



Modern Middle East Survey Part 1: 1939 to 1968 General Background

The History of Terrorism as
a Strategy of Political
Insurgency

February 21, 2011

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Modern Middle East

Arabs rule the middle east from 7th century to around the 13th century

Turks rule from around 13th century to around 19th and 20th centuries

- Significant levels of regional autonomy

Europeans rule from 19th to 20th century

- Mixed bag at best, sucks if you are Algeria

Key Agreements

- Sykes-Picot
- Balfour
- Versailles Treat

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So we appear to have had some issues in the Middle East that became more relevant after WWII, the big one, so let's recap!

After World War I, France and Britain emerged as firmly entrenched, firmly in control imperial powers in the Middle East. Their ascendancy was based on military, economic, and cultural dominance. But then came WWII, and war, like a red hot raging inferno near the Petri dish of life, is a catalyst!

Key Agreements

- Sykes Picot basically divided the former Ottoman Middle East in French and British Zones in 1916, while accepting the principle of Arab independence
- The British Balfour Declaration in 1917 that stated Britain accepted the idea of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine (assuming no one else felt put upon by it)
- The Treaty of Versailles accepted the Arab states could be organized as independent, under the supervision of a state charged with a Mandate.

France gets defeated in 1940, and the administration of the colonies was in flux. Britain seized Syria and Lebanon from the Vichy French, while Italy entered the North African war (soon followed by the Germans). By 1942-43, when the Germans withdrew from Tunisia, the war was over for the Arabs, and they had a good couple of years to ponder the Atlantic Charter.

After the War, France restored Indochina and Algeria to its empire, but was done in Syria and Lebanon. Britain certainly facilitated the independence of these two countries, for its own purposes, but with the unintentional effect of setting the “gold” standard for independence – complete independence without conditions became the general expectation.

Expectations and a New World Order

The Atlantic Charter

- Promise of self determination
- Legal Frame work

The Decline of European Power

- Economic decline
- Perceptions of Invincibility and inevitability changed

The Rise of the Soviet Union

The Strategy of Peoples War

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The Atlantic Charter

Prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, the United States had entered into several very significant arrangements with Great Britain to facilitate their war effort including the Lend Lease arrangement. As part of this increased close cooperation, and in anticipation of the USA eventually entering the conflict directly, Roosevelt and Churchill met off the coast of Newfoundland to outline their post war international intentions. 8 key points were made and they became the Atlantic Charter.

Below is the joint proclamation issued by FDR and Winston Churchill. The 2nd and 3rd points would become very popular with ethnic nationalists in colonial territories, and would in many cases be interpreted as promise for independence at the conclusion of the war.

The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

*Franklin D. Roosevelt
Winston S. Churchill*

Well, now they had really done it. Later the declaration of the United Nations agreed to by Britain and US on January 1, 1942 would include these principles, and later efforts by the British to exclude their empire (we really only meant the German, Japanese, and Italian Empires) from the conversation did not go far. The cat was already out of the bag. Expectations had changed.

In addition to a legal framework coming into place, the defeat of the British by the Japanese (a non-European and non-Caucasian race) in Singapore in 1942 changed the perception of British and imperial invincibility. The Europeans could be engaged, and beaten. The defeat of the French in Indochina at the hands of the Japanese made it completely impossible for them to realistically reassert their rule after World War II with so much of their imperial authority gone. In other areas such as Africa and the Middle East, a return to pre-War Status quo was simply not acceptable to native populations.

Adding to the post war tumult was the rise of the Soviet Union as a Great Power, and their interest in helping liberate the workers of the world (specifically, the ones outside their territories). Seeing an ideological match in many of the young activist leaders, and a geo-political opportunity to undermine the Western states, the Soviets funneled advisors, doctrine, and supplies into the nationalist movements globally. The US did far less for the colonies trying to throw off their European rulers, and it was noticed.

With Mao's victory in 1949, a road map for the people's struggle was tested and accepted as the path for many young Marxist revolutionaries, and accelerated with the victories of revolutionary movements in Asia and Africa.

