

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/mideast.htm>

## IV. THE COLD WAR AND THE MIDDLE EAST

### A. INTRODUCTION

#### 1. BACKGROUND

As discussed in Unit Two most of the Middle East had been mandated to Britain and France at the end of the First World War. By the end of the Second World War two significant factors had changed regarding the Middle East. Firstly, the importance of Middle East oil reserves was now an established fact. Students would be well advised to include a thought about oil in all of their considerations regarding this region. The second major change affecting the region was that the Holocaust had made the creation of a homeland for the Jews a virtual certainty. For approximately the first decade after the Second World War Britain and France remained the major foreign powers in the region. They were struggling with nationalist forces who were demanding independence. By the mid 1950's the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. were becoming involved in the affairs of the region. Within a few years the Middle East would become one of the most intense regions of superpower competition.

#### 2. A FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT: NATIONALISM

Both the Israelis and the Arabs were driven by extreme nationalism. Their nationalism was not only intense, it was also often very negative in that it was driven by their mutual hatred for each other. Not until the 1970's did a single Arab nation even grant Israel the right to exist. The Israelis, on the other hand, practised a very aggressive foreign policy. The Holocaust had taught them that passive resistance was a great risk. Now they reversed their approach to danger: strike first, and strike hard.

If nationalism alone was not enough to send the two groups to war, then serious religious differences would. Both groups took their religions seriously. To further complicate the religious differences, the territory in question contained many of the holy places and shrines of both the Judaic and Islamic religions.

### B. BRITAIN AND THE CREATION OF ISRAEL

1. After the Second World War Britain was the only outside power vitally involved in the Middle East. The Suez and oil remained the reasons for her interest. France had given Lebanon and Syria independence in 1946. Most importantly, Britain held Palestine as a mandate. It was now incumbent upon Great Britain to do something about a homeland for the Jews. The major obstacles to this initiative, of course, were the Palestinians and their Arab supporters. The actions taken by Britain with regard to the Jewish homeland had to be done in such a way as not to make the Arab countries too angry.
2. Britain had worked for Arab unity and welcomed the 1944 Alexandria Conference which led to the Arab League in 1945. The League was made up of Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

3. The Arab League did not work out the way the British had hoped. It turned against British rule in the Middle East. The League also opposed the growing Zionist movement which Britain was unable to control. Eventually the Arabs would blame Britain for the creation of Israel. (The Zionist movement had gained momentum in Europe early in the century. Zionists were Jewish radicals who agitated for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.)
4. In Europe, and Britain in particular, sympathy grew for the idea of a Jewish homeland as evidence of atrocities during WW II grew. However, Britain had promised the Arabs to limit Jewish immigration into Palestine and her navy continued to stop Jewish refugees from reaching their destination.
5. Jewish leaders soon stopped trusting Britain because of her failure to follow up on the Balfour Declaration. They had promised independence to the Arabs after the First World War and coincidentally promised the Jews a homeland in Palestine by issuing the Balfour Declaration in 1917.
6. By now the British were in a no-win situation.
7. Jewish leaders resorted to violence through organizations such as the Stern Gang and Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military Organization usually referred to simply as the Irgun.) In 1946 Jewish terrorists bombed the British headquarters at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing many British officials.
8. British opinion began to shift against the Jews.
9. In 1947 Jews and Arabs rejected a joint Anglo-American recommendation on Palestine. Britain had said all along she would only support a plan acceptable to both sides.
10. British Foreign Secretary Bevin now handed over responsibility for Palestine to the United Nations.
11. A United Nations Special Commission recommended partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem under United Nations trusteeship.
12. The Jews agreed with this, but the Arabs were bitter. The United Nations resolution passed at the United Nations General Assembly. Britain abstained because both sides did not support the resolution. The U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. both supported the resolution.
13. Palestine sank into anarchy. British troops were still present and tried to see that each side, particularly the Jews, did not grab more territory than entitled to under the United Nations Plan.
14. In 1948 Arab and Jewish guerrillas clashed violently as each tried to gain as much territory as possible while the British troops were still present.
16. Because of the violence, the U.S.A. asked Britain to leave her troops in Palestine, but the British refused.

