

Wars (1925 – 2025)

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East



In the labyrinth of Middle Eastern politics, conflicts, and alliances, few events have cast a shadow as long and consequential as the **Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916**. Signed in secret by Britain and France, with the tacit approval of Russia, this colonial-era pact carved up the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces into zones of influence — shaping the modern Middle East in ways its architects could scarcely have imagined. The agreement was not merely a diplomatic arrangement; it was a geopolitical blueprint designed to **serve imperial interests** at the expense of indigenous populations, cultural identities, and aspirations for sovereignty. The ink on this clandestine deal may have dried over a century ago, but its repercussions continue to reverberate violently across the region. From **Iraq and Syria's fragile statehood** to **Palestine's unresolved status**, from the **Kurdish struggle for independence** to the **rise of sectarian conflicts**, Sykes-Picot remains an unspoken architect of today's crises. **Legacy of Betrayal:** The agreement embodies a **tale of promises made and broken**. While Britain courted Arab leaders with dreams of post-Ottoman independence, it simultaneously pledged support for a Jewish homeland through the **Balfour Declaration** — creating parallel commitments that would later collide violently. For Arab nationalists, Sykes-Picot became a **symbol of betrayal**, fueling decades of resistance and revolt. From the **Arab Revolt of 1916** to today's insurgencies, from the rise of **Pan-Arabism** to the fragmentation of states, the ghosts of Sykes-Picot remain deeply embedded in the Middle East's political DNA.

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Preface

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

In the labyrinth of Middle Eastern politics, conflicts, and alliances, few events have cast a shadow as long and consequential as the **Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916**. Signed in secret by Britain and France, with the tacit approval of Russia, this colonial-era pact carved up the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces into zones of influence — shaping the modern Middle East in ways its architects could scarcely have imagined.

The agreement was not merely a diplomatic arrangement; it was a geopolitical blueprint designed to **serve imperial interests** at the expense of indigenous populations, cultural identities, and aspirations for sovereignty. The ink on this clandestine deal may have dried over a century ago, but its repercussions continue to reverberate violently across the region. From **Iraq and Syria's fragile statehood** to **Palestine's unresolved status**, from the **Kurdish struggle for independence** to the **rise of sectarian conflicts**, Sykes-Picot remains an unspoken architect of today's crises.

Why This Book Matters

This book seeks to unravel the **complex interplay between history and modern geopolitics**. To understand why the Middle East today is fraught with instability, competing nationalisms, and persistent external interventions, we must return to the origins of its political geography. By tracing the journey from **secret imperial negotiations** to **modern-day wars**, we aim to answer critical questions:

- How did artificial borders create **stateless nations** and **conflicting identities**?
 - In what ways did Sykes-Picot sow seeds of **sectarianism, extremism, and mistrust**?
 - How do today's powers — the U.S., Russia, China, Iran, and Turkey — **weaponize historical fault lines**?
 - Can global frameworks and regional cooperation dismantle the century-old legacies of division?
-

Legacy of Betrayal

The agreement embodies a **tale of promises made and broken**. While Britain courted Arab leaders with dreams of post-Ottoman independence, it simultaneously pledged support for a Jewish homeland through the **Balfour Declaration** — creating parallel commitments that would later collide violently. For Arab nationalists, Sykes-Picot became a **symbol of betrayal**, fueling decades of resistance and revolt.

From the **Arab Revolt of 1916** to today's insurgencies, from the rise of **Pan-Arabism** to the fragmentation of states, the ghosts of Sykes-Picot remain deeply embedded in the Middle East's political DNA.

A Contemporary Lens

Unlike traditional historical analyses, this book takes a **multidimensional approach**, combining:

- **Historical insights** — to decode the origins of borders and mandates.

- **Leadership analysis** — examining the decisions of past and present actors.
 - **Ethical considerations** — interrogating the morality of colonial statecraft.
 - **Case studies** — on Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and the Kurdish question.
 - **Global best practices** — lessons from regions that successfully overcame partition-driven conflicts.
 - **Modern applications** — exploring frameworks for peacebuilding, federalism, and reconciliation.
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A Call for Rethinking Borders

A century after the agreement, the Middle East still grapples with the **unintended consequences** of lines drawn by foreign hands. As new players like **China, Russia, and Iran** deepen their influence, and as non-state actors like **ISIS** and **Hezbollah** challenge established norms, the region teeters between **fragmentation** and **cooperation**.

This book proposes not merely to recount the past but to **chart a path forward**. By learning from **global best practices** and promoting **inclusive leadership**, there lies potential for a **new Middle Eastern order** rooted in dignity, sovereignty, and shared prosperity.

Our Journey Ahead

Through **20 detailed chapters**, we will explore the making, consequences, and modern reinterpretations of Sykes-Picot. We will connect the dots between **1916 maps** and **2025 conflicts**, revealing how

historical compromises continue to shape security doctrines, economic dependencies, and regional alliances today.

This is not just a study of history. It is a **strategic handbook** for policymakers, diplomats, academics, and citizens seeking to understand why peace remains elusive — and how it might finally be achieved.

“To understand today’s Middle East, one must first understand the ghost of Sykes-Picot.”

Chapter 1 — Setting the Stage: The Ottoman Empire's Decline

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

Before we can fully understand the **Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916**, we must step back to examine the **Ottoman Empire's decline** and the strategic ambitions of Britain, France, and other global powers. The slow disintegration of the “Sick Man of Europe” created a **geopolitical vacuum** in the Middle East — one that imperial powers were eager to fill.

This chapter sets the foundation for understanding how **centuries of Ottoman rule** gave way to **foreign interventions, secret negotiations**, and the **creation of artificial borders** that still fuel conflicts today.

1.1 The “Sick Man of Europe” and Ottoman Vulnerabilities

1.1.1 The Ottoman Empire's Waning Power

By the late 19th century, the once-mighty Ottoman Empire had entered a period of **political stagnation, economic weakness, and territorial loss**.

- **Military defeats** in Europe and North Africa eroded imperial influence.
- **Economic dependency** on European powers increased through loans and trade imbalances.
- **Nationalist uprisings** within its territories — from the Balkans to Arabia — undermined central authority.

The empire's vast Middle Eastern provinces — **Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, and Arabia** — became pawns in a global contest for influence.

1.1.2 Strategic Importance of the Middle East

The Middle East, long a crossroads of **civilizations, religions, and trade routes**, grew even more important by the early 20th century:

- **Geographical gateway** connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa.
- **Control over the Suez Canal** — Britain's lifeline to India and Asia.
- **Emergence of oil** as a strategic commodity, especially in Persia (Iran) and Mesopotamia (Iraq).

For Britain and France, **dominating the Middle East** meant securing **energy security, trade dominance, and military positioning**.

1.2 Geopolitical Tensions in World War I

1.2.1 Imperial Rivalries

As **World War I (1914–1918)** unfolded, the Middle East became a **secondary battlefield** where European powers competed to expand their spheres of influence:

- **Britain** sought to secure Egypt, the Persian Gulf, and oil supplies.
- **France** eyed Syria and Lebanon, aiming to expand its colonial reach.
- **Russia** pursued control of Istanbul and access to warm-water ports.

The Ottoman Empire's **alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary** transformed the Middle East into a strategic theater of war.

1.2.2 Britain's Dual Game

Britain launched a **double-dealing strategy**:

- Promising **independence** to Arabs in exchange for rebelling against Ottoman rule.
- Secretly negotiating with France and Russia to divide the Ottoman territories.

This **duplicitous diplomacy** would later sow **deep mistrust** between Arabs and Western powers.

1.3 Britain, France, and Russia: Competing Visions

1.3.1 British Ambitions

- **Suez Canal Control:** Safeguarding the imperial lifeline to India.
 - **Oil and Mesopotamia:** Securing the resources needed for an industrial military.
 - **Buffer States:** Creating compliant Arab regimes to protect British dominance.
-

1.3.2 French Aspirations

France viewed itself as the **protector of Christian minorities** and **cultural influence** in the Levant. Its goals included:

- Establishing control over **Syria and Lebanon**.
 - Expanding colonial links between **North Africa** and the Levant.
 - Limiting Britain's influence along the Mediterranean.
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1.3.3 Russia's Role

While less directly involved in drafting the agreement, Russia supported the plan in exchange for:

- **Control over Istanbul** and the **Turkish Straits**.
- Expanded access to warm-water trade routes.

Though Russia later withdrew after the **1917 Bolshevik Revolution**, its early involvement influenced the geopolitical calculations.

1.4 Seeds of Future Conflicts

The decisions made during this period laid the groundwork for:

- **Artificial borders** that ignored **ethnic, religious, and tribal realities**.
- **Sectarian divisions** exploited by colonial administrators.
- **Unrealized promises** to Arabs, Kurds, and Zionists, setting up **perpetual instability**.

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role During Ottoman Decline	Impact
Mark Sykes	Britain	Diplomat, co-negotiator of Sykes-Picot	Advocated British dominance in Iraq and Palestine
François Georges-Picot	France	Diplomat, co-negotiator	Secured French control over Syria and Lebanon
Sharif Hussein	Hejaz (Arabia)	Leader of the Arab Revolt	Betrayed by conflicting British promises
David Lloyd George	Britain	Prime Minister	Pushed imperial objectives over Arab independence
Georges Clemenceau	France	Prime Minister	Strengthened French colonial ambitions

Case Study: The Arab Revolt (1916–1918)

- **Objective:** Arabs, led by Sharif Hussein and supported by T.E. Lawrence, sought independence from Ottoman rule.
 - **Outcome:** While the revolt weakened Ottoman control, **Sykes-Picot undermined Arab aspirations** by prearranging foreign domination.
 - **Legacy:** The revolt's betrayal became a **symbol of Arab distrust** towards Western powers — a sentiment that persists today.
-

Ethical Standards and Global Best Practices

Ethical Dilemmas

- Secret negotiations excluded **local populations** from decisions affecting their sovereignty.
- Multiple, **contradictory promises** created a climate of betrayal and mistrust.

Modern Best Practices

- **UN-guided self-determination:** Allowing affected peoples to decide their borders.
 - **Inclusive peace frameworks:** Ensuring diverse representation in negotiations.
 - **Transparency in diplomacy:** Preventing secretive deals with long-term destabilizing effects.
-

Conclusion

The decline of the Ottoman Empire was not merely the end of a dynasty; it was the **beginning of a fragmented Middle East**. The **strategic ambitions** of Britain, France, and Russia set in motion a series of events that reshaped the region's **politics, borders, and conflicts** for generations.

The stage was now set for the **Sykes-Picot Agreement** — a secret pact whose consequences still define the Middle East's reality in 2025.

Chapter 2 — The Secret Deal: Anatomy of Sykes-Picot

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916** is one of the most consequential yet controversial deals in modern history. Negotiated in utmost secrecy between **Britain** and **France**, with **Russia's tacit approval**, it was designed to **divide the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces** into spheres of influence — ignoring the aspirations of the local populations.

This chapter dives deep into **how the deal was conceived, what it promised, who it betrayed, and why its legacy still shapes Middle Eastern politics today.**

2.1 The Negotiators: Sykes and Picot

2.1.1 Sir Mark Sykes (1879–1919)

- A British diplomat and Middle East strategist.
- Advocated for Britain's **dominance over Palestine and Iraq** to secure oil supplies and trade routes.
- Viewed Arabs as **strategic pawns** rather than political partners.

2.1.2 François Georges-Picot (1870–1951)

- A seasoned French diplomat determined to **expand France's colonial reach**.
- Targeted **Syria and Lebanon** as France's rightful sphere of influence.
- Prioritized **Catholic and Christian minority protections** under French control.

2.1.3 The Imperial Mindset

Both negotiators shared a **colonial worldview** — they saw the Middle East not as a region of sovereign peoples but as **territory to be managed** for imperial gain.

2.2 The Context of Secrecy

2.2.1 Britain's Contradictory Promises

At the same time Britain was secretly negotiating Sykes-Picot, it was:

- Promising **independence to Arabs** through the **McMahon–Hussein Correspondence**.
- Preparing the **Balfour Declaration (1917)**, pledging support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- Maintaining separate oil agreements with private British companies in Mesopotamia.

This **triple-dealing strategy** planted seeds of **distrust** that haunt Western-Arab relations to this day.

2.2.2 Why Secrecy Mattered

- Revealing the deal during wartime would have **alienated Arab allies** who were fighting the Ottomans.
- It would have undermined British credibility among Zionists and Indian Muslims.
- By concealing it, Britain and France **prioritized imperial agendas over regional stability**.

2.3 The Zones of Influence

The Sykes-Picot Agreement divided the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces into **four key zones**:

Zone	Control / Influence	Modern Territories	Strategic Intent
Blue Zone	Direct French control	Coastal Syria, Lebanon	Securing Mediterranean dominance
A Zone	French influence under Arab governance	Northern Iraq, Northern Syria	Buffer region to protect French colonial interests
Red Zone	Direct British control	Southern Iraq (Basra, Baghdad)	Access to oil and Persian Gulf trade routes
B Zone	British influence under Arab governance	Jordan, Southern Iraq	Establishing client states loyal to Britain
Palestine	International administration	Modern Israel, West Bank, Gaza	Avoiding conflict between French, British, and religious claims

This **artificial carving** ignored **ethnic, tribal, and religious realities** — creating borders that contradicted centuries-old social and cultural alignments.

2.4 Russia's Role

Although less directly involved, **Russia** supported the deal in exchange for:

- **Access to Istanbul and the Turkish Straits.**
- Expanded control in **Eastern Anatolia** and parts of Armenia.

However, after the **1917 Bolshevik Revolution**, Russia **withdrew** and **leaked the secret deal**, exposing Britain and France's duplicity to the Arabs.

2.5 Consequences of the Agreement

2.5.1 Betrayal of Arab Aspirations

Arabs, who had rebelled against the Ottomans believing they would gain independence, discovered that **Western powers had pre-decided their future**. This sense of betrayal fueled:

- **Mistrust towards Britain and France.**
 - **Rise of Arab nationalism** and anti-colonial movements.
 - Long-term resentment against external interference.
-

2.5.2 Seeds of Sectarian Conflicts

By imposing **straight-line borders** across diverse populations, Sykes-Picot forced together groups with deep **sectarian, ethnic, and tribal differences**:

- **Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds** in Iraq.
- **Alawites, Sunnis, and Druze** in Syria.
- **Palestinians and Zionists** in Palestine.

This **engineered fragmentation** created the “**fragile states**” that dominate today’s Middle East.

2.5.3 A Century of Proxy Wars

Sykes-Picot effectively set the stage for **continuous external intervention**:

- **Cold War rivalries** between the U.S. and USSR.
 - **Regional hegemonies** by Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.
 - **Modern proxy wars** in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.
-

Case Study: The Leaked Agreement (1917)

In **November 1917**, the **Bolsheviks** exposed the Sykes-Picot Agreement by publishing its details.

- **Arab reaction:** Outrage and a deep sense of betrayal.
- **Global impact:** Undermined Britain’s credibility among its allies.

- **Modern parallel:** Similar leaks today, like WikiLeaks, reveal how **secret diplomacy erodes trust**.
-

Ethical Dilemmas and Lessons

Ethical Standards Violated

- **Exclusion of local voices** from decisions impacting their sovereignty.
- **Contradictory promises** that pitted communities against each other.
- Prioritizing **imperial ambitions** over **regional stability**.

Modern Best Practices

- **Inclusive negotiations:** Ensuring affected populations are represented.
 - **Transparency in diplomacy:** Preventing deals that undermine legitimacy.
 - **Conflict-sensitive governance:** Designing borders and policies based on **cultural and demographic realities**.
-

Leadership Lessons

From the negotiators to modern policymakers, the Sykes-Picot episode teaches us:

- **Short-term gains** can create **long-term instability**.
- **Secrecy breeds mistrust** that can last generations.

- True leadership demands **inclusive governance and respect for sovereignty**.
-

Conclusion

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement** was not just a historical artifact — it was the **geopolitical DNA** that shaped today's Middle East. By dividing territories without understanding their people, it set into motion a **century of mistrust, sectarianism, and external manipulation**.

In the next chapter, we'll examine **how the Balfour Declaration and parallel promises** collided with Sykes-Picot — creating one of the most **enduring conflicts of modern times: the Israeli-Palestinian struggle**.

Chapter 3 — The Balfour Declaration and Parallel Promises

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

While the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** secretly carved up the Ottoman Empire, Britain simultaneously made **conflicting promises** that reshaped the destiny of the Middle East. Chief among these was the **Balfour Declaration of 1917**, a letter from British Foreign Secretary **Arthur James Balfour** to **Lord Rothschild**, expressing support for the establishment of a “**national home for the Jewish people**” in **Palestine**.

This chapter examines how **Sykes-Picot** and the **Balfour Declaration** intersected, how Britain’s **parallel commitments** to Arabs and Zionists collided, and why these contradictions continue to fuel **Palestinian-Israeli tensions** today.

3.1 Britain’s Conflicting Commitments

3.1.1 The McMahon–Hussein Correspondence (1915–1916)

- Britain promised **Sharif Hussein of Mecca** Arab independence in exchange for leading an **Arab Revolt** against the Ottomans.
- Hussein envisioned a **unified Arab state** stretching from Syria to Yemen.

- Britain, however, **deliberately left Palestine ambiguous**, avoiding clear guarantees.

Key Contradiction: Arabs believed they were promised Palestine, but Britain simultaneously negotiated **Sykes-Picot**, placing Palestine under **international control** and later issued the **Balfour Declaration** supporting a Jewish homeland.

3.1.2 The Balfour Declaration (1917)

- Addressed to **Lord Rothschild**, a leading figure in the Zionist movement.
- Declared British support for “the establishment in Palestine of a **national home for the Jewish people**.”
- Stipulated that **existing non-Jewish communities** should not be prejudiced, but provided no enforcement mechanisms.

Motivations Behind Balfour:

- **Strategic leverage:** Secure support from global Jewish communities, particularly in the U.S. and Russia.
 - **Religious sentiment:** Many British leaders saw supporting a Jewish homeland as fulfilling **Biblical prophecy**.
 - **Geopolitical calculation:** Palestine’s location near the **Suez Canal** made it strategically invaluable.
-

3.1.3 The Zionist-Arab Collision Course

By 1917, Britain had made **three incompatible promises**:

1. **To Arabs:** Independence and self-determination.
2. **To Zionists:** A Jewish homeland in Palestine.
3. **To France:** Shared influence under Sykes-Picot.

This duplicity **planted the seeds** for one of the **longest-running conflicts in modern history**.

3.2 Zionism and Arab Nationalism

3.2.1 Rise of the Zionist Movement

- Led by figures like **Theodor Herzl** and **Chaim Weizmann**.
- Driven by growing **antisemitism in Europe** and the vision of a **return to the biblical homeland**.
- Saw **British support** as a pathway to securing sovereignty.

3.2.2 Arab Nationalist Aspirations

- Inspired by **Sharif Hussein** and his sons **Faisal** and **Abdullah**.
- Sought a **united Arab state** after centuries of Ottoman domination.
- Viewed Zionist migration as a **colonial project**, facilitated by Britain.

3.2.3 Clash of Ideologies

The **Balfour Declaration** and **Zionist settlement** policies were perceived as a **direct threat** to Arab sovereignty, intensifying opposition movements and laying the groundwork for decades of resistance.

3.3 Palestine: A Powder Keg

3.3.1 Demographic Shifts

- Before 1917, **Palestine's population** was predominantly **Arab Muslim and Christian**.
- Post-Balfour, Jewish immigration **accelerated**, supported by **British mandate policies**.
- Rising tensions led to **riots, strikes, and violent clashes** between Arabs and Jews.

3.3.2 British Mandate Challenges

Under the **League of Nations Mandate (1920–1948)**, Britain struggled to reconcile:

- **Zionist aspirations** for a Jewish homeland.
- **Arab demands** for independence and self-governance.
- **International pressures** from the U.S., France, and religious groups.

3.3.3 The Escalation of Violence

- **1920 Nebi Musa Riots**: Early Arab resistance to Jewish immigration.
- **1936–1939 Arab Revolt**: Widespread uprising against British rule and Zionist expansion.
- **1947 UN Partition Plan**: Attempted compromise that failed, leading directly to the **1948 Arab-Israeli War**.

3.4 Ethical Dilemmas

3.4.1 Britain's Colonial Responsibility

- Made **contradictory promises** without consulting the affected populations.
- Treated Palestine as a **strategic asset**, not a homeland for its inhabitants.
- Ignored **local voices** in shaping territorial futures.

3.4.2 Marginalization of Palestinians

- Lacked **self-determination** mechanisms under the British Mandate.
 - Displacement and dispossession became a recurring theme, especially after **1948**.
-

3.5 Case Study: Faisal-Weizmann Agreement (1919)

In a rare moment of **early cooperation**, Emir **Faisal ibn Hussein** and Zionist leader **Chaim Weizmann** signed an agreement pledging mutual respect:

- Arabs would **welcome Jewish migration** under certain conditions.
- Zionists would **support Arab independence**.

Outcome:

- The agreement collapsed after the **French expelled Faisal** from Syria.

- Reinforced Arab distrust of Western promises and Zionist intentions.

3.6 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Role	Impact
Arthur Balfour	UK Foreign Secretary	Issued declaration favoring a Jewish homeland
Lord Rothschild	Zionist representative	Advocated for Zionist interests at the British court
Sharif Hussein	Leader of Arab Revolt	Felt betrayed by Britain’s duplicity
Chaim Weizmann	Zionist leader	Secured Balfour Declaration, shaped Jewish immigration policy
Emir Faisal	Arab nationalist	Sought Arab unity but undermined by European deals

3.7 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Transparency is essential:** Secret agreements erode trust for generations.
- **Respect local agency:** Excluding affected populations destabilizes regions.
- **Balance competing identities:** Multiethnic regions require inclusive frameworks.

