
POLS 330: MIDEAST POLITICS

WWI AND ITS AFTERMATH



WHEN WE LAST MET...

Ottoman power rises...

Ottoman power withers...

- A more muscular European challenge:
 - Economic capitulations
 - Europeans as “protectors” of minority groups
 - By the end of 18th cen, “Eastern Question” replaces Ottoman threat
- *Tanzimat* pursued in response to waning power
 - Move to centralize and modernize the state
 - But also move to homogenize under single legal framework
 - What were the perverse effects?

AGENDA

- European encroachment into the OE
- WWI in the MENA
 - Key events
 - Dueling resolutions

RISE AND FALL OF THE OTTOMANS

Ottoman Identities

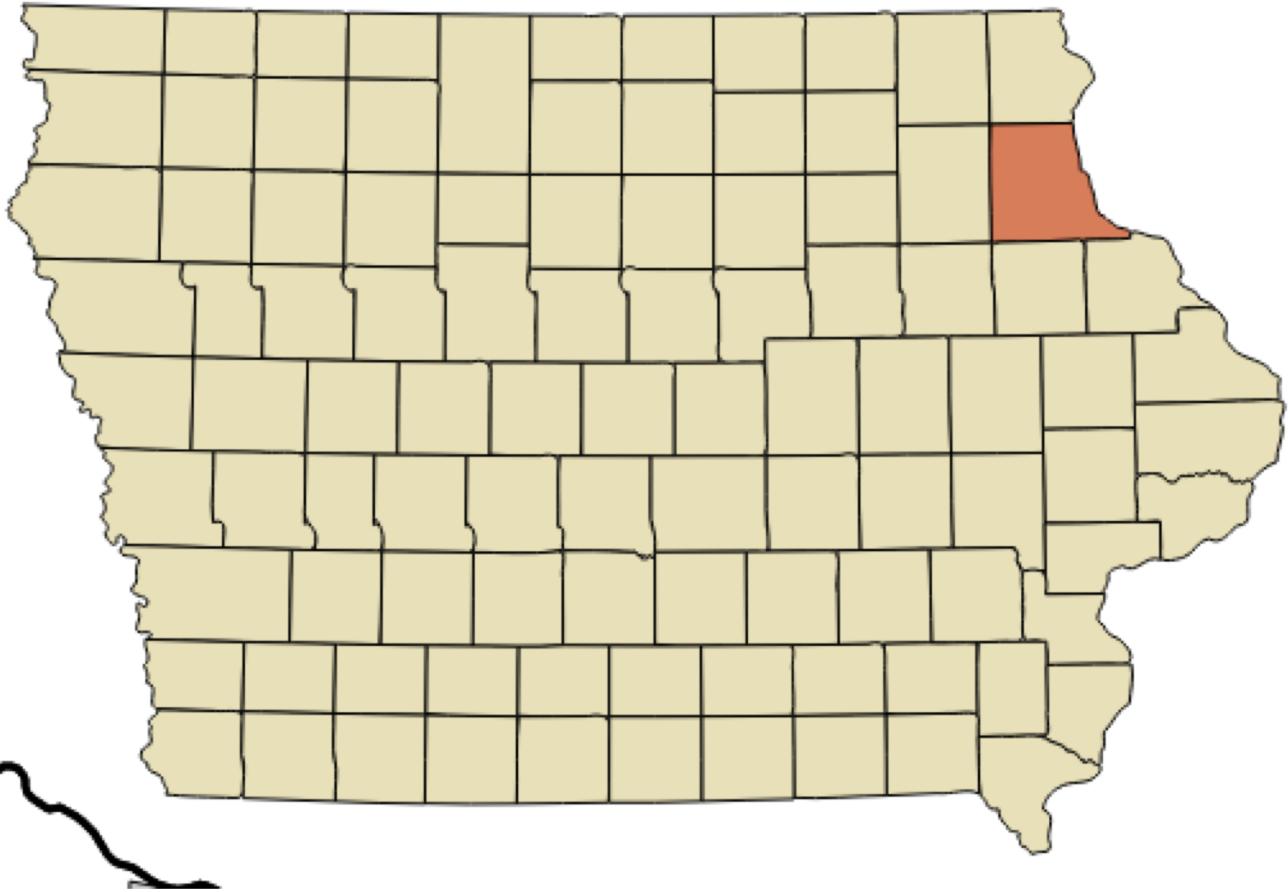
- *Tanzimat* meant to build a sense of “**Ottomanism**”
- Abdul Hamid II ascends to the sultanate in 1876, immediately rolls back reforms
 - Promoted an **Ottoman Islamic identity** – MAKE THE OE GREAT AGAIN!
- All this did not sit well with the more reform-minded political actors
 - Abdul Hamid II deposed by the Young Turks in 1908
 - Advanced a **proto-Turkish nationalism**
 - How did this particularistic nationalism sit with the subjects of a multi-national empire?



