

Geopolitical evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian territory

This page provides a brief description and various maps on the geopolitical evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian territory, from the time of King Solomon to the present day. We have simply compiled and summarized information found on the web, particularly on Wikipedia pages.

10th century BC

- For the Jews, King David (reigned from 1010 to 970 BCE), who succeeded Saul, the first monarch, is the king par excellence and became the model for the expected Messiah. He constantly expanded Jewish territory, which reached its peak under his son Solomon (972 to 933 BCE). The entire Jewish people consisted of twelve tribes.
- It should be noted (map 1) that Solomon's kingdom occupied the territory of the twelve tribes that made up the Israelites, as well as present-day Jordan, Syria up to the Euphrates River, and part of Lebanon.
- The name "Israel" originally referred to the nickname of Jacob, son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, and came to be applied to all his descendants. It does not refer to a territory, but to a people.
- The name "Palestine" is a Latinization by the Romans of the Philistine tribe that occupied the southern coastal territory covering the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod (see Map 1). According to Amos 9:5, this tribe arrived at the beginning of the Iron Age from Caphtor, possibly located on the island of Crete. The Bible tells us that the Jews were in conflict with the Philistines and recounts the story of the battle between Goliath and the young David. But there is no ethnic link between the Philistines and modern Palestinians.
- For comparison purposes, we have included the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights on Map 1.

Map 1

-Source: Aharoni, Y. et Avi-Yonah, M. The Modern Bible Atlas



1st century AD

Map 2 shows Palestine at the time of Jesus (1st century). Since 63 BC, with the victory of General Pompey, the entire territory has been under Roman rule. From 4 CE onwards, a Roman prefect residing in Caesarea had authority over Judea and Samaria, while Galilee and Perea were ruled by a Jew under Roman authority, King Herod Antipas, and Iturea and Gaulanitis were ruled by his half-brother, Herod Philip. Finally, Salome, from Herod's family, inherited the region of Ashdod, in the south, on the Mediterranean coast. The rest of the territory was administered by the Roman legate of Syria, including the territory now covered by the Gaza Strip.

The Jews were mainly concentrated on the western side of the Jordan River, particularly in Judea in the south and Galilee in the north, while Samaria was also Jewish but considered heretical by the majority because its place of worship was a temple on Mount Gerizim rather than the one in Jerusalem. As for the Decapolis (literally deka polis = ten cities), it was mainly populated by Greek-speaking people.

For comparison purposes, we have superimposed today's Palestinian territories (turquoise) and the Golan Heights (brown) on this 1st-century map. Also for comparison purposes, let us say that the territory occupied mainly by Jews consists of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Iturea, Gaulanitis, and Perea.

Map 2

Territory inhabited by Jews in Jesus' time

(with overlapping Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights)



From the 1st to the 3rd century AD: the Jewish revolts

The Jewish revolt of 66-70

In the year 66, a Jewish group called the "Zealots" stirred up a revolt against Roman authority after rumors spread that the temple had been desecrated. The majority of Jewish Christians seem to have refused to join the rebels, and many are believed to have fled to the Jordanian city of Pella. The Romans intervened under the leadership of Domitian and his son Titus. And in the year 70, the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the city ransacked. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, 1,100,000 Jews perished and 97,000 were taken captive. In retaliation, all Jews in the empire were subjected to a special tax, the *fiscus judaicus*.

The Jewish revolt of 132-135

About sixty years later, in 132, a new revolt broke out under the leadership of Shimon bar Kokhba to protest Emperor Hadrian's (Aelius Adrianus) plan to rebuild Jerusalem as a Roman city and give it a new name: Aelia Capitolina. The battle was fierce, and the Romans were forced to send twelve legions. They finally inflicted a bitter defeat on the Jews in 135. Subsequently, Jerusalem was razed to the ground, forbidden to Jews, and a new Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, was built on its site. Hadrian renamed the Roman province of Judea, which became Syria-Palestine, to distinguish it from Syria, and used the name of the Philistines, the traditional enemies of the Jews, to form the new name of Palestine, in order to humiliate the Jewish population and erase a part of their history.

Aelia Capitolina

While the city of Jerusalem probably had a population of 200,000 at the time of Jesus, Aelia Capitolina was now a mere military colony with about 4,000 residents. The Jews were not only banished from the city, but also from its surroundings. And on the site where Christians used to worship at the tomb of Jesus, Hadrian had a temple to Venus built.

Map 3 shows the various Roman provinces at the beginning of the 3rd century. The various Jewish divisions (Judea, Samaria, Galilee, etc.) disappeared to make way for Syria-Palestine.

Map 3

Provinces of the Near East of the Roman Empire in the year 210



From the 4th to the 7th century AD: the Byzantine period

Territorial reorganization

The Roman Empire underwent a geopolitical reorganization. The provinces were grouped into regional units called dioceses (map 4). Syria-Palestine was incorporated into the Diocese of the East, which included the provinces of the Near East. In the 4th century, Palestine and the neighboring regions were reorganized into provinces: Palaestina Prima, Palaestina Secunda, and Palaestina Tertia or Palaestina Salutaris (see map 5). Palaestina Prima, whose capital was Caesarea, encompassed the central parts of Palestine, including the coastal plain, Judea, and Samaria. Palaestina Secunda had its capital at Scythopolis and included northern Transjordan, the lower Jezreel Valley, Galilee, and the Golan region. Palaestina Tertia, whose capital was Petra, included the Negeb, southern Transjordan, and parts of the Sinai.

Emperor Constantine

With Constantine's victories and the beginning of his reign (306-337), the era of the Byzantine Empire began, with Constantinople as its capital. Not only did he put an end to Christian persecution, but the new emperor also sponsored a number of religious initiatives, such as the Council of Nicaea (325) to end theological disputes, and the construction in Palestine of a number of religious monuments, which he entrusted to his mother, Helena: this is how the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built in Jerusalem, on the site where Emperor Hadrian had built a temple to Venus and where Jesus was believed to have been crucified and buried, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, on the site where Jesus was believed to have been born; the Church of the Pater Noster on the Mount of Ascension; all of which made Aelia Capitolina (Jerusalem) a major Christian center. It is believed that around 170 religious monasteries were built during this period. It should be noted that Jews were still banned from the city and its surroundings, although a number of them could be found in the countryside.

Emperor Theodosius

It was the Roman emperor Theodosius I (379-395) who, in 380, issued the Edict of Thessalonica addressed to Constantinople, which stated, among other things:

"We order the followers of this law to adopt the name of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgment, they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics and that they shall not dare to call their gatherings churches."

This edict stated that only the Christian religion was acceptable in the empire. In fact, Theodosius waged war on paganism and destroyed several of their temples, without however forcing pagans and Jews to convert to Christianity. Upon his death in 395, the Roman Empire was definitively divided into two parts, each of his sons inheriting one part, one the western part with Rome as its capital and speaking Latin, and the other the eastern part, with Constantinople as its capital and speaking Greek. The western part collapsed in 476 with the arrival of the barbarian tribes, and the eastern part in 1473 with the arrival of the Ottoman Empire.

Palestine in the Byzantine Empire

It should be noted that the Byzantine period was a time of great prosperity and cultural flourishing in Palestine. New lands were cultivated, urbanization intensified, and many cities reached their demographic peak. Cities gradually acquired new civic basilicas and streets lined with porticoes that could accommodate shops, and the construction of churches and other religious buildings stimulated their economies. The total population of Palestine is believed to have exceeded 1.5 million, its highest level until the 20th century.

The Samaritans

That said, tensions exist between certain groups, particularly around the Samaritans, a kind of Jewish sect (at the time of Jesus, they preferred their temple on Mount Gerizim to that of Jerusalem, and they had their own version of the Bible), grouped together in the region of Samaria, in the center of Palestine I. Following the massacre and expulsion of many Jews by the Romans during the revolt of 135, they were able to take their place and reorganize the central part of the country, establishing their institutions and liturgy. But this brought them into conflict with the Christianity of the Byzantine Empire, which imprisoned their leader in 362. The Christian community of Shechem (Samaria) also came into conflict, demanding that the Samaritans convert to Christianity. When they refused, many were killed and their synagogues were converted into churches. These conflicts lasted for more than 200 years, with the Jews sometimes joining their Samaritan brothers, all of which led to the destruction of churches and synagogues.

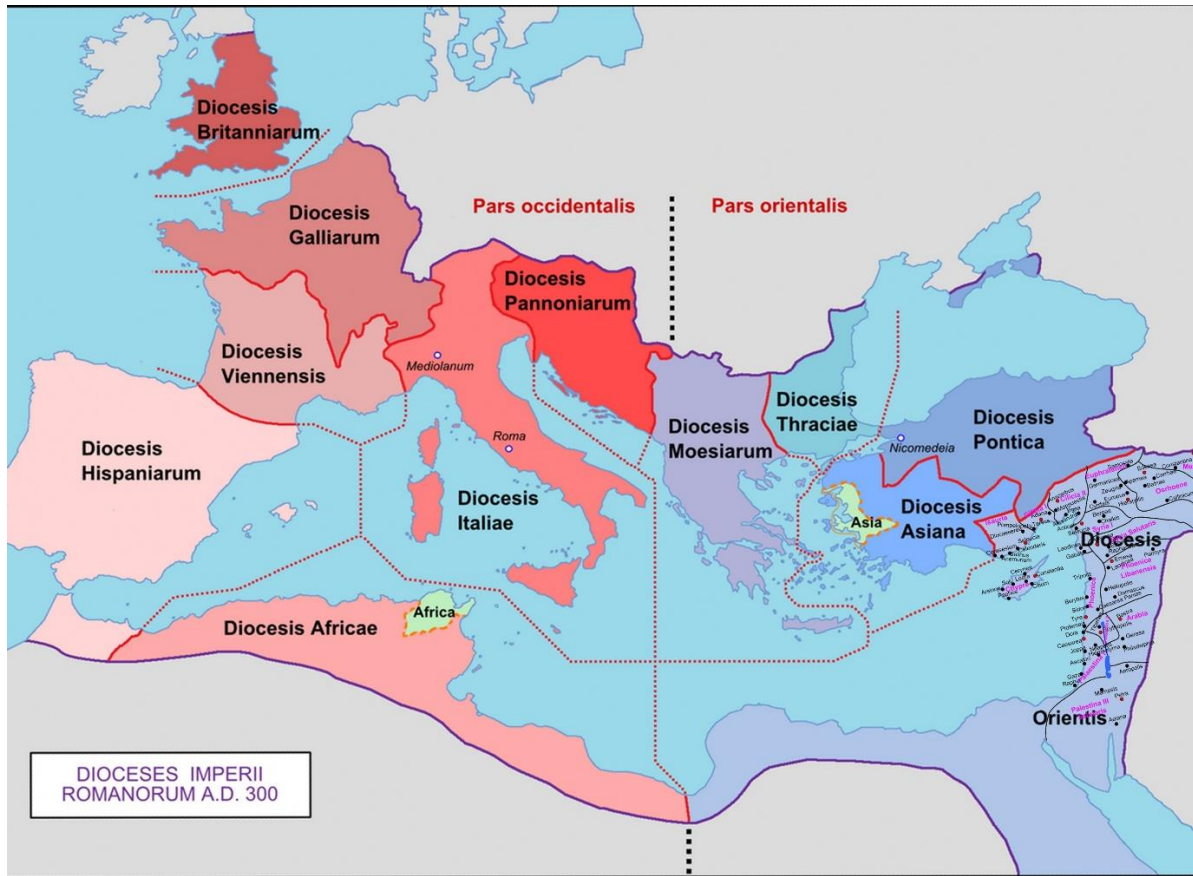
Demographics

What was the Jewish population in the 7th century? As Jews had been excluded from Jerusalem and its surroundings, they were found further north, particularly in Galilee, where Tiberias was the religious center. According to some historians, the Jewish population may have numbered around 200,000, or about 10% to 15% of the total population, spread across 43 settlements. But if we add the Samaritan group, this figure could reach 50% of the total population.

The rise of the Persian Sassanid Empire

The first part of the 7th century was marked first by various Jewish revolts against the Byzantine Empire, which had been fueled by strong anti-Jewish propaganda, and then by the advance of the Persian (Iranian) Sassanid Empire, an empire founded in 224 CE, and the Byzantine-Sassanid war, which lasted 26 years (602-628). Feeling oppressed by the Byzantines, the Jews joined forces with the Persians through some 20,000 rebels who helped them expand into the Byzantine diocese of the East. Thus, after the conquest of Palaestina II, they arrived together to conquer Palaestina I and Jerusalem, which fell in 614. The Persians then gave control of the city to a Jewish leader (Nehemiah ben Hushiel). From then on, a plan was drawn up to rebuild the temple and determine who would be the next high priest. Then, after destroying churches, they set about driving the Christians out of the city. This led to a revolt. Nehemiah ben Hushiel, his council, and many Jews were killed, and the survivors fled to Caesarea. But the Persian forces returned to lay siege to the city: around 20,000 Christians were massacred and a large number were taken prisoner to Mesopotamia. It was not until 630 that the Byzantine emperor regained control of Jerusalem, massacring a large number of Jews in the process and banning all Jewish settlements within a 5-kilometer radius of Jerusalem.

Map 4



Here are the details of the provinces (in pink) in the Diocese of the East. The red dots indicate the capital of each province. The traditional Jewish territory is divided into three provinces: Palestina I, Palestina II, and Palestina III Salutaris. Note that Hierosolyma (Jerusalem) is located in the province of Palaestina I, whose capital is Caesarea Maritima.

