

Jamal Wakim

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

Politics

Middle East Studies

ITHACA
PRESS

THE STRUGGLE OF MAJOR POWERS OVER SYRIA

THE STRUGGLE OF MAJOR POWERS OVER SYRIA

Jamal Wakim

ITHACA
P R E S S

2013
www.ithacapress.co.uk

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

Ithaca Press
8 Southern Court, South Street
Reading, RG1 4QS, UK

www.ithacapress.co.uk
www.twitter.com/Garnetpub
www.facebook.com/Garnetpub
blog.ithacapress.co.uk

Ithaca Press is an imprint of Garnet Publishing Ltd.

Copyright © Jamal Wakim, 2013

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

First Edition

ISBN: 9780863725142

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Typeset by Samantha Barden
Jacket design by Garnet Publishing

Printed and bound in Lebanon by International Press:
interpress@int-press.com

Contents

Introduction		vii
Chapter 1	Syria: early history until the Middle Ages	1
Chapter 2	Syria from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries	25
Chapter 3	The world until the eighteenth century	41
Chapter 4	Syria in the nineteenth century	59
Chapter 5	Syria under the mandate	73
Chapter 6	Turbulent years of independence	89
Chapter 7	Syria under al-Assad: 1970s–1980s	103
Chapter 8	Syria on the threshold of the new world system	119
Chapter 9	The Middle East in the 1990s	139
Chapter 10	Syria under Bashar al-Assad	153
Chapter 11	Syria and the Arab Spring	169
Epilogue		185
Bibliography		193
Index		211

Introduction

This book addresses the subject of the political geography of Greater Syria, or Bilad al-Sham, which is the geographical region that extends from the Palestinian border with Sinai and from the Gulf of Aqaba in the south to the Alexandretta region adjacent to Cilicia in the north, and from the western Mediterranean coast in the west to the Syrian Desert until the Boukamal region on the banks of the Euphrates in the east. The Sinai Peninsula separates Greater Syria from Egypt but does not form a barrier between the two – as is the case with Cilicia in the north, which forms an extension to Greater Syria with the Taurus Mountains and serves as a connection with the Anatolia Plateau. Eastwards, the Euphrates does not constitute a natural barrier between Greater Syria and Mesopotamia but on the contrary forms a connection between the two regions. The Nafud Desert forms an extension to the Syrian Desert as well as which connects the latter to Hail in the north of the Nejd Plateau, leaving Syria exposed to Bedouin excursions from that region and from the Arabian Peninsula and therefore exposed to influences from those regions. I had finished, in 2004, my doctorate dissertation on Syrian foreign policy (Syrian Arab Republic) and noticed that Greater Syria (with its aforementioned borders) was never united except when it was part of a wider political entity, as it was in the days of the Assyrians and Persians until the fourth century BCE, the Romans and Byzantines until the seventh century, during the Umayyad and the First Abbasid periods until the end of the ninth century, and during the days of the Ayyubids, Memluks and Ottomans. I noticed that Syrian politics in the twentieth century was very unstable due to the competition of three geopolitical spheres, namely Iraq, Turkey and Egypt, in the Near East for Syria, while Lebanon was a constant gateway through which the Western

powers could interfere in Syrian affairs. We can thus understand, in this context, the series of coups in Syria between 1949 and 1970. The reason Syria has enjoyed stability under President Hafez al-Assad is that he has been able to impose strong authority and control of Damascus, the main axis of Greater Syria.

This realization pushed me to delve into history to try to compare Syria in the twentieth century to Syria in previous eras from the dawn of history until the end of the nineteenth century, passing through the Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, Hellenic, Roman, Byzantine, Arab and Ottoman periods. I found that Syria's position between Mesopotamia in the east, Anatolia in the north, and Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula in the south made it subject to competition between forces that occupied those geostrategic spheres. In addition, the Syrian Desert is the Achilles' heel of the southeastern region of Syria, which made it subject to migrations and influences from the Arabian Peninsula and the Nejd Peninsula. Therefore, Syrian policy in modern times must be understood in the context of agreement or conflict with the policies of Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It is also not possible to ignore the role of Iran, since it has been geopolitically complementary with Iraq since the dawn of history. The influence of those spheres is not restricted to Syrian foreign policy but extends to interaction with the cultural, economic and social groups, which transforms the geopolitical influences to the cultural, economic and social influence. I have tried to distinguish between Greater Syria as a geographic region, and Syria, or the Syrian Arab Republic, as a modern political entity.

This book is divided into eleven chapters. The first chapter deals with the struggle for Greater Syria since the dawn of time until the tenth century CE and focuses on Syria's central role in international relations and the competition of major powers to control Syria. That was evidenced by the signing of the first international treaty between the King of the Hittites and the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II on Syrian territory in 1284 BCE. The second chapter deals with the wars that erupted for the control of Syria between the eleventh century and the beginning of the fourteenth century followed by the peace

period under the Memluks in the early sixteenth century. The third chapter discusses the fall of Syria and the other Arab countries under the Ottoman Empire and the international changes that occurred until the end of the eighteenth century. The fourth chapter explores the weakness in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century and the colonial struggle for the Orient among countries that considered Syria the gateway through which the Ottoman Empire and the Arab and Islamic worlds could be penetrated. The fifth chapter focuses on the period that followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the division of Greater Syria between Britain and France in the form of a French mandate on Syria and Lebanon (central and northern Greater Syria) and a British mandate over Palestine and Jordan (southern Greater Syria). The sixth chapter covers the period that followed Syrian independence from France in 1946 until the beginning of Hafez al-Assad's rule in 1970. It analyses the reasons for the series of coups in Syria and that coloured political life in the 1950s and 60s. The seventh chapter concentrates on the period of President Hafez al-Assad in the 1970s and 80s and analyses the factors behind the stability of al-Assad's regime in addition to the challenges that faced him in that era. The eighth chapter discusses the challenges that faced Syria at the end of the Cold War, with a focus on the peace negotiations between 1991 and 1996. The ninth chapter deals with the regional and international changes that, upon analysis, lead to comprehension of the international changes that occurred at the beginning of the third millennium. This compound analysis through history will attempt, in Chapters nine and ten, to understand the political changes that occurred during the term of President Bashar al-Assad, leading to an analysis of the causes of the current crisis from the point of view of the geopolitical influences of the Middle East on Syria in the final chapter.

Chapter 1

Syria: early history until the Middle Ages

Year twenty one, the first month of winter, day twenty one of the rule of his majesty the king of the tribal face and the nautical face, Ramses Mari Amon, giver of everlasting life and the beloved of Amon Ra ... On this day, the messenger of the great king of Khita, Khato Seel, came to the Pharaoh requesting peace from his majesty ... And on this day, an everlasting good peace and a nice fraternity has begun ... And the great head of Khita will not attack the land of Egypt ever and will not take anything from it nor will the great ruler of Egypt attack the land of Khita to take anything from it ever ... And if another enemy should invade the lands of the great ruler of Egypt and he demanded assistance from the great ruler of Khita, the great head of Khita should slaughter his enemy ... And if another enemy should attack the land of Khita and the great king of Khita should send to the great king of Egypt for help, the great king of Egypt should send forth his soldiers and wagons.

This is a segment from the peace treaty between King Ramses II and the King of the Hittites after the Battle of Qadish in 1284 BCE – a battle that failed to result in victory for either of the two parties. It was the first recorded international treaty in history and provides proof of the central role of Syria in international relations since the dawn of time.

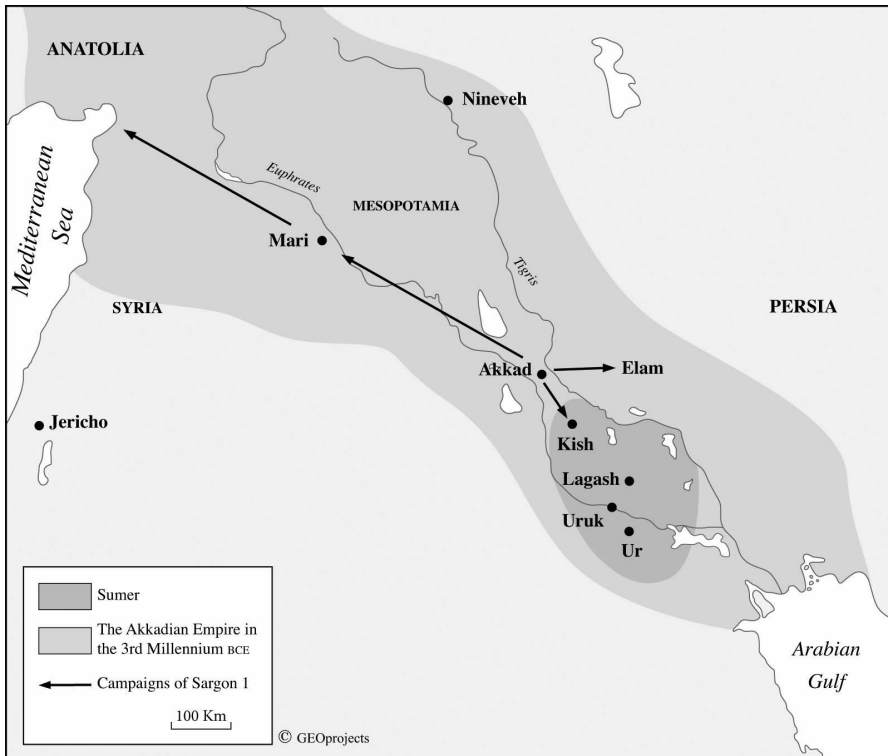
The Near East in antiquity

The early third millennium BCE saw the rise of the first major settlements around the Nile River and in Mesopotamia. These areas,

characterized by annual floods that contributed to fertilizing the fields, made it possible to cultivate the land on a permanent basis.¹ The inhabitants of these areas had to cope with this contingency and with the lack of sufficient rainfall by learning how to build dams, a complex network of canals, dykes and reservoirs.² The development of agriculture led to an overproduction of certain crops, which made possible the development of trade. This economic development led to the rise of cities and urban life in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley. Writing was also invented in these two areas in order to keep a record of crops and revenues from agriculture and trade. Yet there was a difference between the two areas that manifested itself in differences in each society. On the one hand Mesopotamia fell between two rivers, hence its name, whereas Egypt depended only on one river. This made the Egyptian society highly centralized and more stable than that of Mesopotamia. In addition, while Egypt, since the early third century BCE, had fallen under the rule of one kingdom, Mesopotamia was often divided between contending kingdoms. Furthermore, Egypt was surrounded by large deserts from the west, the south and the east, which made it less vulnerable to Bedouin incursions than Mesopotamia, which was often prey to Bedouin migrations from neighbouring Arabia.³ This forced Mesopotamia to develop a more sophisticated mercantile economy, as competition among contending kingdoms in that region centred over the control of trade routes along the rivers. In Egypt, the centralized system monopolized trade in the hands of the Pharaoh and his agents.⁴

In that era, merchants used donkeys, bulls and camels to transport their merchandise. However, they discovered that a larger load of goods could be transported at a cheaper cost via ships sailing along the rivers. This helped to expand trade in Egypt and Mesopotamia.⁵ Trade was destined to develop in the latter as small investors were able to break free from the religious establishment's control, which led to the rise of an independent mercantile class in the Mesopotamian kingdoms, which in turn had an impact on political developments in that region.⁶ This explains the need to develop a simpler form of writing (the alphabet), as merchants needed to keep records of their

trade and did not have as much time as priests to dedicate to learning a complicated alphabet. In Egypt, trade remained in the hands of the Pharaoh and his associates, which delayed the rise of imperial aspirations in that land. The development of trade lay behind the rise of the first empire in history: that of Sargon of Akkad. This ruler would expand his control over the whole Mesopotamian area. In addition, he extended his empire over northern Syria, imposing himself as mediator of all trade coming from the lower Indus Valley and passing through the Arab–Persian Gulf to Mesopotamia and onto the eastern Mediterranean towards its final destination in Europe.⁷



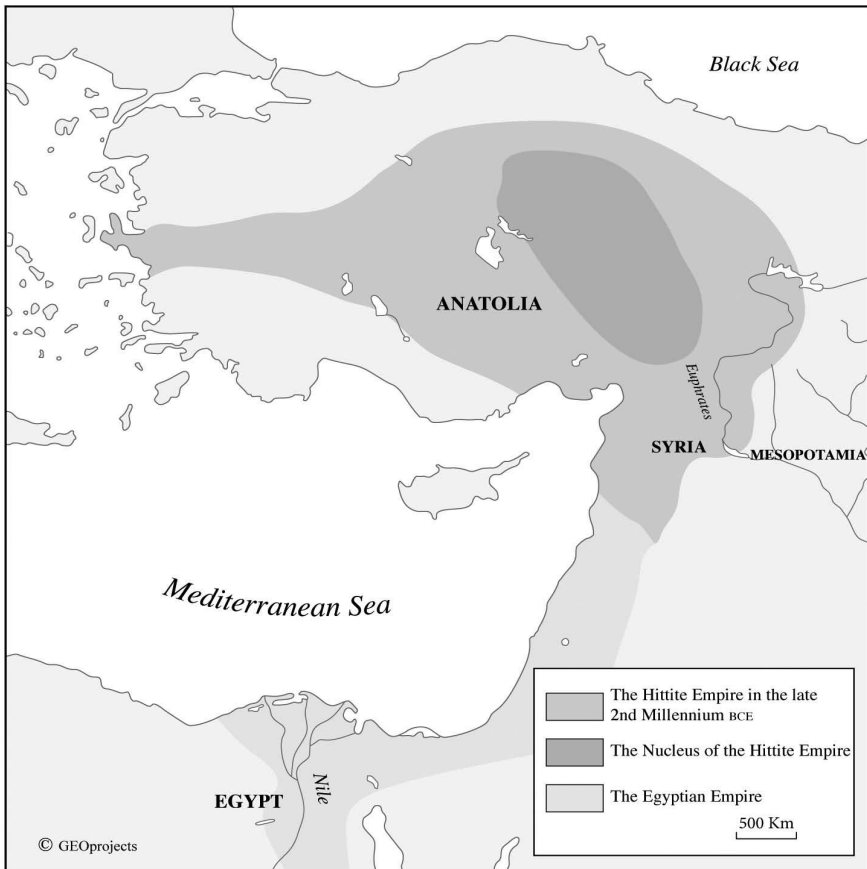
The Akkadian Empire

Egypt would establish its empire just seven centuries after the Akkadian Empire. Unlike Sargon's empire, the Egyptian Empire would be created by an external rather than internal factor. By the early second millennium BCE nomads from Arabia (the Hyksos) arrived in the Syrian Desert and later established themselves in the Sinai Peninsula.⁸ A few decades later these nomads were able to overwhelm the Egyptians and establish their control over Egypt for nearly two centuries. By the mid-sixteenth century BCE, the Egyptians were able to free themselves from the Hyksos. They had learned their lesson: Sinai should always be under Egypt's control, but Egypt's security went far beyond that border, extending deep into Syria, from where the Hyksos came. Egypt went about establishing an empire by extending its control over the Red Sea, the east Mediterranean, and southern Syria (Jordan and Palestine). Competition over trade with India would divide Arabia between a western part under Egyptian hegemony, and an eastern part under Mesopotamian hegemony.⁹ As early as the second millennium BCE the prospects of trade in the Persian Gulf were enhanced whenever there was a strong state in Mesopotamia, while prospects of prosperous trade in the Red Sea were enhanced whenever there existed a strong state in Egypt.¹⁰ By the mid-second millennium BCE the Great Babylonian Empire broke down due to the weakening of central authority on one hand, and the pressure exerted by emigration from the Persian plateau on the other hand. The empire established a few centuries earlier by Sargon broke apart and the northwestern part of Mesopotamia saw the rise of the Mitanni state, while the southeastern part fell under the Kassites. Meanwhile, a new power (the Hittites) established their state in the Anatolian plateau. Having previously been an extension of Babylonian influence on the Anatolian plateau, the Hittites broke free after the disintegration of the first Babylonian Empire.¹¹ In an attempt to tap into the trade of India passing through Mesopotamia, the Hittites extended their control over parts of Cilicia and northern Syria.

Syria would also be open to incursions from Arabia. The Arabian Desert extended as far as Palmyra, where it merged with the Syrian Desert or *al-Badiya al-Souriyya*, and Mosul in central Iraq.¹²

The struggle begins

The fate of Syria was sealed around this time. Starting from the mid-second millennium BCE, it was destined to become the arena of competition between the Mitannis in northern Mesopotamia, the Hittites in Anatolia, and the Egyptians, while also being open to interactions with the Arabian Peninsula. This would be most evident in the developments of the thirteenth century BCE, which saw the first multilateral crisis in the history of the world, one involving the Egyptians, the Hittites and the Mitannis.



The Hittite Empire

With the appearance of the Hittites on the scene, the Egyptians were no longer content with imposing their hegemony over southern Syria (Jordan, Palestine and the coastal region) to repel Bedouin incursions into Sinai. The Hittite presence in northern Syria opened the way to further expansion southwards at the expense of the Egyptians. Ramses II was concerned about Egypt's security, aware that losing control over Syria would prove fatal to Egypt, as shown by the Hyksos interlude. Ramses II wanted to establish a stable frontier behind which he could feel secure. His strategic insight made him realize that the only place he could secure this border was along the Taurus Mountains, which formed a natural dividing line between Syria and Anatolia. This led to a major battle between the Egyptians and the Hittites in Qadesh near present-day Homs in the Syrian Arab Republic. In 1284 BCE the Egyptian and Hittite armies confronted each other, but the ensuing battle proved to be indecisive. News of mobilization of the Mitanni army caused Ramses II to call for the ending of hostilities with Mitelay II, the Hittite king. To counter the Mitanni threat, Ramses II proposed to Mitelay II the signing of a treaty of alliance against the Mitannis. It would be the first international treaty in history, and a copy of it is preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul.

By the second millennium BCE, Syria had become the juncture of all major international trade routes. On the one hand, trade coming from India to the Persian Gulf destined for Mesopotamia would pass through northern Syria on its way to the east Mediterranean. On the other hand, trade coming from India to Yemen, would continue its way either through Hijaz towards the heart of Syria with its destination Anatolia, or would proceed through the Red Sea towards Egypt, to pass through the Syrian coast stretching from Ashkelon in the south to Messina in the north to end also in the east Mediterranean.¹³ However, the long period of conflict between the three contending powers of the Near East – the Hittite, Egyptian and Mitannian states – led to the exhaustion of their economies, which impacted on the region.¹⁴ The collapse of all three powers paved the way for the rise of a new power in the region, Assyria, which would be the first to unite

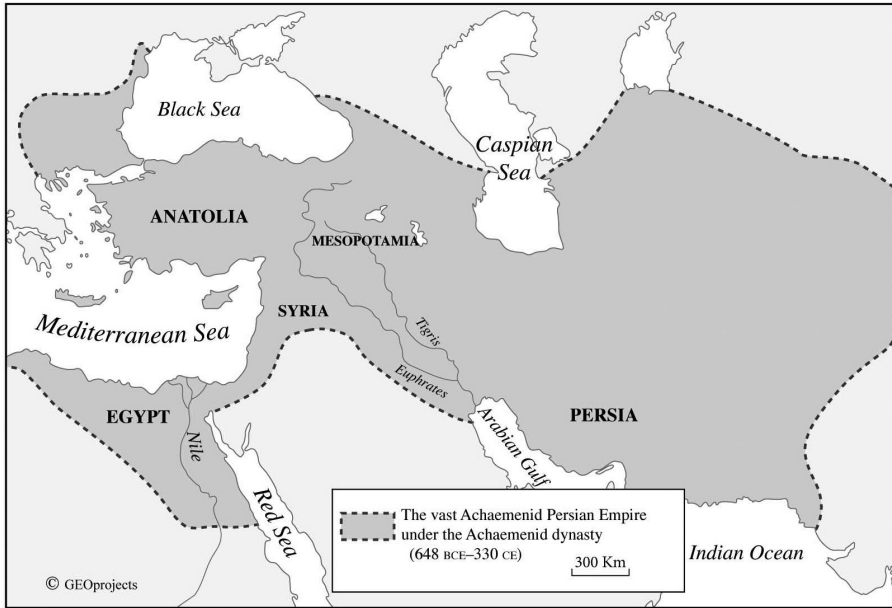
the whole 'civilized world' under its banner and thus impose the first instance of globalization in history as it controlled all trade routes of the Near East. For the first time ever, one power would control parts of northern Persia, Mesopotamia, Cilicia, Syria and Egypt. Its economic domain extended far beyond its political borders. In the East it controlled the trade routes as far as India, and in the West it dominated the trade in the eastern Mediterranean. The Assyrian hegemony would be imposed on the region for several centuries and, as trade prospered, Syriac spread as the dominant language in the region, later to become the sole language there for several centuries.

The Persian and Hellenic age

By the early first millennium BCE the camel had been domesticated and this helped to revolutionize trade via land. Trade was expanded across new horizons, as it was possible to organize camel caravans that could cross long distances on rough terrain, especially arid and desert territories. This development led to the opening of a new land trade route, originating in China, and passing through Central Asia and the Persian plateau towards Mesopotamia and Anatolia. The expansion of trade via land made it possible for the rise of a new power that would be the first *not* to be centred along a major river. It was in this context that Persia rose in the eighth century BCE and was able to dominate Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Syria and Egypt by the late sixth century BCE. The Persians imposed their 'Pax-Persiana' for two centuries in a region extending as far as Thrace and Macedon in the West, and the borders of China in the East after subduing Central Asia and parts of northwestern India.

The Persians adopted the culture of the previously hegemonic Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians, and adopted Syriac as the official language of the state.¹⁵ This explains why Syriac continued to prevail in the Near East and Persia until the advent of the Greeks in the late fourth century BCE. The Achaemenid golden age extended from the rule of Cyrus the Great (559–529 BCE) until the rule of Xerxes I (486–465 BCE), after which the Persian Empire gradually

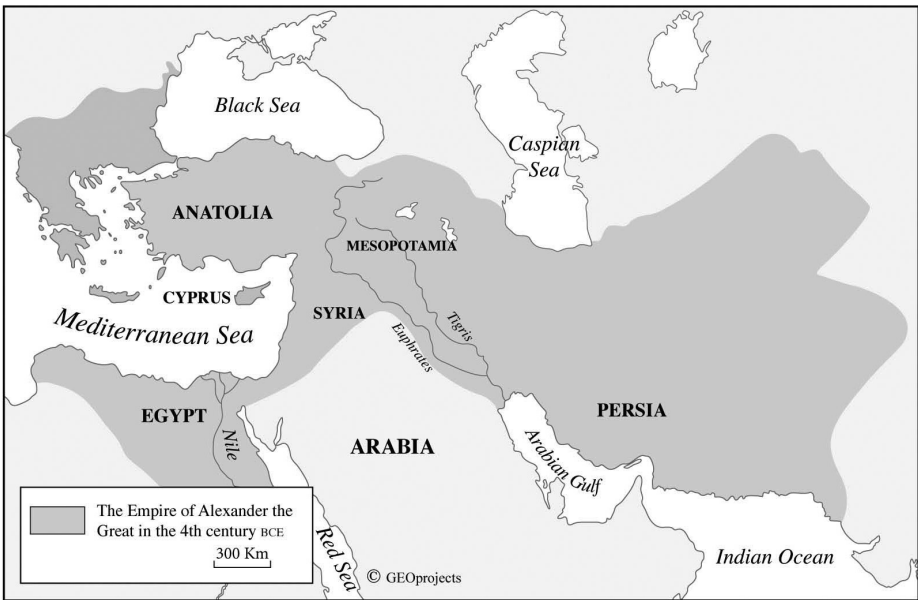
The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The Achaemenid Persian Empire

started to decline, leading to several rebellions in Egypt that ended in the independence of this country by the early fourth century BCE.¹⁶ The lesson learned from the Hyksos was still remembered. Egypt's independence could only be guaranteed if southern Syria came under Egyptian control and this explains the rebellions against Persian rule in Palestine and the Phoenician city states, especially Sidon.¹⁷

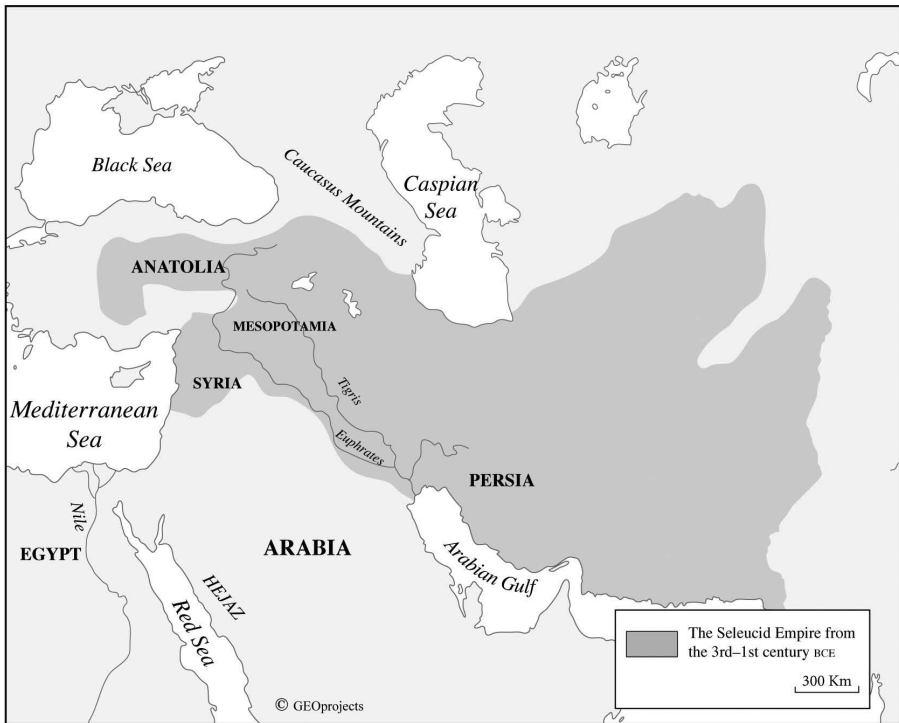
By that time the Macedonians were able to extend their control over Thrace, the Greek cities and parts of the Balkans. By the year 334 BCE Alexander, who succeeded his father Philip to the throne of Macedon, crossed to Anatolia with an army forty thousand strong. He was able to defeat the Persians in three major battles. The Battle of Granicus in 334 BCE made him master of the Anatolian Plateau, the Battle of Issus in 333 BCE made him master of Syria and Egypt, and the Battle of Gaugamela in central Iraq made him master of the Persian realm.¹⁸ Alexander adopted Babylon as his capital and considered himself as heir to the defeated and slain Darius, the last Achaemenid emperor.



The Empire of Alexander

The death of Alexander in 323 BCE ended the unity of his empire. His generals fought for succession for nearly forty years. In the end Macedon, Greece and the Balkans were separated from the rest of the empire, while Seleucos extended his domain over the region between Anatolia in the West and India in the East. Egypt was given to Ptolemy, and his dynasty ruled the country until the coming of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE and the imposition of Roman rule over the country. To secure their independence from the Seleucids, the Ptolemids were keen on extending their control over southern Syria (Palestine and Jordan). The Seleucids' centre of power in Syria was based around the Orontes River in northern Syria.¹⁹ This explains why Seleucos built the city of Antioch, where the Orontes ends in the Mediterranean, and made it the provincial capital of Syria.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The Seleucid Empire

By the late second century BCE the Parthians were able to occupy Persia and Mesopotamia, having wrested these from the Seleucids. This made them masters of the land trade routes with India and China, and as they also blocked the maritime trade routes coming from India via the Persian Gulf, they imposed themselves as mediators of trade coming from India and China destined for the eastern Mediterranean.²⁰

As the Near East was once more divided between three contending powers – the Seleucids centred in Anatolia and Cilicia, the Ptolemids in Egypt, and the Parthians in Persia and Mesopotamia – Syria became divided between a northwestern part under Seleucid rule, a Palestine part under Ptolemaic rule, and an eastern part under Parthian rule. Jordan at the time was ruled by the Nabateans, with Petra



The Parthian Empire

as their capital. The Ptoleuids of Egypt set themselves to revive trade via the Red Sea with India. The Nabateans of Petra, relying on trade, saw that it was highly beneficial for them to establish good relations with Egypt and willingly accepted coming under Ptoleuid tutelage.²¹ By the early second century BCE the Ptoleuids started to decline. As the Parthians were trying to extend their hegemony westwards and the Seleucids were seeking to extend their control southwards, the Ptoleuids felt threatened by the possibility of southern Syria being lost to either one of their foes.