WHAT ABOUT THAT EUROPEAN ENCROACHMENT THOUGH?

Sometimes, just a naked colonial grab:

- 1830s—early 1900s, Britain chipped away pieces of Yemen and the gulf coast up through Kuwait
 - What was their goal?
- France lands in Algiers following the "fly swatter" incident in 1830, incorporating Algeria following a bloody war and taking Tunisia and Morocco along the way
 - What does the Algerian resistance have to do with a small town in Iowa?



Elkader, Iowa

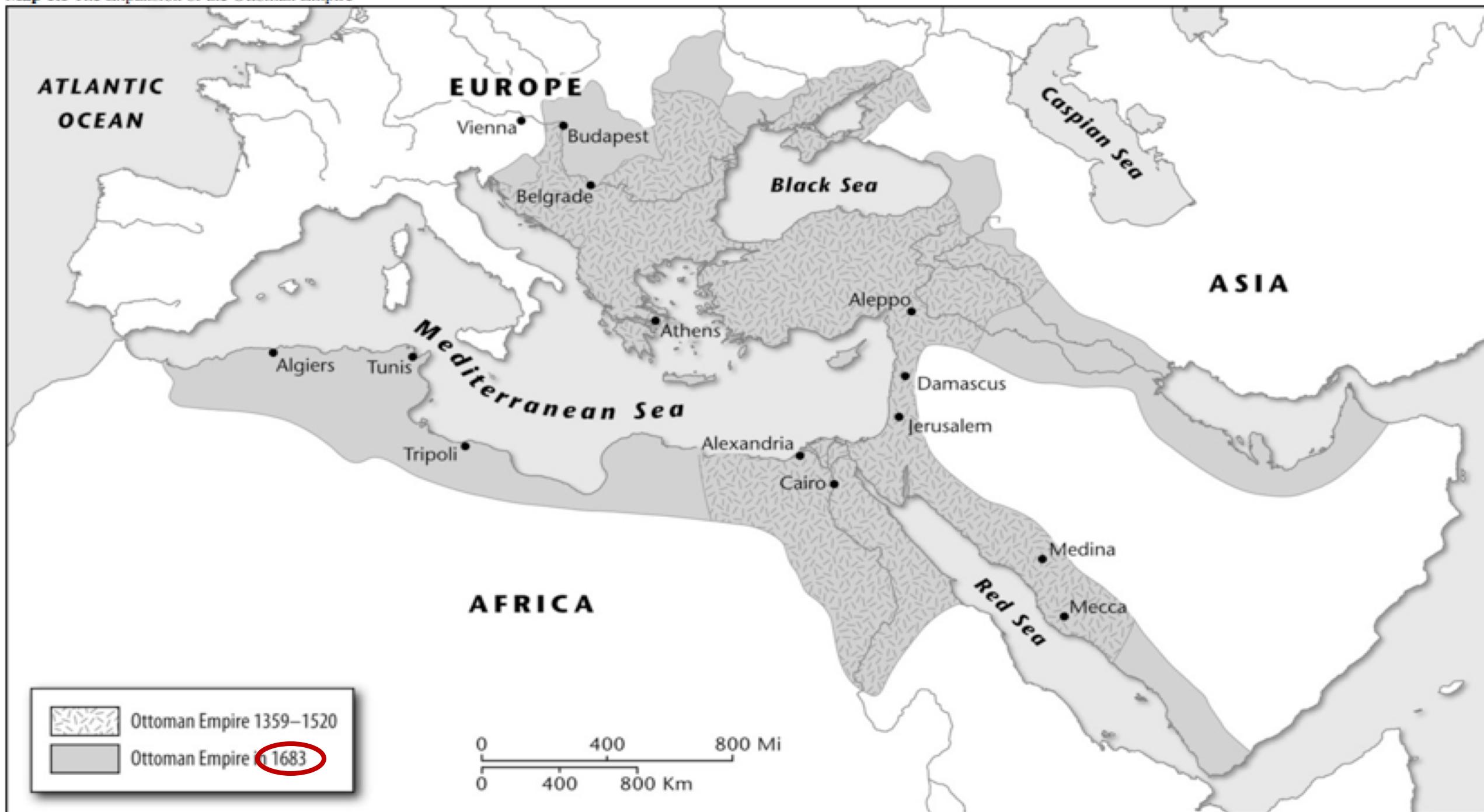
Abdelkader El Djezairi

WHAT ABOUT THAT EUROPEAN ENCROACHMENT THOUGH?

Sometimes, the intervention was packaged as a means to “resolve” an economic dispute:

- In the second half of the 19th Century, Mehmet Ali’s successors in Egypt rack up a ton of debt financing grand projects (most notably the Suez Canal) expecting to pay it off with the proceeds from cotton
- *What does Egyptian cotton have to do with the **Statue of Liberty**?*