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17. On 14 May, 1948 the mandate expired and on the same day the Jews led by Ben Gurion proclaimed the state of Israel. War broke out.

### C. THE PALESTINIAN WAR: 1948

1. The Arab nations, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, invaded Israel to support the resistance of the Palestinians in their effort to destroy Israel.
2. Israel won and gained the western part of the Negev Desert. This gave them access to the sea in the South.
3. An enormous refugee problem now existed. Over one million Palestinians were left homeless. Some Palestinian refugees formed terrorist groups and attacked Israel from neighbouring states. This refugee problem has been, and remains, a constant of Middle East affairs.
4. After the war was over Israel practised ongoing reprisals against states harbouring terrorists.

### D. THE SUEZ WAR: 1956

#### 1. BACKGROUND

(You should review the section in Unit Four regarding this crisis.)

The Suez War is without a doubt the most important of the many Middle East wars. This is so because it demonstrated that Israel was going to survive. Furthermore, this crisis witnessed a major shift in great power influence in the region. At the end of the war Britain and France would cease to have any influence, while the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. would become the power-brokers in the region.

In 1954, during the Egyptian Revolution, Gamal Nasser became Prime Minister. He was an extreme nationalist and wanted to lead Arabs against Israel and evict the British from Egypt.

#### 2. THE ASWAN DAM

During the Cold War the superpowers attempted to draw unaligned nations into their camp by providing various forms of aid. In Egypt the Americans were doing just that by offering to engineer and pay for a huge hydroelectricity project on the Nile River. The project had just started when the Americans learned that Nasser had made an arms deal with Czechoslovakia (sponsored by the U.S.S.R. ). This so angered the Americans that they hastily pulled out of the project.

The problem of Egyptian alignment with the U.S.A. had been complicated by Nasser's anti-Israel stance as well as his alliance with neighbouring countries against Israel. To further annoy the Americans, Nasser recognized Red China in 1956. By this time the bottom line of American involvement in the Middle East was that Israel had become a client of the U.S.A.. The U.S.A. would not desert her. When Dulles cancelled the Aswan aid package the U.S.S.R. poured money into the Aswan project.

ing sides. They had, however, secretly agreed to do this with Israel). British and French forces began bombing Egyptian military targets, followed by an invasion of British and French troops.

**6. THE AMERICANS BERATE BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

The Americans were outraged with Britain and France and threatened to cut off their oil supply. Britain and France were unable to get oil from the Middle East because Nasser had blocked the Suez. This series of actions nicely demonstrates several issues about the Cold War and the diplomatic tightrope that the Americans have walked in the Middle East for many years. First the Cold War issue. The U.S.A. was annoyed with Britain and France because in the context of the Cold War these two countries were the Americans' major allies. To the Arabs, whom the Americans were wooing, this attack by Britain and France was going too far. It was one thing for the Americans to support Israel with arms and money. It was quite another to have American allies attack an Arab country.

The American commitment to Israel should never be questioned. It was solid. However, the manner in which the U.S.A. exercised this commitment was very careful. If their support became too blatant, the threat of the Arabs cutting off American oil supplies was enough to temper American actions.

**7. THE EUROPEAN NATIONS WITHDREW**

This event, more than any other single event, ended British and French influence in the Middle East.

**8. ISRAELI VICTORY**

While the British and French were humiliated by this whole affair, the Israelis won a major victory . For Israel the significance of the war was:

- a) It freed the port of Eliat. This gave Israel a port on the Red Sea.
- b) Israel took the Gaza strip, which was then policed by the United Nations. It had been used for attacks upon Israel.
- c) The United Nations guaranteed to stop Egyptian threats to Israeli shipping in the Straits of Tiran.
- d) The Israeli economy flourished under the more secure conditions.

