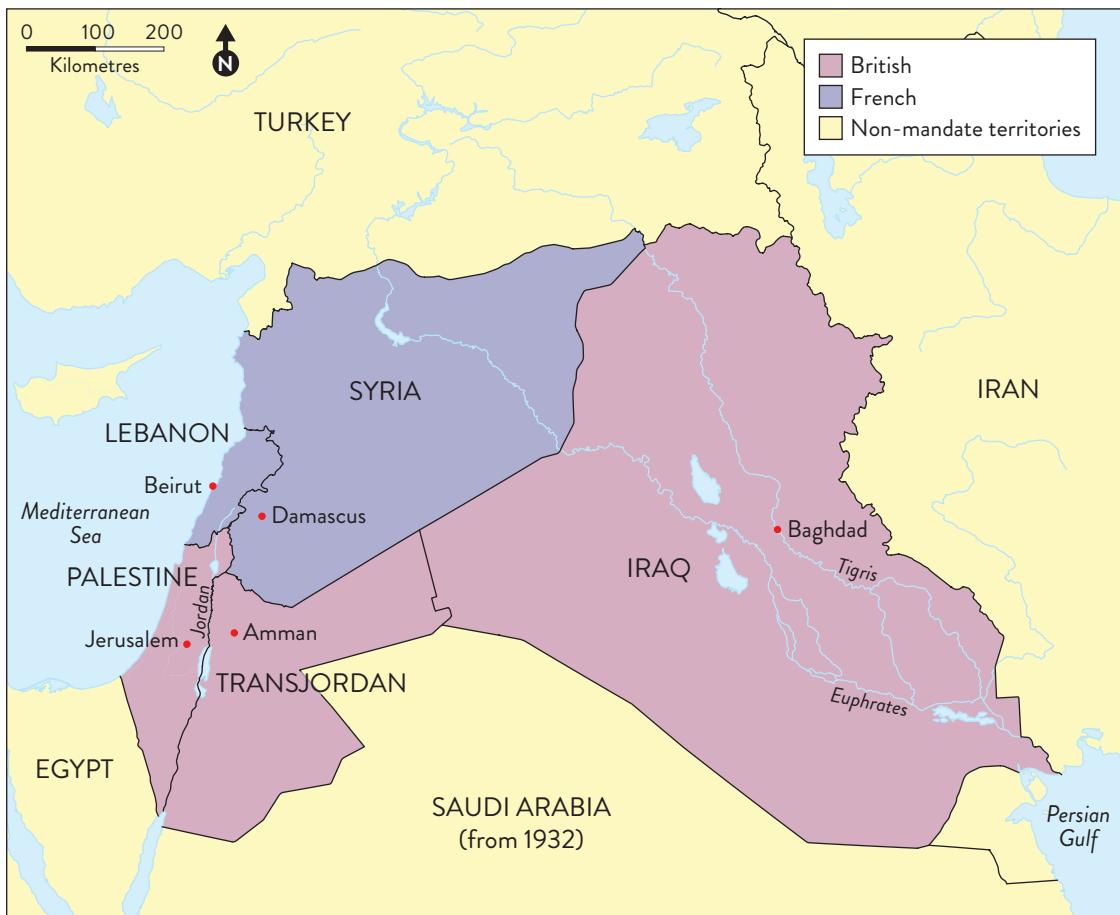
The longing to return to Zion (the Jewish name for Jerusalem) was an age-old desire among religious Jews, and this dream took a more secular character and urgency in the mid-to-late 19th century. For years, without any foundation other than their religion and their ethnic solidarity, Jews had suffered **anti-Semitism** in Europe. This persecution and discrimination intensified in the years following the First World War. It had no rational basis, but it culminated in the Nazi Holocaust (or ***Shoah***) during the Second World War. In addition, towards the end of the 19th century, Jews were also witnessing various Christian ethnic communities seeking to establish their own national states in Europe, which further drove the desires to establish their own state in order to live independently as Jews.

anti-Semitism

Hostility and prejudice towards Jews

Shoah

Hebrew word meaning catastrophe, used as another name for the Holocaust



SOURCE 1.6 Mandates determined by the League of Nations at the San Remo conference, Italy, April 1920

The French mandates

Under the League of Nations mandate system, the French took control of the areas that make up today's Lebanon and Syria. As with the British in Palestine, this period of mandate rule laid the long-term foundations to conflicts that have dominated these parts of the Middle East in the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st century.

LEBANON

Prior to the First World War, the region that is now Lebanon comprised three semi-autonomous provinces of the Ottoman Empire: Mount Lebanon (the central mountainous region), Beirut and Damascus. The population of Mount Lebanon was predominantly Maronite Christian (80 per cent) with some Druze (10 per cent) as well as Sunni and Shia Muslims (10 per cent).

Religious groups

Maronite Christians

Maronite Christians are followers of St Maron, a 4th-century Syrian monk. Maronites follow the teachings of the Pope but the Maronite Church has its own hierarchy and forms of worship. Maronites are found mainly in Lebanon; the role of president of Lebanon is reserved for a Maronite Christian.

Druze

A distinct Middle Eastern monotheistic (having a belief in one god) religious group that originated in the 11th century, combining elements of many religions and philosophies. A somewhat reclusive group, they are found primarily in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel.

Sunni Muslims

Sunni refers to customs of the majority group in Islam. Sunnis followed the principle of designating or electing the leaders of the Islamic community after the death of Muhammad. The role of the prime minister of Lebanon is reserved for a Sunni Muslim.

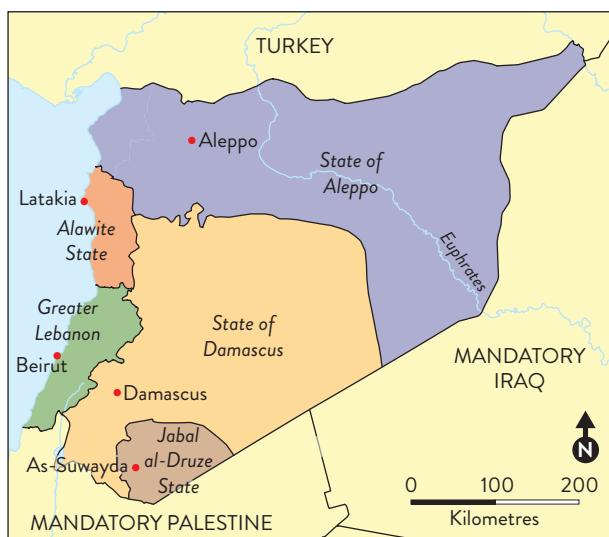
Shia (or Shi'ite) Muslims

Shia refers to the group that followed Ali and his family as the legitimate leaders of the Islamic community after the death of Muhammad. Ali was Muhammad's cousin, and through his marriage to the prophet's daughter Fatima, became his son-in-law and the father of Hassan and Hussein, the only grandsons of Muhammad to reach maturity. The role of parliamentary speaker in Lebanon is reserved for a Shia Muslim.

In September 1920, the French created what they called Greater Lebanon by annexing additional surrounding Muslim areas (including Tripoli on the north coast, the Bekaa valley in the east, Beirut and parts of the south coast), and separating the new entity from Syria. While this arrangement resulted in an economically viable political state, it altered the ethnic composition

of the population of Mount Lebanon, transforming it from a predominantly Maronite Christian enclave to just one group in a larger multi-communal society, only about half of whom were Christian. The Muslim populations, overall, also opposed the new unified country, preferring to be part of Syria, thereby being part of the majority group. Syrian nationalists felt the same way. Both these groups were anti-French. Nevertheless, the Maronite Christians favoured the formation of Greater Lebanon as they hoped the French would assist them to become the dominant group. This was the origin of the hostility between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon that continues to this day.

In July 1922, the League of Nations placed the expanded (Greater) Lebanon and Syria under a French mandate, as the British and French had agreed during the war. Although the French attempted to rule through the establishment of legislative bodies in Lebanon in



SOURCE 1.7 Map of Lebanon and Syria showing the French mandates, 1922

the 1920s and 1930s, the lack of unity within the country and the differing goals of the groups led to political instability and conflict, and little progress was made towards Lebanese independence. Muslim opposition to separation from Syria was so intense that Maronites and Muslims each formed paramilitary groups to defend themselves against armed attacks from the other. Nevertheless, by the late 1930s there was general agreement with the French that Lebanon would become independent and that it would be separate from Syria.