Map 1.1 The Expansion of the Ottoman Empire





WWI IN THE MENA

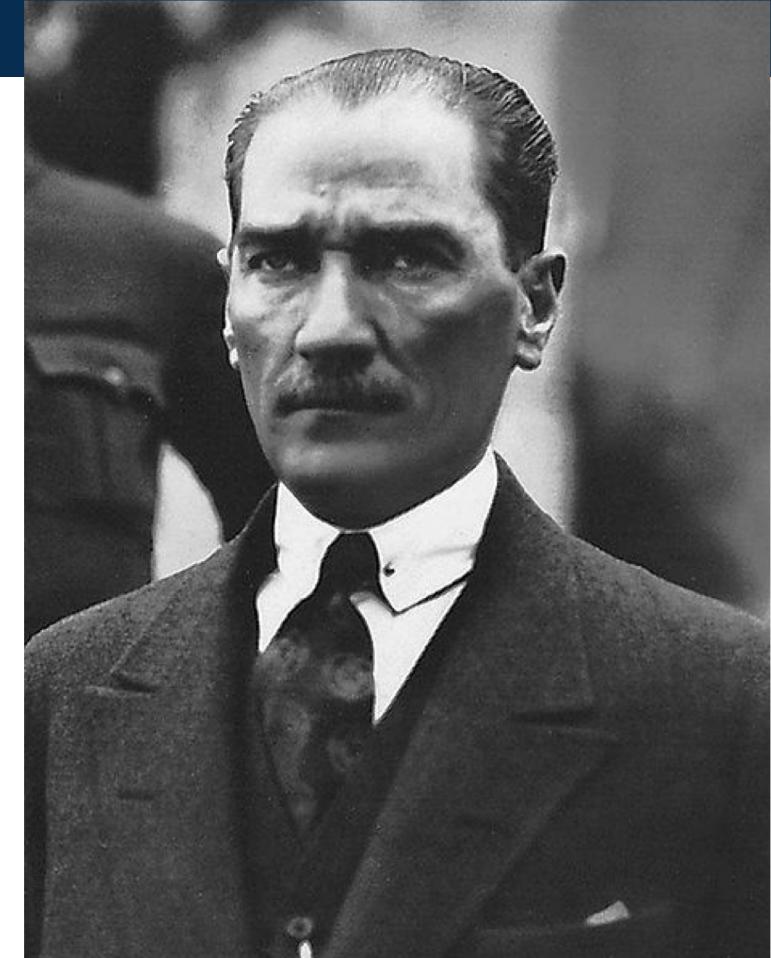
Armenian Genocide

- Russians deal the Ottomans a heavy blow at the outset of hostilities
- Ottoman army general accused the Armenian population in Anatolia of supporting the Russians; orders that they be “deported”
 - Scores of able-bodied males (including those fighting in the Ottoman army) summarily executed, hundreds of thousands more subsequently dying in round-ups and marches through the Syrian desert
- Dispute over both numbers (Turkey says 300K, Armenians say 1.5M, most scholars put it at upwards of 1M) as well as whether or not the killing was systematic (although widely believed to be so)

WWI IN THE MENA

Gallipoli Campaign

- Britain and France try and capture Constantinople, but it ends up being one of the greatest Ottoman victories during the war
- The victory also brought a Commander by the name of **Mustafa Kemal** to prominence, later dubbed **Kemal Ataturk**, founder of the Republic of Turkey



WWI IN THE MENA



Arab Revolts

- Hussein bin Ali (the *Sharif* or Guardian of Mecca) offers to initiate a revolt in exchange for an Arab Kingdom following the war
 - Why would he make this offer?
 - Why, from the British perspective, was Hussein the ideal candidate for this position?
- Hussein's son, Faisal, with the help of TE Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) launches revolt