**9. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUEZ WAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE COLD WAR**

- a) For the first time the United Nations deployed peacekeeping troops. This idea had been proposed by Lester B. Pearson, the Canadian delegate to the United Nations.
- b) The British and French governments no longer played a significant role in the affairs of the region. They had been discredited by their attack on Egypt.
- c) The Suez Crisis combined with the Aswan Dam fiasco had made the Middle East a major arena for superpower competition. For the rest of the Cold War the Middle East remained the area most likely to produce

a military clash between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R..

## 10. TERRORISM

A new anti-Israel terrorist group sprang out of this war. This was the **El Fatah**, better known to us after 1964 as the **PLO**. PLO stands for **Palestinian Liberation Organization**. They mounted attacks from bases in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, but especially from the Golan Heights in Syria. This group was led by Yassar Arafat.

Refugee camps became common in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. It is from these camps that many terrorist raids were made against Israel.



Yassar Arafat

## E. THE SIX DAY WAR, 5-10 JUNE, 1967

### 1. WAR THREATS

Nasser expelled the United Nations Peace Force in 1967. The United Nations troops were there only with Egyptian consent. He then mobilized the Egyptian forces on the Sinai border. To further raise tensions, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israel and massed her troops on the Israeli border.

### 2. ISRAEL ATTACKS

Instead of waiting to be attacked, hawks like **General Moshe Dayan** led Israel to attack.

### 3. THE ISRAELI VICTORY WAS COMPLETE. IN THIS WAR ISRAEL:

- a) Destroyed the Egyptian air force.
- b) Took the whole Sinai.
- c) Took the old city of Jerusalem and the West Bank.
- d) Took the Golan Heights. This, too, had been used for attacks upon Israel.

### 4. RESULTS OF THE SIX DAY WAR

- a) The Palestinian refugees finally realized that Arab states could not win back Palestine.
- b) Israel had secured much stronger frontiers.

### 5. THE SIX DAY WAR AND THE COLD WAR

This war had serious Cold War ramifications. Egypt had developed a quasi-client relationship with the Soviet Union. When the Israelis turned this war into an embarrassment for Egypt, the U.S.S.R. threatened to get involved. The Soviets mobilized troops to intervene. Fortunately they warned the U.S.A. first. The Americans then put pressure on the Israelis to halt their attacks. The danger in such a situation is that if the Soviet forces had in fact been deployed, then the Americans would have been obligated to correspond with similar support for Israel. Such escalation could easily have led to the much feared World War Three.

### 6. ANWAR SADAT

After 1970 Anwar Sadat replaced Nasser. He was somewhat more conciliatory toward Israel at first. He was also worried about dependence upon the U.S.S.R.,



Anwar Sadat

yet wanted their aid. In 1972, after a slow down of Soviet aid, he kicked out all Soviet advisers. This uneasy relationship between the U.S.S.R. and Egypt typifies the problems the Soviets had in developing solid clients in the Middle East. While many of the Arab countries were vehemently anti-American, they could not commit to the Soviets because of the atheist beliefs of Marxism. The Arab countries were devout Muslims, and this allowed no room for atheism.

#### \* F. THE YOM KIPPUR WAR: OCTOBER, 1973

Anwar Sadat was not going to make the mistake Nasser had made. He would not warn the Israelis of his intentions to attack. He organized the attack to coincide with the **Yom Kippur** religious holiday in Israel. Egypt, helped by Syria and Iraq, attacked Israel.

At the onset the Arab countries made significant advances. The U.S.A. sent massive aid to Israel. Israel managed to repel the attacks and at the end of the war the frontiers were basically unchanged. After this war the Western powers begin to push hard for a settlement of the Middle East problems because of their dependence upon oil from that region.

It is during the Yom Kippur War that **OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries)** raised the price of crude by 70%. This affair is known as the Arab Oil Embargo. The embargo lasted only five months; however, in the next two years the price of oil quadrupled. The world faced a serious economic crisis as a result of this because the industrialized world had been accustomed to very cheap oil prices.