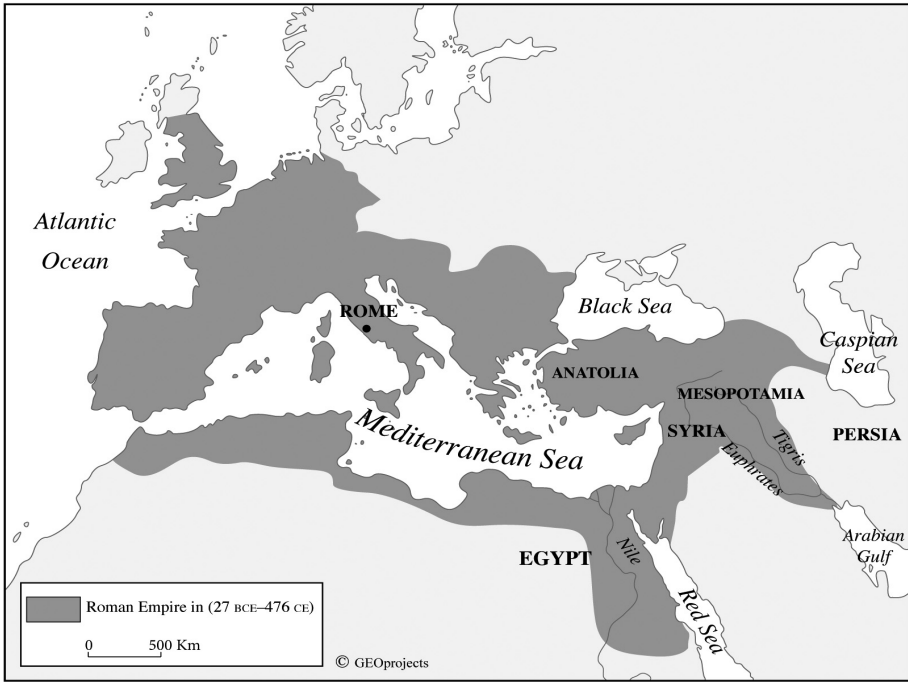
It was at this time that the Israelites in Palestine rebelled against Hellenic hegemony. They were encouraged most likely by the Parthians, who maintained good relations with the Jews, like their

Achaemenid predecessors. This may be what caused the Moabites, allies of the Egyptians, to seek to extend their rule to the west of the Jordan River so as to prevent the fall of Palestine under Parthian influence. This might also explain why the second Jewish state would be ruled by Moabite kings, a hugely controversial development among the Jews as, according to Jewish tradition, the King of Israel should be from the line of David. The Moabites were the descendants of an Arab tribe that had converted to Judaism; hence their rule was challenged by Israeli tradition.²²

Romans-Byzantines vs Parthians-Sassanids

By the year 64 BCE the Romans invaded Syria and made it a Roman province. Soon after, they invaded Egypt and rendered the Mediterranean a Roman lake. By controlling the Mediterranean, the Romans were able to establish an empire that ruled the world for many centuries. The Mediterranean is unique in that it connects Western Europe with North Africa and the Middle East. By connecting to the Middle East, a geographical unit was created that formed the main Eurasian axis which consisted of Asia and Europe.²³ Control of the Mediterranean allowed a power to exert its influence totally on central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa.²⁴ The Mediterranean's importance lay in the fact that it formed a central axis in the international transportation system.²⁵ This made it a strategic cornerstone of any superpower with dreams of international hegemony yet reliant on maritime transportation.²⁶ The Romans imposed political unity on Syria, turning it into a Roman province with its capital in Antioch. The only challenge to the Romans in Syria came from the Parthians from their base in Mesopotamia.

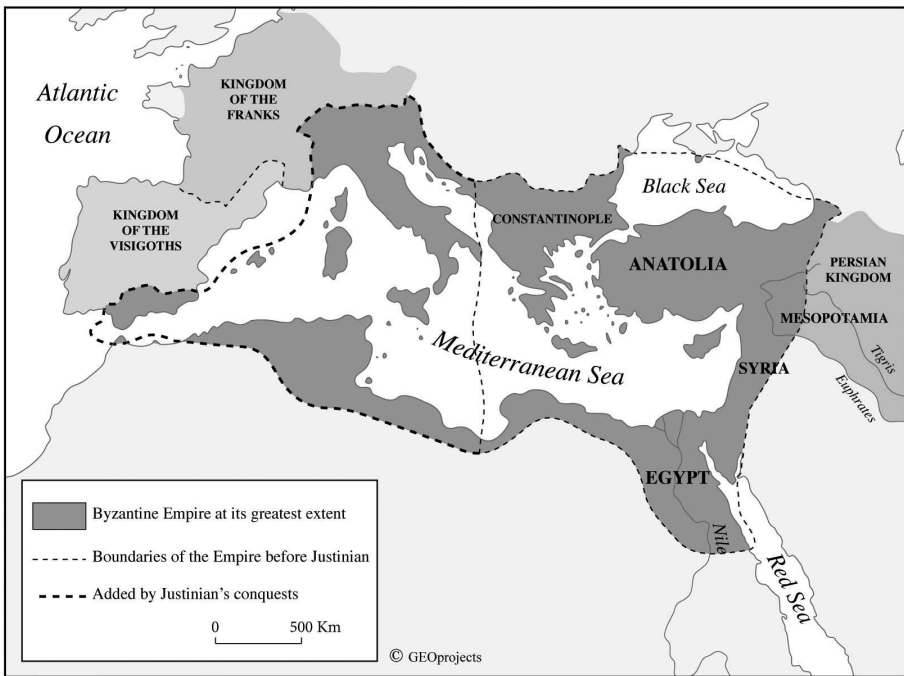
Starting from the third century onwards, a fresh challenge would escalate with the rise of the Sassanids to the throne of Persia. By that time, the Persians had extended their hegemony to Hira on the west bank of the Euphrates and made the Lakhmid rulers of that Arab kingdom their vassals. The Lakhmids, egged on by the Persians,



The Roman Empire

started to make incursions into the Syrian Desert as far as Damascus itself. To counter this infringement on the borders of Syria, the Romans lent their support to Odaenathus, ruler of the Kingdom of Palmyra from 260–267 CE. Shortly after sealing this alliance, Odaenathus was able to repel a Persian invasion led by the Emperor Shapur himself. This prompted the Romans to appoint him co-regent of the Orient, with his domain extending from Egypt and Anatolia in the west to the shores of the Euphrates in the east.²⁷ The crisis that hit the Roman Empire during the fifth century caused their domain to shrink in the Orient to Syria and Egypt, leaving the Arab Peninsula under direct or indirect Persian hegemony.²⁸ Things would change during the days of the Byzantine emperor Justinian the Great. After he ascended to the throne of Byzantium, first as co-emperor with his

uncle Justin in 517 CE, then as sole emperor after Justin's death in 527, he set himself to regain the territories lost to various Germanic tribes in the western part of the Mediterranean. He was partially successful in this, regaining much of North Africa, and parts of Spain and Gaul. In the East he decided to boost the influence of Byzantium and challenge Persian hegemony, mainly in Arabia.²⁹



The Byzantine Empire in the sixth century

Under Roman rule, Syria would be politically united one more time. Except for brief periods of Persian occupation, it would be a Roman and Byzantine province for nearly seven centuries. However, the geopolitical struggle between Anatolia, Egypt and Mesopotamia would take a cultural and religious form. In the fourth century CE the Emperor Constantine moved his capital to Byzans, which became Constantinople, and acknowledged Christianity as the one religion

of the Roman Empire. He was baptized on his deathbed. What made Constantine acknowledge Christianity and convert to the new religion was his belief that it would be the religion that would unite the people of the empire at a time when its administration and troops could no longer fulfil that task.³⁰ However, this unifying factor proved to be as divisive as the pagan religions that had prevailed previously, each reflecting national and ethnic identities.

Hellenism was the official culture of the state. In Anatolia the majority of the population were hellenized, as the region was predominantly Greek. In Syria and Egypt, Hellenic culture remained confined to the urban upper elite, while the lower classes and those in rural areas retained their Syriac and Arabic cultural identity.³¹ These cultural differences were reflected in the spread of the Greek Orthodox faith in the Balkans and Anatolia with Constantinople as its centre. The Monophysite version of Christianity spread in Syria and Egypt with Alexandria as its centre. Mesopotamia would enter the cultural struggle by having its own version of Christianity – Nestorianism – after Bishop Nestorius and his followers were expelled from Byzantine territories in the fourth century due to his disagreement with the Bishop of Constantinople over religious issues related to the nature of Christ. All three versions would compete in Syria, with the Egyptian Church having the upper hand.

Justinian wanted to find a way to avoid trade with India and China having to pass through the Sassanid territories. For this reason he tried to revive trade via the Red Sea, which had declined in the previous century. He encouraged his Abyssinian allies to extend their control over the southern part of the Red Sea and to take over Yemen, which was then ruled by the Himyarites who were allied to the Persians.³² With Byzantine support, the Abyssinians invaded Yemen in the year 525 CE after the massacre of the Christians of Najran at the hands of the Himyarites under their king Dhu Nuwas.³³ In the north, Justinian was concerned with repelling the incursions of the Lakhmids and, to this end, he allied himself to the Ghassanids, who were settled in southern Syria. Hence, the Ghassanids established a kingdom in modern-day Jordan and the south of the Syrian Arab

Republic with their capital in Busra.³⁴ Justinian even tried to extend his hegemony into eastern Arabia by forging an alliance with the Kinda tribe, who had established a kingdom in Najd and along the western shores of the Persian Gulf. The competition over Arabia with the Persians, who were already in control of southern Iraq and Oman, prompted both superpowers and their allies to try to win the allegiance of various Arab tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. This explains the Jahiliyya wars between various contending tribes.³⁵ It was also the reason for the spread of Byzantine Christianity in the Arab Peninsula.³⁶ The Persians in their turn would sponsor Judaism, and this would lead to the conversion of the Himyarite kings to Judaism as a sign of allegiance to Persia after their relations with Christian Abyssinia grew strained and ended in the Abyssinian invasion of Yemen in 525 CE.

Syria united under the Arabs

It was in this context that Mecca rose to prominence as a commercial city, soon to become the economic centre of Arabia. The city became the most important outpost for trade coming from India to Yemen and passing through Hijaz towards Syria and onwards to its final destination in Anatolia and Europe. This trade strengthened relations between the Meccan elite and Syrian merchants located mainly in Damascus.³⁷ The Byzantines imposed direct rule over coastal and northern Syria in addition to Damascus. Their hold over Anatolia facilitated their control of the northern coastal region of Syria, just as their domination of Egypt facilitated their control of the southern coastal region between Sidon and Ashkelon. As they were not in control of the hinterland of Arabia they had to control the area east of the Jordan River through a proxy state, the Ghassanids. By the early seventh century a major war erupted between the Persians and the Byzantines. The Persians were initially successful and were able to take over much of Anatolia. This enabled them to extend their control of Syria, which opened the way to invasion of Egypt. As a result, the Ghassanid state withered away, having lost its *raison d'être*:

to protect the borders of Byzantine Syria.³⁸ However, the Byzantines were able to reverse the tide of the war under Emperor Hercules, who defeated the Sassanids in the year 629 CE and was able to regain the lost provinces of Anatolia, Syria and Egypt. Unfortunately for them, the Byzantines had little time to enjoy their success, as they were soon to lose Syria and Egypt to the conquering Muslim Arabs. By the year 644 CE the whole of Syria and Egypt except for Alexandria was conquered by Arab Muslim troops, who also invaded Mesopotamia and parts of Persia. The conquests would continue for another century until the Arabs established an empire stretching from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean in the West to the borders of China in the East.

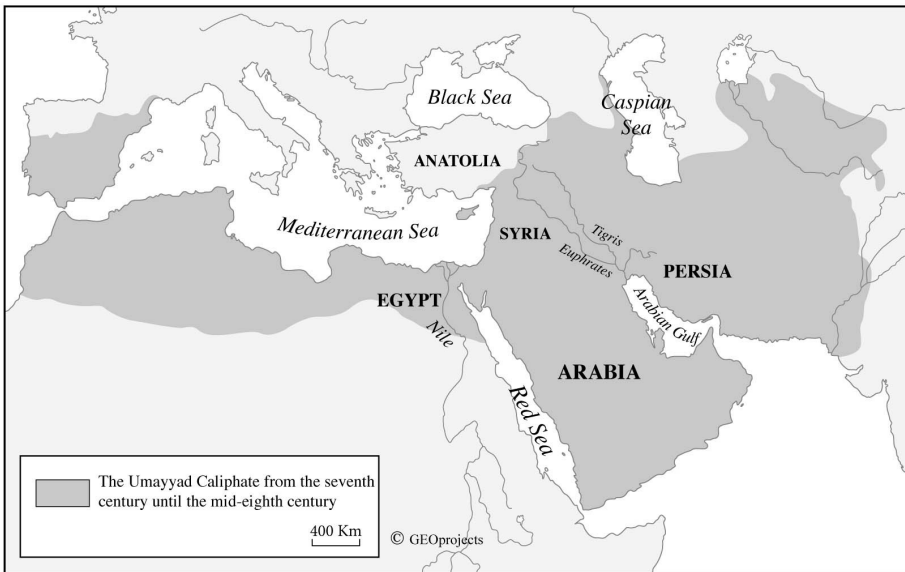
The ease with which Syria and Iraq were conquered cannot be explained by the fact that Byzantium and Persia were exhausted by their wars, nor by the military skills of the Arab conquerors. The reason for this swift conquest was the fact that Syria was Arabized long before the conquests. Hence, the inhabitants of Syria and Iraq felt sympathetic towards their conquerors and perceived their Byzantine and Sassanid rulers as alien Greeks and Persians.³⁹ The decisive battle between the Byzantines and their Arab conquerors was on the shores of the Yarmuk River, a tributary of the Jordan on the border between present-day Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. The moment Jordan was taken by the Arab conquerors, the Byzantines were obliged to retreat to their defensive line in northern Syria, later to be repelled to Anatolia behind the Taurus Mountains.

With the conquest of Syria, the mercantile elite of Mecca saw new opportunities for trade. Before the conquest, they were mere mediators of trade between Yemen and Damascus. After the conquest, they came into control of Yemen on the one hand and Damascus on the other. Hence, the whole trade route came under their control from either end. This explains why Caliph Omar appointed Yazid bin Abi Soufyan, son of the former leader of Quraysh, as governor of Syria with Damascus as its capital. After Yazid's death, his brother Mu'awiya succeeded him.

In a war for control of trade through the eastern Mediterranean, the Umayyads made successive attempts to conquer Constantinople.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

Having established a strong base for their rule in Syria, the Umayyads would transform the Syrian regions that had previously been infiltrated by neighbouring Anatolia, Egypt and Mesopotamia, into zones from which the Umayyads could now control these neighbouring countries instead. As the Umayyads were in control of modern-day Jordan and Palestine, they could easily control Egypt. In the north, as they controlled the coastal region, they could extend their grasp over Cilicia and isolate the Byzantines behind the Taurus Mountains. Furthermore, having established a hold over the eastern part of Syria they could extend their control over Mesopotamia, and from Egypt they could make further inroads into North Africa. From their base in Mesopotamia, they could control the region between Persia and the borders of China. And from northern Syria they could control Cilicia and keep the Byzantines isolated behind the Taurus Mountains while extending their influence over the Caucasus.

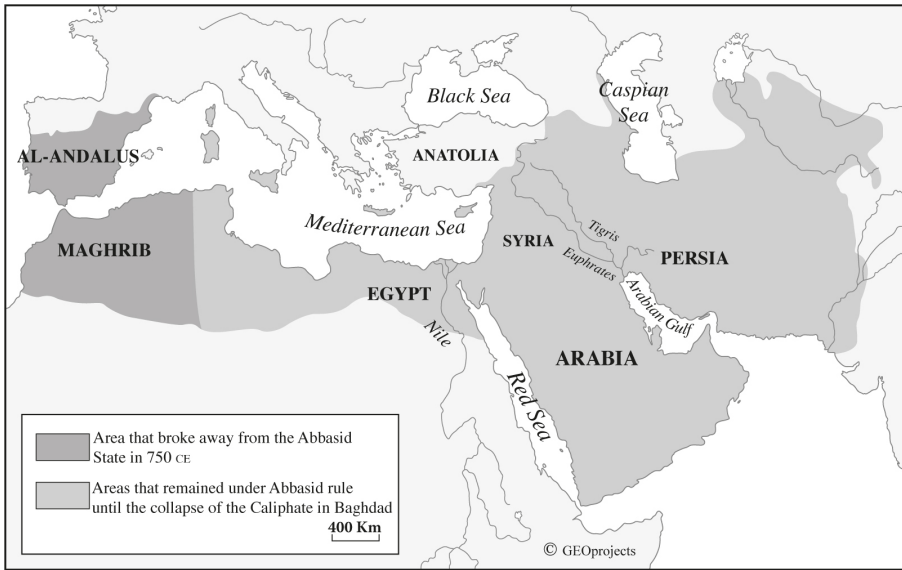


The Umayyad Caliphate

Centre of the world!

For nearly a century, Syria would be the centre of the world, with Damascus being the capital of a global system stretching from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of China. However, the Umayyads had a very delicate task at hand: they had to balance a commercial elite centred in Damascus with a neighbouring tribal rural area, located in the Syrian Desert and exerting mounting pressure on the urban centres, especially in Damascus. The tribes would eventually gain the upper hand and, gradually, the urban centres started to lose ground to the tribal rural neighbourhoods.⁴⁰ This was exacerbated by a decline in trade passing through Syria coupled with the inability of the Umayyads to develop an efficient bureaucracy that could manage an ever-expanding empire. All these factors led to the collapse of Umayyad rule at the hands of the Abbasids in 750 CE.⁴¹ The Abbasids moved their centre of power to Iraq for political reasons, as Iraq and Persia were the centre of political opposition to the Umayyads. But there were economic reasons for this transfer, as Mesopotamia would regain its previous commercial importance due to the revival of trade with India through the Persian Gulf, and the revival of the Silk Road after the conquest of Central Asia. Syria thus became a marginal province, necessary only to link Iraq to Egypt and North Africa. The final days of Haroun Rashid's reign saw a major development in the Abbasid state. The massacre of the Barmakids marked the end of centralization in the Abbasid Empire and heralded a tendency to decentralize the state in order to better manage it. A few decades later saw a rise in the influence of the professional army, recruited mainly from Central Asia. The assassination of al-Mutawakkil in 862 CE led to a deep crisis in the caliphate as it fell under the control of various contending generals. These generals had been appointed to various provinces of the empire, among them being Ahmad Ibn Tulun, governor of Egypt, whose authoritative rule would lead to a revival of trade via the Red Sea.

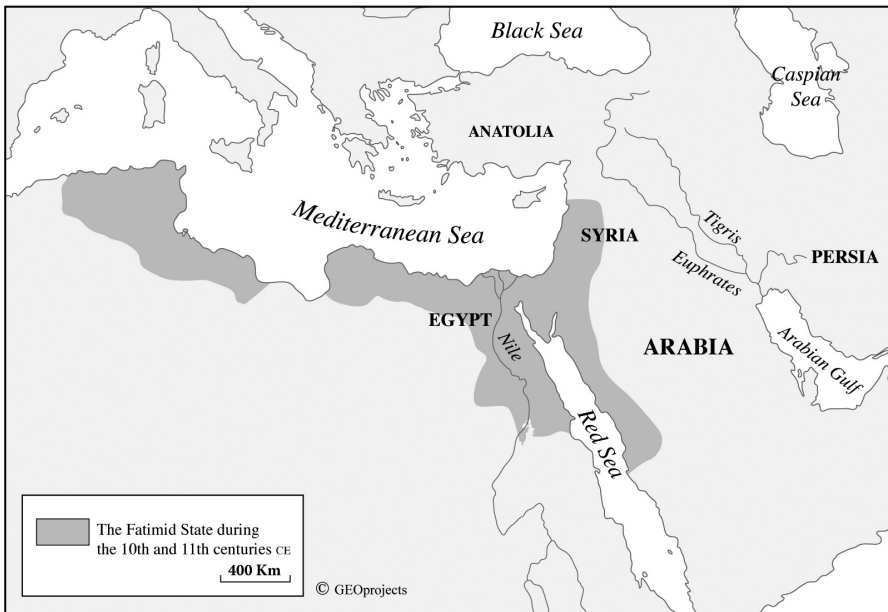
The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The Abbasid Caliphate

The revival of trade via the Red Sea led to the rise of Egypt as a regional power for the first time since the Ptolemids. This was coupled with a further weakening of the caliphs of Baghdad, which encouraged the Ikhshidids, successors of the Tulunids, to become virtually independent and acknowledge the Abbasid caliphs only nominally. To ensure their independence in Egypt, the Ikhshidids extended their dominion over southern Syria all the way to Damascus. Though they were twice victorious over the Hamdanids of Aleppo, and twice able to invade the city and capture its ruler Sayf al-Dawla, in 945 and 947, they released him on both occasions and allowed him to regain his domain, as they wanted the Hamdanid state of northern Syria to be a buffer between them and the Abbasids, who came under Buyid control from 947 CE.⁴² By the year 967 the Fatimids, who had established their state in Tunisia a few decades earlier, were able to extend their control over North Africa and Egypt. By 969 they had moved their capital to the newly founded Cairo and they set themselves to boost trade in the eastern Mediterranean with the Byzantines.⁴³

Syria: early history until the Middle Ages



The Fatimid Caliphate

This may explain why the Byzantines expanded their control over northern Syria, as the Hamdanid state became an obstacle to trade coming through the Red Sea and passing through Syria, destined for Anatolia. The defeat of Sayf al-Dawla around the year 966, and his death a year later, came at roughly the same time as Egypt was being conquered by the Fatimids. His successors continued to rule Aleppo until the early eleventh century, but they did so as vassals of the Byzantines.⁴⁴ Syria now became divided into a northern part under the rule of the Byzantines, a southern part under the rule of the Fatimids, and an eastern part under the rule of the Buyids.

Notes

- 1 William H. McNeill, *History Handbook of Western Civilization* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 4–5.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid., 10.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Abdallah Hilou, *Sira' Al Mamalik Fi Al Tarikh Al Sourî Al Qadim, Ma Bayn Al 'Asr Al Soumari Wa Souqout Al Mamlaka Al Tadmouriyya* (Beirut: Bissan, 1999), 51.
- 6 Ibid., 59.
- 7 Kamal Salibi, *A History of Arabia* (New York: Caravan, 1980), 17.
- 8 Jurji Zaydan, *Al 'Arab Qabla Al Islam* (Beirut: Dar Al Hayat), 54.
- 9 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 17.
- 10 Ibid., 11.
- 11 Hilou, *Sira' Al Mamalik*, 84–100.
- 12 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 1.
- 13 Ibid., 8.
- 14 McNeill, *History Handbook of Western Civilization*, 15.
- 15 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 29.
- 16 Ibid., 28.
- 17 Ibid.; see also Zaydan, *Al 'Arab Qabla Al Islam*, 112–15.
- 18 McNeill, *History Handbook of Western Civilization*, 125.
- 19 Hilou, *Sira' Al Mamalik*, 241.
- 20 Ibid., 243.
- 21 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 37.
- 22 Kamal Salibi, *Who Was Jesus: A Conspiracy in Jerusalem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).
- 23 William Reitzel, 'The Importance of the Mediterranean', in Ernest Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952), 189.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., 190.
- 26 Ibid.

- 27 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 56.
- 28 Ibid., 64.
- 29 Ibid., 65.
- 30 A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. I (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1984), 49.
- 31 Ibid., 89.
- 32 Ibid., 167.
- 33 Salibi, Kamal, *A History of Arabia* (New York: Caravan, 1980), 66; and Bourhan Al Din Dillo, *Jazirat Al Arab Qabla Al Islam*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Al Farabi, 1989), 318.
- 34 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 66.
- 35 Ibid., 67.
- 36 Fadel Al Rubayi, *Al Massih Al Arabi, Al Nasraniyyah fi Al Jazeera Al Arabiyya wa Siraa Al Bizanti Al Farisi* (Beirut: Riyad Al Rayess, 2009), 63.
- 37 Dillo, *Jazirat Al Arab Qabla Al Islam*, 355–73.
- 38 Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. I, 201.
- 39 Kamal Salibi, *Syria under Islam, 634–1097* (Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2009), 18.
- 40 Ibid., 20.
- 41 Ibid., 33.
- 42 Ibid., 61.
- 43 Ibid., 87.
- 44 Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. I, 308–9.

Chapter 2

Syria from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries

Sham [Greater Syria] was in the past either under the Romans or under the rule of Iraq and was never part of Egypt, and the Egyptians should consider Gaza and Ramla as their defence line.

This quote has been attributed to Gazan Khan, the ruler of Persia in the fourteenth century, as he was addressing the people of Greater Syria to prove his right to the rule of the land. His opinion was that Syria had never been independent and had either been part of Anatolia or Iraq or subject to Egyptian infiltration.¹

The Seljuks, the Crusades and the Fatimids

By the mid-eleventh century CE, a general political crisis hit almost every state in the world. By the year 1031 central authority in Umayyad Spain collapsed and the country fell into chaos. At the same time Fatimid Egypt was facing a quick decline after the suspicious death of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim in the year 1021. In Byzantium, the Macedonian dynasty that had ascended to the throne in 868 faced a growing crisis from the year 1056 onwards, as it became weak and was unable to enforce effective control over its territory.² In Iraq, Buyid rule faced a similar crisis in the early eleventh century which led to its ousting at the hands of the Seljuk Turks in the year 1054.

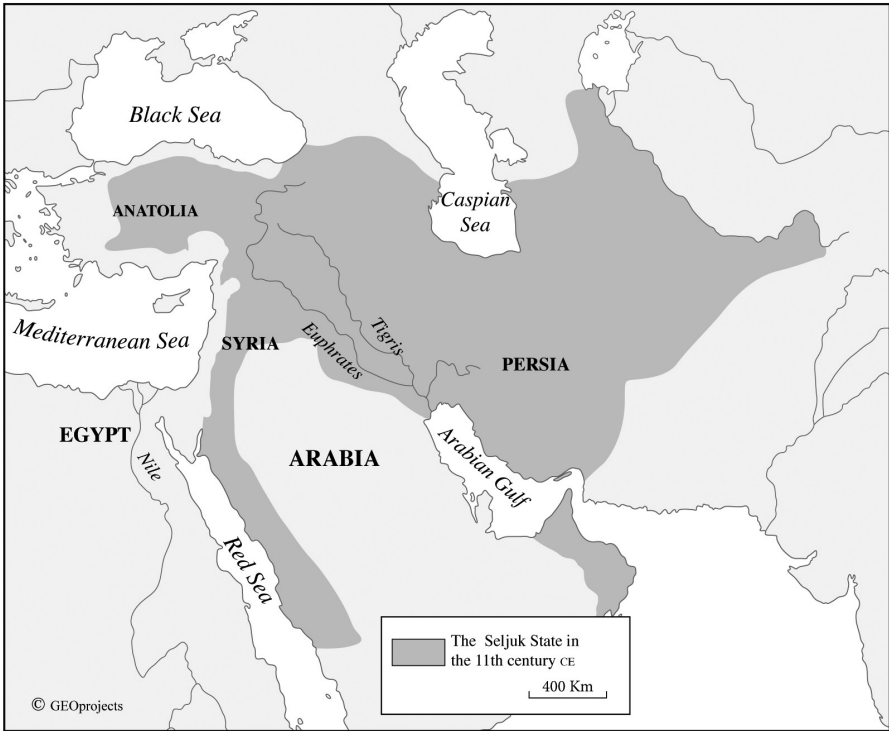
The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The Byzantine Empire

These political crises may have been caused by a global economic crisis that hit the world during that century. The result was the rise of tribal confederations that moved towards the centre of the global economy, i.e. the Mediterranean Sea and the Near East. In North Africa and Spain, Almoravids extended their control and helped to save Muslim rule in Spain from total collapse. The Normans, coming from Scandinavia, invaded much of Western Europe and clashed with the Arabs in Spain and ousted them from Italy and Sicily. In the East, the Seljuks, coming from Central Asia, took over Afghanistan, Persia and Iraq. From Iraq, the Seljuks would direct their attacks against both the Byzantines and the Fatimids, benefiting from their growing weakness from the mid-eleventh century onwards. In 1071 CE the Seljuks defeated the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert near Lake Van close to the eastern border of modern Turkey. Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes was captured, and Armenia and Anatolia fell to the Seljuks. From Anatolia the Seljuks moved to northern Syria, proceeded to move southwards to take over Damascus, and from there went on to occupy Jerusalem and stand on the borders of Sinai,

Syria from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries



The Seljuk Caliphate

perched to take over Egypt itself. Two factors saved the Byzantines and the Fatimids from a fatal blow against them by the Seljuks; the first was the Crusades and the second was the assassination of the talented Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk.

To counter the Seljuk threat, the Fatimids of Egypt had organized a secret society, al-Hashashin (the Assassins), to lead a 'terror' war against their enemies. The founder of this sect was a certain Hassan al-Sabbah, who moved to Syria, which was then under Seljuk occupation. The first of al-Hashashin's operations was directed against Nizam al-Mulk, who was to become the first victim of this sect that terrorized the Near East for nearly three centuries.³ After Nizam al-Mulk was killed, the Seljuk domain fell into anarchy,

which led the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus to try and regain the territories that the Byzantines had lost after the Battle of Manzikert. Aware that he lacked the resources to face the Seljuks, despite their weakness, he called upon the help of various princes in Western Europe to come to his aid. This was not the first time that Alexius had relied on help from the West; a decade earlier he had turned to Venice to help repel Robert Guiscard, Norman king of southern Italy, who had plans to take over Byzantium after successfully taking over southern Italy and Sicily from both the Byzantines and Arabs.⁴ In return for its services, Venice received great trade concessions from Alexius in the Byzantine domain.⁵ Meanwhile, many Italian city states, mainly Pisa, Genoa and Amalfi, were trying to develop trading relations with the Fatimids of Egypt, who were in control of trade via the Red Sea and were thus eager to extend their control over the coastal cities of Syria to serve as outposts for trade with the Italian city states.⁶ The Seljuk invasion of Syria threatened to cut off trade between the Fatimids and these states.