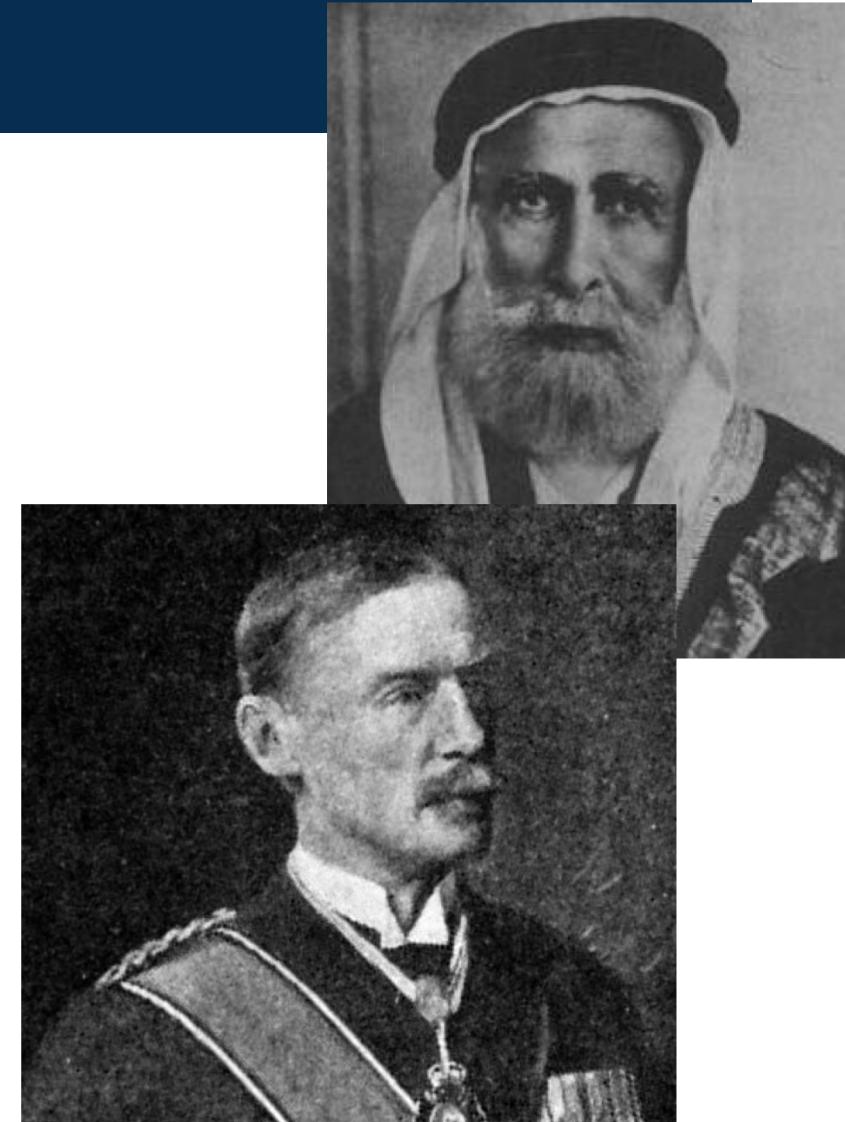
WWI IN THE MENA

McMahon–Hussein Correspondence

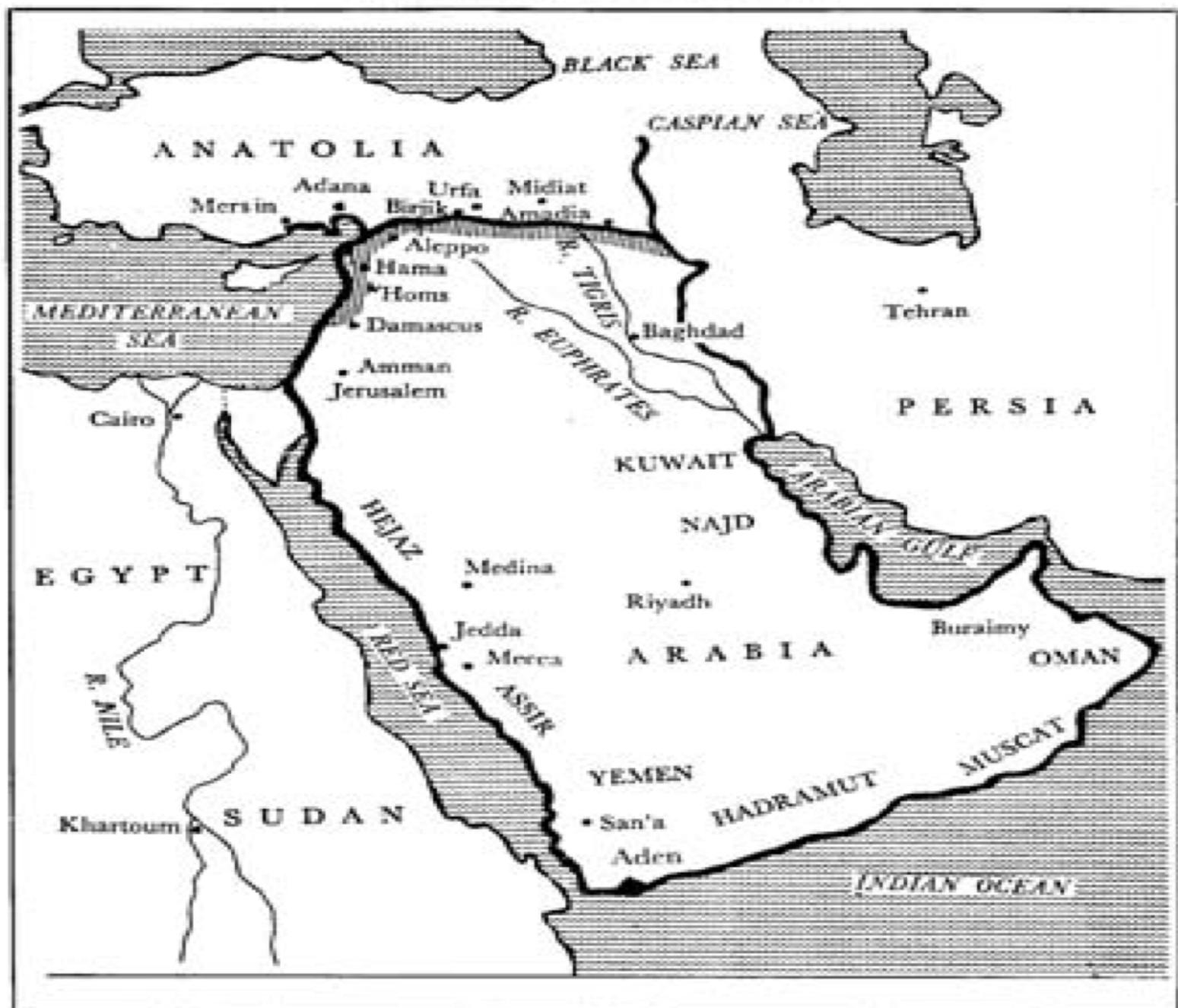
- Primed by perceptions of Turkish supremacy and building Arab nationalism, Sharif Hussein offers to lead a revolt if the Brits recognized Arab independence

