

# The Countries of Southwest Asia

## SECTIONS

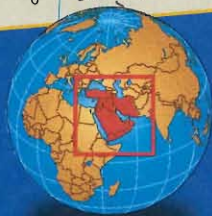
1 Creating the Modern Middle East

2 Israel: A Determined Country

3 Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq

4 Arabian Peninsula

5 Turkey, Iran, and Cyprus



## learning LOCATIONS

### Mapping the Region

Create a map like the one above, lightly shading each country a different color. Then add the labels for countries and bodies of water that are shown on this map.

## 1

# Creating the Modern Middle East

## Section Preview

### Main Ideas

- Many ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East demanded political independence when the Ottoman Empire fell.
- World War I greatly influenced the modern history of the Middle East.
- The 1948 war between Israel and the Arab countries left the Palestinians without a homeland.

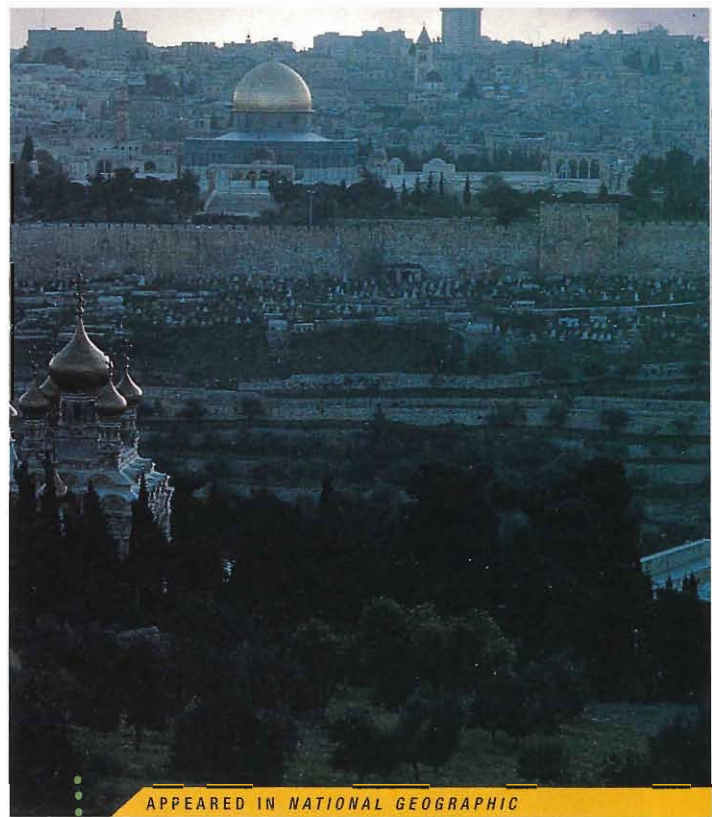
### Vocabulary

mandate, Zionist, self-determination

The Middle East has a long and turbulent history. More than three thousand years ago, the region's great wealth and location at the center of trading routes between Europe, Africa, and Asia made it an important source of power. This area was repeatedly conquered by groups from within and without. The movement of conquering peoples across the Middle East gave the region a unique character. It became a tangle of diverse ethnic groups and religious beliefs.

## Uniting Peoples

When the followers of Muhammad swept out of the Arabian Peninsula into the ancient lands of Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Persia in the mid-600s, they encountered a mosaic of cultures. Most of the conquered people adopted the Islamic religion and the Arabic language. Others, mainly Christians and Jews, continued to practice their religions. The Persians, Kurds, and Armenians maintained their own strong cultural identities.



