



The Ottoman Empire and the Middle East Conflict

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Did you know that the Ottoman Empire was one of the largest empires in history? The Ottomans were Turks, from a land known today as **Turkey**. But who were they? How is this giant empire connected to the current Middle East



conflict? Read along as we explore this fascinating empire that expanded over 600 years.

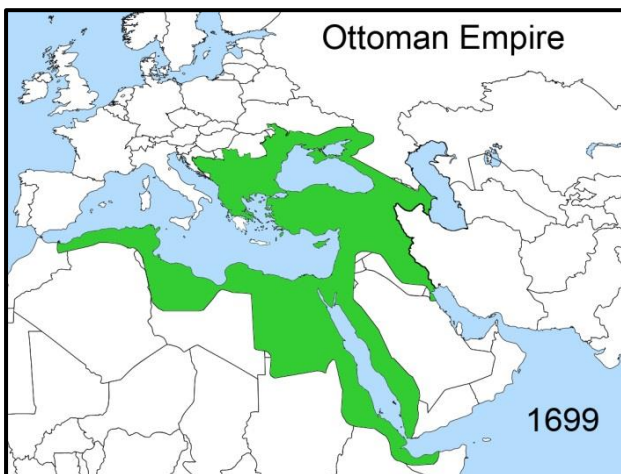
Directions: You will use this interactive booklet and handout to complete this assignment. Make sure you read carefully!

This is their story....



This giant empire began long ago in 1299 on the Anatolia peninsula (modern day Turkey) with a tribal leader named **Osman I**. What kind of leader do you think he was? He must have been an aggressive leader, for he conquered the territory surrounding him. Over the next 150 years, Osman's territory grew **so** much that it included part of the old Roman

Empire (known as the Byzantine Empire), and Eastern Europe. By now, these conquerors were called the Ottomans! They were so big they were able to take over the Roman capital of **Constantinople** and rename it **Istanbul**, making it their *own* capital city. Overtime, Istanbul became an important city and was one of the greatest trade centers in the world.



Study this map, then using the map on your handout, outline the area that included the Ottoman Empire at its peak. For areas that are not shown on your map, just use arrows to show its direction. Write Ottoman Empire across the area.

Interesting Fact

When Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire, a large number of scholars and artists fled to Italy. This led to the European Renaissance. It also caused the European nations to begin searching for new trade routes to the Far East. This led to Age of Exploration.



The Ottoman Empire included:

Turkey	Egypt	Greece	Bulgaria	Jordan
Palestine/Israel	Romania	Macedonia	Hungary	Syria
Lebanon	Parts of Arabia	Coastal strip of North Africa		

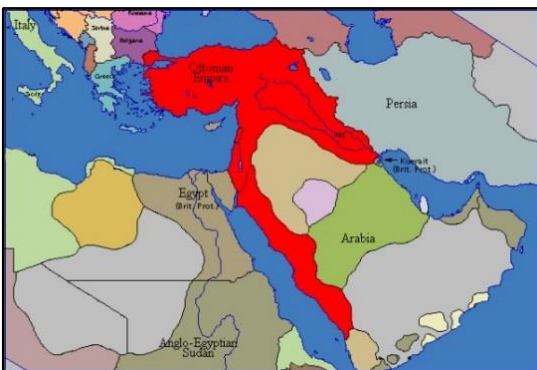
Look at the list of countries. How many CONTINENTS did the Ottoman Empire include? Write your answer on the handout, along with the name of its founder and location. This empire was VERY large and lasted until the early 20th century, almost six hundred years! The Ottoman Turks were **Muslim**, and their religion played an important role in their lives. They did allow other faiths to practice their beliefs and did not force them to follow their Islamic practices, although non-believers paid more taxes. **Reflect for a moment: Do you think allowing the conquered countries to practice their own beliefs helped the Ottomans keep control of its citizens? Be prepared to discuss in class.**



Wow, the Ottoman Empire sure was powerful, for it had a very strong military. Read below for the impact it had on the world.

Impact of the Ottoman Empire

- Spread of Islamic religion
- Ottomans controlled many important trade routes (Europe had to go through Ottoman land to trade with Asia).



On your handout, write down 2 ways the Ottoman Empire impacted the world.

