**UNIT ONE: MEANING, GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLING**

1.1 The Importance of the Middle East

Let us start our discussion with the importance of the Middle East in history .True; it is only few regions of the world that provoke more interest, controversy, or international crises than the Middle East. Although the region has only come to the fore of American consciousness since World War II, it has been an important arena of world events from the beginning of written history. In ancient times, Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilizations born and flourished in the Middle East. Judaism, the first of the three great monotheistic religions, took form here during the 3000 year of the Old Testament era. From its seeds sprang Christianity and Islam, the two other world faiths born in the Middle East. The region was, successively, a part of the Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Mongol, Tatar, and Turkish empires, each contributing to a new fusion of culture and civilization there, fusions that at times reached high points in man’s development. During medieval times, the European Crusaders wrested the eastern shores of the Mediterranean from the Muslims in their attempts to seize the Holy Land. The practical result was to open Asia to contact and a free flow of trade with Western Europe.

It was Napoleon that began the era of modern history in the Middle East when he crossed the Mediterranean to reach the banks of the Nile and occupy parts of Palestine. He hoped to establish a base from which to demolish the British Indian Empire. Throughout the nineteenth century the great powers, recognizing the strategic value of the Middle East as the gateway to Asia made attempts to neutralize it, or, if that was not possible, to seize for themselves an area of influence within its confines. Tsarist Russia periodically push southward in the attempt to expand into Turkey and Iran. Nineteenth-century European diplomacy was plagued by the Eastern Question-as the many problems created by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire were called culminating at mid-century in the Crimean War from 1853 to 1865. Thereafter, the rise of numerous Balkan nationalist movements, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and the continuing dispute over the Turkish Straits resulted in several wars and major European diplomatic conferences. At the end of the century, Kaiser Wilhelm II, considering the possibilities of the area as a bridge to vast German empire in the East, devoted a major part of his foreign policy to acquiring a foothold on this doorstep to Asia. During both world wars I and II, the Middle East playeda major role in the grand strategy of the major contestants. When the United States and the Soviet Union became allies in World War II, tanks, trucks, and other lend-lease supplies from America reached Russia via Persian Gulf and Iran.

The importance of the Middle East was not known by all countries of the globe until recently. For example, until World War II, the United States concern with the Middle East had been small. To most Americans it seemed as remote as the valleys of the moon. A few missionaries and educators had become involved in setting up churches, schools, and colleges there; archaeologists and students of ancient history knew of the rich heritage of the area; and some commercial interests, such as the American Tobacco company, which obtained tobacco from Turkey, were drawn to the Middle East. The First American oil holdings were obtained during the 1920s and 1930s, but they did not begin to realize fantastic incomes until after World War II.

Following the end of Second World War the oil resources of the Arab world and Iran had become the most important single reason for the strategic value of the region to the United States. Companies with concessions in the Middle East produced hundred-million-dollar incomes, becoming the most profitable of all over sea investments. Oil brought such a profit to western investors because it had become a chief source of energy of the European industry. At least 80 to 90 percent of the oil used in the most of the countries of Western Europe came from the Middle East. By 1960 Iran and the oil-endowed Arabs states were producing nearly a quarter of the world’s output and continued two third of the known reserves.

Oil and natural gas and as well as its location on the air and the sea routes between the Europe and Africa, South East Asia, and the Far East involve the Middle East in the by polar conflict between communist and non-communist regions that came to the surface a few months after the end of World War II. Both the Soviet Union and the major western powers began their attempts to capture or influence the explosive nationalities movement that dominated the Middle Eastern scene in the late 1940s and early 1950s .The contemporary American could no longer consider the Middle East an obscure back water area of importance only to a few scholars or those with specialized interests.

The older form of the term “Middle East” and the “Near East “are used daily in the press and even in diplomatic exchanges; yet there exists no general agreement concerning the boundaries of the area so described. Not even scholars who have specialized in the study of this area wholly agree upon what territory or populations should be included in the term. The concept of a “Near East” emerged in the Western world in the great Age of Discovery, which began in the fifteenth century with the explorations of the Portuguese to find a new route to the East. With increasing contact, the area farthest away from Europe came to be ruled as part of the Ottoman Empire after 1453. The similar term “Levant,” which is sometimes used for this area, merely comes from the French word meaning the “rising” of the sun, or the East.

1.2 PHYSICAL SETTING

Coming to the Physical setting of the Middle East the prevailing Western image is a false one of vast desert lands inhabited by nomadic tribesmen mounted on camels or Arabian steeds and driving their flocks of goats and sheep from oasis to oasis. It is true that well over 90 percent of the region is arid and uncultivated because of climatic conditions. In much of the area the climate resembles that in southwestern United States: the Red Sea region is like the Gulf of California; the climate of Israel and Lebanon is similar to that of southern California; the Turkish coasts resemble northern California; and Syria and northern Arabia are arid like Arizona and New Mexico, both separated from a moist coast by a mountain screen. There is nothing in North America, however, as hot and dry as the great desert of central Arabia. However, the generally sparse rainfall, the scarcity of agricultural land, and the limited natural resources of the barren earth have burdened the Middle East with problems common to most arid lands.

Fortunately not all the region is desert water land. A fertile crescent stretches along the Levantine coast of the Mediterranean up to the foothills of the Taurus Mountains in Turkey and down again through the Tigris and Euphrates valleys in Syria and Iraq to the Persian Gulf. There are also the great alluvial strips in the Nile valley, enclaves of fairly rich agricultural land in Iran, and fertile coastal regions in Yemen in southern Arabia and in eastern Turkey along the Mediterranean. Lofty mountain ranges like the Taurus in Turkey, the Elburz and the Zagros in Iran, and the highland of Yemen cut the region into many isolated units. In the Elburz range the highest peak, Demavend, soars to over 18,900 feet and is snow-caped all year round.

Generally, the region is poor in natural resources other than petroleum. Turkey has enough mineral diversity for a modest industrial development; but even its iron, coal, and copper deposits are national resources of secondary importance. Although the oil of Iran and some of the states of the Arabian Peninsula is a major asset, its value depends on sales to world markets rather than internal use. Only in recent decades have oil profits been used extensively for national development of basic agricultural resources. Not all the region is “oil rich”, a majority of Middle Eastern countries produce no oil at all or only small quantities of it. Paradoxically, the countries with the greatest rate of economic development-Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Israel-have only relatively small petroleum deposits, while those rich in this resource-such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Abu Dhabi have difficulty in absorbing hundreds of millions of dollars annually in constructive development projects. Iraq and Iran have made major efforts to use oil profits for building up the nation, but political and social obstacles have prevented real success.

Water is the scarcest and most valuable resource of the Middle East. While the total amount available is not inconsiderable, poor distribution creates the region’s major problem. A greater part of the desert will always remain desert, for little can be done to alter the climatic conditions that have made most of the Middle East arid. The only hope for the better use of water is in improving irrigation facilities connected with the region’s few rivers, or desalination of brackish water. At present about 5 percent of the total area is used for crops. About one fifth of the cultivated land requires additional water. To expand the cultivated area by as much as 1 or 2 percent a decade, with present methods of increasing irrigation and soil productivity, would require a massive effort. Meanwhile, population increases at over 2 percent a year, creating a lag of resources behind population growth. Cheap processes for desalting sea water may soon be available, but even if there were unlimited amounts of irrigation water from the ocean, the cost of pumping it into upland fields would be prohibitive. Consequently, most of the approximately three million square miles in the Middle East will remain permanently unproductive desert and mountain.

There are only two major river systems in the area : the Nile, fed by sources in Ethiopia and Central Africa, and the Shatt el-Arab, fed by the Euphrates, Tigris, and Kuran rivers. The only other river over 350 miles long is the Kizil Irmak (Red River) in Turkey. Parallel to the eastern Mediterranean shore, the Jordan, Litani, and Orontes rivers create small fertile areas in Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Syria. The largest of these, the Jordan itself, is only 85 miles long. The length of the Jordan Valley from the principal source of the river at Mount Hermon to the southern end of the stream at the Dead Sea is 110 miles.

1.3 PEOPLING

Middle Eastern life has always been marked by its oasis character. Since time immemorial clusters of families have gathered around a spring or a river bank or in an area of greater rainfall. Within such more or less isolated geographic pockets a variety of peoples and cultures have developed, many having little knowledge of their neighbors, being cut off from them by natural barriers. Islands of culture have thus developed in many areas, each society consisting of limited, self-sustaining settlements isolated by the surrounding aridity. Until very modern times, the only links with the outside world that these “islanders” had were the occasional camel caravans passing through the barren wastes from one isolated settlement to another.

The largest island or oasis is that of the desert Arabs in Saudi Arabia, where, as it has been phrased by Philip Hitti, “ethnic purity is a reward… of ungrateful and isolated environment.” In the highland plateaus of the Levant coast are found pockets of religious groups such as the Samaritans, Druses, Maronites, Metawilas, and Aawis. In Iran, the Bakhtiari and Kshagia tribes, if they have not kept themselves completely isolated, have at least maintained their cultural autonomy behind their mountain walls. In eastern Anatolia and northern Iran the Kurds, as an ethnic group, have preserved a distinctive identity within the protecting Taurus and Zagros ranges. In northern Iraq are the Kurds, the Yezidis, a religious faction, and the Circassians and Turcomens, tribes with their own distinctive languages.

The main peoples with which we will deal in our study of the modern Middle East are the Semitic, Turkish, and Iranian linguistic groups. These are broad classifications and within each there are numerous subdivisions. It is difficult, if not impossible, to divide them into precise, scientific categories. Terms such as race, nationality, and religion often have meanings in the Middle East that differ from those of the western world. For this reason the following descriptions of the peoples of the Middle East, using these classifications, must be understood as approximations only.

A. The Semites

The largest group is the Semitic, whose principal living tongues are Arabic and Hebrew, the language of modern Israel. A few small remnants still use Chaldean and Syriac, but primarily for religious purposes. Our knowledge of Semitic languages begins with the written records left by the Akkadians, who were the forebears of the Babylonians and Assyrians. None of these civilizations has any existing direct linguistic or ethnic survivors except for the few users of Syria.

The tiny group of people which today call themselves Assyrains do not speak that ancient language but a modern form of Syriac, which is a branch of Aramaic. During the time of Christ, Aramaic was the language of Palestine west of the Jordan and also that of Iraq. The Semitic peoples who adopted Christianity used Armaic and its Syriac script. When the Arabs swept up out of Arabia into Syria and Iraq, the majority of the inhabitants in these regions were members of various Christian sects using variants of the Aramaic language and script. As the new conquerors established themselves, most of these peoples learned Arabic and became Muslims. Small, scattered pockets of Christians assimilated the Arabic language but retained their own religion. Today in Iraq there are still remnants of the Nestorians, formerly the principal Christian sect in the area. Larger early Christian groups remain unconverted in Syria, and in Lebanon nearly half the population today are Maronites (Eastern Uniates who are under the Church of Rome), Greek Orthodox, Jacobites, and other sects who are unconverted descendants from the pre-Islamic era. Most of these sects continue to use Syriac as a ritual language, and in a few villages the language is still spoken.

The origin of both modern Arabic and Hebrew script can be traced to the Phoenicians, another ancient but now extinct Semitic people. Historians postulate that they migrated to the Levant coasts from the shores of the Persian Gulf around the beginning of the Iron Age. Not only were the Phoenicians responsible for originating the Semitic alphabets, they also introduced many new techniques in craftsmanship and navigation. They explored the Mediterranean and opened the first sea-trade routes between the Middle East and Europe. Carthage, in North Africa, was originally a Phoenicians traders’ outpost. Although there are no Phoenicians today, the Arab sailors of Kuwait and Muscat and the traders of Lebanon dealing in global commerce may well be descendants of this ancient inventive and productive people.

B. The Arabs

Arabic was not originally the language of all this region. Its spread is a relatively new phenomenon in history. Two thousand years ago it was but one of many Semitic languages with its locus in central Arabia. Not until the Arab conquests following the birth of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries did it reach a position of cultural dominance. Prior to that time the languages of North Africa and parts of Iran were not Semitic, and those of Palestine and Syria, although Semetic, were not Arabic.

In the area, nearly one hundred million inhabitants are called, or call themselves, Arabs. Although the Arabs have much in common, there is almost as much diversity in their language and way of life as there is among the Latin peoples on the other side of the Mediterranean. In some respects there is even greater variety.

The term Arab does not yet designate a formal nationality, for there is still no single Arab nation-although many Arab nationalists aspire to one. Arabs are today nationals of Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Lebanon, the Republic of Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, or, until recently, if inhabitants of the Crown colony of Aden or one of the Aden protectorates, which became the People’s Democratic Republic of South Yemen, they may have traveled on British passports under the protection of the British sovereign.

Neither does the term indicate race in the modern, anthropological sense. Along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean there are whole towns full of blond, blue-eyed, light-skinned Arabs. Many of the leaders of the Arab world, in a mixed gathering of diplomats, would be indistinguishable from Germans or Swedes. But in the streets of almost any metropolis in the Arab world a traveler will pass some Arabs whose black skin, kinky hair, and negroid facial features would not seem out of place in Ghana or Nigeria. Africa’s contribution through migration and the slave trade to the racial types of the Middle East is evident. So great is the variety in hues of skin color, head shape facial features, types of hair, and body build throughout the Arab East that the term Arab cannot be understood to indicate race.

Frequently in discussions of Middle East problems we hear mention of “Jews and Arabs” in the area. This may result from wrongly interchanging the terms “Arab” and “Muslim”, “Jew” and Zionist.” So common is this error that in an early united Nations debate on the Palestine problem, United States Representative Warren Austin called upon “Jews and Arabs” to settle their differences in a “Christian” manner. Apparently Mr.Austin, as so many non-Middle Easterners, failed to realize that not all Arabs are Muslim. Indeed, there are actually thousands of Arab Jews. Even larger-several-million are the numbers of Arab Christians. True, all Arab nations, except Lebanon, are predominantly Muslim, but Islam is the official religion in only a few. Most of these countries are Muslim only in the sense that the United States is Christian. In fact the Arabs constitute but a small minority of the world’s Muslim population. Out of a world total of nearly a billion Muslims, less than fifth are Arab. Obviously then, the term “Arab” does not indicate the religion of those who so classify themselves.