So for the next part of this discussion, let's focus in depth on Algeria first, and then we will look at similar events in Palestine and Cyprus for comparative purposes.

World War II

WWII changed the Power Structure of the World

- Defeat of France
- Financial burdens of the war
- Emergence of USSR and USA
- Expectations based on Atlantic Charter
- Public Opinion

Britain and France were Withdrawing

- 1956 Suez Crisis
- 1954 to 1962 Algerian War

1950 to 1968 Dominant Ideological view was Arab Nationalism

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This entire section, and beyond, is owed to Albert Hourani, who wrote a marvelously lucid book call A History of the Arab Peoples. As usual, anything intelligent you read in these sections is the work of others, in particular Mr. Hourani. Get his book and enjoy!

For a number of reasons, the Power structure changed significantly after WWII. Certainly the myth of European Invincibility was irrevocably shattered, and the expectations of colonized peoples were changed by the Atlantic charter. Given Western Europe's Financial dependence on the United States for post war reconstruction and the dominance of the International Monetary Fund, the rise of the USA with its "friendly" occupation of Western Europe, while the Soviets occupied the East in their preferred style, the ability of France and Britain to hold on to the region was clearly destined to end (except Algeria in the French view), so it really started to come down to the terms of the separation.

Adding to all this was undoubtedly a National fatigue with war. Britain had exhausted itself, financially and in terms of human capital, and France had a desperate need to both reestablish a national "norm" while stabilizing its economy. I do think a fair amount of national pride was also trying to assert itself, and this explains in my view, a reluctance to extricate itself from Indochina in an organized way, and the military's fanatic efforts to hold onto Algeria.

But Britain and France did try and hang on, at least half-heartedly, with a few last gasps. In both countries situations, the political will quit before the government or army did, but in both cases, once the public was lost, so were the conflicts.

And contrasting this was a rising sense of expectation across the Middle East, as the Arabs started to see their way to independence. This independence would be characterized by close cooperation between Arab states, independence from the West or super power entanglements, and social reforms moving towards greater national equality. Gamal Nasr of Egypt would represent this idea to its fullest, and he would be a central figure for all Arab peoples, but the 1967 defeat at the hands of Israel (those darn Zionists) really stunted the growth of the idea. People still clung to it, but the vision lost its luster, and in fact, became questionable.

At the same time, increased movements of peoples across the Middle East driven by rapid economic growth, and improved communication such as telephone network expansion, media, theater and movies driven by Egypt's very active film industry, etc., were factors that continued to bring Arabs closer together beyond the 1967 defeat.

One note I would emphasize – for seven centuries these countries had been ruled by non-Arabs, at least nominally. There had to be a lot of pride and confidence in the streets as they saw a new future rising over their countries. The downside of course is that with independence, it becomes harder to explain why it is not your fault when things go bad. But for the time being at least, it was good to be moving towards independence, and it was still the other guys fault.

Changing Societies 1940's and 1950's

Population growth & Age Distribution

- Declining death rates
- By 1960 half the population was under 20 years of age

Changing composition of the population

- Ancient Jewish communities dwindled
- European workers halved

Urbanization

- major cities doubled and tripled in size in 25 years

Government Response

- Interventionist and Active in economy

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Mortality rates dropped significantly from the 1930's to 1960 through out the region.
-Infant mortality alone dropped from 160 per 1,000 live births to 109
- Population growth rates jumped from 1% to 2.5%-3% a year

By 1969, half of the Arabs were under the age of 20

Ancient Jewish communities, with their technical skills, dwindled as the Jews moved to Israel (often not by choice, and with some exceptions in Morocco).

Israel's Jewish population grew from 750,000 to 1.9 million.

Most major Arab cities saw close to a tripling of their populations, as the farm could not support all the people who were growing into adulthood. Amman, Jordan, saw a 10-fold increase in its population as they worked to absorb the Palestinian refugees.