Many factors persuaded the Western Europeans to come to the rescue of the Byzantines. The first was the religious fervour that characterized Western Europe in the Middle Ages. Second was the growth of papal influence from the eleventh century onwards. Third were the economic and political ambitions of princes and kings of Western Europe.⁷ In 1095, Pope Urban II called for a council at Clermont and declared a holy war to 'liberate the Holy Lands from infidels'. In the same year two monks led a 'popular Crusade' that ended in disaster in Anatolia, the peasants who had joined the Crusade, aiming for salvation, all being slaughtered. However, a professional army raised by the princes and kings of Europe soon followed. In 1097, Nicaea fell to the Crusaders and was handed over to the Byzantines. In 1098, Antioch fell and in 1099 Jerusalem was taken by the Crusaders and its population was slaughtered, as was the case in other conquered cities.

The Crusaders achieved success in their first Crusade and were able to establish a domain stretching from Antioch on the northern

coast of Syria to Jaffa in southern Palestine. They were not capable, however, of extending their domain deep into the hinterland of Syria, especially into the Syrian Desert, but remained confined to the coastal area of Syria. Their situation would soon be complicated as they antagonized both the Byzantines and the Egyptians. However, they served as an important buffer between the three contending powers in the Middle East: the Byzantines, the Fatimids, and the fragmented domain of the Seljuk Turks in Iraq, parts of Anatolia and Syria. The vital key to this area would be the Kingdom of Edessa in upper Syria, north of Aleppo, which was the first Latin kingdom to be established and would later on be the first to fall.

Reuniting the Near East

The tide soon turned against the Crusaders with the rise of Imad Din Zangi to power in Mosul in northern Iraq. From there he extended his control to Dyar Bakir and by the year 1144 he was able to conquer Edessa. By taking over Edessa, Imad Din was able to oust the Crusaders from their positions on the Euphrates and to open his lines of communications with the Seljuks of Anatolia. Soon afterwards he took over Aleppo and made it his capital and the base from which to direct his attacks on the Crusaders.

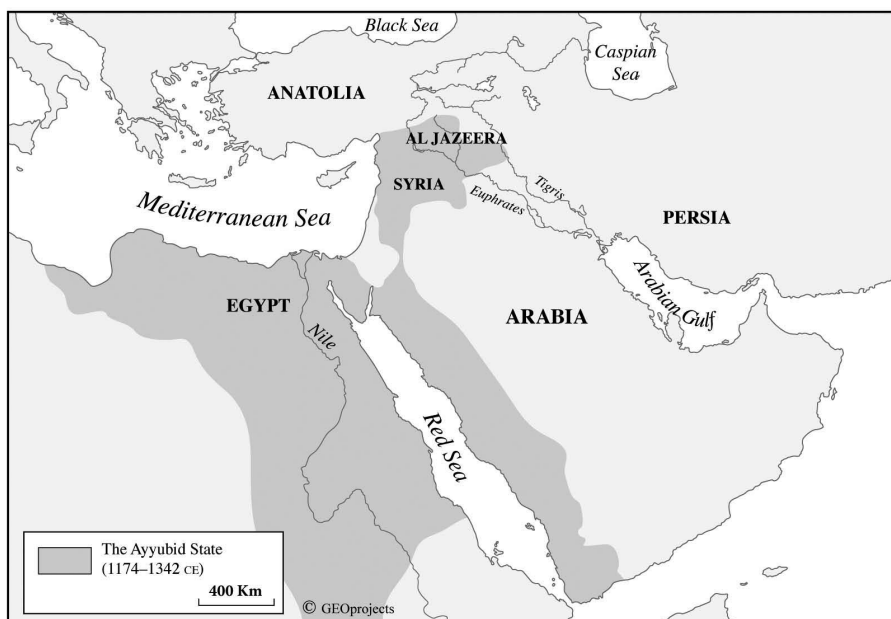
His son, Nur Din Zangi, who succeeded him after his death, was able to repel the second Crusade (1147) aimed at recovering Edessa. In 1154, Nur Din Zangi took over Damascus after its population rebelled against its ruler Mujir Din, who had entered into a tacit agreement with the Crusaders against Nur Din Zangi. The Crusaders, cut off from the Syrian hinterland by Nur Din's rise, started to look southwards to Egypt. In 1153 they took over Ashkalon, cutting off Egypt from Syria. Egypt had been facing a political crisis since the beginning of the twelfth century, the Fatimid court being plagued with plots, conspiracies and corruption by various contenders for power. In 1163, Vizier Shawar was overthrown by a certain Dirgham. Shawar sought refuge in Nur Din's court and asked him to help restore him to power in Egypt. During that year Amalric I, King of Jerusalem, tried

to invade Egypt, and, in response, Nur Din Zangi attacked Tripoli to divert Amalric's attention away from Egypt. The Crusaders' campaign was unsuccessful but was enough to convince Nur Din Zangi that he had to take over Egypt. In 1164, Nur Din sent an army led by his Kurdish general Shirkuh to restore Shawar to power. Shirkuh was successful in taking over Egypt, killing Dirgham, repelling a Crusader army that was intent on assisting Dirgham, and restoring Shawar as a vizier of the young Fatimid caliph al-Adid.

Shawar soon turned against his benefactor and formed an alliance with Amalric against Nur Din Zangi, expelling Shirkuh and Zangi's troops from Egypt. The country fell into chaos, with recurrent invasions by the Crusaders. This led Nur Din to send Shirkuh one last time to Egypt, in 1168. Shirkuh killed Shawar and in early 1169 succeeded him as vizier of the Fatimids. A few weeks later he died and his nephew Yussef succeeded him as vizier. At first, it had seemed that Nur Din would be able to unite northern Iraq, Cilicia, Syria and Egypt under one rule for the first time since the tenth century. However, Yussef, or as he is more famously known, Saladin, refused to acknowledge the suzerainty of Nur Din after he took over Egypt. In 1171, he abolished the Fatimid Caliphate and became the sole ruler of Egypt. This act was aimed at hiding his determination not to join Nur Din on his campaign against the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the same year. Saladin wanted to maintain the Crusaders' presence as a buffer between himself and Nur Din in Damascus. He refused to join Nur Din in 1173 on another campaign against Jerusalem, his non-compliance convincing the latter to prepare for a campaign against him, but Nur Din died before achieving his aim.

Meanwhile, Saladin was consolidating his power in Egypt and had invaded Yemen in order to secure trade coming through the Red Sea. Soon after the death of Nur Din he started looking to extend his control over Syria. By 1176 he was able to take over Aleppo and the rest of the domain of the Zangids in northern Iraq, hence establishing a state that included central and northern Iraq, Cilicia, Syria, Egypt, eastern Libya, Hijaz and Yemen. Having achieved this, Saladin was easily able to defeat the Crusaders in the Battle of Hittin in 1187. The

Syria from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries



The Ayyubid Empire

third Crusade, which ensued in 1191, was as much a failure as the second. Subsequently, the Crusaders remained in the region with the consent of Saladin, who was eager to keep them in the coastal areas of Syria in order to promote trade with Europe.⁸

After the third Crusade Syria lived in peace for nearly eight decades. A fourth Crusade in 1204 was directed against the Byzantines and ended in the establishment of a Latin kingdom in Constantinople which lasted for nearly seven decades. This diversion was motivated by the unwillingness of the Venetians to disrupt trade with the Ayyubids in Egypt, and their desire to control trade coming through the Black Sea. In 1212 a children's Crusade ended with the march of 30,000 children to Jerusalem. However, no battle followed and the children either died on the road or were sold into slavery in Syria and Egypt. In 1217, a fifth Crusade was launched against Egypt and ended in total failure four years later. The sixth Crusade

in 1228 saw no battles but resulted in diplomatic negotiations that resulted in the Ayyubids rewarding the pro-Arab Frederik II, King of Germany and Italy, with sovereignty for ten years over Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem. A seventh Crusade against Egypt in 1248 ended in disaster, while an eighth in 1270 was diverted to Tunisia and its commander, King Louis IX, died two months after the launching of the campaign and was later canonized as a saint by the Vatican.

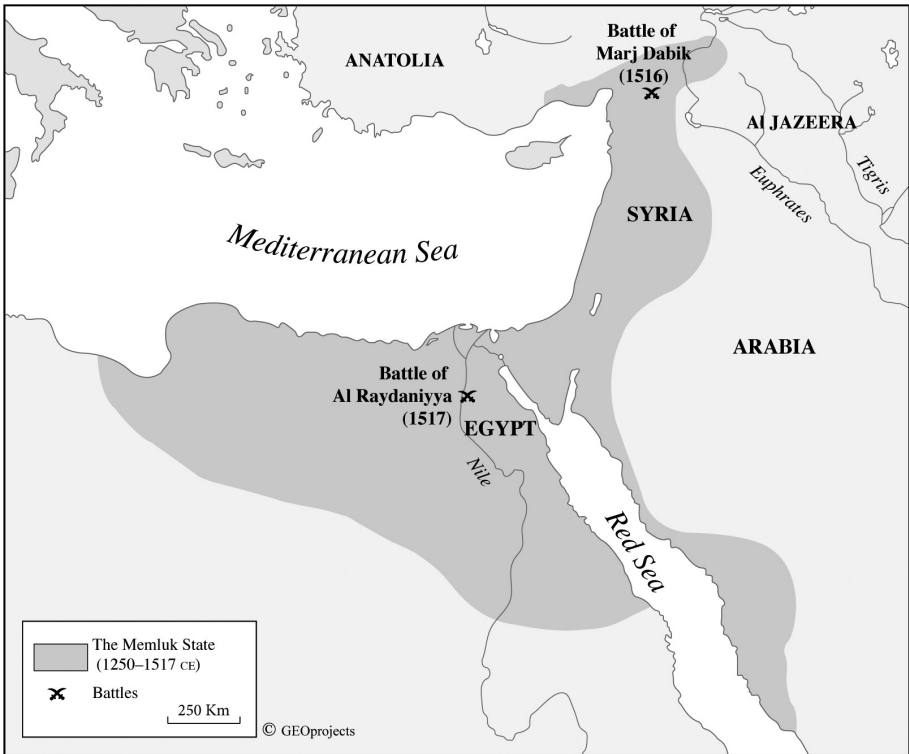
Syria under the Memluks

Peace in Syria would end with the rise of the Mongols to power in the East and their invasion of Baghdad in 1258, which put an end to the Abbasid Caliphate once and for all. The rise of Mongol hegemony was due to the growing importance of the Silk Road in bringing trade from China to Europe and the Mediterranean. The Mongols under Timujin (Genghis Khan) invaded Beijing and seized control of northern China. Later they invaded Khwarizm and Central Asia to ensure control of that segment of the Silk Road. The killing of Mongol merchants in the region of Khwarizm raised concerns about the security of the trade route with Europe, prompting Genghis Khan to invade the neighbouring empires. His grandson Hulagu would sack Baghdad in 1258, as it was regarded as in competition with Mongol trade. Hulagu established an Ilkhanate in Persia, Central Asia and Iraq and from there he intended to extend his control further to the west to Egypt and Anatolia. The Mongols were mainly a land power and relied on land trade routes for their prosperity. It was the first time in history that a Eurasian bloc was formed, extending from the shores of the Pacific in the East to the Black Sea and Eastern Europe in the West. Hulagu's controlling of Iraq and sacking of Baghdad closed off to it trade routes with India via the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, land trade routes via Persia taking their place. This explains why the city failed to recover from Hulagu's blow for several centuries. However, Mongol trade was challenged by trade via the Red Sea controlled by Egypt. This prompted Hulagu

to cross with his troops from upper Mesopotamia into Syria, where they sacked Aleppo and Damascus, and headed towards Palestine.

Egypt was then ruled by a military caste – the Memluks – that rose to power after the death of its last Ayyubid ruler in 1249. Their leader was a certain Qutuz, who resolved to prevent the fall of Egypt into the hands of the Mongols. Like Ramses II, 2,500 years earlier, he knew that the key to defending Egypt lay further to the east, in Syria. Memluk troops thus moved to Ain Jalut near Gaza in southern Palestine to check the advance of the Mongol army led by Ketbuga, brother-in-law of Hulagu. The Memluks were victorious in this battle and thus spared Egypt the fate of Syria and Iraq. A few weeks later they defeated the Memluks near Homs and drove them out of southern and central Syria. In both these battles, credit was given to the skills of a Memluk general, Baybars, who subsequently killed Qutuz after the Battle of Homs and took over power himself. Wanting to tighten his control over Syria, Baybars sacked the Armenian kingdom in Cilicia in 1268 and cut off the Mongol trade line with the Mediterranean through Cilicia. The Memluks later defeated the Mongols in further battles in 1271, 1281, 1304 and 1312, suffering defeat in just one encounter, in 1299. Worried about the Crusaders' presence on the coast of Syria, especially after these sent emissaries to collaborate with the Mongols against them, the Memluks proceeded to take over Antioch in 1268, then Tripoli in 1289, and finally Acre in 1291. In 1302 the Memluks waged another campaign against Cilicia and the Armenian kingdom in southern Anatolia, totally destroying both. Then they were able to extend their control over northern Mesopotamia. Having achieved this they imposed peace in the region for nearly two centuries except for a short invasion of Syria by Tamerlane in 1399. For nearly two and a half centuries, the Memluks would be the most prominent Islamic state, relying for its prosperity on trade with India passing through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The Mamluk Empire

By the early fifteenth century the Portuguese were developing their maritime skills. Since they were blocked from the rest of the European continent by the Kingdom of Castille in the Iberian Peninsula, and from Africa by the Marinids in Morocco, they had to look towards the wide Atlantic Ocean in search of new opportunities. In addition, as the Mediterranean trading route was already in the hands of the Italian city states and Egypt, the Portuguese had to search for an alternative route to India. These factors led to the long journey of the Portuguese round the African continent into the Indian Ocean.⁹ The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope inaugurated a new era in the history of the world. For the first time in history, Indian Ocean trade would pass into non-Arab hands. Until then, it had been controlled

by Arab merchants who served as mediators between India and the Mediterranean and thus had sole control over the spice trade. The Memluks of Egypt had become the protectors of this trade, which earned them huge wealth. The Portuguese fleet led by Vasco Di Gama and Albuquerque proceeded to raid the coast of East Africa and, benefiting from the skills of Arab sailors – among them a certain Ahmad Ibn Majid, who unveiled the secret of the Monsoon winds to them – they proceeded to sail to India, destroy the port of Calicut and establish their base in Bombay. The Memluks of Egypt tried to oust the Portuguese from their newly acquired positions in the Indian Ocean and a fierce war resulted in the defeat of the Memluk fleet in the year 1509. The Portuguese would then extend their control to Hormuz in southwest Persia, Muscat, the island of Socotra off the Yemeni shores, East Africa and the Persian Gulf. Indian Ocean trade was diverted from the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea round the African continent to Portugal.¹⁰ This development led to the decline of the power of the Memluks.

Rise of the Ottomans

Almost sixty years before the infiltration of the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean, a rising power in the Balkans – the Ottomans – was able to take over the city of Constantinople. For nearly a century the Ottomans had been expanding in the Balkans and Anatolia simultaneously, taking over a segment of the trade routes passing through the Russian steppes into the Black Sea and Eastern Europe. The Ottomans were keen on expanding their control over Black Sea trade and expanding their control over eastern Mediterranean trade. Muhammad Fatih's conquest of Constantinople on 29 May 1453 served that purpose and transformed the Ottomans into a superpower.¹¹

Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Aragon was trying to expand its control over the western Mediterranean after taking over Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. The rise of the Ottomans to prominence gave hope to the Nasrids of southern Spain that they could rely on the

Ottomans in their conflict with the Kingdom of Castille. It was possibly the Ottoman threat that prompted the Kingdoms of Castille and Aragon to unite as one state through the marriage of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, and it may have been the same threat that led them conquer Grenada in 1492. This conquest served another purpose: to tighten the grip of Spain on western Mediterranean trade. Soon after the fall of Grenada, Spain invaded Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco, and then started to raid the northern coast of Africa. The Ottomans were aware of this double threat and had to act fast to counter it, especially given that the Portuguese were infiltrating the Red Sea and news of their alliance with Abyssinia and their attack on Jeddah had already reached them, while the Spaniards were expanding eastwards and had already invaded Tripoli on the Libyan coast.

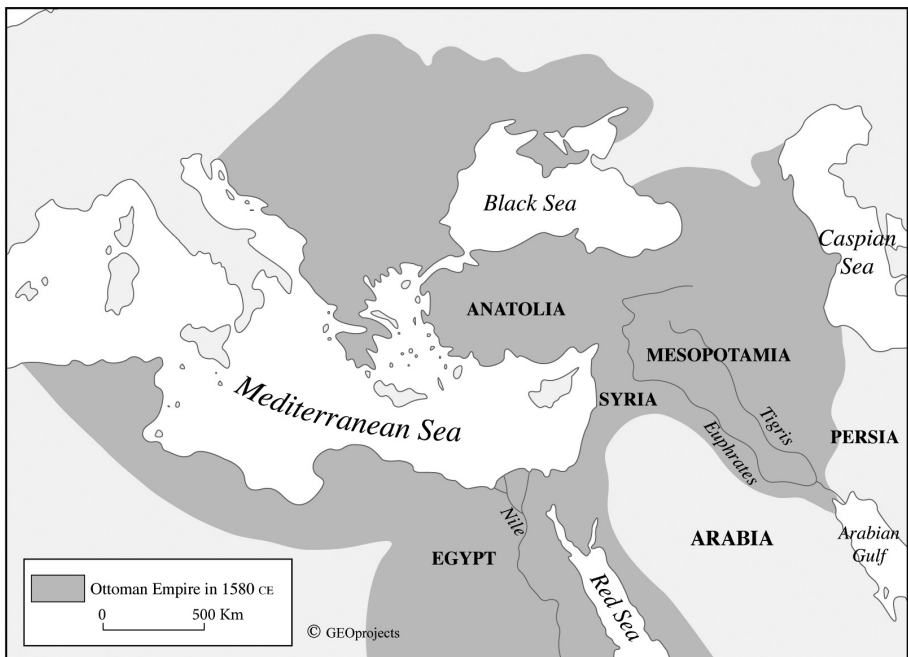
The Ottomans planned to create an alliance with the Memlucs of Egypt in order to unite efforts against the Portuguese and Spaniards. Their expansion in Anatolia had also put them in contact with Cilicia, which was under Memluk hegemony.¹² Meanwhile, Iraq and Persia were living in a state of chaos after the collapse of the Mongol Ilkhanate. Under the rule of the Safavids, who were Shia Turkmen, Persia was converted to Shia Islam through scholars from southern Lebanon.¹³

With the establishment of the Safavids in Persia and their attempts to extend their control over Iraq, and with the expansion of the Ottomans into east Anatolia, Syria once again became the arena for struggle between the three powers. However, the state of weakness into which Egypt had fallen due to the loss of Indian Ocean trade resulted in the Ottomans winning their war against them in the Battle of Marj Dabek in 1516. The main reason for the defeat of the Memluk army was the defection of two prominent commanders to the Ottoman side. The first was the ruler of Damascus, Janberdi Ghazali, and the second was Khayer Bey, who was appointed ruler of Egypt in 1517.¹⁴ Their defection may have been prompted by a realization that the Memlucs could no longer defend Egypt and Arabia, and that only the Ottomans could achieve this mission for Islam.

Once the Ottomans had secured control of Syria and Egypt they had to oust the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean and the Spaniards from the western Mediterranean. Taking over Syria proved to be the most valuable achievement of the Ottoman state. From Syria, Sultan Selim proceeded to Egypt, which became the Ottoman base for a multifold expansion. From Egypt the Ottomans would direct their efforts southwards to take over Eretria and Sudan and to drive the Portuguese out of the Red Sea. From Syria and Egypt the Ottomans would take over Hijaz and Yemen to seal off the Red Sea from Portuguese intrusions and to challenge their presence in the Indian Ocean.¹⁵

From Egypt the Ottomans would also direct their efforts to drive the Spaniards out of their outposts on the North African coast. From Syria, they proceeded to take over northern and central Iraq and would launch a struggle with Safavid Iran to take over southern Iraq and eastern Arabia. This would consume the bulk of the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. By the end of his reign in 1566 the Ottoman state stretched from the walls of Vienna in Central Europe to the Caucasus in the East, rendering the Black Sea a virtual Ottoman lake. In the Middle East the empire stretched from the shores of the Persian Gulf, after over the successful conquest of Baghdad in 1535, to the slopes of the Atlas Mountains separating Morocco from Algeria. Extending Ottoman dominion from Syria in the northern Middle East to the Strait of Mandab rendered the Red Sea also a virtual Ottoman lake.¹⁶ Due to this expansion, the Ottoman Empire gained control of the key routes that had facilitated international trade since the dawn of history. From its positions on the Black Sea and southern Ukraine it could control trade passing through the Russian steppes into central Europe. Through its position in Iraq, it was able to control the land trade route coming from India through Persia in the direction of the Ottoman Empire. From there it could also control Persian Gulf trade, notwithstanding the fact that this had shrunk dramatically due to the presence of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. From Egypt it could control the Red Sea, East Africa and western Arabia. In addition, control of Egypt allowed the

Ottomans to dominate eastern Mediterranean trade and hence gain the upper hand in imposing its conditions on trade in the western Mediterranean. It was their control of Syria that enabled the Ottomans to reach this state of prominence, and they thus treated this province with special care, calling it ‘Sham Shariff’ (Honourable Syria). For nearly three centuries Syria would live in peace under Ottoman rule, as the three geostrategic areas that affected it, i.e. northern Iraq, Cilicia and Egypt, came under Ottoman rule. It would also become a firm base for Ottoman rule in Iraq, Egypt and Eastern Arabia, serving as a springboard for further expansion in North and East Africa.¹⁷



The Ottoman Empire

Notes

- 1 Fouad Abdel Mo'ti Al Sayyad, *Mouarrekh Al Maghoul Al Kabir Rashid Al Din Fadl Allah Al Hamazani* (Cairo: Dar Al Kitab Al 'Arabi), 135.
- 2 A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. I (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1984), 351–4.
- 3 Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
- 4 Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. II, 380.
- 5 Ibid., 381–2.
- 6 Kamal Salibi, *Syria under Islam, 634–1097* (Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2009), 122.
- 7 Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. II, 397.
- 8 Salibi, *A History of Arabia* (New York: Caravan, 1980), 115–18.
- 9 Ibid., 131–3.
- 10 Ibid., 135–9.
- 11 Roger Crowley, *1453, the Holy War for Constantinople and the Clash of Islam and the West* (New York: Hyperion, 2005).
- 12 Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 44–54.
- 13 Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).
- 14 Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol. I, 79–86.
- 15 Nikolai Ivanov, *al-Fath al-Outhmani Lil Aqtar al-Arabiya 1516–1574* (Beirut: Farabi, 2004).
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.

Chapter 3

The world until the eighteenth century

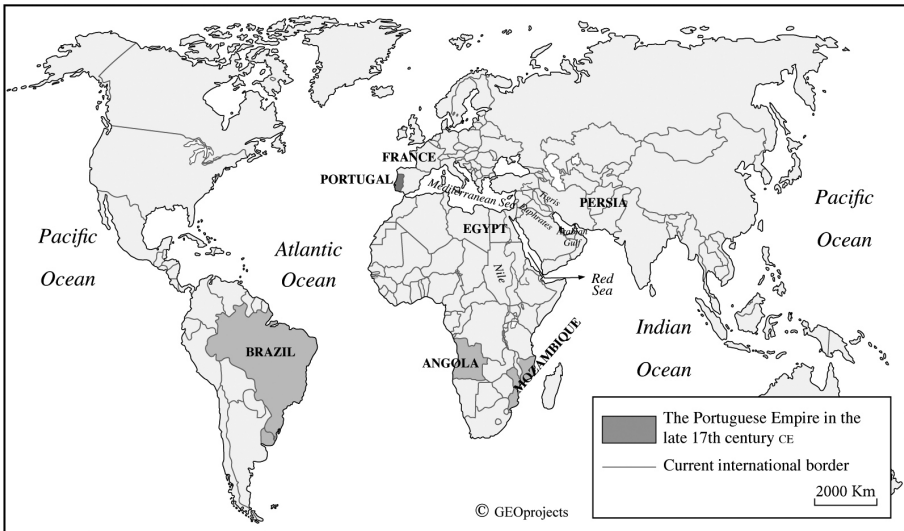
And as for Egypt, its land is of gold and its women are as dolls and its men follow the victorious. Their youngsters are the most couth and their elders are the laziest [of the population]. They are gathered by the drum beats and are dispersed by the stick. And as for the people of Iraq, they are the most experienced in causing trouble and the most inexperienced in dealing with it. And as for the people of Sham (Greater Syria), they are the most obedient towards rulers and the least obedient towards God. Their money is their religion.

(Amr Bin El Aas reporting to Caliph Omar Bin El Khattab on the newly conquered lands. This was the same formula used by the Ottomans afterwards to keep Syria, Egypt and Iraq under their yoke for four whole centuries.)

Portugal and Spain

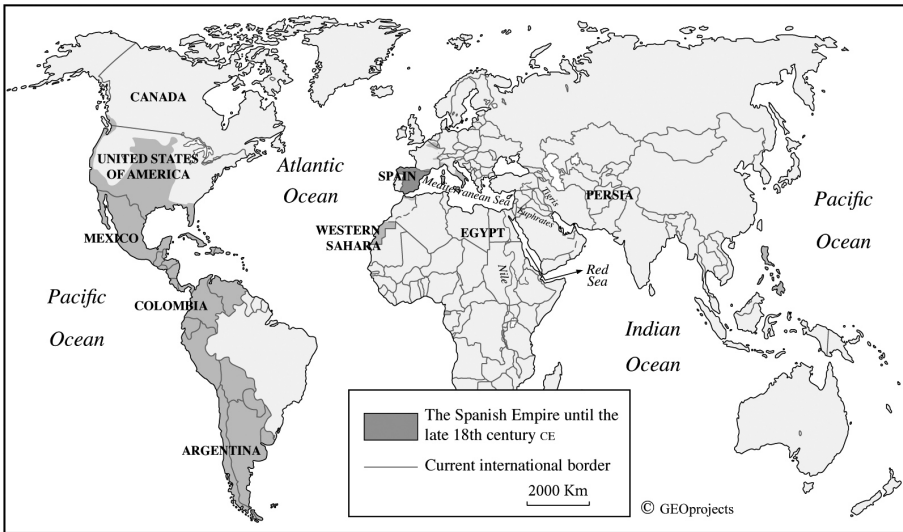
By the early fifteenth century, as mentioned earlier, Portugal, blocked by Castille from expanding into Europe, started to develop its maritime technology. As the western Mediterranean was already dominated by Aragon, and the eastern Mediterranean was dominated by the Egyptians, the Portuguese began to explore the African coast to get to India. In 1488 Bartholomew Diaz discovered the Cape of Good Hope and ten years later Vasco Da Gama crossed the Cape on his way to India.¹ Reaching India served Portugal's primary purpose of diverting the spice trade from Arabia round the African continent to Portugal. The Portuguese were thus able to establish a maritime empire that had coastal outposts all over the African coast, Arabia, India and Southeast Asia, in addition to Brazil.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The Portuguese Empire

In 1505, the Portuguese built Fort Manuel on the western coast of India after forming an alliance with the Indian Maharaja of Kochi who was at odds with the Zamorin of Calicut, the main sea port in western India. In 1506, Alfonso Di Albuquerque conquered Socotra, and a year later Muscat. Worried about the infiltration of the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean and their diversion of trade from Arabia, the states that shared in this trade gathered forces to counter this threat.² The Memluks of Egypt were joined by the Ottomans, the Sultan of Gujarat, the Raja of Kozikhode and even the Raguzan and the Venetian republics in an effort to oust the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean. In 1509, a major battle pitted the forces of this wide alliance against the Portuguese fleet. Known as the Battle of Diu, this encounter ended with an astonishing victory for the Portuguese and a major defeat for the coalition. The Portuguese were then able to establish unchallenged control of the Indian Ocean for over a century. The Ottomans would try again in 1538 to attack the Portuguese there, but to no avail.³



The Spanish Empire

In parallel to the Portuguese successes, the Spaniards were also rising to prominence. By the late fifteenth century, the Kingdoms of Castille and Aragon were united under one crown through the marriage of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. Aragon already controlled western Mediterranean trade through its control of Sardinia and Sicily. However, eastern Mediterranean trade was increasingly coming under the control of their enemies, the Ottomans, who favoured the Venetians over the Spaniards. Since they were lagging behind the Portuguese in the race for the spice trade with India, the Spaniards threw their lot in with Christopher Columbus, who, on the basis of Arabic geography and maps, believed that by sailing straight to the West he could reach India from the East. After he discovered America as a result, the Spaniards were able to conquer most of central and Latin America. Though these regions were rich in silver and gold, they still did not give Spain access to the lucrative spice trade. Nor could they evict the Portuguese from the outposts they had acquired especially after the Treaty of Tordesillas was signed under the auspices of the

Pope, dividing the world into two hemispheres with Spain dominating one and Portugal dominating the other. This caused Spain to turn its attention back to North Africa. In 1497 the Spaniards captured Melilla; then they took over Mer al-Kabir in 1505. In 1509 they conquered Oran and later took over Tunisia and Tripoli.⁴

Portuguese and Spanish expansion, coupled with the inability of the Memluks to counter this, made the Ottomans nervous, especially after the Portuguese infiltrated the Red Sea and threatened to occupy Mecca after successfully attacking the port of Jeddah. This pushed the Ottomans to occupy Syria in 1516 and Egypt in 1517.⁵

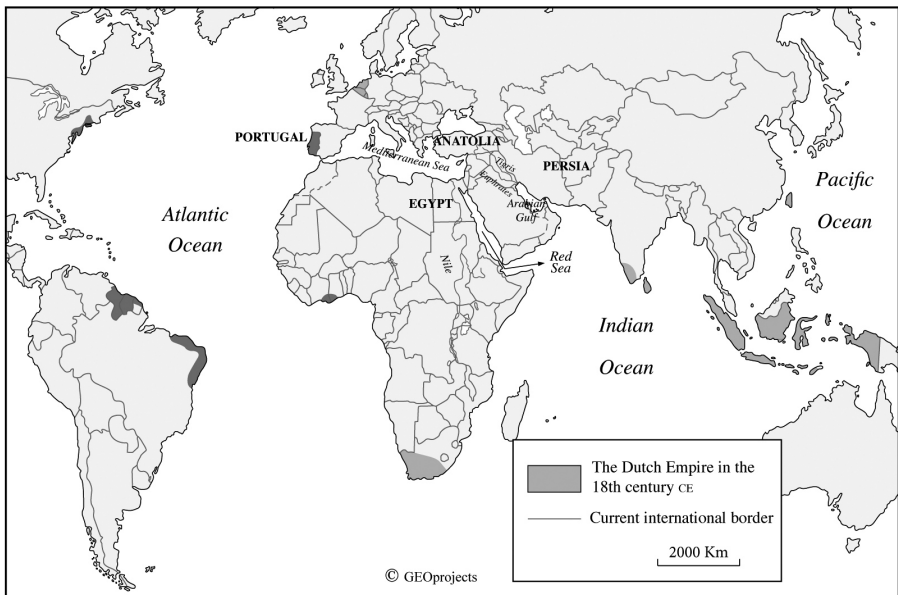
The Spanish advance was checked by the Ottomans and a war ensued in which the Spaniards lost their North African gains, but they went on to challenge Ottoman hegemony in the Mediterranean in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.⁶ The Spaniards, ruled by the Hapsburgs, were also rulers of Austria – a fact that alienated the French, who felt threatened by being encircled by the Spaniards from two sides. This explains the rapprochement of the French and the Ottomans that lasted from then until the French Revolution. The Spaniards were on the rise and by 1565 they had achieved a major victory over France, which was soon to be marginalized due to its civil war. In 1580, Sebastian, King of Portugal, died without leaving an heir. King Philip II of Spain seized the opportunity to invade Portugal and hence unite the whole Iberian Peninsula under his rule.