In June 1941, during the Second World War, the British assisted the **Free French** in invading and occupying Lebanon. The French general heading the occupation proclaimed the end of the mandate and the independence of both Lebanon and Syria, but intended to keep French colonial privileges in the two countries. Uncertainty prevailed for the remaining war years.

Free French

A movement led by Charles de Gaulle during the Second World War to fight for the liberation of France from German control

The National Pact in Lebanon

In 1943, an important event occurred that would have ramifications for many years. Maronite and Muslim party leaders in Lebanon agreed to a power-sharing arrangement, known as the National Pact. Under the Pact, the Muslims accepted Lebanese independence separate from Syria, and the Maronites abandoned their reliance upon the French, thus accepting the Arab character and identity of the new state. It was also agreed that the president of Lebanon would always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament a Shia Muslim. In addition, the head of the armed forces was always to be a Christian. Lebanon finally gained its independence when the last French forces evacuated in December 1946. Despite the National Pact, the political situation in Lebanon was marked by instability, with frequent elections and changes in government.

SYRIA

The story of Syria is inextricably linked to those of Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq as well as Palestine/Israel. And, as in other countries in the Middle East, the people of Syria belong to a number of ethnic and religious groups. During the Ottoman period, Syria consisted of the vilayets of Aleppo, Damascus and Beirut. The majority of the (mainly village and town-dwelling agricultural) population were Sunni Muslims, but there were a number of other ethnic minorities, including **Kurds**, Armenians and Turks along the northern border, and the largest non-Sunni group, the Alawites, in the north-west region. Some Druze were included. Christians (mainly Maronites but some Greek Orthodox) made up about 10 per cent of the population and there was also a small Jewish community.

Kurds

A non-Arab ethnic group. Traditionally nomadic, they originated in areas of the Middle East now occupied by Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia and Syria. Kurds are predominantly Sunni Muslims

The Alawites

The Alawites are a mystical Shia Islamic sect, originating in the 8th century, who played an important role in Syria's struggle for freedom. Traditionally, the Alawites had been farmers, and a close-knit community. Over time they developed a strong fighting tradition to maintain their autonomy and defend themselves against the Sunni majority and Ottoman exploitation. In 1918–19, they led a Syrian revolt against the French presence. When the French created the separate enclaves, many Alawite chieftains supported the

continued

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notion of a separate Alawite nation consisting of rural villages along the coastal and mountain country inland from Latakia where they lived, and tried to convert their autonomy into independence. They did not want to be ruled by the French or by Sunni Muslims. For a few years, from 1930 to 1936, they partially succeeded and their area was known as the government of Latakia. But in 1937 Latakia was absorbed back into Syria.

During the First World War, although Syria was included in the future independent Arab state promised by Britain in return for Arab support against the Ottomans, Syrian Arabs took no part in the Arab rebellion, and the British agreed to Syria becoming part of the French sphere of influence.

General Allenby's British forces occupied Syria in 1918 together with Arab troops commanded by Faisal bin al-Hussein, the son of Sharif Hussein. In March 1920, a congress of Arab nationalists met in Damascus and proclaimed Faisal to be the King of Greater Syria, which included Palestine. However, at the San Remo conference in April 1920, Britain and France declared Syria a mandate of France, a proclamation endorsed by the League of Nations on 25 July 1922.

In July 1920, French forces entered Damascus and Faisal fled to England. Syrians rejected and opposed French rule. The French, adopting the adage 'divide and rule', responded by dividing Syria into six separate ethnic enclaves and separating 'Greater Lebanon' from Syria altogether.

The Alawite enclave, along with Lebanon, had not been included in the state of Syria declared by the French in December 1924. In a treaty signed in December 1936, the French and Syrian governments agreed on plans to grant Syria independence within three years but the Second World War intervened and France postponed the plans. French–Syrian relations dramatically deteriorated during the war as France insisted upon retaining its privileged position that guaranteed it special preferential economic benefits and the maintenance of military forces in Syria.

Pan-Arab nationalism

A movement that advocates cultural and political unity among all Arab states

Vichy French

Pro-German French administration that controlled Syria following the fall of France to the Germans in 1940

In addition to the desire for Syrian independence, **Pan-Arab nationalism** was emerging throughout the region at this time. Syrians offered arms and moral support in the way of strikes and demonstrations to the Palestinian Arabs in their 1936 uprising, known as the Arab Revolt of 1936–39. The French Government, like the British Government in Palestine, used force to end Syrian support for the Palestinians.

During the Second World War, British troops, together with Free French forces, seized Syria, as well as Lebanon, from the **Vichy French**, and by the end of the war the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain recognised Syria as a sovereign state in its own right. As in Lebanon, Syria declared its independence when French forces departed in 1946. However, conflicts immediately emerged between the various political parties and ethnic groups over how the state was to be constituted and how it would align itself within the Arab world – should it remain as a separate state or should it unite with its Hashemite neighbours, Transjordan and Iraq? Another idea was to ally itself with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Lebanon.

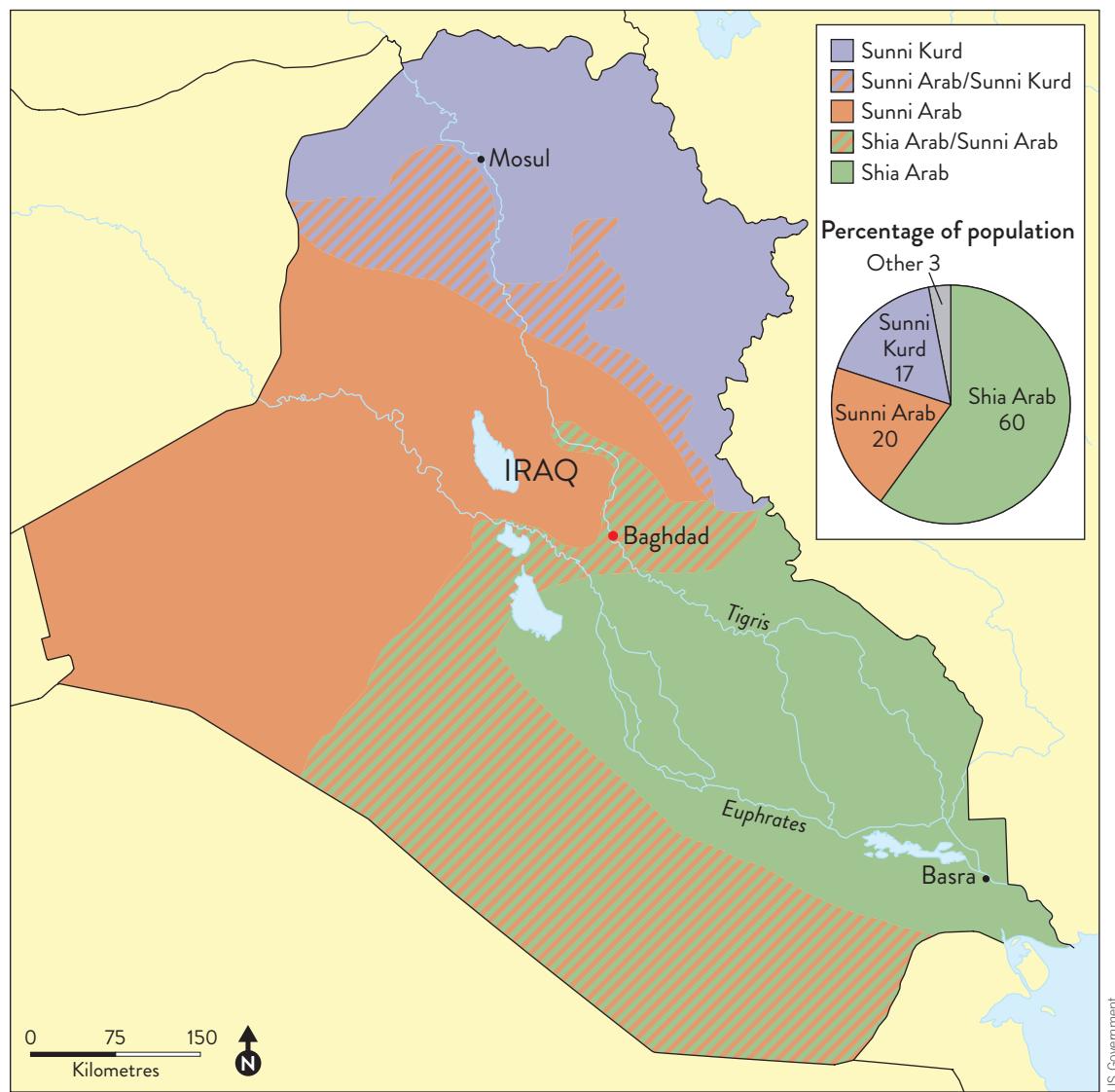
Most Syrian leaders distrusted neighbouring Transjordan because of King Abdullah's lingering ambition to create a Greater Syria that would encompass Syria and Palestine as well as Transjordan. One result, which was to become important 25 years later, was that the Syrian Government opposed a Jordanian takeover of the United Nations Arab-designated section of Palestine in 1947.