#### G. TOWARD A SETTLEMENT

After the Yom Kippur War Sadat became convinced that Israel could not be destroyed. Egypt would be better off without a war in every decade. The Israelis, too, were feeling the economic effects of excessive defence spending.

1. Through a series of President Carter and Kissinger initiatives, Israel and Egypt reached a peace settlement. Anwar Sadat had become a dove. Just as a point of interest, Sadat would win the Nobel Peace Prize as a result of his efforts to bring peace to the Middle East
2. Sadat visited Israel in 1977 and addressed the Knesset asking for Middle East peace. Initially Prime Minister Begin of Israel was not very receptive.
3. President Carter organized the Camp David Conference and a peace treaty was signed March, 1979. Known as the **Camp David Accords**. This accord accomplished the following:
  - a) They agreed not to make war.
  - b) They agreed to negotiate the refugee problem.
  - c) Israel could use the Suez Canal.
  - d) Israel would get their supply of oil from Egypt.

#### 4. RESULTS OF THE CAMP DAVID AGREEMENT

- a) Egypt was expelled from OPEC. Other Arab countries were a long way



Henry Kissinger

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/campdav.htm>

from ready to negotiate with Israel. They felt betrayed by Egypt. At this point the focus of problems in the Middle East turned from being an Egyptian- Israeli affair to an Israel versus other Arab nations issue.

- b) After the Camp David Accords the main issue in the Middle East was soon to be the resurgence of fundamentalist Islamic groups.

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/isregypt.htm>

## H. CONFLICT IN LEBANON

Lebanon had been granted independence in 1945 by the French. Lebanon was sadly divided between four Christian groups and three Muslim groups. In 1975 a civil war broke out. Technically this war ended one year later, but the reality was that fighting continued until 1991.

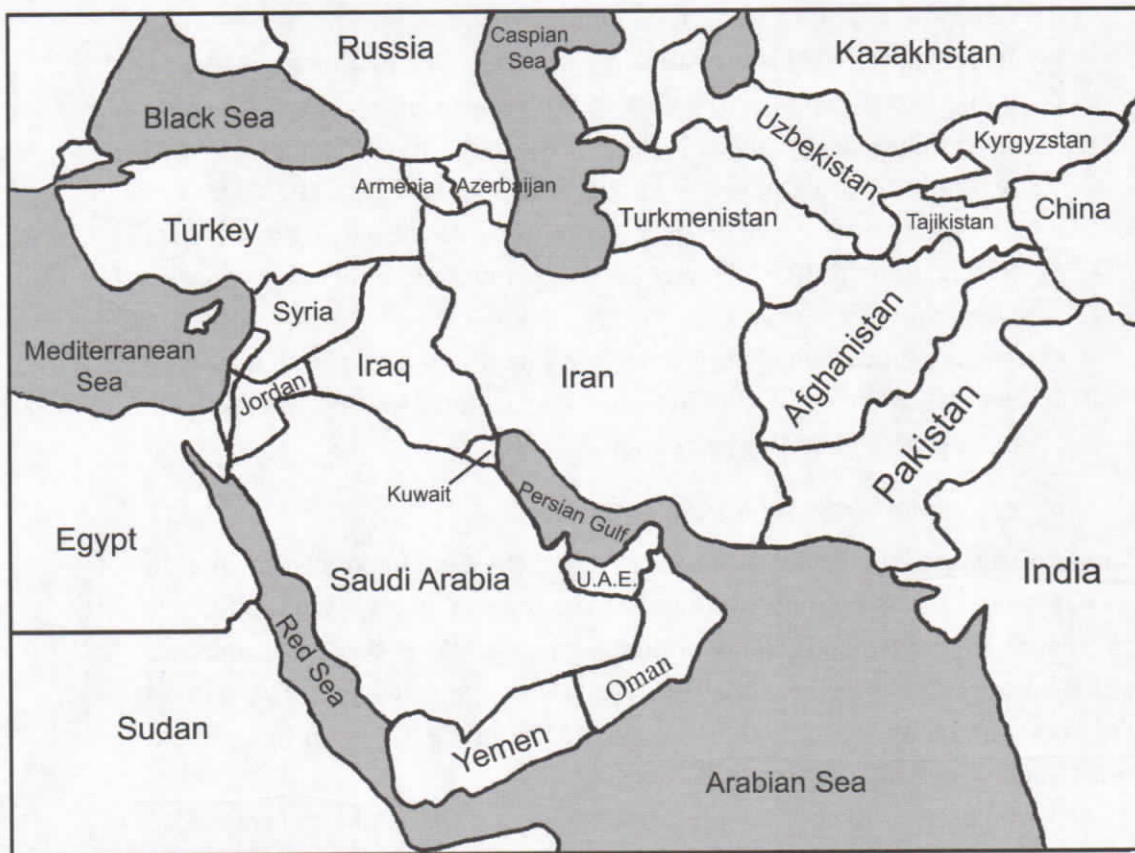
1. The situation in Lebanon was complicated by the fact that 500,000 Palestinian refugees lived in the South. From their camps many terrorist groups launched raids against Israel. This, of course, brought reprisals. At one time (1982) Israeli troops invaded all the way to Beirut.
2. In 1982 a multinational force of Americans, British, French, and Italians went to Beirut to keep the peace. After a number of suicide terrorist attacks this force withdrew. One such attack took the lives of over 200 American Marines.
3. In 1987 Syria had to send troops to control the fighting. The PLO agreed to withdraw.
4. Various factions in the dispute began to take hostages to attract attention to their cause. Terry White, a special envoy of the Archbishop of Canterbury, became a world figure during his lengthy ordeal.
5. A permanent peace finally came to Lebanon when in 1991 Lebanon and Syria signed a "brotherhood and co-operation" statement. Syrian troops remained in Lebanon, and Israel objected because she said this amounted to the annexation of Lebanon by Syria.
6. Today the problem of Lebanon still centres around various Palestinian terrorist groups using the South of Lebanon as a base from which to launch attacks upon Israel. Israel, of course, responds with retaliatory strikes in which innocent people are endangered.