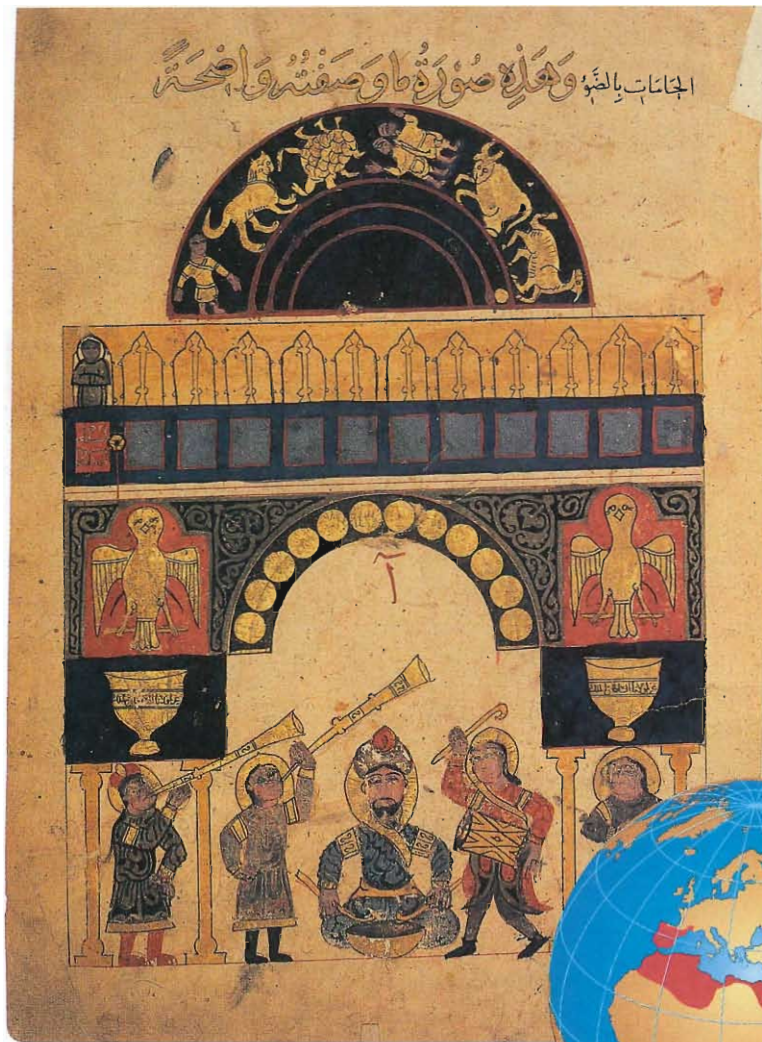
APPEARED IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

The city of Jerusalem is sacred to Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

For over 150 years Islam was successful in governing these different peoples as one political region. But beginning in the tenth century, the Arabs could no longer control their huge empire in the Middle East. Within a short time, large numbers of Turks, led by the Seljuks (SEL jooks), conquered almost all of the Middle East. They adopted the Islamic religion and ruled the Middle East for more than four hundred years before losing control to the region's last great empire builders—the Ottoman Turks.

Under the Ottomans, the people of the region continued to practice their religions. The Ottomans did not impose Islamic law on non-Muslims. Christians and Jews were allowed to govern important aspects of their lives, such as marriage and death, according to their beliefs.

Beginning in the late 1700s, discontent and rivalry developed among the different ethnic and religious groups under Ottoman control. Many of these groups were eager to establish independent homelands. The Ottoman



## A Mighty Islamic Empire

- **Movement** The map at right shows the Islamic Empire at its height around A.D. 750. Arabs brought their technological achievements to the lands they conquered. Pictured above is an elaborate, water-powered clock described in *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, written in 1206. **What other aspects of their culture did the Arabs bring to their empire?**

leadership was no longer powerful enough to hold its empire together.

At the same time, European nations were eager to exert political influence in the Middle East and gain new markets for their products. By the mid-1800s, the Ottoman Empire was being called “the sick man of Europe.” And Great Britain, France, and Russia were waiting for it to die.

## World War I

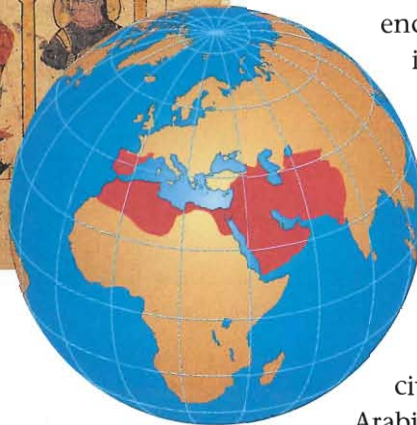
In 1914 World War I broke out. Great Britain, France, and Russia, known as the Allies, were on one side. On the other side were Germany and Austria-Hungary, known as the Central Powers. The Ottoman Empire joined in alliance with the Central Powers. Although World War I was fought mainly in Europe, it greatly affected the course of modern Middle Eastern history.