There was also a significant Diaspora of Arabs to Europe, which would expose them to many different thoughts and experiences.

What is a government to do?

First off, there were some new realities, including control of the revenue and the need to grow the economy to accommodate the population growth. So governments

were very active expanding all manner of infrastructure, such as roads, rail ways, irrigation, oil and mineral fields, education, ports, hydroelectricity and telecommunications. By the 1960s, Arabs were increasingly filling higher skilled positions in their industries, and a higher percentage of the revenue from oil was staying in the region

But they still had some core problems

- they were still mostly exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods.
- Their agriculture had switched from cereals for local consumption to cash crops for export, so they have become net food importers
- The State had emerged as dominant employer, and this would distort the markets and lead them to generate too few technocrats, and too many bureaucrats
- Urbanization had left the rural areas more behind than before

National Culture 1940's and 1950's

Education

- Quantity over quality
- Arabization of a diverse system

Radios, books, and Theater

- Cairo as the center

Muslim Brotherhood

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With social change and the emergence of new elites education spread rapidly. National governments saw improvement of the human capital pool as critical towards competing as independent states and they had a long way to go.

Tunisia (1956) – 143 indigenous doctors, 41 engineer. 11% children in elementary school (65% ten years later)

Morocco (1956) – 19 Muslim doctors, 17 Jewish doctors, 15 each of Jewish and Muslim engineers. 12% of children in elementary school, ten years later 60%.

But there were some big issues

Quantity over quality in Education

- Rapid openings
- Class size too large
- Poorly trained teachers
- Poor secondary schools
- Less emphasis on technical training because many saw law and such the better path to a job with the Government

Arabization of Education in a diverse system – there were Islamic schools, Catholic schools, public schools, private schools, schools in French, schools in English, etc, and in some countries, there was a push to make them all under the Arabic, under a state

umbrella. In Syria, where they actually banned foreign language training until after the age of 11, this led to all manner of issues, including the lack of text books in Arabic for technical topics, and created more problems for students who wanted to study outside the country or read the latest in the main languages of science.

The elites tended to remain multi-lingual though and this would help them stay on top.

Some of the other major changes included the proliferation of radios, books, and theater – in Egypt in 1960 alone 850,000 radios were bought, there were 60 Egyptian films produced, 3,000 new book titles were published.

And we also started to see the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, with some particular increase in influence from 1945 to 1952 as the political situation deteriorated and they had a void to fill. Core philosophy

- all acts can be acts of worship
- Mutual responsibility of men in society
- Obligations existed at different levels for different members of society
- Just rulers were to be obeyed, unjust rulers deposed

The brotherhood Leaders tended to be educated and have some station in life, followers tended to be from lower economic stratum. They did have a falling out with the Egyptian government under Nasser (they tried to assassinate him) so he killed a few and they basically went underground, although they remain very active in daily Egyptian life.

National Independence 1945-1956

Massive change for the region

British Goals included Arab independence, and security ties

The Palestinian issues was born from Israel's independence

- The Arabs were defeated
- The British were seen as defeated as well by the Arabs
- The US was seen as pro-Israel

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The Arab World saw significant change in WWII

- movements of mass armies
- ears/Expectations around Occupation and Liberation
- competing ideologies
- European self destruction
- Declarations of high principles like the Atlantic Charter
- The USSR emerged as a World Power
- So did the USA
- The idea of Arab Unity, with Cairo as its center was percolating

The US moved to guarantee Greek and Turkish security after WWII, and the expectation was Britain would deal with the Arabs.

The British Goals were to help the Arab states emerge as independent states while retaining security ties and bases. They were in particularly helpful to the Syrians and Lebanese in their independence efforts from the French, perhaps to helpful. When Syria and Lebanon won independence in 1945, it was unconditional, and this became the "Gold" Standard to which all Arabs would now aspire.

At the same time, something funny was going on at the UN. A lot of the countries in the UN really did not see Britain's goals as their goals. And as more countries became independent, the more UN saw things differently.