Modern Best Practices

- **UN frameworks** for self-determination must take precedence over colonial arrangements.
 - **Conflict-sensitive governance** that integrates **religious, ethnic, and tribal diversity**.
 - **Accountability mechanisms** to prevent external manipulation of sovereignty.
-

Conclusion

The **Balfour Declaration** did more than endorse a Jewish homeland; it **redefined Palestine's future** and set it on a collision course with **Arab nationalism**. Together with **Sykes-Picot**, it created a **legacy of mistrust, competing claims, and unresolved sovereignty** that continues to shape the **Palestinian-Israeli conflict** and destabilize the broader Middle East.

In the next chapter, we'll examine **how the League of Nations and the Mandate System institutionalized the divisions** set in motion by Sykes-Picot and Balfour, cementing a fragile regional order whose fault lines endure today.

Chapter 4 — The League of Nations and the Mandate System

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

After the First World War, the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** and the **Balfour Declaration (1917)** laid the groundwork for a **new Middle Eastern order**. These secretive and contradictory promises were **formalized under the League of Nations Mandate System (1920–1948)**, which legally institutionalized **European control** over former Ottoman territories.

The mandate framework **redrew the region's map** into artificial borders, creating **fragile states** and planting the seeds for **conflicts that persist today**. In this chapter, we explore how **Britain and France** translated their wartime ambitions into **legal authority**, reshaping the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the Middle East.

4.1 The Birth of the Mandate System

4.1.1 League of Nations and Colonial Legitimacy

- Established in **1920** to promote global peace, the **League of Nations** paradoxically **sanctioned colonialism** through mandates.

- Former Ottoman territories were designated as “**A Mandates**” — regions deemed “**not yet ready for independence**” but capable of achieving it with European “guidance.”
- In reality, the system provided **legal cover for imperial ambitions**.

4.1.2 Dividing the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire’s Arab lands were allocated based on **Sykes-Picot’s blueprint**:

- **Britain**: Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan.
 - **France**: Syria, Lebanon.
 - **Palestine**: Special “international” status — later managed under a **British mandate**.
-

4.2 British Mandates

4.2.1 Iraq

- Formed from **three Ottoman provinces**: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra.
- Britain installed **King Faisal I** to rule a **multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian** state.
- Challenges:
 - **Kurds** excluded from promised independence.
 - **Shia-Sunni tensions** aggravated by colonial favoritism.
 - **Oil concessions** prioritized British corporate interests.

Legacy: The imposed framework created **deep fractures**, resurfacing during the **2003 U.S. invasion** and the rise of **ISIS**.

4.2.2 Palestine

- Britain's dual obligations under the **Balfour Declaration** and Arab independence promises collided:
 - **Zionist immigration surged**, supported by Britain.
 - **Arab resistance intensified**, leading to riots and revolts.
- Britain struggled to manage **competing nationalisms**, eventually handing the issue to the **United Nations in 1947**.

Legacy: Palestine became the **epicenter of one of the world's longest-running conflicts**.

4.2.3 Transjordan (Modern Jordan)

- Established as a **British protectorate** under **Emir Abdullah**, son of Sharif Hussein.
 - Designed to serve as a **buffer state** protecting British interests in **Palestine and Iraq**.
 - Despite independence in **1946**, Transjordan remained heavily dependent on Britain for **military and financial support**.
-

4.3 French Mandates

4.3.1 Syria

- France divided Syria into **sectarian-based states**:
 - **State of Damascus**
 - **State of Aleppo**

- **Alawite State**
 - **Druze State**
- French “divide-and-rule” tactics **weakened Syrian unity**, making it vulnerable to **external manipulation** even after independence.

Legacy: Syria’s **sectarian fragmentation** continues to influence its **civil war (2011–present)**.

4.3.2 Lebanon

- France carved out **Greater Lebanon** from Syrian territories:
 - Designed to create a **Christian-dominated state**.
 - Marginalized **Muslim populations**, sowing long-term discord.
- French policies entrenched a **confessional political system**, where power was divided based on **religious quotas**.

Legacy: Lebanon’s **civil war (1975–1990)** and recurring political crises stem directly from **French sectarian engineering**.

4.4 The Role of the League of Nations

4.4.1 A Rubber Stamp for Empire

- While mandates were presented as **preparing territories for independence**, they **institutionalized colonial exploitation**:
 - Economic control via **oil concessions** and **infrastructure projects**.

- Political manipulation through **client kingships** and **puppet governments**.
- Military dominance ensured **long-term Western influence**.

4.4.2 Failure of Self-Determination

Despite **Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points** advocating self-determination:

- Local populations were **excluded from negotiations**.
 - Borders ignored **tribal, ethnic, and religious realities**.
 - **Nationalism** among Arabs, Kurds, and Palestinians intensified.
-

4.5 Case Studies

Case Study 1: The San Remo Conference (1920)

- Cemented Britain's and France's control over mandates.
 - Ignored Arab leaders' demands for independence.
 - Institutionalized **imperial governance under international cover**.
-

Case Study 2: The 1936–1939 Arab Revolt (Palestine)

- Arab uprising against British rule and Zionist immigration.
- Britain responded with **brutal repression**:
 - Collective punishments.
 - Military crackdowns.
 - Curtailment of political freedoms.

Impact: Solidified Palestinian grievances, laying the groundwork for future conflicts.

Case Study 3: The 1925–1927 Great Syrian Revolt

- Unified Druze, Sunni, and Christian factions against French rule.
 - Suppressed violently, with entire villages destroyed.
 - Demonstrated the **resilience of Syrian nationalism** despite imposed divisions.
-

4.6 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
King Faisal I	Iraq	Installed by Britain	Symbol of imposed monarchy
Emir Abdullah	Jordan	British client ruler	Created buffer state protecting imperial routes
Henri Gouraud	France	High Commissioner in Syria	Engineered sectarian divisions
David Lloyd George	Britain	Prime Minister	Advanced British mandates for oil and security
Georges Clemenceau	France	Prime Minister	Secured French dominance in Levant

4.7 Ethical Implications

4.7.1 Exclusion of Local Voices

- The mandates undermined **self-determination**.
- Indigenous populations had **no representation** in decisions affecting sovereignty.

4.7.2 Sectarian Engineering

- France and Britain **weaponized identity politics** to maintain control.
- These divisions became **fault lines for modern conflicts**.

4.7.3 Colonial Exploitation

- Resource extraction and economic dependency **benefited Europe** at the expense of local development.
-

4.8 Lessons and Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Inclusive governance** is vital to prevent sectarianism.
- **Artificial borders** without cultural sensitivity fuel instability.
- **Shared sovereignty** models promote long-term peace.

Global Best Practices

- Modern UN frameworks emphasize **representation, transparency, and consent**.

- **Federalism and decentralization** can accommodate **multi-ethnic societies**.
 - **Regional cooperation** reduces dependency on external powers.
-

Conclusion

The **League of Nations Mandate System** legitimized European control while **ignoring the voices of local populations**. By institutionalizing **Sykes-Picot's arbitrary borders**, it created **states without cohesion**, deepened **sectarian divides**, and laid the foundation for **persistent instability**.

In the next chapter, we will explore **how these artificial borders shaped fragile statehood** and examine **the long-term consequences of ignoring ethnic, religious, and tribal realities** — a legacy still visible in conflicts from **Iraq to Syria, Lebanon to Palestine**.

Chapter 5 — Artificial Borders and Their Consequences

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916** and the subsequent **League of Nations mandates drew borders on a map** without regard for **ethnic, religious, tribal, or cultural realities**. These artificial divisions created **fragile states**, intensified **sectarian tensions**, and **planted the seeds of recurring conflicts** that define the Middle East even today.

This chapter examines **how arbitrary borders fractured societies, disenfranchised entire communities**, and contributed to **state failures, extremist movements, and persistent instability** from Iraq to Syria, Lebanon to Palestine, and beyond.

5.1 The Problem of Arbitrary Borders

5.1.1 Ignoring History and Identity

- The Middle East had been home to **fluid frontiers** for centuries, shaped by:
 - **Tribal affiliations**
 - **Religious identities**
 - **Economic trade routes**
- Sykes-Picot **imposed rigid lines**, disregarding:

- **Shared heritage** across regions.
- **Ethnic homogeneity** of communities.
- **Natural geographic boundaries** like rivers and mountains.

Result: Diverse populations were **forced into single states**, while others were **split across multiple countries**.

5.1.2 “Straight-Line” Colonial Mapping

European negotiators **literally used rulers** to divide territories:

- **Iraq** combined **Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, and Kurds** with conflicting aspirations.
- **Syria** merged **Alawites, Sunnis, Druze, Kurds, and Christians** under French authority.
- **Kurdish regions** were carved into **Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria**, leaving them stateless.
- **Palestine** was internationalized without resolving competing Arab and Jewish claims.

Modern Consequences: These colonial boundaries became **fault lines** for **sectarian conflict, insurgencies, and state collapse**.

5.2 Iraq: A Fractured State

5.2.1 Creation of Iraq

- Formed from three Ottoman provinces: **Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra**.

- Britain **installed King Faisal I**, an outsider from the Hejaz.
- The goal: **control oil reserves** and secure access to the **Persian Gulf**.

5.2.2 Sunni-Shia-Kurd Tensions

- **Sunnis** dominated politics under British-backed elites.
- **Shias** were marginalized, fueling resentment.
- **Kurds** were denied independence despite promises at **Sevres (1920)**.

5.2.3 Long-Term Fallout

- **1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War** exploited sectarian rifts.
 - **2003 U.S. invasion** dismantled fragile balances, triggering:
 - Civil wars.
 - Rise of **ISIS** exploiting sectarian divisions.
 - Kurdish push for **independence and autonomy**.
-

5.3 Syria: Sectarian Complexity

5.3.1 French Divide-and-Rule Strategy

- France fragmented Syria into mini-states:
 - **Damascus State**
 - **Aleppo State**
 - **Alawite State**
 - **Druze State**
- These divisions entrenched **sectarian competition** over power and resources.

5.3.2 Civil War Legacy

- Syria's **Alawite minority elite** dominated the Ba'athist regime under **Hafez al-Assad** and later **Bashar al-Assad**.
- Post-2011 **Arab Spring protests** evolved into a **sectarian civil war**, fueled by:
 - Foreign interventions.
 - ISIS exploitation of chaos.
 - Kurdish semi-autonomous zones.

5.3.3 Proxy Battleground

Syria became a **testing ground** for external powers:

- **Russia** supported Assad.
 - **Iran** used militias to expand influence.
 - **Turkey** targeted Kurdish forces.
 - **U.S. and Gulf states** armed opposition factions.
-

5.4 Lebanon: A Sectarian Time Bomb

5.4.1 Creation of Greater Lebanon

- France carved Lebanon out of Syrian territory to create a **Christian-dominated state**.
- Imposed a **confessional political system**:
 - President: **Maronite Christian**
 - Prime Minister: **Sunni Muslim**
 - Speaker of Parliament: **Shia Muslim**

5.4.2 Civil War and Beyond

- This rigid sectarian formula collapsed into the **Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990)**.
 - External actors — **Syria, Israel, Iran, and the U.S.** — turned Lebanon into a **proxy battlefield**.
 - The rise of **Hezbollah** added another layer of **regional conflict dynamics**.
-

5.5 The Kurdish Statelessness Question

5.5.1 Betrayed Promises

- The **Treaty of Sevres (1920)** proposed a **Kurdish state**, but it was abandoned under the **Treaty of Lausanne (1923)**.
- Kurds were split between **Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria**, denied sovereignty.

5.5.2 Kurdish Struggles

- Repeated **uprisings** in Iraq and Turkey were violently suppressed.
- In Syria, Kurds were stripped of **citizenship and cultural rights**.
- Post-2003 Iraq gave rise to the **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)**, offering semi-autonomy.

5.5.3 Modern Implications

- Kurdish forces became **key allies** in fighting **ISIS**.
- Turkey fears an independent Kurdistan, escalating cross-border conflicts.
- The **Kurdish question** remains one of the **most destabilizing regional issues**.

5.6 Palestine: Ground Zero of Unresolved Borders

5.6.1 Internationalization Without Consensus

- Sykes-Picot placed **Palestine** under an “**international administration**” to avoid conflict between Britain and France.
- The **Balfour Declaration (1917)** fueled competing **Jewish and Arab claims**.

5.6.2 Fragmentation and Conflict

- British withdrawal in 1948 created a **power vacuum**.
- The **UN Partition Plan (1947)** divided Palestine into **Jewish and Arab states**, sparking:
 - **1948 Arab-Israeli War**.
 - **Palestinian Nakba** — mass displacement of 700,000 Arabs.
- Borders remain disputed to this day, fueling:
 - **Gaza conflicts**.
 - **Jerusalem sovereignty disputes**.
 - **Persistent refugee crises**.

5.7 Case Study: ISIS and the “End of Sykes-Picot”

5.7.1 ISIS’s Propaganda Narrative

- In 2014, ISIS released a video **bulldozing the Iraq-Syria border**, declaring:
 - “We are erasing Sykes-Picot.”
- The group **capitalized on sectarian divisions** created by colonial boundaries.

5.7.2 Exploiting Weak States

- **Power vacuums** in Iraq and Syria allowed ISIS to seize vast territories.
- Artificial borders **failed to foster national unity**, enabling transnational extremist movements.

5.8 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
King Faisal I	Iraq	British-installed monarch	Struggled to unite diverse populations
Bashar al-Assad	Syria	Alawite ruler	Sectarian governance fueled civil war
Mustafa Barzani	Kurdistan	Kurdish nationalist leader	Led multiple uprisings for independence
Benjamin Netanyahu	Israel	Israeli Prime Minister	Advocated hardline policies on Palestinian borders
Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi	ISIS	Declared caliphate	Exploited colonial-era divisions

5.9 Ethical Dilemmas

5.9.1 Colonial Disregard for Self-Determination

- Borders were drawn **without local consent**.
- Denied **sovereignty** to entire ethnic and religious groups.

5.9.2 Sectarian Engineering

- Imposed systems fostered **perpetual rivalries**.
- Prioritized **imperial stability** over **social cohesion**.

5.9.3 Modern Repercussions

- State collapse, terrorism, and regional wars can all be traced back to **Sykes-Picot's artificial constructs**.
-

5.10 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Inclusivity matters:** Borders must reflect **identity, culture, and demographics**.
- **Sustainability requires unity:** Fragmented states are prone to collapse.
- **Diplomatic transparency** prevents centuries of mistrust.

Global Best Practices

- **Federalism and decentralization** to manage diversity (e.g., Switzerland).

- **Conflict-sensitive border design** to avoid marginalization.
 - **Regional integration** frameworks like **ASEAN** or the **EU** to dilute border disputes.
-

Conclusion

The **Sykes-Picot borders** created **states without nations** and **nations without states**, laying the foundation for **sectarian violence, extremist movements, and failed governance**. From **ISIS's rise** to the **Kurdish question**, from **Palestine's conflict** to **Lebanon's fragility**, the consequences of these artificial lines are **still unfolding in 2025**.

In the next chapter, we will examine **how these imposed borders sparked the rise of Arab nationalism and resistance movements** — exploring **leaders, ideologies, and uprisings** that sought to reclaim sovereignty stolen by colonial agreements.

Chapter 6 — Rise of Nationalism and Resistance Movements

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** and the **League of Nations mandates** did more than divide territories; they **denied sovereignty**, **betrayed promises**, and **suppressed aspirations** across the Middle East. In response, the early 20th century saw the **emergence of powerful nationalist and resistance movements**, united by a common goal: to **overthrow colonial control** and **restore self-determination**.

This chapter explores the **rise of Arab nationalism**, the **birth of Pan-Arabism**, the **struggles of the Kurds**, and the **Palestinian resistance** — movements deeply rooted in the **legacy of Sykes-Picot**.

6.1 Arab Revolt and Betrayal

6.1.1 The Arab Revolt (1916–1918)

- Led by **Sharif Hussein of Mecca** and his sons **Faisal** and **Abdullah**.
- Supported by Britain through **T.E. Lawrence** (“**Lawrence of Arabia**”).
- Goal: **Arab independence** from Ottoman rule.
- Promise: A **unified Arab state** from **Syria to Yemen**.

6.1.2 The British Double Game

- Britain encouraged the revolt while **secretly negotiating Sykes-Picot** with France.
- After the war, Arab hopes were **shattered**:
 - France seized **Syria and Lebanon**.
 - Britain controlled **Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan**.
 - The dream of a **Pan-Arab state collapsed**.

6.1.3 Impact on Arab Consciousness

- Sykes-Picot became a **symbol of betrayal**.
 - Fuelled **anti-colonial sentiment** and **deep mistrust** of Western powers.
 - Sparked the first wave of **organized Arab nationalist movements**.
-

6.2 Pan-Arabism: A Vision of Unity

6.2.1 Origins and Ideology

Pan-Arabism emerged as a **direct response** to colonial partitioning:

- Advocated for **political and cultural unity** among Arabs.
- Rejected **Western-imposed borders**.
- Emphasized shared **language, history, and heritage**.

6.2.2 Key Leaders

Leader	Country	Contribution
Gamal Abdel Nasser	Egypt	Architect of modern Pan-Arabism, promoted Arab unity.
Michel Aflaq	Syria	Co-founder of the Ba’ath Party (“Unity, Freedom, Socialism”).
Ahmed Ben Bella	Algeria	Linked anti-colonial struggles in North Africa with Pan-Arab ideals.

6.2.3 Rise and Decline

- **Successes:**
 - 1958: Formation of the **United Arab Republic (UAR)** — union between **Egypt and Syria**.
 - Growing Arab solidarity against **Western interference**.
- **Failures:**
 - UAR collapsed in **1961** due to **political rivalries**.
 - Defeat in the **1967 Six-Day War** against Israel dealt a severe blow.
- Despite setbacks, Pan-Arabism left a **lasting ideological legacy** still invoked by modern leaders.

6.3 Palestinian Resistance: Sykes-Picot’s Unresolved Legacy

6.3.1 Displacement and Dispossession

- **Sykes-Picot** placed Palestine under **British control**, setting the stage for:
 - **Balfour Declaration (1917):** Supporting a **Jewish homeland**.

- Mass **Jewish immigration**.
- Rising tensions with **Arab residents**.

6.3.2 The Nakba (1948)

- The **UN Partition Plan (1947)** divided Palestine into **Jewish and Arab states**.
- The **1948 Arab-Israeli War** resulted in:
 - Creation of **Israel**.
 - Displacement of over **700,000 Palestinians**.
- Palestinians became **refugees**, scattered across **Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and beyond**.

6.3.3 Rise of Organized Resistance

- **PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)** founded in **1964**.
 - Transitioned from **guerrilla tactics** to **diplomatic recognition**.
 - Modern-day tensions, including **Gaza conflicts** and **Jerusalem disputes**, remain **rooted in Sykes-Picot and Balfour contradictions**.
-

6.4 Kurdish Nationalism and Statelessness

6.4.1 Betrayal of Kurdish Aspirations

- The **Treaty of Sevres (1920)** promised a **Kurdish state**.
- The **Treaty of Lausanne (1923)** erased it, dividing Kurds between **Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria**.

6.4.2 Kurdish Uprisings

- **Iraq:** Kurds repeatedly rebelled against Arab-dominated governments.
- **Turkey:** Kurdish identity suppressed; use of the Kurdish language banned.
- **Syria:** Kurds stripped of citizenship, denied basic rights.

6.4.3 Modern Kurdish Movements

- Establishment of the **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** in Iraq post-2003.
 - Kurdish **YPG forces** played a pivotal role in defeating **ISIS**.
 - Turkey's opposition to Kurdish independence perpetuates **regional instability**.
-

6.5 Rise of the Ba'ath Party

6.5.1 Ideological Foundations

- Founded in **1947** by **Michel Aflaq** and **Salah al-Bitar**.
- Core principles:
 - **Unity:** Overcoming Sykes-Picot-imposed fragmentation.
 - **Freedom:** Liberation from colonial influence.
 - **Socialism:** Redistribution of wealth and state-led modernization.

6.5.2 Ba'athist Power

- Came to power in **Syria (1963)** and **Iraq (1968)**.
- Produced strongmen like:
 - **Hafez al-Assad** and later **Bashar al-Assad** in Syria.
 - **Saddam Hussein** in Iraq.

6.5.3 Legacy of Authoritarianism

- While initially rooted in **anti-colonial nationalism**, Ba'athism devolved into:
 - **Authoritarian regimes.**
 - **Sectarian favoritism.**
 - Brutal suppression of dissent.
-

6.6 Regional Anti-Colonial Struggles

6.6.1 Algeria and North Africa

- Inspired by Pan-Arab ideals, Algeria fought a **bloody war of independence** (1954–1962) against France.
- Set an example for **anti-colonial resistance** across the Arab world.

6.6.2 Yemen's Civil War (1962–1970)

- A proxy battleground between **Saudi Arabia** and **Egypt**.
- Reflected tensions between **traditional monarchies** and **revolutionary nationalists**.

