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# Arab Nationalism

LESSON 2 OF 19



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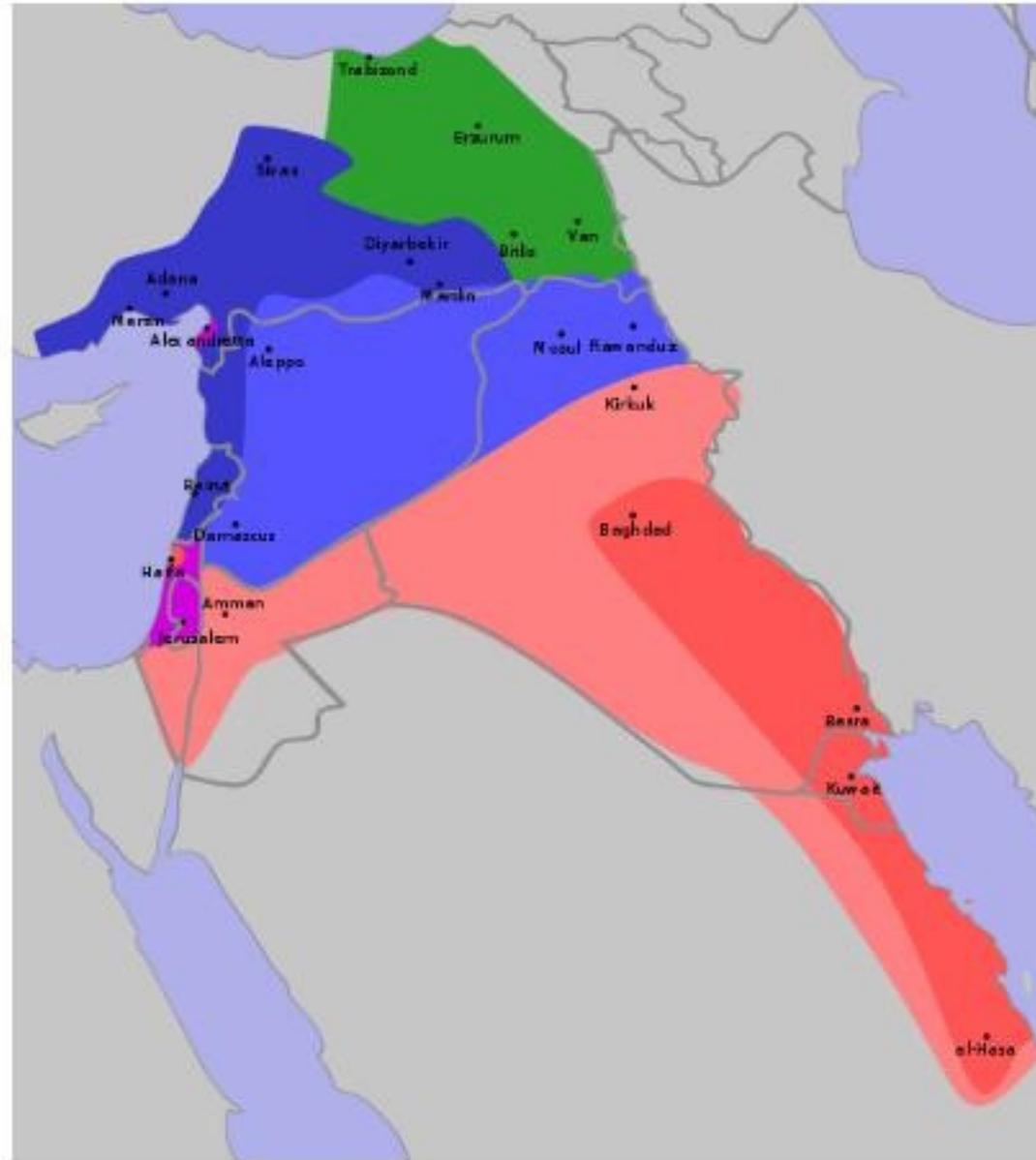


# Arab Nationalism

*Presented by  
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- Arab nationalism had its origin when Arab nations had revolted against Ottoman domination during the First World War.
- Arabs also questioned the right of the Sultan of Turkey to be Caliph and many claimed that Hussein, the Grand Sheriff of Mecca had better claim.
- But this early Arab nationalism was limited to urban elites and they hardly succeeded in spreading their ideas to the wider Arab population.
- Even this Arab nationalism received a check at the peace settlement of 1919-20 when the victorious Allied Powers divided Arab areas among themselves.