**Secret Negotiations** Soon after the war started, the Allies began secret negotiations to decide how to divide the Ottoman Empire when it was defeated. They agreed that, except for the Arabian Peninsula, each of them would control different parts of the empire. The Arabs on the Arabian Peninsula would be given their independence when the war ended. Great Britain, eager to exert its power in the area, entered into other, separate agreements as well.

In 1915, Sir Henry McMahon, a representative of the British government, began to correspond with Husayn ibn 'Ali. Husayn was the Arab ruler of the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina on the Arabian Peninsula. He was an important leader among the Muslim Arabs who

wanted to break away from the Ottoman Empire and establish an independent Arab homeland. In his letters, McMahon hoped to convince the Arabs to support Great Britain in its fight against the Ottomans. Letters discussing possible arrangements went back and forth between the two men for almost a year.

Finally, Husayn agreed to revolt against the Ottomans in exchange for British support of a homeland for all Arabs, including Christians. From the letters that had passed between him and McMahon, Husayn believed that almost all of the area from southern Turkey to southern Arabia, and from the Mediterranean Sea east to the borders of Iran would be one vast Arab country.



**A Broken Promise** Unknown to Husayn, however, Great Britain and France were secretly working out another agreement for dividing the Ottoman Empire. This agreement, known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, limited the independent Arab state to the area that is now Saudi Arabia and Yemen. It gave the French control of Syria and allotted Palestine and Iraq to Great Britain. When the Arabs discovered this, they felt Great Britain had broken its promise to them.

At the peace conference following the Allies' victory, the once-great empire of the Ottomans was reduced to a single independent country—Turkey. The Arab state the British promised to Husayn was limited to the area that is now Saudi Arabia and Yemen. France and Great Britain divided the rest of the Ottoman Empire between them. France took Syria—including the area that would become the country of Lebanon—as a mandate. A **mandate** referred to land to be governed on behalf of the League of Nations until it was ready for independence. Great

Britain was given Palestine, Trans-Jordan, and Iraq as mandates.

## Arabs and Jews

By the mid-1940s, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon had been established as independent countries. The political future of what remained of Palestine after the creation of Jordan was still to be decided, however.

The issue of independence for Palestine created a dilemma for Great Britain. Two groups claimed Palestine as their homeland—the Arabs and the Jews. The Arabs had lived for centuries in Palestine. Many of them traced their ancestry back to the area's earliest settlers. But the Jews also had ancient historical ties to Palestine. Their ancestors had migrated to this region beginning around 1900 B.C. to 1700 B.C. By 1000 B.C. these people were known as the Hebrews. The Hebrews established a kingdom, which later split into two kingdoms and then was defeated in a succession of military conquests. After their