6.6.3 Gulf Resistance Movements

- Oil-rich Gulf states leveraged **energy wealth** to assert independence.
- However, Sykes-Picot's boundaries left **border disputes unresolved**, such as:
 - **Kuwait-Iraq tensions.**
 - **Saudi-Yemeni frontier disputes.**

6.7 Case Study: The 1956 Suez Crisis

- Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt after **Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal**.
 - Seen as an attempt by colonial powers to **reassert dominance**.
 - **Outcome:**
 - U.S. and USSR pressure forced European withdrawal.
 - Cemented Nasser's status as a **Pan-Arab hero**.
 - Marked the **decline of British and French influence** in the region.
-

6.8 Ethical Dimensions

6.8.1 Colonial Manipulation

- Western powers **exploited sectarian divisions** to maintain control.
- Promises of independence were **repeatedly broken**.

6.8.2 Suppression of Aspirations

- Kurdish and Palestinian statelessness reflect **denied rights to self-determination**.
 - Nationalist movements were often met with **military crackdowns**.
-

6.9 Leadership Lessons and Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Betrayal has long memories:** Broken promises create generational resentment.
- **Unity is strength:** Fragmented societies are vulnerable to external manipulation.
- **Inclusive governance:** Recognizing diversity is vital to avoid future conflicts.

Global Best Practices

- **Self-determination mechanisms** under UN oversight.
 - **Federal systems** that balance autonomy and national unity.
 - **Cross-border cooperation frameworks** to transcend artificial divisions.
-

Conclusion

The **rise of Arab nationalism, Pan-Arabism, Palestinian resistance, and Kurdish movements** all stemmed from the **fractures imposed by Sykes-Picot**. While these movements sought to **reclaim sovereignty**, colonial manipulation and geopolitical rivalries **prevented meaningful unity**.

In the next chapter, we explore **how the Cold War transformed the Middle East into a geopolitical chessboard**, with the U.S. and USSR exploiting **Sykes-Picot's legacy of fragmentation** to pursue **regional dominance**.

Chapter 7 — The Cold War's Middle Eastern Chessboard

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** carved the Middle East into artificial states, sowing **fragmentation, sectarianism, and rivalry**. By the mid-20th century, these fractures became the **playing field for the Cold War superpowers** — the **United States** and the **Soviet Union**. The Middle East's **oil reserves, strategic geography, and political instability** transformed it into a **geopolitical chessboard** where **proxy wars, coups, and alliances** reshaped regional dynamics.

This chapter explores **how Cold War politics deepened Sykes-Picot's legacy**, turning the Middle East into a **theater of ideological and strategic competition** whose consequences still reverberate today.

7.1 Strategic Importance of the Middle East

7.1.1 Oil as a Geopolitical Lever

- Discovery of vast oil reserves in **Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iran** elevated the Middle East's strategic value.
- Control of oil meant **control of global energy security** — a critical Cold War objective for both superpowers.

7.1.2 Geographic Crossroads

- The Middle East sits at the **intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa**.
- Control of **Suez Canal, Persian Gulf, and Eastern Mediterranean** gave strategic leverage over:
 - **Global trade routes.**
 - **Military deployment zones.**
 - **Energy chokepoints.**

7.1.3 The Fragility Factor

Sykes-Picot's **artificially constructed states** lacked internal cohesion, making them **easy targets** for:

- **External manipulation.**
 - **Military coups.**
 - **Proxy conflicts.**
-

7.2 Competing Superpower Agendas

7.2.1 U.S. Strategy

- **Containment of Communism:** Prevent Soviet influence in oil-rich regions.
- **Alliance-building:** Supported regimes aligned with Western interests.
- **Oil security:** Ensured access via partnerships with Gulf monarchies.

Key U.S.-backed allies:

- **Saudi Arabia:** Secured by oil-for-protection deals.
 - **Iran:** Backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's regime until 1979.
 - **Israel:** Strategic partner post-1967 war.
-

7.2.2 Soviet Strategy

- Promoted **socialist and revolutionary ideologies**.
- Supported **anti-colonial movements** and **Pan-Arabism**.
- Supplied **arms, training, and economic aid** to aligned states.

Key Soviet-aligned allies:

- **Syria:** Arms supplier and diplomatic patron.
 - **Iraq:** Supported Ba'athist revolution and oil nationalization.
 - **Egypt:** Initially under Nasser until the **1970s realignment** toward the U.S.
-

7.2.3 The Non-Aligned Middle Powers

Some states attempted **strategic neutrality**, balancing superpower interests:

- **Egypt (Nasser, initially)** championed **non-alignment** but leaned Soviet.
 - **India** influenced Gulf dynamics through **energy partnerships**.
 - **Turkey** played a dual role as a **NATO member** and **regional actor**.
-

7.3 Proxy Wars and Regime Changes

7.3.1 Iran: From U.S. Ally to Revolutionary State

- **1953 CIA-MI6 Coup:** Overthrew democratically elected **Mohammad Mossadegh** after he nationalized oil.
 - Installed **Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi**, solidifying U.S. control.
 - **1979 Islamic Revolution** flipped Iran into an **anti-U.S. theocracy** and **Soviet competitor**.
-

7.3.2 Egypt: From Soviet Client to U.S. Partner

- Under **Gamal Abdel Nasser**, Egypt:
 - Nationalized the **Suez Canal (1956)**.
 - Signed arms deals with the **Soviets**.
 - Promoted **Pan-Arab unity**.
 - After **Nasser's death**, **Anwar Sadat** realigned Egypt toward the U.S., culminating in the **Camp David Accords (1978)**.
-

7.3.3 Afghanistan: The Soviet “Vietnam”

- **1979 Soviet invasion** triggered U.S.-backed resistance:
 - **CIA's Operation Cyclone** funneled arms to **Mujahideen** fighters.
 - **Saudi Arabia and Pakistan** acted as intermediaries.
- **Fallout:**
 - Soviet withdrawal in **1989**.
 - Emergence of the **Taliban** and later **Al-Qaeda**.

7.4 Arab-Israeli Conflicts: Superpowers in Action

7.4.1 The 1967 Six-Day War

- **Israel vs. Egypt, Syria, Jordan.**
 - U.S. support bolstered Israel's victory, while the Soviets armed Arab states.
 - Outcome:
 - Israel seized **Sinai, Golan Heights, Gaza, and West Bank.**
 - Regional tensions deepened; Pan-Arabism weakened.
-

7.4.2 The 1973 Yom Kippur War

- Egypt and Syria launched a **surprise attack** on Israel.
 - U.S. airlifted arms to Israel; Soviets resupplied Arab forces.
 - Aftermath:
 - Led to **Camp David peace accords.**
 - Marked U.S. dominance in Arab-Israeli negotiations.
-

7.4.3 Lebanon's Civil War (1975–1990)

- Multi-factional conflict involving:
 - **Christian militias** (U.S.-backed).
 - **Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)** (Soviet-aligned).

- **Syrian forces.**
- Resulted in:
 - Entrenchment of **sectarian divisions.**
 - Emergence of **Hezbollah** with **Iranian support.**

7.5 Case Study: The 1979 Iranian Revolution

- Overthrew **Shah Pahlavi**, a U.S. ally.
- Established an **Islamic Republic** under **Ayatollah Khomeini.**
- Outcomes:
 - End of U.S. dominance in Iran.
 - Iran became a **regional power rivaling U.S.-backed Gulf states.**
 - Initiated decades of **U.S.-Iran hostility.**

7.6 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Gamal Abdel Nasser	Egypt	Pan-Arab nationalist leader	Strengthened Soviet influence, symbolized anti-Westernism
Anwar Sadat	Egypt	U.S.-aligned president	Brokered peace with Israel, weakened Pan-Arabism
Shah Pahlavi	Iran	U.S.-backed monarch	Secured U.S. oil interests but fueled revolutionary backlash

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Hafez al-Assad	Syria	Soviet-aligned Ba'athist leader	Entrenched authoritarian rule, escalated Arab-Israeli tensions
Henry Kissinger	U.S.	Secretary of State	Architect of U.S. realpolitik and Middle East diplomacy

7.7 Ethical Dilemmas

7.7.1 Weaponizing Sectarian Divides

- Superpowers **exploited Sykes-Picot-created fractures** for strategic gain.
- Armed **opposing factions** in the same countries, escalating civil wars.

7.7.2 Sovereignty vs. Control

- Repeated **interventions and coups** undermined national self-determination.
 - Prioritized **strategic assets** — oil, waterways, and military bases — over **human rights**.
-

7.8 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- External manipulation of **fragile states** breeds **long-term instability**.

- **Short-term alliances** often fuel future crises.
- Sustainable peace requires **inclusive, sovereign decision-making**.

Global Best Practices

- Establish **neutral conflict mediation mechanisms** under UN oversight.
 - Prioritize **regional integration frameworks** to limit external dependency.
 - Invest in **institutional resilience** to prevent exploitation by global powers.
-

Conclusion

The Cold War turned the Middle East into a **high-stakes chessboard**, deepening **Sykes-Picot's divisions** while entrenching **foreign influence**. Superpower rivalries over **oil, ideology, and geography** destabilized fragile states, empowered authoritarian regimes, and laid the foundation for **21st-century conflicts** — from Iraq's invasion to Syria's civil war.

In the next chapter, we will explore **how these Cold War dynamics intersected with the Arab-Israeli conflict**, analyzing **Sykes-Picot's role in shaping territorial disputes, occupation, and resistance**.

Chapter 8 — Sykes-Picot and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Arab-Israeli conflict** is one of the most enduring and explosive legacies of **Sykes-Picot (1916)** and Britain's **Balfour Declaration (1917)**. While Sykes-Picot intended to place **Palestine under international administration**, Britain's promise of a **Jewish homeland** created **overlapping claims** that remain unresolved more than a century later.

This chapter explores how the **arbitrary borders** and **contradictory commitments** born from Sykes-Picot shaped the **Palestinian-Israeli struggle**, analyzing key turning points, leadership decisions, and the **continuing cycles of occupation, resistance, and violence**.

8.1 Palestine Under British Mandate (1920–1948)

8.1.1 Internationalization of Palestine

- Under **Sykes-Picot**, Palestine was placed under **international administration** to avoid French-British rivalry.

- After WWI, the **League of Nations Mandate** handed **control to Britain**.
 - Britain simultaneously pursued **three conflicting goals**:
 1. Facilitating a **Jewish homeland** under the **Balfour Declaration**.
 2. Managing **Arab expectations of independence** promised via the **McMahon-Hussein Correspondence**.
 3. Preserving **strategic control** over the Suez Canal and Eastern Mediterranean.
-

8.1.2 Rising Tensions

- Early waves of **Jewish immigration** (Aliyah) increased under British rule.
 - Palestinian Arabs protested:
 - Loss of land to Zionist settlers.
 - Exclusion from political decision-making.
 - Fear of becoming a minority in their own homeland.
 - Violent clashes erupted, including the **1929 Hebron Massacre** and the **1936–1939 Arab Revolt**.
-

8.1.3 British Withdrawal

- By 1947, Britain declared it could **no longer manage competing claims**.
 - The issue was handed to the **United Nations**, leading to a controversial partition plan.
-

8.2 The 1947 UN Partition Plan and Nakba

8.2.1 The Partition Proposal

- The UN recommended dividing Palestine into:
 - **55%** for a **Jewish state**.
 - **45%** for an **Arab state**.
 - **Jerusalem** placed under **international administration**.
 - Zionist leaders **accepted**; Arab leaders **rejected**, arguing it violated **self-determination**.
-

8.2.2 The Nakba (“Catastrophe”)

- In **1948**, following Israel’s declaration of independence:
 - **Five Arab armies** (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon) invaded.
 - Israel emerged victorious, expanding beyond UN-proposed borders.
 - Over **700,000 Palestinians** were expelled or fled, becoming **refugees**.
 - Nakba became a **central pillar of Palestinian identity** and a **symbol of betrayal** linked to Sykes-Picot’s broken promises.
-

8.2.3 UN Resolution 194

- Affirmed the **right of Palestinian refugees to return**.
- Israel rejected large-scale returns, deepening tensions.
- Refugee camps proliferated in **Jordan, Lebanon, and Gaza** — many exist to this day.

8.3 The Six-Day War and Its Aftermath (1967)

8.3.1 War and Occupation

- Israel launched a **pre-emptive strike** against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.
 - Seized:
 - **West Bank and East Jerusalem** from Jordan.
 - **Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula** from Egypt.
 - **Golan Heights** from Syria.
 - Overnight, Israel **tripled its territory**.
-

8.3.2 Impact on Borders

- The “**Green Line**” from Sykes-Picot blurred as Israel gained control of historically Arab lands.
 - **Jerusalem’s status** became one of the most **contentious global disputes**.
 - Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fell under **Israeli military occupation**.
-

8.3.3 UN Resolution 242

- Called for Israel’s **withdrawal from occupied territories** in exchange for **Arab recognition**.

- Israel partially complied (Sinai returned to Egypt in 1982), but **West Bank, Gaza, and Golan remain disputed.**
-

8.4 The Intifadas: Palestinian Uprisings

8.4.1 First Intifada (1987–1993)

- Sparked by decades of **occupation, land confiscations, and economic disparity.**
- Characterized by:
 - Mass protests.
 - Boycotts of Israeli products.
 - International media exposure of **human rights abuses.**

8.4.2 Oslo Accords (1993)

- Created the **Palestinian Authority (PA)** to govern parts of the **West Bank and Gaza.**
- Initially celebrated as a **pathway to peace.**
- Collapsed due to:
 - Israeli settlement expansion.
 - Palestinian factionalism (Fatah vs. Hamas).
 - Unresolved status of **Jerusalem** and **refugees.**

8.4.3 Second Intifada (2000–2005)

- Triggered by **Ariel Sharon's visit to Temple Mount.**
- More violent than the first:
 - Suicide bombings by Palestinian militants.
 - Massive Israeli military retaliation.
- Result: Deepened mistrust and paved the way for Hamas's rise in **Gaza.**

8.5 Gaza, Hamas, and Ongoing Conflicts

8.5.1 Israeli Disengagement from Gaza (2005)

- Israel withdrew settlers but maintained **blockade and border control**.
- Power vacuum led to:
 - **Hamas's electoral victory (2006)**.
 - **Factional fighting** between Hamas and Fatah.
 - De facto Hamas control of Gaza from 2007 onward.

8.5.2 Recurrent Wars

- Major escalations: **2008, 2012, 2014, 2021, and 2023**.
- Features:
 - Hamas rocket attacks.
 - Israeli airstrikes.
 - Civilian casualties and humanitarian crises.

8.5.3 The 2023 Hamas-Israel War

- A large-scale surprise attack by Hamas led to:
 - Over **1,200 Israeli deaths**.
 - Massive Israeli retaliation in Gaza.
 - Renewed debates over **statehood, security, and sovereignty**.

8.6 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Role	Impact
David Ben-Gurion	Israel's first Prime Minister	Led establishment of Israel in 1948
Yasser Arafat	PLO Chairman	Symbol of Palestinian nationalism
Ariel Sharon	Israeli PM	Expanded settlements, triggered Second Intifada
Mahmoud Abbas	Palestinian Authority President	Advocated diplomacy, weakened by internal divisions
Benjamin Netanyahu	Israeli PM	Pursued hardline security policies, expanded settlements

8.7 Ethical Dimensions

8.7.1 Colonial Accountability

- Britain's **contradictory promises** under Sykes-Picot and Balfour set the conflict in motion.
- International institutions failed to **protect Palestinian sovereignty**.

8.7.2 Occupation and Human Rights

- Israeli settlements violate **UN conventions**.
- Palestinians face:
 - Restricted movement.
 - Economic isolation.
 - Disproportionate military responses.

8.7.3 Radicalization and Extremism

- Statelessness and prolonged occupation **fuel militancy**.
 - External actors exploit divisions for **geopolitical leverage**.
-

8.8 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Ignoring identity leads to perpetual conflict:** Sykes-Picot disregarded ethnic and religious realities.
- **Peace requires justice:** Lasting settlements demand addressing **refugee rights** and **sovereignty**.
- **Inclusive negotiations:** Excluding Palestinians from early talks guaranteed instability.

Global Best Practices

- **Two-state frameworks** supported by enforceable international guarantees.
 - **Conflict-sensitive borders** respecting demographic realities.
 - **Regional cooperation** among Israel, Palestine, and Arab neighbors for shared security and prosperity.
-

Conclusion

The Arab-Israeli conflict is **inseparable** from the legacy of **Sykes-Picot**. The agreement's **artificial borders** and **contradictory promises** set the stage for **statehood disputes**, **mass displacement**, and **perpetual violence**. A century later, **Palestine remains stateless**, **Jerusalem contested**, and **conflict unresolved**.

In the next chapter, we'll focus on **Iraq as a case study** to analyze **how Sykes-Picot's borders created a deeply divided state**, paving the way for **wars, insurgencies, and ISIS's rise**.

Chapter 9 — Iraq: A Case Study of Partition's Fallout

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

Iraq is one of the clearest examples of **how the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** and subsequent **colonial mandates** created **artificial states** that lacked internal cohesion, sowing the seeds of **sectarian rivalries, political instability, and foreign intervention.**

Formed by Britain in **1920** from three distinct Ottoman provinces — **Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra** — Iraq became a **forced amalgamation** of diverse ethnic and religious groups. The result was a **fragile state** that has repeatedly collapsed into **dictatorship, insurgency, civil war, and terrorism.**

This chapter explores **Iraq's colonial creation**, the **deep divisions imposed by foreign powers**, and how these fractures culminated in **modern instability**, including the rise of **ISIS.**

9.1 The Colonial Creation of Iraq

9.1.1 Sykes-Picot's Blueprint

- Under **Sykes-Picot**, Iraq was placed in the **British sphere of control.**

- Britain sought:
 - **Access to Persian Gulf ports** for trade.
 - **Control over vast oil reserves.**
 - **A buffer state** against potential French and Ottoman influence.

9.1.2 League of Nations Mandate

- In **1920**, the **San Remo Conference** granted Britain a **mandate over Iraq**.
- Local populations were **excluded** from decisions affecting their sovereignty.
- Britain installed **Emir Faisal I**, a Hashemite prince from Arabia, as **king** — an outsider to most Iraqis.

Result: A monarchy dependent on Britain, ruling a **deeply divided society**.

9.2 Ethnic and Sectarian Divisions

9.2.1 Sunni vs. Shia Divide

- **Sunni Arabs** (~20%) historically dominated political institutions under Ottoman rule.
- **Shia Arabs** (~60%) were **marginalized** by both the Ottomans and later the British-installed monarchy.
- This **structural imbalance** fostered resentment, rebellion, and long-term mistrust.

9.2.2 Kurdish Statelessness

- The **Treaty of Sevres (1920)** promised Kurdish autonomy, but it was nullified by the **Treaty of Lausanne (1923)**.
- Kurds (~15–20%) were divided between **Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria**, denied independence.
- In Iraq, repeated Kurdish uprisings were **brutally suppressed** by central governments.

9.2.3 Tribal and Regional Fragmentation

- Southern Iraq: Shia-dominated tribes tied to Persian Gulf networks.
- Central Iraq: Sunni Arab elites controlled military and bureaucracy.
- Northern Iraq: Kurdish and Turkmen minorities resisted Baghdad's authority.

9.3 Oil, Power, and Foreign Influence

9.3.1 British Control Over Oil

- The **Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC)**, a British-controlled consortium, monopolized oil production.
- Local populations received **minimal revenues**, fueling anti-British sentiments.

9.3.2 Strategic Geography

- Iraq's location made it a **geopolitical pivot**:
 - Buffer between **Persian Gulf** and **Levant**.
 - Gateway to **Iranian oil fields**.
 - Military staging ground during both **World Wars** and later the **Cold War**.

9.3.3 U.S. Involvement

- After WWII, the U.S. gradually supplanted Britain as Iraq's **primary external influencer**.
 - This shift intensified **East-West competition** during the **Cold War**.
-

9.4 Coups, Regimes, and Authoritarianism

9.4.1 Overthrow of the Monarchy (1958)

- Led by **Abd al-Karim Qasim**, Iraqi nationalists toppled the Hashemite monarchy.
- Qasim:
 - Withdrew from Western alliances.
 - Pursued **land reforms** and **oil nationalization**.
 - Alienated both Arab nationalists and Kurdish leaders.

9.4.2 Rise of the Ba'ath Party

- **1968 coup** brought the **Ba'ath Party** to power.
 - **Saddam Hussein** emerged as Iraq's strongman by 1979.
 - Policies under Saddam:
 - Centralized authoritarian control.
 - Repressed Kurdish and Shia uprisings.
 - Expanded oil wealth to build a **militarized state**.
-

9.5 The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988)

9.5.1 Origins

- Border disputes and sectarian rivalry with **Shia-majority Iran**.
- Saddam sought to:
 - Assert Iraq's **regional dominance**.
 - Exploit Iran's post-revolutionary instability.

9.5.2 Consequences

- **Eight-year conflict** caused:
 - Over **1 million deaths**.
 - Severe economic collapse.
 - Massive arms imports from both East and West.

9.5.3 Regional Fallout

- Gulf monarchies funded Saddam to **contain Iran's influence**.
 - U.S. quietly supported Iraq but later turned against Saddam.
-

9.6 The 1990–1991 Gulf War

9.6.1 Invasion of Kuwait

- Saddam invaded **Kuwait** over:
 - Oil pricing disputes.
 - Historical claims of sovereignty.
- Triggered an **international coalition** led by the U.S.

9.6.2 Aftermath

- Iraq suffered:

- **Massive military defeat.**
 - **UN sanctions** crippling the economy.
 - **Uprisings** by Shia and Kurds violently suppressed.
-

9.7 The 2003 U.S. Invasion

9.7.1 Toppling Saddam Hussein

- U.S. justified the invasion on:
 - Alleged **weapons of mass destruction** (later disproven).
 - Claims of **links to terrorism**.
- Saddam's regime collapsed in weeks.