Map 5

The capture of Jerusalem

Muhammad (570–632) initiated military confrontation with the Byzantine Empire in 629. But it was under the leadership of Caliph Umayyad, Muhammad's second successor, that Islamic forces conquered central Syria in 634, then entered Palestine in 635, starting in the north and taking Haifa, Tiberias, Nablus, Jaffa, and Gaza. Palestine was in Muslim hands, except for Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Ashkelon. It was only at the end of 636 that the city of Jerusalem underwent a long siege by the Muslim army and surrendered in April 637. For the Jews, this was a relief, as they were able to return to pray on the Temple Mount (where the Wailing Wall is located). Under Islamic rule, Christians, Jews, and Samaritans were protected as Abrahamic monotheists or “People of the Book” and allowed to practice their religion in peace. The Muslims also lifted the centuries-old ban imposed by the Romans on Jews in Jerusalem. It should be noted that the Byzantine civil service was maintained until a new system could be put in place; as a result, Greek remained the administrative language in the new Muslim territories for more than 50 years after the conquests.

Territorial reorganization

The Muslims organized the territory of the Byzantine dioceses of the East (Syria) into military districts, or provinces (see Map 6). The traditional Jewish territories of Palaestina Prima and Palaestina Secunda became the provinces of Filastin in the south and al-Urdunn in the north. The newly founded city of al-Ramla became the administrative capital and most important city of the province of Filastin, while in the province of al-Urdunn Tabariyyah (Tiberias) replaced Scythopolis as the provincial capital.

The Rashidun Caliphate

Throughout the Rashidun Caliphate (632-661), which was initially centered in Medina, Arabia (632-656), and then in Kufa, Iraq (656-661), Palestine was one of the most prosperous and fertile provinces of the caliphate. Palestine's wealth came from its strategic location as a hub for international trade, the influx of pilgrims, its excellent agricultural products, and a number of local crafts. Products manufactured or traded in Palestine included building materials from marble and white stone quarries, spices, soaps, olive oil, sugar, indigo, Dead Sea salts, and silk. Palestinian Jews were expert glassmakers whose products were known in Europe as “Jewish glass.” Palestine was also renowned for its book production and copyist work. Although Palestine was under Muslim control, the Christian world's affection for the Holy Land continued to grow. Christian kings made generous donations to the holy sites in Jerusalem and helped facilitate the ever-increasing traffic of pilgrims. Finally, it should be noted that under Caliph Omar, the city of Jerusalem was renamed Bayt al-Maqdis (“House of the Sanctuary”) in 638, in reference to the Temple Mount.

The Umayyad Caliphate

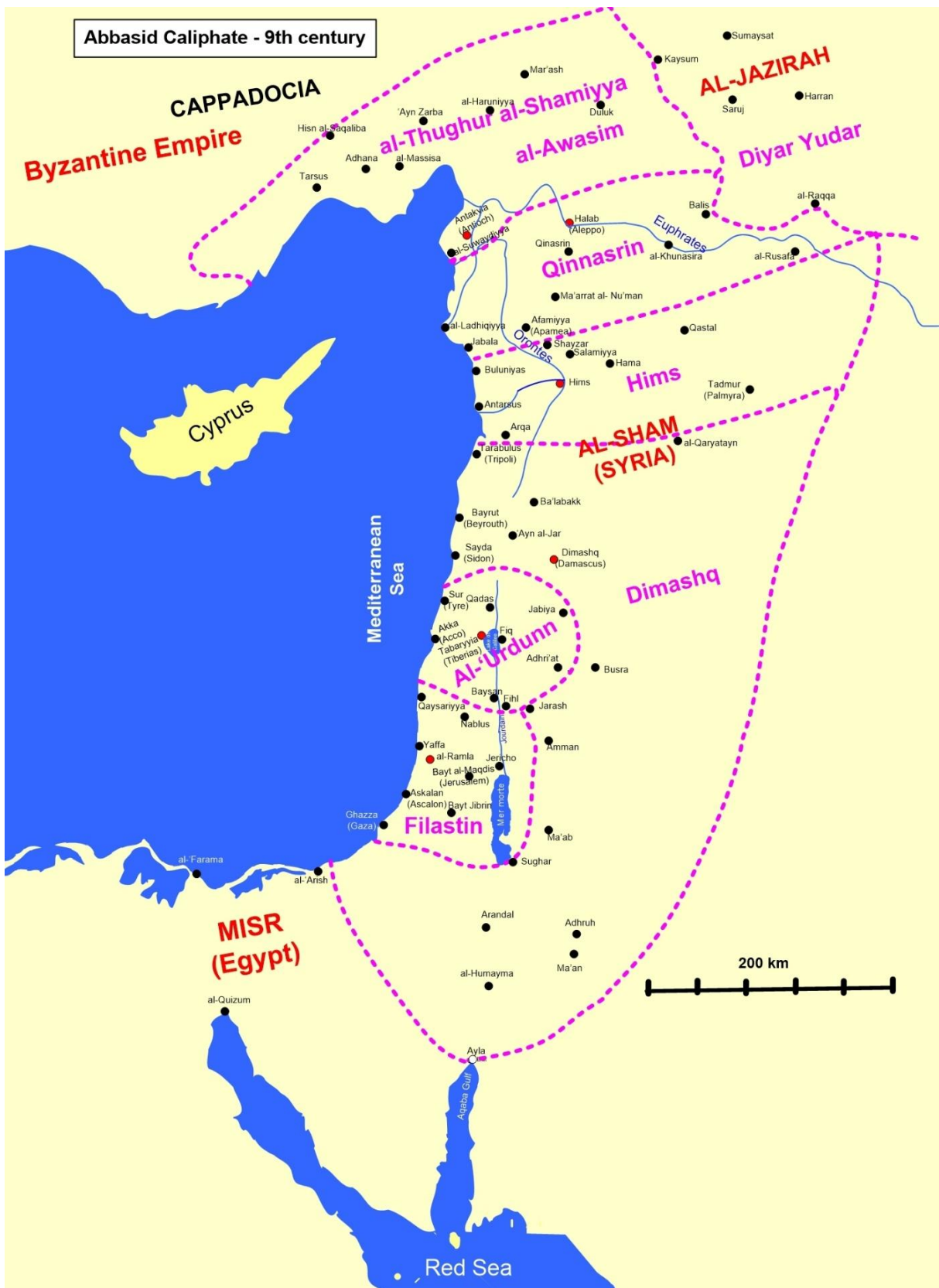
But when Caliph Uthman was assassinated in 656 and replaced by Caliph Ali, a civil war broke out until the emergence in 661 of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750), originating from a clan in Mecca, which moved the capital of the caliphate from Kufa, Iraq, to Damascus, Syria. This caliphate was inaugurated in Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) because of its religious significance and its central location on the road from Syria to Egypt. It was under this caliphate that the famous Dome of the Rock (691-692), the oldest surviving piece of Islamic architecture, was built on the esplanade of the ancient Jewish temple, as well as the al-Aqsa Mosque (around 705), nearby on the same esplanade. However, in the second half of the 8th century, Palestinian tribes began to revolt against this caliphate. In 750, a descendant of Muhammad's uncle, Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah, imposed peace with his victory over the last caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, inaugurating a new caliphate, the Abbasid Caliphate.

The Abbasid Caliphate

The Abbasid Caliphate moved its capital to Baghdad. This move resulted in Jerusalem losing its status as a major hub and becoming a secondary city. During the late 8th century, several clashes took place in the provinces of al-Urdunn and Filastin between Arab tribes from the north and south, joined by Bedouins, creating a situation of anarchy. Cities such as Gaza, Ashkelon, and Bayt Jibrin (Hebron) were destroyed, monasteries were attacked and looted, and several monks were killed.

N.B. The names of the various provinces are shown in pink. The red dot in a province indicates the capital city.

Map 6



The Ikhshidid Caliphate

Towards the end of the 9th century, the caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty began to lose control of the provinces of the Mediterranean basin. In 868, the Turkish-born officer Ahmad ibn Tulun, sent from Baghdad as governor of Egypt, soon behaved like an autonomous monarch and founded the independent Tulunid dynasty of emirs. In 878, he seized Palestine and Syria, ended the persecution of Christians, and began rebuilding churches. But in 906, the Abbasids regained control of Palestine. Their control lasted until 939, when they granted Muhammad ibn Tughj al-Ikhshid, governor of Egypt and Palestine, autonomous control of his domain. The latter founded the Ikhshidid dynasty, whose reign was marked by acts of persecution against Christians, sometimes with the help of local Jews. In 937, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was burned and looted, and in 966, serious anti-Christian riots broke out in Jerusalem.

The Fatimid Caliphate

Meanwhile, a Shiite Muslim movement, claiming descent from Muhammad's daughter Fatima and her husband Ali, settled in North Africa and founded the Fatimid Caliphate. In 969, this movement established the Fatimid dynasty by seizing Palestine. Its arrival marked the beginning of six decades of almost uninterrupted and extremely destructive wars in Palestine between them and their many enemies, the Byzantines, the Qarmatians, the Bedouin tribes, and even internal strife between the Berber and Turkish factions within the Fatimid army. At the same time, the Bedouins enjoyed almost unlimited power in Palestine between 997 and 1010. Their pillaging and numerous atrocities weighed heavily on the entire territory.

In 1009, in a wave of religious persecution, the Fatimid Caliph-Imam Al-Hakim ordered the demolition of all churches and synagogues in the empire, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The news of this demolition shocked and outraged Christian Europe, which blamed the Jews for it. Al-Hakim also forced Christians and Jews to wear distinctive clothing. His successor authorized the reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, but the repression of non-Muslims continued.

From 1095 to 1291: the Crusader period

The Seljuk Empire

In the 11th century, the Seljuk Turkish Muslim empire invaded Western Asia, and both the Byzantines and the Caliphates suffered territorial losses. Baghdad fell in 1055 and Palestine in 1071-1073. Thus, the period of relative calm came to an end and Palestine once again became a theater of anarchy, internal wars between the Turks themselves and between them and their enemies. The Turkish reign was marked by massacres, vandalism, and economic hardship. In 1077, after an uprising, the Seljuks massacred the inhabitants of Jerusalem and destroyed Gaza, Ramla, and Jaffa. Finally, in 1098, the Fatimids recaptured Jerusalem from the Seljuks. Adding to the misfortunes of the Palestinian region were three destructive earthquakes in 1015, 1033, and 1068.

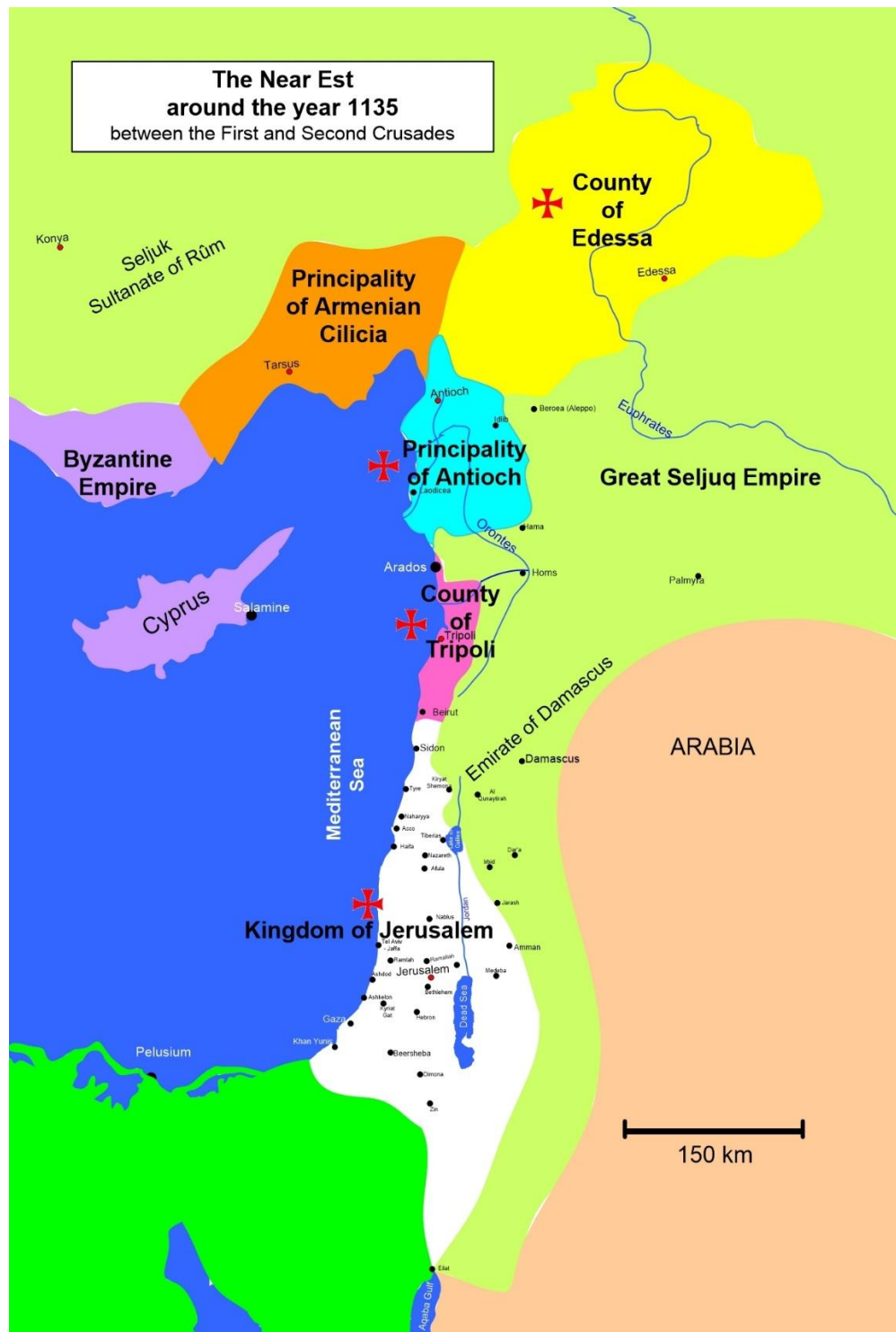
The First Crusade (1096-1099)

The First Crusade was launched in 1095 after a call for help from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I and supported by Pope Urban II, who encouraged an armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Thus, in 1099, the Crusaders took Jerusalem. Along the way, they gradually conquered the entire eastern Mediterranean coast, from present-day Turkey in the north to Sinai in the south. Crusader states were organized in the conquered territories: the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the County of Tripoli (see Map 7). Godfrey of Bouillon was the first king of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and Arnulf of Chocques was the first Latin patriarch. Over the following

decades, various skirmishes and battles took place in several locations in the Near East between various Crusader groups and the Seljuks, with victories and defeats on both sides.