When Britain proposed establishing some form of Trustee relationship over **Libya**, the UN said “Nope” and pushed for Libyan independence in 1948. Full independence came in 1951, under a monarchy.

Palestine was a much tougher nut to crack, with endless debates about the Jews and the Arabs, and who should get what. While the debates went on, massive Jewish immigration continued. The Irgun, a Jewish Terror group, was making trouble as well. So Britain basically gave the problem to the UN, and said they were leaving. A fixed withdrawal date was set, fighting escalated between Jews and Arabs, the British left, and all heck broke loose.

In a series of four campaigns, interrupted by brief cease fires, the Jews ended up with about 75% of the land. The Gaza strip ended up under Egyptian Administration, and Transjordan took over the West Bank. The Palestinians received nothing.

Even worse, 2/3rds of them left their homes. Initially, this was to be a temporary evacuation until the Arab Armies routed the Jews, and it was encouraged by Jewish terror groups who engaged in some “ethnic cleansing” massacres, but it has become permanent. When you hear words about “The Right of Return” for Palestinians, it is this that they are referring to – they mostly left, and were not allowed back. Their properties would later be confiscated and given to the new Jewish settlers.

Public Opinion in Arab countries was:

- The Arabs were defeated
- The British were seen as defeated as well by the Arabs
- The US was seen as pro-Israel

In **Egypt** two big issues surrounded the independence discussion – Egypt wanted to annex Sudan, and Britain wanted security over the Suez Canal. Fighting broke out with Egyptian Guerrilla forces in 1951, and a popular uprising in January 1952 in Cairo led to a group of mid-level officers taking power, with Gamel Nasser at the center. By 1953, a deal had been reached over both. In 1954 the British withdrew from the canal zone, and in 1955 **Sudan** became independent.

Iraq went in 1955, and in 1957 **Jordan** was fully independent.

The French were tougher to convince, and in 1952 Tunisian Guerillas started targeting French civilians. In Morocco, the French tried to box the Sultan in by getting other tribal leaders agitated at the increased risk of central control of Morocco if independence was achieved. Along the way, they deposed the Sultan, who then became a symbol of national unity, and he was restored later as King. Both Tunisia

and Morocco became independent in 1956, following some agreements set in place in 1954, , when the French also withdrew from Indochina, and when things in Algeria were heating up. See [Terrorism link](#) if you want to read more on the Algerian War for independence.

The Suez Crisis

Egypt

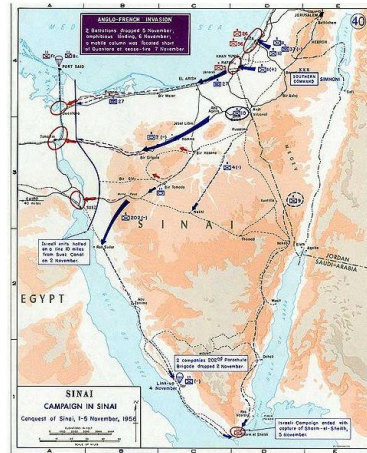
- Nationalizes the canal
- Recognizes communist China
- Plans to annex Sudan

France and Britain

- Just plain crabby

Israel

- Proxy War with Palestinian Guerilla
- Attacks on Israel
- Navigation rights through straits of Tiran



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The 1948-49 partition turned Palestinians into stateless refugees, crowded into refugee camps where they would live for decades, non-citizens of the lands which over time most of them would be born in.

In 1956 the US and Britain decided not to fund the Aswan Dam, and Nasser got a little rowdy over it. In May he recognized the People Republic of China over the Taiwan regime. It also became apparent he was going to pursue his plan to annex Sudan, then still associated with Britain, and he nationalized the Suez Canal.

A big part of this was the Pan Arabism approach Nasser to accomplish. He moved closer to Saudi Arabia, and sought to keep Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria out of the Cold War Military Association of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and the UK established by the Baghdad Pact in 1955 (Central Treaty Organization). Nasser viewed any military ties to the former colonial powers as really extensions or continuations of that colonial power.