The British mandates

As a result of the Treaty of Versailles and the creation of the League of Nations, the British gained control of two main regions of the modern Middle East – the mandates of Palestine and Iraq. As with the French mandated territories, the experience of mandate rule was complex and rarely satisfied the nationalist aspirations of the local populations or the new arrivals to the region during the interwar years.

IRAQ

Prior to 1918, Iraq comprised three provinces of the Ottoman Empire: Mosul in the north-east, Baghdad in the centre, and Basra in the south. The population was, and remains today, quite diverse and tribal. About 20 per cent of the population (the Kurds) spoke a language other than Arabic, and overall, loyalties were local, linguistic, religious and ethnic rather than central or broadly national. Kurds were found in the north, Shia Muslims (about 60 per cent) were found in the south and the central region was predominantly Sunni Muslim (20 per cent of the population). There were also a small number of Christians and Jews who numbered around 100 000 in the 1940s.



SOURCE 1.8 Map of Iraq showing ethno-religious groupings, 1930

At the San Remo conference in April 1920, Britain was awarded the mandates for Iraq (then called Mesopotamia) and Palestine. In Iraq, British administrator Gertrude Bell made recommendations as to the borders of the new nation of Iraq and about its leadership. Minority Sunni Muslims were promoted to positions of power, which caused resentment among the Shia population, who rebelled against the British. They were joined by the Kurds. Following the military suppression of the rebellion, the British offered the throne of Iraq to the Hashemite Faisal, whom the French had expelled from Syria in July 1920. Faisal was installed as King of Iraq in August 1921, and in 1922 an Anglo-Iraqi treaty formalised Britain's special position in Iraq. Oil concessions to a British, Dutch and US consortium were finalised in the mid 1920s.

From the beginning, King Faisal and the military officers supporting him, faced tremendous difficulties in forming and consolidating an Iraqi state. Shia and Kurds resented being ruled by a central minority Sunni Hashemite government, and the surrounding large, strong states – Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – were hostile. Faced with these challenges, the Iraqi regime tried to project itself as a regional champion of Arab unity and nationalism. Faisal's ideas were greeted with enthusiasm by the emerging middle classes and young urban professional Arabs of Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and especially in Palestine following the Jewish–Arab riots of 1929.

In 1932, Iraq became the first new state of the former Ottoman Empire to gain its formal independence. But the first decade of the new state was marked by instability involving military coups and violent clashes between government forces and elements of the population. King Faisal died in 1933 and within a few years the army staged a coup and took control of the government. Several years of instability followed as the increasingly weak governments relied more heavily upon British support to stay in power. When the Second World War broke out, pro-German nationalist groups in Iraq, led by the Iraqi military, seized the opportunity to organise a national rebellion against the British. One of the instigators of this rebellion was the **Mufti** of Jerusalem, al-Hajj Amin Husseini, who was at that time living in Iraq after being exiled from Palestine by the British.

There is a further twist to this story. The British moved swiftly to suppress the rebellious Iraqi Army, supported by Arab Legion soldiers from the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan, and a small group sent by the Jewish community in Palestine. British troops reoccupied Iraq for the remainder of the war and restored the Hashemite family to the throne. But peace did not last long in

Library of Congress



SOURCE 1.9 The Iraqi city of Mosul, showing the Tigris River in the background, 1931

Mufti

An Islamic legal authority and advisor on religious law

pogrom

Violent riot or demonstration, usually against Jews by non-Jews

this deeply divided state ruled by a repressive regime. The Hashemite family and Iraq's Jewish community were seen by rest of the population as allies of the British imperialists. In the case of the Jews, they were seen as allied to Palestinian Zionists, and **pogroms** against them took place in Baghdad. When Israel declared independence in 1948, Iraq contributed 18 000 troops to the Arab war against Israel. Faced with the threat of mass expulsion, around 100 000 of the 120 000 Jews of Iraq fled to Israel between 1950 and 1951.

PALESTINE

It is important to look at the history of Palestine while it was a British mandate, as the issues at the heart of the Arab–Israeli conflict today began to emerge during that period. All the parties involved in the Arab–Israeli conflict formulated positions that remain virtually unchanged almost a century later. The Zionist movement that spearheaded the creation of Israel developed patterns of thought

and behaviour that it has utilised through statehood and subsequent relations with local Arab Palestinians and neighbouring Arab states. Likewise, Palestinian Arabs and neighbouring Arab states adopted patterns of thought and behaviour that shaped their subsequent actions. In their narratives of the period, both sides sought to blame the British, or the other, for any undesirable course of events from their perspective, while refusing to accept any responsibility themselves.

The British mandate of Palestine did not begin well. In April 1920 there were riots between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem. The first British high commissioner in Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, a former postmaster-general and firm Zionist, arrived in June 1920, replacing the military administrator.

In early 1921, King Faisal's older brother, Abdullah, threatened to attempt to reclaim Syria by force. In response, British colonial secretary Winston Churchill authorised that the Palestine mandate east of the River Jordan be administered separately (as Transjordan) and placed Abdullah in control.

In June 1922, as Arab hostility to Jewish immigration to Palestine continued, Churchill told the British House of Commons that Jewish immigration should be limited to meet the 'economic absorptive capacity' of Palestine. In August he excluded Transjordan from areas where Jews would be permitted to settle as part of a Jewish homeland. The League of Nations agreed to the arrangement and the British officially took control of the mandate in September 1923. Technically, Palestine and Transjordan remained one mandate, but most official documents referred to them as if they were two separate mandates.

This satisfied no one in Palestine west of the Jordan River. Jews believed the British failed to keep their promise of ensuring right of unrestricted Jewish immigration (or 'return', as Zionists saw it) to *Eretz Yisrael* (as Zionists termed Palestine), and the local Arabs believed the British, by allowing Jewish migration and the establishment of Jewish institutions of self-government, had betrayed their promises to grant Arab independence following the war.

By this time, about 25 000 Jewish immigrants had arrived in Palestine since British occupation. After this initial postwar surge of Jewish immigration, there were a few years of relative calm in Palestine. In some years, Jewish emigration even exceeded immigration. The stage was set for outbreaks of violence, with the British seeking to mediate between the opposing parties and to maintain law and order.

Eretz Yisrael

Hebrew for 'Land of Israel', the name given by Jews to the area surrounding Jerusalem, roughly the area of the British mandate of Palestine



Library of Congress

SOURCE 1.10 British High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuels' reception at Government House in Jerusalem on 7 July 1920, attended by Jewish and Arab notables

TWO NARRATIVES

The participants in the Arab–Israeli conflict have created their own narratives about themselves and their protagonists, and the place that is being contested.

Zionist/Israeli narrative

Jews, and now Israelis, have a particular interpretation of their history and the place they call *Eretz Yisrael*. This is usually called the Zionist view.

Zionist historians have accentuated the link Jews have maintained with Palestine/*Eretz Yisrael* and the central place it occupies in Jewish religious tradition. Jews of

Questions

- 1 What claims are Jews and Arabs making to Palestine?
- 2 Do you think the two claims can be reconciled?
- 3 How do these claims complicate the struggle for peace in Palestine?

continued

continued

modern Israel claim they trace their ancestry to the Israelites of old. Jews residing in Palestine prior to 1948 are referred to as the *Yishuv*.