## I. THE RESURGENCE OF ISLAM

Arab-Israeli conflicts are not the only source of tension arising out of the Middle East. In the period after the Second World War many Middle East countries would reject western materialism as they claimed it destroyed the basic spiritual values of Islam. This return to the basic tenets of the Islamic religion was known as Islamic fundamentalism. This movement would threaten both the West and the U.S.S.R..

### 1. IRAN

- a) In 1948 Iran became independent. She had tried to remain neutral during the Second World War, but British dependence on oil led to

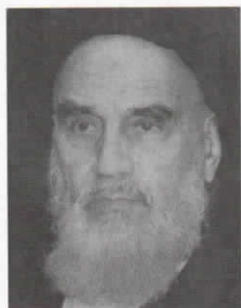


## MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTHERN ASIA

For detail map of Israel and surrounding area see page 168

British and Soviet occupation in 1941. The Shah was forced to abdicate in favour of his son Reza. Britain withdrew in 1945 and the Soviets somewhat more reluctantly in 1946.

- b) In 1951 an elected nationalist government under Dr. Musadeq nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The multinational oil companies then intrigued to bring down Musadeq in 1953 and replaced him with the Shah again.
- c) The Shah had western inclinations. In the 1960's he brought on the "white" or bloodless revolution. His reforms were not always popular so he began to rule by decree. The main reform was concerning land reform. This was popular with the peasants, but opposed by the mullahs (religious leaders) who claimed it was contrary to Islamic law.
- d) In 1964 the Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the mullahs of the Shiite sect, was exiled. He operated out of Paris until his return in 1979.
- e) The Shah's methods were not winning general popularity so he began repression through the use of the Savak (secret police). In 1975 Iran became a one-party state.
- f) Unrest led by the mullahs began to build in Iran. Strikes and riots eventually forced the Shah to flee in 1979. He called it a holiday. He



Ayatollah Khomeini



never did return as he died in 1980.