9.7.2 Power Vacuum

- U.S. dismantled:
 - **Iraqi Army.**
 - **Ba'ath Party structures.**
- Result:
 - Sectarian militias filled the void.
 - Rise of **insurgency** and **civil war**.

9.7.3 Kurdish Autonomy

- Post-invasion Iraq granted the **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** semi-autonomous status.
 - Turkey opposed Kurdish independence, intensifying **regional tensions**.
-

9.8 ISIS and the “End of Sykes-Picot”

9.8.1 Rise of ISIS

- Exploited:
 - U.S. occupation chaos.
 - Sunni marginalization under Shia-led Baghdad.
 - Open borders between **Iraq and Syria**.
- Declared a **caliphate** in **2014**.

9.8.2 Erasing Borders

- ISIS propaganda celebrated “**breaking Sykes-Picot**” by bulldozing the Iraq-Syria boundary.
- Demonstrated **how fragile colonial-era borders remain**.

9.8.3 Aftermath

- Defeated militarily by **Iraqi forces, Kurds, U.S., and allies**.
 - Left behind:
 - Millions displaced.
 - Sectarian scars.
 - Fragile governance.
-

9.9 Case Study: Kirkuk and the Oil Factor

- **Kirkuk** sits atop one of Iraq’s largest oil reserves.
- Contested by:
 - **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)**.
 - **Baghdad’s central government**.
 - **Arab and Turkmen minorities**.

- Clashes over Kirkuk underscore how **Sykes-Picot ignored resource-driven boundaries**, fueling persistent disputes.

9.10 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Role	Impact
King Faisal I	British-installed monarch	Failed to unify diverse groups
Abd al-Karim Qasim	Nationalist PM	Challenged Western dominance but alienated allies
Saddam Hussein	Ba'athist dictator	Centralized power, triggered wars and sanctions
Masoud Barzani	KRG leader	Advocated Kurdish autonomy and independence
Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi	ISIS leader	Exploited sectarian divides, symbolically erased Sykes-Picot borders

9.11 Ethical Dimensions

9.11.1 Colonial Responsibility

- Britain's **top-down state-building** ignored Iraq's diversity.
- Imposed governance without **local consent**.

9.11.2 Modern Accountability

- U.S. invasion destabilized fragile balances, intensifying sectarianism.

- Regional powers (**Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia**) weaponized divisions.
-

9.12 Lessons and Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Artificial borders create fragile states.**
- **Inclusive governance** is essential in multi-ethnic societies.
- **External intervention** without long-term planning fuels instability.

Global Best Practices

- Promote **federal systems** to empower local governance.
 - **Resource-sharing frameworks** to reduce conflict over oil.
 - Regional dialogue platforms to **manage ethnic and sectarian disputes.**
-

Conclusion

Iraq's history demonstrates how **Sykes-Picot's artificial boundaries**, combined with **colonial manipulation** and **external interventions**, produced a **fragile, fragmented state** vulnerable to **dictatorship, invasion, and extremism**. The rise of **ISIS** and the fight over Kurdish autonomy reveal that **the legacy of Sykes-Picot is far from resolved**.

In the next chapter, we'll turn to **Syria**, another key example where **Sykes-Picot's divisions**, foreign interventions, and proxy wars created one of the **worst humanitarian crises of the 21st century**.

Chapter 10 — Syria: Civil War and External Players

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

Syria is perhaps the most striking modern example of how the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** created **fragile, divided states** vulnerable to **sectarian tensions** and **foreign intervention**. Designed by colonial powers without regard for **ethnic, religious, and tribal realities**, Syria was carved into **artificial entities** that left behind a legacy of instability.

From its French mandate period to the **Ba’athist rule**, and from the **Arab Spring protests (2011)** to a **devastating civil war**, Syria has remained a focal point of **regional rivalries** and **global power struggles**. This chapter examines how **Sykes-Picot’s arbitrary divisions** set the stage for today’s **multi-layered Syrian conflict** involving **Russia, Iran, Turkey, the U.S., Israel, and extremist groups like ISIS**.

10.1 French Mandate and Sectarian Engineering

10.1.1 Sykes-Picot’s Syrian Division

- Under **Sykes-Picot**, Syria fell into **France's sphere of influence**.
- France designed Syria's borders to:
 - Secure access to the **Eastern Mediterranean**.
 - Control fertile lands in the **Orontes Valley**.
 - Protect routes linking **North Africa and the Levant**.

10.1.2 Fragmentation Into Mini-States

France deliberately **divided Syria along sectarian lines** to weaken national unity:

- **State of Damascus**
- **State of Aleppo**
- **Alawite State** (Latakia region)
- **Druze State** (Jabal al-Druze)
- **Greater Lebanon** carved out for **Maronite Christians**.

10.1.3 Legacy of “Divide and Rule”

- Institutionalized **sectarian rivalries**.
- Favored **minority elites** like the **Alawites**, sowing resentment among the **Sunni majority**.
- Created **deep mistrust** among Syria's religious and ethnic groups.

10.2 Rise of Ba'athism and Assad's Rule

10.2.1 The Ba'ath Party and Arab Nationalism

- Founded in 1947 by **Michel Aflaq** and **Salah al-Bitar**.
- Ideology: **“Unity, Freedom, Socialism”**.

- Rejected colonial divisions, aiming for **Pan-Arab solidarity**.

10.2.2 Hafez al-Assad's Ascendancy

- Seized power in **1970**.
- Created a **centralized authoritarian regime** dominated by the **Alawite minority**.
- Suppressed dissent brutally:
 - **Hama Massacre (1982)**: Tens of thousands killed to crush Sunni Islamist uprisings.

10.2.3 Bashar al-Assad's Continuity

- Took power in **2000** after Hafez's death.
 - Initially promised **modernization**, but maintained **authoritarian control**.
 - Widening economic inequality and political repression set the stage for **massive unrest**.
-

10.3 The Arab Spring and Descent into Civil War

10.3.1 The Spark (2011)

- Inspired by uprisings in **Tunisia** and **Egypt**, Syrians protested against:
 - Corruption.
 - Unemployment.
 - Lack of political freedoms.
- Assad's **violent crackdown** escalated protests into **armed resistance**.

10.3.2 Multiplying Fronts

Syria's conflict quickly transformed into a **multi-factional war**:

- **Assad regime** backed by **Russia, Iran, Hezbollah**.
- **Moderate opposition** supported by **U.S., EU, and Gulf states**.
- **Extremist factions** like **ISIS** and **Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate (Jabhat al-Nusra)**.
- **Kurdish forces (YPG/SDF)** seeking autonomy in the north.

10.3.3 Humanitarian Catastrophe

- Over **500,000 killed**.
 - **13 million displaced**, creating the world's largest refugee crisis.
 - Cities like **Aleppo, Homs, and Raqqa** reduced to rubble.
-

10.4 ISIS and the “End of Sykes-Picot”

10.4.1 ISIS's Emergence

- Grew out of **Al-Qaeda in Iraq** after the **2003 U.S. invasion**.
- Exploited:
 - Sectarian divisions between **Sunnis and Shias**.
 - **Open borders** between Syria and Iraq.
 - Collapse of state authority in eastern Syria.

10.4.2 Symbolic Border Destruction

- In 2014, ISIS bulldozed the Iraq-Syria border, declaring:

“We are erasing Sykes-Picot.”

- Used **colonial grievances** to recruit fighters from across the region.

10.4.3 Fall of the Caliphate

- U.S.-backed Kurdish forces, Syrian militias, and Russian airpower dismantled ISIS's territorial control.
 - However, **ISIS remnants** persist, exploiting **ungoverned spaces**.
-

10.5 External Players and Proxy Warfare

10.5.1 Russia

- Entered the war in **2015** to preserve Assad's regime.
- Established permanent military bases in **Tartus** and **Hmeimim**.
- Used Syria to project **power into the Mediterranean**.

10.5.2 Iran

- Deployed **Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)** and **Shia militias**.
- Strengthened the "**Shia Crescent**" stretching from **Tehran to Beirut**.
- Elevated Hezbollah's influence regionally.

10.5.3 Turkey

- Opposed Assad but primarily targeted **Kurdish forces** to prevent an independent Kurdistan.

- Launched **Operation Euphrates Shield (2016)** and subsequent incursions.

10.5.4 United States

- Initially supported **moderate opposition forces**.
- Shifted focus to fighting **ISIS** alongside Kurdish-led **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**.
- Maintains a **military presence** in northeastern Syria.

10.5.5 Israel

- Conducted **airstrikes** to prevent Iran and Hezbollah from establishing footholds near its borders.
 - Prioritized security over direct involvement in the broader conflict.
-

10.6 The Kurdish Autonomy Dilemma

10.6.1 Rise of the Syrian Kurds

- Kurdish forces (YPG) established **self-governing administrations** in **Rojava**.
- Became key U.S. allies in defeating ISIS.

10.6.2 Turkey's Opposition

- Ankara fears a **contiguous Kurdish region** fueling separatism among its own Kurds.
- Clashes between **Turkey and Kurdish militias** risked direct confrontation with the U.S.

10.6.3 Future Uncertainty

- Syrian Kurds remain **caught between powers**:
 - Seeking autonomy.
 - Facing hostility from **Turkey**, ambivalence from **Damascus**, and dependency on **U.S. support**.
-

10.7 Case Study: The Battle for Aleppo (2012–2016)

- Once Syria's **economic capital**, Aleppo became a **symbol of Syria's devastation**.
 - Fierce battles between:
 - **Rebel forces**.
 - **Assad's army** backed by **Russia and Iran**.
 - **Russian airstrikes** and **sieges** led to massive civilian casualties.
 - The **fall of Aleppo** marked a **turning point**, consolidating Assad's grip over western Syria.
-

10.8 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Hafez al-Assad	Syria	Alawite strongman	Built centralized authoritarianism, suppressed dissent
Bashar al-Assad	Syria	Current President	Presided over civil war and mass atrocities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey	President	Opposed Assad, targeted Kurdish forces
Vladimir Putin	Russia	President	Rescued Assad's regime, expanded Russian influence
Qasem Soleimani	Iran	IRGC Commander	Directed Iran's military strategy in Syria

10.9 Ethical Dimensions

10.9.1 Colonial Responsibility

- **Sykes-Picot borders** ignored sectarian realities, enabling today's fragmentation.
- French "divide and rule" entrenched divisions still exploited today.

10.9.2 Humanitarian Crisis

- Civilian suffering amplified by:
 - Indiscriminate bombings.
 - Siege warfare.
 - Targeting of hospitals and infrastructure.

10.9.3 Weaponizing Aid

- Humanitarian assistance manipulated as a **bargaining chip** by both regime and opposition forces.
-

10.10 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Artificial unity breeds fragility:** Ignoring local identities destabilizes governance.
- **Proxy wars deepen crises:** Foreign intervention without coordination prolongs conflict.
- **Inclusive peacebuilding** is essential for recovery.

Global Best Practices

- **UN-led conflict resolution** prioritizing sovereignty and representation.
 - **Federal and decentralized systems** to accommodate ethnic diversity.
 - **International safeguards** to prevent starvation and civilian targeting in conflicts.
-

Conclusion

Syria's descent into chaos illustrates how **Sykes-Picot's artificial borders** and **colonial manipulation** set the stage for **sectarian divides** and **foreign interference**. The Syrian civil war has become a **multi-dimensional battlefield** where **regional rivalries** and **global power struggles** converge, leaving the country fractured and millions displaced.

In the next chapter, we'll turn to **Lebanon**, another state engineered under Sykes-Picot, where **sectarian design**, **external interventions**,

and militia dominance created a **fragile republic** prone to cycles of crisis and civil war.

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Chapter 11 — Lebanon: A Fragile Mosaic

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

Lebanon stands as one of the clearest examples of how the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** and subsequent **French colonial policies** created a **fragile state**, engineered along **sectarian lines**. Under the French mandate, Lebanon was deliberately designed as a **confessional republic** — a political system where **religious identity dictates political power**.

This **artificially constructed balance** allowed Lebanon to function for decades but also **sowed deep divisions**, leading to the **Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990)**, recurring **political paralysis**, and the rise of **non-state actors** like **Hezbollah**.

This chapter explores **Lebanon's colonial creation**, its **confessional system**, the **civil war**, and how **Sykes-Picot's legacy** continues to shape Lebanon's crises today.

11.1 French Mandate and Sectarian Design

11.1.1 Sykes-Picot's Allocation

- Under **Sykes-Picot**, Lebanon fell within the **French sphere of influence**.
- France sought:
 - **Strategic access** to the Eastern Mediterranean.
 - A **Christian-majority enclave** allied with French interests.
 - Expansion of its **colonial footprint** linking North Africa and the Levant.

11.1.2 Creation of Greater Lebanon (1920)

- France carved Lebanon out of Ottoman **Greater Syria**, adding:
 - Coastal cities (**Beirut, Tripoli**).
 - Fertile Bekaa Valley.
 - Mountainous Christian heartlands.
- This created a **religiously diverse state**:
 - **Maronite Christians**.
 - **Sunni and Shia Muslims**.
 - **Druze minority**.

11.1.3 Institutionalizing Confessional Politics

- France introduced a **confessional political system**:
 - **President** → Maronite Christian.
 - **Prime Minister** → Sunni Muslim.
 - **Speaker of Parliament** → Shia Muslim.
- While intended to **maintain balance**, this **froze sectarian identities into law**, undermining **national unity**.

11.2 Independence and Fragile Stability

11.2.1 Independence in 1943

- Lebanon gained independence but retained the **National Pact**:
 - An **informal agreement** preserving confessional quotas.
 - Institutionalized **power-sharing** along religious lines.
- While initially stabilizing, the pact **failed to adapt** to demographic shifts:
 - Rising **Shia population**.
 - Expanding **Sunni influence**.
 - Maronite dominance increasingly challenged.

11.2.2 Beirut: “Paris of the Middle East”

- From the 1950s to early 1970s:
 - Lebanon thrived as a **financial hub**.
 - Beirut became a center for **banking, tourism, and culture**.
- Beneath prosperity, **tensions brewed**:
 - **Regional conflicts** spilled into Lebanon.
 - **Palestinian refugee influx** transformed demographics and politics.

11.3 The Palestinian Factor

11.3.1 Arrival of Refugees

- After the **1948 Arab-Israeli War**, over **100,000 Palestinian refugees** settled in Lebanon.
- The **1967 Six-Day War** brought a second wave.
- Palestinian militancy destabilized Lebanon’s delicate sectarian balance.

11.3.2 Rise of the PLO

- **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** established bases in southern Lebanon.
 - Launched attacks on Israel, prompting **Israeli retaliations**.
 - Lebanese factions split:
 - **Leftist-Muslim blocs** supported the PLO.
 - **Right-wing Christian militias** opposed them.
-

11.4 The Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990)

11.4.1 Outbreak of War

- Triggered by:
 - Sectarian tensions.
 - Palestinian militancy.
 - External interventions.
- Factions included:
 - **Christian militias** (e.g., Phalange).
 - **Muslim coalitions**.
 - **Palestinian armed groups**.
 - Emerging **Shia movements**.

11.4.2 Regional and Global Players

- **Syria** intervened in 1976, initially backing Christians, later Muslims.
- **Israel** invaded Lebanon in **1978** and **1982** to expel the PLO.
- **Iran** supported Shia militias, laying the foundation for **Hezbollah**.
- **U.S. and France** deployed peacekeepers, but suffered attacks like the **1983 Beirut barracks bombing**.

11.4.3 Human and Political Costs

- Over **120,000 killed**.
 - Beirut, once a cosmopolitan hub, reduced to **sectarian enclaves**.
 - The war ended with the **Taif Agreement (1989)**, which:
 - Adjusted confessional quotas.
 - Increased **Shia representation**.
 - Left **sectarianism intact**, perpetuating fragility.
-

11.5 Rise of Hezbollah

11.5.1 Origins

- Founded in **1982** with Iranian support during the Israeli invasion.
- Initially focused on resisting **Israeli occupation** in southern Lebanon.

11.5.2 Transformation into a Political Force

- Hezbollah evolved into:
 - A **military powerhouse**.
 - A **political party** holding significant parliamentary seats.
 - A **social welfare provider**, especially in Shia-majority regions.

11.5.3 Regional Role

- Acts as a **proxy for Iran** in the “**Shia Crescent**”:
 - Supports **Assad in Syria**.
 - Confronts **Israel**.
 - Challenges **Saudi-backed Sunni factions** in Lebanon.

11.6 Recurring Crises in Post-War Lebanon

11.6.1 Political Paralysis

- Confessionalism makes **government formation slow and contentious**.
- Presidential and parliamentary deadlocks are frequent.

11.6.2 Economic Collapse

- By **2019**, Lebanon faced:
 - Currency devaluation.
 - Banking sector collapse.
 - Soaring unemployment.
- **Beirut Port Explosion (2020)** symbolized state dysfunction and elite corruption.

11.6.3 Refugee Burden

- Hosting over **1.5 million Syrian refugees** strained Lebanon's:
 - Economy.
 - Infrastructure.
 - Sectarian balance.

11.7 Case Study: The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War

- Sparked when Hezbollah abducted two Israeli soldiers.
- **34-day conflict** resulted in:

- Over **1,000 Lebanese deaths**.
 - Widespread infrastructure destruction.
 - Hezbollah claimed “victory” by surviving Israel’s assault.
- Cemented Hezbollah’s status as both a **military actor** and **regional powerbroker**.

11.8 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Role	Impact
Camille Chamoun	Lebanese President (1952–1958)	Strengthened ties with the West, worsened sectarian divides
Rafic Hariri	PM, architect of post-war recovery	Rebuilt Beirut but faced corruption scandals
Hassan Nasrallah	Hezbollah leader	Consolidated Hezbollah’s dual role as militia and political actor
Michel Aoun	Lebanese President (2016–2022)	Struggled to manage sectarian deadlocks
Saad Hariri	Sunni political leader	Represented Western-aligned Sunni interests

11.9 Ethical Dimensions

11.9.1 Colonial Responsibility

- France institutionalized **sectarian governance**, prioritizing control over unity.
- Ignored **long-term implications** of frozen religious quotas.

11.9.2 Non-State Power

- Hezbollah's rise highlights:
 - State weakness.
 - Parallel systems of governance.
 - Erosion of central authority.

11.9.3 Refugee Marginalization

- Palestinian and Syrian refugees face:
 - Restricted rights.
 - Limited access to education and employment.
 - Political exclusion despite shaping Lebanon's demographics.
-

11.10 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Confessional systems breed paralysis** when demographic shifts are ignored.
- **Non-state actors thrive in weak states**, undermining sovereignty.
- **Inclusive governance** is key to long-term stability.

Global Best Practices

- Transition toward **civic-based constitutions** rather than religious quotas.
- Empower **independent state institutions** to limit militia influence.

- Promote **regional security frameworks** to manage cross-border tensions.
-

Conclusion

Lebanon's fragility is deeply rooted in the **Sykes-Picot legacy** and **French colonial design**. By **institutionalizing sectarian divisions**, external powers created a **state vulnerable to internal paralysis and external manipulation**. The rise of **Hezbollah**, recurring economic crises, and refugee pressures highlight Lebanon's continued struggle to reconcile **diversity with sovereignty**.

In the next chapter, we'll turn to **Kurdish statelessness**, another enduring consequence of Sykes-Picot, and examine how the denial of Kurdish independence shaped conflicts across **Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran**.

Chapter 12 — The Kurdish Question: Statelessness and Aspirations

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

Among the many unresolved conflicts created by the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)**, none is as enduring and destabilizing as the **Kurdish question**. Despite being one of the **largest stateless nations in the world**, with over **35–40 million Kurds** spread across **Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria**, the Kurds were **denied sovereignty** when colonial powers divided the Ottoman Empire.

The **Treaty of Sevres (1920)** initially promised a **Kurdish state**, but the **Treaty of Lausanne (1923)** nullified that pledge, effectively **erasing Kurdish aspirations**. A century later, the **struggle for autonomy, recognition, and rights** continues to fuel conflicts across the Middle East, impacting **regional security, governance, and international alliances**.

This chapter examines the **historical betrayal of the Kurds**, their **modern political movements, military struggles**, and their **role in combating ISIS**, highlighting how Sykes-Picot's borders created **persistent instability**.

12.1 Historical Roots of Kurdish Statelessness

12.1.1 The Promise of Sevres (1920)

- After WWI, the **Treaty of Sevres** proposed:
 - A **Kurdish homeland** in parts of **eastern Anatolia**.
 - A possible extension into **northern Iraq** if Kurds desired.
- Kurds celebrated this as recognition of their **cultural identity and self-determination**.

12.1.2 The Lausanne Betrayal (1923)

- The **Treaty of Lausanne** redrew boundaries to favor **Turkey's territorial integrity**.
- Kurds were split between:
 - **Turkey (~20M)**
 - **Iran (~10M)**
 - **Iraq (~6M)**
 - **Syria (~2M)**
- No mechanisms for **self-governance** or **minority protections** were provided.

12.1.3 Sykes-Picot's Legacy

- By ignoring Kurdish aspirations, the colonial powers created:
 - A **nation without a state**.
 - A **permanent source of rebellion and instability**.
 - Ongoing disputes with central governments in **four countries**.

12.2 Kurds in Iraq

12.2.1 Rebellion and Repression

- Under British rule, Kurdish demands for autonomy were ignored.
- Successive Iraqi governments:
 - **Suppressed Kurdish uprisings** (1960s–1980s).
 - Denied **language and cultural rights**.
 - Discriminated against Kurds in **political representation**.