The Dutch, the French and the English

The rise of Spanish hegemony in Western Europe would be challenged by an unexpected power: the Dutch. With their country previously a Spanish colony, the Dutch, who converted en masse to Protestantism, would rebel in 1566 under the leadership of William of Orange. The rebellion would draw Spain into a bloody war that would cost it the loss of Holland, though it retained control of the Walloon provinces in the south and the Pas de Calais in modern-day France. The British, then under the rule of the Protestant queen Elizabeth I, intervened in the conflict on the side of the Dutch – a move designed to counter

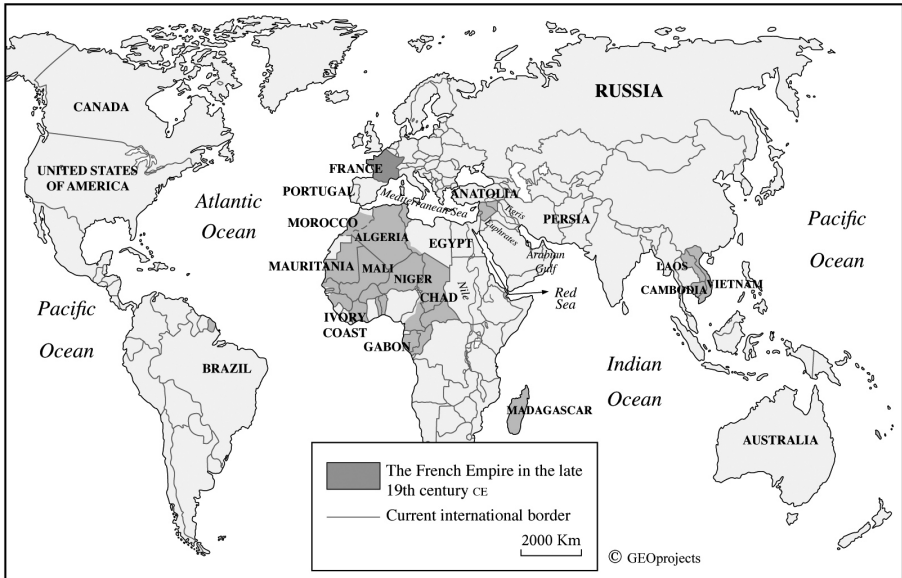
Spanish attempts to impose control over England in the religious war that had hit Europe. This led the Spaniards to gather their forces to invade England – a venture that ended in the defeat and destruction of the Spanish Armada. However, this was a mere setback to the progress of the rising star of Spain.

Nonetheless, the Dutch had secured their independence and would soon establish themselves as a maritime power that would compete with the Spanish and Portuguese for nearly eight decades until they prevailed. After gaining independence, the Dutch resorted to a policy of hostility towards the Portuguese Empire, attacking its outposts throughout the world and trying to establish alliances with Asian powers damaged by the Portuguese hegemony over the Indian Ocean. Through their alliance with Persia and the Omanis, they finally totally ousted the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean by the year 1648.⁷ Brazil would be among the very few colonies the Portuguese managed to keep, and the spice trade passed over to the Dutch. The Portuguese would resort to another type of trade, the slave trade, which would earn them huge profits at the expense of the African people.

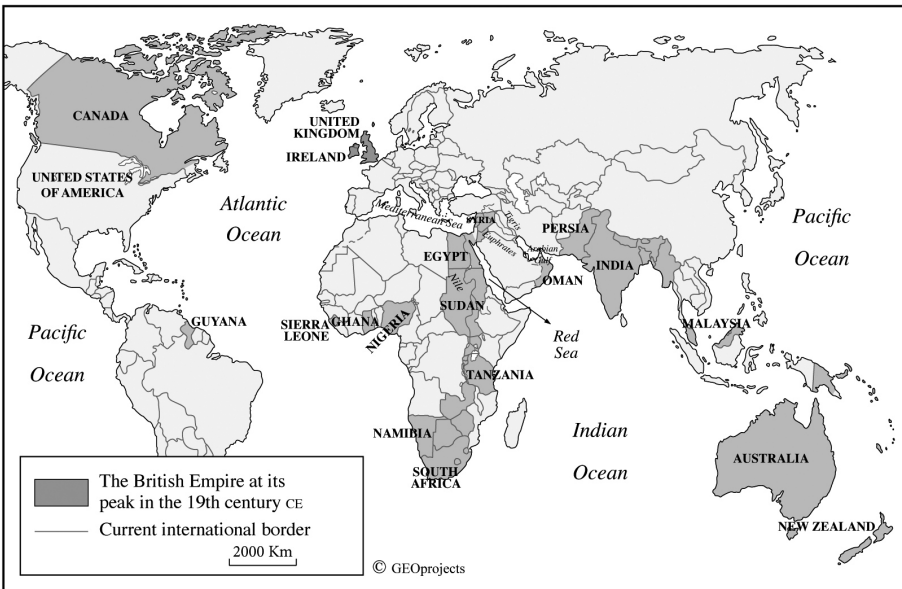


The Dutch Empire

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The French Empire



The British Empire

The hegemony that the Dutch were to enjoy was short-lived as, starting from the late seventeenth century, they came under attack from both the British and French. By the late seventeenth century the British had overcome their long-time conflict between Protestants and Catholics, dethroning James II, the last king of the Stuart dynasty, in 1690 and replacing him with William of Orange, the head of the Dutch Republic. In France, the long reign of Louis XIV had endowed the country with natural borders that made her feel sufficiently safe to venture out and establish an empire overseas.

The first war between England and Holland dates back to 1652, shortly after the restoration of the monarchy in England after the Cromwell interlude. A year earlier, the English parliament had passed the Navigation Acts which forbade the Dutch from taking part in the spice trade between England and its colonies. This resulted in a war between the two countries that ended with a British victory. Two other wars between the two powers followed in 1664 and 1673, both ending in a British triumph. The accession of William of Orange to the British and Scottish thrones ended hostilities between the Dutch and British, after which they joined forces against France. The latter, under Louis XIV, was able to establish a centralized government that rendered it more efficient and capable of winning over its long-time enemy, the Hapsburgs of Austria, and Spain, and thus secure the ascent of a Bourbon to the throne of Spain while putting the Austrians in check, mainly by applying political pressure. After he achieved this, Louis XIV then turned his attention to Holland as part of his strategy to endow France with natural borders that could ensure its defence. The accession of William of Orange to the throne of England had virtually ended the Franco-Dutch wars and started a long-lasting conflict between France and England.

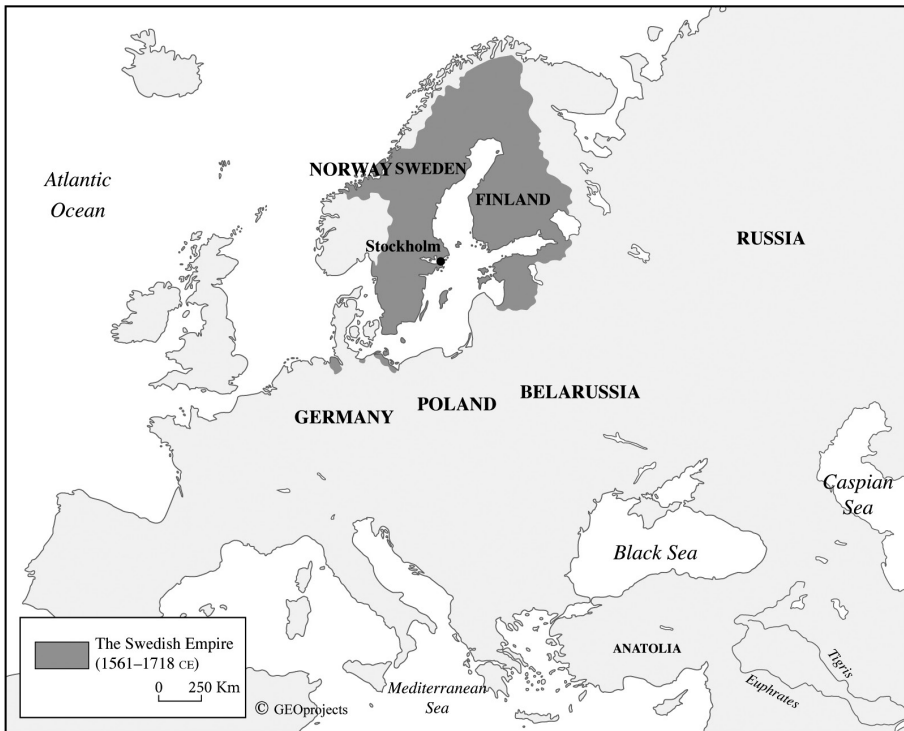
The union between Holland and England allowed both powers to compete with two other superpowers, namely France and Spain. Holland would face France in the European continent with little success while the British would successfully brush aside the Spaniards in the first half of the eighteenth century. The French would also join the naval battle and the conflict would drag on and extend to all

colonies in the Indian Ocean and North America. This long conflict reached its peak in 1756 in the Seven Years War, which would cause France to lose the province of Quebec in North America.⁸ With this, France lost access to the Grand Lakes which connected it to its colonies in Louisiana and the Mississippi in the modern United States. In the Indian Ocean, France lost its possessions in India and the Mauritius Islands. Later, a peace treaty was signed in which the British handed back Mauritius but kept most French colonies, putting France out of the race for the spice trade.⁹ Britain would hence become the European power in control of the Indian Ocean and the spice trade with Europe. The Spanish soon became a marginal power in the European balance of power, while France would face a crisis that would lead to the revolution of 1789. Now that England had the upper hand it had to develop a strategy that would ensure the safety of its newly acquired possessions by keeping any European power at a distance from the Indian Ocean.¹⁰

Sweden, Russia and the Baltic

Early in the seventeenth century, a new power in Northern Europe would rise to prominence, benefiting from Baltic Sea trade after it had acquired Russian and Lithuanian territories and expanded its dominion over the northern German principalities. The country was Sweden, a champion of Protestantism, and by 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years War, it had come to dominate over half of the states constituting the Holy Roman Empire. More importantly, Sweden took control of the Weser, Oder and Elbe rivers, which ensured its control of Baltic Sea trade and afforded it the opportunity of delivering its goods to the heart of Germanic territories. Another victory over Russia in 1658 gave Sweden control over Kexholm, Ingria and Estonia.¹¹

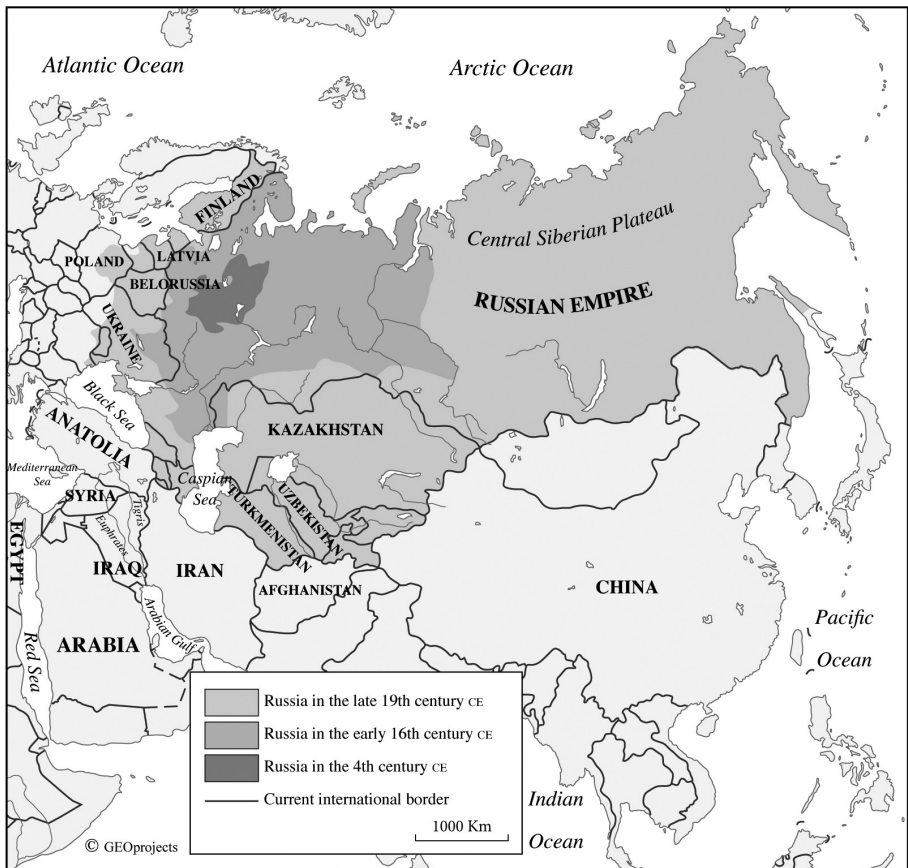
In 1700 Charles XII ascended to the Swedish throne as a consequence of the demise of his father. Russia, Poland and Denmark, having lost territories to Sweden, saw this as an opportunity to reverse their losses, as they judged the young king would be inexperienced in



The Swedish Empire

the art of war. This assumption proved to be erroneous, for Charles turned out to be a military genius. He directed his first strike against Denmark and drove it out of the war. Then he managed to strike a severe blow against the Russians in the Battle of Narva where over forty thousand Russian troops were wiped out by a mere eight thousand Swedish soldiers led by Charles himself. Tsar Peter the Great, who had headed to Moscow prior to the battle seeking to speed up reinforcements, was reported to have fled the battle, which made him the laughing stock of Europe for years to come. However, instead of seizing the opportunity to march on Moscow and force Russia into capitulation, Charles made a strategic mistake by redirecting his forces against Poland, due to a personal grudge that he bore against the Polish king Augustus II. This proved to be a grave mistake as it

gave Tsar Peter the time he needed to form another army, which he trained according to European standards. The year 1709 saw the tide of the war turn against Charles when Peter defeated him in the Battle of Poltava, and cut off his retreat route back to northern Poland. Charles sought refuge with the Ottomans and the war dragged on for some time, but its outcome had been decided the moment Charles made that fateful mistake. Sweden was eventually defeated and, thanks to the brilliance of its Tsar Peter, Russia went on to emerge as a major power in Europe by the early years of seventeenth century.¹²



The Russian Empire

The Russian rise to prominence had started almost two centuries earlier. After the break-up of the Mongol order in Asia in the early fifteenth century, the Khanate of the Golden Horde, established in the Russian steppes with its capital in Kazan, began to weaken, which enabled the Duchy of Moscow to slip gradually out of its control. In 1380, the Duchy of Moscow was joined by other Russian principalities to fight against the Tartars. It was to prove the first time that the Russians inflicted a defeat on their previous masters, in the famous Battle of Kolikovo. From that day on, Moscow started to expand its domains by absorbing the neighbouring principalities. By the fifteenth century, the Duchy of Moscow, under Ivan III, became totally independent from the Khanate of the Golden Horde, and proclaimed itself heir to the Byzantine Empire after the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453. The following century, under Ivan IV, the Duchy of Moscow was able to repel the last Tartar attack. By 1547, Ivan, nicknamed 'the Terrible' for his ruthlessness, absorbed the Khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia, hence doubling his territory and extending his reach into southwestern Siberia and the Caucasus. In spite of these developments, Russia was still considered a backward country with no access to the wide seas except in the north where it had access to the Arctic Sea which freezes over for six months of the year, thus blocking navigation. By the late sixteenth century Russia had been weakened by its war against Sweden, Lithuania and Poland, a war waged in order to gain access to the Baltic Sea, but to no avail. By 1598, the last Tsar of the Rurik dynasty died, leaving no heir to succeed him. A period of civil war ensued and Poland took advantage of the situation to extend its control over parts of Russian territories. In response to this crisis, Prince Dmitry Pozarsky and Kuzma Minin, a merchant, organized resistance against the Poles, their efforts leading in 1613 to the rise of the Romanov dynasty to power.¹³

By the second half of the seventeenth century, Ukraine, east of the Dnieper, came under Russian protection after waging war against Poland between 1654 and 1667. Meanwhile, the Russians extended their control over the rest of Siberia and reached the shores of the

Pacific Ocean, even crossing into Alaska. In spite of this, Russia was still isolated from the high seas that gave access to international lines of communication and international trade routes. It still had no access to the Black Sea which would remain under Ottoman control until the late eighteenth century. In addition, Russia had no access to the Baltic Sea, which was then virtually a Swedish lake. The only seaport Russia had was the port of Archangel in northern Russia, but for six months of the year this was inaccessible due to ice.

This was not the main problem that Tsar Peter faced after he acceded to the throne in 1682. For the first seven years of his reign, his elder half-sister, Sofia, enjoying the support of the military, the Streltsy, imposed herself as regent and imposed her brother, the mentally ill Ivan, as Peter's co-regent. By 1689, Peter had reversed the situation and had become master of Russia. He then was free to turn his attention to getting access to the Black Sea.¹⁴ In 1696, Peter benefited from the involvement of the Ottomans in a war against Austria to launch an attack on their fortress in Azov which blocked access to the Sea of Azov, a tributary of the Black Sea. Peter took over the fortress but his success was short-lived; he had to return it in 1712 to the Ottomans with a large sum of money after he was besieged by an Ottoman army in Wallachia. His greatest success would be in the northwest against Sweden. In 1700, he joined Denmark, Saxony and Poland in a coalition against Sweden. The war was painful and lasted for nearly twenty years. Russia was left to fight on its own from 1706, after Augustus II, King of Poland, was defeated and abdicated. Saxony had capitulated earlier that year, while Denmark had abandoned the war still earlier. The turning point was the victory of the Russians in 1709 in the Battle of Poltava. Though a peace treaty with Sweden would be signed only in 1723, Russia after Poltava emerged as a major power that was to play a major role in East Europe ever afterwards. Peter would set Russia in motion towards the south in a drive aimed at taking over Constantinople, as he believed that whoever would take over this city would rule the world.¹⁵ This drive was bolstered by Russia's Oriental heritage, which it had adopted after it converted to the Greek

Orthodox branch of Christianity, as well as by Asian cultural influence on Russia.¹⁶ The pan-Slavic policies of Russia, which compelled them to push eastwards in Europe, formed a secondary factor compared to their primary goal of reaching warm waters.¹⁷ As the periodical *Novoye Vremya* mentioned in 1901: ‘What we want to achieve is the good of the Slavic people and securing a path to the Black Sea because neither the ports of Port Arthur, nor Hai Kwan or Boi Hoi, could be as important as the Bosphorus.’¹⁸

Ottomans, supremacy and challenges

As Western and Northern Europe were taking shape, the Ottoman Empire was secure in its domain and was considered the most powerful power in the world until the first half of the eighteenth century. By the time of the death of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1566, the Ottomans were already in control of Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt in North Africa and Syria, Iraq, and most of Arabia including Yemen in the Near East, East Anatolia, and most of the Caucasus, the Balkans, Romania, Hungary and parts of Poland and Ukraine. It also controlled most of the ancient seas. The Black Sea by the fifteenth century was already a virtual Ottoman lake. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the Red Sea had become the same. Ottomans would also control the eastern Mediterranean and have access to the Persian Gulf. Until the late seventeenth century, the only defeat suffered by the Ottoman army was under the leadership of Bayezid (‘the Thunderbolt’) in 1402 at the hands of Tamerlane. By 1683, the Ottomans were besieging Vienna for the second time, although they were unsuccessful in taking control of it. However, their supremacy would continue for another century. The only challenge to the Ottomans came through occasional encroachments by Safavid Persia into their domain. Other than that, nobody dared to defy them, hence the long period of peace enjoyed under Ottoman rule during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Syria, or Sham Sharif, would benefit from this long period of stability to become the most important Arab province of the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman supremacy was due to the economic supremacy that it enjoyed through the control of all traditional trade routes between India and Europe. However, by the late eighteenth century, things were about to change. The traditional trade routes lost their importance with the discovery of new ones. The infiltration of the Portuguese and other Europeans into the Indian Ocean delivered a severe blow to the trade routes between Arabia on one hand and India and East Africa on the other. The Portuguese also blocked trade through the Persian Gulf. As the Ottomans lost Indian trade, eastern Mediterranean trade declined too. The Ottomans could still rely on land trade routes coming from China through Central Asia in the direction of Europe. However, these routes would be affected by hostile relations between the Ottomans and Safavids. In addition, the Russian victory over Sweden under Peter the Great and his acquiring access to the Baltic and Eastern Europe led him to divert trade from Central Asia to his domain and away from Ottoman control. These developments would later take their toll on the Ottoman economy which would suffer from stagnation and recurrent economic crises from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Without a strong economy, it was impossible to sustain a strong and efficient army, so the Ottoman military inexorably declined also. In 1699, the Ottomans were forced to sign a peace treaty with Austria and thus relinquish their dream of conquering Vienna. The outskirts of Vienna would be the furthest their armies would ever reach in Europe. Subsequently, the borders of the Ottoman Empire would remain unchanged until the late eighteenth century.

The beginning of decadence

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Ottomans were made aware of their weakness after suffering defeat at the hands of the Russians, ruled then by Catherine the Great. The modernization process that had started in Russia during the days of Peter the Great had led to a rise in Russia's fortunes. A major problem for the country, however, was that, despite the huge size of its territory, it did not have

access to major world trade routes. In the north it was blocked by the Arctic Sea. The Caspian Sea was landlocked and connected it only to Persia and Central Asia. Access to the Baltic Sea had helped to make Russia a regional power with limited influence over parts of Eastern Europe, but it had not fulfilled its aim of becoming a major superpower. To achieve that, Russia needed to look southwards and secure access to the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Three powers stood in its way: the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Empire, and the Khanates of Central Asia and Afghanistan. It was competition for 'warm waters' that made the Ottoman Empire the fiercest enemy of the Russian Empire and vice versa.

In 1768, the Russians waged war against the Ottomans to acquire access to the Black Sea. After six years of battles, the Ottomans would endure their first major defeat in history, resulting in them signing the Treaty of Kutschuk Kainardzhi by which the Russians were to take over vast territories in southern Ukraine, the coast of the Black Sea and Crimea, which was annexed to Russia in 1783. The Ottomans, in an attempt to recover their losses, waged war against Russia in 1787 but again suffered heavy losses and by 1792 they had to sign the Treaty of Jassy, which reinforced the Russian hold on the spoils they acquired in the previous war. This would give Russia access to the 'warm waters' and would end three centuries of Ottoman monopoly on Black Sea trade.¹⁹

While the Russians started to press from the north, the British tightened their control over India and trade through the Indian Ocean. The English East India Company had already been active in the Indian Ocean since the early seventeenth century, but its activities were totally commercial until the Battle of Plassey in 1757. Until then, the company had established outposts granted to it by the Mughal emperor Jahangir and other local Indian rulers in Surat, Madras and Bombay. In 1757, commercial activities would be transformed into direct colonization. The British were then fighting the French in North America and the Indian Ocean. When the French won over the Nawab – the Indian ruler of Bengal – to their side, the British felt threatened and launched an attack against him.

With the Nawab's defeat, the French were ousted from Bengal and the British started to extend their military control over India. A few decades later they had transformed India into a colony which remained in their hands until 1947.²⁰ As the British were able to impose uncontested control over trade through the Indian Ocean following the Seven Years' War with France, and as India was considered the most precious jewel of the British Crown, the strategy of Great Britain afterwards was based on preventing any European power from gaining access to the Indian Ocean. This determined the British geopolitical approach to its role and interests in the world. The Ottoman Empire, Persia and Afghanistan lay between British India and Europe, and to safeguard British interests these either had to remain as a buffer between British India and Europe, or come under direct British control.

Notes

- 1 Kamal Salibi, *A History of Arabia* (New York: Caravan, 1980), 131–3.
- 2 Lewis Thomas, 'European Imperialism in the Middle East', in Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 118–19.
- 3 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 135–9.
- 4 Refer to Nikolai Ivanov, *al-Fath al-Outhmani Lil Aqtar al-Arabiya 1516–1574* (Beirut: Farabi, 2004) and Roger Crowley, *Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Center of the World* (London: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009).
- 5 Thomas, 'European Imperialism in the Middle East', 120.
- 6 Crowley, *Empires of the Sea*.
- 7 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 145–6.
- 8 Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War 1754–1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (Harlow: Pearson, 2011).
- 9 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 160.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Refer to Gary Dean Peterson, *Warrior Kings of Sweden: The Rise of an Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (McFarland & Company, 2007).

- 12 Lindsey Hughes, *Peter the Great: A Biography* (Yale University Press, 2004).
- 13 Chester S. L. Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (Penn State Press, 2012).
- 14 Lindsey Hughes, *Peter the Great: A Biography* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004).
- 15 Ernest Jackh, 'The Geostrategic Uniqueness of the Middle East', in Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 12.
- 16 Edgar Alexander, 'Russian Messianism and the Middle East', in Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 140.
- 17 Ibid., 141.
- 18 *Novoye Vremya*, April 1901; as quoted in Alexander, 'Russian Messianism and the Middle East', 141.
- 19 Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 247–50.
- 20 Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

Chapter 4

Syria in the nineteenth century

My dream was realized in the Orient as it almost turned into a nightmare in the Occident. I've spent the best years of my life in Egypt; in Europe the clouds do not allow you to think of the projects that change the course of history whereas in Egypt, whoever rules is capable of changing history. If I were not ruler of Egypt, I would not have become emperor of France.

(Attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte)

Napoleon in Egypt

The weakness of the Ottoman Empire would be harshly exposed by the campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte against Egypt in 1798. Bonaparte, who rose to prominence from the ranks of the French army, wanted to take over Egypt so that it could serve him as a base from which to reach India and establish an alliance with Tipu Sahib, the ruler of southwest India, who was at war with Britain. The French general believed that whoever controlled the Middle East would rule the world.¹ Thus, Napoleon departed with around fifty thousand troops from the port of Toulon headed for Egypt. On his way he took over Malta and on the first of July the fleet reached Alexandria and conquered the city. Then Bonaparte headed towards Cairo. However, by the time he had managed to defeat the Memluks and take over the city, the British fleet had located the French fleet docked at Abou Qir and destroyed it, hence blocking Bonaparte's return to Paris. News of Bonaparte's conquest of Egypt pushed the Ottomans to send troops to fight him in an attempt to liberate Egypt. One army was sent

by sea to Abou Qir, while another was launched from Syria to Sinai. Both armies then converged on Cairo. Bonaparte defeated the Ottoman expedition but realized that his position in Egypt would remain precarious so long as he did not control Syria. This prompted him to proceed to Palestine as soon as he defeated the Ottoman expedition. He headed to Acre, which is considered the gateway to Syria. His siege of the town, however, proved a failure, Bonaparte finding himself unable to prevent the British from sending supplies to the city via the sea. His failure to take Acre, coupled with the destruction of his fleet, sealed his fate in Egypt. It was a matter of time before the French would be ousted in 1802.