But, over time, the large Ottoman Empire began to shrink. By the beginning of **World War I** in 1914, the only land the Ottoman Empire controlled was the **Middle East** (Southwest Asia). **Study the map here. Do**

you see the area in red? It was all that remained of the Ottoman Empire prior to WWI. Look at your own map on your handout and compare the differences. Do you see that the regions of Europe were no longer controlled by the Ottomans? The empire sure had gotten smaller, as it had weakened and lost its power and control. But, *why* did this happen?

What had caused the empire to lose control and become weak?

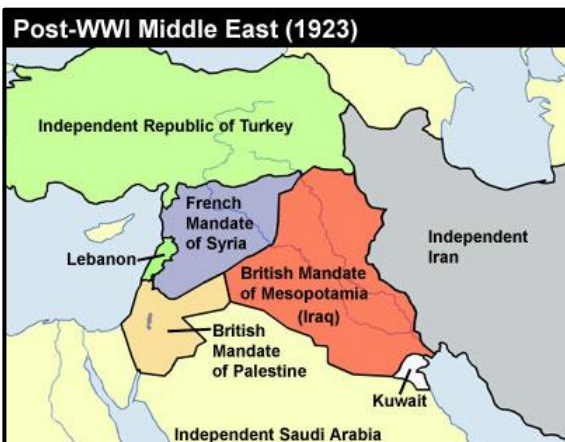
- It was too large to manage and had ineffective leaders.
- Europe destroyed their strength with advanced technology and discovery of new land.
- New water routes around Africa allowed Europe to bypass the empire.
- People controlled by the Ottomans began to want their independence (nationalism).

On your handout, in the Question box, list the reasons why the Empire weakened over time.



Now, let's discuss WWI. The Ottoman Empire *really* wanted their empire to be strong again. They thought joining the war would help them gain back some of their lost territory. They had to choose sides carefully, for if they lost, they would have to give up their remaining land. What side should they choose? The **Allied** Powers had loaned the Ottomans money before, *but* they were upset that Russia was now a part of the allied side. What would the Ottomans do? They *finally* decided to support the **Central** Powers of Germany, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and Bulgaria. Would this prove to be a wise decision?

Fast forward 4 years to **1918**. The **Allied** Powers had won the war, but would life ever be the same again for the citizens involved in the conflict? Many countries were *devastated*, with 9 million soldiers dead and 21 million wounded. Do you remember that the Ottomans had supported the losing side? Because of this, it fell apart, and its land was divided up by the Allied Powers of France and Great Britain. The only land the Ottomans were allowed to keep was land located in modern day **Turkey**, the original homeland of its founder, Osman I!



Study this map to determine what the Middle East looked like after WWI and the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. Do you see the European countries that controlled the land? This region has been sacred to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims for thousands of years. Would this cause future conflict? **Notice that some lands remained independent.** **Now, fill in the blanks on your handout, in the box titled: Ottoman Land Conquered.**

Think about all of the changes that were taking place. The former Ottoman Empire was gone, and now France and Great Britain had carved up the land and made new countries! The new boundaries came to be known as the **modern Middle East**, Southwest Asia. Do you think everyone agreed with this changes?



As you can imagine, not everyone agreed with the new boundaries. There were many ethnic and religious groups living in the former Ottoman land, such as the Palestinian Arabs and Kurds. Do you think Europe asked these ethnic groups their opinion on how the area *should* be divided? How would **you** have felt? Remember that these lands held religious significance, and was considered sacred to 3 major religions.



Let's look at the Kurds. Before the Ottoman Empire broke apart, this ethnic group lived in a region known as **Kurdistan**, but after the Europeans carved up new borders and countries, their homeland was now scattered over **5** countries! **Study the map. Do you see Kurdistan? Instead of the Kurds living in one location as they did under Ottoman rule, they now were scattered under the new European borders.**