Britain and France were losing their status in the region and in the world, and they were getting crabby about it. In particular, Nasser's activities made him look just like a big doo-doo head in their eyes. France was also recovering from the fall of Indochina, and fighting aggressively to retain Algeria.

From the conclusion of the 1948-49 war to the 1956 Sinai war Palestinian irregular

forces, encouraged by the heir host countries, particularly Jordan and Egypt, made frequent gross border incursion in a low intensity but active Guerilla war. In 1956, the anticipated arrival and deployment of Czechoslovakian weapons, and a blockade of the Israeli Port of Eliat. There was a secret arrangement with the French and English, where Israel would engage the Egyptians, and then France and Britain would seize the canal to protect it. The key to the offensive was mobility, and in classic 3 G style, they campaigned succeeded very quickly, with most fighting over in a week.

Israel had its own goals, which included giving the Palestinian big thumping for cross border guerilla attacks, and gaining some navigation rights in the straits of Tiran.

The US and USSR both needed this situation de-escalated, and forced everyone back to their starting lines. Hungary in 1956, and tensions between Taiwan and China were more pressing concerns for both states.

Pan Arabism

Pan Arabism is a
political ideology

- Unite Arabs from the Arabian Sea (Persian Gulf) to the Atlantic
- Socialist
- Opposed borrowing Western concepts
- Opposed Western colonial heritage
- Empower Arab states through integration



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Pan Arabism is a political ideology which would theoretically Unite Muslim Arabs from the Arabian Sea (Persian Gulf) to the Atlantic Ocean

-Socialist

-Opposed borrowing Western concepts (like socialism?) – in many ways it was the outcome of having competing philosophies, including fascism, sort of smeared together

-Opposed Western colonial heritage

-Empower Arab states through integration – certainly militarily and in some cases politically, but not so much economic for some reason

It sounded really good to the masses, creating a sense of higher purpose. It is well worth noting that the Arabs had not really run their own affair since the 13th century. First the Turks, then the Europeans for a 7 century stretch of not being in charge.

The ideology had elements that anticipated Arab independence after WWI, but the nasty Europeans fooled them, and occupied the administration and exploited the Arab lands after the Ottomans ceased to exist around 1918 to 1922.

After independence, power gravitated towards the local elites, who often liked the way things were. Both Nasser and the Ba'ath (Resurrection) movement challenged this status quos and the elites who benefited from it.

The 1967 Thumping

Nasser makes the wrong Bet

- Nasser asks UN troops to leave the border
- Nasser Closes the straits of 'Aghaba to Israeli Shipping
- Nasser believed his troops were superior to Israel's
- Nasser believed the US would prevent Israel from attacking

Israel was tired of Palestinian Guerrilla Attacks



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Clashes between Israelis and Syrian troops in Golan, and Israeli incursions into what was West Bank of the Jordan to deal with Palestinian guerillas, heightened regional tensions further. The movement of troops to borders, and the movement of Iraqi troops and Armor into Jordan in support of the Arab cause, continued the escalation. Closure of the straits of Tiran, in violation of the 1956 armistice, added even more fuel to the fire, and on June 5, 1967, Israel attacked its Arab neighbors. The first two days Israel focused on destroying her enemies' capacity to wage war with massive air strikes destroying the Arab air forces. From June 5th to the 9th, they seized Sinai and defeated the Egyptians. Between June 5th and June 7th seized the West Bank from Jordan. It was in the Golan Heights, which had been heavily fortified by the Syrians, fighting lasted until the 10th.

The defeat was a major calamity for the Arab States. A clear, total victory, by Israel, with no Western Troops backing them, simply humiliated the Arabs. The credibility of Arab leadership to their peoples was crushed. Conventional conflict with Israel seemed a failed strategy, and alternatives were sought by the Palestinians. It was this set of conditions that led to a reliance on terror, and the publicity associated with it, as the strategy of political insurgency, since it was really their only option.