Bonaparte's ill-fated campaign had several consequences. The first was to push Sultan Selim III to speed up modernization of the Ottoman army. In addition, it gave back to the Mediterranean – particularly the eastern Mediterranean – its lost geostrategic importance. After the Battle of Lipanto in 1571, the Mediterranean had been marginalized as colonial powers competed with each other on the high seas. After Bonaparte's expedition, the Mediterranean regained its importance, as the British were the first to realize. Gibraltar had already been in British hands since 1713. Malta became a British territory in 1814 as part of the Treaty of Vienna which followed Napoleon's defeat. This provided the British with full control of navigation in the eastern and western Mediterranean.

A group of scientists attached to the French expedition, led by the scholar Jean-François Champollion, was able during their time there to decode the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic alphabet, thus unlocking the secrets of the past. Among these was the discovery of a lesson learned by Ramses II over three thousand years earlier: that the security of Egypt could only be guaranteed by taking over Syria, either wholly or partially. Napoleon's failed expedition in Egypt prompted French scientists to study the Crusade era in the Levant. They went even further back to the time of the Romans, who had concluded in the third century BCE – especially after the Battle of Beneventum (275 BCE) when Rome foiled the attempts of Perseus, ruler of Macedon, to invade Italy – that controlling the shores of the Balkans

was integral to the protection of Italian southern regions. The battle in question revealed the major role of the Mediterranean in delineating relationships between the superpowers. It laid down a fundamental principle of international relations; namely, that major powers reliant on maritime routes for transportation will protect those routes by controlling coastal regions vital for them. Controlling the shores of the eastern Mediterranean was vital in preventing any Asian power from reaching them and thus obstructing maritime trade routes. This principle was integral to the European powers in shielding them from outside interference.²

The French assigned special importance to Syria, and throughout the nineteenth century tried to impose their influence on this highly important geostrategic region. The lessons of the past, of Ptolemaic Egypt and the Crusades, had prompted Napoleon to contemplate the idea of creating a Jewish state in Palestine that would serve as a buffer between Egypt and Syria. Eventually, as noted earlier, France was to end the influence of the Memluks in Egypt after more than five centuries. Subsequently, the Albanian general of the Ottoman expedition that recovered Egypt from the French, Mohammad Ali Pasha, rose to power there. With him Egypt would enter into a hasty programme of modernization that would have important consequences.

Mohammad Ali and Syria

Mohammad Ali wanted to modernize Egypt and centralize power and authority with an army and bureaucracy stylized along European lines. For this he needed revenue, which he created by taking over the agricultural land in the country. He also established local industry and drafted the peasants into the new Egyptian army, after he wiped out the Memluks. For nearly twenty years Mohammad Ali acted as an obedient servant to the Ottoman Sultan. Between 1808 and 1818, he went on to recover Hijaz from Wahhabi insurgents who had taken over the region in 1803 and obstructed pilgrimage. The Wahhabis had proceeded to organize the Arab tribes of Nejd into a powerful army and started to expand their domain into the shores of

the Persian Gulf and Hijaz, launching attacks on central and southern Iraq, and on southern Syria. Some of these Wahhabi tribes even settled in southern Syria, and changed the name of the city of Athraa to Deraa, derived from al-Dariyya, the capital city of the Wahhabis in Nejd. In 1818, Mohammad Ali destroyed Diriiya and took the Wahhabis' leaders as prisoners to Istanbul where they were either executed or imprisoned. Three years later he sent troops and battleships to fight with the Porte against Greek insurgents. Eight years after that he was to lose the bulk of his precious navy to the joint British and French fleet in the Battle of Navarino, which led to the independence of Greece.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Ali was building his military power with the assistance of French officers from Napoleon's Grand Army such as General Seves or Sulaiman Pasha al-Fransawi. Acquiring economic and military power heightened Mohammad Ali's awareness of the geostrategic elements essential to securing Egypt's interests. In 1820, he sent an expeditionary force to Sudan in order to subdue this country which was both rich in natural resources and important for securing the hydraulic resources of the Nile. The expedition reached Uganda, Zaire and the shores of Lake Victoria. Defeat of the Ottomans by the Greeks in 1829 clearly revealed how weak the Ottoman Empire had become. Mohammad Ali felt that he was now responsible for defending Muslim Lands given that the Ottomans were no longer capable of doing so. An independent Egypt had to take over Syria. On 31 October 1831, Mohammad Ali sent his son Ibrahim to Syria. Within a few months he was in Konya and about to advance on Istanbul, ready to deliver the death blow to the Ottoman state, only for the great powers to intervene and obstruct his plans.

Mohammad Ali's ambitions had the potential to establish a regenerated Islamic state in the Near East that might damage the aspirations of the Russians and British in the region. As soon as Ibrahim Pasha reached Konya, the Russians sent their navy to Istanbul and established themselves as protectors of the Porte. The British and French were alarmed by this move and intervened to limit Mohammad Ali's aspirations. He had to be content with ruling

Syria and Cilicia as far as the Taurus Mountains. Meanwhile, the British felt threatened by his expansion into Nejd in 1818. Fearing that he would extend his control to the western shores of the Persian Gulf, they proceeded in 1819 to bombard the coast between Jalfar – Ras El Khaimah in the modern-day UAE – all the way to Kuwait, imposing a de facto British ‘protection’ on the region.³

In 1839, the British took over Aden to block access to the Indian Ocean after Mohammad Ali took over Yemen.⁴ Mohammad Ali’s expansion of his domain prompted Russia, Britain, Austria and Prussia to join forces to pressure him into withdrawing to Egypt. In 1840, his troops battered by the European coalition, Mohammad Ali accepted the terms imposed on him and withdrew to Egypt, content that it would be ruled by his dynasty. His withdrawal from Syria opened the way for the great powers’ scurry for influence in Syria, particularly its coastal areas, with special importance being assigned to Mount Lebanon. The French championed the cause of the Maronites while the British supported the Druze. A civil war ensued between 1840 and 1860, resulting in bloody massacres that led to the imposition of a special status for Mount Lebanon in the form of a Mutasarrifiyyah or ‘autonomous region’ stretching from Koura in northern Lebanon into the Shouf area in the south. This area would be ruled by a Christian chosen with the consent of the five major powers: France, Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria. Once again, Syria was open to regional and international competition over influence after long centuries of peace. Soon, French economic interests began to permeate Syria and with these came French missionaries followed by others from Britain and America.

Russian, French and British expansionism

As these developments were taking place in the Near East, Russia was pushing southwards, whether in the Balkans, the Caucasus or in Central Asia. In 1802, Russia annexed Georgia. Following the fall of Napoleon, the Russians got involved in a long war to take over the

Caucasus. Between 1817 and 1864, they were able to subdue the Chechens, Dagestanis, Circassians and Karachays, hence taking over the northern Caucasus. Then they started to clash with Persia over Azerbaijan, and with the Ottomans over Armenia. In 1853, a dispute erupted between Russia and France over custody of the Holy Places in Jerusalem. The French under their new ruler Napoleon III wanted to take custody of the Holy Places from the Russians. In retaliation, the Russians tried to impose on Sultan Abdulmajid a treaty by which they would become protectors of the Greek Orthodox faith in the Ottoman Empire. When the Sultan refused, the Russians moved their troops into Moldavia and Wallachia along the Danube River. Unexpectedly, the Ottomans had the upper hand in this war as they were able to achieve several victories over the Russians while repelling the Russian attacks in the Caucasus. It was then that the Russian navy started to attack Ottoman ports in the Black Sea – a move that drove the French and British to intervene on the side of the Ottomans in early 1854 against the Russians in what would become the Crimean War. The war ended in Russian defeat but did not end Russian ambitions of expansion. In 1877, they would try their lot one more time and waged war against the Ottomans. This time the French did not intervene, having been battered seven years earlier by the Prussians. The British did not want to act alone in support of the Ottomans. The end result was the independence of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro from Ottoman rule, while Bulgaria acquired an autonomous status which amounted to a near independence from the Ottoman Empire.

As the Russians were carving out territories in the northern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, the French were gradually expanding their domain in North Africa at the expense of the Ottomans. They were already on the coast of Algeria in 1830. When Napoleon III rose to power, his dream of expanding the empire prompted him to tighten his grip on Algeria as a prelude to expanding French dominion into West Africa. By 1882, French troops had reached Chad and the drive was on to reach the Indian Ocean.⁵ The French plan in the Orient was to establish an Arab kingdom located between the Taurus Mountains

in the north and the Sinai Peninsula in the south, with the Emir Abdelqader al-Jazaeeri as its king. The Emir had been exiled from Algeria after a long struggle against the French before becoming friends with Napoleon III and being sent with his comrades to live in Damascus.⁶ This alarmed the British who were already worried about French relations with the successors of Mohammad Ali in Egypt and with the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869. The opening of the Suez Canal gave more importance to Istanbul and the straits, which increased competition among the superpowers for influence in the Middle East. This bestowed greater geostrategic importance in general to the Persian Gulf, Basra, Baghdad, the region of the Suez Canal, and the Port of Aden, in addition to the roads connecting Belgrade with Constantinople and Thessaloniki, and the Taurus Mountains, which separate the Anadol Plateau and Cilicia.⁷

The British had then to impose their control over Egypt. Taking advantage of Egyptian debt resulting from overspending during the days of Khedive Ismail, the British imposed a *de facto* tutelage over the Egyptian government. In 1882, they invaded Egypt, leaving France to invade Tunisia and Morocco as a compensation for the loss of its influence in Egypt. In order to ward off the French threat, the British proceeded to extend their colonies in Africa southwards. By 1899, they had extended their control over Sudan. After the second Boer War (1899–1902) they were in full control of South Africa and Namibia and the whole line of territories stretching from South Africa into Rhodesia, Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Egypt, thus preventing the French from expanding eastwards and reaching the Indian Ocean. The result of this colonial expansion was catastrophic for the Ottoman Empire, which lost all its provinces in North Africa except for Libya – the French and British left this to serve as a buffer region between them.

Abdul Hamid II and the great powers

These developments had a massive impact on the options open to Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who ruled between 1876 and 1909. Abdul

Hamid was initially supported by liberal Ottomans who wished to install a constitutional rule that would fulfil their dreams of reform in the empire. However, Abdul Hamid would turn out to be ultra-conservative after defeats at the hands of the Russians in 1878. He dissolved the parliament and imposed an autocratic rule. This trend was reinforced after the loss of the North African provinces in 1882, which prompted the Sultan to try his utmost to safeguard the remainder of the Ottoman state. Now that Britain, France and Russia had joined forces against the Ottoman Empire, Abdul Hamid had to turn to the one European power that was challenging the hegemony of these states, namely Germany.⁸ Abdul Hamid II developed his friendship with Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and invited him twice to visit the Ottoman Empire, first in 1889 and second in 1898. German officers were invited to help train the Ottoman army, with positive results clearly apparent during the 1897 war against Greece. Finally, Abdul Hamid II granted generous concessions to Kaiser Wilhelm to construct the Berlin–Baghdad Railway.⁹ The reward for Abdul Hamid was to help him in the construction of the Damascus–Hijaz railway, which made pilgrimage to Mecca more efficient and helped the Porte better impose its control over western Arabia.

By this time Germany was being heavily industrialized, becoming the first industrial power in continental Europe. Much of this industrialization was supported by a network of railways that linked the eastern parts of Germany to its western parts. This enabled the strengthening of central authority, as the railways served as a means of transport not only for merchandise but also for troops.¹⁰ The railways also revolutionized land trade and transportation, as it became faster to transport by land than by sea. This network of railways is what helped Washington impose central authority in the United States of America, construction of the railways being one reason for the American Civil War between 1859 and 1865. In Russia, the railways made it possible to enforce centralized authority in the country and to expand the country's domain into new lands, mainly to outer Manchuria in 1870 and into Central Asia.

During the First World War it was the extensive railway system that made it possible for Germany to fight on two opposite fronts at the same time: against the French and British in the west and the Russians in the east. The railway system enabled the Germans to transport troops from the western front to the eastern in a matter of a few days to fight two Russian armies in two different locations. In just one week, beginning 30 August 1914, the first Russian army was totally annihilated and the second army forced to withdraw, the two German generals who oversaw these battles, General Erich Von Ludendorf and General Paul Von Hindenburg, becoming national heroes as a result, yet they owed it all to the railways.

Growing German strength and influence worried the British, causing them to amend their strategy to expand their coastal outposts and venture further inland with new outposts all over the world. Having already imposed protection over Kuwait in 1899 as a result of the Berlin–Baghdad railway project,¹¹ they extended their control in Yemen beyond Aden, and became involved in the affairs of hinterland Arabia by supporting Abdul Aziz al-Saud in Nejd against the al-Rashid of Hail, allies of the Ottomans who were trying to impose central authority over eastern Arabia.¹² As having outposts inland as well as the coastal outposts became the norm, southern Iran and northwestern India became integral parts in warding off the Russian threat coming from Central Asia. Also, Arabia and Iraq became integral parts of the British geostrategy in the Near East to ward off the German threat of infiltrating the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and thus gaining access to the Indian Ocean.¹³ Palestine (southern Syria) became essential for the defence of the Suez Canal, especially during the First World War after successive attempts by Jamal Pasha, General Governor of Syria, to launch attacks in 1914 and 1915 against the Suez Canal in an attempt to take over Egypt from the British.

The First World War

After Napoleon was crushed in the Russian war and then at Waterloo, Europe was reorganized in 1815 through a series of treaties and

conventions arising from the Congress of Vienna along a balance of power that most fitted the interests of Britain and Russia. The rehabilitation of the Austrian Empire and the rise of Prussia checked France and prevented it from waging the type of war it had been capable of during the days of Napoleon. After Napoleon's exile, France never again waged an offensive war in the European continent. As checks and balances were established to contain all continental European powers, the British felt secure enough in their isles to focus on expanding their empire. This was to characterize the Victorian age in Britain and to dominate most of the nineteenth century. In the eastern part of Europe, Russia was given the task of putting the region stretching from the Baltic to the Danube under check. The system set up by the Austrian minister Klemens von Metternich seemed sufficiently solid and satisfactory to all major powers that it would live on for nearly a century, withstanding the Crimean War of 1853–1856 and only being broken by the Franco–Prussian war of 1870. Even then, it was able to survive for another four decades before being finally dissolved.

The rise of Prussia during the second half of the nineteenth century was the key factor in upsetting the balance of power in Europe established by Metternich. By 1866, Prussia had defeated Austria and excluded it from the North German Confederation – an alliance of twenty-two Germanic princedoms into a loose confederation of states. The intention of the Prussians to extend this confederation into the Rhineland region put them in conflict with French interests in that region. The result was the defeat of France in the Franco–Prussian war of 1870 and the ousting of Napoleon III from power and the establishment of the Third Republic in France. In an attempt to redraw European order along the new lines of power, the Prussian chancellor Otto Von Bismarck tried to establish a league of the German, Austrian and Russian emperors to replace the Franco–British–Russian order that had prevailed until then. However, Austro–Russian differences over influence in the Balkan region foiled this attempt.

Russian interests in the Balkans were to be accommodated a few years later when the British and French failed to intervene in the

new Russo–Ottoman war. Gradually, two alliances would be formed in Europe; the first constituted Britain, France and Russia, and the other included Germany, Austria and Italy. Later, Italy would switch sides, while the Ottomans would be drawn to the side of the Austrians and Germans in what would become the First World War. The direct reason for the war was the assassination of the crown prince of Austria, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 by a Serbian nationalist. Austria blamed Serbia for the assassination and a month later waged war against it. As Russia intervened on the side of Serbia, Germany declared war on the Tsar and France reacted by declaring war on Germany. A few days later, it was joined by the British, who were worried about the rise of German power in the continent. A few months after that, the Ottomans attacked Russian ports on the Black Sea and entered the war on the side of the Axis Powers. Meanwhile, developments in the Ottoman Empire would have an impact on the course of events during the war.

By the early twentieth century, a strong modernist movement in Syria had imposed itself, expressed in the form of nationalism. The strongest of all the nationalist movements was the Arab Nationalist Movement, which acquired significant impetus with the *coup d'état* against the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908. The leaders of this coup were Ottoman officers educated and trained along Western lines, who – with the model of the French Revolution in mind – believed it plausible to establish a constitutional monarchy and thus to save the Ottoman state from total collapse. These officers, joined by intellectuals in an organization known as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), were able to foil a counter-coup by Sultan Abdul Hamid, who was deposed and replaced by his brother Muhammad V. After several setbacks, especially in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, the CUP endorsed a policy of extreme nationalism, convinced that the Ottoman state could only be saved if Turkification (forcing other nationalities within the empire to become Turkish by adopting the Turkish language) were to be imposed on the various nations comprising the empire. This pushed many Arabs to rebel or to form groups calling for autonomy or total secession from the Ottoman

Empire.¹⁴ This, added to the oppressive rule of Jamal Pasha during the First World War, reinforced the radical trend among Arab nationalists.¹⁵

When the war in Europe reached an impasse by early 1915, the British contemplated opening a new frontier where they could achieve success. Worried about the possibility of the Ottomans using the prerogatives of the caliph to turn the Muslims against them in India, they searched for someone who might have a counter-claim to the Ottoman Caliphate. This they found in the person of Sherif Hussein, ruler of Mecca, who was dissatisfied with the Ottomans and feared that they wanted to replace him with a cousin of his. In addition, the French and British encouraged Arab nationalists in Syria to rebel against the Ottomans, which would have facilitated a Franco-British landing on the Syrian coast. However, the measures taken by Jamal Pasha and the transfer of Arab troops in the Ottoman army to Gallipoli foiled the plan.¹⁶ On 16 June 1916, Sherif Hussein launched a rebellion in the Hijaz after being promised an Arab kingdom that was to include Arabia, Syria and Iraq, and by 1918 the Arab rebels had taken over Damascus and Aleppo. It seemed that their dream of a national state of their own would come true. However, conflicting British and French interests in the region would kill this dream.

Notes

- 1 Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 12.
- 2 Edgar Alexander, 'Rome and Western Christianity', in Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 43–52.
- 3 Kamal Salibi, *A History of Arabia* (New York: Caravan, 1980), 175.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 77–178.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 182–3.
- 6 Afaf Sobhi Al Khansa, *Al Tanafus Al Inglizi Al Faransi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Qomati, 2010), 28.
- 7 Thomas, 'European Imperialism in the Middle East', in Ernest Jackh, ed., *Background of the Middle East*, 123.
- 8 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 183–4.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 185.
- 10 Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 16.
- 11 Salibi, *A History of Arabia*, 190–191.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 191–2.
- 13 Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 16–17.
- 14 Henri Laurens, *L'Orient Arabe, Arabisme et Islamisme de 1798 à 1945* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2000), 132.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 133.
- 16 Abdullatif Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria* (London: Macmillan/St Martin's Press, 1st edn, 1969), 231.

Chapter 5

Syria under the mandate

We are back, Saladin.

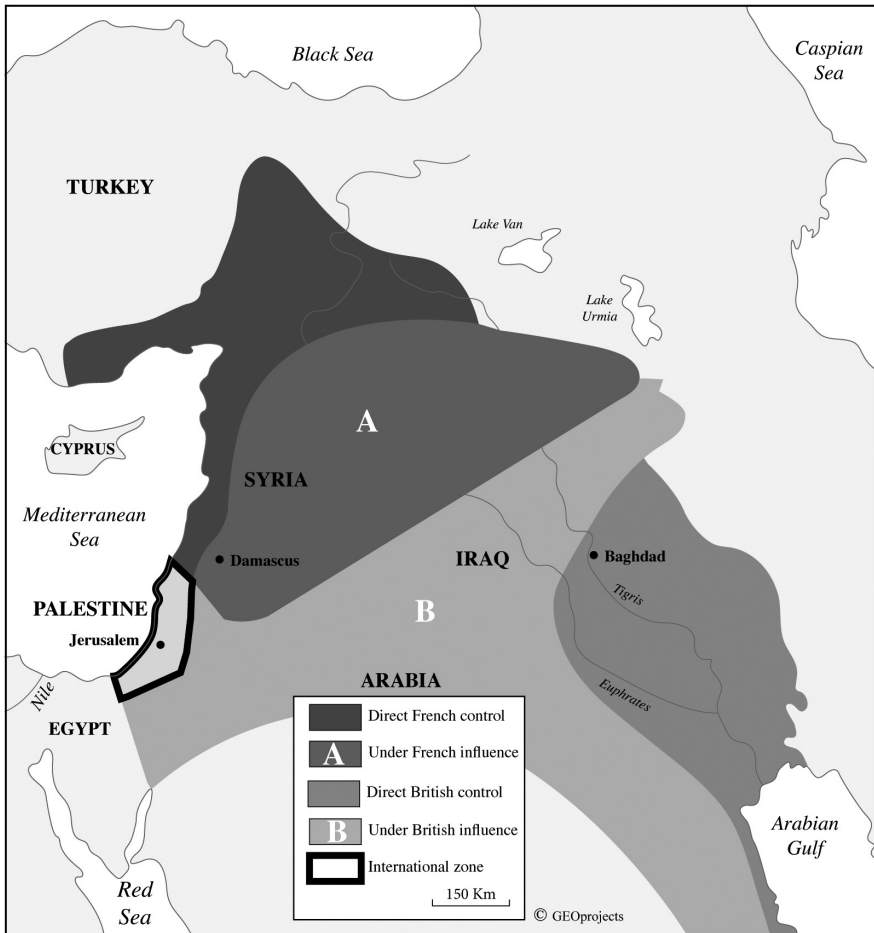
(General Henri Gouraud at Saladin's tomb after he
had occupied Damascus)

Syria under the mandate

As soon as Syria was taken from the Ottomans, Faisal hastened to install his rule there, and claimed authority over the provinces of Aleppo, Dayr El Zor and Damascus, in addition to Mount Lebanon and Palestine. He was able to establish his control over much of the claimed territory except for Lebanon and Palestine; the French obstructed his plans in the former and the British forbade him from taking over the latter. As the war ended, the French wanted to have their share of the spoils of war and Syria was to be their share in the Levant. According to the Sykes–Picot Agreement,¹ their domain was to extend over much of modern-day Lebanon and Syria in addition to Cilicia and the Mosul province in northern Iraq. The precariousness of their position in the Levant, however, led them to give up Mosul to the British, and later they were to relinquish their claim to southern Turkey and be content with their share in what is today Lebanon and Syria.

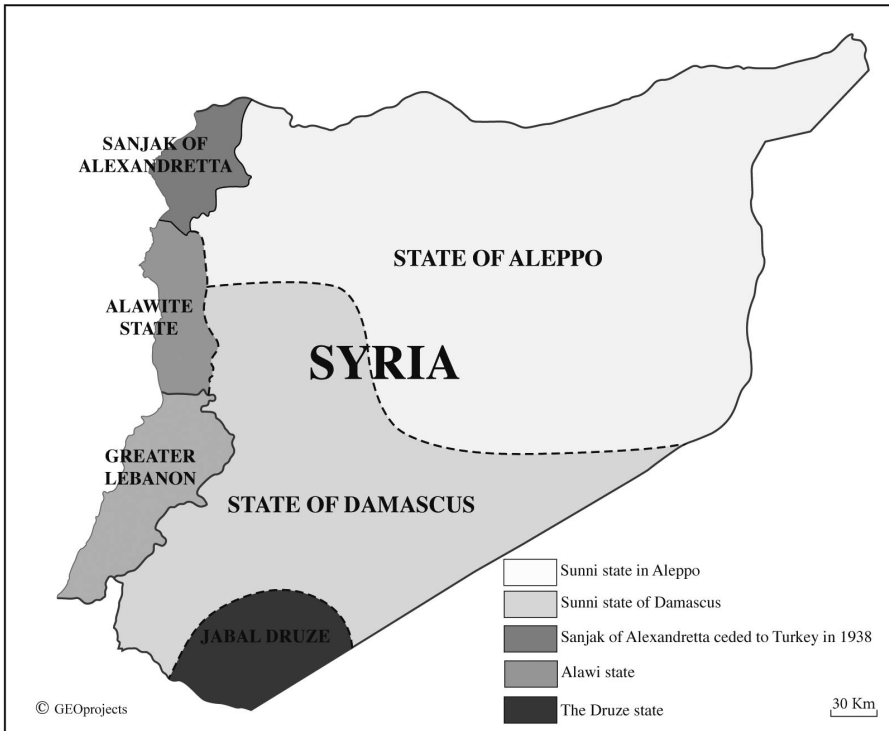
The French rejected the government of Faisal and in July 1920 – after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire – they invaded Damascus and imposed their mandate over Syria and Greater Lebanon.² As soon as France invaded Syria, it had to implement its designs on the country.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



The Sykes-Picot Agreement

French colonial policy was determined by its promotion of Christians as allies and economic partners in the region. This also determined its perception of Syria as a society fragmented along ethnic lines. Hence it created a Druze state in southern Syrian Arab Republic (SAR), an Alawi state on the coast, a Sunni state in Damascus, and another Sunni state in Aleppo. This fragmentation served its purpose of better controlling Syria by following a policy of 'divide and rule'.³ The French tried to instigate conflict among various sects in order to justify their presence.⁴



Syria as divided by the French mandate

'The age of revolution'⁵

The French wanted to make Syria and Lebanon an extension of their economy and to isolate them from the British domain. This damaged the economic interests of the mercantile elite of both Damascus and Aleppo, as well as the interests of bureaucrats who used to work for the Ottoman administration and the office corps that was trained during the Ottoman days and fought in the Ottoman army during the First World War. Dayr El Zor was a backwater in terms of Syrian politics and has remained so until the present time.

The first rebellion against the French was that of Ibrahim Hananu in Aleppo. Hananu belonged to a rich family of landowners from the village of Kafr Takharim near Aleppo. A student of the Imperial High School of Aleppo, he pursued his higher studies in law in al-Mulkiye

Law School, the most renowned Ottoman law school, and joined the Ottoman bureaucracy. By 1918, Hananu was already retired from the Ottoman bureaucracy. Being a staunch Arab nationalist, he left for Damascus when it fell into King Faisal's grasp and offered his services to him. After the fall of Faisal in 1920, Hananu led a rebellion against the French in northern Syria. This rebellion was successful while supported by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, who was at the time fighting the French in an attempt to oust them from Cilicia. In October 1921, Atatürk signed an agreement with the French according to which they had to withdraw from Cilicia and all the Ottoman territories they had occupied after the armistice in 1918. In return, the Turks had to end their support of Hananu and block the passing of all ammunition and subsidies from Turkish territories to the rebels in Aleppo and its neighbourhood. The Franklin–Bouillon Agreement sealed the fate of the first rebellion in Syria after the imposition of the mandate. Turkey under Atatürk, and for several decades subsequently, would turn its back on the Middle East and reach out instead towards Europe, Aleppo was cut off from its surrounding area of influence in the south of modern Turkey. As the trade routes from Damascus to Aleppo and onwards to Europe became marginalized, the economic interests of the mercantile elite of Aleppo were damaged. After Hananu, Aleppo was marginalized in Syrian politics.