N.B. The territories marked with the red cross of the Crusaders indicate those under their authority.

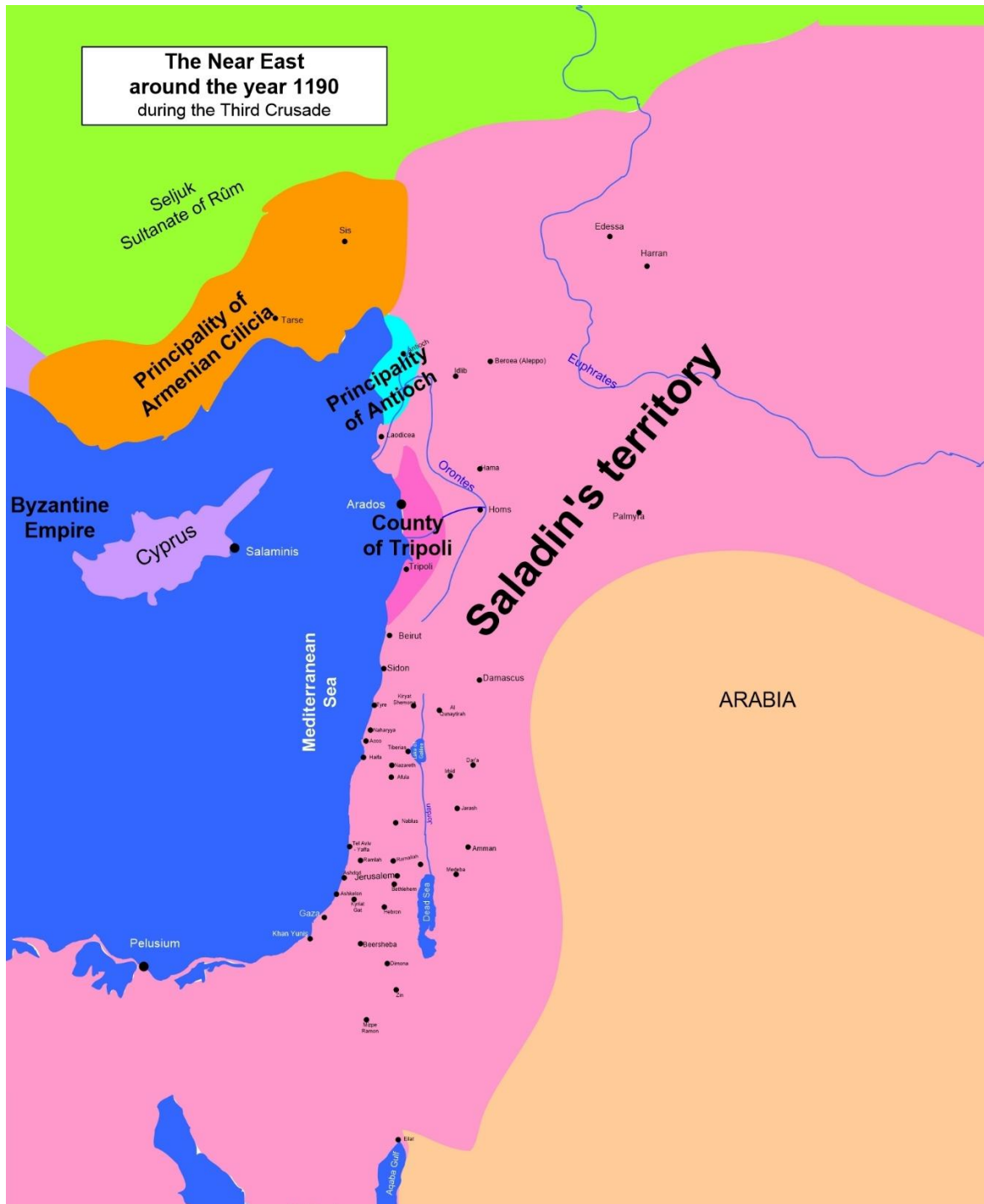
Map 7



The Second Crusade (1146-1149)

The Second Crusade was launched in 1047, after the county of Edessa was captured in 1044 by Seljuk forces led by Zengi. It was led by Kings Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany, supported by Pope Eugene III. Upon arriving in the Middle East, the Crusaders suffered nothing but defeats. Faced with this situation, Pope Eugene III redirected the crusade to the Iberian Peninsula against the Moors, where it was more successful. But during this time, Zengi's clan, known as the Zengids, continued their military campaigns in the Near East under the leadership of Nur ad-Din. The latter seized part of the principality of Antioch in 1149 and Damascus in 1154, then defeated the Knights Templar at Banias, on the Golan Heights, in 1157. But the scene of the fighting shifted to Egypt when Almaric, King of Jerusalem, undertook a series of four invasions of Egypt between 1163 and 1169, taking advantage of the Fatimids' weaknesses. However, faced with Nur ad-Din's advance, the Fatimids and the Crusaders decided to join forces to confront the enemy. Several battles took place in cities in northern Egypt. Nur ad-Din won a decisive victory in 1169 with the help of his uncle, Saladin, who was appointed vizier of Egypt. From that moment on, Saladin, who founded the Ayyubid dynasty, a Kurdish dynasty named after his father Najm al-Din Ayyub, continued the work of reconquering the "Holy Land," and thus arrived on September 2, 1187, at the gates of the city of Jerusalem, which he besieged. The city fell two weeks later. Jerusalem was once again in Muslim hands. Many inhabitants of the kingdom fled to Tyre. Finally, with the siege of Safed, north of the Sea of Galilee, in 1188, Saladin completed his reconquest of the "Holy Land" (map 8).

Map 8



The Third Crusade (1189-1192)

Shortly after learning of the fall of Jerusalem, Pope Urban III died. His successor, Gregory VIII, launched the call for a third crusade. It was led by Frederick Barbarossa of Germany and Richard I of England, known as “the Lionheart.” Unfortunately, Frederick drowned in Cilician Armenia before reaching the “Holy Land.” Richard I succeeded in

capturing the city of Acco in 1191 and was victorious as far as the city of Jaffa, but failed to capture Jerusalem. On September 2, 1192, Richard and Saladin signed the Treaty of Jaffa, which stipulated that Jerusalem would remain under Muslim control, while allowing unarmed Christian pilgrims and merchants to visit the city freely. In addition, Christians retained possession of the narrow coastal strip from Acco to Jaffa, known as the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem. This treaty brought the Third Crusade to an end.

The Fourth Crusade

The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204), called by Pope Innocent III, did not go beyond Constantinople, where the Crusaders pillaged the city. The Fifth Crusade (1217-1221), called by Pope Honorius III, aimed to capture Jerusalem, but failed. The Sixth Crusade (1228-1229) was a military expedition to recapture Jerusalem. This crusade was led by Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, with the support of Pope Gregory IX. It resulted in no significant fighting, but simply in the Treaty of Jaffa in February 1229 with al-Kamil, Saladin's fourth successor in the Ayyubid dynasty: the latter ceded Jerusalem, which returned to Christian rule, with the exception of certain Muslim holy sites, as well as Bethlehem and Nazareth, which joined the Kingdom of Jerusalem, reduced to a narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean coast from Beirut, Tyre, Sidon, and Acco to Ashkelon, with Acco as its capital, and agreed to a ten-year truce.

The Ayyubid dynasty

But in July 1244, the Khwarezmians, a dynasty from the ancient Iranian kingdom of Khwarezm, formed an alliance with the Ayyubid dynasty of Egypt and invaded Palestine, ransacking and pillaging Jerusalem and massacring the Christian community. These events led Louis IX of France, supported by Pope Innocent IV, to undertake the Seventh Crusade (1248-1254). His goal was to reconquer the "Holy Land," first attacking Egypt, the stronghold of the Ayyubid dynasty. After preliminary victories in the cities of northern Egypt, Louis IX's armies ultimately suffered a resounding defeat at the Battle of Fariskur in 1254, with the king being taken prisoner and released in exchange for a large ransom. Meanwhile, a month after this battle, the victorious sultan al-Muazzam Turanshah was assassinated by his Mamluks, a group of mercenaries, slave soldiers, and freed slaves of non-Arab ethnic origins (mainly Turkish, Caucasian, Eastern European, and Southeast Asian). They took control of the Sultanate of Egypt, forcing the Ayyubid dynasty to retreat to Damascus.

The Mamluk dynasty

The Mamluk dynasty (see map 9) contributed to the disappearance of the Crusader states at the end of the 13th century. The County of Tripoli, already a vassal of the rapidly expanding Mongol Empire of the Ilkhans in 1260, was attacked by the Mamluk sultan Qalawun in March 1289, who feared that the recent arrival of Genoese merchants would jeopardize the trade of the merchants of Alexandria. He laid siege to the city and used catapults. The city was taken on April 26. The city's population was massacred. Women and children were enslaved, and 1,200 prisoners were sent to Alexandria to work in the sultan's new arsenal. Two years later, Acco, the last major Crusader outpost in the "Holy Land," was also taken during the Siege of Acco in 1291. Many historians consider this event to mark the end of the Crusades.

Map 9

kingdom around 1170, there were also Samaritans, about 1,000 in Nablus, 200 in Caesarea, and 300 in Ashkelon. The Samaritan population at that time could therefore be considered larger than the Jewish population, perhaps for the only time in history.

From 1250 to 1517: the Mamluk period

Initiatives to prevent the return of the Crusaders

The Mamluks, continuing the policy of the previous Ayyubid dynasty, made the strategic decision to destroy the coastal area and ravage numerous cities, from Tyre in the north to Gaza in the south. Ports were destroyed and various materials were dumped to render them unusable. The aim was to prevent attacks from the sea, given the fear of a return of the Crusaders. This had a long-term effect on these regions, which remained sparsely populated for centuries. Partly due to the many conflicts, earthquakes, and the Black Death that struck the region at that time, the population is believed to have declined to around 200,000.

The Bahri period

During the reign of the Mamluk Sultanate, in the period known as the Bahri dynasty (1250-1382), the territory was divided into wilayas (districts), which were further subdivided into sanjaks. Palestine was part of the Damascus wilaya and was divided into three smaller sanjaks, whose capitals were Jerusalem, Gaza, and Safed (north of the Sea of Galilee). The early 14th century is considered the zenith of the Mamluk Empire, when a peace treaty ended the Mamluks' fighting against the Ilkhanid Mongols.