What does the term mean then if it does not indicate race, religion, or nationality? As other such ethnic terms, like that of Jew, it is easier to indicate what an Arab is not than what he is. Arab national leaders are more and more associating the term with language, with culture, and with a vague, intangible emotional identification with “the Arab cause.” This is not an incontestable definition. There are many individuals and groups of people whose native tongue is Arabic but who would not consider themselves members of the Arab community. For many scholars all those are Arabs for whom the central fact of history is the mission of Muhammad and the memory of the Arab Empire and who in addition cherish the Arabic tongue and its cultural heritage as their common possession. Therefore, for the sake of convenience, we will accept as a general rule that an Arab is one whose native language and culture is Arabic and who identifies with “Arab” problems.

Although we will deal only with the Arabic-speaking nations on the Asian continent and with Egypt, the other African counties that are Arab should be noted: Sudan, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Somalia, Djibouti, Tunisia, and Algeria. They, along with Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Palestine, are members of the league of Arab states. The official language of all is Arabic, and all consider themselves to be Arab nations. The single greatest factor of unity and common identity among them is language. An approximate comparison is the somewhat similar identity of the English-speaking countries – the United states, Great Britain, and the British Commonwealth nations: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

But even accepting this generalization, one is likely to fall into simplification. Although the literate inhabitants of all the Arab nations read and write the same language, local dialects, of which there are dozens, are quite varied. Such dialects are often mixed with Persian, Turkish, English, French, or Berber words, depending on the speaker’s origin. In this regard ,Carleton S.Coon in Caravan tells us the disappointment felt by a devout Arabian Muslim on his pilgrimage to Mecca when an Algerian Arab greeted him with “Bonjour alaikum” (with the Arabic meaning “unto you”). Colloquial Arabic is so imprecise that often the same terms have opposite meanings in different parts of the Arab world. For example, North Africans say muzien for “good,” while in Irag mu-zen, pronounced almost the same way, has the opposite meaning.

In general, there are five main groups of Arabic dialects within which exist dozens of subdivision: Moroccan spoken west of Tunis; Egyptian divided from Syrian and Arabian dialects by the Sinai Peninsula; Syian spoken in western Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, an Syria; the speech of Iraq; and that considered to be most pure, spoken east of the Jordan and in Arabia.

The classical, or written, Arabic that is common to all literate Arabs, and to millions of other Muslims, is found in the Koran, Islam’s Holy Book, which Muslims believe was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by Allah, the Arabic word for God. Indeed, many devout Muslims in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Indonesia cannot speak Arabic but can read it, and use it for worship.

In modern times, with the development of mass communications and diffusion of newspapers, radio broadcasts, and motion pictures, it has become increasingly necessary to fuse the classical and colloquial languages; to this end there is now emerging a popular newspaper Arabic in which the Egyptian and Syrian dialects are most influential.

C. The Jews

The only other large Semitic group in the Middle East is the Jews, now concentrated in Israel. Their language, Hebrew (not to be confused with Yiddish, an East European German dialect using many Hebrew expressions, as well as Hebrew script, and sometimes called “Jewish"), is derived from the same source as Arabic and is like a sister tongue because it is so similar in grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and script. Not only are the roots of many Arabic and Hebrew words identical, but actual terminology is so similar that a knowledge of either Hebrew or Arabic gives a student considerable advantage in learning the other.

Like “Arab,” the term “Jew’is difficult to define and the subject of much controversy. It is, of course, not a nationality since there are not only Israeli but American, French, Russian, and even Arab Jews. Racially the Jews are as composite a people as the Arabs, if not more so. The racial types visible in the streets of Tel Aviv or Jerusalem today are literally gathered from the four corners of the earth. Fair-skinned “Nordics,” Negroes, brown-skinned Indians, and even a few Chinese mix in the racial mélange.

Most controversial is the question of whether or not the designation “Jewish” indicates only religion or some broader classification, such as an ethic group or a “people”. In Israel and elsewhere there are many individuals who are not religious in any commonly accepted sense of the term, yet they consider themselves and are regarded by others as Jews. There are also a few Israeli Jews who have converted to Christianity but insist that they are still Jewish. Most Israeli Jews link being Jewish with nationality since, they maintain, Israel was established as a “Jewish State.” When the issue was debated in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) during 1960-1961, some members insisted that anyone choosing to call himself a Jew and identify with Jewish problems and life should be accepted as Jewish. At the other extreme, orthodox religious members would exclude anyone whose mother was not a Jewes, or who had not gone through the conversion ritual prescribed by orthodox Jewish law and tradition. They would in fact have excluded thousands of Israelis who were accepted as Jews but were the offspring of non-Jewish mothers. To clarify the issue, Prime Minister Ben Gurion sent questionnaires to recognized Jewish scholars around the world requesting their opinions. So varied were the views that the matter has not yet been resolved.

Although the Jews are Semitic people by virtue of their historic and contemporary use of Hebrew, it is the native tongue of less than half of the population of Israel. Most inhabitants immigrated to the new state from other areas and had to learn the language upon arrival. Consequently, the Semitic Hebrew of modern Israel is a strange blend of accents. It is spoken with Polish, Russian, French, English, Arabic, and other nuances, although the Eastern European intonation is considered most acceptable because the original Jewish settlers in the country came from that part of the world.

D. The Turks.

After the Semitic peoples, the next large group in the Middle East is the Turks. They are descended from tribes which swept out of Central Asia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. As the Turkish tribes moved west, they were converted to Islam, and the overwhelming majority of Turks today are Muslim. Indeed, the term “Turk” generally refers to a Muslim whose mother tongue is Turkish. In the contemporary Turkish Republic, although the constitution specifically separates the state and religion, it is the rare non-Muslim Turkish citizen who will claim he or she is a Turk.

The Turks are related to the tribes of Mongoloid peoples – of which the Huns were the first to achieve fame – that came out of the grasslands of Mongolia to overrun most of Europe as well as the Middle East at one time. Their linguistic influence in Europe is still evident in Hungarian, which stems from the same origins as Turkish – the Ural-Altaic family of languages that includes both Finnish and Mongolian.

Turkish tribes began infiltrating the Middle East by way of Turkestan during the seventh century. After their conversion of Islam they invaded Asia Minor, where they set up the Seljuk sultanate of Rum – at that time inhabited principally by Christian Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, and Muslim Kurds. Since then most of these groups have been assimilated, although small clusters remain within modern Turkey.

The Turks were followed by the Mongols who, led by Genghis Khan (1162-1227), overran most of Iran in the thirteenth century, His grandson, Hulagu, destroyed Baghdad and laid waste the formerly fertile country by destroying the great irrigation works that controlled the flow of the Tigris-Euphrates river system. So terrible was the havoc they wrought that the memory of the Mongols is today still regarded with dread in Iraq. The Mongol dynasty disintegrated during the fourteenth century leaving of their racially recognizable descendants can still be found in eastern Iran and western Afghanistan.

The greatest Turkish impact on the Middle East was through the Ottoman Empire. In the clashes between the Mongols and the Turks, the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum was toppled, and another tribe of Anatolian Turks, named after their leader Osman (Osmanli or Ottoman), began their steady ascent to power-a struggle that, within a few centuries, brought them the caliphate of Islam and control of the Middle East up to the gates of Iran . For 400 years the Ottoman Empire dominated the Arab East, until the end of World War I, when it was carved up into a number of separate Arab states and the present Turkish republic.

Today the geographic boundaries of the Turkish republic overlap an area in which live over forty-five million people, or less than half of those who are Turkish speaking. In the Soviet Union there are over sixty million Turkish speaking peoples, who inhabit the Central Asian and Caucasian areas bordering Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. They are the second most numerous ethnic minority in the USSR after the Slavs. At least six million Iranians exhibit elements of Turkish in either speech. In Afghanistan there are over a million and a half such Turkish-speaking people, and there re a few thousand others scattered throughout the Arab nations.

There are well over one hundred million people whose speech is strongly influenced by Turkish, more than half of whom are behind the “iron curtain.” Aside from the millions of such people in the Soviet Union, there are several millions in Communist China and a very small number in Korea. Strong religious and linguistic ties bind them with their ethnic cousins in Turkey, as evidenced by the unqualified willingness of the Turkish republic to take in thousands of refugees whose spoken language is some Turkish dialect.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were Pan-Turkish movements, but there is no strong sentiment in that direction today. No concept like the Arab passion for “unity,” or the Zionist ideal of “ingathering” all Jews to Israel affected republican Turkey. The idea of unifying the Turkish world was cast aside by Ataturk after World War I and has never since been seriously revived.

E. The Iranians

The Persian-speaking Iranians, numbering over thirty million, are the third largest linguistic group of Middle Eastern peoples. They belong to the Indo-Europeans, who originated outside the Middle East and heavily influenced, as the name indicates, the languages of Europe. There were several Indo-European languages in ancient times. Other ethnic groups who today speak their own distinctive Indo-European languages are the pathans, Kafirs, Armenians, Greeks, and the Sephardic Jews who use Ladino.

Linguistically related to the Iranians are the Kurds, who are scattered through eastern Turkey, Iraq, northern Syria, northeastern Iran, and Russia. Accurate statistics are unavailable and estimates concerning their numbers range form three and one half million to eleven million. Scholars generally accept the figure of eight and one half million to ten million, of whom over four million are in Turkey, three million in Iran, two million in Iraq, and one half million in Syria and Russian Transcaucasia. The Kurds have been able to maintain not only their common language and cultural characteristics but also the physical traits that tend to identify them because of their self-imposed isolation. In Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, they constitute such large minorities that they frequently cause complicated political problems. There has never been a really independent Kurdish nation, but rather a tradition of tribal autonomy. Yet a strong “national” sentiment does exist. Again, it is difficult to define in precise terms the bonds of Kurdish kinship, for like some other peoples we have been describing, the Kurds are not a race, they have no political state, and they possess no religion exclusively their own (nearly all are Sunni Muslims) .Yet they are a characteristic “national” group in the Middle East. So strong is their national sentiment that in World War I the Allied nations promised to carve a national territory for the Kurds out of the fragments of the Ottoman Empire. But the Turkish republic refused to surrender this area and the plan failed.

**UNIT TWO: ZIONISM**

2.1 EVOLUTION AND ORIGIN OF STATE OF ISRAEL

Modern Zionism, the movement for a Jewish return to the home land, is inspired by the ancient land of Israel of the Old Testament. Zionism was a direct product of the economic, political, and social conditions of nineteenth-century European Jews and, indirectly, of the many centuries of Jewish history that followed the dispersion of the Palestine Jewish community after conquest by Rome during the first century A.D. From the Holly Land, Jews emigrated or were transported mainly to Europe, where they usually lived together in separate communities whose life was based on the laws, traditions, and customs of ancient Israel. In the Byzantine, Catholic, and protestant reams recognizing a state religion, Jews could not participate in the main stream of national life. They were not permitted to hold public office or to own land, and they were usually excluded from the dominant social life. Not only were Jews isolated from the community at large, but frequently they were expelled altogether. Nearly every major European nations- Spain, France, England, Poland, Rumania, and Germany- exiled its Jewish communicative at one time or another.

It is not surprising; therefore, that Jews did not really become Frenchmen, Englishmen, poles, or Germans. They thought of themselves and were thought of by those around them primarily as Jews, and their national history and sentiment rested on historic memories of past glories in the Holy land. Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles) came to regard each other with suspicion, the latter because they saw the Jewish community as a “foreign” element in their society and the former because they believed the Gentiles desired to persecute if not destroyed them utterly.

Judaism as religion was intimately linked with Palestine. Jews rabbinical law favored the settler in the ancient home land. Literature of the rabbinate echoed with such saying as: “It is better to dwell in the deserts of Palestine than in places aboard”, “whoever lives in Palestine, lives sinless;” and “the air of Palestine makes one wise.” Jewish attachment to the Holy land was not only to the spiritual, but also to the physical land of Zion. Holydays and fasts commemorated events such as Moses’ flight across the Sinai to Palestine, destruction of Solomon’s temple, and the harvest season, not of Russia, Poland, or France, but of Palestine. The annual Passover festival memorializing the exodus from Egypt ended with the hopeful prayer, “next year in Jerusalem.” There was a mystique about Palestine among Jews especially while they were segregated in to ghettos, and a great many felt a close personal identity with the land, though they had no physical contact with it. Jewish identification with Palestine, heightened by the conditions of their “exile,” was far more intense and pervasive than that of the average Muslim or Christian.

In the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquests developed our modern concept of the nation state and the role of the citizen. Most important for the Jew was the destruction of the ghetto walls in Western Europe and his growing acceptance as an equal citizen with out the compromise of his beliefs. By the mid-nineteenth century, the western Jew was permitted, in varying degrees depending on country, to own property to practice law, and to teach in universities. He acquired the vote along fellow citizens, often could stand for office, and even entered military service.

The Napoleonic concept of full equality for all citizen regardless of religion did not reach tsarist-controlled European at all. There the Jewish become the butt of conservative reaction against the French revolutionary era.The Russian governments actually imposed new restrictions on Jewish movement, place of habitation, and employment. Sporadic Jewish program reached such intensity that by the 1880s waves of emigrants were fleeing Russia for Western Europe and the United State. The programs also led to the organization of the first social movements in Eastern Europe directed to the amelioration of the Jewish plight.

In the vanguard of these movements was the Hoveve Zion (Lovers of Zion), first established in Russia during the early 1880s. This group advocated Jewish settlement in Palestine as practical measures of relief, rather than as a religious ideal. Many Jewish youths in Russia, disillusioned with in the liberal ideal of political and social reform and enlightenment that in no way alleviated the plight of the Jews in that country, turned, like other nationalist, to the concept of self-determination. Their philosophy was expressed in Leo Pinscher’s Auto-Emancipation, in 1882. Legal emancipation, even out of humanitarian motives, he argued, was useless. Only a “land of our own,” whether it be on the banks 0f the Jordan or the Mississippi, was true a solution. It was easy for idealistic Jewish youths in Russia to become aroused by vision of a land offering hope of a better life. One such student group traveled through Russia recruiting some 500 fellow enthusiasts, who become the “Bilu” form Hebrew initials of their rallying call in Isaiah, “O house of Jacob, Come, let as go forth.” A few of them managed to settle in Palestine, where they established the small town of Rishon le-Zion (First in Zion) in 1882. With in the decade, other Russian and Polish Jewish youths set up a few similar small settlements. Economic difficulties and problems of adjustment to the arduous pioneer life underdevloped the new colonies so that they never developed significantly.

Only hand full of the first Zionist went to Palestine, where as million of Jews immigrated for Russia to America and Western Europe. Many who never contemplated emigration to the Middle East, including many who had settled in American and Western Europe, became ardent Zionist, however, deriving emotional satisfaction from identification with this “home land” movement.