- Sir Henry McMahon, British high commissioner in Egypt responds:

"Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca"



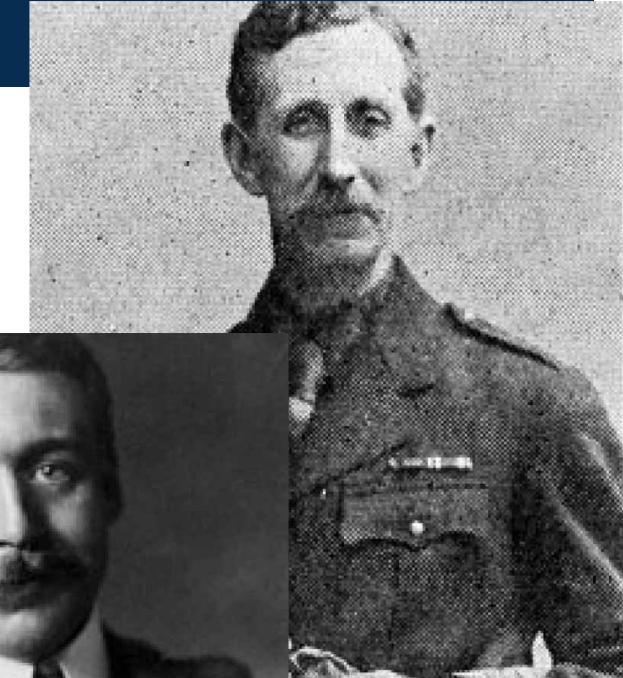
Map 1
THE EASTERN ARAB WORLD

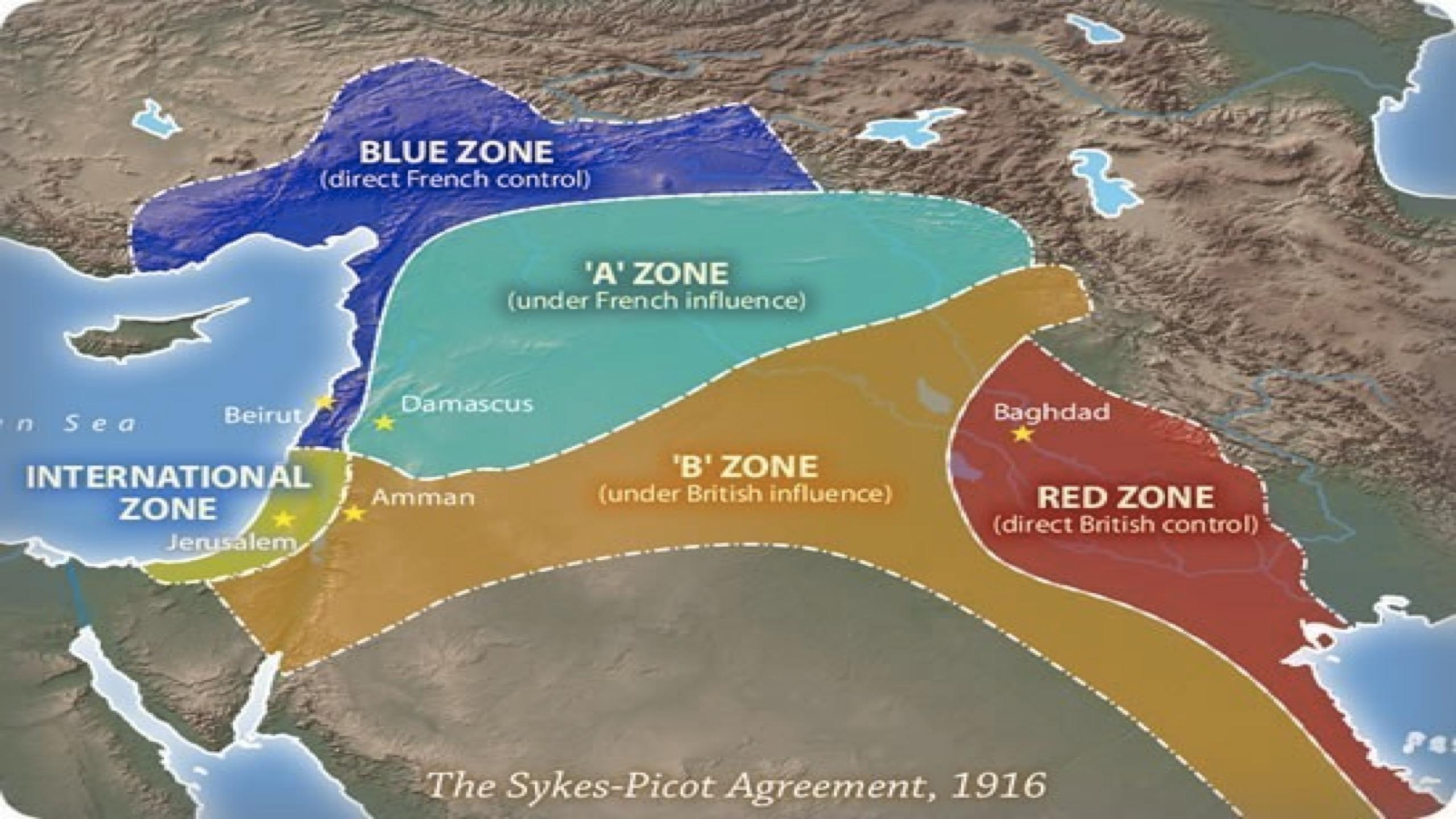


WWI IN THE MENA

Sykes-Picot

- Britain and France peg respective representatives to negotiate the partition of Ottoman territories
- Francois Georges-Picot: A diplomat whose family was “very involved in the whole colonial project in Asia”
- Mark Sykes: Military man, diplomat, politician...and MidEast “expert” (gifted amateur) who studied at Cambridge