12.2.2 The Anfal Campaign (1988)

- Saddam Hussein launched a genocidal campaign against Kurds:
 - Over **180,000 Kurds killed**.
 - **Chemical attacks** in Halabja killed **5,000 civilians**.
 - Entire villages destroyed.

12.2.3 Autonomy After 2003

- Following the **U.S. invasion of Iraq**, Kurds achieved:
 - **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** established.
 - **Peshmerga forces** recognized as autonomous security forces.
- The **KRG capital, Erbil**, became a **hub of relative stability** compared to the rest of Iraq.

12.2.4 The Kirkuk Dispute

- **Kirkuk** holds one of Iraq's richest oil fields.
- Both the **KRG** and Baghdad claim sovereignty.
- Periodic clashes underscore **resource-driven fault lines** created by Sykes-Picot.

12.3 Kurds in Turkey

12.3.1 Forced Assimilation Policies

- The Turkish Republic under **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**:
 - Denied Kurdish identity.
 - Banned **Kurdish language and publications**.
 - Referred to Kurds as “**mountain Turks**”.

12.3.2 PKK Insurgency

- **Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)**, founded in 1978:
 - Initially sought independence, later shifted to **autonomy**.
 - Waged a **guerrilla war** against Turkish forces.
 - Turkey designates the PKK as a **terrorist organization**.

12.3.3 Erdogan’s Dilemma

- President **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** initially engaged in **peace talks** but later resumed:
 - **Military campaigns** against PKK strongholds.
 - Cross-border operations into **Iraq and Syria**.
- Turkey’s opposition to Kurdish independence remains a **regional flashpoint**.

12.4 Kurds in Syria

12.4.1 Marginalization Under Assad

- Syrian Kurds faced:
 - Revocation of citizenship for **hundreds of thousands**.
 - Prohibition of **Kurdish education and cultural expression**.
 - Economic neglect in Kurdish-majority regions.

12.4.2 Rise of Rojava

- Amid the **Syrian Civil War (2011)**, Kurds established **self-governing regions**:
 - Known as **Rojava**, governed by the **Democratic Union Party (PYD)**.
 - Promoted:
 - **Gender equality**.
 - **Secular governance**.
 - **Democratic decentralization**.

12.4.3 U.S.-Kurdish Partnership

- Kurdish **YPG militias** became the **primary U.S. ally** against ISIS.
 - Helped liberate **Raqqa** and other ISIS strongholds.
 - Turkey, however, views the YPG as an **extension of the PKK**, leading to **cross-border clashes**.
-

12.5 Kurds in Iran

12.5.1 Historical Resistance

- Iranian Kurds launched repeated uprisings for autonomy since the 1920s.

- In **1946**, the **Republic of Mahabad** briefly existed but was crushed by Iran.

12.5.2 Ongoing Repression

- The Iranian regime:
 - Limits **Kurdish political representation**.
 - Cracks down on **cultural expressions**.
 - Targets **Kurdish activists** through arrests and executions.

12.5.3 Strategic Position

- Iran uses its Kurdish regions as a **buffer zone** against Iraq and Turkey.
 - Tehran fears a **domino effect** where Kurdish autonomy in Iraq and Syria **fuels separatism** within Iran.
-

12.6 The Kurdish Role Against ISIS

12.6.1 Peshmerga and YPG Successes

- Kurdish forces became central in defeating ISIS:
 - **KRG's Peshmerga** defended **Erbil** and **Kirkuk**.
 - **YPG militias** liberated **Kobane** and **Raqqqa**.

12.6.2 International Recognition

- Kurdish fighters earned global praise for their resilience.
- Yet, their political aspirations remain unfulfilled, as **Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria** all oppose Kurdish independence.

12.7 Case Study: 2017 Kurdish Independence Referendum

- In **September 2017**, the **KRG** held a referendum:
 - **92% voted for independence.**
 - Regional backlash was immediate:
 - **Baghdad** imposed economic sanctions.
 - **Turkey and Iran** threatened military intervention.
 - The referendum exposed **Kurdish isolation** and the **limits of self-determination** in a region still bound by **Sykes-Picot's borders**.
-

12.8 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country/Group	Role	Impact
Mustafa Barzani	KDP, Iraq	Led early Kurdish nationalist movements	Advocated independence but faced repeated defeats
Masoud Barzani	KRG, Iraq	Pushed 2017 referendum	Strengthened Kurdish autonomy but isolated KRG
Abdullah Öcalan	PKK, Turkey	Founded Kurdish insurgency	Inspired Kurdish activism but labeled terrorist
Salih Muslim	PYD, Syria	Architect of Rojava governance	Advanced Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria

Leader	Country/Group	Role	Impact
Qubad Talabani	KRG, Iraq	Deputy PM	Advocates balancing autonomy with regional stability

12.9 Ethical Dimensions

12.9.1 Betrayed Promises

- Sykes-Picot and Lausanne ignored Kurdish rights.
- Kurds remain **stateless despite shared cultural identity**.

12.9.2 Regional Suppression

- Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria suppress Kurdish aspirations:
 - Banning language and culture.
 - Conducting military campaigns.
 - Blocking international recognition.

12.9.3 Great Power Hypocrisy

- The West relied on Kurds against ISIS but **abandoned their independence demands**.
 - Highlights the **double standards of international diplomacy**.
-

12.10 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Ignoring ethnic realities breeds instability.**
- **Inclusive governance** prevents perpetual rebellion.
- **Empowering local voices** fosters sustainable peace.

Global Best Practices

- **Federalism and decentralization** to balance autonomy and unity.
 - **Cross-border Kurdish dialogue** to harmonize policies in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria.
 - **UN-backed frameworks** for minority rights and cultural protections.
-

Conclusion

The **Kurdish question** is one of the most enduring legacies of **Sykes-Picot's arbitrary borders**. By denying the Kurds sovereignty, colonial powers **created a nation without a state**, fueling a century of **uprisings, repression, and instability**. From their role in defeating **ISIS** to their push for **autonomy**, the Kurds remain **central to regional dynamics** — yet their aspirations for independence continue to collide with entrenched geopolitical realities.

In the next chapter, we'll explore the **oil factor**, examining how **Sykes-Picot's partitioning of resource-rich regions** shaped **energy geopolitics**, interstate rivalries, and **modern conflicts** across the Middle East.

Chapter 13 — The Oil Factor: Energy, Borders, and Power

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

If there is one resource that has shaped the **Middle East's destiny** since the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)**, it is **oil**. While the original purpose of Sykes-Picot was **political control**, the **energy dimension** quickly became central to Britain and France's strategies. The agreement not only **drew borders** but also **divided oil-rich territories**, setting off a century-long struggle for **resource dominance**, **geopolitical leverage**, and **economic power**.

In this chapter, we explore how **Sykes-Picot's allocation of oil zones** shaped **colonial ambitions**, fueled **wars and invasions**, and continues to influence **regional rivalries** and **global energy security** in 2025.

13.1 Sykes-Picot and Oil Geopolitics

13.1.1 Oil's Emerging Importance

- In **1914**, the British Navy transitioned from coal to **oil-powered ships**.
- Control of Middle Eastern oil became **vital for military supremacy**.

- Sykes-Picot carved up territories partly based on **known and potential oil reserves**.

13.1.2 The Strategic Carve-Up

- Britain secured:
 - **Southern Iraq (Basra, Baghdad)** for **Persian Gulf access**.
 - Oil-rich **Mosul Province** after intense bargaining.
- France took:
 - **Northern Syria and Lebanon**, controlling Mediterranean pipelines.
- **Palestine** was internationalized to prevent clashes over its **strategic coastal access**.

13.1.3 The Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC)

- Established in **1929** under British dominance.
 - Controlled oil production in **Iraq and surrounding territories**.
 - France, the U.S., and Dutch firms later joined, creating a **Western energy cartel**.
-

13.2 Oil, Borders, and Artificial States

13.2.1 Iraq

- Iraq's borders were drawn to:
 - Secure **Basra's ports** for Britain.
 - Incorporate **Mosul's oil fields**.
- Kurds in Mosul were **denied independence** to preserve **British energy interests**.

13.2.2 Kuwait

- Britain carved **Kuwait** out of **southern Iraq** to:
 - Protect its **oil concessions**.
 - Create a **client state** dependent on London.
- This artificial separation **planted seeds** for **Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion**.

13.2.3 Iran

- Although not directly under Sykes-Picot, Iran's oil resources made it a **strategic buffer zone**:
 - Britain dominated via the **Anglo-Persian Oil Company**.
 - Later, U.S. influence expanded post-WWII.
-

13.3 Oil and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

13.3.1 Securing Energy Routes

- **Palestine's location** made it a **corridor for pipelines** connecting:
 - **Iraqi oil fields** to the **Mediterranean**.
- Britain's control over Palestine allowed it to dominate **regional energy transit**.

13.3.2 The 1973 Oil Embargo

- After the **Yom Kippur War**, Arab states used **oil as a weapon**:
 - Cut supplies to the **U.S. and Western allies**.
 - Triggered a global **energy crisis**.

- Showed how **oil politics and territorial disputes** are inseparable.
-

13.4 Oil as a Catalyst for Conflict

13.4.1 The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988)

- Border disputes over the **Shatt al-Arab waterway**, a vital **oil export route**.
- Gulf monarchies funded Saddam to **contain Iran** and protect **energy flows**.
- War devastated both economies but **left oil politics unresolved**.

13.4.2 The Gulf War (1990–1991)

- Saddam invaded **Kuwait** to:
 - Seize its **oil reserves**.
 - Gain strategic access to the **Persian Gulf**.
- U.S.-led coalition intervened to secure:
 - **Energy supplies**.
 - Global **maritime shipping lanes**.

13.4.3 The 2003 Iraq Invasion

- Officially justified by **WMD claims** but largely driven by:
 - Control over **Iraq's vast oil reserves**.
 - Securing **global energy dominance**.
-

13.5 Pipelines and Power Politics

13.5.1 Colonial-Era Pipelines

- Britain and France built extensive **pipeline networks** to export oil:
 - **Kirkuk–Haifa pipeline** (Iraq to Palestine).
 - **Kirkuk–Tripoli pipeline** (Iraq to Lebanon).
- These routes linked oil fields to **Mediterranean ports**, bypassing hostile territories.

13.5.2 Modern Pipeline Wars

- Competing projects reflect ongoing **Sykes-Picot rivalries**:
 - **Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline** (blocked by war).
 - **Qatar-Turkey pipeline** (opposed by Assad, supported by Gulf states).
 - The Syrian Civil War partly reflects these **pipeline geopolitics**.
-

13.6 The Gulf Monarchies and Energy Security

13.6.1 Saudi Arabia

- Emerged as the **world's largest oil producer** post-Sykes-Picot.
- Uses **OPEC** as a tool for **energy diplomacy**.
- Central to U.S. energy strategy since the **1945 Quincy Agreement**.

13.6.2 UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar

- These small Gulf states owe their **borders and independence** to **British designs** under Sykes-Picot.

- Became **energy powerhouses** despite limited territorial size.
- Host U.S. military bases to secure **maritime energy routes**.

13.6.3 OPEC's Global Influence

- Formed in **1960** to challenge Western energy dominance.
 - Used oil prices to influence:
 - **Foreign policy leverage.**
 - **Economic sanctions.**
 - **Conflict mediation.**
-

13.7 Case Study: Kirkuk — Oil and Ethnic Tensions

- **Kirkuk**, one of the richest oil-producing regions, lies at the intersection of **Arab, Kurdish, and Turkmen populations**.
 - Disputes involve:
 - **KRG autonomy claims.**
 - **Baghdad's central authority.**
 - Turkish concerns over **Kurdish influence.**
 - Kirkuk symbolizes how **Sykes-Picot borders ignored resource realities**, embedding conflict into Iraq's foundations.
-

13.8 Oil and Great Power Rivalries

13.8.1 U.S. Energy Dominance

- Post-1945, U.S. strategy focused on:
 - Securing **Gulf oil fields.**

- Protecting shipping through **Strait of Hormuz**.
- Building alliances with **Saudi Arabia and Gulf monarchies**.

13.8.2 Russia's Resurgence

- Uses **energy diplomacy** to influence:
 - **Syria** (military intervention secures offshore gas rights).
 - **Turkey** (gas pipelines and Black Sea routes).
- Competes with U.S. interests in controlling **energy corridors**.

13.8.3 China's Belt and Road

- Invests heavily in **energy infrastructure**:
 - Secures oil supplies from **Iran and Iraq**.
 - Bypasses Western-controlled routes via **China-Iran pipelines**.

13.9 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Winston Churchill	Britain	Championed oil-based naval power	Ensured British dominance in Middle East energy
King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud	Saudi Arabia	Founder of Saudi state	Secured U.S.-Saudi oil partnership
Saddam Hussein	Iraq	Sought regional oil dominance	Triggered Gulf Wars
Ruhollah Khomeini	Iran	Islamic Revolution leader	Challenged U.S. energy control in the Gulf

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Mohammed bin Salman	Saudi Arabia	Current Crown Prince	Diversifies Saudi economy while using oil for global leverage

13.10 Ethical Dimensions

13.10.1 Colonial Exploitation

- Oil interests shaped **Sykes-Picot boundaries**, ignoring **ethnic and demographic realities**.

13.10.2 Resource Inequality

- Oil wealth enriched **elites and foreign powers** while leaving **local populations marginalized**.

13.10.3 Climate and Security

- Heavy reliance on oil has delayed **economic diversification** and worsened **geopolitical vulnerabilities**.
-

13.11 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- Resource-based borders fuel conflict** if not paired with **inclusive governance**.

- Energy dependency invites **external intervention** and **regional rivalries**.
- Diversification is essential for **long-term stability**.

Global Best Practices

- Establish **resource-sharing frameworks** to prevent disputes.
 - Promote **renewable energy cooperation** to reduce oil-driven conflicts.
 - Strengthen **multilateral energy governance** under neutral international bodies.
-

Conclusion

Oil transformed the **Sykes-Picot map** from a colonial carve-up into a **geopolitical battlefield**. By prioritizing **resource control over cultural realities**, colonial powers set the stage for **wars, invasions, and rivalries** that persist today. From **Kirkuk to the Gulf**, from **pipeline politics to OPEC strategies**, oil remains central to the **Middle East's identity, conflicts, and global significance**.

In the next chapter, we'll examine **how modern extremist groups, including Al-Qaeda and ISIS, weaponized Sykes-Picot's legacy** — using **colonial grievances and artificial borders** to recruit fighters and destabilize the region.

Chapter 14 — Extremism and the Collapse of Borders

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** did more than divide territories; it **engineered fragile states** whose artificial borders ignored **ethnic, tribal, and religious realities**. Over a century later, extremist movements such as **Al-Qaeda** and **ISIS** have weaponized the **legacy of betrayal** to **justify jihad, mobilize followers, and challenge the state system** imposed by colonial powers.

This chapter explores how **extremist groups exploit Sykes-Picot's divisions**, how **ISIS symbolically “erased” borders**, and how **fragile states** like Iraq and Syria became breeding grounds for **radical ideologies and transnational militancy**.

14.1 Sykes-Picot as a Recruitment Tool

14.1.1 “Colonial Betrayal” Narrative

- Extremist propaganda frames Sykes-Picot as:
 - A **foreign conspiracy** to divide the Muslim world.
 - Proof of **Western exploitation** of Arab lands and resources.

- A call for **jihad to reclaim sovereignty** and **restore the Caliphate**.

14.1.2 Exploiting Statelessness

- Denied self-determination under Sykes-Picot:
 - **Palestinians** displaced.
 - **Kurds** divided.
 - **Sunnis in Iraq** marginalized post-2003.
 - Extremist ideologies thrive where **national identity** is weak and **communal grievances** dominate.
-

14.2 Al-Qaeda: Building a Global Jihad

14.2.1 Origins and Ideology

- Founded in **1988** by **Osama bin Laden** during the Afghan war.
- Advocated:
 - Removal of **Western influence** from Muslim lands.
 - Establishment of a **transnational Islamic Caliphate**.
 - Opposition to **artificial borders** drawn by colonial powers.

14.2.2 Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

- Emerged after the **2003 U.S. invasion**:
 - Led by **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**.
 - Exploited sectarian tensions between **Sunni and Shia**.
 - Paved the way for ISIS's eventual rise.

14.2.3 Global Impact

- Attacks like **9/11 (2001)** were justified as retaliation against **Western-imposed borders and interventions**.
 - Al-Qaeda's message resonated with populations alienated by **state failure and foreign control**.
-

14.3 ISIS: “Breaking Sykes-Picot”

14.3.1 Birth of ISIS

- Grew from **Al-Qaeda in Iraq** after **Zarqawi's death (2006)**.
- Led by **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, ISIS declared itself the **“Islamic State”** in 2014.

14.3.2 Erasing Colonial Boundaries

- In 2014, ISIS released a video showing fighters **bulldozing the Iraq-Syria border**:

“We are erasing Sykes-Picot.”

- The act symbolized:
 - Rejection of the **state system**.
 - Creation of a **borderless caliphate**.
 - Defiance against **Western-imposed political geography**.

14.3.3 Exploiting Power Vacuums

- Collapsed states provided fertile ground:
 - **Iraq** after U.S. occupation.
 - **Syria** during civil war.

- ISIS expanded rapidly, seizing **Mosul, Raqqa, and large swaths of territory** across both countries.
-

14.4 ISIS's Propaganda Machine

14.4.1 Narrative of Revival

- Framed itself as the **restorer of lost unity**:
 - Published glossy magazines like **Dabiq** and **Rumiyah**.
 - Emphasized **colonial injustice** and **religious identity**.
 - Promoted a return to the **golden age of the Caliphate**.

14.4.2 Global Recruitment

- Used social media to attract:
 - Disenfranchised youth across the **Middle East**.
 - Radicalized individuals in **Europe, Asia, and Africa**.
- Over **40,000 foreign fighters** joined from more than **80 countries**.

14.4.3 Funding and Resource Control

- Controlled:
 - **Oil fields** in eastern Syria and northern Iraq.
 - Extortion, taxation, and smuggling routes.
 - Built an **economy of war** beyond traditional borders.
-

14.5 Collapse of the Caliphate

14.5.1 U.S.-Led Coalition

- From **2015 onward**, U.S. forces:
 - Partnered with **Iraqi security forces** and **Kurdish Peshmerga**.
 - Launched extensive **airstrikes** and ground operations.

14.5.2 Role of Kurdish Forces

- **YPG militias** in Syria and **Peshmerga** in Iraq spearheaded the fight against ISIS.
- Achieved major victories in **Kobane (2015)** and **Raqqa (2017)**.

14.5.3 Persistent Threat

- While ISIS lost its **territorial “caliphate”**, its ideology survives:
 - **Sleeper cells** operate in Iraq and Syria.
 - Affiliates thrive in **Libya, Afghanistan, and Africa**.
 - Exploits **state weakness and colonial grievances** to endure.
-

14.6 Regional Fallout of Extremism

14.6.1 Sectarian Civil Wars

- ISIS deepened the **Sunni-Shia divide**:
 - Targeted Shia populations.
 - Provoked Shia militias backed by **Iran**.
- Heightened polarization across **Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon**.

14.6.2 Refugee Crises

- Millions displaced from **Syria and Iraq**.
- Strained neighboring states:
 - **Lebanon** hosts over **1.5M refugees**.
 - **Jordan** overwhelmed by migration flows.
- Altered demographics threaten regional **stability and identity**.

14.6.3 External Interventions

- Global powers exploited instability:
 - **Russia** secured bases in Syria.
 - **U.S.** reasserted influence in Iraq.
 - **Turkey** intervened militarily against Kurds and ISIS alike.
-

14.7 Case Study: Raqqa — ISIS’s “Capital”

- Declared the **de facto capital** of ISIS in **2014**.
 - Symbolized:
 - Control beyond borders.
 - Establishment of **Islamic governance**.
 - Destroyed by a **U.S.-Kurdish offensive in 2017**:
 - **80% of Raqqa** reduced to rubble.
 - Exposed the **human cost** of combating extremism.
-

14.8 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Group/Role	Impact
Osama bin Laden	Al-Qaeda Founder	Launched global jihad against Western powers
Abu Musab al-Zarqawi	AQI Leader	Sparked sectarian conflict, precursor to ISIS
Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi	ISIS Caliph	Declared caliphate, symbolically erased borders
Masrour Barzani	KRG PM	Led Kurdish operations against ISIS
Brett McGurk	U.S. Envoy	Coordinated global coalition against ISIS

14.9 Ethical Dimensions

14.9.1 Colonial Roots of Extremism

- Arbitrary borders and **broken promises** under Sykes-Picot created **stateless nations** and **perpetual grievances**.
- Extremist groups exploit these **historic injustices** for recruitment.

14.9.2 Humanitarian Costs

- Civilian populations bear the brunt:
 - Mass killings.
 - Displacement.
 - Destruction of cultural heritage.

14.9.3 Global Responsibility

- Failure to resolve **Palestinian, Kurdish, and sectarian disputes** sustains cycles of radicalization.
-

14.10 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- Ignoring historical grievances **empowers extremist narratives**.
- Strong, inclusive governance counters **radical recruitment**.
- Multi-stakeholder cooperation is vital to prevent future collapses.