- British and French Imperialists pledged to promote Arab independence if the Arabs helped them win World War I.
- But once victorious, they broke their promises, dividing the region among them into foreign-dominated "mandates" with artificial borders.
- Sykes-Picot / Asia Minor agreement. Sanremo Agreement.
- The British, moreover, encouraged the aspirations of Zionists, to establish a separate Jewish state by taking over parts or all of Palestine.



- Arab Nationalism rose to prominence in the 1940s and 50s as Arab Nations began to gain independence.
- The premise of Arab Nationalism is that there should be political, cultural, religious, and historical unity among the people of Arab nations.
- Modern Arab nationalism is transnational in principle but national (state-based) in practice.
- It stood for national independence of separate Arab states as well as for the unity of all Arabs irrespective of their state boundaries.

- One of the primary goals of Arab nationalism is the end of Western influence in the Arab world, seen as a "nemesis" of Arab strength, and the removal of those Arab governments considered to be dependent upon Western power.
- Michel Aflaq, a Syrian philosopher and Arab nationalist. His ideas played a significant role in the development of Ba'athism (Resurrection) and its political movement. Baathism had a left wing, Arab independence and unity outlook.

- Formation of Arab League in 1945.
- The League's main goal is to "draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries".
- Though it expanded to 20 states by 1980, it achieved nothing much due to internal squabbles.

- Pan-Arab movement got a boost under Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1950s, who gained enormous prestige in Arab World after Suez Crisis.
- Syria joined Egypt to form UAR in 1958, but withdrew in 1961 due to Nasser's attempt to dominate the union.  
Nasserism Vs Ba'athism.
- After Nasser's death in 1970 his successor Sadat organised a loose union b/w Egypt, Libya and Syria known as Federation of Arab Republics. Existed as a loose federation till 1977.

- In 1974, Muammar Gaddafi (Libya) and Habib Bourgiba (Tunisia) attempted to form the Arab Islamic Republic, failed due to differences what the merger would look like.
- The Arab Maghreb Union- a trade agreement aiming for economic and future political unity among Arab countries of the Maghreb in North Africa. Its members are Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

- Ancient states such as Morocco and Egypt are very different in character from more recent creations such as Iraq, Syria and Libya—culturally, economically and ethnically.
- Various attempts to create a wider pan-Arab state, e.g. the Ba'ath Party, the United Arab Republic, have always failed for this reason.
- Jordan and Saudi Arabia were ruled by conservative royal families who were criticised for being pro-western by other Arabic states like Egypt and Syria, which were pro-Arab nationalists as well as socialists.

- Personal interests of the ruling families also hindered pan-Arab unity as they would have lost their ruling power in case of any disappearance of the national boundaries.
- Tension between secular nationalism and Islam. For example Saddam Hussein, whose regime was nominally secular and socialist, was long reviled by Islamists as both a tyrant and an apostate.
- Arab Nationalism also became the basis for alienation and loss of national identity for many indigenous Jews and other minorities of Arab countries.

- Western Powers also worked towards disunity of Arabs by playing one state against other for the fulfilment of their own interests.
- ME is strategically located b/w western nations, communist bloc and Asia/Africa.
- Attempts by the US and UK to forge pro-western military pacts within the region in the early 1950s such as the 'Baghdad Pact' (1950-59) and the 'Middle East Defence Organisation' (1952) were attempts at undermining Nasser's nationalist power-base whilst securing a role for the British army in the region.

- Formation of United Arab Republic- Saudi oil pipelines passing through Syria under control of Arab nationalists.
- ME produced more than 1/3rd oil produced. Before North Sea oil was discovered West was heavily depended on oil from the region.
- The failure of the West to recognise Arab nationalism and Communism as two entirely separate and independent ideologies had led very quickly to American involvement in local Middle Eastern problems that had nothing to do with Soviet interference.