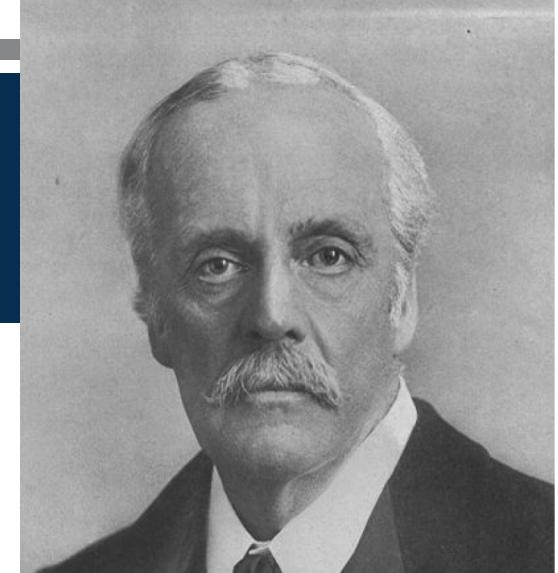
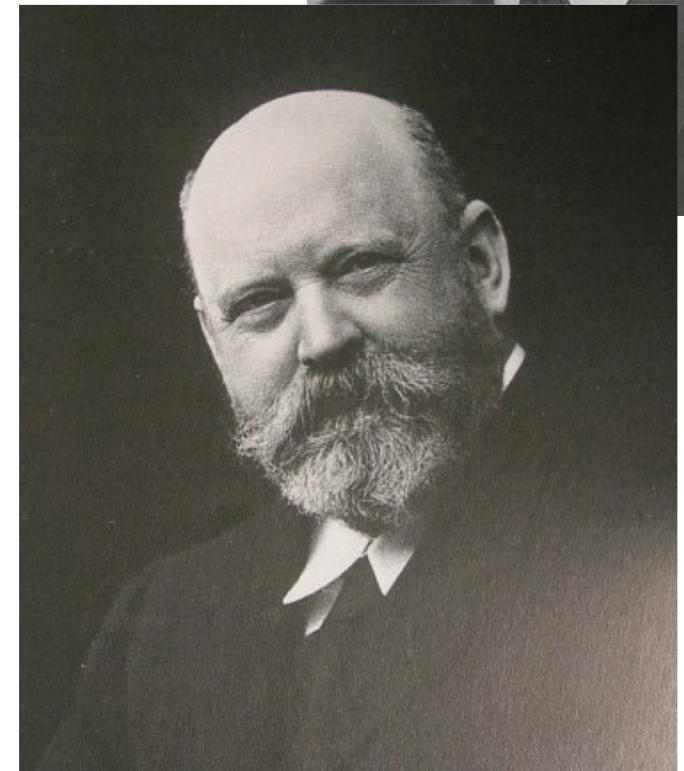


The Sykes-Picot Agreement, 1916

WWI IN THE MENA

Balfour Declaration

- Correspondence between UK Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, and Lord Walter Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community
- According to the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, the British endorsed the Zionist goal of establishing a “**national home**” in Palestine for Jews around the world
- As Palestine was implicated directly (although, importantly, not explicitly) in both Sykes-Picot and the McMahon–Hussein Correspondence, the Balfour Declaration really muddied the waters



WWI IN THE MENA

Balfour Declaration

What prompted the British to back Zionist claims?

- Jews in Palestine would be a minority and hence dependent on the British
- Overestimation of Jewish power in the US and Russia (wanted to endear themselves to influential Jewish officials in both countries)
- Strategy of mobilizing every possible opinion and force across the world: Basically, “hey, it can’t hurt” (...they may have underestimated the effects)

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

“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
A. J. Balfour*

WWI IN THE MENA

Three general guidelines for partition:

- McMahon–Hussein Correspondence (concludes January 1916)
- Sykes–Picot (signed May 1916)
- Balfour Declaration (created November 1917)

Which ends up dictating the post-war settlement?

- NONE OF THEM
- In part due to the political machinations that took place during the final years of the war on through the immediate aftermath
- In part due to the mutually exclusive and contradictory nature of the agreements (not least as concerns Palestine)

WWI IN THE MENA

Enter the League of Nations (forerunner of the United Nations)...

- Not willing to let Britain and France just have there way with the MidEast (newfound deference to freedom and self-determination)

notions as freedom and self-determination. The result was the invention of a new instrument of political control, the mandate, which was used to legitimize British and French government of their Middle Eastern possessions. This had many of the features of an old-fashioned colony but it also required the mandate holders to submit to certain internationally sanctioned guidelines, notably the need to establish constitutional governments in the new states as a way of preparing their peoples for eventual independence. Another of these important



League of Nations Mandates, 1920