The rebellion of Aleppo reinforced the French belief that the challenge it was to face would come mainly from the cities where a modernized elite was found. According to the French, the rural areas were passive and indifferent to politics, typifying the stagnant culture of the Orient. The French thus attempted to enforce control by isolating rural areas from urban centres. Little did they imagine that resistance to their rule would start in the countryside. In 1925, Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, a minor landlord of the al-Qrayya region, rebelled against the French mandate and inflicted heavy defeats on them in the battles of al-Kabir, al-Mazraa, Salkhad, Almisfarah, and al-Souwayda during the summer of 1925. The revolution soon spread to all of Syria and parts of Lebanon, and proclaimed Sultan Pasha al-Atrash as its leader. The cause of the revolution was that the French arrangements for Syria and the creation of a Druze state and a state in Damascus

had damaged the interests of grain producers in Hauran, who were involved in an economic partnership with Damascene merchants. As Michael Province says, this revolt was a mass movement based on the axis of the grain trade between Hauran, which produced wheat, and Damascene merchants, who used to buy this grain. The rebellion led to the elaboration of a pan-Arab Syrian national identity.⁶ The revolution in Hauran received support and subsidies from Jordan, which was ruled by Prince Abdullah I, brother of King Faisal, under a British mandate.⁷ Jordan became the base from which the British could interfere in Syrian politics by supporting the Druze in Mount Hauran and the tribes around Deraa. Four years before the rebellion of Sultan Pasha, the tribes of Deraa sent a delegation to Damascus demanding that their region be annexed from Syria and given to Jordan. That was followed by a general strike which pushed the prime minister at the time, Alaadine Droubi, who had been assigned to his position by the mandate, to head to Hauran to solve this dilemma. During his visit, disturbances erupted in the region which led to the death of Droubi and the minister Abdulrahman Pasha; the French blamed the British for this incident.⁸

To confront this revolution, the French did not just resort to harsh military measures. They also reached an agreement with the British by which the latter pressured Prince Abdullah to cut off subsidies to the rebels. More importantly, the French were able to marginalize the Damascene merchants by creating an alliance with the Damascene upper class.⁹ After two years, the French policies bore fruit and Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, defeated, fled to Wadi Sarhan in northern Saudi Arabia where he stayed for ten years. The break-up of this partnership between Hauran and Damascus would marginalize Hauran in Syrian politics for good except for a brief period during the 1930s. The upper Damascene class was drawn into cooperation with the French, mainly by economic means. Now that Turkey had closed its doors to Syria, Aleppo and the northern Syrian cities lost their role as outposts for the hinterland trade. Tripoli in northern Lebanon was the biggest loser, along with Aleppo, as it lost its role as a port to the hinterland of Syria.¹⁰ With Beirut having become the favoured port for French trade with the Levant, the role of the traditional

seaports in the Levant, Tripoli and Saida, declined. As transit trade was to have the upper hand over the trade routes passing through the hinterland of Syria, the merchants of Damascus lost their position to the Damascene upper class, who became partners of the Beirut mercantile elite in the transit trade coming from Beirut and passing through Damascus on its way to Jordan and the Arab peninsula. This elite started negotiations with France upon the defeat of Sultan Pasha al-Atrash in order to gain independence. A treaty of independence was signed with France in 1936, and Hashim Attasi was elected as president of the republic. The Druze and Alawi districts were reunited with the states of Aleppo and Damascus and, in time, the most radical elements were eliminated. A key factor in this was the assassination of Abdul Rahman Shahbandar in June 1940. In 1946, Syria gained its independence thanks to British pressure on France, and the country went on to become a republic with Shukri Quwatli as its first post-dependence president.¹¹



Syrian Arab Republic upon achieving independence in 1943

A fragmented state?

The French mandate inaugurated a new era in the history of Syria. The Syrian Arab Republic was created in a region that was subject to the influence of three contending regional powers: Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt. The northeastern part of Syria – which included al-Hasaka, Qamishli, down to al-Bou Kamal and stretched to the Euphrates in the east – was an extension of Mesopotamia. By the early twentieth century, members of the Shammar tribal confederation lived in that area in addition to a minority Kurdish population that had kinship relations with the Shammar of Mosul and central Iraq and with the Kurds in northern Iraq. The people of Aleppo had strong mercantile relations that had been damaged by the creation of Syria and hence felt sympathetic to an open relationship with Turkey. However, it was Ataturk's Turkey that forsook them and turned westward. The Alawis of the coastal region had strong affiliations with the Alawis of East Anatolia, estimated at around 20 million strong by the beginning of the twentieth century, many of whom were Kurds. In the south, the Druze of the mountains had strong relations with the Jordanians based on their traditional economic interests with Jordanian tribes. The Sunnis of Hauran competed with them over relations with Jordan. Having come from Arabia in the nineteenth century and settled in Hauran, they maintained relations with their kin in Arabia through Jordan. The upper Damascene class was drawn into a partnership with the mercantile elite of Beirut while the middle merchant class, upset by the French arrangements in the Levant, would express its dissatisfaction through political activism in the form of Arab nationalism. Hence Syria, which encompassed three contending geostrategic centres – Iraq, Turkey and Egypt – and which was open to Arabia from the southeast, became subject to competition from these centres, especially during the first two decades after independence. As Karl Kautsky observes, 'the frontiers that resulted from colonialism created nation states in the legal sense but did not create nations'.¹²

United for the first time in its history as one state, yet with its constituent parts showing a strong tendency to affiliate to

neighbouring powers, Syria had to create its own identity. Arab nationalism as an ideology served to create a common identity for the Syrians, bypassing their tribal and regional sub-identities, while at the same time satisfying the tendency of particular regions to affiliate to their neighbouring geopolitical centres. This explains why, of all Arab states, Syria's national interests were always determined by Arab nationalism. Pan-Arabism became essential for the survival of Syria, which became the propagator of this ideology. It viewed its national frontiers as temporary, pending the achievement of Arab unity, and thus it always felt uneasy about its frontiers.¹³ Such nationalism was also reflected in the Syrian constitution, which stated that the legitimacy of any government stems from its tendency to achieve Arab unity¹⁴ – a conviction that explains why 'the mission of Syria exceeded its frontiers', and made it bear a sense of duty towards its Arab brothers.¹⁵

SSNP vs Baath

The order established during the mandate alienated many sectors of society in Syria, which ultimately would form political parties to challenge the existing order. The two most important parties that would play a major role in Syrian affairs were the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP) and the Baath Party. The SSNP was founded by Antoun Saade in 1932 to challenge the order established by the French mandate that separated Lebanon from Syria. Saade was born into a Greek Orthodox family in 1904 in Dhour Shwayr, a village in the upper Metn area in Mount Lebanon. He was 15 years old when he emigrated for Brazil where he stayed for 11 years, after which he returned to Lebanon and taught German at the American University of Beirut. It was in the American University that he started preaching his ideology concerning Syrian unity. Initially he advocated that the Syrian nation should include Cilicia, SAR, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and the Sinai Peninsula, in addition to Cyprus.¹⁶ Later, after a time in Argentina, he added Iraq and Kuwait to the Syrian nation.¹⁷ Despite the fact that Saade was accused of being influenced by German Nazi

nationalism, his ideas actually reflected a French version of nationalism. Nazi nationalism was the outcome of Social Darwinism, which projected the ideas of Darwin concerning species onto societies and focused on the role of race in determining national identity. French nationalism was influenced by geostrategic considerations from the time of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century concerned with seeking natural boundaries for the king's domain. French nationalism believed that geographical area was the most important element in determining national identity. Furthermore, Saade was aware that the people comprising the Syrian nation were a mixture of different ethnic groups that spoke different languages, which made Nazism an unsuitable model for the SSNP in spite of the admiration that Saade and other political groups in Lebanon might have had for the Nazis' organizational skills.

Saade's SSNP started to be active in politics against the mandate authorities, who were facing mounting problems in governing Syria and Lebanon. The expansion of the party, organized in secret, alarmed the French authorities, who tried and sentenced Saade in 1936 to six months in prison. In 1938, Saade went on a tour of Latin America to campaign for support for his party, during which time he received news that he was banned by the French authorities from returning to Lebanon and Syria. The French were growing increasingly concerned about the rise of Hitler to power and wanted to marginalize all groups that they considered to be pro-German. Meanwhile, the party gained support from King Abdullah of Jordan, who had designs for taking over Syria and Lebanon and adding them to his kingdom. Saade would remain in Argentina until 1947, when he decided to come back after the French had eased their grip over Syria and Lebanon following the German defeat in 1945 and Britain's sponsorship of independence for Lebanon and Syria in 1943, which was completed in 1946 with the withdrawal of French troops from Syria and Lebanon. By then, as Saade added Iraq to the Syrian nation, the SSNP won Iraqi support from the Hashemites of Iraq, who were eager to extend their control over the newly independent Syrian Arab Republic. The SSNP would acquire more adherents and would grow strong, especially in

Syria where a whole contingent of the Syrian army was reported to be loyal to the SSNP. The party's ideology earned Saade the hostility of a great number of political figures and parties. In Lebanon, the SSNP's fiercest enemies were the communists, and the Phalangist Party, a Lebanese version of Italian fascism. In Syria, it was the Baathist Party that would pose the biggest challenge for the SSNP.

The SSNP was founded by a teacher of German language influenced by French nationalism, whereas the Baath Party was founded by two teachers of French influenced by German nationalism. Michel Aflaq was born to a middle-class Damascene family. Like Antoun Saade, Aflaq was Greek Orthodox. He pursued his education at French missionary schools in Damascus, and upon finishing high school he left for Paris to pursue higher studies in the Sorbonne, where he met a colleague from Damascus who would become his best friend: Salah Din Bitar. Both men were influenced by French culture and dreamt of independence for their country. As both came from middle-class Damascene families, they were part of the class whose economic interests had been damaged by the French mandate. For them, Arab nationalism, which was influenced by German nationalism's reliance on language and culture to shape national identity, offered the best response to the problems that Syria suffered. Upon their return to Syria, Aflaq and Bitar started teaching in high schools and propagating their ideas. In 1940, they founded the Baath Party. The Baath began to gain support and adherents, though it lacked the organization and zeal of the SSNP. In 1947, the Baath Party held its first congress and elected Aflaq as its leader. The populist nature of the party made it a fierce competitor to the SSNP, especially since it was more successful in winning wide support in the cities. The SSNP proved more successful in rural areas, especially coastal regions and in southern Syria. The other foe of the Baath would turn out to be the Communist Party.

Iraq vs Egypt

The struggle between the SSNP and the Baath Party in the 1950s would reflect another struggle at a regional level between Iraq and

Egypt over hegemony in the Near East. Peculiarly enough, the latter struggle would echo a weird competition between the British Foreign Office on the one hand, and the Government of India (GOI) on the other. At the beginning of the century, the British Empire was vast. This was the reason why the GOI was entitled to an autonomous government that had its own geopolitical directives within the sphere of the British Empire. During the First World War Egypt became officially a British protectorate directly accountable to the British Foreign Office. After the war, Iraq was occupied by British forces sent from India and hence came under the control of the GOI, which had a certain autonomy in running its affairs according to the broad guidelines set out by the British government. As they wanted to expand into the hinterland for better defence of their coastal outposts, the officials of the GOI started to extend their hegemony northwards and westwards, causing British officials in the Foreign Office to joke about how London could soon come under the control of the Indian government. As part of the geostrategic directives to defend India, Iraq was invaded during the First World War. Facing fierce opposition to their rule, especially in the south of Iraq, they called upon Faisal, the ousted King of Syria, to come to Iraq as a monarch. When Faisal assumed power, he set about raising the Sunnis of central Iraq to power and marginalizing the Shias of southern Iraq while allying himself with their notables. By 1932, Iraq was declared independent, though it remained under de facto control of the GOI. During the First World War, the GOI hoped to bring the whole Near East under its control. It was pleased by arrangements with the French, sponsored by the Foreign Office, in the form of the Sykes–Picot Agreement. For the GOI, Syria had to come under its control and this was one reason why it supported King Abdullah I of Jordan in his call for a Greater Syria and allowed him to support Sultan Pasha al-Atrash at the beginning of the Syrian Revolution. It later withdrew this support due to pressures from the British Foreign Office, which was more concerned with winning the favour of the French on the European scene.

The Second World War would give impetus to the strategic direction of the GOI. The swift defeat of France in June 1940 at the

hands of the Germans and the fall of Paris put the new Vichy government at Hitler's mercy. French domains in North Africa became an extension of the German Reich, and Syria and Lebanon received an Italo-German political commission to supervise the French commissioner in running the two countries.¹⁸ It was from Syria that the Germans sent their planes to support the rebellion of the Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali Kaylani against the British in May 1941¹⁹ although it was Hitler himself who saved the British in the Near East. As he was preparing for his attack on Russia, Hitler did not send enough troops to support Rommel's attack in North Africa, nor did he send enough support to the Kaylani rebellion to withstand a British attack. Many would consider that it was this mistake that cost Hitler the war as, in consequence, he could not extend his control over the Mediterranean or the Middle East.²⁰ Had he concentrated his attack on the Middle East, he would have been able to establish contact with the pro-German shah of Persia and Afghanistan and would have ended up encircling the Russians. However, Hitler ignored the directives of Erwin Rommel, who was for focusing on the Middle East, and attacked Russia on 22 June, precipitating his eventual defeat. However, German support of Kaylani alarmed the British and prompted them to invade Syria and Lebanon one month after ousting Kaylani and reinstating regent Abdullah to power. Now the two countries came under British control with the Free French contingent serving as a mere façade. The British commissioner in Lebanon and Syria was an ardent follower of GOI dictates and believed that Lebanon and Syria should remain under British influence. It was in this context that Lebanon and Syria gained their independence from France in November 1943. The GOI wanted to promote its own agenda in the Near East and it used the Hashemites of Iraq to promote this agenda.

In the West, Egypt had broken its isolation from regional affairs in 1924 after Ataturk ended the caliphate. Since 1840, Egypt had been barred from playing a role in Near Eastern affairs after the defeat of Mohammad Ali and the withdrawal of his forces from Syria. Three decades later, Egypt became heavily indebted to the Europeans and

hence came under Franco-British tutelage that would end with the British occupation of the country in 1882. Egypt became a pseudo-British colony that served to expand British control into Africa. In 1914, it was officially proclaimed a British protectorate. Five years later, a revolution broke out calling for independence. The leader of the revolution, Saad Zaghloul, who headed a delegation to negotiate with the British, was arrested with many of his colleagues and exiled to the Seychelles for two years. However, this did not calm the Egyptians and Zaghloul was allowed to return to Egypt, where he founded the Wafd Party (Delegation Party). The party became the most prominent party of opposition to the king. By then King Fouad was claiming the caliphate for himself after the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by Ataturk. The other contenders for the title were the Hashemites of Iraq, who were descendants of the Prophet and had a more legitimate claim to the title. Consequently, the Egyptian king turned his attention to the East. After the death of Saad Zaghloul, Mustapha Nahas Pasha became the head of the Wafd Party and was appointed prime minister three times before the Second World War, in 1928, 1930 and 1936.²¹ During his third term, he formed a committee to help the Palestinians during their 1936–1939 revolution. This earned him the wrath of the British, who forced the young King Farouq to dismiss him. However, the British were not against an Egyptian role in the East. In fact, the Foreign Office was supportive of such a role, as it thought that, subsequent to the First World War, Egypt under British control could serve as a base from which to control the Near East and Arabia at minimal cost. This caused the British minister of foreign affairs, Anthony Eden, in 1944 to sponsor the establishment of the Arab League with Cairo as its headquarters. By then, Nahas Pasha was the prime minister forced by the British onto the king, and he would play an essential role in the establishment of the league. The Hashemites would look with envy to the Egyptians for having won British recognition. On the other hand, the Egyptians, who were blocked from the East by the Hashemites of Jordan and Iraq, found common ground with Ibn Saud of Nejd, who took over Hijaz from Sherif Hussein, father of Faisal and Abdullah, and had good reason to feel hostility towards the Hashemites.

A case for Israel!

Napoleon's experience in the East taught him a very important lesson: controlling Egypt does not help one take over the Near East unless one can also take over Syria. Centuries earlier, the Crusaders had been able to remain in the East so long as the three geopolitical centres of power – upper Mesopotamia, eastern Anatolia and Egypt – were divided. The moment these three centres were united under one rule, the fate of the Crusaders was sealed and they had to leave the region. Hence, Napoleon concluded that in order to control the Near East, it would be more important to take over Syria than Egypt, Mesopotamia or Anatolia, for taking over Syria would allow the controlling power to extend its control over each of the latter. This was why Napoleon was enthusiastic about establishing a Jewish state in Palestine sympathetic to French interests. Learning from this, the French focused on developing relations with Syria throughout the nineteenth century. A century later, Britain – having taken over Egypt and the Suez Canal, and aware of French designs over Syria – wanted to establish a buffer state between its own and French domains, which is why it supported the Zionist claim over Palestine in the form of the Balfour Declaration. A Jewish state in Palestine would also serve to connect British domains in Africa to those in the Persian Gulf and exclude any other power from access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. At the same time, it served to prevent the creation of an alliance between Mesopotamia and Egypt, and prevent Egypt from gaining access to Syria and hence playing an active regional role that could challenge the hegemony of the British over the region.

On 15 May 1948, Ben Gurion declared the establishment of Israel. This led to the intervention of the armies of seven independent Arab states, ending in their defeat in early 1949. The establishment of the new state would have many implications for its neighbouring states. The least affected in this regard was Turkey, which turned its back on the East for several decades to come, and Iraq, which was anxious to secure access to the Persian Gulf through Kuwait or Iranian Khuzestan, or to the Mediterranean through northern Syria. The most affected was Egypt, which saw in the establishment of Israel

a danger to its own national interest. This explains why the Egyptians were the last to halt military actions against Israeli forces.

The involvement of Egypt in the affairs of Palestine preceded the establishment of Israel. By the late 1930s, Hitler's influence was rising and the British thought that they could allow the Egyptians to have a standing army to defend the country for the first time since British occupation. The new officer corps, which included young people like Gamal Abdul Nasser and Anwar Sadat, was – like Farouq – full of patriotism and hatred towards the British. Many of them, including Nasser and Sadat, were influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood founded by Hassan Banna in 1928. Banna was among those who called for a jihad in Palestine against Zionist colonialism, and the officer corps would follow suit. During the late 1940s, these officers became involved in guerrilla warfare against Zionist colonists, volunteering for the Fidai groups that fought in Palestine.

Syria also was greatly affected by for the creation of a Jewish state, as Israel was established on what it considered its southern part. More importantly, the newly established state had designs for a Syria fragmented along ethnic and sectarian lines in order to make the region compatible with its own identity.

Notes

- 1 The Sykes–Picot Agreement was a secret agreement signed by Mark Sykes, representing the British Foreign Office, and George Picot, representing the French Quai D'Orsay. According to this agreement the possessions of the Ottoman Empire in the Near East were to be divided between the French and the British. Lebanon, Syria and southern Turkey were to be taken by France, while Iraq, Jordan and Palestine were to be taken by the British.
- 2 For further details about Syria under the rule of Faysal, 1918–1920, review Zeine Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence* (Beirut: Khayat, 1960).
- 3 Nasri Sayegh, *Abdul Hamid Karami, Rajul Liqadiyya* (Beirut: All Prints, 2011), 120–1.
- 4 Michael Province, *The Great Syrian Revolt, and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 17.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- 5 Inspired by Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, Europe 1789–1848* (London: Abacus, Vintage Books, 1962).
- 6 Province, *The Great Syrian Revolt, and the Rise of Arab Nationalism*, 21.
- 7 Afaf Sobhi Al Khansa, *Al Tanafus Al Inglizi Al Faransi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Qomati, 2010), 117.
- 8 Ibid., 109.
- 9 Province, *The Great Syrian Revolt, and the Rise of Arab Nationalism*, 13.
- 10 Sayegh, *Abdul Hamid Karami*, 125.
- 11 Al Khansa, *Al Tanafus Al Siyasi*, 293–337.
- 12 Karl Kautsky, as cited in Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry*, trans. Marion Farouk-Shiyett and Peter Sniggett (London: Macmillan, 1981), 19.
- 13 Derek Hopwood, *Syria 1945–1986: Politics and Society* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1st edn, 1988), 77.
- 14 R. D. McLaurin, Muhammad Mughisuddin and Abraham Wagner, *Foreign Policy Making in the Middle East: Domestic Influences on Policy in Egypt, Iraq and Syria* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987), 241.
- 15 Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1991), 54.
- 16 John Imad Nasr, *Nationalism and Modernism in Antoun Saadeh's Nushu' Al Umam*, M.A. Thesis (American University of Beirut, 2006).
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Al Khansa, *Al Tanafus Al Siyasi*, 158.
- 19 Ibid., 159.
- 20 Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 12.
- 21 Marius Deeb, *Party Politics in Egypt: the Wafd & its Rivals, 1919–1939* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979).

Chapter 6

Turbulent years of independence

Congratulations, mister President! You do not know what you have acquired. You do not know the Syrian people. You have inherited a nation where half of its people are politicians, another quarter considers itself prophets, and one-eighth counts itself gods. There are people in Syria who worship God and those who worship the Devil. There are even sects and ethnic groups that worship a certain female organ because they consider it as the fountain of life.

So said Syrian ex-president Shukri Quwatli to the Egyptian ex-president Gamal Abdul Nasser as they were greeting the Syrian people from the porch of the Diyafa Palace in Damascus after signing the Syrian–Egyptian Unity Agreement.

Coup d'états

The regional context discussed previously put Syria under heavy constraints and pressure. Added to this was the infiltration of the United States into the Middle East. In February 1945, the American president Franklin Delano Roosevelt passed through the Suez Canal on a cruiser, where he met King Farouq of Egypt and King Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia. King Farouq saw in the visit an opportunity to press his demands for the withdrawal of the British from Egypt and for replacing British influence with American. The Saudi king used the meeting to distance himself further from the British. The British were not pleased about Roosevelt's visit as they realized it came at the

expense of their influence. The implications for Syria would be great. With the Cold War escalating, the British – fearful of losing ground to the Americans – wanted to ensure full control of the Near East by fully taking over France's share in Lebanon and Syria. The independence the two countries had secured a few years earlier had come as a result of a compromise between Britain and France. In Lebanon, the British withdrew support from their favourite, Camille Shamoun, in return for the withdrawal of the French favourite, Emile Edde. A compromise was reached on the person of Bshara El Khouri, who enjoyed good relations with both sides.¹ In Syria, the British had the upper hand.²

In 1949 two petroleum projects competed over the right of passage of oil taplines. The first was a British-sponsored tapline from Mosul that passed through Syrian territory on its way to the Mediterranean. The second was an American-sponsored tapline coming from eastern Saudi Arabia through Jordan and Syria, then through Lebanon, and ending in Saida on the Mediterranean. Quwatli favoured the Saudi tapline and this was one reason why the British lent their support to the *coup d'état* led on 11 April 1949 by the chief of staff general Husni Zaim. Zaim, who came from a Damascene family, had been implicated in a corruption case involving him supplying the army with rotten butter. To cover up this scandal, he attempted to oust Quwatli on the pretext that he was responsible for defeat in the war against Israel in 1948. Zaim, who started as pro-British, was soon won over by the Americans. This made him turn against the British and against Antoun Saade, who had thought that Zaim was an ally who would be willing to achieve unity between Lebanon and Syria as a first step towards reuniting the whole Fertile Crescent in one state. Saade was handed over in July to the Lebanese authorities, who executed him without a trial. The British, displeased over the betrayal of Zaim, sponsored another *coup d'état* in August against Zaim. The head of this new coup was General Sami Hannawi, from Aleppo. Two months later, the Americans sponsored a coup against Hannawi, and General Adib Shishakli, from Hama, led a *coup d'état* and took over power.³

The struggle over Syria would rise with the reactivation of the Turkish role in the Middle East with the coming of Jelal Beyar and Adnan Menderes to power in Turkey. The Republican People's Party founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk had ruled Turkey from the early 1930s. The party, which was nationalist in its direction, promoted a policy of state-directed economy and a conservative foreign policy aimed at Europe while isolating Turkey from Middle Eastern affairs.⁴ After the death of Ataturk in 1938, Ismet Inonu was elected as head of the ruling party and of the state and the first thing he did was to oust Jelal Beyar as prime minister. Eight years later, Beyar was allowed by Inonu to form an opposition party with liberal directions and a more active foreign policy. Beyar was born in Bursa in 1883. His father was a religious cleric who migrated from Bulgaria, and this had an impact on Beyar's political affiliations. Despite the fact that he was a former member of the Committee of Union and Progress and later a member of Ataturk's party, Beyar had reservations regarding the staunch secular policies of Ataturk. In addition, he had liberal inclinations concerning management of the economy based on his experience in establishing the Turkish Central Bank in 1924. Beyar's most active associate was the young Adnan Menderes, who also shared Beyar's liberal economic views and his tolerance of Islamic folk culture, which had been persecuted under Ataturk.⁵ In 1950 the Democratic Party won a landslide victory over the Republican People's Party (RPP) in the first democratically held elections. Jelal Beyar became president of the republic and Menderes became prime minister. Influenced by their affiliation with Turkey's traditional culture, they promoted an active foreign policy towards the Near East. Syria, for them, had special importance as it was the gateway to the Arab world.

Rise of Nasser

Developments in Egypt in the early 1950s also proved crucial to Syria. Ever since the ousting of Nahas Pasha from power in 1944, weak and unpopular prime ministers had been appointed by King Farouq, which had added to the instability of the regime. The war

against Palestine dealt a severe blow to the image of the regime and the king himself. It also alienated the army and its officer corps, creating feelings of bitterness about the king. Among these officers was a certain colonel, Gamal Abdul Nasser, whose role would prove crucial in the development of events. Nasser had fought in Falluja, not far from Beersheba, and as such had become aware of how crucial Palestine was for Egyptian National Security. The defeat in the war against the Zionists made him realize the importance of ousting Farouq, deemed corrupt and incapable of protecting Egyptian national interests. Almost four years later, Nasser would lead a *coup d'état* against Farouq and take over power himself. For nearly two years Nasser had to struggle to enforce his rule against traditional parties and certain officers who had ambitions for themselves, mainly General Mohammad Najib, appointed president of the republic until early 1954. In addition, Nasser faced a struggle to force the British to withdraw from the region of the Suez Canal. For this he relied on a conflict of interests between the Americans and the British. The former, keen on replacing the British in the region, were ready to support Nasser's claims. The outcome was a treaty signed in early 1954 by which the British were to withdraw from Egypt, including the Suez Canal region, by early 1956.⁶ The Americans expected that their support of Nasser in his demand for the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt would convince him to sign a peace treaty with Israel and join the Pact of Baghdad (otherwise known as CENTO – Central Eastern Treaty Organization), intended to unite the rest of the Middle East with Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan in a military alliance directed against the Soviet Union.⁷ Nasser saw in this alliance an attempt to replace British colonialism with indirect British and American control of his country. For him, Egypt had more urgent problems: that of British occupation, and the Israeli danger.

The British and Americans were pressing for the establishment of CENTO. Turkey and Iraq were exerting mounting pressure on Lebanon, Jordan and Syria to join the alliance. The Lebanese president, Camille Shamoun, was all for the alliance. However, he was blocked from taking action by the Muslim opposition. King Abdullah

of Jordan was also for the alliance, but he was blocked by nationalist elements encouraged and supported by Nasser. In Syria the situation was more complicated. By 1954 the Syrian dictator Adib Shishakli could no longer maintain power, and the Syrian army was divided into competing regiments: regiments fully loyal to the SSNP, supported by the British; regiments backed by the Communist Party which, in turn, were supported by the Soviet Union; and regiments that paid allegiance to the Baathists and Arab nationalists, supported by Egypt. In order to prevent a *coup d'état* by the SSNP, the Baathists proceeded to cleanse the army of all SSNP officers after the assassination of the Baathist general Adnan Malki in April 1955. By then Nasser was making secret agreements with the Soviet Union that culminated in the arms deal that furnished the Egyptian army with Soviet arms through Czechoslovakia. This was reflected in the alliance of the communist regiments of the Syrian army with the Baathist and Nasserist regiments against the SSNP regiments, which facilitated purging them from the Syrian army. Their most prominent figure, Ghassan Jadid, had to escape to Lebanon, where he was assassinated two years later in Beirut. Nasser had gained the upper hand in Syria but he was still challenged by the Turks and the Hashemites, both encouraged by the British.⁸

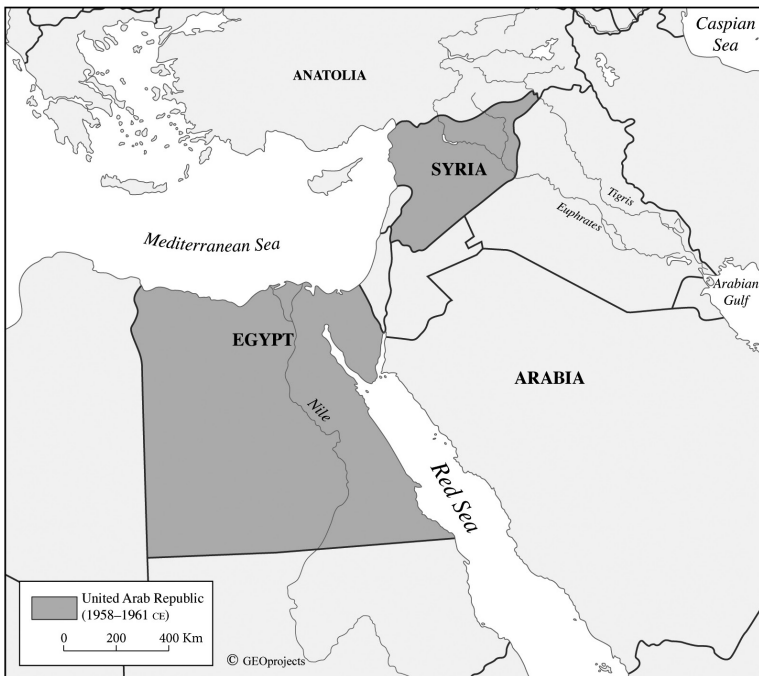
Nasser's star continued to rise, at the expense of the interests of the colonial powers that had dominated the Arab world since 1882. As soon as he was able to establish uncontested power in 1954, he set himself to implement the strategy that he had set out for Egypt in his book *Falsafat Al Thawra* (*The Philosophy of the Revolution*), completed in late 1953. In this book Nasser rediscovered rather than created the elements that formed an essential part of Egypt's national security. The book talks about three dimensions for Egypt: an Arab dimension, an African dimension, and an Islamic dimension.⁹ As well as attempting to extend his influence into Syria and Jordan, Nasser attended the Bandung Convention held in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1954 aimed at forming a coalition among Third World countries against imperialism and against joining any bloc, whether the Western bloc led by the USA or the socialist bloc led by the

Soviet Union. The convention aimed to help colonized countries gain their independence. Accordingly, Nasser aided revolutions in many Arab and African countries, including Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. This earned him the wrath of France, which perceived it as necessary to join forces with Britain against him. Israel also was alarmed by the rise of Nasser's influence. The British withdrew from Egypt in early 1956 but the Company of the Suez Canal was still under their and French control. Nasser nationalized the company in July 1956 in reaction to the withdrawal of the American-British pledge of a loan to finance the High Dam project in Aswan. The British took the nationalization of the Suez Canal as a pretext to prepare for a military campaign against Nasser in October/November 1956. Joined by the French and the Israelis, the British were able to take over parts of the Suez Canal, and extended their attack into Cairo with the aim of ousting Nasser. The latter, benefiting from American discord with the British and French, and from Soviet diplomatic support, was able to strike a major political victory over two colonial powers and a regional one. After the Suez crisis, Britain lost most of its influence in the Near East, and France fought to hold on to Algeria for six years, only to lose the battle and withdraw after ruling the country for 130 years.¹⁰

Nasser and the Syrians

The victory of Nasser in 1956 made him the most renowned Arab leader since the Middle Ages. From the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf his name was chanted with unprecedented enthusiasm. In addition Nasser's victory dealt a severe blow to the colonial powers. After 1956, Africa, Southeast Asia, Arabia and Latin America were set on a course of national liberation that ousted the Europeans from their colonies. The Soviet Union was rewarded generously by Nasser. Its support of Egypt earned it a gateway to the wider world. Through Egypt, the Soviet Union infiltrated the Arab region and Africa, and Khrushchev became as popular as Nasser himself. These developments made it clear that Nasser would bring Syria under his banner. Since the dawn of time no Egyptian ruler had been

able to promote an Egyptian regional role without controlling Syria, either wholly or partially. By Nasser's time, the Syrian mercantile elite had been drawn into relations with Saudi Arabia and the Americans. President Quwatli, reinstated to his post in 1954, leaned significantly towards good relations with King Saud. Saudi relations with Egypt had become strained as the Saud family feared the rise of Nasser's influence. Nationalist and communist officers in the Syrian army, lacking in political experience and fearful of one another, feared the traditional political elite. Consequently, a delegation of these officers went to Cairo in early 1958 and pressed for a union between Syria and Egypt. Nasser, hesitant in the beginning, accepted the offer and went for this union. The Damascene mercantile class was split regarding the issue. The upper class was against it but could not exert effective opposition. The middle and lower mercantile classes thought that it could promote their interests, as it would open wider markets for their trade.