As in other nationalist movement of the day, various Zionist trends emerged reflecting the complexity of ideologist prevalent in mid-nineteenth century Europe. Socialism, both Marxian and non –Marxian, was most influential. It strongly colored early Zionism with egalitarianism and a prolabor view point that came to dominate the movement. The socialist emphasis also under scored the Zionist theory that Jews were concentrated in nonproductive occupations every where. Because, in the past, Jews had been excluded from land ownership and other “Christian” occupation, such as law, the army, government service, and the like, they like gravitated to money-lending, banking, and similar service professions. The Zionists as a group professed a desire to return to the land, not only in the national sense, but as farmers. But it was not easy for the lower-middle-class Jews, unaccustomed to such toil, to go to Palestine to work the soil, and their early failures were many. Many Bilu settlements, once they were actually set up, preferred to hire Arab labor rather then to dig the earth with their own hands.

2.3 HERZL AND ZIONISM

A decade after the first Russian Jewish settlers landed in Palestine, the various Zionist groups came in to a single, large movement. Its founder was not from Poland or Russia, but was from Hungary. He was Theodore Herzl, born in Budapest in 1860. While a correspondent for an influential Viennese newspaper, Herzl attended the trial in Paris of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French Jew falsely accused of selling military secrets to Germany. Dreyfus was sentenced to imprisonment on Devil's Island and his trial stirred both a humanitarian protest and an answering wave of anti-Semitism. Herzl was deeply moved by such virulent expressions of hatred as the cry "Death to the Jews" that rose over the parade grounds during the captain's degradation.

Although Dreyfus was later exonerated and restored to rank, Herzl disillusioned about the possibilities of full and equal Jewish participation integration into European life. ‘Let the sovereignty be granted us over apportion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation ,’he wrote , "and the rest we shall arrange ourselves. "This was germ of his book, Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State), written in 1895.Herzl was not the first to publish such views, but he had never read either Pinsker's Autp-Emancipation or Rome and Jerusalem by Moses Hess , published in 1862. Herzl's writing became the essence of the Zionist cause, capturing the imagination of Eastern European Jewry.

The Jews, Herzl wrote, would always be persecuted no matter how useful or patriotic they were. Nowhere was their integration into nation possible, for the Jewish problem, the hatred of the Jewish minority by non-Jewish majority, existed wherever there were Jews. Even immigration to hopefully safe places did not exempt Jews from eventual anti-Semitism. Perhaps, he conceded, if not persecuted or discriminated against for two generations, Jews might become part of a new liberal society, but it seemed unlikely that they would be free from persecution for such a long time .The Jewish problem was not religious or social, he concluded, but national .Jews were a "nation without a land." Therefore, they should be granted a territory by the world powers to fulfill the needs of a nation.

In his book, Herzl envisaged a "society of Jews "to organize the Jewish masses for emigration and to negotiate the acquisition of a national territory with the European powers. A Jewish company would raise the necessary funds and deal with economic and financial matters. Because he himself was not closely involved with the formal religious practice or observance of the Jewish faith. Herzl did not have the deep emotional ties to Palestine that his followers had. He suggested that either Palestine or Argentina- the latter because of its rich underdeveloped territories-were possible choices for a new Jewish homeland. But Jewish public opinion and the Society of Jews would be the final judges.

The Jewish State stimulated fervent debates on the Jewish problem. Most Jewish leaders in Western Europe and America believed the program unrealistic and one that would jeopardize their possibilities of becoming fully integrated citizens. Orthodox extremists attacked it as blaspheming the “Mission of Israel” and the Messianic doctrine. Liberals opposed another national movement to the already multiplying nineteenth-century nationalisms because they preferred to look forward to a new internationalism. But most Eastern European Jewry lionized Herzl as a new Moses. Jewish was so great in Russia and Poland that Herzl successfully held the First World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in August 1897. As Sir. Isaiah Berlin Put it: "But for the character and needs of the European Jews there would have been no Israel. " Over 200 delegates to the congress came from all over the world, representing Orthodoxy and Reform Eastern and Oriental Jews, socialists, the middle class, and the wealthy.

2.4 DEVELOPMENTS IN PALESTINE

One difficulty was that a political entity called Palestine did not exist.It was merely a vague geographic designation indicating the general area where ancient Philistines and later the Jews had lived. After the Ottoman conquest in 1517, the land had been divided and redivided in to provinces until, in 1864, geographic Palestine was partitioned between the two Ottoman provinces of Beirut and Syria and the smaller administrative subdivision of Jerusalem. The latter was not attached to an larger province because of its special status, guaranteed by the European Christian powers when they intervened in the Levant to protect Christians during the 1860’s.

No accurate population estimates for Palestine existed. In 1914 were some 600.000 Arabs and 85,000 Jews. The Arabs had no as yet developed a strong nationalist feeling. Their loyalty was to Islam ,or to Christian millet, not to the state. Not until World War I was there a distinctive Arab, and later a Palestine, nationalist movement. The Osmanlis had only a shadowy control over many parts of Palestine, and roaming Bedouin periodically raided the settled villages in the hill country or the northern plains.

Since the time of the Roman dispersion, small numbers of Jews had lived in Palestine; there were only 5000 when Napoleon invaded the area. mid-century their numbers had doubled, and they doubled again by the 1880’s.Between 1882 and 1914, the number grew from 24,000 to 85,000. Most of these were the pious elderly who, coming to die in one of the four holy cites, Jerusalem , Hebron, Safed, or Tiberias, lived off charitable donations sent abroad. About 12,000 Jews came to live in one or another of the forty-three Zionist agricultural settlements established by 1914. Only 10 percent of Palestine’s total Jewish population was Ottoman subjects.

From the late 1880s until 1914, the greatest Zionist activity took place among the Russian and Polish Jewry, who found in the movement a great spiritual hope and community rallying point. Even the first Zionist self- government experiments were not in Palestine but in Odessa during the 1880s 1890s, where Menachem Usishkin unsuccessfully tried to organize a Kenessiyah or elected assembly.

Unfortunately, the Jewish national movement had little contact with the Palestine Arabs. Relations between the scattered Jewish settlements in the country and their communities in the towns with the nearby Arabs were for the most part casual, and often cordial. No deep political schism emerged until World War I, and the occasional raids of Arab looters on Jewish settlements were strictly for loot, rather than an expression of competing nationalism.

Diaspora Jewry imagined the Holy Land as described in the Bible or, in words of Herzl, as a land without a people awaiting a people without a land. Haam (one of the people) observed in 1891 that:

We abroad have a way of thinking that Palestine today is almost desert, uncultivated wilderness, and that anyone who wishes to buy land there can do so to his heart’s content. But that is not in fact the case. It is difficult to find any uncultivated land anywhere in the country…. We abroad have a way of thinking that the Arabs are all savages, on a level with the animals, and blind to what goes on around them. But that is quite mistaken. The Arabs, especially the townsmen, see through our activities in their country, and our aims, but they keep silence and make no sign, because for the present they anticipate no danger to their own future from what we are about. But if the time should ever come when our people have so far developed their life in Palestine that the indigenous population should feel more or less cramped, then they will not readily make way for us…………

2.5 THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

Immediately after the outbreak of World War I, the Osmanlis clamped rigid restrictions on Palestine and the surrounding area. Added to their harsh treatment was a famine caused by widespread drought and a locust plague .Foreign minorities fared worse than others at the hands of the Ottoman government because they had lost the protection of the capitulations, abolished by the Osmanlis in 1914. Since many Jews were still subjects of the Ottoman enemy, Russia, they either fled or were deported. The Zionist movement itself was charged by the Osmanlis with being a subversive element aimed at caring up the Ottoman Empire, and a number of local Jewish leaders in Palestine were imprisoned or hanged. Zionist institution like Anglo-Palestine Bank was banned, and public use of Hebrew was forbidden in the streets of the new Jewish town, Tel Aviv. By the time British General Allenby entered the country in 1917, the Jewish population had been reduced by nearly a third to only 55,000.

The war fragmented the Zionist movement in to three parts-one was in the Allied-controlled countries, another remained under the Central Powers. The third existed in neutral territory. To facilitate contact among them, neutral Copenhagen became the Zionist liaison center.

Jewish leaders in Allied capital’s found the time expedient to press their claims to a homeland in Palestine and organized military units to help fight for that land. Joseph Trumpeldor gathered 900 men in the Zion Mule corps, which saw service in Gallipoli. Later another Russian Zionist, Viladmir Jabotinsky, headed a campaign for a fighting unit that led to the formation the Judeans, two battalions or Russian, British, American, and other Jew volunteers. Still other battalions were added, bringing the Jewish combat strength in Allenby’s Palestine armies to about 5000.

More significant were the political maneuvers of Dr. Chaim Weizman chemistry lecturer at Manchester University and a prominent Zionist leader. Before becoming a British citizen, Dr. Weizmann had been a Jewish leader in Russia, his birthplace. He contributed to the Allied cause by development process to produce acetone, an essential ingredient for manufacturing cordite required in artillery shells. Scientific discoveries brought Weizmann into intimate contact with British war leaders, whom he persuaded to favour the Zionist cause. They were especially amenable because they were searching for a dramatic appeal to rally world Jewry to their side at a time whn he Allied positions was doing badly .Perhaps American Jewish backing could be won and the Austrian and German Jews could be weaned away from away from thier governments. Russia was already out of the war. An appeal to Jewish leaders in the new antiwar Bolshevik government, formed in 1917, might have a dramatic effect in winning their favor,

In the United States, Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis and Rabbi Stephen Wise, both prominent American Jewish leaders, persuaded President Wilson to back British support of Zionist aims in 1917. Negotiation finally culminated in the Balfour Declaration, published on November 1917.

The Zionist formula was watered down in deference to non-zionists so that the declaration called for establishment of “a national home” in Palestine in lieu of defining the country as “the national home of the Jewish people”. This intervention by influential British Jews therefore resulted in vaguely worded document, subject to a variety of interpretation containing a pledge that the rights of non-Jews in Palestine and elsewhere would be protected.

The British information ministry followed through by creating a special department for liaison, propaganda, and research. It prepared leaflets containing the Balfour Declaration, which were dropped over enemy territory. To counteract Allied support for Zionism, the Central Powers made largely vague statements of sympathy. Germany especially played up its concern for what had been the plight of Russian Jews under the Tsars.

As a result of the Balfour and other conflicting Allied Statements, Palestine became a focal point of international disagreement. Actually none of the Allied wartime promises and agreements among themselves concerning the Holy Land carried any authority in international law since they were made while this territory was still part of the Ottoman empire

In general, the Balfour declaration was proclaimed to win worldwide Jewish backing for the war effort at a time when Great Britain urgently needed every possible source of support. Because of the 1917 revolution, Russia had dropped out of the war. Many influential American Jewish leaders were pro-Zionist, and their backing was an important asset. If an alliance could be contracted with worldwide Zionist interests, it might strengthen the pro-allied sentiments of many influential Jews.Some British leaders even hoped to win German Jewish support away from the Kaiser. Later, in 1936 , war time prime minister David Lioyd George prevailed that the Zionist had promised to rally Jewish pro-allied sentiment if they received a commitment for establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine. They were helpful, he commented in the House of Commons, both in America and in Russia, which at the time was walking out and living England alone.

The declaration took the form of the public letter from Alfred Balfour, the British foreign Minister, to Lord Rothschild, a prominent English Jewish leader. It stated that;

His majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use the best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this objective, 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 Balfour declaration was proclaimed to win worldwide Jewish backing for the war effort at a time when Great Britain urgently needed every possible source of support. Because of the 1917 revolution, Russia had dropped out of the war. Many influential American Jewish leaders were also pro-Zionist, and their backing was an important asset. If an alliance could be contracted with worldwide Zionist interests, it might strengthen the pro-allied sentiments of many influential Jews, some British leaders even hoped to win German Jewish support away from the Kaiser.

To mollify Arab concern about the statement, Commander D.J Hogarth was sent to reassure Sheriff Hussein that Great Britain’s promise to the Zionists would be implemented only in so far as it did not conflict with the freedom of the population in Palestine.

**UNIT three: Middle East and World War I Peace Settlements**

INTRODUCTION

In this section we will continue the peace making process in the Middle East and the subsequent treaties signed between the victorious powers and the Arabs. In the previous chapter we have seen that World War I destroyed the Ottoman Empire, ending Ottoman sovereignty all over areas beyond Anatolia and a corner of Thrace in Europe. We have also seen the peace settlement processes with the Ottomans .We have seen that following the end of the war and the subsequent treaty, Turkish Nationalists were to put the coup against the old and impotent government altogether. When the fighting stopped, Great Britain controlled most of the Arab regions; an Allied Controlled Commission was established in Istanbul; and British, French and Italian groups began occupying much of south western Anatolia. There was immediate competition among the three allies and Greece to seize what territory they could. All Russian claims had been renounced by the Revolutionary government. Only the United States insisting on President Wilson’s policy of “no spoil to the victors,” seemed interested in an open and just peace settlement.

3.1 THE PEACE TREATIES WITH TURKEY

The war with Turkey ended with an armistice in October 1918, followed at once by Anglo-French occupation of Constantinople. The problems of peace making were very complicated because of the rival demands of the European powers, and no treaty was signed until 1920 at Sevres. The Sultan was prepared to abandon his Arab Empire. France was given the League of Nations Mandate for Syria. Britain received the Mandates for Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine – the latter as an added protection for the Suez Canal, in view of the French presence in Syria. The Arabian Peninsula was left independent. A Greek force occupied Smyrna; Italy moved into the zone around Adalia; while France acquired Cilicia, an area adjacent to her Syrian Mandate. The Straits were made international. Bolshevik Russia renounced all claims made by the Tsarist government, and by agreement with the Turks took Batum while conceding Kars and Ardahan. Greece was given a portion of East Thrace including Adrianople. There was provision for an independent Armenia and an autonomous Kurdistan, but nothing was done to secure either.

But defeat in the war and humiliation in the peace treaty led to fierce Turkish resentment against the Sultan who had signed at Severs. In truth, there was little the Sultan could do beyond the protest he made. Allied fleets lay in the Bosphorus; Allies troops were at hand. But Turkish nationalists, though prepared to accept the abandonment of the Arab Empire, would not stomach the partition of the Turkish homeland. They were particularly resisted that their arch-enemy, Greece, had got a foothold in and around Smyrna. Here was a rallying point for nationwide anger and a revolutionary nationalist movement emerged, led by the soldier Mustapha Kemal. By the end of 1919, effective power in Turky lay with Kemal and his Nationalists rather than the Sultan. Elections resulted in a victory for the Nationalists, who in January 1920 in the Parliament at Constantinople pledged themselves to a six-point National Pact, including self-determination, the opening of the Straits and the securing of Constantinople in Turkish hands. In March, an Allied force occupied the capital and Nationalist leaders were detained and sent into exile. But in April, the Nationalists set up a provisional government; a republic was proclaimed with Mustapha Kemal its president, and a revolutionary National Assembly met at Angora, Kemal’s stronghold deep in Asiatic Turkey. Meanwhile, Greek forces were fighting Kemal’s troops even before the Treaty of Severs was signed. In October 1921, the French made their peace, the Italians having withdrawn in April. For the Greeks, a defeat in September was the beginning of the end, and in September 1922 the Turks, with great savagery, drove them out of Smyrna and off the Turkish mainland. These events opened the way to a revised settlement, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923).