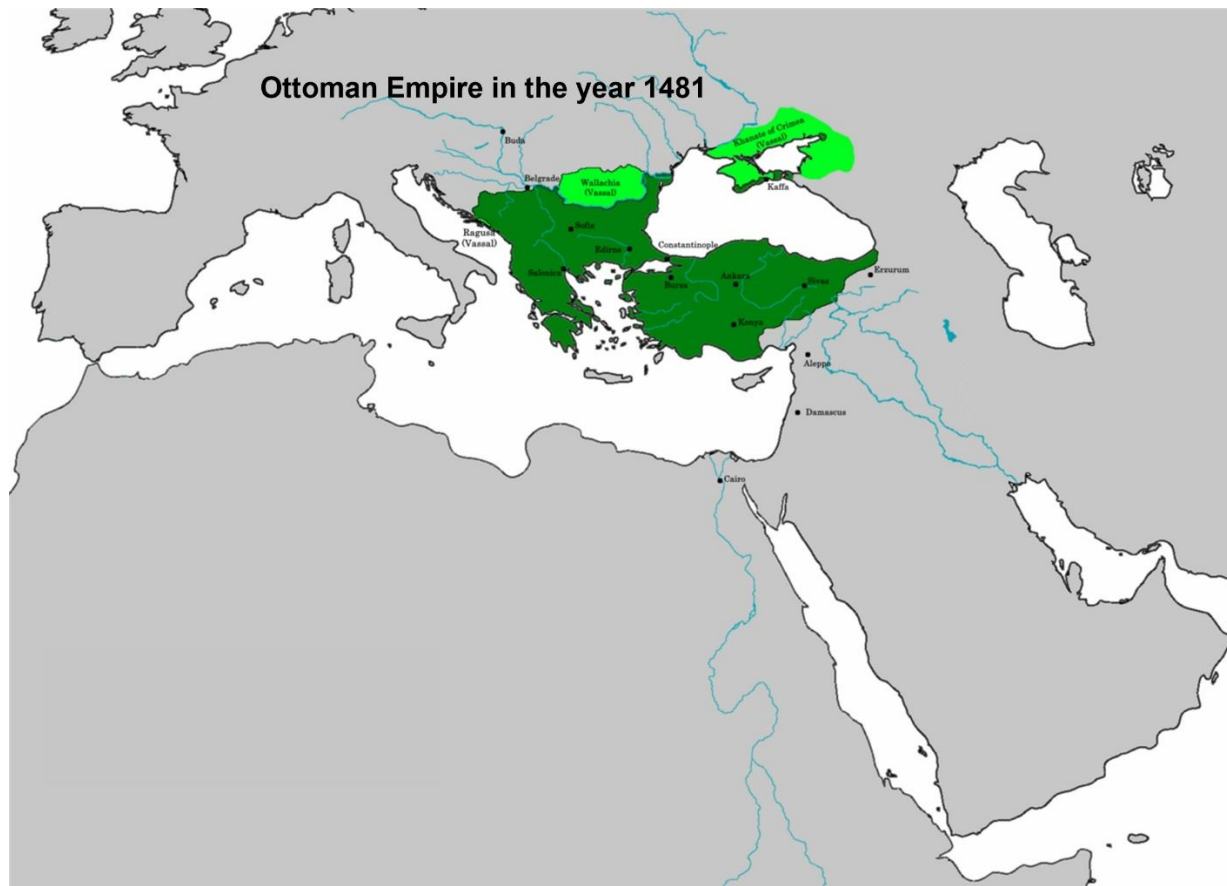
The Burji period

However, a series of internal wars between army factions and economic decline led the main cities of Palestine and Syria to revolt following the death of al-Ashraf Sha'ban. The revolt was suppressed and a coup d'état was organized by Barquq in Cairo in 1382, founding the Mamluk dynasty of the Burji (1382-1517), of Caucasian and Georgian origin. For a time, after consolidating its power, this dynasty had expansionist ambitions, completing the conquest of Cyprus in 1426. But these ambitions were to be curbed by other powers.

The rise of the Ottoman Empire

First, there was the Republic of Venice, which seized Cyprus in 1489. Then there were the Portuguese merchants who, since Vasco da Gama's voyage in 1498, threatened Mamluk trade with Asia. But above all, there was the rise of the Ottoman Empire (see map 10), or Turkish Empire, which, since the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by Memet II, thus ending the Byzantine Empire, continued its expansion by defeating the Iranian Safavid dynasty in 1514, and then attacking the Mamluk dynasty near Aleppo in 1516. Victory was all the more rapid because the Ottomans used the new technology of gunpowder, a technology shunned by the conservatives in the Mamluk army. As a result, the Ottomans only had to fight a few minor battles in the Jordan Valley and at Khan Yunis, on the road leading to the Mamluk capital in Egypt. The year 1517 marked the end of the Mamluk Empire.

Map 10



From 1517 to 1917: The Ottoman Period

The Ottoman administrative organization

After the Ottoman conquest in 1517, the territory was divided into four districts and administratively attached to the province of Damascus, under the authority of Istanbul. At the beginning of the Ottoman era, it was estimated that there were 1,000 Jewish families living in the country, mainly in Jerusalem, Nablus (Shechem), Hebron, Gaza, Safed (Tzfat), and in the villages of Galilee. The community was composed of descendants of Jews who had never left the country, as well as immigrants from North Africa and Europe.

The Ottomans retained the administrative and political organization left by the Mamluks in Palestine. Greater Syria became an *eyalet* (province) governed from Damascus, while the Palestinian region within it was divided into five *sanjaks* (provincial districts): Safed, Nablus, Jerusalem, Lajjun, and Gaza. The *sanjaks* were themselves subdivided into subdistricts called *nawahi*. For much of the 16th century, the Ottomans ruled the *eyalet* of Damascus in a centralized manner, with the Sublime Porte (imperial government) based in Istanbul playing a crucial role in maintaining public order and internal security, collecting taxes, and regulating the economy, religious affairs, and social welfare. Most of the Palestinian population, estimated at around 200,000 at the beginning of Ottoman rule, lived in villages. The largest cities were Gaza, Safed (north of the Sea of Galilee), and Jerusalem, each with a population of around 5,000 to 6,000.

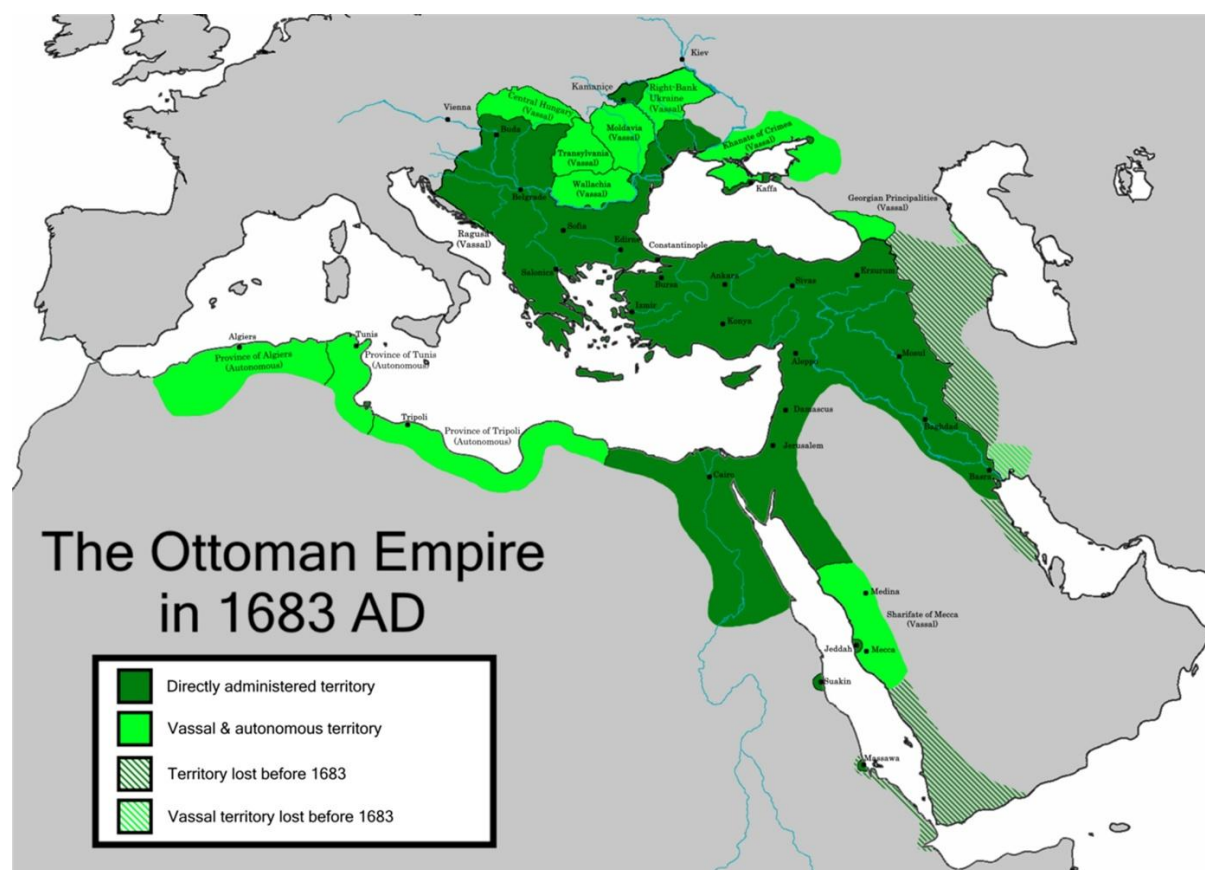
The name "Palestine" was no longer used as the official name of an administrative unit under the Ottomans, as they generally named provinces after their capitals. Nevertheless, the old name remained popular and semi-official, and many examples of its use in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries have survived; in fact, this term was

considered an alternative name for Arazi-i Muqaddas (in Ottoman Turkish, “the Holy Land”). Some jurists used the term “Filastin” in fatwas (religious edicts) without defining it, although some of these fatwas suggest that they more or less corresponded to the borders of Jund Filastin. It can be said that Jerusalem is still considered the capital of Palestine, although it has lost much of its former grandeur.

The reign of powerful families

At the end of the 16th century, direct Ottoman rule over the Damascus Eyalet weakened, partly due to revolts and other Anatolian uprisings, and a kind of decentralization took place. As a result, a new ruling elite emerged in Palestine, composed of the dynasties of three prominent families, Ridwan, Farrukh, and Turabay, whose members served as governors of the sanjaks of Gaza, Nablus, Jerusalem, and Lajjun between the late 16th and late 17th centuries. The ties between the families were strengthened through marriages, trade relations, and political and military cooperation, creating an extended dynasty that ruled over much of Palestine. When in 1622, the Druze emir (prince) of Mount Lebanon, Fakhr-al-Din II, took control of the Sanjak of Safed in northern Galilee and raised an army to take control of the coastal plain of Palestine and Jerusalem, the three great families raised an army, obtained the support of the Bedouins and the Sublime Porte, and routed the Druze forces. Once the Druze threat had been eliminated, the Sublime Porte sought to put an end to the dynasty of the three families. In addition to its concerns about their growing consolidation of power in Palestine, the Sublime Porte was frustrated by the substantial decline in revenues from the annual Hajj pilgrimage caravan (to Mecca), often commanded by a governor from one of the three families. In 1657, the Ottoman authorities launched a military expedition to Palestine to reassert imperial control over the region. Although one of the three families, the Ridwans, continued to rule in Gaza until 1690, this marked the end of a dynasty.

Map 11



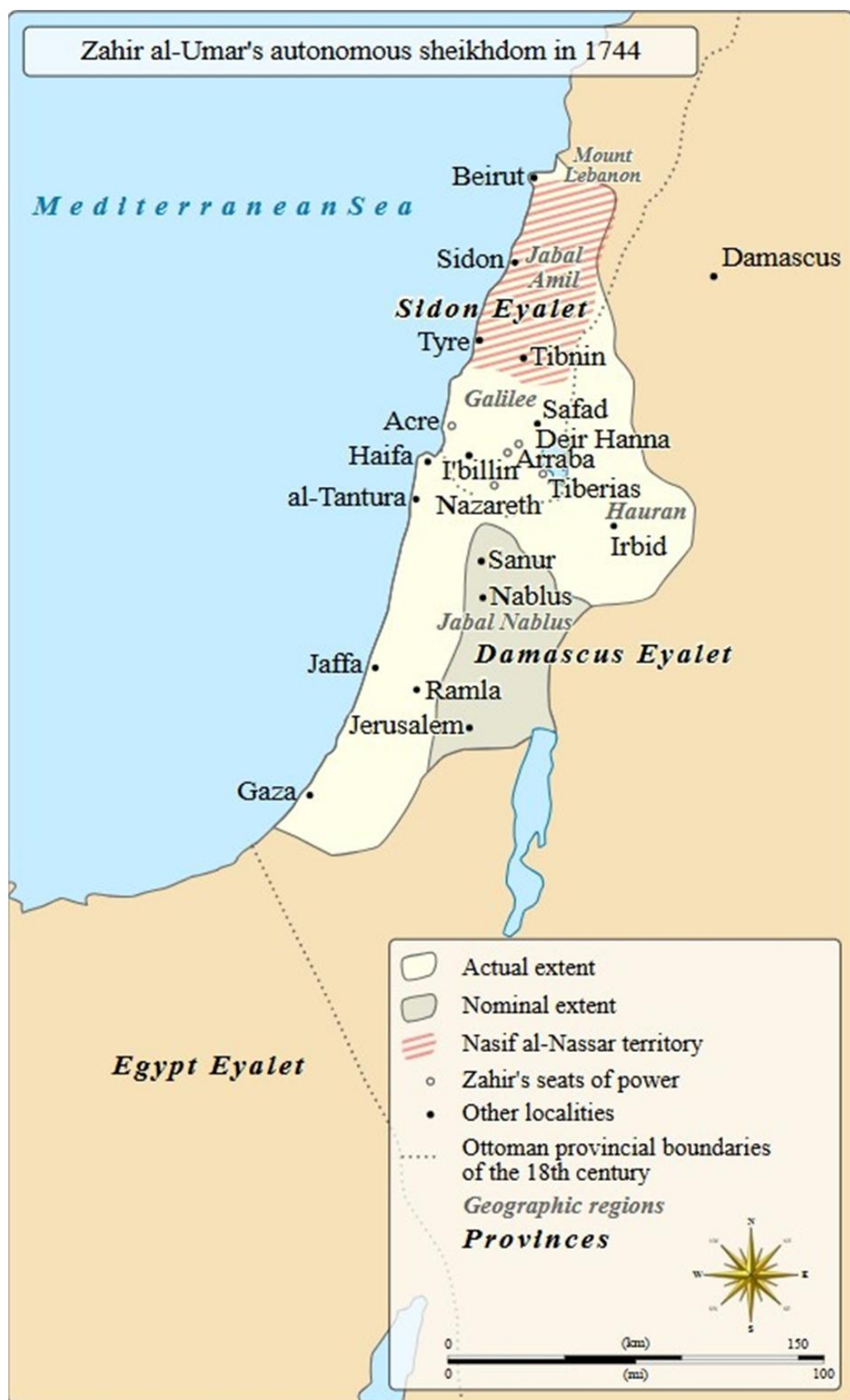
A move toward centralization

A move towards centralization was then initiated, replacing the dynasty of the three families with governors appointed by the Ottoman government, but the initiative was not a successful one. The appointed governors ignored the increasing exploitation of the population by the Janissaries (the elite infantry of the Ottoman army). Official complaints to the Sublime Porte about the latter groups exploded among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Many peasants abandoned their villages to escape exploitation, city dwellers complained about the seizure of their property, and the ulema (Muslim scholars) complained about the Janissaries' disregard for justice and the sanctity of Muslim places of worship, including the Temple Mount. In 1703, an uprising known as the Naqib al-Ashraf revolt took place in Jerusalem, led by the head of the Ashraf families, Muhammad ibn Mustafa al-Husayni, and supported by the city's notables. The house of the head of the Jerusalem government, a symbol of imperial authority, was ransacked and his translator killed by the rebels. The rebellion was suppressed in 1705.