For many years they denied the existence of the Palestinians as a people with a specific identity, or legitimate national aspirations. They claimed that the land was virtually unoccupied, and asserted that the bulk of the Arab population migrated to Palestine as late as the 1920s and 1930s. Thus the slogan used to justify Jewish settlement in Palestine: 'A land without a people for a people without a land'. In addition, Israelis believe that they have transformed the land itself from a desolate, poor and neglected backwater of the Ottoman Empire into a productive, vibrant, modern and, perhaps most importantly, democratic state.

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), an Austrian political activist and writer, is regarded as the originator of modern Zionism. In his famous pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, published in Vienna in 1896, he advocated the establishment of a Jewish state:

Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvellous potency. Suppose His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey. We should there form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. We should as a neutral State remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. The sanctuaries of Christendom would be safeguarded ...

Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 1896, translated from the German by Sylvie D'Avigdor, American Zionist Emergency Council, 1946

Arab/Palestinian narrative

Arabs, particularly Palestinian Arabs, also have an interpretation of their history and the place they know as Palestine. It is very different from the Zionist narrative. They believe that they are descendants of the original inhabitants of the region, and that Palestine is theirs by birthright. They regard the Zionists who have arrived in the past century or so as unwelcome intruders. They believe they have been engaged in an equally heroic attempt to resist the takeover and loss of their homeland, first by Zionists and later by Israelis, and to create an independent Palestinian state against overwhelming odds, both European and Zionist.

These themes are evident in the following passage from Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi:

Both Britain and the Zionist movement always treated the prospect of an independent state in Palestine as a grave threat. The Zionist movement saw such a prospect as a particular challenge to the Jews' aspirations to exclusive sovereignty over what they called *Eretz Israel* (the land of Israel).

Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, Beacon Books, 2006, p. xvii

These two contradictory views of the past, involving such hostile depictions of each other, have not made resolving the conflicts that have arisen between Palestinians and Israelis any easier.

Women in the struggle for peace

In the vast majority of cases, women have been hidden from view in historical narratives, and the Middle East is no exception in this regard. For centuries, Western travellers, writers and painters, particularly French painters of the mid and late 19th century, have depicted Middle Eastern women as exotic and erotic objects of desire. These depictions of women have contributed to the general popular Western notion of Middle Easterners, especially their rulers, as lazy, degenerate and backward, restrained by a repressive and primitive religion that regarded women merely as chattels. Most of the Western artists had never been near the places or people they presented in their pictures.

These paintings, and later, photographs taken by Westerners, distort and hide the reality of the lives women led in the Middle East during the 20th century. One cannot generalise about the experience of all women, of course, just as one cannot generalise about any aspect of the region as a whole. The lives of women were shaped by the country in which they lived, their class and family structure and their religious traditions.

In addition to their central role of giving birth and child-raising, by the beginning of the 20th century, girls, regardless of their ethnicities and religions, were going to schools, and in some cases universities, across Middle Eastern cities from Tehran, Istanbul, Beirut and Cairo to Morocco.

Women played an essential role in the pastoral, nomadic, rural economies that characterised much of the Middle East. Women's work was crucial to the survival of the clan and village. In addition to working in the fields, they produced commodities such as tents, clothing, bed linen, mats, rugs and (often clay) cooking utensils, and bought and sold them at local markets. As industrialisation took place in towns and large urban centres, they worked in (often foreign-owned) factories producing carpet from locally grown wool for export markets. Women also worked at home producing small lace and silk cloth items and in occupations meeting specific female needs, such as midwives and beauticians, and, in some cases, they worked as dancers.

Women were active in shaping political events in the Middle East throughout the 20th century. As their sisters in the West sought independence and freedom in the 1920s and beyond, women in the mandated territories of the Middle East formed associations that were essentially political in purpose. Like their male counterparts, they sought Arab independence. They took part in street protests, formed associations, and some took part in combat operations against their colonial masters. In 1923, the Women's National Rights Association was formed in Tehran, and in 1936 the International Feminist Congress was held in Istanbul.

Tarab abd al-Hadi (1910–1976)

One of the most notable of these prominent women was Palestinian Muslim activist and feminist, Tarab abd al-Hadi. In 1929, she co-founded the Palestine Arab Women's Congress, the first women's organisation in British mandated Palestine, founded to fight off the threat of Zionist occupation of Palestine and to protest against the British mandate. She was also an active organiser in the Arab Women's Association.



SOURCE 1.11 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk visits Istanbul University, Turkey, c. 1933, following the revision of the university law to allow mixed-sex education at Turkish universities and colleges. Note the number of women attending; a reflection of his desire to establish Turkey as a modern, secular state.



PASSIA

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Henrietta Szold (1860–1945)



Corbis/Bettmann

Henrietta Szold was another woman who made a tremendous impact upon life in Palestine during and after the mandate period. Szold was the daughter of a rabbi and deeply committed to the Jewish people and the creation of a Jewish culture in the United States. She was also a strong advocate for peace. In 1909, at age 49, Szold travelled to Palestine for the first time and embarked upon her life's mission: the health, education and welfare of the Yishuv (pre-state Jewish community of Palestine). In 1912, she was involved with the creation of Hadassah, a Zionist women's organisation, which today is the largest Jewish organisation in the United States. Under Szold's leadership, Hadassah recruited American Jewish women to work on upgrading healthcare in Palestine.

Szold persuaded her colleagues that practical programs open to all were essential to Jewish survival in Palestine.

In the 1920s and 1930s she was a supporter of Brit Shalom, a small organisation dedicated to Arab–Jewish unity and a bi-national state in Palestine. Henrietta Szold died in 1945 in the Hadassah Hospital she helped to build in Jerusalem.

Zlikha Shihabi (1903–1992)

Zlikha Shihabi was a Palestinian Muslim activist during and after the British mandate period. She was born in Jerusalem and, unusually for a girl at the time, was formally educated. Her activism began in 1929, when she was one of the organisers of the first Palestinian women's conference. Shihabi became president of the prominent resistance organisation, the Arab Women's League of Jerusalem, in 1937 and remained in that position until her death.

Huda Sha'arawi (1897–1947)

Huda Sha'arawi was a well-connected Egyptian nationalist and teacher who became a leading activist against British rule after the First World War. Sha'arawi is perhaps best known for a symbolic act that launched the women's movement in Egypt. In 1923, on returning to Cairo after attending a women's conference in Rome, she removed her face veil, in protest against the life of seclusion and obedience that was expected of Muslim women. This was a radical move at the time, but symbolised the preparedness of women to change their position in society. In 1923 she founded the Egyptian Women's Union, the first such organisation in the Arab world.

Questions

- ① Research the life stories of these women and see how many others (including Jewish and Christian women) you can find who also contributed to the struggle for peace.
- ② Write a brief biographical profile of one of the women you identified in your research.

Arab–Jewish relations during the British mandate

The majority of Arabs and Jews in Palestine viewed each other with fear, distrust, ignorance, arrogance and hostility. Leaders recognised that two emerging national movements were fighting for supremacy over the future of Palestine. Zionist leaders, intent on transforming Palestine into a Jewish homeland (by which the majority meant a national state), had contempt for the local Arabs of Palestine. Some Zionists argued for the complete removal of the Arabs; others argued that they could civilise and uplift the Arabs, bringing expertise and financial resources that would benefit all the inhabitants of Palestine.

The Arabs of Palestine could not decide whether or not to accept Jews who were content to practise their religion in traditional ways, or to oppose all Jews on the grounds that if the majority Zionist immigrants achieved their goals, the Arabs' way of life would be destroyed. Disagreements and tensions within each group were almost as profound as the divisions separating the two. In the end, those on both sides who advocated the use of force triumphed so often that long-term violent conflict became almost inevitable.



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SOURCE 1.12 'The Policeman's lot', a cartoon published in *Punch* magazine, 18 September 1946

The Policeman's lot

Questions

- 1 Identify the parties depicted in the cartoon.
- 2 What is the cartoonist telling us in the picture?
- 3 What specific events during the mandate lend support to the notion depicted?
- 4 How does the cartoonist depict the parties in this picture?