Lausanne was the only peace treaty freely negotiated and accepted by the defeated power. Kemal confirmed that Turkey had no wish to maintain her Arab empire, so that terms were mainly concerned with Turkey proper. Smyrna was returned and Turky also received back from Greeece Eastern Thrace including Adrianople. Italy kept the Dodecanese Islands ceded at Severs. The Straits were restored to Turkey, demilitarized, and were to be kept open in peace and war as long as Turkey was neutral.

The only meaningful restriction on Turkish sovereignty was the international commission in charge of the straits. Four zones along the waterway and the islands in the Sea of Marmara were demilitarized, and the Turkish garrison in Istanbul was limited to 12,000 men.

European failure to partition Turkey was due to Ataturk’s strong campaign against the invaders after they had gone through an exhausting war. There was little stomach for the invasion in England, France or Italy although the Greeks became enthusiastic by visions of enhanced power at Turkey’s expense. All the Allies were suffering from the war weariness, exhausted military resources, and political dissent on their home fronts. Overthrow the new republican government would have meant a long costly campaign .under the circumstances, the best course was graceful retreat via Lausanne.

3.2 THE SETTLEMENT WITH THE ARABS

After 1918, the consequences of the conflicting wartime commitments about the Arab empire had also to be faced. For instance, while Britain approved Feisal’s claim to Damascus as being consistent with the promises made to Hussein, France insisted the claim was invalid under the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement. In 1919, military control of Syria was given to France. This was the first of a series of post-war disappointments for Emir Hussein and the Hashemites. As early as 1916, he had proclaimed himself ‘King of the Arabs’, but tactful challenges from Britain and Ibn Saud persuaded him to confine his title to ‘King of the Hejaz’. Even that title was later to be taken from him by Ibn Saud, who, having defeated him supporters in 1919, successfully took over the Hejaz in 1924.

His sons fared little better. In March 1920, their Arab supporters in Damascus defiantly proclaimed Feisal King of Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, and Abdullah King of Iraq. The Allies, at the Conference of San Remo, were quick to counter this by awarding the areas to Britain and France, and French guns forced Feisal to withdraw from his ‘kingdom’ and flee to London. An embarrassed British government made some compensation by giving Feisal the throne of Iraq. Abdullah, who was ready to march on Damascus to avenge his brother’s exile, was given the crown of Transjordan, another British Mandate, which the Arabs had expected to be part of an independent Arab kingdom. The aged Hussein, who refused to sign the peace treaties, made his final grasp for the power of the Hashemites by taking the title of Caliph which the Sultan had renounced; it was this that provoked Ibn Saud’s decisive attack on Hejaz in 1924.

Thus the Arabs of the former Ottoman empire were not given the independence they had been promised and for which they had fought. Five new states were indeed created – Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan – their boundaries dictated by their Western creators. Though some were given Arab kings, all were Mandates under Britain of France. So, by 1923, all the ingredients of 60 years of turmoil in the Middle east had made themselves apparent: great power rivalry, Arab opportunism and resentment, inter-Arab jealousies, the conflict of Arab and Jew in Palestine, and, not least, the strength of Islam and the ever-growing importance of oil.

3.3 IRAN

Following the collage of the Tsarist regime, Russia suspended its intervention in Iran’s internal affairs there by leaving the country under complete British control. British troops used Iran as base of operations against the Soviet arms in the Caucasus. Britain’s temptation (appetite) was great to hold Iran because of its strategic position in the chain of British controlled territories between the Mediterranean and India. A virtual British protectorate seemed to be established as a result of the 1919 Anglo – Iranian Treaty, until strong nationalist sentiment caused the Iranian parliament to reject the document. In 1921 British force were withdrew from Iran. Since then, throughout the 1920’ constant bickering (disagreement) over economic matters caused one crisis after another in Anglo –Iranian relations .For example, dispute over oil rich Bahrain in 1927 was caused by Britain’s refusal to consider Iranian claims of the island. In retaliation to this, the Shah (political leader of Iran) withdrew (dismissed) British rights to fly over Persian Gulf on the way to India. From the eve of WWI down to the 1970 Anglo –Iranian relations have been overshadowed by the Anglo – Iranian Oil Company in which the British government was the main share holder. Reza Shah Pahlaui who had seized control of the Iranian government in 1921 was jealous of the company’s extensive power and resented the large profit it was exporting. Since the British government controlled the company its activity were regarded more political than as economic and they intervened in Iran’s domestic affairs. In 1932 Reza Shah decide to end this threat by nationalizing the company. However, before that a new sixty year of concession was obtained that gave Iran substantially higher influence and committed the company to increases gradually its Iranian employees.

In contrast to its conflict with Britain, Iran’s relationship with government of Russia was initially cordial. At the conference of the “Peoples of the East” in Baku during 1920 the new Red Government proclaimed to friendship for all colonial peoples and renounced all imperialist privileges and concessions. Soviet -Iranian Treaty of Friendship followed in 1921 reconfirming Soviet renunciation of all special privileges and concessions. In the same treaty the soviets abrogated the 1828 treaty which forbade Iranian vessels to sail in the Caspian Sea. The 1921 treaty forbade each signatory to permit any groups, organizations or forces for use its territory for hostile act against the other. The supplementary provision or understanding permitted the soviet government to send troops into Iran should the country be in danger of occupation by power hostile to Russia. In WWII the Soviet Union justified its occupation of Iran on the bases of this agreement and after the war used the treaty as justification for subsequent act of intervention. Although Soviet- Iranian relationship had an auspicious (good) beginning gradually it assumed. the classic Russian forms (Russians regarded Iran as their colony). The hidden agenda became open. Soviet agents infiltrated Iran Stirring up rebellion in Azerbaijan and Khorasan. To counter balance British and Russia pressures, Reza Rah Palhavi began to cultivate closer lies with Germany in 1928. Within a decade Germany became Iran’s important partners. By 1939 over 40% of Iran’s foreign trade was with Germany.

3.4 The Middle East Mandates

According to Article 22 of the League of nations Covenant,

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire [had] reached a state of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognize, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.

It was not only the patronizing tone of these sentiments that enraged Arab leaders. They felt deceived: the independence that they had been promised and for which they had fought was now denied them. Nor could they see why Syria, which had provided Turkish Emperors with talented administrators, should need to be taught how to govern itself. They felt betrayed by the British who had talked of 'Arab freedom and independence' and 'the consent of the governed', and by the French whose armies were about to remove the Arab government in Syria . Indeed, both Britain and France had refused to take part in the King-Crane Commission, set up with President Wilson's blessing, to ascertain 'the wishes of the communities'. Moreover, both powers ignored its conclusion that Syrian Arabs, if they had to have a Mandatory, would prefer British or American supervision and did not want the French. They also disregarded the Commission's advice that Palestine should be included in the Syrian state rather than become a separate Mandate. Clearly the Arabs could claim that they had been denied self-determination; the peace had merely placed European and Christian tutors where previously there had been Turkish and Muslim masters.

This was the deliberate policy of the two victorious European powers. France's sphere of influence on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean (the Levant) was recognized by the powers and now the Syrian Mandate provided a territorial foothold for it. For Britain, the protection of the Suez Canal was an important factor .This was instinct of imperialism. Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, an ex-Viceroy of India, saw the Mandates not as a trust from the League, but a reward for conquest. Lord Balfour, his predecessor in office, admitted that the Arabs had been deceived but insisted that this was necessary. He argued that the needs of Zionism were more important than the rights of the 700000 Arabs in Palestine, thus supporting the imperialist view that some peoples were fit to govern, others only fit to be governed. Even T.E. Lawrence, who had fought with the Arabs for independence, hoped that they would form ' a Brown Dominion' within the Empire. In effect, the Mandates did become parts of the British and French Empires – Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine under Britain, Syria and Lebanon under France.

Apart from Iraq, the new Mandates were carved out of what had been 'Greater Syria' territory, against the advice of the King-Crane Commission. That body opposed the Palestine Mandate, arguing that Zionist plans for the Homeland could only be achieved by force, making future instability inevitable. It pleaded vain for recognition of 'the economic, geographic, racial and language unity of Syria'. This unity was broken, and new boundaries, customs posts, administrative centers and garrisons appeared. The pilgrims' route to the Holy City of Mecca southward from Damascus crossed and recrossed new frontiers. All these changes increased the resentment and anger of Arab nationalists.

3.4.1 The French Mandates: Syria and Lebanon

In October 1918, the Emir Feisal led his victorious Arab troops into Damascus and set up a 'government embracing all Syria'. In July 1920, French armies marched into Damascus, deposed King Feisal and took over the Mandate of Syria. In the months between these events, Arab nationalists had mixed fortunes. They were disappointed when General Allenby Divided Syria into three zones and put two of them, both in the coastal area, under British and French governors. In the third zone however – 'internal Syria' – an Arab administration began a series of reforms aiming to modernize and expand education, agriculture and public services. In the new state schools were built, textbooks were translated into Arabic, the possibilities of irrigation and co-operative farming were assessed, and free vaccination made available. But the resources and opportunities to develop such projects were restricted in what the Allies called 'Occupied Enemy Territory'.

In July 1919, a Syrian National Congress met. Its members representing all parts of 'natural' Syria demanded an independent Syria, including Palestine and Lebanon. This programme, which had the approval of the King-Crane Commission, received widespread support. As nationalist fervor exploded in demonstrations in the cities, in March 1920 the Congress proclaimed Feisal king of this independent Syria. But their armed resistance was crushed by the advancing French armies and Feisal was sent into exile.

The French were unwelcome in Syria and their rule was unpopular because they treated their Mandate as a colony. The first three High Commissioners were army generals, steeped in France's African colonial tradition who kept a tight hold on administrative and security affairs. Until 1925, civil rights were reduced by the imposition of martial law, arbitrary arrest or imprisonment, and control of the press. The French attempted there – as elsewhere in their Empire – to impress French culture on the Arabs. French was made equal with Arabic as an official language; and French history, geography and literature became compulsory subject.

Economically, Syria suffered at first from an Open Door policy which made foreign imports free of duty while Syrian exports faced tariff walls. Again, France regarded Syria's economy as 'complementary to France' – a source of raw materials for her textile industry. Syria greatly benefited from the improvements such as docks, harbors and railways, which French capital financed. But the profits returned to France, and the Arabs were given few opportunities to acquire the requisite skills to undertake similar projects. Syrians resented the imposition of collective fines (penalties) on villages and towns where civil disturbances had taken place. Sometimes this involved peasants having to sell their sheep – or even their daughters.

There were frequent outbreaks of protest and disruption. In a major rising in 1925, nationalists set up a provisional government to secure independence. It took the French, whose ruthless methods included the bombardment of Damascus, two years to restore control. Thereafter, the French became more responsive to Arab proposals and in 1928 they called a Constituent Assembly. But its nationalist majority proposed a Constitution which denied the Mandate. Yet, the French rejected it and in 1930 produced their own version. This made Syria a republic, with president and parliament elected for five and four years respectively. This constitution remained in operation for the next 20 years. Negotiations began in 1932 for a treaty which would end the Mandate, but it proved difficult to agree on an acceptable degree of French influence in an independent Syria and the talks continued on until 1936.

In that year, after widespread demonstrations and a seven-week general strike, a treaty was concluded providing for Syrian independence and membership of the League of Nations and for the continuation of some French economic and military privileges. The treaty was due to take effect in 1939, but the French Parliament refused to ratify it and so the Mandate continued. Meanwhile, the French had since 1936 encouraged separation within Syria, and the Syrian government offered little resistance to new extensions of French influence and could only watch helplessly as Alexandretta, with a population less than 40 percent Turkish, was ceded by France to Turkey. Inevitably these issues led to divisions in the government and violence on the streets. In the end the scale of the demonstrations forced the High Commissioner to suspend the Constitution and rule by decree.

The mandate ended after the Second World War .Since 1920, France had modernized communications and built primary schools and power stations, all of which would be of benefit to the people at large. But 75 percent of the populations were illiterate in 1939 and there were secondary schools to accommodate only 5000 pupils. Industry was barely improved.Indeed some estimates suggest that workers' standard of living was below that of pre-1914 days. In agriculture, it was the large, often absentee landowner who benefited from the sale of state lands, and from low interest loans. Only to them and to the urban well-to-do did the Mandate show any advantage.Aand even in these circles the French never overcame Arab hostility; for the town worker and peasant, life was little change.

Before 1914, Lebanon was a small autonomous district of Syria with largely Christian population sympathetic to Catholic France. After the war, France made it a separate mandate and enlarged it by the addition of the mainly Muslim towns: Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre and Sidon . Thus France secured a foothold in the Levant. Syria and its national movement was further broken up, while Christians remained the majority. But the Christians were not always on good terms with their French patrons. In 1920, they had declared Lebanon independent and made common cause with Syria before the Mandate was imposed. In the Constitution of 1926, Lebanon became a republic in which the President was to be a Christian and the Prime Minister a Muslim. Ministerial and Parliamentary seats were divided between Christians and Muslims in proportion. Since 1932, this has been 6:5. As with Syria a treaty was agreed, but not ratified. Though Lebanon suffered less disorder than Syria, nearly half its population felt its loyalties lay with Muslim brothers elsewhere. This religious division was the basis of the suspicion, tension and violence that has erupted periodically ever since.

3.4.2 The British Mandates: Iraq and Transjordan

At the beginning of the Great War a British force entered Mesopotamia, now called Iraq. British motives had been to secure India from a possible Turkish attack, and stop claim in the development of any Iraqi oil reserves, as well as to defend their recent investment in Persian oil. By the Sykes-Picot agreement Iraq was to become a British sphere of influence, and after the war both the Peace Conference and the League gave Britain the Mandate. But Arab opinion was outraged by the decision and there were prolonged disturbances in 1920 similar to those which the French had faced in Syria. The British administration restored order and its policy, which had been guided by the repressive outlook of the Indian Civil Service, now became more liberal.