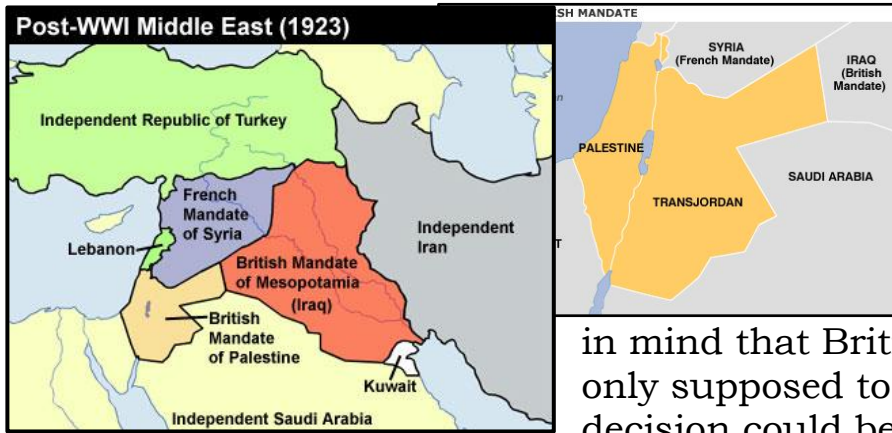
New Boundaries – the Modern Middle East

Palestine

Let's review.... The Ottomans had previously controlled the region, but after WWI, Great Britain and France took over and created **new** borders such as Iraq, Syria. Great Britain also controlled the region it named "**Palestine**" (with Jordan being created later on). There were independent countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey).



As mentioned before, this region is sacred to Jews, for it is considered their ancestral **Promised Land**. Also, many events in the Bible and Quran took place here and contains religious sites for all **three** religions, such as **Jerusalem**. Do you see how this divided Ottoman land could now cause conflict among the religions? **Now, at the bottom of your Israel map, write the name that Great Britain called this region.**



Study both maps and find Palestine. The smaller map shows Palestine split **again**, this time into territory called Transjordan. This would later become the modern day country called **Jordan**. Keep in mind that British control over this region was only supposed to be **temporary**, just until a final decision could be made on a permanent

government for these regions. **Now, on your handout, in the Questions box, answer why Palestine was such an important place, THEN on your own Ottoman map, outline the areas that Great Britain and Syria controlled.**

Think for a moment. Arabs were living in Palestine, along with a small Jewish population. But something was happening all around the world. **Anti-Semitism** was increasing (hatred of the Jews), and this caused them to desire to *return* to their ancestral homeland (Palestine) that was promised to them in the Bible This longing to go back to their **Promised Land** was called **Zionism**. Thousands began returning to Palestine. Would both populations now live in peace?



Think about it. If Jews were migrating back to Palestine, would Arabs accept them? Each group claimed that this land now known as Palestine belonged to **them**. **On your handout, define anti-Semitism and Zionism.**

World War II begins...



It's hard to believe, but within a few years, **another** world war raged called **World War II**. This time, the year was 1941. Anti-Semitism, especially in Europe, grew stronger, and many Jews were persecuted. Thousands began to leave Europe to avoid death, but many were put in concentration camps set up by Hitler, the

German dictator. By the time World War II ended in 1945, over six million Jews had been killed. This terrible time was known as the **Holocaust**.

Imagine how the world must have felt now. Many people felt guilt and disgust over what had happened to the Jews. How do you think the Jews felt? Their desire for their homeland (Zionism) grew even *stronger*, and *now* the newly created **United Nations** began to consider what could be done to help the Jewish people. Was there really anything that the United Nations could do? The Jews were not welcomed in many countries throughout the world and had just suffered through the Holocaust. **Reflect for a moment. This region, which used to be part of the Ottoman Empire, was now called Palestine. It was sacred land. If you were part of the United Nations, what possible solutions would you consider? Really reflect on this, and then be prepared to discuss in class.**



The Conflict Deepens

The year was **1948**. It had been three years since **World War II** had ended, but the world had *not* forgotten what happened to the Jews in WWII. So, the United Nations, to show their support for the persecuted Jews, voted to *create* a country for them. This new nation would be located in Palestine, their ancestral homeland. But, if you were a Palestinian Arab, what emotions would you be feeling? Would you agree to this?

This was the plan set forth by the United Nations. It would **divide** the British controlled Palestine into an Arab *and* Jewish state. The Jews certainly liked this idea, but the Arabs were very angry about it and vowed to stop it from happening. They felt the land belonged to them only.