Populating Palestine

The population of Palestine at the end of the First World War had declined from around 720 000 to approximately 560 000: 500 000 Arabs and 60 000 Jews. Precise population figures for Palestine during the mandate are problematic and difficult to come by. Borders were imprecise; many local Arabs were nomadic and elusive; birthrate figures were unreliable; Jewish movements for much of British rule were outgoing as well as incoming; and both sides contest the accuracy of any figures other than their own.

What is certain, though, is that by the outbreak of the Second World War, there had been a very significant demographic transformation in Palestine. In the space of 30 years, the population had more than doubled, and life expectancy had been prolonged. British rule had also prompted a major transformation of the economy and infrastructure in Palestine. Post and telegraphic services had been upgraded, railways extended, roads, port facilities, schools and hospitals had been built, and the standard of living in towns and on the land had risen substantially.

TABLE 1.1 Population of Palestine 1922–1948 (approximate)

Year	Jewish population	Total population
1922	83 800 (11%)	752 050
1931	175 600 (17%)	1 036 300
1940	463 500 (30%)	1 554 500
1946	630 000 (31%)	1 970 000
1948	650 000	uncertain

The Jewish population of Palestine (including present-day Syria) at the beginning of the 19th century was around 25 000. Most were descendants of ancient local families and were, like the Arab population, subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The Jews lived mostly in the towns holy to them; Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberius. While they were given a considerable amount of autonomy under the Ottomans, living in self-governing groups (*millet*s), like Christians they were regarded as second-class citizens (called *dhimmis*, the Arabic term for non-Muslims) and had to play a special poll tax (*jizyah*) for state protection. They also experienced other forms of discrimination. By and large, they were allowed to continue to observe their religion, and although dependent upon financial support from European Jews, many made a living as artisans and craftsmen. The majority of the



gettyimages/Universal History Archive/UIG

SOURCE 1.13 Members of a Jewish agricultural colony, c. 1932

continued

continued

founding generation of Israelis, however, migrated to Palestine between the 1890s and 1939 from Eastern Europe and Russia.

By the end of the 19th century, the population of Palestine was around 450 000; by the end of 1946 it was in the vicinity of 1.9 million.

Since its proclamation of independence in 1948, Israel's population has grown seven fold. In 2012, the population of Israel was about 7.8 million. The population can be divided ethnically into a Jewish majority of 5.8 million (75 per cent) and an Arab minority of 1.36 million (17.4 per cent). Christians and Druze account for a further 280 000 (3.6 per cent) and other ethnicities make up just under 4 per cent. Israel's 5.8 million Jews make up 43 per cent of the world Jewish population of approximately 13.4 million Jews. About 90 per cent of Israel's inhabitants live in some 200 towns with about 5 per cent members of *kibbutz* and *moshav*, unique rural cooperative settlements.

In 2010, there were about 3.7 million Palestinians living in the area formerly known as Palestine; 1.5 million in the West Bank, 960 000 in Gaza and more than 1.2 million in Israel.

ARAB-BRITISH RELATIONS

Conflict between Arabs and the British began almost at once following the arrival of the British administration. It is difficult to imagine the depth of disappointment, bitterness, frustration and anger Arab leaders and their followers in Palestine felt during the British mandate. The agreement following the First World War was supposed to take account of the national aspirations of peoples, like themselves, who had previously been subjected to foreign rule. Palestinians, as did other Middle Eastern Arab populations, experienced a 20th-century version of 19th-century colonialism.

To the European powers there was nothing exceptional about this; they had been establishing colonies (usually by force) and ruling them for centuries. Different Arab areas fared differently under the mandate system. In general those ruled by Britain were able to establish self-governing representative institutions with fewer problems than those under French rule. But a complicating factor in the case of Palestine was, as noted above, the British support for Jewish immigration and the nationalist aspirations of the Jews.

The Arab population was at a disadvantage because any response they made to British policies – or to the Zionist movement – was interpreted as oppositional and uncooperative. The willingness of the more radical and extreme Palestinian nationalist leaders to encourage unrest among their own people and resort to violence against the Jewish population simply confirmed this British view about the Arabs. In addition, Palestinian Arabs were divided by family and clan, and by traditional religious, cultural and economic differences between Christian and Muslims. These divisions prevented them from forming a representative body and meant that they were unable or unwilling to come up with positive proposals to further their goal of national independence. As a result, they were always on the defensive.

JEWISH-BRITISH RELATIONS

The Jewish arrivals, on the other hand, seized whatever opportunities British policy offered. The Jews of Palestine (the *Yishuv*) moved quickly to create their own, separate institutions of statehood. They elected their own assembly (the *Vaad Leumi*), built up a strong trade union

and labour movement (the *Histadrut*), established schools, universities, medical services and a legal system, and developed an underground defence organisation, the *Haganah*. Some Zionist leaders did recognise that peaceful coexistence with the Arabs would be desirable, but others, more extreme, were determined to achieve their goals by violent means. This group, the Revisionist Zionists led by Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, rejected any attempts to negotiate with local Arab leaders and advocated the removal of the Arab population.

The Jewish Agency

The Palestine mandate document suggested that a Jewish agency be established to take care of the needs of the Jewish population and to cooperate with the British administration. The World Zionist Organization (WZO) was recognised as the Jewish Agency, but its president, Chaim Weizmann, remained in London. In Palestine, David Ben-Gurion headed an executive committee which, in effect, became the Jewish Agency and, for the most part, cooperated with the British.



Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky (1880–1940)

Irgun
Hebrew for
'National
Military
Organisation'.
Military arm of
the Revisionist
Zionist
movement,
created in 1937.
Disbanded by
Israeli Prime
Minister David
Ben-Gurion
in 1948 and
merged with
Israel Defense
Forces

Vladimir Jabotinsky was born in Odessa, in the Russian Empire, to an assimilated Jewish family. During the First World War, he and Joseph Trumpeldor created a Zionist Mule Corps that operated with the British and Australians at Gallipoli. He then co-founded the Jewish Legion of the British Army that fought in Palestine. In 1923, he split from the mainstream Zionist movement in Palestine, which he regarded as too moderate and accommodating and established the Revisionist party with the aim of establishing a Jewish state that extended across both banks of the Jordan River. He also established the extremist Zionist youth organisation, Betar, and the armed underground organisation, *Irgun*.



Alamy/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Ze'ev (as he named himself) Jabotinsky died and was buried in New York. In 1964, he was reinterred in Jerusalem at Mount Herzl Cemetery. Jabotinsky's legacy is continued by Israel's Herut party (which merged with other right-wing parties to form the Likud in 1973).

Jewish immigrants, overwhelmingly Zionist, had begun arriving in Palestine in increasing numbers since the 1890s. The Zionists openly stated that their goal was the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. As Europeans, they saw nothing untoward in this; religious groups of various ethnicities had been asserting their rights to national identity within Europe for at least the previous half century.

Arab–Jewish tensions

Arab and Jewish religious sensibilities were most volatile over Jewish activities at the **Western Wall** in Jerusalem, also known as the ‘Wailing Wall’. The issues revolved around customary practices, access and ultimately ownership. Traditionally, the Mufti of Jerusalem was responsible for ensuring that traditional forms of prayer and worship were observed in the vicinity of the Western Wall and protecting the shrines on the Haram al-Sharif from Jewish encroachment. Although the majority of Zionists lived in Tel Aviv and country towns rather than in Jerusalem, Jewish religious nationalists sometimes used the Wall to rally nationalist sentiment.

Grievances were felt most keenly on the occasions of Muslim and Jewish high holy days, when crowds took to the streets of Jerusalem and other towns to observe religious rituals. The Western Wall was a particularly sensitive site, sacred to both Jews and Muslims. The religious hierarchies of both groups were fearful of the intentions of the other and fiercely guarded against any infringement of their traditional rights and practices. They correctly recognised in these observances, if not a political agenda, certainly the political overtones and implications for the political future of Jerusalem and the so-called holy sites. Frequently, these activities got out of hand and riots occurred.

Western Wall

Considered a sacred site by Jews, who claim it to be the only remaining wall of the Temple Mount, it was built by King Herod from 19 BCE but destroyed by the Romans in c. 70 CE. Jews mourning the destruction prayed at the wall, hence its alternative name, the ‘Wailing Wall’.