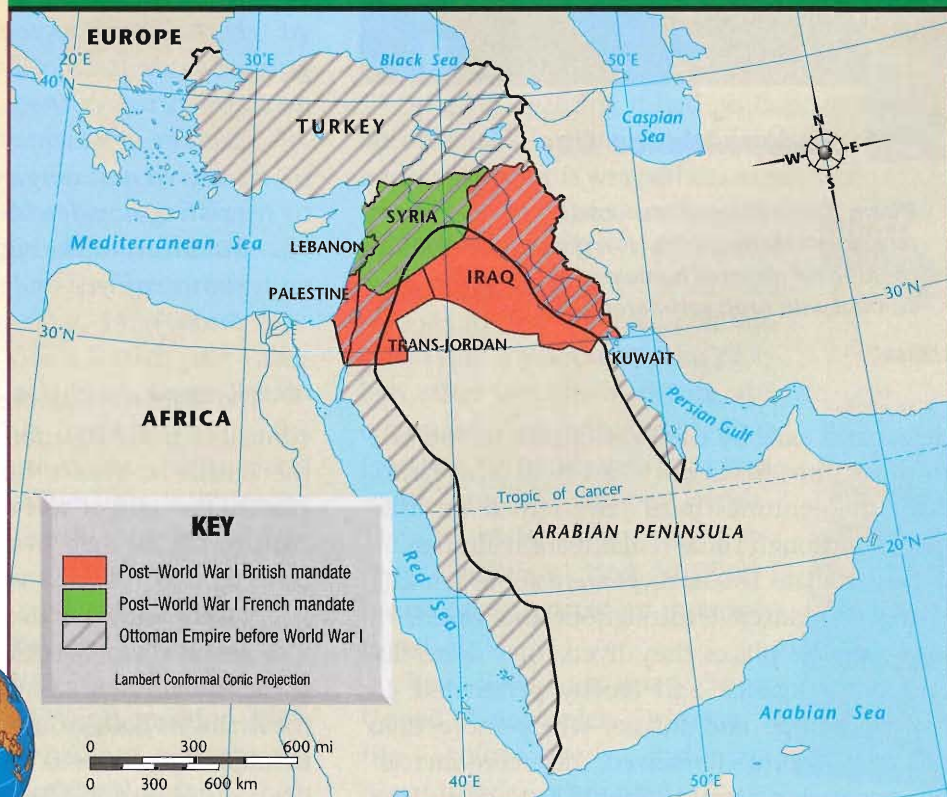
### APPLYING THE GEOGRAPHIC THEMES

● **Regions** Which countries were part of the British mandate following World War I? Which were part of the French mandate?

● **Regions** The land that was Palestine and Trans-Jordan is now Israel and Jordan. According to the map, what was Palestine's status prior to and following World War I?



## The Emergence of the Modern Middle East





## Independence Day

- **Place** The creation of Israel was a joyous moment for many people. *How did the creation of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine conflict with Arab self-determination?*

defeat and exile by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., however, the Jews began to move to other lands. Over the centuries most Jews settled in other places, although some remained in Palestine.

By the late 1800s, there were about ten million Jews scattered throughout the world. In many of the places they lived, they were discriminated against and cruelly persecuted. In eastern Europe and Russia, where more than half of the world's Jews lived, they faced increasing oppression. Afraid of what lay ahead, Jews

began to emigrate. Some called themselves **Zionists**, after the hill in Jerusalem to which Jews had always prayed to return. They believed that the only way to solve the problem of oppression was by returning to the place they considered their homeland—Palestine—and creating their own country.

In 1882 the first group of Zionists immigrated to Palestine. Their numbers had reached almost 85,000 by 1914. As Jewish immigration increased, the Arabs who were living in Palestine under Ottoman rule grew more and more fearful of losing their land.

**Two Peoples, One Homeland** The Zionists put increasing pressure on Great Britain and other European nations to support their plan for an independent homeland. In 1917, in the midst of World War I, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration. It stated Britain's support for the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine without violating the rights of Arabs living there:

*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.*

The Arabs were shocked and dismayed by the content of the declaration. They had been led by the British to believe that all Arabs would be granted the right of **self-determination**, or the right to decide their own political future. They believed that Palestine would become part of a larger, independent Arab country. The British sent representatives to Arab leaders to assure them that Great Britain's goal was still self-determination for the Arabs. As both groups pressured Great Britain to fulfill its promises to them, it became clear that the goals of Jews and Arabs were at odds.

## Arab-Israeli Conflict

**Movement** Troops from Jordan, shown here patrolling the Palestinian border, and other Arab Legion nations attacked the newly created nation of Israel in 1948.

**What was the outcome of this Arab-Israeli war?**



While Britain searched for a way to solve the problem, the struggle between Jews and Arabs in Palestine became increasingly violent. As Jewish immigration grew, so did Arab feelings that their political future as an independent Arab country was threatened. Finally, the Arabs revolted by boycotting Jewish businesses and burning bridges and crops. The Jews retaliated. People on both sides were killed.

Meanwhile, Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. As Nazi Germany began to persecute Jews, thousands fled to Palestine. By 1939, the number of Jews living in Palestine had increased from 85,000 to 445,000.

Tensions between Great Britain, the Palestinians, and the Jews mounted. Great Britain decided to limit Jewish immigration to the area, leaving Jews stranded in Germany and other parts of Europe. The Jews in Palestine began a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the British.

**The Creation of Israel** Nearly six million Jews had perished in Nazi concentration camps by the time World War II ended in 1945. Thousands of survivors had no place to go. When the world learned of the Holocaust, there

was an outpouring of support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

However, the Arabs made up 70 percent of Palestine's population. They were bitterly opposed to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Why, they wondered, should they give up their land because of what the Nazis had done?

In 1947, realizing it had no hope of finding an acceptable solution, the British government announced that it was withdrawing from Palestine and turning the problem over to the United Nations. Immediately the United Nations formed a special committee to find a solution to the problem. After months of debate, the committee recommended that Palestine be partitioned into two states—one Arab and one Jewish. The city of Jerusalem, sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims would be designated an international city.