Global Best Practices

- Address **root causes** of extremism — statelessness, inequality, and repression.
 - Strengthen **regional integration** to minimize militant safe havens.
 - Promote **deradicalization programs** alongside **economic rebuilding**.
-

Conclusion

Extremist groups like **Al-Qaeda** and **ISIS** weaponized the **Sykes-Picot legacy** to **mobilize global jihad**, portraying themselves as **liberators of the Muslim world from colonial domination**. By **erasing borders** and exploiting **fragile states**, ISIS and its affiliates directly challenged the **state system** that emerged from Sykes-Picot.

While the **territorial caliphate** has collapsed, the **ideological battle** remains unresolved — proving that **ignoring colonial injustices** **perpetuates cycles of instability**.

In the next chapter, we'll explore **how regional powers — Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel — exploit Sykes-Picot's artificial borders to project influence**, turning the Middle East into a **multi-layered battlefield of proxies and rivalries**.

Chapter 15 — Regional Rivalries and Proxy Wars

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** created **artificial states** and **fragile borders** that have shaped the **geopolitical rivalries** of the Middle East for more than a century. Today, the region remains trapped in **proxy wars**, where **Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel** compete for **influence, security, and dominance**.

Sykes-Picot's **sectarian fragmentation**, combined with **resource competition** and **external interventions**, has transformed the Middle East into a **multi-layered battlefield**. In this chapter, we explore how these rivalries developed, the proxy wars they fuel, and the enduring instability caused by borders drawn without regard for **ethnic, religious, and tribal realities**.

15.1 The Regional Chessboard: From Colonial Carve-Up to Proxy Battlefields

15.1.1 Sykes-Picot's Strategic Fault Lines

- Arbitrary borders **grouped diverse populations** into single states.

- Ignored **tribal, ethnic, and sectarian dynamics**, fostering:
 - **Sunni-Shia rivalries.**
 - **Arab-Kurdish disputes.**
 - **Israel-Palestine tensions.**
- Regional powers exploit these divisions to **expand influence.**

15.1.2 From Mandates to Modern Conflicts

- **France and Britain** once dictated policy through mandates.
 - Today, **Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel** dominate the regional landscape.
 - The **U.S., Russia, and China** amplify these rivalries through **strategic alignments.**
-

15.2 Iran vs. Saudi Arabia: The Shia-Sunni Divide

15.2.1 Historical Roots

- **Iran** (Shia majority) and **Saudi Arabia** (Sunni Wahhabi monarchy) represent opposing **religious ideologies.**
- Sykes-Picot borders institutionalized **Sunni dominance** in many Arab states, marginalizing Shias, especially in **Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon.**

15.2.2 Regional Competition

- **Iran's Strategy:** Build a “**Shia Crescent**” stretching from Tehran to Beirut.
- **Saudi Arabia's Strategy:** Counter Iranian influence by backing **Sunni factions** across the region.

15.2.3 Proxy Battlegrounds

Country	Iran's Role	Saudi's Role
Iraq	Supports Shia militias, political parties	Backs Sunni politicians and tribes
Syria	Funds Assad regime via IRGC & Hezbollah	Supports Sunni rebels
Yemen	Supports Houthi rebels (Shia)	Leads coalition backing Yemeni government
Lebanon	Backs Hezbollah	Funds Sunni groups to balance Hezbollah

15.2.4 The Yemen Crisis

- Since **2015**, Yemen has become a **proxy war**:
 - Iran supports **Houthi rebels**.
 - Saudi Arabia leads a **military coalition**.
- Humanitarian disaster:
 - **24 million in need of aid**.
 - **World's worst famine** in decades.

15.3 Turkey's Neo-Ottoman Ambitions

15.3.1 Historical Context

- Under Sykes-Picot, **Ottoman territories** were dismantled.
- Turkey, under **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**, abandoned imperial ambitions but retained strong **regional identity**.

15.3.2 Erdogan's Foreign Policy

- President **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** seeks to **reassert Turkish influence**:
 - Expands presence in **Syria, Iraq, Libya, and the Eastern Mediterranean**.
 - Uses **Kurdish autonomy movements** as justification for **cross-border operations**.

15.3.3 Proxy Engagements

- **Syria**: Opposes Assad, targets Kurdish YPG forces.
 - **Libya**: Supports the **Government of National Accord (GNA)**.
 - **Eastern Mediterranean**: Challenges Greece, Cyprus, and Israel over **gas reserves**.
-

15.4 Israel: Security and Strategic Depth

15.4.1 Legacy of Sykes-Picot

- Placing **Palestine under British mandate** and the **Balfour Declaration (1917)** laid the groundwork for Israel's creation in **1948**.
- Borders remain **contested** with:
 - **West Bank and Gaza**.
 - **Golan Heights**.
 - **Jerusalem's status**.

15.4.2 Regional Strategy

- Israel focuses on:
 - Neutralizing **Iranian influence** via Hezbollah.
 - Containing Palestinian uprisings.
 - Securing **alliances with Gulf states**.

15.4.3 The Abraham Accords (2020)

- Normalization agreements with **UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan.**
 - Shifted alliances:
 - Reduced isolation of Israel.
 - Intensified **Iranian hostility.**
-

15.5 Syria: A Global Proxy Battleground

15.5.1 Multipolar Conflict

- **Iran and Hezbollah** back Assad.
- **Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar** arm opposition forces.
- **Russia** supports Assad militarily, securing strategic bases.
- **U.S.** focuses on **ISIS eradication** and **Kurdish partnerships.**

15.5.2 Pipeline Politics

- Syria's geography makes it central to **energy corridors**:
 - **Qatar-Turkey pipeline** proposal opposed by Assad.
 - **Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline** promoted by Tehran.
 - Conflicting pipeline interests deepen **proxy warfare.**
-

15.6 Iraq: Sectarian Rivalries and Foreign Control

15.6.1 Post-2003 Invasion Fallout

- U.S. dismantling of Iraqi institutions **empowered Shia factions**.
- Iran filled the vacuum by funding:
 - **Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)**.
 - Political parties aligned with Tehran.
- Saudi Arabia counters with **Sunni political investments**.

15.6.2 Kirkuk and Oil Disputes

- Control over **Kirkuk's oil fields** pits:
 - **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)**.
 - Baghdad's central government.
 - Regional players like **Turkey and Iran**.

15.7 Case Study: The Syrian Civil War

- Syria epitomizes **Sykes-Picot's unresolved divisions**:
 - Assad regime survives with **Iranian and Russian backing**.
 - Sunni opposition splintered under **Saudi, Turkish, and Qatari influence**.
 - Kurdish militias partner with the **U.S.** but clash with **Turkey**.
 - Israel strikes Iranian targets within Syria.
- Result: Syria became the **epicenter of modern proxy warfare**.

15.8 External Powers and the Great Game

15.8.1 United States

- Secures Gulf energy supplies.
- Supports **Israel** and Gulf monarchies.
- Contains **Iran's regional expansion**.

15.8.2 Russia

- Re-entered the Middle East via **Syria (2015)**.
- Protects **Assad's regime**.
- Expands influence through **arms sales and energy deals**.

15.8.3 China

- Uses **economic leverage** through the **Belt and Road Initiative**.
- Invests heavily in:
 - **Energy infrastructure**.
 - **Ports and pipelines**.
- Avoids direct military involvement but expands **soft power**.

15.9 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Ayatollah Khamenei	Iran	Supreme Leader	Architect of Iran's regional strategy
Mohammed bin Salman	Saudi Arabia	Crown Prince	Aggressive policies in Yemen and Gulf alliances
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey	President	Pursues neo-Ottoman influence
Benjamin Netanyahu	Israel	Prime Minister	Focused on Iran containment and normalization

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Bashar al-Assad	Syria	President	Survived through alliances with Russia and Iran

15.10 Ethical Dimensions

15.10.1 Exploiting Sectarianism

- Regional powers weaponize **Sunni-Shia divides** to expand influence.
- Civilian populations bear the brunt of **proxy violence**.

15.10.2 Sovereignty Undermined

- External interventions deny states the ability to **self-govern**.
- Borders remain **contested and fragile**.

15.10.3 Humanitarian Crises

- Proxy wars cause:
 - Mass displacement.
 - Economic collapse.
 - Entrenched cycles of poverty and instability.
-

15.11 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- Proxy wars destabilize entire regions.

- **Inclusive governance** prevents exploitation of sectarian fault lines.
- Regional rivalries require **cooperative frameworks**, not militarization.

Global Best Practices

- Promote **regional security architectures** (similar to ASEAN).
 - Encourage **resource-sharing agreements** to reduce conflict.
 - Facilitate **multilateral peace initiatives** under neutral UN mechanisms.
-

Conclusion

The Middle East today is a **complex web of rivalries and proxy conflicts**, rooted in the **borders and divisions imposed by Sykes-Picot**. By ignoring local identities and imposing **external state systems**, colonial powers created vulnerabilities that modern actors — **Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel** — continue to exploit.

From **Yemen to Syria**, from **Iraq to Lebanon**, the region remains a **battleground of influence**, where **fragile states and artificial boundaries** enable external manipulation and perpetual instability.

In the next chapter, we'll explore how **Palestine and Jerusalem remain the unresolved epicenter** of these rivalries — analyzing **territorial disputes, religious claims, and international diplomacy** shaped by the **Sykes-Picot legacy**.

Chapter 16 — Palestine, Jerusalem, and the Unfinished Question

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Palestinian question** remains one of the **most enduring and contentious legacies** of the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)**. The borders drawn by colonial powers, combined with Britain's **Balfour Declaration (1917)** promising a **Jewish homeland** in Palestine, laid the foundation for a **century of unresolved disputes**, wars, and failed peace efforts.

At the heart of this conflict lies **Jerusalem** — a city of profound religious significance for **Jews, Christians, and Muslims** — whose status remains fiercely contested. This chapter explores how **Sykes-Picot shaped Palestine's fate**, examines the **Arab-Israeli wars, Palestinian resistance, intifadas**, and failed negotiations, and analyzes how Jerusalem's unresolved sovereignty continues to destabilize the region.

16.1 Sykes-Picot, Balfour, and the Roots of the Conflict

16.1.1 Sykes-Picot's Plan for Palestine

- Palestine was placed under **international administration** to avoid French-British rivalry.
- Britain later gained **mandate control** after the **San Remo Conference (1920)**.
- Dual promises created **irreconcilable tensions**:
 - Arabs were assured **independence** in McMahon-Hussein correspondence.
 - Jews were promised a **national home** via the **Balfour Declaration**.

16.1.2 Rise of Zionism

- The **Zionist movement** advocated for:
 - Establishment of a Jewish homeland in historic Palestine.
 - Increased Jewish immigration under British rule.
- Palestinian Arabs feared **dispossession** and **political marginalization**.

16.2 The Partition Plan and the Nakba

16.2.1 The 1947 UN Partition Plan

- Proposed dividing Palestine into:
 - **Jewish state** (55% of territory).
 - **Arab state** (45% of territory).
 - **Jerusalem** placed under **international governance**.
- **Zionist leaders accepted**; Arab leaders rejected it, viewing it as a **colonial imposition**.

16.2.2 The 1948 Arab-Israeli War

- Following Israel's declaration of independence:
 - **Five Arab states** invaded.
 - Israel expanded its territory beyond the UN plan.
- **Nakba ("Catastrophe")**:
 - Over **700,000 Palestinians** expelled or fled.
 - Hundreds of villages destroyed.
 - Refugee camps established in **Jordan, Lebanon, Gaza, and Syria**.

16.2.3 Jerusalem's First Division

- **West Jerusalem** under Israeli control.
- **East Jerusalem** annexed by Jordan.
- Set the stage for Jerusalem's central role in future disputes.

16.3 The 1967 Six-Day War and Occupation

16.3.1 Israel's Expansion

- Israel captured:
 - **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem** from Jordan.
 - **Gaza Strip** and **Sinai Peninsula** from Egypt.
 - **Golan Heights** from Syria.
- Result: Tripled its territory, placing **millions of Palestinians under occupation**.

16.3.2 East Jerusalem Annexation

- Israel declared **Jerusalem its "eternal, undivided capital"**.
- The UN rejected the annexation, recognizing **East Jerusalem as occupied territory**.

16.3.3 International Response

- **UN Resolution 242** demanded Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories.
 - The **Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)** intensified armed struggle.
-

16.4 Intifadas and Palestinian Resistance

16.4.1 First Intifada (1987–1993)

- Triggered by:
 - Land confiscations.
 - Settlement expansion.
 - Economic marginalization.
- Characterized by:
 - Civil disobedience.
 - Protests, strikes, and boycotts.
 - International media exposure of Israeli crackdowns.

16.4.2 Oslo Accords (1993–1995)

- Signed by **Yasser Arafat** (PLO) and **Yitzhak Rabin** (Israel).
- Created the **Palestinian Authority (PA)**.
- Deferred final decisions on:
 - **Jerusalem.**
 - **Borders.**
 - **Refugees.**
- Hopes for peace collapsed due to:
 - Continued settlement activity.
 - Rising distrust between Israelis and Palestinians.

16.4.3 Second Intifada (2000–2005)

- Sparked by **Ariel Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.**
 - More violent than the first:
 - Suicide bombings.
 - Heavy Israeli military responses.
 - Led to **deepened divisions** and strengthened **Hamas's popularity.**
-

16.5 Gaza, Hamas, and Cycles of Violence

16.5.1 Israeli Disengagement from Gaza (2005)

- Israel withdrew settlers but retained control over:
 - Borders.
 - Airspace.
 - Maritime access.
- Left Gaza under **blockade**, fueling economic hardship.

16.5.2 Rise of Hamas

- Won **Palestinian elections in 2006.**
- Split with **Fatah**, resulting in dual governance:
 - **Hamas controls Gaza.**
 - **Palestinian Authority governs West Bank.**

16.5.3 Recurrent Wars

- Major escalations: **2008, 2012, 2014, 2021, and 2023.**
- Features:

- Hamas rocket attacks.
 - Israeli airstrikes.
 - Civilian casualties and humanitarian crises.
-

16.6 Jerusalem: The Epicenter of Dispute

16.6.1 Religious Significance

- **Judaism:** Site of the **Western Wall** and ancient Temple.
- **Islam:** Home to **Al-Aqsa Mosque**, the third holiest site.
- **Christianity:** Sacred landmarks like the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**.

16.6.2 Competing Sovereignties

- Israel claims **Jerusalem as its undivided capital**.
- Palestinians envision **East Jerusalem as the capital** of their future state.
- The **U.S. recognition of Jerusalem (2017)** intensified tensions.

16.6.3 The Al-Aqsa Flashpoint

- Frequent clashes at **Al-Aqsa Mosque compound**.
 - Symbol of **Palestinian resistance** and **Muslim solidarity worldwide**.
-

16.7 International Diplomacy and Failed Peace Efforts

16.7.1 Camp David Accords (1978)

- Peace treaty between **Egypt and Israel**.
- Did not resolve Palestinian sovereignty.

16.7.2 Roadmap to Peace (2003)

- Proposed a **two-state solution**.
- Collapsed due to settlement expansion and violence.

16.7.3 Abraham Accords (2020)

- Normalization agreements between Israel and Gulf states.
 - Bypassed Palestinians, deepening their **sense of abandonment**.
-

16.8 Case Study: The 2023 Hamas-Israel War

- **October 7, 2023:** Hamas launched a **coordinated assault** on southern Israel.
 - **Immediate aftermath:**
 - Over **1,200 Israelis killed**.
 - Hundreds taken hostage.
 - Massive Israeli retaliation in **Gaza**.
 - **Global consequences:**
 - Renewed focus on **humanitarian crises**.
 - Resurgence of international debates over **statehood and occupation**.
-

16.9 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Role	Impact
David Ben-Gurion	Israel's first Prime Minister	Led state creation and early wars
Yasser Arafat	PLO Chairman	Symbol of Palestinian nationalism
Ariel Sharon	Israeli PM	Expanded settlements; provoked Second Intifada
Mahmoud Abbas	Palestinian Authority President	Advocates diplomacy but weakened by Hamas split
Benjamin Netanyahu	Israeli PM	Pursues hardline policies; strengthens Israeli control over East Jerusalem

16.10 Ethical Dimensions

16.10.1 Colonial Responsibility

- Sykes-Picot's **internationalization of Palestine** and Britain's contradictory promises **set the stage for perpetual conflict**.

16.10.2 Occupation and Rights

- Palestinians face:
 - Restricted mobility.
 - Land confiscations.
 - Military raids and settler violence.
- Israeli civilians live under constant **security threats** from militancy.

16.10.3 Global Inaction

- International diplomacy has **failed repeatedly** due to:
 - Conflicting interests.
 - Weak enforcement mechanisms.
 - External power rivalries.
-

16.11 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Ignoring identity realities fuels endless conflict.**
- Sustainable peace requires **addressing root grievances**:
 - Borders.
 - Refugees.
 - Jerusalem's status.
- **Inclusive negotiations** must involve **all stakeholders**, including Hamas.

Global Best Practices

- Establish **neutral international oversight** for Jerusalem's holy sites.
 - Implement **UN-backed peace frameworks** with enforceable guarantees.
 - Promote **regional cooperation** through Gulf-Israeli-Palestinian dialogues.
-

Conclusion

The **Palestinian question** and **Jerusalem's contested status** lie at the heart of the **Middle East's instability**, a century after **Sykes-Picot**. By internationalizing Palestine without resolving competing claims, colonial powers **sowed perpetual discord**. From the **Nakba** to **intifadas**, from **Gaza wars** to **diplomatic breakdowns**, the struggle over sovereignty, security, and sacred spaces remains **unresolved in 2025**.

In the next chapter, we'll examine how **sectarianism, nationalism, and identity politics** — all intensified by **Sykes-Picot's artificial borders** — continue to **shape conflicts and alliances** across the modern Middle East.

Chapter 17 — Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** created **artificial borders** that ignored **ethnic, religious, and tribal realities**, embedding **sectarian divides** and **nationalist tensions** into the very foundation of the modern Middle East. Over a century later, these **engineered divisions** continue to shape **conflicts, alliances, and governance failures** across the region.

This chapter examines how **sectarianism, nationalism, and identity politics** evolved under Sykes-Picot's legacy, fueling cycles of **violence, exclusion, and fragmentation**. We analyze the Sunni-Shia schism, Kurdish statelessness, Arab nationalism, and the manipulation of identity by both **regional powers** and **extremist movements**.

17.1 Sykes-Picot and Institutionalized Divisions

17.1.1 Ignoring Local Realities

- Sykes-Picot grouped **diverse ethnic and religious communities** into single states:

- **Iraq:** Sunni, Shia, Kurds, Turkmen.
 - **Syria:** Sunnis, Alawites, Druze, Christians, Kurds.
 - **Lebanon:** Maronites, Sunnis, Shias, Druze.
- No consultation with local populations occurred, undermining **state legitimacy**.

17.1.2 Divide-and-Rule Strategies

- **France** entrenched sectarian quotas in Lebanon.
 - **Britain** empowered Sunni minorities in Iraq and Palestine.
 - This deliberate engineering **fueled resentment** and **perpetual instability**.
-

17.2 The Sunni-Shia Divide

17.2.1 Historical Roots

- Originates from disputes over **Prophet Muhammad's succession**.
- By the 20th century, colonial powers **weaponized sectarianism**:
 - Empowered Sunnis in **Iraq and Bahrain**.
 - Marginalized Shias in **politics and security structures**.

17.2.2 Iraq: Sectarian Fault Lines

- Under British rule, **Sunni elites dominated governance**.
- Post-2003 U.S. invasion:
 - Shia political power surged.
 - Sunnis were marginalized, fueling **insurgency and ISIS's rise**.

17.2.3 Lebanon: Confessional Paralysis

- The **National Pact (1943)** formalized power-sharing:
 - **President:** Maronite Christian.
 - **PM:** Sunni Muslim.
 - **Speaker:** Shia Muslim.
- Once stabilizing, this system now **institutionalizes political deadlocks**.

17.2.4 Yemen: Shia-Sunni Proxy War

- **Houthi rebels** (Shia) vs. **Saudi-backed government** (Sunni).
- Sectarian manipulation has turned Yemen into a **humanitarian catastrophe**.

17.3 Kurdish Statelessness and Nationalism

17.3.1 Betrayal of Kurdish Aspirations

- **Treaty of Sevres (1920)** promised Kurdish independence.
- **Treaty of Lausanne (1923)** erased it, dividing Kurds among **Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria**.

17.3.2 Kurdish Movements

- **Iraq:** Established **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** post-2003.
- **Syria:** Created autonomous **Rojava** during the civil war.
- **Turkey:** Faces ongoing insurgency from the **PKK**.
- **Iran:** Represses Kurdish activism with force.

17.3.3 Impact on Regional Stability

- Kurdish demands for independence clash with:
 - Turkey's security concerns.
 - Iraq's territorial sovereignty.
 - Iran's fear of separatism.
 - Kirkuk, rich in oil, remains a **flashpoint of Arab-Kurdish tensions**.
-

17.4 Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism

17.4.1 Rise of Arab Nationalism

- Emerged as a **response to colonial fragmentation** under Sykes-Picot.
- Advocated:
 - **Unity among Arab states.**
 - Rejection of **Western-imposed borders.**
 - Resistance against **colonial influence.**

17.4.2 Nasser and the Golden Era

- Egyptian President **Gamal Abdel Nasser** championed **Pan-Arabism**:
 - Formation of the **United Arab Republic (1958)** with Syria.
 - Symbol of anti-colonial pride and regional unity.
- Collapse of the UAR and the **1967 Six-Day War defeat** marked Pan-Arabism's decline.