The wall is also part of a sacred area known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary or Haram al-Sharif. The al-Aqsa mosque is located on the Temple Mount



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SOURCE 1.14 The Temple Mount area, Jerusalem



Library of Congress

SOURCE 1.15 Nebi Musa procession, 4 April 1920

A pattern emerged from the frequent outbreaks of violence between Arabs and Jews during the British mandate. Whenever a dispute arose, usually over property ownership or religious observance and holy sites, extremist leaders on both sides urged the use of violence. The violence in turn not only escalated the issue, but reinforced the determination of both sides not to make concessions.

UNREST IN THE 1920s

The first major Arab–Jewish riot under British rule occurred in Jerusalem in April 1920 during the Muslim pilgrim festival of Nebi Musa, which coincided that year with the Christian Easter and the intermediary days of the Jewish Passover. Part of the Muslim observance of Nebi Musa included a journey from Jerusalem to the tomb of Moses near Jericho. The Jerusalem riot, which lasted four days, from 4 to 7 April, followed rising tensions in Arab–Jewish relations over Zionist

immigration, which had spilled over into skirmishes at Jewish settlements in the Galilee region. On 1 March 1920, during a gunfight in the defence of Tel Hai, a settlement in the Upper Galilee, Zionist activist and member of the local Jewish self-defence team, Joseph Trumpeldor, was among those killed. Vladimir Jabotinsky and others began to organise a self-defence league.

On 4 April 1920 around 60 000–70 000 Arabs congregated in Jerusalem's Old City square. Following some anti-British and anti-Zionist speeches to the assembled Muslim pilgrims prior to their journey to the tomb of Moses by nationalist and religious leaders, including 22-year-old Haj Amin al-Husseini, rioting broke out, and Arab gangs attacked Jews in the Old City. The British failed to contain the rioting. Nine people were killed, of whom five were Jews, and 244 were injured, 211 of whom were Jews. Leaders on both sides were arrested, but all were later released.

A British military commission of inquiry concluded that the Zionists were largely responsible for the riots because their impatience to achieve their ultimate goal, and their indiscretions, had substantially increased the sense of disappointment and frustration among the Arab population. The commissioners singled out Haj Amin al-Husseini and Jabotinsky in particular for aggravating the sense of distrust between the British, Jews and Arabs. These criticisms spurred Zionists to build an autonomous infrastructure and security apparatus parallel to that of the British administration. In June, believing the British were unwilling to defend Jews from continuous Arab violence, Zionists set up an underground self-defence militia, called the Haganah.

Haganah is the Hebrew word meaning defence. Until the unrest and riots of the late 1920s, the Haganah was largely defensive, but then it became much larger and better trained and armed. In 1931, militant elements of the Haganah splintered off and formed the Irgun Tsva'i-Leumi (National Military Organisation), better known simply as Irgun. In 1940, an even more militant Zionist group founded by Avraham Stern and known as the Stern Gang, split from Irgun to fight for Israeli independence. After 1948, the Haganah became the core of the Israel defence forces.

Invariably, rumours contributed to fear and suspicion on both sides. In August 1929, demonstrations by members of the Revisionist Party at the Western Wall sparked a particularly serious outbreak of violence against Jews in Jerusalem, Safed and Hebron. During the week of riots, 133 Jews were killed and 339 wounded; 116 Arabs were killed and 232 wounded. Most

Jews were killed by Arabs and most Arabs were killed by British-commanded police and soldiers. A British inquiry in the aftermath of the 1929 riots reached similar conclusions to previous investigations; the subsequent **White Paper** issued by the British in 1930 recommended that land sales to Jews and Jewish immigration be suspended. The Zionist-led hostile reaction was so great that the recommendations were never put into effect.

White Paper

A government report that provides detailed information or proposals about an issue or subject

THE 1930s: THE ARAB REVOLT

During the 1930s developments in Europe once again played an important role in shaping events in Palestine. Denied more suitable alternatives, thousands of Jews sought refuge in Palestine from rising and increasingly virulent anti-Semitism, especially in Germany. The Jewish population grew from 175 000 in 1931 (17 per cent of the population) to 463 000 in 1940 (30 per cent of the population) and around 550 000 in 1945. The 1930s arrivals were increasingly from Central Europe, and were wealthier, better educated (although usually not as familiar with Hebrew or Judaism) and more cultured (in a Western European sense) than the depressed masses from Eastern Europe (Poland and Romania), who had entered Palestine in the 1920s.



Getty Images/Central Press/Hulton Archive

SOURCE 1.16 British soldiers escort a group of Arab prisoners from the Old City of Jerusalem after a revolt against the British mandate in Palestine, 26 October 1938.

In November 1935, Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, an Arab preacher from Haifa who had organised violent resistance against the British and Zionists to stop the inflow of Jewish migrants, was shot and killed by British police. In April 1936, angry Palestinian Arab leaders called a general strike and began a campaign of civil disobedience across the country that lasted six months. An Arab Higher Committee was formed with the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, as head. Landless peasants and workers in northern Palestine responded, and they were joined by middle-class townspeople in what was soon to become a full-blown rebellion, known as the Arab Rebellion.

The British responded with comprehensive land, air and sea force strikes and met violent opposition in the towns and villages. It took two years for 20 000 British troops to quell the violence and contain the upheaval. In the process, 5000 Arabs were killed, 15 000 wounded and 5600 arrested, detained or expelled. To assist them in putting down the uprising, the British armed and trained nearly 15 000 Jewish fighters. Just over 500 Jews were killed during the revolt. It is important to recognise that this revolt was a major Arab anti-colonial struggle against the British.

The Peel Commission recommends partition of Palestine

Yet again, the British Government responded with an enquiry, this time a royal commission chaired by Lord Peel. In its report, issued in July 1937, the Peel Commission called for the partition of Palestine into an Arab state (to be joined to Transjordan) and a smaller Jewish state. Jerusalem and immediate surrounding towns, including Bethlehem together with a corridor to the coast at Jaffa, and Nazareth were to remain under British rule. The Jewish



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SOURCE 1.17 Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, opposed Zionism in Palestine. During the Second World War, he aligned himself with Nazi Germany and in 1948 he helped form the all-Palestine government in Egyptian-ruled Gaza.



Library of Congress

SOURCE 1.18 British train derailed during the Arab Revolt, 24 June 1936

state was to occupy approximately 5000 square kilometres, and the Arab state would be merged with Transjordan under King Abdullah. The link between Transjordan and a Palestinian Arab state had been one of the dreams of Abdullah for a Greater Syria.

Following vigorous debate, Zionists accepted the concept of partition but demanded more advantageous boundaries for the Jewish state. They recognised that there was little chance of Christians allowing Jerusalem to be included in a Jewish state. Arab leadership was divided, but the al-Husseini family, who totally rejected the notion, succeeded in silencing the Nashashibi family, who supported it.

Important Arab families

The al-Husseini family

ultranationalism
A form of extreme nationalism (devotion to one's country) that promotes the interests of one state or people above all others

The Husseini were one of the richest and most powerful of all the clans in Jerusalem. There was great rivalry between the Husseini and the Nashashibi families. Members of the Husseini family held the position of Mufti of Jerusalem from the middle of the 9th century. Haj Amin al-Husseini was appointed the Mufti of Jerusalem in 1921 and was the most outspoken Arab representative against the British and of Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Husseini were **ultranationalists** and extremists.

The Nashashibi family

During the Ottoman Empire period, the Nashashibis of Jerusalem were prosperous landlords and merchants and had considerable influence in Palestine. During the British mandate, the Nashashibis held important public and administrative posts. Ragheb al-Nashashibi was the Mayor of Jerusalem for several years. The name Nashashibi became associated with secularism and modern development and moderation towards the British and the Jews.

Overall, the Peel Commission report further inflamed the Arabs. In an effort to protect its broader Middle East interests in an increasingly threatening world, the British consulted in London with Arab representatives from Palestine, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen, as well as an Anglo-American-Palestinian Jewish delegation, on the future of Palestine.