A plebiscite was held which indicated that 96 percent of the population would accept the Hashemite Feisal as king, and so in 1921 he was given the Syrian throne with pomp and ceremony. Yet nationalist opposition to foreign guidance did not diminish. Rather it increased as Britain tried to make permanent its Mandatory power through a series of treaties pressed upon the Iraqi government. Though these provided for the creation of a parliament to which ministers were responsible, Britain retained the right to advise the King on finance and foreign policy. In 1930, this Parliament ratified a treaty to end the Mandate, but only after prolonged nationalist opposition to the 'strings' attached as the price of independence. For while Iraq would join the League of Nations with British support and happened in 1932. According to a new treaty Britain would be given new air bases, control of army training and long-term influence in Iraq through a 25-year Treaty of Alliance.

British and Iraq both found it difficult to build a unified modern state where no common political tradition existed. No doubt the British presence gave a touch of stability because it brought administrative competence, a judicial system and a police force, as well as progress in industry and agriculture. British influence got the League to award the disputed oil-rich area round Mosul to Iraq rather than Turkey. Yet this success added to the problems caused by the numerous traditions and loyalties already found in Iraq. In Feisal's reign which ended in 1933, there were three major risings of the Kurds, still resentful that they had no homeland. The tribal rivalries among the Bedouins of the desert occasionally developed into major disturbances which had to be suppressed. The British had recruited troops from the Assyrian Christians to keep order among the tribes, and in 1933 there was terrible revenge when the Iraqi army massacred a large number of these Christians. The Muslims too were divided, the majority Shia sect resentful of the usually more prosperous Sunni minority

Feisal was succeeded in 1933 by his son, Ghazi. He was less conscientious than his father, though as a playboy who liked fast cars he was popular enough. In his short reign, Iraq made a treaty with Saudi Arabia – the basis for a projected pan-Arab alliance. Like Syria, he gave vocal and other support to their Arab brothers in Palestine. A non-aggression pact in 1936 with Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan was an expression of Muslim solidarity. During the 1930s the increasing influence of the army in politics reflected the absence of civilian political tradition. Younger army officers were influenced by the example of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. General Bakrsidqi was one such soldier who staged a coup in 1036, but he was assassinated in 1938. Another General, Nuri Said, who emerged at this time, was to have great influence in Middle East politics. He was sympathetic to Britain (having, unlike most of his colleagues, fought with Feisal in 1916) and conscious of Iraq's place in the Arab world, but in the late 1930s some military circles were sympathetic to Nazi Germany.

When Ghazi died in a car crash, the British Consul in Baghdad was stoned to death in the mistaken belief that he had been part of a plot to cause the accident. This was a measure of the suspicion which some Iraqis had of Britain. For Britain had only given up the Mandate on advantageous terms which secured her interests, particularly in Iraqi oil; British companies had taken over the old Turkish Petroleum Company and gained new monopoly concessions from Feisal's government in 1925. Pressure from the United States and France led to the formation of the Iraq Petroleum Company in which all three countries had a share. In 1927, major oil reserves were discovered and soon Iraqi oil production was exceeded only by that of Iran. Pipelines were constructed to carry the oil from Mosul across the desert to Tripoli in Lebanon, and to Haifa in Palestine.

Transjordan was the most peaceful and the poorest of the Mandates. It was an almost accidental creation which Britain carved out of the Palestine Mandate. In doing so, and exempting it from the Balfour Declaration, Britain appeared to be appeasing Arab opinion. At the same time, Britain's problem was solved a little and promises made to Hussein in 1916 were in part fulfilled. For his son, Abdullah, was made Emir of Transjordan, an Arab state. Between the wars Abdullah was made content to accept British help and advice, while Britain as in Iraq, was keen to drop the duties of the Mandate and to perpetuate her influence by treaty. Colonel Peake and General John Glubb – Glubb Pasha, as he was known – trained the Arab tribesmen and created the famous Arab Legion, probably the most efficient of all Arab armies. Britain continued to advise on financial and foreign policy until 1946 when Transjordan became Jordan, and Abdullah its King. Abdullah, assassinated in 1951, was succeeded by his grandson, Hussein, in 1953.

3.4.3 The British Mandates: Palestine

In the Mandate for Palestine, Britain was charged with two responsibilities. The first was to lead Palestine to independence as quickly as possible. The second was, in accordance with the Balfour Declaration, to place the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of a Jewish National Home. At the same time Britain was to safeguard the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine. When Britain withdrew from Palestine in 1948, it was because she had found it impossible to reconcile these responsibilities and conditions.

In view of earlier promises of independence, from the first the Arabs generally were hostile. This Mandate – like the others – was an insult, proof of Allied cheating, a further partition of 'natural' Syria. It put Muslims under Christian tutors who regarded them as inferiors. Even the sympathetic Americans on the King-Crane Commission had rudely referred to them as 'the non-Jewish communities of Palestine'. To these indignities was now to be added an influx of Jewish immigration which would lead not merely to a Jewish Homeland, but to a Jewish state. Even King Feisal, who held a more optimistic view, would give his consent to the inclusion of the Home-land only if Britain guaranteed Arab independence as well. This was because he expected Britain to grant Arab independence long before the Homeland could grow into a state

In the Mandate for Palestine, Britain was charged with two responsibilities. The first was to lead Palestine to independence as quickly as possible. The second was, in accordance with the Balfour Declaration, to place the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of a Jewish National Home. At the same time Britain was to safeguard the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine. When Britain withdrew from Palestine in 1948, it was because she had found it impossible to reconcile these responsibilities and conditions.

Other measures were taken to ally Arab fears: the Balfour Declaration was not to apply in Trnasjordan, Zionist solemnly renounced and notions of a Jewish state in Palestine, and much was made of Palestine being a National Home rather than the National State. Winston Churchill, then British Colonial secretary, defined the Homeland as the further development of the existing Jewish community... that it may become a center where the Jewish people as a whole may take... an interest and pride and promised that immigration would be regulated in relation to 'its economic capacity to absorb'. Most Zionists were happy with these terms, satisfied to see their dreams of a Homeland become a reality guaranteed by the highest international authority. Yet some Zionists believed that the long-term impact of Jewish immigration would make a Jewish state inevitable when the Jewish state was rejected in 1922 and its realization seemed unlikely. So Britain would not contemplate a Jewish state and could not develop an Arab state. Instead, the 25 years of Mandate was a period of compromise, concession and appeasement, in an attempt to balance the claims and counter-claims of Arab and Jew.

Because of the upheavals in Russia and Eastern Europe, the impact of Zionism and the pull of the Homeland became strong. More than 30000 Jews entered Palestine between 1918 and 1922. By 1931, there were 175000 Jews in a total population of 1036000. But then, as a result of Hitler's anti-Semitism, 250000 Jews immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s so that in 1939 there were more than 400000 Jews – nearly a third of the total population. The Jews came from different regions and countries. The only thing they had in common was their Jewishness They came from diverse cultural backgrounds. Not all found 'the Promised Land' in the rough terrain and simple conditions. Many of them – nearly a third in the 1920s – did not stay long, and in one year, 1927, more Jews left than entered Palestine.

The immigration and settlements were organized and financed largely by the Jewish Agency. Much of the money came from American Jews, many of whom were they emigrants from Europe. The Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA), sponsored by the Rothschilds, was another source for purchasing land from Arab landlords. In such a way early settlers took pride in the working hard in swampy and bare soil so as to identify themselves completely with the building of their new Homeland.

Work on the land was organized in various types of co-operatives, the best known of which was the kibbutz. A number of families would build a settlement. All fit persons worked and shared the fruits of their labor. Their children would go to school, and would grow up with each other rather than with a family. Members of the kibbutz elected officials and representatives who controlled the admission of new members and organized the work, planning and financing of new projects. Sometimes new kibbutzim would have to be created ' in a day and a night' to prevent destruction by Arab gangs. The buildings, fences and watchtowers would be prefabricated and then taken to their location .Life on the kibbutzim was hard, and they were established with difficulty. There were 14 in 1914; in 1931 there were 24, and 50 by 1937. These, together with other kinds of cooperatives, increased the number of Jewish settlement in 1939 . Later, they would provide soldiers for Israeli armies, and military needs would dictate their location. There were also industrial kibbutzim. The Jewish community organized trade unions, and representative bodies to decide attitudes to the British, the Arabs, and to the Homeland. Golda Meier, later Prime Minister of Israel, began her political life as a representative of her kibbutz at the Assembly. The Jews also organized the Haganah – an underground army that was tolerated, even used, by the British.

The appointment of Sir Herbert Samuel, a British Jew, as Palestine's first High Commissioner did nothing to appease the Arabs. On the day the Mandate began they organized a general strike.Until 1929, their opposition to the Mandate was kept in bounds by the prospect of independence being granted soon. But Amin al-Husseini, Mufti (Muslim leader) of Jerusalem, represented the uncompromising view that neither the British nor the Jews had any right to be in Palestine. A military court had sentenced him to 15 years in prison; Samuel had freed him as an act of good will. But Amin al-Husseini felt no need to be grateful.Rather, like the Jews, he sought allies outside Palestine. In 1931, a Muslim Congress with representatives from 22 countries agreed to counter Zionist expansion, and in 1936 an Arab Higher Committee was formed in opposition to such further Jewish claims as that to settle in Transjordan. In that same year, Iraqi and Syrian volunteers joined Palestine Arab guerrillas.

Britain's position from the start was for practical purposes impossible. Her policies, unsatisfactory to Jews and to Arabs inside and outside Palestine, were widely criticized. Other countries were unhelpful. As Nazi persecution developed after Hitler came to power in 1933, immigration increased and with it came increasing unrest. President Roosevelt called a conference to see what could be done, but neither his country, Canada nor Australia – despite their vast open spaces – would offer any relief. In any case, Zionists insisted that Jews should go to Palestine.

In these circumstances, Britain had no hope of creating an Arab-Jewish state. Attitudes became more entrenched, and as violence increased in 1929, Jews and Arabs clashed at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem (a place of religious importance to both) leaving 150 dead. Arabs attacked synagogues; Jews attacked mosques. A British Commission of Enquiry saw the causes of the Arab's irritation in the delay in granting independence, their fear of being outnumbered, and the loss of the land to the Jews. A British Government White Paper of 1929 proposed limited immigration, and a restriction on the purchase and settlement by Jews of Arab land. Arabs welcomed these proposals, but Zionist pressure caused Britain to reduce its scope. In the next few years the influx of European Jews, fleeing from Hitler and backed by the wealth of world Jewry, increased the Arabs' fear of imminent Jewish domination. So, in 1936, the Arabs changed their policy. From then until 1939, they waged guerilla warfare against Briton and Jew by ambush and murder. In reply, Britain increased its forces threefold and with 30000 men began the reconquest of Palestine. The Jews also organized their own force – the Haganah and the terrorist Irgun Zvei Leumi. Britain appointed another Commission in 1937 under Lord Peel which concluded that Arabs and Jews could no longer live in peace.So the best solution would be partition. Some Jews accepted this solution, but the vast majority of world Jewry rejected it. A pan-Arab conference of 400 representatives also rejected it. The Woodhead Commission, sent to establish boundaries in the partition, declared partitioning to be impracticable.So Britain dropped the idea.

A British Government White Paper of 1929 proposed limited immigration and a restriction on the purchase and settlement by Jews of Arab land. Arabs welcomed these proposals, but Zionist pressure caused Britain to reduce its scope. In the next few years the influx of European Jews, fleeing from Hitler and backed by the wealth of world Jewry, increased the Arabs' fear of imminent Jewish domination. So, in 1936, the Arabs changed their policy. From then until 1939, they waged guerilla warfare against Briton and Jew by ambush and murder. In reply, Britain increased its forces threefold and with 30000 men began the reconquest of Palestine. The Jews also organized their own force – the Haganah and the terrorist Irgun Zvei Leumi

3.4.3.1 The Peel Commission and the 1939 White Paper

As Arab feelings of anger and impotence mounted, Hajj Amin al-Husayni took charge of a new Arab Higher Committee that represented nearly all Palestinian Muslim and Christian factions. The committee called a general Arab strike in 1936. The strike turned into a large-scale rebellion that practically paralyzed Palestine for several months. Again the British government sent out a commission of inquiry.This one was headed by Lord Peel. The Arabs tried to impress the Peel Commission with their power by boycotting it until just before it departed in January 1937. As a result, the Zionists got a better hearing. The Peel Commission report, issued later that year, recommended partition, giving a small area of northern and central Palestine to the Jews to form their own state and leaving most of it the Arabs. The Arab state was expected to join Abdallah's Transjordan. The small allotment for the Jews would hardly have given them much space, but perhaps this foothold would later have enabled the Zionists to rescue far more European Jews from persecution and death under the Nazis. The Palestine Arab, backed by other Arab states, opposed partition, fearing that Britain's acceptance of the Peel Commission's plan would be step toward their loss of Palestine. But as often happened in the competition for Palestine, Britain soon scaled down the offer and finally took back it.

Seeking a peace formula that would satisfy all parties, Britain called a roundtable conference of Jewish and Arab leaders (including Arabs from other countries) in London in early 1939. By then the differences between Palestinian Jews and Arabs had become so great that they would not even sit around the same table. No agreement was reached, and the conference ended inconclusively. A new war with Germany was by then imminent, and Britain needed Arab support. It issued a policy statement commonly known as the White Paper that announced that the mandate would end in ten years, whereupon Palestine would become fully independent. Until then, Jewish immigration would be limited to 15,000 each year up to 1944, after which it could continue only with Arab consent (which hardly seemed forthcoming!). The sale of Arab land to Jews was restricted in some areas and prohibited in others.

Like the Arabs earlier, the Jews now felt angry but powerless. The White Paper seemed to sell out Britain's commitment to help build the Jewish national home pledged in the Balfour Declaration and the mandate itself. Remember that this happened after Hitler's troops had marched into Austria.After the Western democracies had consented to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at the Munich conference, and during the time that Poland was being threatened by a German attack. Europe's Jews were in danger. They had nowhere to go but Palestine. Now Britain, bowing to Arab pressure, had shut its gates to the Jews. The Arabs, too, rejected the White Paper because it postponed their independence and did not stop Jewish immigration and land purchases altogether.