- g) In February, 1979 the Ayatollah Khomeini returned to begin his Islamic fundamentalist revolution. Anti-westernism and demanding strict adherence to ancient Islamic law were the key elements of this revolution. He withdrew Iran from CENTO and held the American Embassy staff hostage for over a year. Iran became a theocracy, a state in which the **Shiite** religious authorities and the political authorities were one and the same.
- h) Islamic fundamentalism has been a threat to various Arab countries ever since the revolution in Iran. Many splinter terrorist groups have been spawned by this revolution.

### J. THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR: 1980-1988

Saddam Hussein, the leader of Iraq feared that the fundamentalist revolution would spread to his country because the majority of Iraqis were Shiite. The two countries made claims and counterclaims to various strips of land and sea. The truth, however, was that this was a war about religion. Iran wanted to export fundamentalism, while Iraq wanted to prevent it from taking hold in its country.

The world powers, of course were interested because Iran and Iraq controlled so much of the Middle East's oil reserves. Oil tankers in the Persian Gulf were threatened by mines. The Western powers, including the U.S.A. and Britain, supported Saddam because of the rude treatment westerners were getting from the fundamentalists. Arab countries were split in their support. In the final phases of the war both sides began to bomb each other's capital cities.

By 1988 it was clear that neither side was going to win. The United Nations became involved and a truce was arranged. By 1990 formal peace terms were agreed to.

### K. THE PERSIAN GULF WAR: 1990-1991

In August 1990 the Iraqi government ordered its troops to invade Kuwait. Kuwait was a small, but oil rich southern neighbour. Saddam Hussein made claims that Kuwait historically "belonged" to Iraq. He did not expect the international community to react because he had the strongest army in the region.

#### 1. WORLD AND UNITED NATIONS REACTION

##### a) "No More Munichs"

Led by President **George Bush** and the U.S.A., the United Nations almost immediately placed trade sanctions upon Iraq, cutting off her oil trade. Furthermore, the United Nations ordered Saddam to remove his troops from Kuwait by 15 January, 1991. Failing that, the United Nations had resolved to use military force if necessary. A coalition led by the U.S.A. was developed. Britain also strongly supported the coalition. In the end more than thirty countries joined the coalition.



Saddam Hussein

While their public relations campaign tried to convince the public that this campaign was about preventing aggression and the slogan “no more Munichs” was used a lot, in truth the campaign was about oil. Saddam already controlled too much of the region’s rich oil resources and now he threatened further expansion into Saudi Arabia. The Saudis, Syrians, and Egyptians were nervously brought into the coalition because they, too, feared Saddam’s future intentions. One of the delicate diplomatic manoeuvres carried out by the U.S.A. was to keep Israel from joining the fray. This was done with heavy diplomatic pressure as well as an American promise to defend Israel from incoming SCUD missiles with their new Patriot missile. The Patriot was the first missile capable of destroying incoming hostile missiles.

#### **b) The Campaign**

For over a month the allies, under what became known as Operation Desert Storm, bombed Baghdad and other strategic locations. The Iraqi airforce offered only token resistance at first. Beginning on 24 February a short four day ground campaign drove the Iraqi army out of Kuwait. While Iraq suffered heavy losses (about 90,000 troops) much of her army was still intact. President Bush called a ceasefire for fear that the Arab countries within the coalition would leave the coalition.

#### **c) Issues during and after the Gulf War**

##### **(i) The threat of weapons of mass destruction**

Saddam had tried to develop nuclear capability during the 1980’s. The Israelis, ever wary of Saddam, destroyed his facility in an air attack. Saddam did, however, develop poison gas and biological weapons. He had used them against the Kurds, a minority group in his own country. During the Gulf War there was much nervousness amongst the coalition members about these weapons. Israel was attacked several times. The American patriot missiles did prevent much damage by shooting down most of the incoming missiles. Saddam knew that the fastest way for him to destroy the coalition was to draw Israel into the war because the Arabs within the coalition would not be caught beating up a fellow Arab with the help of the hated Israelis.