The reign of Zahir al-Umar

Curiously, the government officials responsible for the centralization movement were behind the emergence of clans that went on to take control of Palestine. First there was the Nimr family, who settled in Nablus and, contrary to the intentions of the Sublime Porte, began to form their own local power bases in the rural hinterland of the city from the lands that had been allocated to them. Towards the end of the 18th century, they were quickly followed by the Jarrar and Tuqan families who, like the Nimrs, came from other regions of Ottoman Syria. But it was above all the Zaydani family that became a formidable force in northern Palestine. Initially, its leaders were appointed tax collectors and local law enforcement officers. In 1730, the head of the Zaydani family, Zahir al-Umar, was directly appointed governor of Tiberias, which he quickly fortified, along with other strongholds such as Deir Hanna, Arraba, and Nazareth. Between then and 1750, Zahir consolidated his control over the entire Galilee (see Map 12). He moved his headquarters to the port village of Acco, which he renovated and fortified once again. Combined with a significant improvement in overall security and social justice, Zahir's economic policies made him popular with the local population. Zahir also encouraged immigration to Palestine, and his reign attracted large numbers of Jews and Melkite and Greek Orthodox Christians from throughout Ottoman Syria, revitalizing the region's economy. Zahir founded present-day Haifa in 1769. Then, allying himself with Egyptian and Russian forces, he invaded Sidon and Damascus. By 1774, Zahir's reign stretched from Gaza to Beirut and included most of Palestine. The following year, however, a coalition of Ottoman forces under the leadership of Jazzar Pasha besieged and killed him in his headquarters in Acco.

Map 12



The reign of Jazzar Pasha

To thank him for his contribution to Zahir's elimination, the Ottoman authorities appointed Jazzar Pasha as governor of Sidon. Unlike Zahir, who was born in Galilee, Jazzar was a product of the Ottoman state and a proponent of Ottoman centralization, but he also pursued his own goals, extending his influence throughout the southern half of Ottoman Syria. Jazzar took control of Zahir's cotton monopoly and further strengthened the fortifications of Acco, where he was based. He financed his reign with revenues from the cotton trade, as well as taxes, tolls, and extortion. But in February 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte entered Palestine after conquering Egypt as part of his campaign against the Ottomans, allies of his enemy, the British Empire. He occupied Gaza and moved north along the Palestinian coastal plain, capturing Jaffa, where his forces massacred some 3,000 surrendered Ottoman soldiers and many civilians. His forces then captured Haifa and used it as a base to besiege Acco. Napoleon appealed to the Jews for support in capturing Jerusalem. He hoped to win the favor of Haim Farhi, the Jewish vizier in the service of Jazzar, whose family of merchants and bankers in Damascus was prosperous. But he was opposed by the leaders of the cities of Mount Nablus, Jenin, and Sanur. The French nevertheless emerged victorious in Galilee, but failed to conquer Acco, and this defeat at the hands of Jazzar's forces, supported by the British, forced Napoleon to withdraw from Palestine in May after suffering heavy losses. Jazzar's victory greatly enhanced his prestige. The Ottomans pursued the French into Egypt in 1800, using Gaza as their starting point.

The reign of Sulayman Pasha

Jazzar died in 1804 and was replaced as governor of Sidon by his loyal Mamluk Sulayman Pasha al-Adil. Under the leadership of Jewish vizier Farhi, Sulayman undertook a policy aimed at relaxing his predecessors' monopolies on the trade in cotton, olive oil, and grain. However, he also made Acco the only port city in the Levant authorized to export these cash crops. He adopted a policy of decentralization, refraining from interfering in the affairs of his vice-governors. In 1810, Sulayman was appointed to the Eyalet of Damascus, giving him control over most of Ottoman Syria. He also succeeded in annexing the districts of Latakia, Tripoli, and Gaza to the Eyalet of Sidon. He proved to be a skilled mediator when, in 1818, he secured a temporary peace during a civil war between several prominent families.

The reign of Abdullah Pasha

Sulayman was replaced in 1820 by Abdullah Pasha, who had been groomed for the position by the Jewish vizier Farhi. However, Abdullah had Farhi executed less than a year after taking office, following a power struggle. In 1830, the eyalet of Sidon was assigned the districts of Nablus, Jerusalem, and Hebron, thus uniting all of Palestine under a single province. Abdullah's reign was marked by declining revenues from the cotton trade, efforts to reassert Acco's monopolies, and poverty in Palestine. Nevertheless, under Abdullah, Acco remained the main force in Ottoman Syria due to instability in Damascus and the Ottomans' preoccupation with the war in Greece.

The reign of Muhammad Ali

In October 1831, Muhammad Ali of Egypt sent his modernized army, commanded by his son Ibrahim Pasha, on a campaign to annex Ottoman Syria, including Palestine. Ibrahim Pasha's forces encountered no resistance from the local inhabitants or the rural leaders of the central highlands as they entered Palestine. Acco, where Abdullah Pasha resided, was besieged and eventually surrendered in May 1832. This Egyptian domination led to significant political and administrative reforms in Palestine and Ottoman Syria in general, representing a radical change from the semi-autonomous regime that had existed until then. Thus, all of Syria was placed under a single administration, and advisory councils were created, based in the major cities and composed of religious leaders, wealthy merchants, and urban leaders. Ibrahim also instituted conscription of peasants in order to establish a centralized regime and a modern army.

Conscription and disarmament were highly unpopular among peasants and their leaders, who refused to carry out orders. The new fiscal policies also threatened the role of urban notables and rural chiefs as tax collectors, while Egypt's effective law enforcement measures threatened the livelihoods of Bedouin tribes who derived their income from extorting merchants and travelers. The various social and political groups hostile to Egyptian reforms throughout Palestine joined together in a coalition. It was this coalition that launched what became known as the peasant revolt of May 1834. By June, rebel forces had conquered most of Palestine, including Jerusalem. Muhammad Ali then arrived in Palestine and successfully negotiated a truce. But during the truce, many religious and political leaders in Jerusalem and other cities were arrested, exiled, or executed. Feeling betrayed, the rebels resumed fighting. Egyptian forces then launched a campaign to defeat the rebels at Mount Nablus, destroying 16 villages before capturing Nablus itself on July 15. The rebel leaders were executed.

Following these events, Britain sent the navy to bomb Beirut and an Anglo-Ottoman expeditionary force landed, provoking local uprisings against the Egyptian occupiers. The Egyptian army withdrew to Egypt. Muhammad Ali signed the Treaty of 1841. Great Britain returned control of the Levant to the Ottomans and was thus able to increase the extraterritorial rights that various European nations had enjoyed for centuries under the capitulations of the Ottoman Empire, so that the many nationalities of the Ottoman Empire formed a state within a state.

Palestine

From 1840 onwards, the term “Palestine” was commonly used either to refer to the consular jurisdictions of Western powers or to designate a region that generally stretched from south to north, from Rafah (southeast of Gaza) to the Litani River (now in Lebanon). The western border was the sea, and the eastern border was the ill-defined place where the Syrian desert began. In various European sources, the eastern border was located between the Jordan River and the territory slightly east of Amman. The Negeb desert was not included. Consuls were originally magistrates who judged cases involving their own citizens in foreign territories. While the jurisdictions of secular states in Europe had become territorial, the Ottomans perpetuated the legal system inherited from the Byzantine Empire. In many areas, the law was personal rather than territorial, and each citizen carried the law of his country with him wherever he went. Capitular law applied to foreigners in Palestine. Only the consular courts of the foreigners' home country had jurisdiction to judge them. This applied not only to cases involving personal status, but also to criminal and commercial cases. Thus, the Western powers had their own courts, police, colonies, schools, postal systems, religious institutions, and prisons. Consuls also extended their protection to the large communities of Jewish protégés who had settled in Palestine.

The Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities in Palestine were allowed to exercise jurisdiction over their own members in accordance with the charters granted to them. For centuries, Jews and Christians enjoyed considerable community autonomy in matters of worship, personal status jurisdiction, taxation, and the management of their schools and charitable institutions. In the 19th century, these rights were formally recognized as part of the Tanzimat reforms (administrative reorganization completed in 1876) and when the communities were placed under the protection of European public law.

Map 13

Division into vilayets (provinces) and sandjaks (districts)

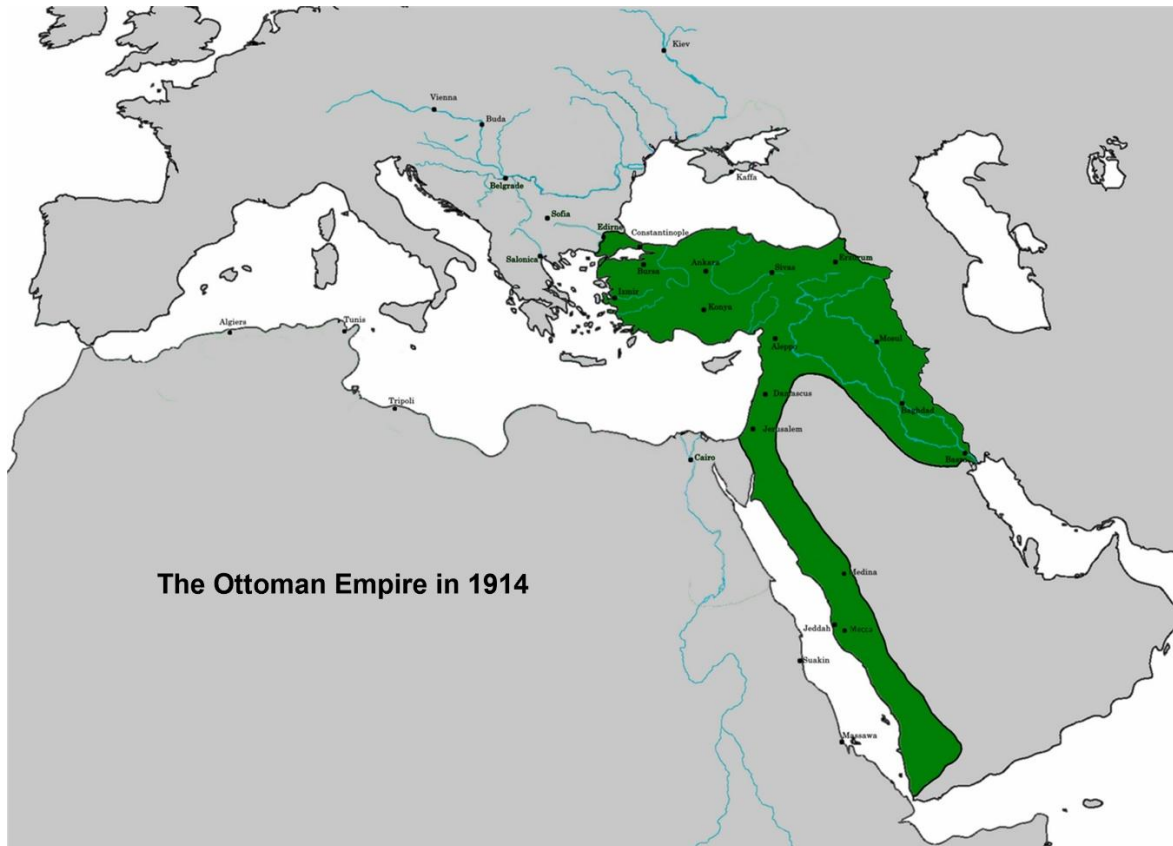


Administrative reorganization

During the reorganization of 1873, which established the administrative boundaries that remained in place until 1914, Palestine was divided into three large administrative units. The northern part, above a line connecting Jaffa to north of Jericho and the Jordan River, was assigned to the Vilayet of Beirut (borders colored in pink), subdivided into sanjaks (districts) of Acco, Beirut, and Nablus (Balqa). The southern part, from Jaffa southward, was part of the sanjak of Jerusalem, a special district under the direct authority of Istanbul. Its southern borders were vague, but extended eastward to the Sinai Peninsula and northward to the Negeb Desert. Most of the central and southern Negeb was assigned to the Vilayet of Hejaz, which also included the Sinai Peninsula and western Arabia.

The Ottomans considered “Filistin” to be an abstract term referring to the “Holy Land,” rather than a term applied consistently to a clearly defined area. Among the educated Arab public, Filastin was a common concept, referring either to the entire “Holy Land,” to the Jerusalem sanjak alone, or simply to the region around Ramlah. The publication of the daily newspaper Falastin (Palestine) from 1911 onwards is an example of the growing popularity of this concept.