During World War II, most of the Arab countries remained neutral. Some of their leaders (including the exiled mufti of Jerusalem) sought out the Nazis, hoping that they would free the Arab world from both British imperialism and Zionism. But the Jews in Palestine had no choice. The threat of annihilation by the Nazis outweighed the evils of British appeasement to the Arabs, so the Jews committed themselves to the Allied cause. On the advice of the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion, the Zionists agreed that "we must assist the British in the war as if there were no White Paper and we must resist the White Paper as if there were no war." Thousands of Palestinian Jews volunteered for the British armed services, taking high-risk assignments in various theaters of war. Some also undertook dangerous missions to rescue Jews from the parts of Europe controlled by Hitler and his allies. As the Nazi threat continued, a few frustrated Zionists turned to terrorist acts, such as assassinating the British minister-resident in Cairo.

**UNIT six: ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS**

**6.1 THE 1948 WAR**

In the preceding chapter we have mentioned that the whole Arab world stood in protest against the United Nations partition resolution because it denied self-determination to Palestine’s Arab majority. Throughout the Arab East, angry demonstrations erupted against all those responsible for partition. The Yishuv and Zionists throughout the world, on the other hand, were overjoyed at the U.N. recommendation. Jewish youth in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem danced in the streets and openly fraternized with British troops. The public excitement of Palestine’s Jewish community was such as had not been displayed for decades. Zionist leaders made plans to establish a Jewish government. Great Britain refused to have anything to do with the U.N proposals because only one, not both, sides approved them. Anticipating armed conflict between Jews and Arabs, British mandatory authorities made no attempt to devise an orderly transfer of government authority and functions to either Jews or Arabs. As a result, when the British evacuated an area, Jews and Arabs fought to obtain control of it.

Excitedly enthusiastic celebrations by one side in the midst of bitter protests by the other made violence inevitable. Where Jews and Arabs lived side by side, as in Jerusalem, Arab demonstrators attacked Jewish shops and counter retaliations soon followed. Within hours, the whole country was torn by large-scale intercommunal warfare. There are no more room now for the few moderates who had urged compromise. It was to be a fight for complete Arab or Jewish victory.

Because Arab efforts to raise military forces and collect military equipment were poorly organized, with no really strong central authority, their numerical superiority and the assistance they received from foreign volunteers was of little advantage. Although a small volunteer force of Palestine Arab guerilla fighters was organized, Arab villagers were not conscripted. In the larger cities, such as Jeffa, Jerusalem and Haifa, Arab manpower was recruited for home guard duty. But most rural inhabitants were uninvolved until the fighting swept down on them and they were forced to flee for safely. Initial combat was carried out by small guerilla cadres, many veterans of the 1936-1939 civil wars.

The much smaller Jewish community was far more efficient. Every aspect of life was quickly organized for a full-scale war-food, medicine, transport, communications, and all other vital services. Not only did it have many combat veterans of Europe’s World War II armies, it could also call upon Western-trained administrators to organize the community on a wartime footing. Most important was the great plan uniting the Yishuv, men, women, and children, as it had never been untied before.

As the civil war spread, atrocities mounted on both sides and the struggle increasingly became a matter of life or death for everyone involved. The most notorious atrocity perpetrated was the Irgun massacre, in April 1948 ,that resulted in the death of men, women, and children in Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem. The Haganah and the Jewish Agency strongly condemned it, but word of this brutal attack spread like wildfire through Arab towns and villages. Fear gave way to panic.And by the end of May, most Arab villagers and townsmen had fled to the neighboring Arab countries. The first Arabs departures had occurred in December and January, when many of the wealthier families took “temporary” refuge in neighboring countries. As the conflict steadily grew more desperate, thousands of Arabs, fled for safety so that by the end of the fighting, early in 1949, there were nearly 750,000 Palestine Arab refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egyptian occupied Gaza strip in southern Palestine.

Differences in the organization of the Arab and Jewish communities accounted for differing reactions to the war. When the fighting began, the Jewish government already had taken over many areas. Even a Jewish postal service, issuing its own stamps, was serving several communities before the British left. Law and order continued in the Jewish occupied zones and public morale was high as a consequence of the Yishuv’s excellent leadership and organization.

The Arab community had no such leadership or administrative apparatus. Nearly all important government functions had been left to the direct control of British mandate officials. Shortly after most of the Arab leaders left the country, early in 1948, the British administrators also departed, leaving no effective body to manage essential services or maintain communal morale. All normal governmental functions necessary to preserve law, order, and well being disintegrated-water, electricity, posts, police, education, health, and even sanitation. With no effective leaders left to guide them and the nearly complete collapse of government in most Palestine Arab communities, Arab panic rose with very Jewish military victory.

As long as the British remained in the country, until the middle of May 1948, the Arab-Jewish conflict was a civil war between Jewish and Arab Palestinians. On May 14, 1948, when the mandate formally came a “war of Liberation,” despite their numbers the Arabs were too disorganized to wage an effective campaign, and soon the Israelis were on the offence.

Effort by the United Nations to halt the fighting, by bringing about truces or cease fires and by appointing Counit Folke Bernadottee as a mediator, all failed. Finally in 1949, Dr. Ralph Bunche, after the assassination of Berandottee by Israeli terrorists, successfully arranged armistice agreements between Israel and all the Arab combatants except Iraq. By successful military operations, Israel had gained nearly a third more territory than the amount allocated to it by the U.N. partition resolution.

6.2 THE JUNE 1967 WAR

Another Arab-Israel war started in 1967.It was the continuation of the previous wars. In early 1960’s Nasser had to face mounting criticism from Syria and Iraq in particular for his unwillingness to contemplate any confrontation with Israel. The immediate origins of the 1967 war can be found in the steady rise in tension between Israel and a new Syrian government which came to power in the same year. The war became inevitable .Accordingly, on 5 June 1967 Israel launched a series of preemptive air strikes against its Arab neighbors. Its consequent victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the war took only six days. It disproved the notion, common after 1956, that the Jewish state could not defeat the Arabs without Western allies. It exploded the myth that “unity of goals” among the Arab states would enable them to defeat Israel. It proved that the Israel Defense Force could attain high levels of skill, coordination, and valor in order to ensure the country’s survival.

It also created a new myth, shared by supporters and detractors of the Jewish state, that Israel was invincible. This myth lasted until October 1973, when another war begun by Egypt and Syria exposed Israel’s vulnerability. This October (or Yom Kippur) war was the most intensely fought .It was the war that demanded highest price in terms of lives and equipment. It also became the greatest threat to world as it set off a fourfold increase in the price of Middle East oil and nearly sparked a enlarged the U.S. role in trying to resolve the conflict.

Therefore, one of the overarching themes of Middle East history between 1967 and 1979 was the Arab-Israel conflict. More than ever before, Arab-Israel held center stage in the Middle East drama. At the same time, many diaspora Jews turned in to ardent Zionists. The Palestine question gained new significance in Arab states as remote as Morocco and Kuwait. Quarrels among the Arab countries and power struggles within them continued, but after 1967 they became secondary to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hardly a month went by without some prediction that a new war was about to break out. Up to 1973 most people assumed that Israel-if adequately armed by the United State-would win any conventional war. Therefore, the Palestinian fidaiyin came to dominate in Arab strategy against Israel.

The war had also international implications. After 1967 the USSR stepped up its role as arms supplier and adviser to many of the Arab states, as the United States did for Israel. This intensified super power involvement in the conflict often threatened to escalate into World War III. As neither side wanted so drastic a confrontation, they frequently conferred together and with other powers over possible imposed solutions to the conflict. Many would suggest formulas. Return of occupied territories and Palestinian Arabs became one of the main agenda among the Arabs. The Israelis still demanded security and Arab recognition but argued among themselves over which of the captured lands-Jerusalem, the West Bank (which most Israelis call Judea and Samaria), the Gaza Strip, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights-they should give back in exchange for peace. Arms purchases claimed a growing share of every Middle Eastern government’s budget, more young men in uniform risked dying for their time, and people’s mental and physical energies had to shift from constructive to destructive endeavors. No matter, both sides felt: survival and dignity were worth more than the highest price they (or their backers) could ever pay!

6.2.1The Course of the War

The story of Israel’s lightning victory over the Arabs in 1967 will be told and retold for years to come. It began when Israel’s air force attacked the main air bases of Egypt-followed by those of Jordan, Syria, and Iraq- on the morning of 5 June and wiped out virtually all their war-making potential. Having gained control of the air in the first hour Israel sent its army into Sinai and, in four days’ fighting, took the whole peninsula. As he had done in 1956, Nasir ordered the Suez Canal blocked, but by taking Sharm al-Shaykh, Israel broke the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.

As King Hussein had made a pact with Nasir one week before the war that effectively put his army under Egyptian command, Jordan plunged in to the war by firing into Israeli sections of Jerusalem. Israel’s army then invaded the northern part of the West Bank (or Samaria) and also the north side of Arab Jerusalem to secure Mount Scopus (an Israeli enclave since the 1949 armistice) and to attack the Old City from its eastern side. On 7 June the Israelis took the city, after fierce fighting, and prayed at the Western Wall for the first time in nineteen years. Elsewhere on the West Bank Israeli forces drove back the Jordanians, under Hussein’s direct command, in extremely tough combat. The Arabs accused Israel of dropping napalm on Jordanian troops and of using scare tactics to clear out some refugee camps and West Bank villages. Some 200,000 Arabs sought refuge across the Jordan, and new tent camps ringed the hills around Amman. Many Palestinians, after hearing promises from the Arab radio stations that Israel would be wiped out and that they would be allowed to return home, wondered why the Arab armies failed to work together for the desired victory.

Syria was the least helpful. Because of recent border clashes with Jordan, the Syrians did nothing for Hussein until he was defeated. By then, Israel could storm Syria’s well-fortified positions on the Golan Heights-no easy task-when no other Arab country would or could do anything for the Damascus regime. If Israel and Syria had not agreed to a Security Council cease-fire on 10 June, nothing would have stopped the Israelis from marching into Damascus itself. In this regard there is a saying that “Syria had often in history marched under the banner of Islam to victory and glory; it had yet to prove that it could do so under the banner of Arab nationalism.”

6.2.2 Reasons for the Outcome

The 1967 war indeed discredited Arab nationalism. Beforehand the Arab forces had seemed superior on paper: Egypt alone had more men under arms than Israel, even if it mobilized all its reserve units. The Arabs had 2,700 tanks compared to 800 for Israel, 800 fighter planes to Israel’s 190, and 217 ships to Israel’s 37, and the population ratio was about 25 to 1. The Arabs had the wholehearted support of the communist bloc and most Asian and African nations, at a time when Washington’s position (to quote a State Department Spokesman) was “neutral in thought, word, and deed.” Many Americans would have disputed this assertion, but with a half million troops in Vietnam the United States could not have intervened, even if Israel had asked it to.

Why, then, did Israel win? One obvious reply is that Israel attacked first, destroyed most of the Arab fighter planes, and then kept complete control of the air. Another is that Egypt’s best troops were still fighting in the Yemen civil war. The New York Times reported during the war that Israel probably had more troops on the field than its enemies, deployed better firepower, and used greater mobility in battle. Israel also had rapid internal transport and communication. The technical sophistication of Israel’s soldiers – or even the fact that they all could read and write-helped them. Israeli culture encouraged improvisatory thinking under pressure and egalitarian friendship between officer and fighting men. The Israeli soldiers may not be better than their Arab counterparts in strength, motor skills, or even bravery, but they did cooperate with their comrades-in-arms. Arab armies were divided by factionalism, and their governments did not trust one another. These factors had contributed to the Arab defeat in 1948, we mentioned earlier. In 1967, even after most anachronistic monarchies and landowning elites had fallen from power, even some fifteen years of Pan-Arabism and social reform in Egypt and Syria, and even after billions of dollars’ worth of Soviet and Western arms had poured into the Arab world, the Arab’s divisiveness led to a quicker, more devastating defeat in 1967 than in 1948. Small wonder that Nasir, the Arab nationalist leader, tried to resign at the end of the war!

The 1967 war indeed discredited Arab nationalism. Beforehand the Arab forces had seemed superior on paper: Egypt alone had more men under arms that Israel, even if it mobilized all its reserve units; the Arabs had 2,700 tanks compared to 800 for Israel, 800 fighter planes to israel’s 190, and 217 ships to Israel’s 37, and the population ratio was about 25 to 1. The Arabs had the wholehearted support of the communist bloc and most Asian and African nations, at a time when Washington’s position (to quote a State Department Spokesman) was “neutral in thought, word, and deed.” Many Americans would have disputed this assertion, but with a half million troops in Vietnam the United States could not have intervened, even if Israel had asked it to.

6.2.3 The Wars’ Aftermath

By the time the guns fell silent on 10 June, Israel had expanded its land area to three times what it had been six days earlier, having occupied the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Almost a million Arabs, most of them Palestinians, had come under Israeli rule. Israel had not anticipated this. No one had drawn up contingency plans. Defense Minister Dayan and other Israeli officials had said during the war that they would defend, not expand, Israel’s territory. Most Israelis were relieved just to find that they had not been annihilated and that the physical destruction and loss of Jewish lives, though certainly bad enough, were less than anyone had expected. Many hoped that the militant Arab leaders would be overthrown by the moderates or that the Arab government would agree to talk about a peace settlement. In retrospect, it is too bad that both sides were not more accommodating. The Arabs would not negotiate from weakness (after all, some said, Hitler could not persuade Churchill to talk peace in 1940), whereas Israel decided to hold all the occupied lands as bargaining chips in the peace talks it hoped would ensue. Its new borders were shorter and more defensible than the old ones had been. Soon some Israelis hoped to keep these lands, fueling Arab fears of Israeli expansionism.

6.2.4 The United Nations

The Arabs believed that a just solution was more apt to come from the UN (as in 1956) than from direct negotiations. Responding to a Soviet call, the General Assembly held a special session that June, but none of the resolutions put forth. After five futile weeks, the General Assembly handed the issue back to the Security Council .A summit meeting between Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin and President Johnson also failed. In August the Arab leaders (none of whom had fallen from power because of the war) held their own summit in Khartoum and resolved not to negotiate with Israel.

By the time the Security Council resumed its deliberations, both sides had hardened their positions. While the Arabs ruled out peace talks with Israel, the Israelis were making their occupation more visible in the captured territories. Arab houses were destroyed in Jerusalem’s Old City to expand the space in front of the Western Wall. Suspected terrorists in Gaza and the West Bank were jailed or deported and sometimes their houses were blown up; whole villages and towns were destroyed. Jewish settlers, with full government backing, began building settlements in the Golan Heights, the environs of Hebron, and East Jerusalem, notably on the hills connecting Mount Scopus with the western half of the city. Israel annexed East Jerusalem, including the Old City, defying a nearly unanimous General Assembly vote against the action. The USSR rearmed Syria and Egypt, sending them more technicians and advisers. The danger of a new war was rising.