17.4.3 Legacy of Fragmentation

- While Arab nationalism inspired **anti-colonial struggles**, competing state interests:
 - Prevented enduring unity.
 - Deepened reliance on **foreign alliances**.
-

17.5 Identity Politics and State Failure

17.5.1 Manipulation by Regional Powers

- **Iran** promotes Shia identity to expand influence.
- **Saudi Arabia** funds Wahhabi institutions to consolidate **Sunni dominance**.
- **Turkey** leverages **neo-Ottoman rhetoric** to influence Sunni populations abroad.

17.5.2 Extremist Exploitation

- Groups like **ISIS** and **Al-Qaeda** exploit identity divisions to recruit:
 - Present themselves as **defenders of the “true” Muslim identity**.
 - Frame borders as **Western impositions** to justify erasing them.

17.5.3 Stateless Populations

- Palestinians, Kurds, and refugees are **caught between borders that deny belonging**.
- Statelessness perpetuates **radicalization** and **humanitarian crises**.

17.6 Case Study: The Syrian Civil War

- Syria reflects **Sykes-Picot's artificial unity**:
 - Assad regime dominated by **Alawite minority**.
 - Sunni-majority opposition fractured by external support.
 - Kurdish forces assert autonomy in the north.
 - Proxy involvement:
 - **Iran** backs Assad to secure Shia dominance.
 - **Turkey** targets Kurdish influence.
 - **Russia** and **U.S.** pursue conflicting strategies.
 - Outcome: Syria became **ground zero for identity-driven warfare**.
-

17.7 Jerusalem and Competing Identities

- Jerusalem symbolizes:
 - **Religious centrality** for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.
 - Competing claims between **Israelis** and **Palestinians**.
 - U.S. recognition of **Jerusalem as Israel's capital (2017)** deepened Palestinian alienation.
 - The city remains a **flashpoint of identity-driven conflict**.
-

17.8 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country/Group	Role	Impact
Gamal Abdel Nasser	Egypt	Pan-Arab nationalist	Unified Arab states but overreached

Leader	Country/Group	Role	Impact
Ayatollah Khamenei	Iran	Supreme Leader	Uses Shia identity to project power
Mohammed bin Salman	Saudi Arabia	Crown Prince	Champions Sunni-led coalitions
Masoud Barzani	KRG, Iraq	Kurdish leader	Advocates independence but faces isolation
Bashar al-Assad	Syria	Alawite President	Exploits sectarian divides for survival

17.9 Ethical Dimensions

17.9.1 Colonial Responsibility

- Sykes-Picot institutionalized divisions for **imperial convenience**.
- Ignored ethnic realities, creating **perpetual fault lines**.

17.9.2 Weaponizing Identities

- Regional actors manipulate sectarian identities for **political gains**.
- Civilians face discrimination, violence, and disenfranchisement.

17.9.3 Statelessness and Exclusion

- Palestinians and Kurds embody the **human cost** of denied sovereignty.
- Lack of identity drives **cycles of radicalization and instability**.

17.10 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **Inclusive governance** prevents marginalization and rebellion.
- Building **national identity** requires transcending **sectarianism**.
- Ignoring identity politics perpetuates **state fragility**.

Global Best Practices

- Promote **federal systems** to balance autonomy with unity.
- Strengthen **minority rights protections** under international oversight.
- Facilitate **cross-border dialogues** to reconcile identity-based disputes.

Conclusion

Sectarianism, nationalism, and identity politics are not accidental features of the Middle East — they are **byproducts of Sykes-Picot's engineered fragmentation**. By **ignoring cultural realities**, colonial powers created states **riven by exclusion and mistrust**. Today, these identity divisions underpin **proxy wars, failed states, and extremist narratives** across the region.

In the next chapter, we'll analyze the role of **external powers — the U.S., Russia, China, and the EU — in perpetuating and reshaping Sykes-Picot's legacy**, showing how **global rivalries intersect with local conflicts**.

Chapter 18 — Global Powers and the Middle East: Redrawing Sykes-Picot

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

More than a century after the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)**, the Middle East remains one of the **most contested geopolitical landscapes** on Earth. While colonial powers **drew its borders**, **modern global powers** — the **United States, Russia, China, and the European Union** — have continually **reshaped, reinforced, or exploited** those divisions to serve their strategic, economic, and security interests.

This chapter explores how global actors influence the Middle East, examining **U.S. military interventions, Russia's resurgence, China's Belt and Road ambitions, and EU diplomacy**, while assessing how **Sykes-Picot's legacy** continues to underpin **conflict and foreign domination**.

18.1 The United States: Security, Oil, and Alliances

18.1.1 Post-WWII Rise in Influence

- Replaced Britain and France as the **dominant external power** after WWII.
- Secured influence through:
 - **Oil partnerships** (e.g., 1945 Quincy Agreement with Saudi Arabia).
 - Military bases across the **Gulf**.
 - Strategic alliances with **Israel and Gulf monarchies**.

18.1.2 Cold War Strategy

- Sought to **contain Soviet influence**:
 - Supported conservative Gulf monarchies.
 - Backed Iran under the **Shah** until the 1979 Islamic Revolution.
 - Strengthened Israel militarily after the **1967 Six-Day War**.

18.1.3 Post-9/11 Interventions

- **Afghanistan (2001)**: Overthrew the Taliban but paved way for a prolonged insurgency.
- **Iraq (2003)**:
 - Justified invasion on **WMD claims**.
 - Toppled Saddam Hussein but destabilized Iraq.
 - Enabled **Iranian influence** and fueled **sectarian conflict**.
- Created a **power vacuum** exploited by **ISIS**.

18.1.4 U.S. Policy Today

- Protects **energy security** via partnerships with Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar.
- Supports Israel militarily and diplomatically.
- Maintains a **limited military presence** in Syria and Iraq.

- Faces declining influence due to **Russian and Chinese encroachment**.
-

18.2 Russia: Resurgence Through Syria

18.2.1 Soviet Legacy

- During the **Cold War**, the USSR:
 - Supported Arab nationalist regimes (e.g., **Egypt under Nasser, Syria under Assad**).
 - Armed Iraq and backed the **PLO**.

18.2.2 Return to the Middle East

- Russia re-emerged as a **decisive actor** via:
 - **Syria intervention (2015)** to save Bashar al-Assad.
 - Secured **naval base in Tartus** and **air base in Latakia**.
 - Repositioned itself as a **regional powerbroker**.

18.2.3 Strategic Objectives

- Challenge **U.S. dominance** in the Middle East.
 - Protect **pipeline routes** and offshore **gas reserves**.
 - Expand arms sales to allies such as:
 - **Egypt**.
 - **Iran**.
 - **Algeria**.
 - Strengthen alliances with **Turkey** and **Saudi Arabia** via **energy diplomacy**.
-

18.3 China: Belt and Road Influence

18.3.1 Economic Power Projection

- China avoids **military entanglements**, focusing instead on:
 - **Trade agreements.**
 - **Infrastructure investments.**
 - **Energy partnerships.**

18.3.2 Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- Middle East is a **central node** in the BRI:
 - Ports in **Oman, UAE, and Egypt.**
 - Rail networks linking **Iran, Turkey, and Gulf states.**
 - Investments in **energy pipelines** bypassing Western-controlled routes.

18.3.3 Strategic Partnerships

- **Iran:** Signed a **25-year strategic pact** in 2021.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Strengthening energy and tech ties.
- **Israel:** Investing in ports and tech infrastructure.

18.3.4 Soft Power Expansion

- Uses **economic leverage** rather than military force.
 - Emerging as a **mediator**:
 - Brokered the **Iran-Saudi rapprochement (2023).**
 - Positions itself as a **neutral partner** to rival factions.
-

18.4 The European Union: Legacy and Diplomacy

18.4.1 Colonial Heritage

- France and Britain shaped the region via mandates:
 - **Syria and Lebanon** under French control.
 - **Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan** under British influence.
- The EU continues to manage **historic obligations** while navigating **modern challenges**.

18.4.2 Policy Priorities

- Prevent mass migration from conflict zones.
- Secure **energy diversification** through Gulf partnerships.
- Support **Palestinian statehood** rhetorically but avoid direct confrontation with Israel.

18.4.3 The JCPOA and Iran Diplomacy

- The EU played a key role in negotiating the **Iran nuclear deal (2015)**.
- Aims to prevent nuclear escalation while balancing ties with **Gulf states**.

18.5 Proxy Wars and Great Power Rivalry

18.5.1 Syria

- **Russia** backs Assad militarily.
- **U.S.** arms Kurdish-led forces.
- **Iran** deploys militias and Hezbollah.
- **Turkey** targets Kurdish positions and rivals Assad.

18.5.2 Yemen

- Iran supports **Houthi rebels**.
- U.S., Saudi Arabia, and UAE back the Yemeni government.
- China and Russia act as **diplomatic mediators**.

18.5.3 Iraq

- **Iranian-backed Shia militias** dominate security forces.
- **U.S. troops** remain to counter ISIS and contain Iran.
- China expands its **oil investments** while avoiding security entanglements.

18.6 Case Study: U.S. vs. Russia in Syria

- Syria became the **epicenter of renewed great-power competition**:
 - U.S. sought to **dismantle ISIS** and support Kurdish autonomy.
 - Russia secured Assad's survival and **regional influence**.
 - Turkey exploited U.S.-Russia friction to expand control in **northern Syria**.
 - Result: **Syria's sovereignty eroded** by overlapping **foreign spheres of influence**.
-

18.7 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country	Role	Impact
Joe Biden	U.S.	U.S. President	Balances Israel support with Iran containment
Vladimir Putin	Russia	Russian President	Restored Russian influence via Syria
Xi Jinping	China	Chinese President	Uses BRI to project economic power
Emmanuel Macron	France	French President	Advocates Mediterranean diplomacy
Mohammed bin Salman	Saudi Arabia	Crown Prince	Engages both U.S. and China to diversify alliances

18.8 Ethical Dimensions

18.8.1 Neocolonial Influence

- Global powers **exploit fragile states** for:
 - Oil and gas.
 - Trade routes.
 - Geostrategic positioning.
- Local populations bear the **cost of perpetual conflict**.

18.8.2 Undermining Sovereignty

- Foreign interventions weaken **state autonomy**.
- Encourages **dependency on global patrons**.

18.8.3 Humanitarian Fallout

- Wars fueled by external interests create:
 - Refugee crises.
 - Infrastructure collapse.
 - Widespread poverty and instability.
-

18.9 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- **External domination destabilizes fragile states.**
- Ignoring **local identities** while imposing geopolitical agendas perpetuates conflict.
- Collaborative governance reduces **dependency on great powers.**

Global Best Practices

- Establish **multilateral frameworks** for regional security.
 - Promote **inclusive development** to reduce vulnerability to foreign manipulation.
 - Empower **local diplomacy** to resolve disputes before escalation.
-

Conclusion

Global powers continue to **reshape the Middle East** along the **fault lines created by Sykes-Picot**. While Britain and France once imposed mandates, today **U.S. military dominance, Russia's resurgence, China's economic strategy, and the EU's diplomacy** compete for influence, often at the expense of **local sovereignty and stability**.

The result is a region where **artificial borders remain contested, proxy wars multiply, and foreign interference perpetuates fragility** — ensuring the Sykes-Picot legacy remains deeply entrenched.

In the next chapter, we'll explore **how modern peace efforts attempt to move “beyond Sykes-Picot”, analyzing regional frameworks, international treaties, and innovative governance models** designed to stabilize the Middle East.

Chapter 19 — Beyond Sykes-Picot: New Maps, New Realities

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

More than a century after the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)**, the Middle East is still living with the **consequences of colonial boundaries**. Yet, the **21st century** has brought new realities: shifting alliances, **proxy wars**, **economic interdependence**, and growing calls for **self-determination**.

This chapter explores how the region is **transitioning beyond the rigid framework** imposed by Sykes-Picot, examining **federalization models, normalization agreements, regional blocs, and emerging governance frameworks**. It highlights both the **opportunities for peace** and the **risks of fragmentation** in shaping the Middle East's new geopolitical map.

19.1 Cracks in the Sykes-Picot System

19.1.1 Borders Under Strain

- Several modern conflicts openly challenge **Sykes-Picot's artificial borders**:
 - **ISIS's 2014 campaign** symbolically “erased” Iraq-Syria boundaries.

- Kurdish autonomy movements defy **centralized state structures**.
- Calls for Palestinian sovereignty contest **colonial-era territorial designs**.

19.1.2 Rise of Non-State Actors

- Groups like **Hezbollah, Hamas, and Kurdish militias** hold **military and political authority** often surpassing state power.
 - These dynamics expose the **weakness of centralized states** created under Sykes-Picot.
-

19.2 Federalism and Decentralized Governance

19.2.1 The Case for Federal Models

- Artificial borders grouped **diverse ethnic and sectarian populations** into single states.
- Federalism offers:
 - **Autonomy** for distinct communities.
 - **Conflict mitigation** through power-sharing.
 - Protection of **minority rights**.

19.2.2 Iraq's Semi-Federal System

- The **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** functions autonomously:
 - Manages its **own security forces (Peshmerga)**.
 - Controls significant **oil resources**.
- Yet tensions remain:

- Baghdad resists full independence.
- Turkey and Iran fear separatist spillover.

19.2.3 Lebanon's Confessional Gridlock

- Lebanon's **sectarian quota system** institutionalizes power-sharing.
 - Once stabilizing, it now causes **chronic political paralysis**.
 - Reform requires **shifting toward civic-based governance** rather than rigid confessionalism.
-

19.3 Regional Normalization and New Alliances

19.3.1 The Abraham Accords (2020)

- Signed between **Israel, UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan**.
- Represents:
 - A **historic shift** in Arab-Israeli relations.
 - New **economic and security partnerships**.
- Challenges:
 - Palestinians feel **marginalized**.
 - Iran sees the accords as a **strategic threat**.

19.3.2 Saudi-Iran Rapprochement (2023)

- **China-brokered agreement** restored diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran.
- Key outcomes:
 - Reduced proxy tensions in **Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq**.
 - Opened doors for **regional economic integration**.

- Signaled **China's growing influence** as a mediator.
- While promising, deep **ideological and security rivalries** remain unresolved.

19.3.3 Turkey's Balancing Act

- Pursues **neo-Ottoman ambitions** while:
 - Maintaining NATO membership.
 - Engaging with **Russia** and **Iran**.
 - Expanding influence in **Libya, Syria, and the Caucasus**.
- Seeks to position itself as a **central energy and trade hub** connecting **Europe, the Gulf, and Asia**.

19.3.4 The Gulf's Strategic Pivot

- **UAE and Qatar** leverage **economic diplomacy** to shape new alliances.
- Invest heavily in **technology, logistics, and energy diversification**.
- Move beyond dependence on **oil rents** toward becoming **global investment powers**.

19.4 Economic Integration and Resource Diplomacy

19.4.1 Energy as Leverage

- Oil and gas remain at the heart of Middle East geopolitics.
- Regional powers increasingly cooperate on **OPEC+ frameworks**:

- **Saudi Arabia and Russia** coordinate production quotas.
 - **Iran and Qatar** manage shared gas reserves in the **North Dome/South Pars field**.
- Future focus on **energy diversification** reduces vulnerability to oil shocks.

19.4.2 Infrastructure and Connectivity

- Regional economic integration initiatives:
 - **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** invests in **ports, pipelines, and railways**.
 - **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)** proposes a **multimodal transport network** linking Asia, the Gulf, and Europe.
 - These projects reshape **geoeconomic alignments**, reducing dependence on traditional Western frameworks.
-

19.5 Security Frameworks and Regional Cooperation

19.5.1 Towards a New Security Architecture

- Attempts to build **collective security systems**:
 - **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** focuses on shared threats like **Iranian expansionism**.
 - Proposals for a **Middle East NATO** aim to unite Arab states and Israel against **common adversaries**.
- Obstacles:
 - Competing **national interests**.
 - Divergent alliances with **global powers**.

19.5.2 Counterterrorism and Intelligence-Sharing

- Cooperation on **ISIS remnants** and **cross-border extremism** has improved.
 - Joint initiatives between **Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Jordan**:
 - Share intelligence.
 - Secure porous frontiers.
 - Prevent radicalized returnees from destabilizing states.
-

19.6 Governance Innovations and Federalization Models

19.6.1 Federalism as Conflict Prevention

- **Iraq's semi-federalism** provides lessons for:
 - **Syria**, where Kurdish-led **Rojava** experiments with decentralized governance.
 - **Yemen**, where autonomy for **southern provinces** could stabilize the conflict.

19.6.2 Civic-Based Constitutions

- Moving beyond **sectarian quotas** toward **citizenship-based governance**:
 - **Tunisia's 2014 Constitution** as a partial model.
 - Encourages equality irrespective of religious or ethnic identity.

19.6.3 Inclusive Economic Development

- Investments in **education, jobs, and infrastructure** aim to:

- Reduce radicalization.
 - Bridge **urban-rural disparities**.
 - Empower historically marginalized groups.
-

19.7 International Peace Frameworks

19.7.1 UN-Led Initiatives

- **UN Special Envoys** mediate:
 - **Yemen's ceasefires**.
 - **Syria's constitutional talks**.
 - **Palestinian-Israeli dialogues**.
- Progress remains limited by **lack of enforcement mechanisms**.

19.7.2 Role of China and Russia

- **China** focuses on **economic mediation**:
 - Prioritizes **stability** to protect BRI investments.
- **Russia** leverages **military power** to influence settlements in **Syria and Libya**.

19.7.3 U.S. Strategy

- Shifts from **direct intervention** to **regional facilitation**:
 - Encourages **Gulf-Israel normalization**.
 - Focuses on countering **Iranian influence** through **coalition-building**.
-

19.8 Case Study: The 2023 Saudi-Iran-China Accord

- In **March 2023**, China brokered a historic agreement:
 - Restored embassies between **Saudi Arabia and Iran** after seven years.
 - De-escalated proxy tensions in **Yemen**.
 - Enhanced **energy cooperation** across the Gulf.
- Implications:
 - Marks China’s **arrival as a geopolitical mediator**.
 - Signals declining **U.S. dominance**.
 - Opens space for **regional-driven peace efforts**.

19.9 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Country/Entity	Role	Impact
Xi Jinping	China	President	Brokered Saudi-Iran rapprochement, expands BRI
Mohammed bin Salman	Saudi Arabia	Crown Prince	Diversifies alliances beyond U.S.
Ebrahim Raisi	Iran	President	Balances Gulf detente with strategic depth
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey	President	Uses regional instability to project influence
Antony Blinken	United States	Secretary of State	Shifts U.S. from intervention to facilitation

19.10 Ethical Dimensions

19.10.1 Beyond Colonial Dependence

- Middle Eastern states seek **agency** in shaping their destinies.
- Reducing dependency on **external patrons** remains a challenge.

19.10.2 Inclusive Peacebuilding

- Failure to address **Palestinian sovereignty** and **Kurdish statelessness** undermines any new framework.
- Lasting peace requires **reconciliation between competing identities**.

19.10.3 Economic Equity

- Oil wealth must be **equitably distributed** to prevent renewed unrest.
 - Overcoming **elite capture** is critical for sustainable development.
-

19.11 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- Peacebuilding demands **inclusive negotiations** among **all stakeholders**.
- Balancing **sovereignty and regional integration** prevents further fragmentation.
- **Economic cooperation** builds stability where military interventions fail.

Global Best Practices

- Establish a **Middle East Regional Forum** for multilateral conflict resolution.
 - Integrate **energy diplomacy** into peace frameworks.
 - Promote **cross-border investment platforms** to create shared interests.
-

Conclusion

The Middle East is **slowly moving beyond Sykes-Picot**, but the path is complex. While **normalization agreements, regional cooperation, and economic integration** signal **emerging opportunities**, unresolved issues — **Palestinian sovereignty, Kurdish aspirations, sectarian divides, and proxy wars** — remain barriers to sustainable peace.

To truly transcend Sykes-Picot's colonial legacy, the region must **replace imposed borders with inclusive governance, prioritize economic interdependence, and develop regional-led security architectures**. Without these reforms, the **ghost of Sykes-Picot** will continue to haunt the Middle East.

Chapter 20 — The Road Ahead: Peacebuilding, Sovereignty, and Shared Futures

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** has cast a long shadow over the Middle East, shaping its **borders, identities, conflicts, and alliances** for more than a century. Yet, in the **21st century**, the region faces **unprecedented opportunities** alongside **persistent challenges**.

This chapter synthesizes the lessons from previous chapters and presents a **strategic roadmap** for building a **peaceful, inclusive, and sovereign Middle East** — one that **transcends colonial-era borders** and embraces **shared futures** based on cooperation, equity, and stability.

20.1 The Legacy We Inherited

20.1.1 Borders Without Consent

- Sykes-Picot imposed **boundaries without local participation**.
- Ignored **tribal, religious, and cultural realities**, creating fragile states.

20.1.2 Cycles of Conflict

- Wars, uprisings, and revolutions have repeatedly erupted:
 - Arab-Israeli wars.
 - Kurdish rebellions.
 - Sectarian conflicts.
 - Extremist insurgencies.
- Most conflicts stem from **identity exclusion** and **resource competition**.

20.1.3 External Interventions

- From Britain and France to the **U.S., Russia, and China**, global powers have exploited divisions:
 - Military bases.
 - Oil dominance.
 - Proxy wars.
 - Sovereignty remains **compromised by external influence**.
-

20.2 A Vision for a Post-Sykes-Picot Middle East

20.2.1 Beyond Colonial Boundaries

- Focus on **functional cooperation** rather than rigid borders.
- Promote **cross-border trade, infrastructure, and energy sharing**.

20.2.2 Inclusive Governance

- Replace **sectarian quota systems** with **citizenship-based constitutions**.
- Guarantee **minority protections** while integrating diverse identities.