Map 14



Zionism

The rise of Zionism, the national movement of the Jewish people, began in Europe in the 19th century with the aim of recreating a Jewish state in Palestine, restoring the original homeland of the Jewish people, and reducing the Palestinian Arab presence as much as possible. This movement is said to have been founded by Theodor Herzl with his pamphlet “Der Judenstaat” (The Jewish State), a movement in response to anti-Semitism and part of the intellectual and secular “Enlightenment” movement among Jews that condemned religious conservatism. The end

of the 19th century saw the beginning of Zionist immigration. A first wave of migration, mainly from Eastern Europe and Yemen, took place in 1881-1882 and continued until 1903, bringing in about 25,000 Jews. In 1891, a group of Jerusalem notables sent a petition to the central Ottoman government in Istanbul demanding an end to Jewish immigration and the sale of land to Jews. The second wave took place between 1904 and 1914, during which time approximately 35,000 Jews immigrated, mainly from Russia and Poland.

World War I

The period from 1914 to 1918 is considered to be the theater of World War I. The Ottoman Empire entered the war alongside the Central Powers and the German Empire, which were defeated. Ottoman participation in the war began with the joint German-Ottoman surprise attack on the Black Sea coast of the Russian Empire on October 29, 1914. Following this attack, the Russian Empire (November 2, 1914) and its allies, France (November 5, 1914) and the British Empire (November 5, 1914), declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Also on November 5, 1914, the British government changed the status of the Khedivate of Egypt and Cyprus, which were *de jure* of the Ottoman territories before the war, turning them into British protectorates. In 1915, the Ottoman government and Kurdish tribes in the region began exterminating the Armenian population, resulting in the deaths of nearly 1.5 million Armenians in what is considered the Armenian genocide. In 1916, the Arab revolt, which began in 1916 with British support, turned the tide against the Ottomans on the Middle Eastern front: the goal of the Arab nationalists was to create a single, unified, independent Arab state stretching from Aleppo, Syria, to Aden, Yemen, which the British promised to recognize. The rebellion thus succeeded in expelling the Ottoman military presence from much of the Hejaz (southeastern Arabia) and Transjordan. It eventually took Damascus as well and established a short-lived monarchy.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration

Under the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, it was planned that most of Palestine, once conquered from the Ottoman Empire, would become an international zone not under the direct colonial control of France or Great Britain. Shortly thereafter, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour issued the Balfour Declaration, which promised to establish a “Jewish national home” in Palestine, thereby contradicting the British promise of 1915-1916, which contained a commitment to form a united Arab state in exchange for the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. This commitment was also violated by the subsequent partition of the region into British and French mandates of the League of Nations under the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916, which became the true cornerstone of the geopolitics structuring the entire region. Similarly, the Balfour Declaration was seen by Jewish nationalists as the cornerstone of a future Jewish homeland.

On December 9, 1917, the British Expeditionary Force in Egypt, commanded by Edmund Allenby, captured Jerusalem. Then, in September 1918, it defeated Turkish forces at Megiddo, in northern Palestine, and subsequently occupied the entire Levant. On October 31, 1918, Turkey surrendered.

From 1920 to 1948: the British Mandate

The idea of a national Jewish homeland

Following World War I and the British occupation of the region, the major Allied and Associated Powers drafted a mandate on the administration of Middle Eastern territories by the British and French, to be approved by the League of Nations. Britain would administer Palestine on behalf of the League of Nations. The preamble to the mandate stated:

Considering that the principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory shall be responsible for implementing the declaration made initially on November 2, 1917, by His Majesty's British Government and adopted by the said Powers, in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

Map 15



The prospect of British rule caused dissatisfaction among many. First there were the Arabs, disappointed that the British had not kept their promise of a great Arab reunification. But there were also the Christians. In 1919, Pope Benedict XIV, addressing a consistory of cardinals, expressed concern that the “holy places” of Palestine were falling into the hands of “infidels” (Jews and Arabs), and in 1921 he sent a “mémoire” to the Council of the League of Nations asking that the rights of Catholics to the holy places be recognized and respected, noting that if most of Palestine were given to the Jewish people, it would deal a severe blow to the religious attachment of Catholics to that land. In April 1920, violent Arab riots against Jews broke out in Jerusalem, riots stemming from tensions over the prospect of Zionist immigration. Nevertheless, on July 24, 1922, the League of Nations went ahead and approved the terms of the British Mandate over Palestine and Transjordan. On September 16, the League also approved Lord Balfour's memorandum on a Jewish national home, specifying measures to be taken to support Jewish immigration while excluding Transjordan (the eastern part of the Jordan River) from this national home.

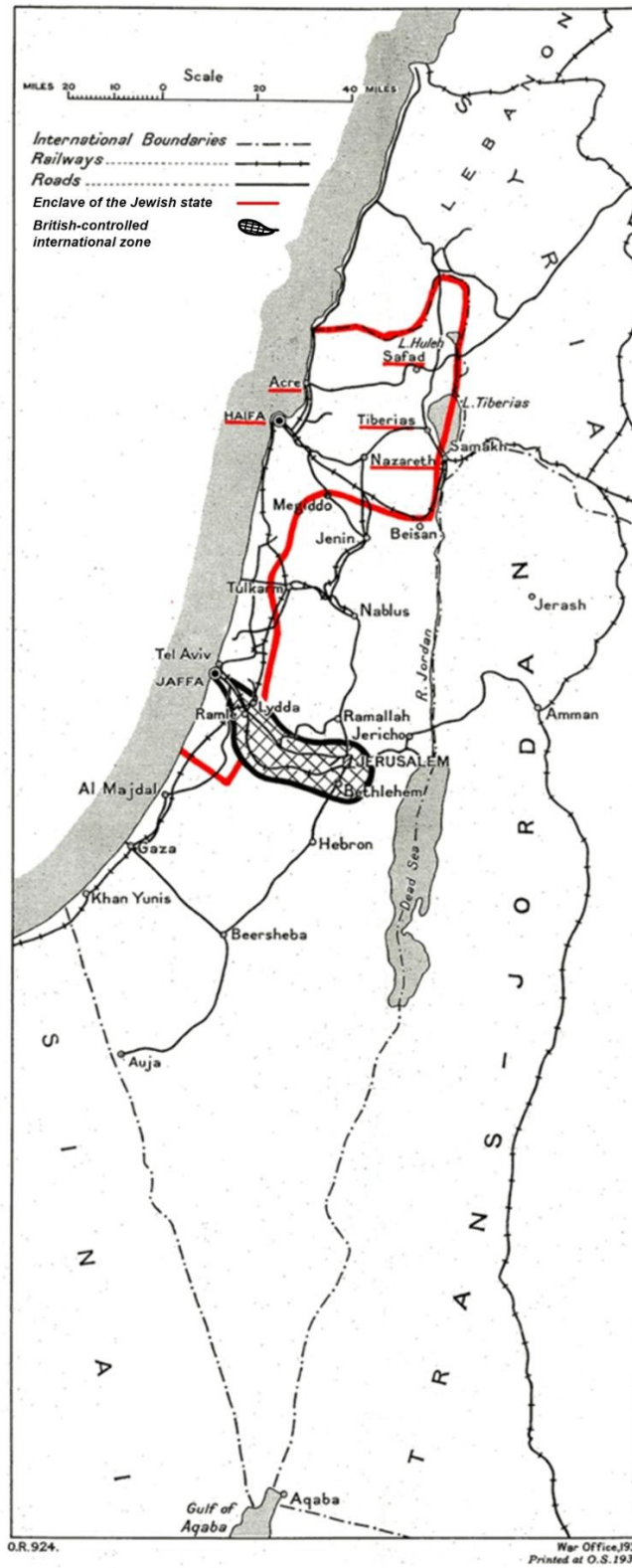
This is how the British facilitated the Zionist colonization of Palestine. According to the 1922 census, the population of Palestine was 763,550, of which 89% were Arabs and 11% were Jews. In 1933, with Hitler now Chancellor of Germany and anti-Semitic sentiment spreading throughout the country, an agreement, known as the “Haavara Agreement,” was concluded between the Third Reich and the Zionist Federation to facilitate the emigration of German Jews, enabling 62,000 Jews to enter Palestine in 1935. All this had an impact on the economy. Between 1922 and 1947, the annual growth rate of the Jewish sector of the economy was 13.2%, mainly due to immigration and foreign capital, while that of the Arab sector was 6.5%. By 1936, the Jewish sector had eclipsed the Arab sector, and Jews earned 2.6 times more than Arabs. Furthermore, in 1932, the literacy rate was 86% for Jews compared to 22% for Arabs, although Arab literacy was steadily increasing.

The Arab revolt and the Peel Commission

The social upheaval in Palestine led to the Arab revolt of 1936-1939. The movement sought independence from British colonial rule and an end to British support for Zionism, particularly Jewish immigration and the sale of land to Jews. Faced with this revolt, which began with a general strike, the British government created the Peel Commission in 1937 to examine the issue. This commission concluded with a proposal to partition the territory into two states, Arab and Jewish (see Map 16). Arab leaders opposed this plan, proposing instead the creation of an independent Palestinian state, “with the protection of all the legitimate rights of Jews and other minorities and the safeguarding of reasonable British interests.” Zionist leaders were open to the principle of partitioning the territory but opposed the plan as proposed, while wishing to continue exploring a peaceful settlement within the framework of an undivided Palestine. Hesitant in its response to the Peel Commission report, the British government created the “Woodhead Commission” in 1938 to examine the report and make recommendations. This new commission rejected the Peel plan, mainly on the grounds that it could not be implemented without a massive forced transfer of Arabs. From then on, the British government opted to severely repress the Arab revolt by deploying 100,000 soldiers: this involved imprisonment without charge or trial, curfews, floggings, house demolitions, and collective punishments against villages and families.

Map 16

1937 - Peel Commission's proposed division



The 1936-1939 revolt was a disaster for the Palestinians. Due to British repression, the Palestinians found themselves without local leadership, as most of their leaders had fled the country or been deported by the authorities. Infighting between rival families exacerbated divisions within Palestinian society, causing irreparable damage, while the Zionists mobilized and cooperation between the British and the Zionists intensified.

World War II

When World War II broke out, the Jewish population sided with Great Britain. Palestinian Arabs were not unanimous in their position toward the belligerents. A number of leaders and public figures considered an Axis victory a likely outcome and a means of recovering Palestine from the Zionists and the British. Approximately 6,000 Palestinian Arabs and 30,000 Palestinian Jews joined the British forces. In 1942, faced with fears over Rommel's advance in North Africa and the prospect that he might conquer Palestine, the British army authorized the creation of the Palmach (literally "strike force"), a highly trained Jewish regular unit belonging to the Haganah (literally "defense," a Jewish paramilitary force created at the beginning of the British Mandate in 1920 to protect the Zionists). In 1944, Menachem Begin took over the Irgun (a Zionist paramilitary force, an offshoot of the Haganah), determined to force the British government to withdraw its troops completely from Palestine. But the Jewish Agency for Israel, the operational arm of the World Zionist Organization, opposed his action.

With the end of World War II, the British army found itself in a crisis situation until the end of its mandate in Palestine on May 15, 1948. First, it was confronted with Jewish paramilitary organizations such as the Irgun, the Haganah, and the Lehi (a Zionist paramilitary organization created in 1942 to expel the British), which launched attacks against strategic installations and British forces and officials, to the point that British public opinion demanded the return of the "boys". But above all, it faced a financial crisis. Maintaining more than 100,000 men in Palestine weighed heavily on the British economy. Added to this was the delay by the US Congress in granting a loan to avoid bankruptcy, a delay justified by the British refusal to keep the promise made to Truman to allow 100,000 Holocaust survivors to emigrate to Palestine. In early 1947, the British government announced its intention to end the mandate and asked the United Nations General Assembly to make recommendations regarding the future of the country.

From 1947 to 1949: Arab-Jewish conflicts

UN two-state partition plan

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly, by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions, adopted Resolution 181 (II) recommending partition with an economic union of Mandatory Palestine after the end of the British Mandate. The plan called for the partition of Palestine into an "independent Arab state alongside a Jewish state, and a special international regime for the city of Jerusalem" (see Map 17). Jerusalem was to include Bethlehem. The plan aimed to resolve the conflicting goals and claims of two competing movements: Palestinian nationalism and Jewish nationalism in the form of Zionism. Jewish organizations collaborated with the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) during the deliberations, while Palestinian Arab leaders boycotted it. Critics of the plan considered the proposal pro-Zionist because it allocated most of the land to the Jewish state even though Palestinian Arabs outnumbered the Jewish population two to one. Zionist leaders, particularly David Ben-Gurion, viewed acceptance of the plan as a tactical step and a springboard for future territorial expansion throughout Palestine. In the end, Zionist leaders accepted the plan, while Palestinian Arab leaders rejected it and all independent Muslim and Arab states voted against it.

Map 17



The UN resolution was the catalyst for a large-scale civil war that began the very next day, November 30, 1947. The Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine clashed (the latter supported by the Arab Liberation Army) while the British, who were obliged to maintain order, stood back, intervening only occasionally. The offensive by the Yishuv forces (literally “settlement,” referring to the Jews who had been in Palestine since the 19th century) in April-May 1948 defeated the Arab forces and Palestinian Arab society collapsed. By the time the armistice was signed, some 700,000 Palestinians caught up in the turmoil had fled or been driven from their homes. This event is now known to Palestinians as the Nakba (the catastrophe).