It was up to the Security Council to devise a peace formula acceptable to Israel and the Arabs, as well as to the superpowers. During the debates, Britain’s Lord Caradon devised a formula with the necessary ambiguity (Resolution 242)to which all the permanent members could agree. It stressed “the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by war” and called for a just and lasting peace based on (1) withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict and (2) the right of every state in the area to “live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats and acts of force.” Other points included freedom of navigations through international waterways and a “just settlement to the refugee problem.”

Now the Resolution 242 has joined the Hussien-McMahon correspondence and the Balfour Declaration in that gallery of ambiguous documents complicating the Arab-Israeli conflict, you should know what the parties to this conflict, you should know what the parties to this conflict read into it. The Arabs saw the resolution as calling on Israel to return, as a precondition for peace, all the lands it had taken in the June war. Israel claimed that the resolution meant withdrawal from some of these lands, as each country was to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries. Some Arabs interpreted the “just settlement to the refugee problem” to mean Israel’s readmission of all displaced Palestinians wishing to return (the General Assembly had passed resolutions to that effect almost annually since 1948). Israel contended that the Palestinian refugees should be settled in the Arab countries. After all, the Arab states had expelled their Jewish citizens, most of whom had settled in Israel, and no one suggested letting them return to Iraq, Morocco, or Yemen.

Jordan, Israel, and Egypt agreed to abide by Resolution 242 (Syria, seeing it as a de facto recognition of Israel, rejected it until 1974), even though Arabs and Israelis disagreed on that it meant. Secretary-General U Thant asked a UN mediator, Gunnar Jarring, to bring the two sides closer together. Yet, when he began his ultimately fruitless mission in early 1968, the resolution’s deficiencies were becoming apparent. One, clearly, was that each side expected the other to give in first. Another was that no limitation was put on the arms race, which was as exciting and financially incapacitating as ever. Yet another was that the Arabs could still wage economic warfare against Israel and its backers – the boycott would go on. Finally, although this became clear only with the passage of time, Resolution 242 ignored the rights and interest of the Palestinian Arab people.

6.3 THE OCTOBER (YOM KIPPUR) WAR

This was the fourth Arab- Israel war. In 1970 the USA and the USSR persuaded Israel and UAR to renew the 1967 cease -fire and to entre peace negotiations through the United Nations. The tenuous cease –fire lasted until October 1973 when the outbreak of another war was signaled by a massive Egyptian air and artillery (and water cannon) assault on Israel’s Bar Lev line east of the Suez Canal, together with a large-scale Syrian tank invasion of the Golan Heights. With only 600 officers and soldiers on the Bar Lev line and seventy tanks guarding the Golan, Israel could not withstand this first assault. Within a few hours, thousands of Egyptians had crossed the canal using their surface-to-air missiles to down Israeli planes. They effectively denied the enemy its accustomed control of the air. They also overran most of the Bar Lev line. The Syrians retook Mount Hermon and made advance into the southern half of the Golan Heights; they might have invaded Israel itself. The war lasted longer than expected, nearly three weeks, and ended with Israel on the offensive. For the first time Arab armies successfully drove the Israelis back from their front line positions along the Suez Canal and in the Golan heights. The war was brought to a halt by American and Russian invention.

6.3.1 The War’s Aftermath

The June 1967 war had destroyed whatever influence the United States had in Egypt and Syria. One of the surprising results of the October 1973 war was that the United States actually regained her lost influence, thanks to the skill of Henry Kissinger. Even though he had never spent time in the Arab countries or shown much interest in them before he became secretary of state, he managed to deal shrewdly and yet compassionately with their leaders, to draw them away from their uncompromising position toward Israel, and to strengthen their ties with Washington, which alone could put real pressure on Jerusalem. He would try various means to bring the Arabs and the Israelis together; if one failed he suggested another. In early November Egyptian and Israeli army commanders met in a tent pitched near the kilometer 101 marker on the Cairo-Suez road to identify and run through the lines separating the two sides and to arrange for sending food and medical supplies to Egypt’s trapped Third Army. After these talks, Kissinger began organizing a general peace conference, to be held in Geneva in late December under the joint presidency of the superpowers. Syria stayed away because the PLO had not been invited, but Egypt and Israel both came. After a day of opening speeches, the conference postponed as a technical committee began working on disentangling the Israelis and Egyptians around Suez. The Geneva Conference has been suspended ever since but an attempt was made in 1977 to revive it.

6.4 THE ROAD TO CAMP DAVID

The U.S. government suspended its quest for Middle East peace during its 1976 presidential election. Both President Gerald Ford and his challenger, Jimmy Carter, pledged to back a strong and independent Israel and ignored the Palestinian Arabs. The United States was not unaffected by the Lebanese civil war, as its ambassador was assassinated in 1976 and the PLO helped the embassy evacuate U.S. civilians from Beirut. But Washington would not enter negotiations with the PLO; such conference were ruled out by Kissinger during his 1975 peace talks and opposed by most American voters. After Carter was elected, though, he would try a new initiative to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict and perhaps the Lebanese civil war as well.

After coming to power, Carter’s administration proposed a new plan. The key to the new administration’s thinking on the Middle East lay in a report prepared by the Bookings Institution and published in 1976 Called towards Peace in the Middle East. It urged the Arab states to recognize Israel within its pre-June 1967 boundaries (with some minor border adjustments). Israel was to turn the Gaza Strip and the West Bank over to a government of Palestinian Arabs, but not necessarily the PLO. It also called for reconvening the Geneva Conference to reach the necessary agreements. One of the authors of the Brookings report was William Quandt, who worked with Carter’s national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Carter gave high priority to Middle East peace and began to talk with various heads of state, hoping to revive the Geneva Conference before the end of 1977.

Yet, new problems soon appeared. Israel was intensely suspicious of any conference that the USSR would co-chair with the United States. Formerly, Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy had kept Moscow out of the peacemaking process. Now Washington seemed determined to invite the Soviets back in, embarrassing the Israelis and reportedly even Sadat. Besides, the Arab states insisted on having Palestinians at the proposed conference. If they were left out, some Palestinian group or individual might kill someone or blow up something to block any peace settlement that might bypass their interest and aspirations. If they were included, would the PLO represent them, according to the 1974 Rabat summit resolutions? Negotiating with the PLO was totally unacceptable to Israel, which viewed Arafat as a murderer and his organization as the umbrella for a collection of terrorist groups. Israel argued that Jordan was a Palestinian state and that there was no need for another, especially one whose covenant called for Israel’s destruction. For their part, the Palestinians wanted the PLO to represent them. As of 1976 all newly elected mayors of West Bank towns backed the PLO. Few expected the PLO to recognize Israel, but it wanted to speak for the Palestinians at the reconvened Geneva Conference.

Carter’s advisers learned the hard way not to take Israel for granted. While the new administration was seeking peace, Israel was holding a general election. The Labor Alignment had been hurt by internal disagreement between Prime Minister Rabin and Defense Minister Shim’on Peres, government scandals, galloping inflation, and mounting social problems. Israel’s electorate turned against Labor. Some changed to a new party calling for peace and major reforms, but more voted for the right-wing Likud. Its head, Menachem Begin, managed to form a coalition with the National Religious party and thus to become prime minister. For the first time, the post was held by an Israeli not belonging to any of the labor parties. Begin’s election seemed to be a giant step away from peace, as he was quick to assert that the West Bank (which he called Judea and Samaria) was an integral part of Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) that had been liberated, not occupied, in 1967. He called on Jews to settle in strategic parts of that mainly Arab area. The Arabs called Begin a terrorist. As former head of the Irgun, he had carried out the 1948 Dayr Yasin massacre. It seemed unlikely that any Arab leader would talk to such a chauvinistic Israel. Yet, amazingly, there was one-also a former terrorist.

6.4.3The Egyptian-Israeli Treaty

A spectacular summit, consisting of Begin, Sadat, and Carter, along with cabinet officers and advisers from the three corresponding countries, met at Camp David (the summer White House in Maryland) in September 1978. Twelve days of intense negotiations produced documents called “A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel” and “A Framework for Peace in the Middle East.” The latter was intended to bring other parties into the settlement. But Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and (not surprisingly) Syria and the PLO refused to join in these agreements, which offered the Palestinians little hope for self-determination. After long and bitter debate, Israel’s Knesset agreed to pull its troops out of Sinai and hence its settlements and airfields from the lands it would give back to Egypt. Negotiations opened at Blair House, not far from the White House (clearly high lighting Carter’s crucial role). But the Washington talk focused on Egypt’s attempt to link the establishment of diplomatic relations to Israel’s loosening its control over the Gaza and West Bank Palestinians. The three month deadline agreed upon at Camp David passed without a treaty.

Meanwhile, OPEC warned that during 1979 it would raise posted oil prices by 14.5 percent (later, after the Iranian revolution, it would boost them further and faster), increasing the West’s balance-of-payments deficit. Egypt and Israel jockeyed for support from Carter, Congress, and the American people and avoided making compromises. The other Arab governments held a summit meeting in Baghdad in November 1978, offered Egypt inducements to quit the peace talks, and threatened reprisals if it signed a treaty. Hard-line Israelis warned that they would block any pullout from the lands Begin had offered to return to Egypt.

Concerned about the eroding U.S. position in the Middle East, Carter decided in early March 1979 to fly to Cairo and Jerusalem to complete negotiations for the peace accord. His risky venture paid off, as Carter and his aids managed to reconcile the differences between Sadat and Begin. A complex treaty, formally ending the state of war between Egypt and Israel, was signed on the White House on 26 March 1979. It would prove costly for the United States, both economically and politically. Almost at once Begin and Sadat disputed the meaning of the document they had signed. Nearly all the other Arab governments condemned it. Most of all, the Palestinians accused Sadat of betraying their quest for justice and self-determination by agreeing to negotiate with Israel on the future of Gaza and the West Bank. Washington expected peace, but most of the Middle Eastern peoples rejected the terms Cairo and Jerusalem had accepted.

**Chapter 7: THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE WEST AFTER WORLD WAR II**

Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq, southern Arabia, and the Persian Gulf were fully with in British control. While Russia had reasserted its influence in northern Iran., in Syria and Lebanon, the French and been displaced. American interests were just beginning to develop .And Russia had re-established its control over northern Iran. Within months after the allied victory, the signs of a new Middle East power relationship began to appear. The region had acquired renewed importance and was soon to become a major center of tensions and clashes between the West and Russia.

7.1 FRENCH DEPARTURE FROM THE LEVANT

Weakened by defeat in 1940, France was no longer able to contain the nationalist tide in Syria and Lebanon. When British and Free French forces had occupied the Levant in 1941,they had recognized the independence of the two Arab states. Pro-French governments in both were replaced by nationalist regimes which resisted the 1943 attempts by the de Gaulle Free French forces to re-impose the colonial administration. The British intervened in 1945to protect the nationalists in their demand for complete independence. Both Syrian and Lebanese nationalist governments brought charges before the United Nations Security Council in 1946 claiming the continued presence of French and British troops to be unlawful. An American draft resolution calling on all four parties to negotiate the immediate evacuation of foreign troops was vetoed by Russia on the grounds that it was “ineffective.” Nevertheless, Great Britain and France continued withdrawing their forces. By the end of 1946 the last foreign soldiers were gone, and Syria and Lebanon were completely free. The dominant position enjoyed by France for nearly four centuries had ended, although French cultural influences, especially in Lebanon, remained strong.

7.2 DECLINE OF BRITISH INTERESTS

Great Britain withdrew from the Middle East, less suddenly than France. The first area abandoned was Palestine. Intensified hatred between the Palestinian Arabs the Jews, and the British after the war made the latter’s position on shaky ground. After an unsuccessful attempt by the 1946 Anglo- American committee of Inquiry to find a compromise, Great Britain hand over the dilemma to the United Nations. In November 1947 the General Assembly accepted the recommendations of its special Committee on Palestine, which proposed the division of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state and the creation of an international zone in Jerusalem. Palestine’s Arab majority and their supporters in the neighboring nations rejected the plan, and their protests gave birth to riots that grew into the Arab-Israeli war in 1948. Great Britain evacuated its troops and officials from the country in the midst of these hostilities, abandoning the framework of government to whatever Arab or Jewish forces managed to effect a takeover.

The thirty-year British occupation thus ended in disaster. With the British retreat, the Palestine war was brought to an end by armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Syria. Palestine was thereupon divided into three segments; the new republic of Israel, the Gaza strip in southern Palestine occupied by Egypt, and about a quarter of the former eastern part of Palestine incorporated in to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (formerly Transjordan).

Nationalist pressures in Egypt reopened unsuccessful negotiations with the British for evacuation of both the Suez Canal zone and the Sudan. In 1947 Egypt tried to bring Great Britain before the U.N before the Security Council, but neither side won sufficient votes to support its case. In the next phase, during 1950 Egypt unilaterally denounced the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance. Great Britain refused to acknowledge the act. A final settlement was at last reached after the 1952 Egyptian revolution. The young revolutionists accepted an agreement with England in February 1953 leading to Sudanese independence. Military evacuation of the Suez Canal zone and abrogation of the 1936 treaty was agreed on in October 1954.the new agreement provided that in case of attack on a member of the Arab league or Turkey, British troops or those of England’s allies were authorized to return to the Canal Zone. In addition free navigation through the Suez Canal as specified in the 1888 Constantinople convention was guaranteed .the union jack was at last lower over the Canal Zone in June 1956, terminating seventy –four years of British military occupation.

Abdullah Transjordan was rewarded for loyalty to the allied cause with fuller control over his country at the end of WWII, and his status raised from Amir to king. Yet, neither Arab nationalists nor Soviet Union acknowledged the change in title. After the Arab- Israel war Transjordan absorbed those parts of Palestine not conquered by the Israelis, and the resulting state was named in 1949 the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. Because of the nationalist pressure, the last British troops departed in 1957 after the cancellation of the 1948 Anglo-Transjordan agreement, although a few economic ties with Britain remained.

He last former mandate territory from which British forces departed was Iraq. After the end of WWII only a few British officers remained at two royal air force bases in that country. In 1953 the two countries signed the treaty called the Bagdad Pact which replaced previous agreements. The pact recognized both nations as equals, but nationalists regarded it as yet another disguise for continued British control of Iraqi foreign policy. Continued British influence in the country and the pact were the principal targets of the revolutionists who overthrew the British-backed Hashemite monarchy in 1958.A few months later, the last small British units left their air base .The Bagdad Pact was denounced, and Iraq terminated thirty years of alliance with Britain.