As a result, in May 1939, the colonial Secretary, Malcolm McDonald, issued a white paper setting out a new British policy. McDonald's White Paper recommended allowing a further 75 000 Jews to migrate to Palestine by 1944, after which the country was to become an independent **binational** state with an Arab majority, to be governed jointly by Arabs and Jews. Sales of Arab land to Jews were to be restricted. Largely because of the Second World War, the future of Palestine was left unresolved.

TRANSJORDAN

Transjordan was the semi-autonomous **emirate** created by Britain in 1921 as part of the Palestine mandate. At that time, it consisted of about 300 000 people, half of whom were semi-nomadic Arab Muslims. The area had few natural resources and was mostly arid land. Transjordan was ruled by the autocratic Hashemite Abdullah, who had hoped to rule Baghdad but reluctantly accepted the position of king of Transjordan. To the surprise of many, including those in the region as well as France and Britain, Transjordan, with the support of the British, became a model of peace and economic development during the inter-war years.

Because it had no traditional political centre and was almost totally dependent upon British economic and military aid, Transjordan was regarded by most of the world as the most artificial and temporary Arab state. Britain controlled its financial and foreign affairs, although a legislative council was created in 1928 and an elected legislative assembly in 1939. Abdullah sought independence for his country, which was granted in 1946 when the British mandate ended and the country was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Abdullah never entirely gave up his hope of ruling a large and unified Hashemite Kingdom of Greater Syria, consisting of Transjordan, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, together in a federation with Iraq, but he received little support from the British (or any of the other countries concerned). Although it was just a pipedream, it nonetheless reveals how the histories of these states were, and in many cases still are, linked in the minds of some Arab leaders.



binational
In this context, a state
that consists of two
nations

emirate
Territory under the
control of a Muslim
or Arab chieftain or
prince (an emir)



Abdullah I of Jordan (1882–1951)

Abdullah I bin al-Hussein, King of Jordan, was born in Mecca in the Hejaz region, which is now part of Saudi Arabia. He was the second of three sons of Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif and Emir of Mecca. Before the First World War, Abdullah was a member of the Ottoman legislature, as deputy for Mecca, but during the war he allied himself with Britain and cooperated with the British guerrilla leader TE Lawrence in planning the Great Arab Revolt against Ottoman rule. He was the ruler of Transjordan and its successor state, Jordan, from 1921 to 1951, first as king, or emir, under a British mandate from 1921 to 1946, then as king of the independent nation of Jordan from 1946 until his assassination in Jerusalem in 1951. Whether or not Abdullah cooperated with the British in relation to the UN partition plan, he certainly occupied the area of Palestine designated as the Arab state, including the Old City of Jerusalem.



Getty Images/Paul Popper/Popperfoto

In 1948–49, Jordan occupied – and in 1950 formally annexed – a large part of the area of Palestine allocated to the Arabs in the United Nations partition resolution (now called the West Bank), including East Jerusalem. Jordan became a member of the United Nations in 1955. Jordan's role in the Arab–Israeli conflict is examined in later chapters.

Beyond the mandates

Not all of the Middle East was ruled by the British and French under the mandate system. Independent kingdoms, such as in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Iran, and the notionally independent Egypt, each had particular experiences that laid the foundations for future conflicts and tensions after the Second World War.

SAUDI ARABIA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in central and eastern Arabia escaped the attention of the Western powers until the 1930s, when oil was discovered in this arid, empty region of the Middle East. This is not surprising. Until then it had been an inland area populated by poor nomadic fractious tribes until forcefully united by charismatic leader, Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, known as Ibn Saud, who belonged to a strict puritanical Sunni sect of Islam called

Wahhabism. This process of unification took place between roughly 1902 and 1926. When he captured Mecca and Medina from the Ottomans in 1924–26, Ibn Saud became the most respected leader in the Arab world. In 1932 Ibn Saud proclaimed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Wahhabism

Wahhabis are followers of an ultra-conservative offshoot of Sunni Islam

Ibn Saud (1876–1953)

King Abdul Aziz was the first monarch of Saudi Arabia, and was referred to for most of his career as Ibn Saud. Abdul Aziz reconquered his family's ancestral home-city of Riyadh in 1902, and between 1922 and 1925 gained control of the highlands of central Arabia (the Najd) and the western region bordering the Red Sea, known as the Hejaz. He then united his dominions into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. When oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia in 1938, he encouraged exploration and fostered large-scale Western (primarily US) exploitation of the kingdom's oil after the Second World War. He fathered many children, including all of the subsequent kings of Saudi Arabia.



Getty Images/Bob Landry/The LIFE Picture Collection



Interestingly, Australian engineers were among the first to survey and prospect for oil in the Middle East, and played prominent roles in the foreign oil companies that gained concessions on both sides of the Persian Gulf. The discovery of oil and its export through Bahrain by American oil companies dramatically transformed Saudi Arabia (and Bahrain), bringing untold wealth, drastically changing the economic, social, cultural and moral life of Saudi Arabs. More than a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves are thought to be in Saudi territory, making the Saudi Government the most wealthy and influential in the Middle East.

The country was ruled autocratically by Ibn Saud and his family. Ibn Saud personally controlled all the wealth generated in the kingdom, which he kept not in a central bank but in wooden chests. There was no cabinet or parliament and the law was that of the Koran, interpreted and administered by Wahhabi **ulema**. Everything Western, such as alcohol, tobacco, clothes, movies and music, was prohibited. When the sons and extended family of Ibn Saud saw how people lived in the West, however, they soon began to imitate a lavish Western lifestyle, much to the disgust of their father.

ulema

From the Arabic word *ilm*, or knowledge. Refers to Islamic lawyers, jurists, scholars and teachers

The Gulf States

Along the Persian Gulf, the tribal groups of Kuwait, Bahrain, the Trucial States (now the United Arab Emirates) and Oman, were all British protectorates by 1914. Although today's boundaries were not settled at the time, during the inter-war years Iran resisted British and Russian attempts to take over or dominate the Gulf region.

IRAN

Following the First World War, Britain wanted to absorb Iran as it had Iraq, but the Russian Bolshevik Government also had ambitions to control the country. Thanks to the leadership of an Iranian army officer, Reza Khan, neither Britain nor Russia succeeded, and by 1923 Reza

shah

The title given to the former rulers of Iran; equivalent of king

Khan had ousted the ruling **shah** and seized power. In December 1925, he abolished the old dynasty and proclaimed himself the new Shah with the name Pahlavi (the name of the pre-Islamic Persian language). Pahlavi began a series of reforms to modernise the transport, health and education systems as well as other administrative and social infrastructure, to liberate the country from foreign political and economic domination. However, his efforts were resisted by the country's parliament (*majlis*) and deeply conservative Shia *mullahs* (religious leaders). Iranians remained committed to their Shia Islamic traditions. In addition, the British refused to relinquish control of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company concession.

During the Second World War, Britain and the Soviet Union occupied Iran to prevent a German takeover of the nation's valuable oil resources. Reza Khan's son, Mohammad Reza Khan, became Shah upon his father's abdication in 1941, and at war's end became an ally of the West for the next 25 years, ensuring the continued presence of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, despite popular opposition. Supported by the United States and Britain, he ruled as a dictator until he was overthrown in January 1979 by a nationwide revolution led by the Shia *ulema* who established an 'Islamic Republic'.

EGYPT

Egypt's struggle for peace has been a long one. Saudi Arabia may be the most influential segment of the Middle East today, but for centuries Egypt remained the pre-eminent country of the region. Although less than 5 per cent of the vast country (the Nile River valley) is inhabitable, more than 10 million people (mainly small farmers) lived in Egypt in 1900. The vast majority of

the population were Sunni Muslims and around 10 per cent were **Coptic Christians**.

Coptic Christian

Member of the Christian Church that originated in Alexandria, Egypt

Throughout the 19th century, Egypt was a magnet for European powers. Although nominally an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire ruled by a *khedive* (viceroy or governor), for much of the 19th century, Egypt (which at the time included what is now Sudan) was under the control of the British. A French company using thousands of Egyptian and foreign labourers constructed the strategically and economically important Suez Canal between 1859 and 1869, and gained a 99-year lease to operate the canal and collect tolls on ships passing through. The British Government bought shares in the company operating the canal in 1875, and for the next century regarded the protection of the canal, which it saw as the gateway to India and the East, as a primary goal of British foreign policy. Egyptian resentment of French and British intervention and interference resulted in a rebellion in 1882, which led to British occupation of the country. Those championing Egyptian independence directed their hostility towards the British rather than the Ottomans, and as a result they, and later Egyptian nationalists, saw themselves as somewhat separate from the Arabs seeking freedom from Turkish control. Equally, the Arab nationalists of the **Fertile Crescent** did not regard Egypt as part of their struggle.