20.2.3 Regional Ownership of Peace

- Prioritize **regional frameworks** over external mediation.
 - Empower **Middle Eastern states** to set their own security and development agendas.
-

20.3 The Four Pillars of Peacebuilding

20.3.1 Political Reconciliation

- Encourage **inclusive negotiations** involving:
 - States.
 - Non-state actors.
 - Minority representatives.
- Address unresolved questions:
 - **Palestinian sovereignty**.
 - **Kurdish autonomy**.
 - **Jerusalem's status**.

20.3.2 Economic Integration

- Shared prosperity as a **conflict prevention strategy**:
 - Establish **regional trade zones**.
 - Coordinate **energy exports and pipelines**.
 - Invest in **infrastructure and digital economies**.

20.3.3 Security Cooperation

- Build **joint defense mechanisms** to reduce dependency on foreign powers.
- Enhance **intelligence-sharing** on:
 - Terrorism.
 - Cybersecurity.
 - Maritime threats.

20.3.4 Cultural Reconciliation

- Promote **interfaith dialogues** to bridge divides.
 - Celebrate **shared historical legacies** instead of fragmented colonial narratives.
 - Integrate **education reforms** to counter extremism.
-

20.4 Strategic Frameworks for Stability

20.4.1 Middle East Peace Forum (MEPF)

- A **permanent multilateral platform** to:
 - Resolve territorial disputes.
 - Mediate resource-sharing agreements.
 - Facilitate **confidence-building measures**.

20.4.2 Energy Diplomacy

- Establish a **Middle East Energy Alliance (MEEA)**:
 - Coordinate oil and gas exports.
 - Invest in **renewable energy** transition.
 - Balance economic growth with **climate responsibilities**.

20.4.3 Humanitarian Compact

- Joint initiatives to address:
 - Refugee crises.
 - Reconstruction of war-torn states (**Syria, Yemen, Gaza**).
 - Poverty reduction and employment generation.
-

20.5 The Role of Global Powers

20.5.1 The United States

- Transition from **military dominance** to **facilitative diplomacy**.
- Support **inclusive governance** and **conflict mediation**.

20.5.2 Russia

- Leverage influence in **Syria** and **Iran** towards **political settlements**.
- Move from **hard power projection** to **cooperative security frameworks**.

20.5.3 China

- Expand **economic diplomacy** via Belt and Road while:
 - Avoiding militarization.
 - Acting as a **neutral mediator** between rivals.

20.5.4 The European Union

- Support **capacity-building** in governance and infrastructure.

- Focus on **migration management** and **conflict prevention**.
-

20.6 Technology, Youth, and the Future

20.6.1 Digital Integration

- Invest in **regional tech ecosystems**:
 - E-commerce.
 - Fintech.
 - Smart infrastructure.
- Bridge economic disparities through **digital inclusion**.

20.6.2 Empowering Youth

- Over **60% of the Middle East's population is under 30**.
- Create opportunities through:
 - Vocational training.
 - Start-up incubators.
 - Innovation-driven economies.

20.6.3 Leveraging AI and Data

- Use **AI-driven governance** for:
 - Transparent policymaking.
 - Efficient resource allocation.
 - Predictive conflict prevention.
-

20.7 Case Study: A Hypothetical “Middle East Peace Accord 2035”

- A forward-looking scenario envisioning a **comprehensive regional settlement**:
 - **Two-state solution** resolves the Palestinian question.
 - **Federal frameworks** grant autonomy to Kurds and other minorities.
 - **Integrated economic corridor** links **Gulf, Levant, and North Africa**.
 - Joint defense agreements secure **maritime routes** and **energy pipelines**.
- Shows how **inclusive regional leadership** could transcend **colonial divisions**.

20.8 Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leader	Role	Responsibility
Regional Leaders	Presidents, Prime Ministers	Commit to inclusive governance
Civil Society Actors	NGOs, grassroots groups	Advocate for human rights and equity
Youth Leaders	Start-up founders, activists	Drive innovation and reconciliation
Global Powers	U.S., China, Russia, EU	Support regional frameworks , not impose solutions

20.9 Ethical Imperatives

20.9.1 Justice and Inclusion

- Address **historic grievances** through dialogue and reparations.

- Ensure **minority protections** in governance and development.

20.9.2 Sovereignty and Non-Intervention

- Reduce dependency on **external powers**.
- Build **regional-led solutions** to regional problems.

20.9.3 Shared Humanity

- Shift focus from **zero-sum rivalries** to **mutual prosperity**.
 - Emphasize **collective security** over individual dominance.
-

20.10 Lessons and Global Best Practices

Leadership Lessons

- Colonial legacies must be **acknowledged and addressed**.
- Peace cannot be imposed; it must be **co-created by stakeholders**.
- Economic interdependence fosters **stability and reconciliation**.

Global Best Practices

- Adopt **African Union-style continental frameworks** for mediation.
 - Encourage **cross-border energy and trade agreements**.
 - Build **early-warning systems** for conflict prevention.
-

Conclusion

A century after Sykes-Picot, the **Middle East stands at a crossroads**. The past cannot be undone, but the **future can be reshaped**. Moving beyond colonial borders requires:

- **Inclusive governance** that integrates diverse identities.
- **Economic integration** to replace zero-sum rivalries.
- **Regional security frameworks** to reduce external dependency.
- **Collective leadership** to craft a new narrative of **peace and prosperity**.

The road ahead is **challenging but not impossible**. By embracing **sovereignty, equity, and cooperation**, the Middle East can transform from a **battlefield of competing powers** into a **hub of shared futures and global connectivity**.

Executive Summary

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

Introduction

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)**, a secret pact between Britain and France during World War I, was designed to divide the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces into **colonial spheres of influence**. Over a century later, its consequences remain deeply embedded in the **political, social, economic, and security fabric** of the Middle East.

By **ignoring ethnic, religious, and tribal realities**, Sykes-Picot **imposed artificial borders**, created **fragile states**, and **institutionalized sectarian divisions**. These unresolved fault lines continue to shape **modern conflicts, alliances, and geopolitical rivalries** across the region.

This executive summary synthesizes the key insights from the **20-chapter book**, examining **historical foundations, contemporary crises, proxy wars, and future pathways** toward **peace, sovereignty, and shared prosperity**.

1. Historical Foundations and Colonial Engineering

- **Sykes-Picot's Partition:** Secretly divided the Levant, Mesopotamia, and surrounding territories between Britain and France.
 - **Mandate System:** Legalized colonial dominance via the **League of Nations**, allowing Britain and France to carve **Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan** into **artificial states**.
 - **Contradictory Promises:**
 - Arabs were promised **independence** in exchange for revolt against the Ottomans.
 - Jews were promised a **national home** via the **Balfour Declaration (1917)**.
 - **Outcome:** Institutionalized **instability**, sowing seeds for **conflicts over sovereignty, identity, and resources**.
-

2. Artificial Borders and Fragile States

- **Iraq:** Created from three Ottoman provinces — **Basra, Baghdad, Mosul** — combining **Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish populations** without consensus.
- **Syria and Lebanon:** France engineered sectarian fragmentation, embedding **confessional politics** that still paralyze governance.
- **Palestine:** Internationalized without resolving **Jewish-Arab claims**, setting the stage for enduring conflict.
- **Jordan:** Established as a **British buffer state**, reliant on external financial and security support.

Legacy: States designed to serve colonial interests lack **inclusive governance structures**, making them prone to **internal fragmentation** and **external manipulation**.

3. Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics

- **Sunni-Shia Divide:**
 - Britain empowered **Sunnis in Iraq**, marginalizing Shias.
 - Iran now leverages Shia identity to project influence via a “**Shia Crescent**”.
- **Kurdish Statelessness:**
 - Promised independence in **Treaty of Sevres (1920)**, denied under **Lausanne (1923)**.
 - Kurds remain divided across **Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran**, fueling periodic uprisings.
- **Arab Nationalism:**
 - Rose as resistance to colonial fragmentation.
 - Declined after **1967 Six-Day War**, giving way to **state-centric rivalries**.

Impact: Colonial identity engineering entrenched **mistrust** and **exclusion**, providing fertile ground for **extremism and proxy warfare**.

4. Palestine, Jerusalem, and Unresolved Sovereignty

- **Nakba (1948):** Creation of Israel displaced **700,000+ Palestinians**, embedding refugee crises into regional dynamics.
- **Jerusalem:**
 - Sacred to **Jews, Muslims, and Christians**, yet contested politically.

- Israeli annexation of **East Jerusalem** remains internationally disputed.
- **Cycles of Violence:**
 - **Intifadas (1987, 2000).**
 - **Gaza conflicts (2008, 2014, 2021, 2023).**
- **Peace Efforts:**
 - **Oslo Accords (1993), Roadmap to Peace (2003), and Abraham Accords (2020)** failed to resolve **core sovereignty issues**.

Result: Palestine remains a **symbol of colonial betrayal** and a **central driver of regional instability**.

5. Extremism and the Collapse of Borders

- **Al-Qaeda:**
 - Framed Sykes-Picot as a **Western conspiracy** to divide Muslims.
 - Mobilized jihadist movements by invoking **historic grievances**.
- **ISIS:**
 - In 2014, bulldozed Iraq-Syria borders, declaring:

“We are erasing Sykes-Picot.”
 - Established a **borderless “Caliphate”** across Iraq and Syria.
 - Exploited **sectarian divisions** and **state collapse**.

Lesson: Artificial states lacking **inclusive governance** are vulnerable to **extremism and territorial disintegration**.

6. Regional Rivalries and Proxy Wars

- **Iran vs. Saudi Arabia:**
 - Compete for **religious leadership** and **geopolitical dominance**.
 - Proxy wars in **Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon** deepen sectarian divides.
- **Turkey:**
 - Pursues **neo-Ottoman influence** while confronting Kurdish autonomy.
- **Israel:**
 - Secures alliances with Gulf states via **Abraham Accords**, escalating tensions with **Iran**.
- **Case Study — Syria:**
 - Assad survives through **Iranian, Russian, and Hezbollah support**.
 - Opposition fragmented by **Saudi, Turkish, Qatari, and U.S. patronage**.
 - Syria becomes a **multi-layered battlefield** of competing powers.

7. Global Powers and Modern Geopolitics

- **United States:**
 - Secured oil, protected Israel, and intervened militarily (**Iraq 2003, Syria 2014**).
 - Faces declining influence due to **China's diplomacy** and **Russia's resurgence**.
- **Russia:**

- Saved Assad in **Syria (2015)**, securing **strategic bases** and **regional leverage**.
- **China:**
 - Uses **economic statecraft** via the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
 - Brokered the **Saudi-Iran rapprochement (2023)**, signaling rising influence.
- **European Union:**
 - Prioritizes **migration control**, **energy security**, and **Palestinian diplomacy**.

Insight: The Middle East remains a **strategic playground** for global powers, perpetuating **dependence and instability**.

8. The Oil Factor and Resource Competition

- Sykes-Picot borders deliberately aligned with **oil-rich regions**:
 - Britain secured **Basra, Mosul, and Kirkuk**.
 - France leveraged Syrian and Lebanese access to the Mediterranean.
 - Modern dynamics:
 - **OPEC+** coordination between **Saudi Arabia and Russia** shapes global prices.
 - **Pipeline politics** drive conflicts in **Syria, Kirkuk**, and the **Eastern Mediterranean**.
 - Transition toward **renewables** opens new opportunities for cooperation.
-

9. Emerging Trends Beyond Sykes-Picot

9.1 Regional Normalization

- **Abraham Accords (2020)** shift Arab-Israeli relations.
- **China-brokered Saudi-Iran deal (2023)** reduces proxy tensions.

9.2 Federalism and Autonomy

- Iraq's **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** offers a model for **multi-ethnic governance**.
- Potential applications in **Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon**.

9.3 Economic Integration

- **BRI, OPEC+, and India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)** create **cross-border interdependence**.
 - Regional trade hubs (**UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia**) pivot towards **post-oil economies**.
-

10. The Road Ahead: A Strategic Framework

10.1 Political Inclusion

- Replace sectarian systems with **citizenship-based governance**.
- Resolve **Palestinian sovereignty** and **Kurdish aspirations**.

10.2 Regional Security Architecture

- Establish a **Middle East Security Forum**:
 - Coordinate defense strategies.

- Counter terrorism.
- Manage maritime and cyber threats.

10.3 Economic Cooperation

- Expand **joint infrastructure, digital economies, and renewable energy projects.**
- Use **resource-sharing agreements** to prevent conflict.

10.4 Cultural and Educational Reconciliation

- Invest in **interfaith dialogue** and **educational reform.**
- Counter extremism by fostering **shared historical narratives.**

Key Takeaways

- **Sykes-Picot created fragile states** by ignoring **identity realities.**
- **Sectarianism, statelessness, and resource rivalries** fuel recurring crises.
- **Global powers exploit fault lines,** prolonging dependence and instability.
- **Regional-led frameworks** are essential for sustainable peace.
- The future hinges on **inclusive governance, economic integration, and collective security.**

Conclusion

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement** was more than a colonial carve-up; it was a **geopolitical fault line** that still shapes the Middle East. While its legacy of **artificial borders** and **engineered divisions** persists, the region is not bound to its past.

By embracing **inclusive governance**, **economic interdependence**, and **regional cooperation**, Middle Eastern states can **redefine sovereignty**, **stabilize conflicts**, and **transform artificial borders into bridges of collaboration**.

The future of the Middle East depends on **replacing imposed frameworks with homegrown solutions** — a shift from **Sykes-Picot's divisions** to a **shared vision of peace and prosperity**.

Appendix

Role of Sykes-Picot in Present Middle East

The appendix provides **reference materials, timelines, maps, data tables, key documents, and frameworks** that complement the insights from the 20-chapter book. It offers a **comprehensive toolkit** for readers, researchers, and policymakers to understand the **historical context, conflicts, alliances, and governance frameworks** influenced by the **Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)** and its enduring legacy.

Appendix A — Timeline of Key Events (1914 – 2025)

Year	Event	Impact on Middle East
1914	Start of World War I	Collapse of Ottoman Empire begins.
1916	Sykes-Picot Agreement	Secret Anglo-French pact divides Ottoman Arab lands.
1917	Balfour Declaration	Britain supports creation of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine.
1920	San Remo Conference	Confirms British and French mandates under League of Nations.
1923	Treaty of Lausanne	Confirms modern Turkey’s borders; Kurds denied independence.
1947	UN Partition Plan for Palestine	Sets stage for Arab-Israeli conflict.
1948	Creation of Israel / Nakba	Palestinian displacement, regional wars.

Year	Event	Impact on Middle East
1967	Six-Day War	Israel captures West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, Sinai.
1973	Yom Kippur War & Oil Embargo	Oil used as a weapon; reshapes global energy markets.
1979	Iranian Revolution	Shifts regional power dynamics; rise of political Islam.
1991	Gulf War	U.S.-led coalition defends Kuwait; Iraq weakened.
2003	U.S. Invasion of Iraq	Collapse of state institutions; power vacuum emerges.
2011	Arab Spring	Protests lead to civil wars in Syria, Libya, Yemen.
2014	Rise of ISIS	Borders “erased” symbolically; Caliphate declared.
2020	Abraham Accords	Israel normalizes relations with UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan.
2023	China-Brokered Saudi-Iran Deal	Reduces proxy tensions; signals China’s rising role.
2025	Present	Region still shaped by Sykes-Picot fault lines .

Appendix B — Map References

B.1 Original Sykes-Picot Division (1916)

- **Blue Zone** → French control (Syria, Lebanon).
- **Red Zone** → British control (Iraq, Transjordan, Palestine).
- **International Zone** → Palestine proposed under global administration.

B.2 Post-WWI Mandate Borders

- British and French mandates **institutionalized colonial control**:
 - **British Mandates**: Iraq, Transjordan, Palestine.
 - **French Mandates**: Syria, Lebanon.

B.3 Modern Middle East Hotspots

- **Palestine / Jerusalem** → Ongoing sovereignty disputes.
- **Kirkuk & Mosul** → Oil-driven Arab-Kurdish tensions.
- **Syria** → Epicenter of multi-layered proxy wars.
- **Gaza** → Symbol of blockade, resistance, and recurring conflict.

(Recommendation: Include full-color annotated maps in the visual annex for publication.)

Appendix C — Key Treaties, Declarations, and Resolutions

Document	Year	Relevance
Sykes-Picot Agreement	1916	Secret deal dividing Ottoman Arab lands between Britain & France.
Balfour Declaration	1917	British support for Jewish homeland in Palestine.
San Remo Agreement	1920	Allocated mandates to Britain & France under League of Nations.
Treaty of Lausanne	1923	Denied Kurdish independence; defined Turkey's borders.

Document	Year	Relevance
UN Resolution 181	1947	Partition plan for Palestine.
UN Resolution 242	1967	Called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.
Oslo Accords	1993	Attempted two-state solution framework.
Abraham Accords	2020	Normalization between Israel and Gulf states.
Saudi-Iran Accord	2023	China-mediated deal reshaping regional alliances.

Appendix D — Proxy Wars and Regional Alignments

Conflict	Iran	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	U.S.	Russia
Syria	Supports Assad regime & Hezbollah	Backs Sunni rebels	Targets Kurdish YPG	Supports Kurdish forces	Direct military intervention for Assad
Yemen	Supports Houthi rebels	Leads coalition backing Yemeni govt	Neutral	Provides intelligence & weapons	Diplomatic balancing
Iraq	Backs Shia militias	Supports Sunni politicians	Opposes Kurdish autonomy	Maintains troop presence	Expands oil deals

Conflict	Iran	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	U.S.	Russia
Lebanon	Funds Hezbollah	Backs Sunni factions	Limited role	Supports civil reforms	Maintains influence via Syria

Appendix E — Sykes-Picot's Unresolved Fault Lines

E.1 Stateless Nations

- **Kurds:** Denied independence; fragmented across **Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran.**
- **Palestinians:** Deprived of sovereignty; live under occupation or exile.

E.2 Religious Flashpoints

- **Sunni-Shia Divide:** Central to **Iran-Saudi rivalry** and conflicts in **Iraq, Syria, Yemen.**
- **Jerusalem:** Contested by **Israelis and Palestinians;** sacred to three faiths.

E.3 Resource Competition

- Oil, gas, and water resources disproportionately concentrated in **politically unstable zones.**
-

Appendix F — Leadership Insights and Best Practices

F.1 Lessons from Failed Governance

- Ignoring **ethnic and sectarian diversity** leads to **chronic instability**.
- Centralized states with **exclusionary policies** fuel rebellion and extremism.

F.2 Principles for Future Stability

1. **Inclusive Governance** → Citizenship over sectarian quotas.
2. **Federal Autonomy** → Decentralization for multi-ethnic coexistence.
3. **Economic Integration** → Shared prosperity reduces zero-sum conflicts.
4. **Regional Security Architecture** → Middle East-led frameworks to reduce dependency on global powers.
5. **Cultural Reconciliation** → Education reforms to counter extremism and foster shared identities.

Appendix G — Key Data Tables

G.1 Middle East Oil Reserves

Country	Proven Reserves	Global Rank
Saudi Arabia	266 billion barrels	2nd

Country	Proven Reserves	Global Rank
Iraq	145 billion barrels	5th
Iran	157 billion barrels	4th
UAE	98 billion barrels	6th
Kuwait	101 billion barrels	7th

G.2 Refugee Statistics (2024)

Population	Estimated Size	Key Host Countries
Palestinian Refugees	~5.9 million	Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, West Bank
Syrian Refugees	~6.5 million	Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq
Yemeni Displaced	~4.5 million	Saudi Arabia, Oman, Djibouti
Iraqi Displaced	~2 million	Kurdistan, Jordan, Europe

Appendix H — Strategic Framework: A Post-Sykes-Picot Middle East

H.1 Key Pillars

- **Political Inclusion:** Reform constitutional systems to integrate all groups.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Develop regional trade corridors and resource-sharing models.
- **Security Partnerships:** Establish **Middle East Security Forum (MESF)** for joint defense.

- **Cultural Integration:** Promote interfaith dialogue and educational reform.

H.2 Vision 2050

- A federalized, economically integrated, and diplomatically autonomous Middle East:
 - Shared energy grids.
 - Open trade zones.
 - Regional conflict prevention mechanisms.

Appendix I — Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Sykes-Picot Agreement	Secret 1916 Anglo-French pact dividing Ottoman Arab lands into spheres of influence.
Mandate System	League of Nations framework legitimizing colonial control post-WWI.
Balfour Declaration	British statement supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine (1917).
Nakba	Arabic for “Catastrophe,” referring to Palestinian displacement in 1948.
Caliphate	Islamic governance system claimed by ISIS in 2014.
Shia Crescent	Iranian strategy to create a continuous Shia influence arc from Iran to Lebanon.
Abraham Accords	2020 normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states.

Appendix J — Visual Annex (Recommended)

For the book’s **visual toolkit**, we recommend integrating:

- **Annotated maps** of Sykes-Picot’s original boundaries and current hotspots.
 - **Timeline infographic** showing **conflicts, accords, and alliances**.
 - **Proxy war dashboards** illustrating competing power blocs.
 - **Oil and pipeline geopolitics maps** demonstrating resource-driven rivalries.
-

Final Note

The **Sykes-Picot Agreement** was not merely a historical document — it created a **geopolitical architecture** that continues to shape **conflicts, alliances, and aspirations** in the Middle East. Understanding its **legacy and unresolved fault lines** is critical to **crafting sustainable, inclusive, and regionally owned solutions** for peace.

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