##### **(ii) U.S.S.R. in Collapse**

It is doubtful if this coalition would ever have seen the light of day if it were not for the simple fact that the U.S.S.R. was near collapse.

#### **d) Coalition Mistake**

By not removing Saddam from power, the United Nations coalition allowed this dictator to continue to use every means available to repress and torture his own people. The claims by the U.S.A. and Britain that

this war was about freedom and justice wore a bit thin after the war. The West had to intervene repeatedly in the ensuing years to prevent Saddam from eliminating the Kurds within his own borders.

#### e) Continuing Sanctions

A partial blockade continues to this day (2003). This blockade has been somewhat effective in controlling Saddam, but it has punished the Iraqi people much more than its leaders.

### L. THE SOVIETS IN AFGHANISTAN

1. The Soviets were interested in Afghanistan because gaining influence or even control in the region was a natural extension of decades of Russian foreign policy—namely, Southern expansion.
2. Daoud had gained power in 1973 and after a short period began to suppress opposition parties. He attacked the Islamic fundamentalists with particular vigour. Daoud was deposed and Nur Taraki became the leader within the People's Party. He ruled with the blessing of the Soviet Union, but with the opposition of the Muslims.
3. Taraki was overthrown in September, 1979, but in December, 1979 the Soviets invaded and installed **Babrak Karmal** as President. His was a puppet government.
4. The West, China, and India were all alarmed. The Soviets appeared to be attempting to take control of the Persian Gulf. The U.S.A. and others boycotted the Moscow Olympics of 1980 as a result.
5. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is generally considered the end of détente between East and West. (For détente see page 185)
6. Early in 1980 the U.S.S.R. escalated this war. They soon had almost 2000 tanks and squadrons of aircraft supporting their war effort. In spite of this effort, the rebels, called the Mujaheddin, still controlled most of the country. This was another guerrilla war.
7. From 1980-1988 a vicious war followed in Afghanistan, creating much East-West tension as well as an enormous refugee problem for neighbouring states like Pakistan. By 1985 the Soviets had more than 100,000 troops in Afghanistan.
8. In 1987 Karmal was replaced by Mohammed Najibullah, who was completely controlled by the Soviets. In 1988 an Accord was signed which approved a withdrawal plan for the Soviets. Given their problems at home, they were all too happy to withdraw.
9. The Afghanistan venture on the part of the Soviets had many parallels to the American experience in Vietnam. While Soviet citizens were not totally informed about activities in Afghanistan, growing resentment within the Soviet forces in Afghanistan was evidence that all was not well. The Soviets have been accused of practising methods of warfare in Afghanistan that are brutal and against the Geneva Convention, i.e., chemical warfare. Western

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/A0802662.html>

## Unit Five: Exercise Six: The Creation Of Israel

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Refer to the *Student Workbook* p. 164-166

1. By the end of the Second World War, what two significant changes had occurred which would later impact superpower involvement in the Middle East?

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2. Why was nationalism so intense within both the Israeli and Arab communities?

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3. Identify three reasons for Britain's involvement in Middle Eastern affairs.

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4. a) What was the Arab League (which Britain initially supported)?

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- b) After its inception, what became the Arab League's objective(s)?

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5. a) What is a Zionist?

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- b) How did Europe in general feel about the Zionist movement?

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## Unit Five: Exercise Six: The Creation Of Israel

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

6. Britain's navy refusal to let Jewish refugees reach their destination showed Jewish leaders that Britain was not following up on the Balfour Declaration. What was the Balfour Declaration?

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7. Why did British opinion begin to shift against the Jews?

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8. a) Why do you think Britain handed over responsibility for Palestine to the United Nations?

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- b) What did the United Nations recommend?

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- c) Did Britain support this recommendation?

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9. What happened on 14 May 1948?

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