United Arab Republic

The mercantile classes, especially the Damascene, would be disappointed by the economic policies of Gamal Abdul Nasser, who forsook his liberal economic approach and reverted to a policy of protectionism and a state-directed economy. This was preceded by agrarian reforms that gave land to the peasants. Now that he had also become president of Syria, he proceeded to implement the same economic policies there. Large-scale nationalization and redistribution of the land won Nasser wide support among the peasantry and the middle class. However, it earned him the wrath of the mercantile class, which considered itself his partner in the union.

Nasser thought low of the Egyptian party's performance prior to the coup of 1952. This made him ban all political parties in Egypt after he took over power. His condition for accepting unity with Syria in 1958 was to disband all political parties, including those espousing unity with Egypt such as the Baath Party. The leadership of these parties either accepted Nasser's conditions and had to sustain the wrath of the constituency of their parties, as in the case of Michel Aflaq and Salah Din Bitar, or had to leave Syria, with their party members being imprisoned, as in the case of the Communist Party. Now that Nasser was well established in Syria he could sort out matters with his staunchest enemies, the Hashemites and the British. In Lebanon, pro-Nasser parties and leaders posed fierce opposition to President Chamoun, who was pro-British and pro-Hashemite himself. In Iraq the Hashemites felt isolated. In July 1958, a few months after the union of Syria and Egypt, a *coup d'état* ousted the Hashemites and their prime minister, Nuri Saeed, the fiercest enemy of Nasser in the 1950s. Said, King Faysal II (1935–1958) and the former regent Abdullah were all killed and a nationalist regime was established in Iraq. In Turkey, the success of Nasser had serious implications for Jela! Beyar and Adnan Menderes. In 1960, a coup ousted them from power; Beyar was put under house arrest and Menderes sentenced to death.¹¹

Ruralization of Syria

Nasser's vigorous policies turned many Syrians against him. The mercantile class of Damascus was totally alienated, as were the political parties disbanded by his order. On 28 September 1961 a coup was led against Nasser in Syria. The most prominent figure of the coup was Abdul Karim Nahlawi. Born into a wealthy Damascene family, Nahlawi had been for the union with Egypt. However, Nasser's socio-economic policies alienated the wealthy Damascenes to whom Nahlawi belonged. The second most prominent figure was Haydar al-Kuzbari, who was born into a wealthy landowning Damascene family and was also a supporter of the union with Egypt, but like Nahlawi was irritated by Nasser's economic policies, which adversely affected the interests of his family. Al-Nahlawi used his position as assistant to Marshal Abdul Hakim Amer, second-in-command to Nasser, to organize with Kuzbari a peaceful *coup d'état* that ended the union with Egypt after only three and a half years. Though the coup had strong local support in Damascus, regional factors also played a role. By that time the Iraqis had fallen foul of Nasser and the Iraqi dictator Abdul Karim Kassim had ousted his companion, the pro-Nasser Abdul Salam Aref, in 1959. Then Kassim, started to support Syrian communists who were against Nasser. In addition, the Saudis were supporting the Syrian opposition to Nasser.

The leaders of the coup wanted to reverse the tide initiated by Nasser and to recover their losses of the previous four years. Land was retaken from the peasants and nationalized companies were given back to their previous owners. This damaged the interests of the lower middle classes and of peasants of the rural areas whose sons were in the army, prompting them to act swiftly to protect the interests of their kinship. This coalition led to yet another coup on 8 March 1963 through which disaffected citizens took over power in Syria. The most prominent figure of the coup was Amin Hafiz. An Arab nationalist from Aleppo, Hafiz was a member of the delegation dispatched to Cairo in 1958 to establish the Union between Egypt and Syria. Belonging to a middle-class family he was disenchanted with Nasser's economic agenda. Hafiz assumed power assisted by the

leaders of the Baath Party – Michel Aflaq, Salah Din Bitar and Akram Haurani – who had supported union with Egypt in 1958 and been among the plotters against Nasser in 1961. They represented the interests of the urban middle class and controlled the Baath Party. Their coup, which purged the officers of the 1961 coup, saw the rise from rural areas of a new generation of officers, such as Muhammad Omran, Salah Jadid, Abdel Karim Jundi and Mahmoud El Mir, all belonging to Alawi or Ismaili minority groups. These officers held tight the Syrian command of the Baath Party and represented the interests of the rural areas. Soon conflict would arise between officers of urban descent led by Hafiz and those of rural descent led by Jadid. The Alawi officers were joined by Sunni officers from the rural areas, such as Mustafa Tlas from the village of al-Rastan near Homs, Naji Jamil from Dayr El Zor and Druze officers led by Salim Hatoum from the Druze Mountain.

The Alawis started to mobilize and to enter into the political scene in Syria following the French mandate. The French authorities tried to gain the support of minorities based on their policy of playing on sectarianism to justify their presence in Syria. This led them to favour the Alawis, Christians, Armenians, Circassians and other minorities over the Sunni majority, which explains why a high proportion of army soldiers and officers belonged to minority groups.¹² ‘The rise of the Alawis was due to the policies pursued under the French mandate which promoted members of minority groups in bureaucracy and in the army.’¹³ As Hanna Batatu stated: ‘The chief of Syrian intelligence discovered in 1955 that 55 per cent of the noncommissioned officers belonged to the Alawi minority and during the mandate out of eight battalions, three were exclusively Alawi.’¹⁴ In order to pursue their policy, the French relied on the notables in each and every community and, because of this, lesser rural notables were on the rise during the 1940s and 50s.¹⁵ The rise of the Alawis in the Officers Corps led to their eventual rise to power.¹⁶ The coup of 1966 saw the rise of the Alawis to power, aided by their alliance with Druze officers. However, a few months later the leader of the Druze officers, Salim Hatoum, was ousted, together with 200 other Druze

officers. Salah Jadid, brother of the late SSNP commander Ghassan Jadid, became the strong man of the new regime, with Nur Din Atasi as a figurehead president of state. The new leadership set itself to implement a radical leftist socio-economic programme that nationalized many private companies and alienated the interests of the urban mercantile class, especially of Damascus. In addition, it strained relations with Nasser, the Iraqi regime and Saudi Arabia, while drawing closer to the Soviet Union at a time when tensions with Israel were rising.

Defeat in 1967

In 1940, as the United States of America was getting closer to entering the Second World War, its government declared that the independence of the states of the Middle East was detrimental to American security.¹⁷ Seven years later, General Dwight Eisenhower declared that if the Mediterranean was closed to the United States it would constitute an act of war.¹⁸ It was in this context that the United States encouraged the Middle Eastern countries to acquire independence from old colonial powers. During the Cold War, the United States wanted to seal off the region from any Soviet intrusion. However, Nasser's arms deal with the Soviet Union through Czechoslovakia caused a major breach in the front that the USA wanted to build through CENTO and eventually CENTO crumbled. In the 1960s relations between the Soviets and the Egyptians enabled the former to infiltrate into Africa, Asia and Latin America. Wanting to wipe out Nasser's regime, the USA unleashed Israel against him. In 1967, Israel set a trap for Nasser by threatening to attack Syria and topple its regime. Nasser fell into the trap and sent his troops to Sinai after ordering the withdrawal of UN forces. The sequence of events eventually led to an Israeli attack in which Egypt was defeated, but although this dealt a severe blow to Nasser his regime was not toppled. The prize for Israel was to take over the West Bank and the Golan Heights, which were essential for the defence of the Hula valley in northern Palestine and were rich in water resources.

Syria and Egypt, which were considered responsible for this defeat, were the most affected by this war, notably because they lost immense territories.¹⁹ As a consequence, the Arabs woke up to a new reality: the unity of the Arab nation was not going to be realized imminently. In addition, many Arabs became resigned to the existence of Israel as a reality foisted upon them, leaving them with no option other than to accept it. Consequently, Egypt accepted UN Resolution 242 which called on the warring parties to establish peace and return the Occupied Territories, this resolution containing an implicit recognition of the existence of Israel.²⁰

The defeat of 1967 caused two reactions in Syria. The first was represented by Salah Jadid, an Alawi officer and the true leader of Syria between 1966 and 1970. His branch considered the defeat a result of a conspiracy between imperialist nations, the bourgeoisie and reactionary Arab regimes. Therefore it considered that it had to instigate a Soviet-style revolution against the Syrian bourgeoisie, Arab regimes and finally imperialism, while allying itself with socialist countries.²¹ The second branch, represented by Hafez al-Assad, who was at the time minister of defence and more moderate in outlook, considered the defeat a result of inter-Arab conflicts. It also blamed the radicalism that permeated Syrian internal and external politics for the defeat, which is why it considered it essential to start Syrian internal and external reconciliation with other Arab states.²² Concerning the Palestinian cause, the war of 1967 had the important consequence on the formation and evolution of the Palestinian liberation movement.²³ Palestinian organizations won huge accolades among the Arab people in March 1968 when they stood against an Israeli force that had penetrated into Jordanian territories. This would lead to a change in the composition of the National Palestinian Congress, representatives of military factions gaining a majority, with Fatah emerging as the most important of the Palestinian organizations.²⁴ This led to a radicalization of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) charter (which was amended in July 1968 in Amman) *vis-à-vis* the resolution of the conflict with the Israelis and the exclusive right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.²⁵ It would form the

basis for political and military conflicts between the PLO and a number of Arab states, including Syria, as the PLO was against any Arab interference in their affairs. At the same time, Arab states, including Syria, were wary of any independent Palestinian role that might involve them in a war with Israel for which they were not prepared. At the same time, the Arab states were eager to control the PLO, which would give them an important political card that would serve them well in their conflicts with each other. These same states influenced a change in the leadership of the PLO and, therefore, in 1969, Yasser Arafat (leader of Fatah, the biggest Palestinian military organization) became head of the PLO with Saudi and Egyptian consent.²⁶

Notes

- 1 Afaf Sobhi Al Khansa, *Al Tanafus Al Inglizi Al Faransi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Qomati, 2010), 285–90.
- 2 Ibid., 322–50.
- 3 Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945–1958* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).
- 4 Jeffrey Haynes, 'Politics, Identity and Religious Nationalism in Turkey: From Ataturk to the AKP', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 3, 312–27, June 2010, 314.
- 5 Adnan Menderes, *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2012).
- 6 Mohamed H. Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (New York: Arbor House, 1987).
- 7 William Reitzel, 'The Importance of the Mediterranean', in Ernest Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952).
- 8 Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*.
- 9 Gamal Abdul Nasser, *Falsafat Al Thawra* (Cairo: Bayt Al 'Arab Lil Tawthiq, 1996).
- 10 Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail*.
- 11 James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2001).

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- 12 Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of its Lesser Rural Notables, and their Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 145.
- 13 Ibid., 156.
- 14 Ibid., 157.
- 15 Ibid., 155.
- 16 Ibid., 158.
- 17 Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 12–13.
- 18 Eisenhower, as quoted in Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East*, 12.
- 19 R. D. Mclaurin, Muhammad Mughisuddin and Abraham Wagner, *Foreign Policy Making in the Middle East: Domestic Influences on Policy in Egypt, Iraq and Syria* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987), 246.
- 20 Nikolas Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Sectarianism, Regionalism and Tribalism in Politics, 1961–1978* (London: Croom Helm limited, 1979), 84; and Derek Hopwood, *Syria 1945–1986: Politics and Society* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 51.
- 21 Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, 84; and Hopwood, *Syria 1945–1986*, 51.
- 22 Mohammed Zuheir Diab, 'Al-Mawquef Al-Souri min Al-Taswiya Al-Silmyyah Lil-Nizaa Al-Arabi – Al-Israeli, Beirut', *Majallat Al-Derasat Al Falastiniah* 9, Winter 1992, 86–7.
- 23 Henri Laurens, *Le retour des exilés, la lutte pour la Palestine de 1869 à 1997* (Paris: édition Robert Laffont, 1998), 941.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid., 945.

Chapter 7

Syria under al-Assad: 1970s–1980s

I apply not my sword where my whip suffices, nor my whip where my tongue is enough. And even if there be one hair binding me to my fellowmen, I do not let it break: when they pull I loosen, and if they loosen I pull.

The above is a famous saying attributed to Mu'awiya Bin Abi Sufyan, who was able to rule the newly established Arab Empire from Syria in the seventh century CE. He was capable of doing so as a result of his ability to balance the contradictions in Syria, as his words eloquently express. In the twentieth century, Hafez al-Assad proved similarly capable of transforming Syria into a major regional power in the Middle East by following the same policy adopted before him by the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. This is why many people have compared him to Mu'awiya.

A system designed for al-Assad?

On 16 November 1970, Hafez al-Assad became the undisputed master of Syria, after relations between him and his opponent Salah Jadid reached the point of no return. Salah Jadid believed he was keeping control through his strong domination of the Baath Party. But al-Assad, who was minister of defence from 1966, had been actively seeking to extend his control over the army by appointing supporters in sensitive positions, including his brother Rifaat. In the middle of

1970, as the Baath party was preparing to overthrow al-Assad from his post as minister of defence, he led a coup and took over power, putting Salah Jadid and President Nouredine al-Atassi in jail. The movement he led was new; he supported the Damascene bourgeois class that is vital for the stability of any system in Syria. He also distanced Syria from the influential regional powers in the Middle East, particularly Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. He won over the Damascene bourgeois class by taking into account their economic interests which had been negatively affected by the socio-economic policy pursued by Salah Jadid. This helped to secure the loyalty of the city of Damascus to his regime after he assumed power. Al-Assad also sought to bestow on his regime a modern look, contrary to what had been the norm during the seven years that followed the Baath Party's seizure of power in 1963. He re-formed the parliament in Syria, although it did not have any actual authority independent of the powers of the head of state. He also tried to give the regime a pluralistic form through the establishment of the National Progressive Front, which included a number of Syrian parties, in addition to the Baath Party, though this too was devoid of any real political role. A new constitution for the country was issued, though the urban elites and the middle classes, especially Sunni religious men, opposed the endorsement of this.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Syria is a country with multi geopolitical dimensions; its eastern region forms a natural extension of Iraq, the north and coastal regions form an extension of the region of Cilicia, and the southern region is part of the Egyptian national security and is open at the same time to influences from the Arabian Desert in the form of Bedouin migrations spreading from the south to the heart of Syria. According to this political map, Syria has multiple demographic dimensions as well. There are people from rural areas, who make up most of the population of Syria, and those from the cities, who control a line extending from Deraa in the south to Aleppo in the north which divides the country between a peasant-based rural area in the west and coastal areas, and a Bedouin-populated rural area that controls the Syrian Desert and separates it from the

Euphrates area. In order to ensure its stability, every regime had to establish an accurate balance between these geopolitical and demographic variations. Every regime in Syria has had to create accurate balances between the different areas of Syria; between rural and urban areas, between the ‘minorities’ and the ‘Sunnis’, between the south of the country and its capital Damascus, and the north of the country and its capital Aleppo, and between the Arabs and the Kurds. The long period of al-Assad’s rule was a result of his ability to manage such balances with huge efficiency and in a way that few others could master.

On the regional level, al-Assad succeeded in the re-normalization of relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which had been strained during the 1960s, in order to prepare for a liberation war aimed at regaining the occupied Golan and other territories occupied by Israel in 1967, and finding a just solution to the Palestinian cause.¹ In addition, al-Assad sought to limit Israel to its 1967 borders, since he felt that any expansion of its influence would surely come at the expense of Syria, given that the two were competing over the same geographic range, Bilad al-Sham or the Levant.² Furthermore, al-Assad had to ensure the stability of his regime. Some have accused him of being ‘obsessed with securing the interests of a system governed by a minority’,³ claiming that he believed in the policy of power to the extent that ‘makes him detached from any moral values’,⁴ and that ‘the stability of the regime had the priority at the expense of the Syrian national interests’.⁵ However, imposing stability was an integral part of maintaining Syrian national interests by preventing or reducing regional and external interventions in Syrian internal politics, to the disadvantage of Syrian interests. Every coup that took place in Syria in the 1950s and 60s was supported by a regional or international power attempting to extend its influence on Syria.⁶ Al-Assad was aware of this, so rather than relying on fragile civil and constitutional institutions he increasingly relied on intelligence agencies and the army to ensure the stability of his regime.⁷ This stability imposed by al-Assad was what transformed Syria into an effective regional power in the Middle East for the first time in

its modern history.⁸ The 1973 constitution gave the president almost absolute powers.

The army was one of the most important pillars of the new regime but it was ruled by intelligence agencies even before Hafez al-Assad took control of the country. After 1970, al-Assad gave greater powers to the air intelligence (al-Mukhabarat al-Jawiiyya) and military intelligence, and sought to establish a number of security and paramilitary combinations: the Defense Brigades (Saraya Difaa), which was founded in 1971 and headed by his brother Rifaat, in addition to the Republican Guards and Special Forces and another number of security services which always competed with each other, but displayed absolute loyalty to the president himself and were personally associated with him.⁹ Al-Assad took advantage of the Alawi officers in the army and intelligence agencies to serve as a strong nucleus for the regime.¹⁰ However, the regime was mainly based on the support of the rural population, in addition to the support of the Damascene upper class, so the main contradiction was between rural and urban areas rather than between Alawis and Sunnis.¹¹

In this context, the Baath Party, devoid of any real power, played a pivotal role in reducing the intensity of regional and sectarian polarization, and in constructing a unifying national identity.¹² Many of its leading figures were from the rural Sunnis, such as minister of defence Mustafa Talas from Rastan in the countryside of Homs; air force intelligence agency chief until the mid-1980s, Naji Jamil from Deir al-Zour; former prime minister Mahmoud Zoubi from Deraa; current Syrian vice-president Farouk al-Sharaa from Deraa; and the deputy secretary general of the Baath Party, Sulaiman al-Kadah. In other words, the model of political dominance on which the regime was based, especially during Hafez al-Assad's rule, closely resembled a model of dominance based on tribal and ethnic hierarchy that marginalized class struggle by enhancing a system based on tribal, ethnic or confessional solidarity.¹³

Regional developments during the 1970s

After usurping power in Syria, al-Assad set his mind to wage war on Israel to liberate the territories occupied in 1967. This was a key factor in his decision to normalize relations with the Egyptians and Saudis.¹⁴ The Syrians believed that the war of 1973 would help them regain the Golan and provide a just solution for the Palestinian cause. Despite their obsolete weapons, especially when compared to those of the Israelis, both the Syrians and Egyptians dared to wage war against Israel – something that would have been impossible for al-Assad to do alone. The brunt of the war initially fell on Egypt. After three years of attempts by Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat to regain Sinai by diplomatic means, and as a result of growing internal pressures to resort to war, the Egyptian and Syrian armies initiated an attack on Israeli forces in order, so Hafez al-Assad believed, to liberate the Occupied Territories.¹⁵

During two days of fighting, the Egyptian army was able to cross the east bank of the Suez Canal and establish a line of defence 10–15 km, east of the canal. On the Syrian front, the Syrian army was able to cross the Golan and reach the shores of Lake Tiberias. Given that the Egyptians were still far from the Israeli border, Israeli leaders preferred to assign most of their forces to confront the Syrians. After a week of confrontation, Syrian hopes of liberating the Golan started to fade. Egyptian forces stopped their attack on the Israelis and took cover behind the defensive line they had built on the east of the canal, leaving the Syrians to bear the brunt of Israeli attacks on their own. In consequence, they started to withdraw and their capital, Damascus, became threatened by Israeli forces. As the Syrians began to lose what ground they had gained in the early days of the war, the Israelis set their sights on the Egyptians; they counterattacked and were able to create a breach between the second and third Egyptian armies, then they crossed to the west of the Canal and surrounded the third army.¹⁶

Sadat's political objectives in the war were limited. He was working on establishing negotiations with Israel, so he sought a limited military operation and not the liberation of land by war. He thus halted his attacks after just two days, satisfied with a 15 kilometres

deep defensive line to the east of the canal. He had not, however, informed his partner in war, Hafez al-Assad, about his real intentions.¹⁷ In early 1974, Sadat unilaterally signed the Sinai first agreement to disengage forces in Sinai. The Sinai second agreement followed in 1975, which practically took Egypt out of the conflict with Israel after Sadat limited the presence of Egyptian forces east of the canal. International forces were deployed to separate the Egyptians from the Israelis, thus leaving Syria alone in the confrontation field.¹⁸

After the war, the first peace conference between Arabs and Israel was held in Geneva, Switzerland, under the auspices of the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Syria refused to attend, due to al-Assad's scepticism that Israel had any real intention of returning the Occupied Territories to the Arabs.¹⁹ Sure enough, the conference proved a failure because of Israel's determination not to withdraw from the Occupied Territories, except from Sinai, aiming to isolate Egypt from the Arab–Israeli conflict. After Egypt's departure from the conflict with Israel, it became possible for Israel to direct all its efforts towards the eastern front in order to impose a regional situation that suited it. Al-Assad had doubts as to the United States' intentions, and believed that Israel was seeking to impose its dominance on the Middle East, particularly on the Levant, at the expense of the Arabs and Syria.²⁰

In 1978, Egypt completely removed itself from the Arab–Israeli conflict after signing a peace treaty with Israel, tilting the balance of power greatly in Israel's favour and leaving the eastern front vulnerable to Israeli threats.²¹ In response, Syria decided to form a 'rejection front' comprising the countries opposing the Egyptian–Israeli peace, and sought to establish an eastern front against Israel.²² The idea of a Greater Syria, seeking to unite Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the PLO in one political and military front, was the first step in al-Assad's strategy to confront Israel in the absence of Egypt.²³ Syria was afraid that Lebanon or Jordan or the PLO might follow Egypt and sign a peace treaty with Israel, but it was also afraid of a war for which it was ill-prepared, if one of these parties, especially the PLO, escalated tensions with Israel.²⁴

As a result of his bitter experience with Sadat, al-Assad no longer trusted any of the Arab leaders, and therefore preferred to control neighbouring countries and organizations, especially Lebanon, Jordan and the PLO, rather than treat them as partners.²⁵ Al-Assad particularly did not trust the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, believing that he intended to join Sadat if it were possible for him to do so and that, but for the opposition of most Palestinian organizations, he would have accepted the self-government proposed to the Palestinians at Camp David.²⁶

The withdrawal of Egypt from the conflict with Israel, coupled with Israel's military superiority, made Syria feel insecure, prompting al-Assad to seek to build a strategic balance with Israel through the strengthening of the Syrian army with advanced military personnel and equipment to enable it to confront the Israeli army in case of war.²⁷ This military balance with Israel would be achieved with the support of the Soviet Union.²⁸

When Egypt signed the second Sinai Agreement with Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States began a policy of fomenting disturbances in Syria by supporting the Muslim Brothers, who had started to carry out military operations against the regime. Al-Assad was to face growing opposition from this group until 1982. In order to take Damascus out of this conflict, al-Assad, to the delight of the Damascene bourgeoisie, raised its share of the state-controlled import from about one billion Syrian pounds in 1975 to 3.63 billion Syrian pounds in 1976 and to about 4.17 billion Syrian pounds in 1980, thus weakening the support that the Muslim Brothers received from the Damascene merchants.²⁹ This helps to explain why the city of Damascus did not participate in the rebellion of the northern Syrian cities against al-Assad's regime, culminating in the events of Hama in 1982. There was discord within the leadership of the Muslim Brothers itself, reflecting the permanent economic and political competition between southern Syria, with Damascus as its centre, and northern Syria, with Aleppo as its centre. The Damascene Muslim Brothers, led by Issam Attar, were less radical than their northern counterparts and refused military confrontation with the regime of President al-Assad; those descending from the northern cities of Syria, led by

Mohammed Riad al-Shaqfa, who is currently the General Guide of the Muslim Brothers, supported this confrontation.

The rise of the Muslim Brothers in Syria during the 1970s can be mainly explained by the impact of inflation on the Syrian economy, which mostly affected the middle classes in the cities. While the rural people, most of whom were members of President al-Assad's regime, had a tribal solidarity that provided them with a political and economic backbone, the people of the city were deprived of this feeling of unity. Consequently, the Muslim Brothers' organization provided the urban middle-class with a sense of allegiance that they could turn to in order to confront the rural population. The Damascene bourgeois class had benefited from the regime of President al-Assad, which protected their interests, while the bourgeoisie class of the northern cities, such as Aleppo, Hama and Homs, were most severely affected by the deteriorating economic conditions, which contributed to their support of the military action of the Muslim Brothers.

The movement of the Muslim Brothers had a international dimension as well. The Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, played a significant role in supplying the northern cities with money and weapons with which to confront the Syrian regime. This explains the rebellion of the northern cities, led by Hama, against al-Assad, at a time when Damascus remained loyal to him.

Syria in Lebanon

In April 1975, the Lebanese civil war broke out, which al-Assad saw as a means to divert the attention from the second Sinai Agreement to disengage Egyptian and Israeli forces. He also saw in it a way to undermine Syrian national security. Al-Assad knew that none of the warring parties in Lebanon owed him allegiance. The PLO and its leader, Yasser Arafat, owed allegiance to the Egyptians, as was the case of the Lebanese National Movement leader Kamal Jumblatt and Lebanese parties rallying under his banner. As for the Lebanese Front parties, they owed allegiance to the Americans and had begun to

weave relations with Israel under the pretext that they were threatened with extinction and thus had to accept support from any power, even if it was from the Devil himself.³⁰ Al-Assad initially supported the Lebanese National Movement, but when he realized the depth of Egyptian influence upon it he began to distance himself from the movement. Al-Assad initiated an intervention in the Lebanese war by sending units from the Syrian special troops (*al-Saeeka*) and from the Palestine Liberation Army to fight alongside the national movement.³¹ However, the official entry of Syrian troops came later with American consent, at a time when it seemed that progress along the Syrian track of the peace process going on at the time was possible, even though this possibility was short-lived.³² Syria was afraid that Israel would extend its influence into Lebanon; if this were to happen, Israel would be able to access the heart of Syria and destabilize its regime.³³ For this reason, Syria intervened in Lebanon to protect it from Israeli influence.³⁴ Al-Assad was concerned that sectarian conflicts in Lebanon could negatively affect Syrian society, as happened in 1860 when sectarian clashes in Lebanon led to similar sectarian clashes in Damascus.³⁵ Al-Assad was also concerned about the relations of the Palestinians and Yasser Arafat with Egypt and Iraq,³⁶ and the possibility of the Lebanese Front allying itself with Israel under the pretext of protecting Christians from being wiped out.³⁷ Since none of the Lebanese parties owed allegiance to Syria, Hafez al-Assad was determined to play on the contradictions between them, in order to promote Syria's role in Lebanon and try to end the Lebanese civil war through simple constitutional amendments he proposed in 1976, which gave certain rights to the Islamic communities.³⁸ Syria believed that if it could extend its influence over Lebanon, it would be able to control the PLO and thus, through the PLO, be able to intervene in the political situation in Jordan using the fact that most of the Jordanians are of Palestinian extraction.³⁹

In 1978, Syria's regional status started to decline. The Geneva Peace Conference failed to achieve any progress and was replaced by bilateral negotiations between Egypt and Israel, which dealt a severe blow to Syria.⁴⁰ The Americans and Israelis wanted negotiations with

Egypt to be held without being disturbed by al-Assad's opposition to them, so they pushed their allies in the Lebanese Front to rebel against the Syrians, which led to what is known as The Hundred Days War between the Syrians and the Lebanese Front. The Syrians failed to convince the Lebanese Front to give up its relations with Israel or its dream of establishing a national homeland for Christians in the East.⁴¹ As regards the Palestinians, coolness permeated the relationship between the Syrians and the PLO. Syria feared Arafat, who refused to sever relations with Egypt, worrying especially that he would join the Camp David negotiations and accept the autonomy that was being offered to the Palestinians at that time, which would give legitimacy to Sadat's peace agreement with Israel.⁴² Israel took advantage of the situation and invaded southern Lebanon in March 1978, establishing a 10 kilometre deep security zone inside Lebanese territory along the northern border of Israel.