Great Britain and France made an abortive attempt to re-establish their Middle East roles in 1956.Then they joined Israel in attacking Egypt. France was eager to end Egyptian assistance to the Algerian nationalist movement engaging its forces in North Africa; Israel feared the growing strength of Arab nationalism symbolized by Egypt’s president Nasser; both Great Britain and France were angered by Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. Nasser controlled the company as retaliatory act against withdrawal of American and British offers of assistance in constructing a new high Aswan dam. After seizure of the Suez Canal Company, England and France were determined to overthrow Nasser for his act severely wounded their national pride and they considered him a potential future threat to the whole Middle East. Israeli invasion was mainly due to the rapid growth of Egyptian military strength resulting from large scale acquisition of arms from Soviet Union and the increase of Palestine Arab harassment of the Israel border.

The United Nations ordered the aggressors to evacuate their forces from Egypt immediately. Voting in the United Nations was marked by the agreement of the USA, the USSR, and several British common wealth members, producing an overwhelming majority. Russian threats to use rockets and to send volunteers to fight the aggressors added to the potential danger of the situation. Furthermore, large segments of public opinion in Great Britain strongly opposed the invasion of Egypt .By the end of 1956, British and French forces had retreated, and the last Israeli troops withdrew from the Gaza strip early in 1957.

By the end of the 1960’s the British government decided to cut back on all its international obligations because of their great costs, especially the cost of maintain military and naval forces in Asia. This decline in the empire tended to increase soviet-American competition to replace the British Asia, including the Middle East.

After the 1967 Arab-Israel war, France attempted to reassert some of its traditional influence, but there was little prospect that it would again become a major force in the region. Rather the French government by supplying arms to some Arab countries and diplomatic support, attained a more favorable public image in several Arab capitals

7.3 The USA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The interests of Americans in the Middle East were neither political nor strategic until WWIII. Immediately after the war most Americans interest s were abandoned. When the Britain’s financial situation became critical, however, and it was forced to abandon its self-imposed role as arbiter in the region. The USA felt obliged to return and to assume many of the British commitments before the area fall under Soviet influence.

The Soviet Union took the advantage of victory over the Axis and the decline in British power to press historical Russian ambitions in turkey and Iran. Even before the end of the war the USSSR began to accuse Turkey of prolonging the struggle by protecting the German flank in the Balkans through a policy of neutrality. Two months before the collapse of Nazis, the USSSR unilaterally denounced its 1925 Pact of Friendship and non aggression with Turkey. By the spring of 1947, many Turks feared possible Soviet arm intervention. Neighboring Greek was also in danger of losing its independence to communist guerrilla forces inside the country. To prevent the coming disaster, President Truman asked the congress in March 1947 to approve a massive economic and military aid program to the disturbed nations. A 400 million -dollar -bill was approved in May .And 100 million dollars immediately allocated to Turkey .The Truman Doctrine became part of America’s policy of contain Russia and was its first major peacemaking process in the middle east . This was an initial step toward USA acceptance of what had been the historic British role throughout the region.

Gradually, the USA replaced Great Britain in most of the Arab world after World War II. However the strong support received by the Zionist cause from both the American government and the American public in the Palestine dispute seriously compromised USA standing with the Arabs .Although the Soviet Union also was among the first nations to recognize Israel, its friendly attitude toward the Zionists soon changed, and soviet policy gave full backing to Arab nationalist aspirations. This move, among other things, became a source of embarrassment to the west.

Arab bitterness at the west, because of its support for Israel, because of long memories of the British and the French administration of their Middle East mandate as though they were colonies, and because of the recent Anglo-French-Israel attack on Egypt facilitated soviet advances to he region. At the Unite Nations the USSSR backed the Arab position on major Middle Eastern issues concerned with the Palestine, colonialism, and evacuatin of foreign troops.

By 1958 anti-western sentiment and the spread of Arab nationalist fervor symbolized by President Nasser brought a series of crises. When Egypt and Syria were joined in the United Arab Republic in February of that year, enthusiasm in the neighboring Arab countries was overwhelming. Lebanese Arab nationalists were motivated to revolution against their pro-western government. In Jordan and Iraq nationalist plots were undertaken to destroy the Hashemite regimes that were thought to be dominated by politicians who were “tools of Western imperialism.” The antimonarchists succeeded in July in overthrowing Iraq’s pro-western regime and in replacing it with a republic. American troops sent to Lebanon-at the request of that country’s President Chamoun under the terms of the Eisenhower Doctrine-and British forces flown into Jordan at that king’s request-blocked nationalist coups in those two nations . The foreign troops remained until the end of 1958, when relative stability returned to both Jordan and Lebanon. Communist influence in Iraq infiltrated the government, giving the Arab world its first direct experience with Soviet penetration. Until 1958 there had been direct contact only with British, French, and American “imperialism”.Thus there had been little concern about Soviet influence even among most conservative leaders. The experience in Iraq developed the first strong Arab antipathy to Soviet maneuvers and aroused the first sentiment for a genuinely neutral foreign policy. Gradually Egypt, Syria, and Iraq shifted their Pro-soviet policies toward alliance with neutralist nations such as India, Indonesia, and Yugoslavia. By 1962 Nasser was again seriously considering approaching the United States for economic assistance. But Arab-American relations never reached an even at expected level. Complicated by continued American support for Israel, by the growing leftist tendencies of Arab nationalism, and by increased demands for an independent Arab role in foreign affairs, relations between the United States, the UAR, and other Arab radical regimes slowly deteriorated. These relations were dealt their most severe blow by Arab defeat in the Six-Day War of June 1967 when the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria were crushed by Israel.The United States was held responsible, in large measure, for the defeat, although it played no direct or active role in the fighting. Arab defeat failed to produce peace or security for Israel. On the contrary, it stimulated the birth of a Palestine Arab guerrilla movement whose activities soon escalated into renewed fighting along all of Israel’s expanded frontiers. Within months of the war, the Soviet Union replaced most of the war material lost by Egypt. Thousands of Soviet military advisers and technicians also came to Egypt’s assistance with the result that the United States found itself, as Israel’s chief supplier of war planes, moving toward confrontation with the Soviet Union. After the June 1967 war, Moscow not only stepped up its military assistance to the UAR, but greatly expanded its Mediterranean fleet and acquired special privileges for its naval operations in several Arab ports. The buildup of Soviet strength in the area was in reality, not a new “intrusion,” but a forceful reassertion of centuries-old Russian interests in an area considered vital to Russian security and commerce. As seen from the West, the Soviet buildup threatened the eastern wing of NATO and was evidence of growing militancy. The buildup, either directly by the USSR, or by proxy on the part of the United States through Israel, was an integral aspect of the bipolar competition between the two superpowers for spheres of influence. Soviet buildup in the Mediterranean and Arab East was seen by some as a challenge to American intervention in Southeast Asia, especially since it occurred at a time when American policy in Indo-China was being subjected to critical evaluation both at home and abroad.

The dangers of a superpower confrontation in the Middle East became apparent as escalation of fighting along the Suez Canal between Israel and the UAR threatened to involve Russia and the United States in support of their respective clients. In August 1970 both powers persuaded Israel and the UAR to renew the 1967 cease-fire and to enter peace negotiations through the United Nations. Although Israel and the United States accused the UAR and Russia of violating the renewed cease-fire agreement by installing soviet anti-aircraft missiles in the Suez Canal cease-fire zone, negotiations continued through the superpowers to “rectify” the violations and to prevent another dangerous outbreak of Arab-Israeli conflict.

The tenuous cease-fire lasted until October 1973 when the fourth Arab Israeli war broke out. In their supervise attack on Israel, Egypt and Syria hoped to reverse the humiliating defeat of 1967. The war lasted longer than expected, nearly three weeks, and ended with Israel on the offensive. When the war was brought to a halt by American and Russian intervention, the Israelis had driven wedges into the Arab lines recapturing some of the territory they had lost. Egypt and Syria considered their advances a great victory, but the Israelis did not regard the outcome as a defeat even though their casualties were expensive with some 3,000 dead. The costs of the war reached tens of billions of dollars. The three weeks of combat used the equivalent of about one year’s GNP for each of the contestants. Battles fought were larger than any since World War II, destroying thousands of tanks and planes, more than were in the arsenals of any NATO country other than the United States.

As the battles raged back and forth in Sinai and Golan, the United States and Russia each supplied their respective clients through massive airlifts. Neither Arabs nor Israelis would have been able to continue the struggle without their big-power supplier. Once again the war brought Soviet-American relations to a precarious balance. When Moscow threatened to intervene in Egypt’s behalf to prevent a disastrous defeat, Washington issued an alert that sparked world attention and apprehension. Russia did not directly intervene and the two superpowers imposed another cease-fire in the region through the United Nations.

In the aftermath of the war they convened a Middle East Peace Conference at Geneva in December 1973. But it met only two days, and then postponed for several years. Through the intervention of U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger disengagement agreements were signed between Israel and Egypt and Syria. As a result of the two-phased disengagement with Egypt, one agreement signed in 1974 and a second in 1975, Israel withdrew from substantial parts of Sinai. This made it possible for Egypt to reopen the Suez Canal which had been closed since 1967. In exchange for Israel’s withdrawal, Egypt permitted shipment of cargoes to Israel on non-Israeli ships. Both Israel and Egypt received large amounts of economic assistance from the United States and Israel was guaranteed several billion dollars in American military assistance. A separate disengagement agreement was signed under Secretary Kissinger’s auspices between Israel and Syria, calling for the former’s withdrawal from small areas in the Golan.

After the Kissinger “shuttle” diplomacy from one Middle East capital to another during 1974-1975, relations between the United States and the major Arab states greatly improved. Diplomatic relations were restored between the United States and Egypt and Syria, and the presidents of these nations visited each other. The credibility of the United States as “honest broker” in the Arab-Israel conflict was restored.

Saudi Arabia was brought directly into the negotiations because of its large scale economic assistance to Egypt and Syria. Without Saudi oil revenues, it would have been impossible for the two Arab confrontation states to finance the purchase of Soviet weapons with which they fought the October war. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia, as the world’s major oil exporter, called the tune in use of the petroleum as a weapon during the October war. The weapon was used as a double-edged word; it financed the war for the Arabs, and an Arab oil boycott against Western countries sympathetic to Israel was a major factor in alerting diplomatic positions of several European countries.

As relations improved between the united state and Egypt, they deteriorated between Egypt and Russia. Egypt’s President Sadat charged that after the October war the Soviet Union broke her promises of aid, refusing to resupply his country with parts and equipments lost in the fighting. Soviet technicians were withdrawn in larger numbers from Egypt, as the two former friends exchanged unfriendly charges. Deterioration of relations between Moscow and Cairo also affected relations between Egypt and Syria, and the strong alliance that gave them so great an advantage in October 1973 was weakened. The situation was saved by Saudi Arabia in 1976 when it used its financial influence to halt the inter-Arab fight.

Changes in the Middle East balance of power were accentuated by Egyptian president Anwar Sadat’s peace initiatives in 1977. Sadat opened direct peace negotiations with Israel, establishing the first direct Arab contact with the Jewish state since it was established in 1948. Lengthy discussions between Egypt and Israel .facilitated by the United States as third partner led to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed at Washington, D.C. in March 1979. The treaty was followed by Israel’s return to Egypt of all the Sinai Peninsula seized in the 1967 war and by normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Embassies were opened in each other’s capitals. Trade, commercial, cultural, and tourist exchanges were imitated as Egypt became the first Arab country to end the thirty-year boycott and blockade of the Jewish State.

As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, the basis for negotiations between Egypt and Israel was provided by U.S. president Jimmy Carter at the presidential retreat in Camp David near Washington during 1978. The Camp David agreements included a proposal submitted by Israel’s Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, for Arab autonomy in Gaza and the West Bank, which were among the territories seized by Israel in the 1967 war. Despite successful conclusion of the peace treaty, negotiations for autonomy were long and arduous, frequently causing acrimonious tensions between Israel and Egypt and the U.S .Egypt perceived autonomy as a step toward self- government by the Arab inhabitant of the occupied territory. Whereas the Begin government vowed that Gaza and the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) would become integral parts of the Jewish state because of their historic ties with Israel.

Relations between Egypt and the rest of the Arab world were also strained because of the peace treaty. Egypt was expelled from the Arab League in 1979 and its members were divided among moderate and fanatical critics of Sadat. After his assassination in 1981, several Arab governments began to relax their boycott of Egypt, but the diplomatic balance was terrified in 1982 by Israel’s invasion of Lebanon. The invasion was aimed at destruction of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its bases in Lebanon. Notable was the lack of any tough Soviet or Arab action to counteract Israel’s military activity or to assist the PLO, despite nearly universal diplomatic condemnation of the invasion.

After this, the U.S. president Ronald Reagan used occasion of the Palestinian defeat and PLO departure from Beirut to announce a more decisive and clear-cut American policy in the Arab-Israeli dispute. He called for a cessation of further Israeli settlement in the West Bank and Gaza, establishment of “full autonomy” under Jordanian supervision for the Arab inhabitants rather than an independent Palestinian state, and negotiations for an “Undivided Jerusalem.

While the Begin government categorically rejected the plan, it received the sympathetic attention of several Arab governments and some PLO leaders. Even the leaders of Israel’s Labor opposition expressed willingness to discuss Reagan’s plan as a basis for peace. If Reagan could back up his proposals with concrete actions, it seemed that he might re-establish some of the American credibility lost as a result of deterioration in the U.S. diplomatic position following the 1979 revolution in Iran and the political upheaval in the Arab world caused by the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the invasion of Lebanon.

Use of the oil weapon in 1973 was a major turn point in relations between the Middle East and the West. For the first time, contrary to expectations of most Westerners, the Arab states were able to unite. By combining the military powers of non-oil producing states such as Egypt and Syria, with the economic power of the oil producers including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, political influence flowed from the Middle East toward the West. Iran, a non-Arab state, neutral in the Arab-Israel conflict, used the occasion to raise oil prices.

Convergence of oil shortages caused by the boycott with a five-fold price increase seemed to restore some of the political balance in favor of the Middle Eastern countries. The price increase seriously jeopardized development efforts in many Third World countries, which became increasingly dependent on the Middle East. Repercussions of these events were felt inside the region and the world at large. Internally, extensive development projects costing billions of dollars were initiated in the oil producing countries. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia stepped up their armament programs, acquiring billions of dollars’ worth of new weapons. To balance the outflow of capital from Western countries, they sent the latest, most sophisticated weapons to the Middle East, starting a dangerous arms race in the area. Convergence of all these events gave the Middle East a new and central importance in world politics.