Creation of the State of Israel

On May 14, 1948, the date that marked the end of the British Mandate, David Ben-Gurion signed the document declaring the creation of a Jewish state, to be called the State of Israel. The next morning, Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, and Iraqi expeditionary forces entered Palestine, taking control of Arab areas and attacking Israeli forces and settlements. The Jews, who had opted for a defensive strategy until then, changed their strategy and followed Plan Dalet (the letter D in the Hebrew alphabet). This plan, commissioned by the Jewish Agency and Ben-Gurion and finalized in March 1948, specifically called for taking control of areas where Jewish populations lived, including those outside the borders of the Jewish state proposed by the UN. It involved besieging Palestinian Arab villages, bombing city neighborhoods, forcibly expelling their inhabitants, burning fields and houses, and detonating TNT in the rubble to prevent any return. The ten months of fighting that followed took place mainly in the British Mandate territory, the Sinai Peninsula, and southern Lebanon, interspersed with several periods of truce. The most intense fighting was between Jordanian and Israeli forces for control of Jerusalem.

At the end of the war, the State of Israel controlled the entire territory that the UN had proposed for a Jewish state, as well as nearly 60% of the territory proposed for an Arab state, including the regions of Jaffa, Lod, and Ramla, the Upper Galilee, parts of the Negeb, the western coast up to the city of Gaza, and a wide strip along the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road (map 18). Israel also took control of West Jerusalem, which was originally intended by the UN plan to be part of an international zone for Jerusalem and its environs. Jordan took control of East Jerusalem and what became known as the West Bank, which it annexed the following year. The territory known today as the Gaza Strip was occupied by Egypt (see Map 18). Neighboring Arab countries signed armistice agreements in 1949 (February 24 with Egypt, March 23 with Lebanon, April 3 with Jordan, July 20 with Syria) that ended the war and recognized Israel's new borders de facto. During this phase, an additional 350,000 Arab Palestinians fled or were expelled from the conquered areas.

Map 18

1949 Armistice Lines

■ Jordanian occupied ■ Egyptian occupied □ Armistice lines



The creation of the Palestinian National Council

Meanwhile, on the very day that the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, the Arab League announced that it would establish a single Arab civil administration throughout Palestine. This government was created by the Arab League on September 22, 1948, during the Arab-Israeli War. The Palestinian National Council (PNC) met in Gaza and declared Palestine's independence on October 1, 1948. It was quickly recognized by all members of the Arab League, with the exception of Jordan, which had ambitions to occupy the entire area west of the Jordan River, in addition to the West Bank. Although the government's jurisdiction was declared to cover the entire former Mandate of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, its effective jurisdiction was limited to the Gaza Strip. This government was under the official protection of Egypt, but on the other hand, it had no executive role, but rather a mainly political and symbolic one. Its importance gradually declined, particularly due to the transfer of the seat of government from Gaza to Cairo following Israeli incursions in late 1948.

From 1949 to 1967: the Israeli government and territorial expansion

The new Israeli government

The Parliament, the Knesset, composed of 120 seats, first met in Tel Aviv, then moved to Jerusalem after the 1949 ceasefire. In January 1949, Israel held its first elections. David Ben-Gurion, leader of a labor-socialist party, was appointed Prime Minister and formed a coalition (all governments were coalitions, as no party ever obtained a majority in the Knesset).

On January 23, 1950, the Knesset passed a motion declaring Jerusalem the capital of the State of Israel. That same year, the Knesset passed the Law of Return, which granted all Jews and those of Jewish descent (Jewish grandparents), as well as their spouses, the right to settle in Israel and obtain citizenship. As a result, between 1948 and 1951, Israel's population doubled due to immigration. A total of 700,000 Jews settled in Israel, some 300,000 of them from Asia (more than 100,000 from Iraq) and North Africa as part of the Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries. The other immigrants came from Europe, including more than 270,000 from Eastern Europe, mainly Romania and Poland. Almost all Jewish immigrants could be considered refugees, but only 136,000 of them, from Central Europe, had international certificates, as they were among the 250,000 Jews registered by the Allies as displaced persons after World War II and living in displaced persons camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy. In 1958, the population of Israel stood at 2 million.

This massive immigration strained public finances, as many immigrants were refugees without money, living in tents and makeshift shelters. The financial pressure on the new state led Ben-Gurion to negotiate a dispute reparations agreement with West Germany. In 1952, Israel and West Germany signed an agreement covering the next 14 years, under which the latter would pay the equivalent of US\$714 million to Israel. In addition, since 1950, the Israeli government had been issuing Israeli bonds to American and Canadian Jews. By 1957, bond sales accounted for 35% of Israel's special development budget. The proceeds from these sources were invested in industrial and agricultural development projects, enabling Israel to become economically self-sufficient.

The Suez Canal Crisis

In 1956, Egyptian President Nasser, who was becoming increasingly pro-Soviet, announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal (owned by France and Britain), which was Egypt's main source of foreign currency. Egypt also blocked the Gulf of Aqaba, preventing Israel from accessing the Red Sea. Faced with this situation, Israel, France, and Britain devised a plan: Israel would attack Egypt, then Britain and France would call on both sides to withdraw, and when Egypt refused, as was certain to happen, they would invade the country to take control of the canal. Israeli forces, commanded by General Moshe Dayan, attacked Egypt on October 29, 1956. The allied plan went ahead as planned after Nasser refused to withdraw from the conflict. But the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion on November 5 sparked an outcry at the UN, with the United States and the USSR agreeing for once to denounce the actions of Israel, Britain, and France. A ceasefire request was reluctantly accepted on November 7. Nasser emerged victorious from the conflict, but the Israeli army realized that it did not need British or French support to conquer the Sinai and that it could do so in a matter of days. Israeli political leaders also understood that, in order to be successful, a military operation had to be carried out at lightning speed, before international political pressure could intervene.

The Six-Day War

On May 17, 1967, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan massed troops along the Israeli borders, and Egypt closed the Strait of Tiran (the southern tip of the Red Sea) to Israeli shipping. Nasser demanded that UN peacekeeping forces leave the Sinai, threatening to unleash all-out war. On May 26, Nasser declared, "The battle will be general, and our fundamental objective will be to destroy Israel." Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq signed defense pacts, and Iraqi troops began to deploy in Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Algeria also announced that it would send troops to Egypt. For Israel, the closure of the Strait of Tiran was a *casus belli*. The government mobilized its civilian reserves and created a national unity coalition, including Menachem Begin's party for the first time. Moshe Dayan (chief of staff during the Sinai War) was appointed Minister of Defense. On the morning of June 5, 1967, the Israeli Air Force launched

preemptive strikes that first destroyed the Egyptian Air Force and then, later that day, the Jordanian and Syrian air forces. By June 11, the Arab forces were in disarray, and all parties accepted the ceasefire called for in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 235 and 236. Israel took control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank of the Jordan River, formerly controlled by Jordan. East Jerusalem was annexed by Israel (see Map 19). Residents were granted permanent resident status and the opportunity to apply for Israeli citizenship. The annexation was not recognized internationally.

Map 19

After the 1967 War

■ Land occupied by Israel in 1967



After 1967, the Soviet bloc (with the exception of Romania) broke off relations with Israel. Anti-Semitic purges encouraged the last Jews in Poland to settle in Israel. Growing anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and enthusiasm for the 1967 victory led to a wave of requests from Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel, although most were denied exit visas. But in Israel, for the first time since the end of the British Mandate, the victory in the Six-Day War allowed Jews to visit the Old City of Jerusalem and pray at the Western Wall (the holiest site in Judaism), to which the Jordanians had denied them access in violation of the 1949 armistice agreement. In Hebron, Jews were able to access the Cave of the Patriarchs. A third Jewish holy site, Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, also became accessible. The oil fields of the Sinai enabled Israel to achieve energy self-sufficiency.

From 1967 to 1987: the various expressions of the Arab-Israeli conflict

Several attacks against Israel

The period following the Six-Day War saw an increase in hostile actions expressing Arab frustration with the political situation. In early 1969, Egypt stepped up its bombing of Israeli positions along the Suez Canal. In retaliation, Israeli aircraft carried out deep strikes into Egypt during the “War of Attrition” of 1969-1970 and, in July 1970, shot down five Soviet fighter jets that were assisting the Egyptians in the war. In August 1970, a ceasefire was agreed.

During the 1972 Munich Olympics, two members of the Israeli team were killed and nine others taken hostage by Palestinian terrorists, while a failed German rescue attempt resulted in the deaths of the other hostages and five of the eight hijackers.

On October 6, 1973, while Israel was celebrating Yom Kippur (literally, Day of Atonement), the Syrian and Egyptian armies launched a well-planned surprise attack against the unprepared Israeli Defense Forces. The small remaining contingent of Israeli armored forces in the Golan Heights managed to repel the Syrians. Meanwhile, in Egypt, although Arab forces had conquered a strip of territory in the Sinai, Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal, trapping the Egyptian Third Army completely isolated in the Sinai. The war cost the lives of more than 2,000 Israelis and resulted in considerable military expenditure for both sides, prompting all parties to seek negotiations. Thanks to the intensive diplomatic efforts of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, a disengagement agreement with the Egyptian government, followed by one with the Syrian government, was signed on May 31, 1974. It should be noted that in November 1974, the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization, founded in 1964 with the aim of creating an Arab state on the entire territory of the former British Mandate of Palestine, advocating the elimination of Israel) was granted observer status at the UN, and Yasser Arafat addressed the General Assembly.

In July 1976, militants from the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and German revolutionaries hijacked an Air France plane and kidnapped the Jewish passengers, forcing the plane to land in Uganda. The Israeli government launched Operation Entebbe, in which Israeli commandos killed all the hijackers and 45 Ugandan soldiers, as well as 11 Ugandans, rescuing 102 of the 105 hostages.

In March 1978, eleven armed Lebanese Palestinians reached Israel by boat and hijacked a bus carrying families on an excursion, killing 38 people, including 13 children. The attackers opposed the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. Three days later, Israeli forces crossed the Lebanese border and launched Operation Litani. After the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 425, calling for Israeli withdrawal and the creation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Israel withdrew its troops.

Camp David Summit

But the defining event of this period was the election of Anwar Sadat as president of Egypt in November 1977, who ended 30 years of hostility with Israel by visiting Jerusalem at the invitation of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Sadat's two-day visit, which included a speech to the Knesset, marked a turning point in the history of the conflict. In September 1978, US President Jimmy Carter invited President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin to join him at Camp David; on September 11, they agreed on a framework for peace between Israel and Egypt, as well as comprehensive peace in the Middle East. This framework defined the broad principles that would guide negotiations between Israel and the Arab states. It also established guidelines for a transitional regime of full autonomy for Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. The treaty was signed on March 26, 1979, by Begin and Sadat, with Carter signing as a witness. Under this treaty,

Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in April 1982 (see Map 20). As a result of this agreement, Israel and Egypt became the two largest recipients of U.S. military and financial aid.

Map 20

After Israel-Egypt peace treaty, 1982

■ Land occupied by Israel - - - Armistice lines



Furious at this peace treaty, the Arab League suspended Egypt from the organization and moved its headquarters from Cairo to Tunis. And Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by fundamentalist Islamist members of the Egyptian army who opposed peace with Israel. The conflict then shifted to Lebanon, which had become the base of the PLO. In June 1982, following the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador to Great Britain, the Israeli army invaded the southern half of Lebanon to drive out the PLO. This invasion, known as the 1982 Lebanon War, led to the Israeli army occupying Beirut, the only Arab capital to have been occupied by Israel. Part of the Shiite and Christian population of southern Lebanon initially welcomed the Israelis, as they had been mistreated by PLO forces, but over time Lebanese resentment toward the Israeli occupation grew and the Shiites gradually became radicalized under Iranian influence. In August 1982, the PLO withdrew its forces from Lebanon (to settle in Tunisia).

The Israeli army partially withdrew from Lebanon in 1985. However, this partial withdrawal did not end the conflict, as the Shiite organization Hezbollah, based in Lebanon, had become a growing threat to Israel.

Two demographic developments are worth noting during these two decades. First, with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, 40,000 Iranian Jews emigrated to Israel. Earlier, in 1968, Moshe Levinger led a group of religious Zionists who established the first Jewish settlement, a town near Hebron called Kiryat Arba. Subsequently, in 1974, religious Zionist supporters of the teachings of Abraham Isaac Kook formed the Gush Emunim movement (literally, the Bloc of the Faithful, an ultra-nationalist and fundamentalist religious movement) and launched an organized campaign to colonize the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Menahem Begin, throughout his time in the Knesset, assured them of the government's support, thus laying the groundwork for intense conflict with the Palestinian population in the occupied territories.

From 1987 to today: Palestinian uprisings and the failures of peace efforts

The First Intifada

The expansion of Israeli settlements and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip sparked the first Intifada (literally “uprising”) in 1987, motivated by the collective frustration of Palestinians with the military occupation, which was then approaching its twentieth year. The Intifada began on December 9, 1987, when an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) truck collided with a civilian car in the Jabalia refugee camp, killing four Palestinian workers. The Palestinians saw this as a deliberate act. This was followed by demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience and violence, the erection of barricades, the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, general strikes, boycotts of Israeli civil administration institutions in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and an economic boycott consisting of refusing to work in Israeli settlements on Israeli products, refusing to pay taxes, and refusing to drive Palestinian cars registered in Israel. Israel deployed some 80,000 soldiers in response. In six years (1988-1994), the Israeli army killed between 1,162 and 1,204 Palestinians. On the Israeli side, 100 civilians and 60 soldiers were killed, often by militants outside the control of the Intifada, and more than 1,400 Israeli civilians and 1,700 soldiers were wounded. Intra-Palestinian violence also marked the Intifada, with mass executions of approximately 822 Palestinians killed for allegedly collaborating with Israel. Human rights violations committed by Israeli troops led a group of Israelis to create B'Tselem (literally “image [of God]”), an organization dedicated to raising awareness and enforcing human rights requirements in Israel.