Study the map to see how the United Nations planned to divide Palestine. **On your own Israel map, divide Palestine into the Jewish and Arab states by drawing a rough sketch of the borders. Mark them “I” for Israel and “P” for Palestine.**



Palestine, a land that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire, was now an area **full** of conflict. The Arab countries around Palestine were **extremely unhappy** about the idea of a Jewish state, believing that the land still belonged to them. But, even though the Arabs protested against a Jewish nation, it finally happened. The British control ended as they withdrew their troops and the very next day, **May 14, 1948**, the **Jewish state of Israel** was officially created.

The Arabs felt betrayed and were very angry, for they had been promised this land for *their* own official country. **Do this: on your handout, in the Israel map box, write the date that Israel became a nation.**

A War Breaks Out!

Think about that day in May, 1948 when Israel finally became a nation. There must have been much celebration with music and song! But, the celebration was disrupted, for that very night, Arab nations attacked them. Nations such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen joined together to go against Israel. It was called the **Arab-Israeli War**. Israel often refers to it as the Israeli War for Independence. Even though Israel was a brand new country, they won the war, for they had a better army than the Arabs. The conflict lasted 8 months.



UN ARMISTICE LINES 1949

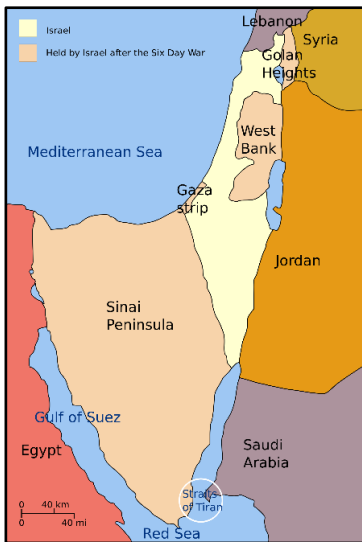


Israel not only defended their new nation, but they also *expanded* their territory, gaining land that the Palestinians had been offered but rejected. In the end, armistice lines were agreed on; Israel would receive more land, and Egypt and Jordan would keep control over the Gaza Strip and West Bank. **Study this post 1949 Arab Israeli War map. The dark gray represents Israel. Do you see that its borders have expanded? On your handout, define the Arab-Israeli War.**

What Happened Next?

Even though the Arab-Israeli war had ended, the conflict continued. Many Palestinian Arabs became **refugees** and fled to neighboring countries. Arab countries continued to harass Israel in hopes of getting them to leave. For example, Syria used the Golan Heights to shell Israeli farms and villages. Most Arab countries refused to acknowledge that Israel was truly a nation.

Even in **1967**, conflict continued. There was talk of yet *another* war. Nations such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria prepared to invade Israel, but Israel, knowing what they were planning, decided to not wait for an attack. They instead issued a surprise assault on Egypt. **Reflect for a moment without writing anything down. Was this a wise thing for Israel to do?**



After just **six days** of fighting, Israeli forces claimed victory. Not only did they win the war, but they now owned **more** land! Israel now occupied enough territory to more than triple the size of the area, from 8,000 to 26,000 miles.

This war was called the **Six Day War** (or 1967 War). This victory allowed Israel to gain control of the holy city of **Jerusalem**. Israel now controlled Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. **Study the map to see the areas that Israel gained after the war. On your handout, describe the Six Day War, and the territory that Israel gained.**

Throughout the following years, Israel and the Arab countries engaged in other wars such as the **1973 Yom Kippur War**. Terrorism increased on both sides. Even U.S. presidents attempted to promote peace.

President Jimmy Carter arranged a meeting between Anwar Sadat of Egypt and the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The world was thrilled that a **peace treaty** would be signed! As part of the agreement, Israel would *return* the **Sinai Peninsula** to Egypt and in exchange Egypt would officially recognize Israel as a nation.



Did the Peace Treaty last?

Despite the treaty, terrorism continued. Anwar Sadat was assassinated by Muslim extremists for officially recognizing Israel. Then, in 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon in search of terrorists hiding out there. The conflicts continued to disrupt any plans for peace. On your handout, explain Egypt's attempt at peace and its outcome in the Question box.