The Jews accepted the United Nations plan. However, the Arabs were furious. According to the plan, the

### GLOBAL ISSUES

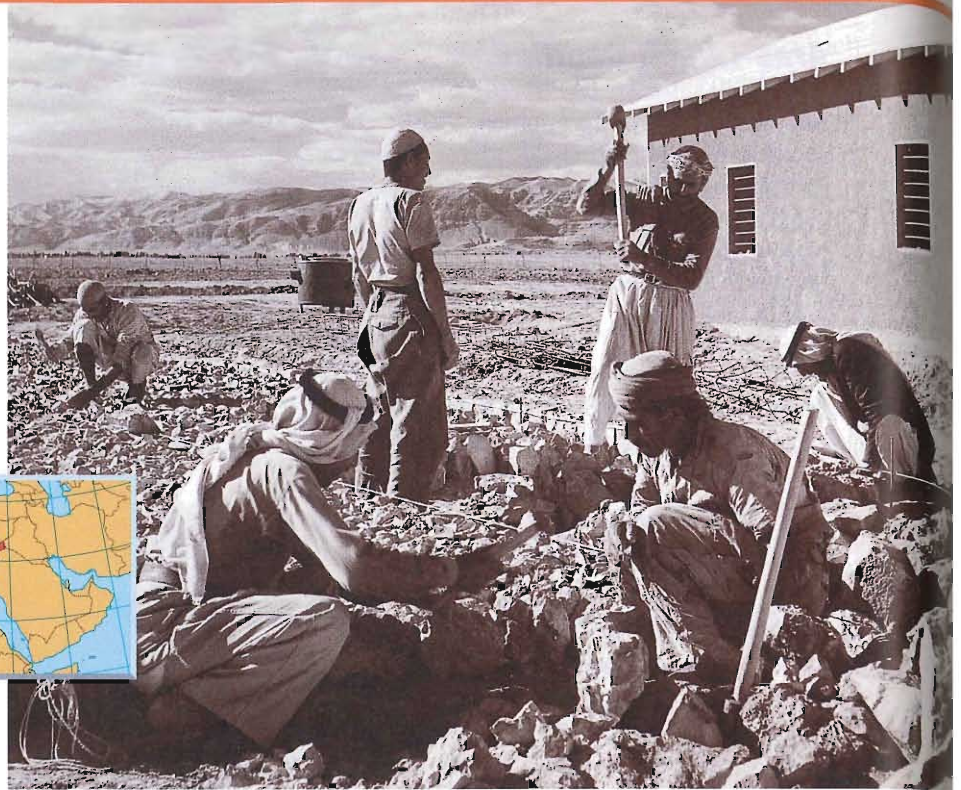
#### Conflict

*Many of the world's regional conflicts are related to geographic boundaries and disputes over territory. The Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Gaza, shown on the map on page 444, are all examples of such disputed territories.*

## Road to Recovery

**Movement** These Palestinian refugees, left homeless in 1948, are building a road through their settlement in Jordan.

**Critical Thinking** What is the importance of having a road?



Jewish state would include more than half the total land of Palestine, though less than one third of the population was Jewish.

Arab leaders warned that dividing Palestine would result in war. One Arab leader stated, "We Arabs shall not be losers. We shall be fighting on our ground and shall be supported . . . by 70 million Arabs around us."

Nevertheless, the United Nations voted to approve the partition of Palestine. In May

1948, David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Palestinian Jews, announced the independent, new state of Israel. In a matter of hours, neighboring Arab countries attacked Israel. By the end of the 1948 war, Israel controlled almost three fourths of Palestine, including land in the Negev Desert and half of Jerusalem. Jordan and Egypt divided the rest of Palestine between them. The Palestinians were left with no country at all.

## Section 1 Review

### Vocabulary and Main Ideas

1. Define: a. mandate b. Zionist  
c. self-determination
2. What effect did World War I have on the Middle East?
3. What was the Balfour Declaration?
4. **Critical Thinking: Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** Why do you think the Arab nations were opposed to the creation of the nation of Israel?

**Learning LOCATIONS**

5. Name five countries in Southwest Asia that border the Mediterranean Sea.
6. Name six Southwest Asian countries that share a border with Iraq.