Fertile Crescent

Name given to a semicircular region of the Middle East, regarded as the birthplace of civilisation

In some ways British policy towards Egypt during the First World War and the inter-war years closely paralleled its policy in Palestine. When the war broke out in November 1914,

the British immediately severed the formal link between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire and declared Egypt a protectorate, promising to prepare the country for independence. Australian troops were among the thousands of soldiers stationed in Egypt. As a result of the economic and other hardships caused by martial law, Egyptian hostility towards British rule dramatically increased in the war years.

In May 1919, the League of Nations recognised the British protectorate of Egypt, a move that was bitterly opposed by all elements of Egyptian society. However, the British and Egyptian governments could not agree on what British interests should be guaranteed and protected, so on 28 February 1922, the British Government ended its protectorate over Egypt, declaring Egypt independent, except for four main areas of power. This meant that Britain was still responsible for the defence of Egypt, the protection of British communications within Egypt, the protection of foreign interests in Egypt, and the administration of Sudan. This did not satisfy many. In March 1922, the Egyptian self-declared Sultan, Fu'ad, declared himself king. Parliamentary elections were held in 1923 and the nationalist Wafd Party won easily.

Over the next 30 years many elections were held but the Wafd was frequently the major governing party. It worked to abolish the British four reserve powers and gain complete independence for Egypt as Iraq had through the Anglo-Iraqi treaty in 1930. There was also considerable friction over who was to rule Sudan and how the waters of the Nile were to be shared. In April King Fu'ad died and was replaced by his young son, Farouq, who became regent. During 1936–37 arrangements were worked out between the ruling Wafd Party and Britain, and an Anglo-Egyptian treaty was signed in 1936, granting Egypt formal independence. The following year Egypt was admitted to the League of Nations and Farouq became King in July. The Second World War once again brought British and Egyptian leaders into conflict as Britain established its main Middle East military base and installations in that country. Tensions developed during the war continued in the following years, especially as Egypt became caught up in the regional war following the proclamation of Israel in 1948.

Conclusion

From late 1917 to 1948, Palestine was ruled by a Christian power for the first time in more than four centuries. The First World War had devastated the remote, somewhat neglected and underdeveloped region. The British governed Palestine as if it was a British crown colony. In Palestine, there was an increase in population, prosperity and polarisation. These three factors contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of suspicion and fear and, frequently, conflict.

At first, both Arabs and Jews had welcomed the British as liberators. Arabs believed they would be freed from the oppressive rule of the Ottomans and achieve independence. Zionist Jews, who had begun arriving in relatively significant numbers over the previous 30 years or so, believed that the British would facilitate the establishment of a 'national home' for the Jewish people in Palestine. In the next 30 years, between 1918 and 1948, the ambitions of both groups were frustrated, although Britain did favour Jewish over Arab aspirations. The Arab population was particularly disillusioned. By 1948, the Jewish population of Palestine had increased tenfold, from 60 000 in 1918 to around 650 000 in 1948. Adhering to the 1917 promise to favour Jewish activities in Palestine, British administrations had permitted Jewish purchases of land, the establishment of settlements, towns, industries, banks, schools and even an army.

Chapter summary

- + In 1915 the British, in their effort to secure Arab support for the war effort, promised, in a series of letters between British High Commissioner in Egypt, McMahon and Emir Hussein, King of the Hejaz (present-day Saudi Arabia) to help the Arabs gain their independence from the Turks.
- + In 1916 the British negotiated and signed a secret agreement with their French Allies to divide the Middle East between them while allowing for certain sections to be given to the Arabs to form a state. The Sykes–Picot Agreement contradicted the pledge they had given to the Arabs in 1915.
- + In 1917 the British issued the Balfour Declaration, a public letter of support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the World Zionist Organization, was closely involved in the discussions whereas the Arabs were never consulted.
- + The Balfour Declaration was enshrined after the war in the League of Nations mandate for Palestine (formalised at the San Remo conference in 1920) and became one of the legal documents upon which Israel is based. It openly favoured the Jews while denying the Arabs their national aspirations.
- + The British administration of Palestine during the mandate was divisive, working through the powerful Arab families and pitting them against each other. They fractured the Palestinian National movement, denying it the ability to unite to reclaim their homeland from the British and the Jews while providing the Jews with formal support as outlined in the mandate document, to establish organisations that could eventually govern a Jewish state.
- + The British White paper of 1939 attempted to redress the concerns of the Arabs in terms of proposing a ‘one state’ or ‘unitary state’ solution with proportional representation and limiting Jewish immigration to 30 per cent of the population. This was greeted with hostility and violence by Jews who wanted a separate state and the numbers to set it up and it was rejected by the Arabs.
- + The conflicting promises made by the British to the Arabs, the Jews and the French exacerbated the situation in the Middle East, laying the foundations for further conflict in the area.
- + With few exceptions (Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran), the hopes for independence and peace shared by the various religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East were dashed by the European powers that ruled over them in place of the Turkish Empire.
- + The struggle for peace was only just beginning.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/middleeast>

Further resources

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Chapter review activities

- 1 In your own words define the following terms:
Mandate Arab Jew Palestine nationalism Zionism Balfour Declaration
Sykes–Picot Agreement Peel Commission the Haganah
- 2 Place the following events in correct chronological order:
 - + Peel Commission Report recommended partition of Palestine
 - + Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud gained control of Saudi Arabia. Declared kingdom in 1932 and ruled until 1953

- + Iraq declared independence
 - + League of Nations ratified British Mandate of Palestine
 - + Sykes–Picot Agreement between Britain and France
 - + Sharif Hussein began Arab Revolt
 - + Arab Revolt in Palestine
 - + Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
 - + First World War began
 - + Mandate of Palestine to Britain and conditions for its administration
 - + Second World War began
- 3 Using this chapter and other resources, prepare a short (approximately one page) biography, detailing the life and significance of one of the following individuals for the period between 1914 and 1939:
- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) | Theodor Herzl |
| Abdul Aziz (Ibn Saud) | Henrietta Szold |
| Colonel TE Lawrence | Tarab abd al-Hadi |
| Chaim Weizmann | Vladimir Jabotinsky |
| Arthur Balfour | King Abdullah |
| Haj Amin al-Husseini | |
- 4 On a blank map of the Middle East, identify all the countries referred to in this chapter, and make a list of each country's neighbours.
- 5 Prepare a mindmap, or similar graphic organiser, to illustrate the major issues of the Middle East during the period between 1914 and 1939.
- 6 Using information from this text as a starting point, explore the outbreaks of violence within the British Mandate of Palestine. What similarities and differences do you see between the riots of 1920 and 1929?
- 7 Brainstorm, individually or in small groups, the differences and similarities between the British administration of Palestine and/or Iraq during the mandate period (1920–48). Write two paragraphs using evidence from this chapter to summarise the differences and similarities.
- 8 What was the impact of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the 1920 and 1930s? Write a single-paragraph response.
- 9 Assess the significance of the Arab Revolt of 1936–39.
- 10 What role did women play in shaping or influencing the course of events in the Middle East during the Mandate period?

- 11 'The Arabs of the Middle East, despite support from the British and French throughout the Mandate period to 1939, sabotaged their own case by their disunity and intransigence.' Evaluate the Arab response to the various British and French proposals for self-rule in the Middle East.
- 12 In groups, conduct a class debate on the topic: 'Why did the Balfour Declaration assume such significance in the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict?' Be sure to examine how all the parties view the declaration.
- 13 'The British from their very first contact in the Middle East betrayed the Arabs and used the Jews to achieve their own personal goals.' Compare what the British told Arabs and Jews about their plans for the future of the Middle East during the First World War. Were they compatible?
- 14 Discuss the similarities and differences between the experiences of the local inhabitants under the French and British mandates.