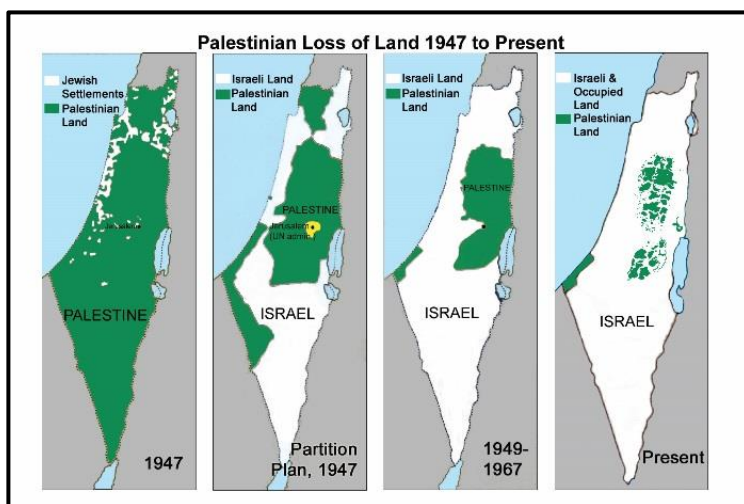
What is Happening Now?

There is conflict even today! Palestinians still live in refugee camps and still demand their own state. Even though there are peace talks, many issues need to be resolved. Arab countries support the Palestinians, while the U.S. supports Israel. This has caused tension between the U.S. and Middle East countries.

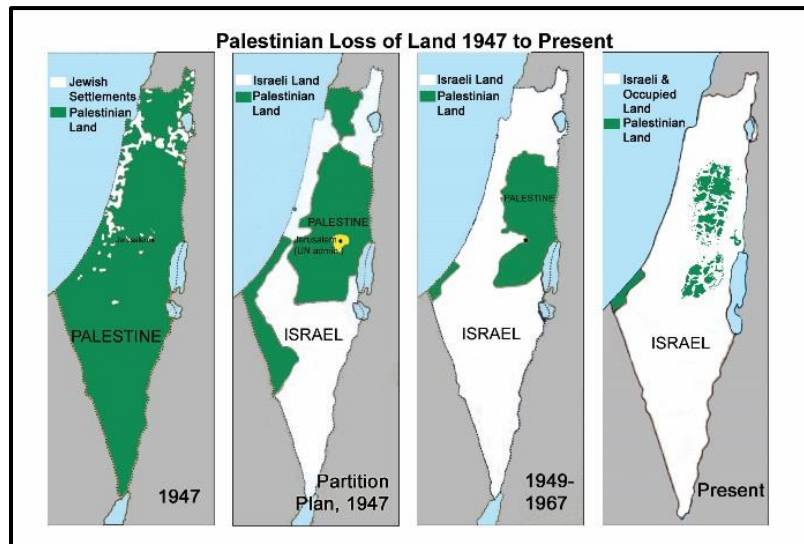
Current Map of Israel and Palestinian Territory

The map below shows the transition of land loss from pre-1948 to current day. As you can see, each time Israel and the Arabs went to war, more Palestinian land was lost.

Now, the issue has become quite complicated! Israelis are now living in Palestinian areas. Palestinians often attack Israel with suicide bombings, while Palestinians claim they are being mistreated and controlled by the Israelis. They argue over border disputes, Israeli security, Palestinian refugees, and control of Jerusalem.



Study the maps. Look at the last map to see where the Palestinians currently live, and then shade in the area on your own Israel map to represent their current territory.



Study the map again. The first slide shows the land prior to WWI when the Ottoman Empire controlled it. **Do you see how the borders changed in 1948 to current day?** Each time Israel and the surrounding nations went to war, Israel gained *more* land. The conflict is a complicated one. What do Palestinians want? They want complete control of the pre-1967 borders, especially **Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights**. **On your handout, in the Israel map box, write down the 3 areas Palestinians want control of.**

Show What You Know

On your handout, answer these 2 final questions:

- How would you summarize this conflict? Use your notes to help you write one solid paragraph (5 – 7 sentences).
- What are your own thoughts regarding the Palestinian Israeli conflict? Are there any solutions? Really reflect on this, writing 5- 7 sentences.

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