Demographically, in May 1991, 15,000 Ethiopian Jews emigrated to Israel, and in October of the same year, Mikhail Gorbachev finally allowed Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel. All of this put financial pressure on the country. However, George H. W. Bush, then President of the United States, who was seeking to pacify the region after the Allied victory in the Gulf War and had organized the Madrid Conference (October 30-November 1, 1991) bringing together the Lebanese, Jordanians, Syrians, and Palestinians, asked the Israelis to join, promising financial support. The Madrid Conference laid the groundwork for the Oslo Accords that would follow.

The Oslo Accords

In 1992, Yitzhak Rabin was elected prime minister on a promise to pursue peace. This led to secret negotiations beginning in Oslo. It should be remembered that in 1978, the Camp David Accords, signed by Anwar Sadat, Menachem Begin, and Jimmy Carter, created a “Framework for Peace in the Middle East” and provided for autonomy for the local inhabitants (Palestinians) of the West Bank and Gaza. At the time, some 7,400 Jewish settlers lived in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) and 500 in Gaza, but their numbers in the West Bank were growing rapidly. Furthermore, at the time, Israel considered the PLO a terrorist organization and refused to negotiate with the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Israel preferred to negotiate with Egypt and Jordan, as well as with the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. Thus,

exceptionally, while the ultimate goal at Camp David was a peace treaty between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, the Oslo negotiations took place directly between Israel and the PLO and aimed to conclude a peace treaty between these two groups.

The Oslo Accords are divided into two agreements. First, there is Oslo I, signed on September 13, 1993, in Washington by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, with Bill Clinton as a witness, providing for the creation of a provisional Palestinian government, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA); as well as the withdrawal of the Israeli Defense Forces from certain parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It should be noted that this temporary arrangement would last five years, after which a permanent agreement would be negotiated (starting in May 1996 at the latest). Outstanding issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, security, and borders, would be part of the “permanent status negotiations” during this period. Then there was Oslo II, signed on September 28, 1995, in Taba (on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt) by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, with Bill Clinton as a witness, creating Areas A (urban areas), B (rural areas), and C (Israeli settlements, the Jordan Valley, and areas connecting Palestinian communities) in the West Bank, with the Palestinian Authority receiving limited powers and responsibilities in Areas A (civil and security affairs) and B (civil affairs). This agreement aimed to establish a provisional Palestinian Authority responsible for the administrative autonomy of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a transitional period not exceeding five years, with a view to reaching a permanent settlement based on Resolutions 242 (the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in which all states in the region can live in security) and 338 (calling in 1973 for a ceasefire in the Yom Kippur War) of the Security Council. It should be noted that in this agreement, the PLO removed from its constitution the article calling for the expulsion of all Jews who had emigrated after 1917 and the elimination of Israel, and thereby recognized Israel's right to exist.

Unsurprisingly, Hamas and other Palestinian factions rejected this agreement, which was followed by suicide bombings against Israel, leading to the construction of a barrier around Gaza to prevent these attacks. And on November 4, 1995, a religious right-wing Zionist opponent of the Oslo Accords assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Nevertheless, the Oslo Accords led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority, the government that would exercise partial civil control over the Palestinian enclaves of the West Bank and Gaza (until 2006).

Map 21

Territory of the Palestinian Authority



The Palestinian Authority was supposed to last for a transitional period of five years, during which a permanent agreement would be negotiated. However, the reality on the ground deeply disappointed both sides with regard to the Oslo process. Palestinians' freedom of movement deteriorated between 1993 and 2000. Israelis and Palestinians blamed each other for the failure of the Oslo peace process. In the five years following the signing, 405 Palestinians and 256 Israelis were killed. Faced with this situation, Bill Clinton invited Palestinian Authority

President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to a summit from July 11 to 25, 2000, at Camp David. The summit was a failure. The points of disagreement primarily concerned territory, with the Palestinians demanding 100% of the occupied territories and the Israelis offering only 73% of the West Bank and 100% of Gaza. In addition, the West Bank would be divided into four cantons, separated from each other by Israeli territory, which, in the eyes of the Palestinians, would make it resemble Bantustan in South Africa. But the biggest obstacle was the status of East Jerusalem, the site of the Temple Mount for Jews and the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims: both groups claimed full sovereignty over the site. Finally, the dispute concerned the right of return for Palestinians who had fled or been expelled during the 1948 war, a number that stood at around 725,000 at the time but now perhaps represented around 4 million people.

The Second Intifada

The failure of the Camp David summit created the conditions for the second Intifada. On September 28, 2000, Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon and a delegation from the Likud party, escorted by hundreds of Israeli riot police, visited the Temple Mount, widely considered the third holiest site in Islam. Israel has claimed sovereignty over the Mount and the rest of East Jerusalem since 1980, and the entire complex is considered the holiest site in Judaism. The stated purpose of Sharon's visit was to assert the right of all Israelis to visit the Temple Mount. Shortly after Sharon's departure, angry demonstrations organized by Palestinians in Jerusalem escalated into riots. Israeli security forces responded with extreme violence, killing more than 100 Palestinian demonstrators in the first few weeks. This marked the beginning of a period of increased violence in Palestine and Israel. The violence, including shootings, suicide bombings, and military operations, continued for five years until the 2005 Sharm el-Sheikh summit (a city in the southern Sinai Peninsula), which brought an end to the hostilities. During this second Intifada, Hezbollah stepped up its attacks from southern Lebanon, causing much of the Jewish public and Israeli political leaders to lose confidence in the Palestinian Authority as a partner for peace.

In the midst of this second Intifada, after Hamas carried out a suicide bombing on March 27, 2002, at the Park Hotel in Netanya, Israel, killing 30 civilians and wounding 140, the Israeli army responded by destroying virtually the entire Palestinian public administration, reestablishing military control in the West Bank, including Areas A and B under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority according to the Oslo Accords. So the United States, under the presidency of George W. Bush, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia formed a "Middle East Quartet" in order to save the peace process. This Quartet proposed a "road map," the final text of which was published on April 30, 2003. This road map proposed only objectives, without going into detail, and the entire process was to take place in three phases. The objectives were: 1) to end violence; 2) to cease all settlement activity; 3) to reform Palestinian institutions; 4) to accept Israel's right to exist; 5) to create a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; and 6) to reach a final settlement of all issues by 2005. This was the first time an American president had accepted the idea of a Palestinian state. Unfortunately, the process reached an impasse at the beginning of phase I and the plan was never implemented. But that did not prevent Israel from implementing its unilateral disengagement plan to withdraw all its settlers and most of its military presence from the Gaza Strip in 2004, and to dismantle four settlements in the northern West Bank in September 2005.

By February 2005, the second Intifada had claimed more than 5,000 Palestinian and Israeli lives and had a significant impact on the economies and societies of both countries. Mahmoud Abbas, who had just been elected president of the Palestinian Authority following the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004, immediately sought to bring order to the anarchy that reigned in the Palestinian territories and to put an end to attacks against Israel. As a sign of goodwill, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon changed his attitude toward negotiations and ordered a significant reduction in Israeli military activities in the Palestinian territories, while taking numerous measures to help Palestinian civilians. These confidence-building measures, combined with renewed security coordination between the two sides and support from the United States, Jordan, and Egypt, led to an agreement to hold a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh (a city in Egypt south of the Sinai Peninsula). On February 8, 2005, the summit began with a series of meetings between Sharon and Mubarak, King Abdullah, and Mahmoud Abbas. Later, all the leaders, with the exception of King Abdullah, read statements reaffirming their commitment to continuing efforts to stabilize the situation and reaffirmed their commitment to the roadmap for the peace process. The second Intifada was over.

Hamas in power

But just as Sharon had left Likud to form a new party called Kadima, which accepted the peace process leading to the creation of a Palestinian state and had been joined by many prominent figures from Likud and the Labor Party, Palestinian Authority legislative elections on January 25, 2006 brought Hamas to power, defeating Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah. The election results shocked the world and meant that Hamas (Arabic acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement") would take control of most Palestinian Authority institutions. Hamas attempted to form a national unity government with Fatah, but this offer was rejected. At the same time, Israel and the United States imposed sanctions on the Palestinian Authority in order to destabilize the Palestinian government and provoke new elections. These efforts failed and led to a split between Hamas and Fatah.

Relations between Hamas and Fatah deteriorated further when Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas attempted to dissolve the Hamas-led coalition government in June 2007. Hamas challenged this decision, deeming it illegal, and street fighting broke out between Hamas and Fatah members in what became known as the 2007 "Battle of Gaza." Hamas emerged victorious and took full control of the Gaza Strip. From that point on, governance of the Palestinian territories was divided between Hamas and Fatah. Hamas, designated an Islamist terrorist organization by the EU and several Western countries, controlled Gaza, while Fatah controlled the West Bank.

In terms of demographics, in July 2009, approximately 305,000 Israelis lived in 121 settlements in the West Bank, while 2.4 million Palestinians from the West Bank (according to Palestinian estimates) lived mainly in four blocks centered on Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus, and Jericho.

Since 2006, when Hamas won the elections, there has been a continuous series of clashes and attacks. In June 2006, Palestinian militants affiliated with Hamas carried out a cross-border raid from Gaza into Israel through a tunnel dug for the purpose of attacking Israel. An Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, was captured. Despite large-scale Israeli raids on Gaza, resulting in the deaths of 500 Palestinians and 11 Israelis, the soldier was only released five years later in exchange for the release of 1,027 prisoners. In 2010, in response to the incessant rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, Israel set up an advanced mobile air defense system called "Iron Dome." But on July 8, 2014, after an escalation in rocket fire, Israel launched the operation known as the "2014 Gaza War," which began with air strikes, followed by a large-scale invasion by the Israeli army with the aim of destroying the tunnel system. The operation ended on August 26, after 4,564 rockets and mortar shells had been fired at Israel, of which more than 735 were intercepted in flight and destroyed by Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system. Between 2,125 and 2,310 Gazans were killed during the conflict, while between 10,626 and 10,895 were wounded (including 3,374 children, of whom more than 1,000 will remain disabled for life). The UN estimated that more than 7,000 homes housing 10,000 families were razed, and that another 89,000 homes were damaged. Subsequently, a wave of isolated attacks by Palestinians took place in 2015 and 2016, including stabbing attacks.

There were a few noteworthy events during this decade. On September 23, 2011, President Mahmoud Abbas submitted an application on behalf of the PLO for the State of Palestine to join the United Nations. However, after being blocked in the Security Council, the General Assembly voted on November 9, 2012, to grant Palestine non-member observer status at the UN, allowing it to participate in General Assembly debates and improving its chances of joining other UN agencies. On the other hand, on December 6, 2017, President Donald Trump announced the United States' recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, followed by the United States' recognition of the Golan Heights as part of Israel on March 25, 2019. And at the end of 2020, Israel normalized relations with four Arab League countries: the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in September (an agreement known as the Abraham Accords), Sudan in October, and Morocco in December.

The Gaza War

From 2019 to 2022, Israel went through a political crisis with five elections in four years, during which no political party managed to maintain a stable coalition. Then, following the 2022 elections, Benjamin Netanyahu returned to the position of Prime Minister as part of a coalition comprising Likud (literally "consolidation," a political party

founded by Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon), Shas (acronym for an orthodox and fundamentalist religious party), United Torah Judaism, the Religious Zionist Party, Otzma Yehudit (literally “Jewish power,” an ultra-nationalist far-right party), and Noam (literally “pleasant,” an Orthodox Jewish and Zionist far-right party), in what has been described as the most right-wing government in the country's history. This government undertook initiatives in dispute, such as reforming the judicial system, which sparked large public demonstrations, and military actions such as the incursion into Jenin in July 2023, which led to an upsurge in Palestinian political violence with the highest death toll since 2005.

All of this led to October 7, 2023, when Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing 1,195 Israelis and foreign nationals, including 815 civilians, and taking 251 hostages with the stated goal of forcing Israel to release Palestinian prisoners. An Israeli offensive followed, in which more than 62,000 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, nearly half of them women and children, and more than 156,000 were wounded. A study published in The Lancet estimated the number of deaths from traumatic injuries at 64,260 as of June 2024, while noting that the death toll could be higher if “indirect” deaths were included.

The war caused a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The tightening of the Israeli blockade deprived the population of basic necessities, causing a severe food crisis, malnutrition, and imminent, even confirmed, famine in August 2025. By early 2025, Israel had caused unprecedented destruction in Gaza and rendered much of the Gaza Strip uninhabitable, razing entire towns and destroying hospitals (including children's hospitals), religious and cultural sites, educational institutions, agricultural land, and cemeteries. Journalists, health workers, humanitarian workers, and other members of Gaza's civil society were detained, tortured, and killed. Nearly all of the 2.3 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip were forcibly displaced. Despite international pressure, the Israeli government intends to continue this war.

What will happen next? Looking back at all the Palestinian conflicts of the past 75 years, ceasefires have been made possible either by a change of government or by diplomatic intervention by a group of countries. Unfortunately, a ceasefire is not a permanent solution. The Oslo Accords proposed a path to a solution, but for the moment, none of the groups involved is interested in pursuing this path, as each wants the entire territory. A real solution would require the radical groups, for whom anything less than total control is completely unacceptable, to be brought under control.

Map 22