1982–1984

In 1981, Ronald Reagan was elected as president of the United States of America. His administration stepped up its confrontation with the Soviet Union and resumed the arms race with it. This gave Israel a golden opportunity to target Syria, which feeling increasingly isolated in the region, had signed an agreement of friendship with the Soviet Union in the hope of gaining its support in confronting the United States and Israel.⁴³

However, the Soviets were busy with crises in Afghanistan and Poland and did not want to get involved in yet another conflict with the United States in the Middle East.⁴⁴ Despite its signing of a friendship pact with Syria, and the escalation of Israeli threats against Damascus, the Soviets were reluctant to pursue a more dynamic policy in the Middle East.⁴⁵ In such a regional and international atmosphere, a new Israeli government was formed, headed by Menachem Begin, who chose General Ariel Sharon as minister of agriculture, later appointing him minister of defence. This contributed to the escalation of tensions in the region.⁴⁶

Israel wanted to take advantage of the prevailing conditions to achieve a major strategic victory.⁴⁷ In 1982, the situation seemed favourable for it to create fissures in Arab ranks by signing separate peace agreements with a number of Arab countries, thus imposing further isolation on Syria. In addition, the new US administration wanted to push the peace process in the Middle East after isolating the Soviet Union's allies in it.⁴⁸ The Israelis were worried about the situation in occupied Gaza and the West Bank and the possibility of a Palestinian uprising in these, and thought that the only way to avoid this was to direct a blow against the Palestinian leadership in Lebanon.⁴⁹ It aimed to support Israel's ally in Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel, in his quest to take over power so that he would be able to sign a peace treaty with Tel Aviv, thus ending the isolation of Egypt, which had been boycotted by the Arab States and Arab League after it signed the Camp David Agreement, and encouraging other Arab nations to sign peace treaties with Israel without waiting for Syria. All this would reinforce the regional role of Tel Aviv.⁵⁰

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon began on 6 June 1982, and after three days Syrian sites in Beirut, the Chouf and Bekaa were subject to attacks. In two days, the Syrians lost around eighty aircraft and twenty-five anti-aircraft SAM batteries, together with dozens of tanks and hundreds of soldiers, which pushed them to withdraw from the battle except for the 85 Brigade which remained fighting in Beirut with the joint Lebanese and Palestinian troops.⁵¹ In September 1982, it seemed as if the Israelis were on the threshold of achieving their goals. At that time, the PLO withdrew from Lebanon, and Bashir Gemayel was elected president of the republic. However, Israeli joy was short-lived. On 14 September 1982, Habib Shartouni – a member of the Syrian Social National Party – assassinated Bashir Gemayel, which led to the massacre of civilians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, prompting the United States and its allies to directly intervene in Lebanon. This coincided with the escalation of Israeli opposition to the Begin government and the resignation of the American minister of foreign affairs, Alexander Haig, who had supported the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.⁵²

These developments marked the beginning of Israeli–American conflict with regards to Lebanon, a conflict that became blatantly obvious when Reagan submitted his peace proposal without referring to Israel.⁵³ The plan was to place Lebanon under direct American tutelage after the withdrawal of Israeli troops, and to conjoin it with Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in a broad front, in order to isolate Syria and settle the conflict with Israel.⁵⁴ The invasion was a major blow to Syria, whose influence was weakened in Lebanon.⁵⁵ The weakness of Syria encouraged the PLO and Jordan to accept Reagan's plan in spite of Israeli refusal. This was followed by Syria's acceptance of the American conditions.⁵⁶ In spite of this, the Americans refused to cooperate with Damascus deeming it too weak to obstruct American plans in Lebanon.⁵⁷ Therefore, they refused the Syrian offer to withdraw from Lebanon in return for Israeli withdrawal likewise.⁵⁸ Damascus was left with just one remaining course of action; namely, armed resistance.

Several factors played to the favour of Syria and allowed it to reverse the situation to its advantage. It benefited from its good relations with the Shiite sect in Lebanon, and with a number of Lebanese parties, to regain its influence in Lebanon and to obstruct Israeli plans.⁵⁹ In addition, the ascent of Yuri Andropov to power in the Soviet Union resulted in the Soviets adopting a policy of confrontation with the United States in various parts of the world, especially in the Middle East. The first step was to provide unlimited support to Syria, which included furnishing it with the necessary weapons to confront Israel and the United States in Lebanon.⁶⁰ Andropov put Syria under the Soviet military mantle and threatened to use force against anyone who attacked it, which strengthened the resolve of Damascus to face the Americans and Israelis in Lebanon.⁶¹ Al-Assad also benefited from the tardiness of the Americans and Israelis in imposing a suitable situation for them in Lebanon, which gave him time to gather his breath and then launch a counter-attack to thwart US plans. Washington waited until May 1983 before attempting to impose a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon, and it proved incapable of helping President Amin Gemayel to impose his authority

over Lebanese territory, except for a few areas in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.⁶² With the help of its Lebanese allies, Syria launched a counter-attack on the Americans and their ally President Amin Gemayel, which translated into operations against their forces in October 1983, the support of the Druze in facing Lebanese Forces in the Chouf region. Support from the Amal Movement and other national parties in Beirut eventually led, in February 1984, to the defeat of the Lebanese army serving under the command of Amin Gemayel, the fall of Shafik Wazzan's government, and the formation of a government led by Prime Minister Rashid Karami, who was close to Damascus.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Does Syria want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian Israeli Peace Negotiations', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 101, Autumn 1996.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Assad Abou Khalil, 'Syria and the Arab-Israeli Conflict', *Current History*, February 1994, 83.
- 4 Elie Chalala, 'Syrian Policy in Lebanon: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means', *Journal of Arab Affairs* 4, no. 1, 1985, 83.
- 5 Khalil, 'Syria and the Arab-Israeli Conflict', 83.
- 6 Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945–1958* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).
- 7 Moshé Ma'oz, 'The Emergence of Modern Syria', in Moshé Ma'oz and Evner Yaniv (eds), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 27.
- 8 Volker Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Assad* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 4.
- 9 Human Rights Watch, *Syria Unmasked* (Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Press, 1991).
- 10 Hanna Batatu, 'Some Observations on the Social Roots of the Syrian Political Elite', *The Middle East Journal* XXV, Summer 1991.
- 11 Alasdair Drysdale, 'The Syrian Political Elite, 1966–1976: A Spatial and Social Analysis', *Middle Eastern Studies* XVII, 1 January 1981, 8–13.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- 12 Human Rights Watch, *Syria Unmasked*, 30.
- 13 Peter Gran, *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 11.
- 14 R. D. Mclaurin, Muhammad Mughisuddin and Abraham Wagner, *Foreign Policy Making in the Middle East: Domestic Influences on Policy in Egypt, Iraq and Syria* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987), 246.
- 15 Patrick Seale, *Assad, Al Siraa Ala Al Sharq Al Awsat* (Al Muassassa Al Arabiya Lil Dirassat Wal Nashr, 1987), 319.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Alasdair Drysdale, 'The Assad Regime and its Troubles', Merip Reports, Nov./Dec. 1982; and Eberhard Kienle, *Baath vs Baath: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq* (I.B. Tauris & Co., London, 3rd edn, 1993), 135.
- 19 Mclaurin, *et al.*, 253.
- 20 Michael Eisenstadt, *Arming for Peace? Syria's Elusive Quest for Strategic Parity* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992), 1.
- 21 Jaafar Qassem Mohammad, *Souriya Wa Al Ittihad Al Sovieti, Dirasa fi Al Ilaqat Al Arabiya Al Sovietya* (London: Dar Najib Al Rayyes, 1987), 50.
- 22 Mclaurin, *et al.*, 254.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1991), 74.
- 25 Patrick Seale and Linda Butler, 'Assad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 101, Autumn 1996.
- 26 Mclaurin, *et al.*, 255. The Camp David Agreement was a peace treaty signed in September 1979 between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin under the auspices of US President Jimmy Carter. According to this treaty peace was established between Egypt and Israel. Syria and other Arab countries opposed this, as it was a separate treaty that did not include a resolution of their differences with Israel. As a result Egypt was ousted from the Arab League.
- 27 Mohammad, *Souriya Wa Al Ittihad Al Sovieti*, 66.
- 28 Seale and Butler, 'Assad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu', 65.
- 29 Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of its Lesser Rural Notables, and their Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 208.

- 30 See Joseph Abu Khalil, *Qissat Al-Mawarina Fi Al-Harb* (Beirut: Al Matbouat Lil Nashr, 2000).
- 31 Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry*, 295.
- 32 Ibid., 294.
- 33 William Harris, 'Syria in Lebanon', *Merip Reports*, July–August 1985, 76.
- 34 Chalala, 'Syrian Policy in Lebanon', 'Syrian Policy in Lebanon', 70.
- 35 Harris, 'Syria in Lebanon', 77.
- 36 Evner Yaniv, 'Syria and Israel: The Politics of Escalation', in Moshe Ma'oz and Evner Yaniv (eds), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, 172.
- 37 John Devlin, *Syria: Modern State in an Ancient Land* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1st edn, 1983), 120.
- 38 Najib Saliba, 'Syrian–Lebanese Relations', in Halim Barakat, *Toward a Viable Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 152.
- 39 Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, 74.
- 40 Assad Abou Khalil, 84.
- 41 Chalala, 'Syrian Policy in Lebanon', 74.
- 42 Moshé Ma'oz and Evner Yaniv, 'On a Short Leash: Syria and the PLO', in Moshé Ma'oz and Evner Yaniv (eds), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, 201.
- 43 Efram Karsh, 'The Soviet Union and Syria: The Assad Years', *Chatham House Papers* 47, 55.
- 44 David Roberts, 'The USSR in Syrian Perspective', in Moshe Efrat and Jacob Bercovitch (eds) *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1991), 229.
- 45 Mohammad, *Souriya Wa Al Ittihad Al Sovieti*, 66.
- 46 Jonathan Randal, *Harb Al Alf 'Am fi Lubnan* (Dar Al Mourouj, 1984), 234.
- 47 Ghassan Elezzi, 'De la Paix en Galilée à la Relance de la Guerre Civile, Quand l'Armée Israélienne "sauvait" le Liban', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1992, 23.
- 48 Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, 190.
- 49 Michael Jansen, *The Battle of Beirut: Why Israel Invaded Lebanon?* (London: Zed Press, 1st edn, 1982), 66.
- 50 Seale, *Al Assad*, 599.
- 51 Seale, *Al Assad*, 625.
- 52 Jansen, *The Battle of Beirut*, 69.

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- 53 Shimon Schiffer, *Asrar Al Ghazou Al Israili Li Lubnan-Amaliyat Kurat al-Thalj*, (Beirut: Sharikat al-Matbouat Al Sharkiya, 1985), 132.
- 54 Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, 126.
- 55 Itamar Rabinovitch, 'The Changing Prism', in Ma'oz and Evner (eds), *Syria under Assad*, 187.
- 56 John Bulloch, *Final Conflict: The War in Lebanon* (London: Century Publishing, 1983), 151.
- 57 Karsh, 'The Soviet Union and Syria', 74.
- 58 Chalala, 'Syrian Policy in Lebanon', 84.
- 59 Christopher Dickey, 'Assad and His Allies, Irreconcilable Differences', *Foreign Affairs* 66, Autumn 1987, 166.
- 60 Seale, *Al Assad*, 651.
- 61 Karsh, 'The Soviet Union and Syria', 74.
- 62 Seale, *Al Assad*, 651.

Chapter 8

Syria on the threshold of the new world system

There is no war without Egypt and no peace without Syria.

(Henry Kissinger, former US Foreign Secretary and National Security Advisor, on the prospects of resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict)

International changes

In 1985, a significant change in the Soviet Union occurred: the ascent of Mikhail Gorbachev to power constituted the first act of many that would eventually lead in 1991 to the collapse of the socialist bloc and, among them, the Soviet Union itself. The international role of the Soviet Union had been regressing since the 1970s, as its foreign policy stagnated and it struggled, unsuccessfully, to cope with crises in Afghanistan and Poland. Signs of change evident at the Helsinki Conference in 1975 were confirmed in 1985 in Paris during the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe,¹ which was a prelude to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the international arena, leaving the United States as the only superpower in the world, at a time when other potential powers such as Europe, Japan and China were still far from constituting a political or military challenge.² Economic problems prompted Russia to rely increasingly on economic aid from the United States.³

As a result of changes in the Soviet Union, it was no longer possible for radical Arab states to rely on Soviet military, economic and political aid.⁴ This weakened their position in relation to Israel, Syria being the most affected country.⁵ In April 1987, Gorbachev

informed al-Assad that the Soviet Union would not be able to support him in his plans to achieve a strategic balance with Israel.⁶ The Soviet Union believed that it would be able to retain its influence in the Middle East if it could enter into a partnership with the United States that allowed it to share power with the latter.⁷ However, the United States, which had more realistic designs, took advantage of the situation to impose its influence over the oil-rich Middle East,⁸ which contains 65 per cent of the global reserve.⁹ This control would enable Washington to become the most important provider of oil to Europe and Japan, allowing it to impose a strong tutelage over their policies.¹⁰ Iraq, with its military strength and economic potential, was seen as an obstacle that could potentially disrupt US hegemony over the Gulf region and the USA therefore resolved to crush it.

The most prominent reason for US interest in the Middle East, however, was its desire to prevent the formation of a Eurasian bloc that could marginalize the United States, and obstruct its plans to dominate the world. In this regard, Zbigniew Brzezinski has pointed out that Eurasia is key to controlling the world and the great battle for global domination will always hover around it.¹¹ He notes that 'the U.S. global hegemony will be through the direct control of the Middle East'.¹² Through such control, it would be possible to separate Europe from Africa, creating a rift between Russia and Europe. This would also create an impregnable barrier against Russia's intentions to access the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, and at the same time would prevent China from accessing Africa. Brzezinski adds that controlling the European part of Eurasia through oil and security could allow Washington to control Africa, while economic control over Russia could facilitate control of Asia, and thus of Oceania, the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and the North and South Poles.¹³ Brzezinski was remarketing Halford Mackinder's theories, based on the control of the seas and containment of the 'Asian Castle', which the Americans adopted after the end of the Second World War to confront the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc.

The Arabs were well aware of the serious impact the collapse of the Soviet Union would have on them, Saddam Hussein declaring in

1989 that the end of the Cold War would be a disaster for the Arabs.¹⁴ This also made al-Assad concerned about Syria, and convinced him that the Americans would dominate the world stage for the next decade,¹⁵ prompting him to improve his relations with them rather than confront them in the Middle East.¹⁶ He thus joined the international coalition to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein in 1991.

Syria hoped that its new attitude would contribute to its establishment as a partner of the United States in the Middle East, and its removal from the American blacklist, which would allow it to gain economic aid and facilitate the transfer of US technologies to it. Syria received two billion US dollars from Saudi Arabia, and established a kind of alliance with Egypt and the Gulf States (through the Declaration of Damascus). In addition, its new-found harmony with the United States allowed it to overthrow General Michel Aoun in Lebanon and to impose a settlement through what is known as the Taif Agreement, which ended the civil war that lasted for fifteen years.¹⁷

The United States benefited the most from the destruction of Iraqi power, as this allowed it to impose its hegemony indisputably over the Gulf region, thus helping to delay the transformation of Europe and Japan into two forces competing with it on the global level.¹⁸ It also removed a potential threat to Israel. The destruction of Iraqi military power had serious implications for the Arabs, especially for Syria, as the balance of power was completely shifted in favour of Israel.¹⁹ After the Gulf War, scenarios for a new map of the Middle East started to be presented. In 1991, Iraq was divided into three zones: a Kurdish area in the north, a Shiite area in the south and a Sunni area in the middle. These zones, however, were not accorded the status of states, as Washington feared that giving independence to the Iraqi Kurds might encourage the Kurds in Turkey, its ally, to follow them.²⁰ Similarly, the Gulf States opposed the establishment of a Shiite state in southern Iraq, as this would allow the infiltration of Iranian influence into the Gulf region.

Europe was a major competitor with the United States which, in order to address this potential risk, worked on obstructing the

establishment of a partnership between Europe and Russia in the early 1990s, to block the formation of a European–Russian alliance. This is the premise from which we can understand the Russian–US partnership in the Middle East.²¹ The United States wanted to block the formation of an independent security system in Europe in order to keep the latter under the American umbrella.²² Three institutions were used by the United States to strengthen its hegemony over the world: the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the World Trade Organization. With the growing weakness of the Soviet Union and the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev to power, the US president Ronald Reagan realized that the United Nations could exercise a role consistent with US needs. Thus, through the United Nations, the USA solved the crises of Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, Namibia, and especially the Gulf crisis, according to its interests.²³ The United Nations served as a legitimate cover for US intervention in the world. According to Gilbert Achcar:

The United Nations' cover to the US policies was, paradoxically, more useful to the White House's internal politics than it was to the American administration, who might use it for military operations carried out with the participation of the allies. For the Americans, the essential issue was to legitimize their intervention in the affairs or policies of other States ... To this end, the consensus expressed by the United Nations ... The United Nations also contributed in legitimizing the means chosen by Washington, and it has helped it to overcome an obstacle, which is the problem of financing a massive military effort, at the time when the United States was suffering from a huge deficit in its budget. The solution was to involve the wealthiest allies: oil monarchies in the Gulf, Japan, Germany, etc. ... in the funding process.²⁴

The other tool of American hegemony was NATO, which, despite questions about its role after the Cold War, stayed involved in international politics under US control. The future of this organization was not clear at the end of the cold war, despite plans to accept new members from Eastern Europe. NATO serves the US administration to counter domestic constraints on foreign policies.²⁵ This policy was

applied after the failure of the United Nations in Somalia; the United States also resorted to NATO to resolve crises like that of Yugoslavia.²⁶ Despite the discussions that were taking place between the member states of NATO and the USA, NATO remains an important tool in the hands of the United States for imposing its hegemony²⁷ and keeping Europe under the American umbrella. The World Trade Organization has served as another tool of American hegemony through being used primarily to open up foreign markets to US products. The Americans have employed it to impose their will on their main competitors, Europe and Japan.

The irony is that the United States, despite its calls for an open global market, applied in the early 1990s a traditional protectionist policy.²⁸

The peace conference

Talks about a peace conference in the Middle East were renewed during the tour of the US Secretary of State George Shultz in the region in 1985. He was the first US foreign minister to have established personal relationships with local VIPs prior to his appointment as minister of foreign affairs. However, he severed all personal ties after his appointment as foreign minister, although this attitude would harm his interests as being representative of the 'oil' interests of the USA in the Middle East. Schultz's tour coincided with the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in the Soviet Union, and the consequent changing of Soviet domestic and foreign policy, aimed, among other things, at ending conflict with the United States.

The US government succeeded in achieving political gains in several areas of the world. Schultz's greatest achievement was his persuading of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat to draft a document condemning terrorism. This signalled an implicit approval of the negotiations between the PLO and Israel, which wanted to dictate its own terms on the Arabs. Subsequently, President Hafez al-Assad tried to influence various Palestinian factions, encouraging the Shiite Amal Movement to wage war on the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut

and southern Lebanon, as the Head of the PLO Yasser Arafat was conducting policies that were regarded as damaging to the Syrian interests in Lebanon. In September 1987, secret negotiations brought together the PLO and representatives of Yitzhak Shamir's government, during which Arafat admitted the rights of Palestinians to self-determination, which he had rejected eight years earlier during the Camp David negotiations between Sadat and Begin. It is worth mentioning that these secret meetings between the Israelis and Palestinians started in the 1970s,²⁹ encouraged by Arafat's desire to reach an agreement with the Israelis at any cost. The declaration of a Palestinian state in April 1988 in Algeria was intended merely to cover the negotiations that were going on secretly between the representatives of Arafat and Israeli officials. The Syrian response to the secret negotiations came when President Hafez al-Assad announced in a speech on 8 March 1989 that he opposed any 'other Camp David in the region'.³⁰ He added that Syria had not only opposed the Camp David Agreement but had also intervened to hinder it.³¹ In that speech, President al-Assad pledged to support the Palestinian Intifada in all of the Occupied Territories and to strengthen the role of Syria in Lebanon. He highlighted his objectives in the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict, assuring that he was seeking to 'return our Arab countries to their proper position in civilization, after the colonial problems and their difficulties have been resolved. Those are the periods that plunged the Arab world into backwardness and fragmentation, as well as planting the Zionist danger in the heart of the Arab world'.³² After confirming his support of the Palestinian Intifada he went on to affirm his support also for resistance against Israel in southern Lebanon, the situation there taking up half of his speech. He focused on the help and support offered by Syria to Lebanon, emphasizing that Syria was intent on 'eliminating all the factors that encourage discrimination', and that it had always sought to achieve the national interests of all Arabs, including Syria and Lebanon.³³

The US response to President al-Assad's speech was to support General Michel Aoun, the commander of the Lebanese Army who was appointed as head of an interim military government in 1988 after

the expiry of President Amin Gemayel's term, and the failure of the Lebanese parliament to elect a successor. The government of General Aoun was not recognized by the government of Salim Hoss, which was loyal to Syria, when he declared war on Syrian forces in Lebanon on 14 March 1989, a few days after President al-Assad's speech. Calmness did not return to Lebanon until Syria accepted the decisions of a summit held in Casablanca, which supported all previous and future efforts of the PLO and Jordan aimed at establishing a lasting peace with Israel.

The USA initiated moves to hold a peace conference in the Middle East in May 1991 directly after the Gulf War. In the presence of observers from the United Nations Peace Conference and members of a Palestinian delegation (part of the Jordanian delegation), Secretary of State James Baker went to great lengths to persuade Yitzhak Shamir's government to accept the principle of land for peace. Given the circumstances, al-Assad could not but accept Bush's promise to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict according to the principle of land for peace, and on the basis of UN Resolutions 242 and 338, within the framework of a peace conference sponsored by the Americans and Russians.³⁴ The conference was finally held in Madrid, starting on 30 October 1991, after months of talks between Israel and the United States. Although James Baker announced that the United States was not and never would be a mediator in the peace process, his country had already shown itself to be a strong ally of Israel, backing it all the way. It consequently regulated the process throughout in line with Israeli conditions.³⁵

Towards Oslo

The first round of talks, like the four rounds that followed during the reign of the Likud government, did not yield any result because the Likud was intransigent in refusing to sacrifice land for peace.³⁶ This incurred the anger of the United States, which realized that Shamir was not only threatening through this to undermine US efforts and its interests in the Middle East but was also aggravating the situation

by provoking Arab countries, including those that were pro-peace, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, by establishing new settlements in the Occupied Territories.³⁷ However, the deadline for US elections was approaching and the Bush administration felt itself incapable of putting any pressure on Israel. In fact, the American election campaign had already begun, and each candidate wanted to satisfy the Jewish lobby in an attempt to win power.

In Israel, the Labour Party and its allies achieved a landslide victory against the Likud in elections held on Wednesday, 24 June 1992, the Likud's first defeat since 1977. Labour's victory was counted as a trump for peace in the Middle East.³⁸ Just as Bush and Baker had expected, the Labour Party wanted to push the peace process forward. After its election, the party promised the Palestinians autonomy and pledged to accelerate the negotiations.³⁹ The new government set up by Yitzhak Rabin, announced that priority would be given to the progress of negotiations with the Syrians.⁴⁰ However, this was only a cover for Israel's intention to proceed with the negotiations with the Palestinian delegation before making progress on other tracks. All these changes allowed Israel to achieve its primary goal: the establishment of a Middle East dominated by the Israelis and with their problems with the Palestinians settled. Israel, therefore, would be able to establish relations with Arab countries without needing to make compromises with Syria and Lebanon.

Arafat was willing to sign a treaty with the Israelis, whatever it cost him. His position stemmed from his fear that the Palestinian delegation might become an alternative to his leadership in the negotiations. He attempted to legitimize his position through playing on the fear that Syria might reach a peace agreement with Israel before him. However, he knew very well that Syria had grave reservations concerning Israel. It is worth mentioning that all the leaders of the Fatah Movement, with the exception of Arafat, had been killed at that time. The Israelis assassinated Abu Jihad in 1989, and then Abu Iyad and Abu al-Hawl in 1991. The aim of these murders seemed to be to eliminate all Palestinian leaders who might

oppose peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. This applies especially to Abu Jihad. A number of Israeli ministers, including foreign minister Shimon Peres, wanted to make peace with the Palestinians. In fact, Peres had announced that 'Israel has to initiate talks with the Palestinians whatever the organization to which they belong, provided that the latter is willing to reach to a peace agreement with us.'⁴¹ According to the *Yediot Ahronot* newspaper, Peres announced that Faisal Husseini, head of the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem, could start a dialogue with Israel if he was willing to take a position independent of the position of Fatah.⁴² The minister of the environment in the Labour government, Uri Safir, adopted the same position. The minister of education, Shulamit Aloni, declared that 'the Palestinian Liberation Organization forms the only likely partner which is capable to contribute to the progress of peace negotiations. We call upon the government to involve the PLO in the peace process, and Israel has to consult decision makers who are in Tunisia and in the occupied territories, such as Faisal Husseini and the true leaders who seek to make peace with the Israelis.'⁴³

The first instance of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza was declared on 23 May 1993 as a result of the negotiations in Washington. Arafat suggested, in a letter he sent to the Austrian advisor Franz Vranitzky, that the Israeli forces should leave the populated areas in Gaza, and be replaced by international forces. He again emphasized his call for Rabin to begin direct negotiations with him, and in this regard, he informed the 'Voice of the Arabs' radio station that he was 'ready to meet with Rabin if he wants peace. And we have rejected the US proposals because they ignored the basic issues and did not take a decisive position regarding the Arab Jerusalem and the settlements.'⁴⁴ At the same time, the political advisor of the Egyptian president, Osama al-Baz, made a visit to Washington to discuss with Secretary of State Warren Christopher how to overcome the obstacles that impeded progress in the bilateral negotiations, especially on the Israeli-Palestinian track. He insisted, before his departure, on the importance of reviving the idea of a confederate union between the Palestinians and Jordanians, pointing out that such a union would

contribute to the establishment of a Palestinian state 'accepted' by Israeli society.⁴⁵ Christopher promised on 28 May that the tenth round would be held in June. Sources close to the Israeli Foreign Ministry revealed that the Israeli delegation would propose self-rule in Gaza to the Palestinians; the Palestinians rejected it, demanding that it should be 'preceded by the declaration of the principles maintaining the safety of the occupied territories.' The spokesman for the Palestinian delegation, Hanan Ashrawi, declared in this regard, that 'the Palestinians view the land as an integral whole. And we are convinced that the national authority will unite one day, but no one can prevent the withdrawal of one party outside the framework of negotiations.'⁴⁶ Shimon Peres wrote in his memoirs that his position on the matter was clear: after Israel had lost the Jordanian option it had a single choice left, which was progress on the Palestinian track.⁴⁷ Peres gave priority to the Palestinian track and chose to postpone progress on the Syrian track. The former track could facilitate progress on the Jordanian track. He saw that it was unreasonable to leave the Gaza Strip and West Bank fully to the Palestinians and that a transition period was needed for the evacuation of Gaza first, later to include also Jericho in the West Bank.⁴⁸

Peres went on in his memoirs to talk about secret meetings held between Israel and the PLO during the summer of 1992, two weeks after the elections but before the formation of the government. One such confidential meeting was held between the Israelis and Palestinians through the Norwegian minister of foreign affairs who proposed in September 1992⁴⁹ that the Fafo Research Foundation (FAFO) should mediate between the parties. The FAFO is a Norwegian organization for research studies and had conducted studies in the region in early 1992. Its director, Terry Rod Larsen, met with Yossi Beilin in Oslo and, after a short period, the latter became deputy minister of foreign affairs. In September, the minister of foreign affairs suggested that a secret channel of communication might be established between Israel and the PLO. Beilin was very cautious about this, and decided to put Larsen in direct contact with Israeli academicians unrelated to the government; one of them was

Yair Herchwild who was teaching at the University of Haifa, and the other was Ron Pundak who is a doctor. By raising some of the sensitive points of the project in December 1992, Herchwild became close to Abu Alaa, the minister of finance in the PLO. They agreed at the time to attend a seminar on human resources held in January 1993, near Oslo. Finally, it was attended by five participants: Herchwild and Pundak, from the Israeli side and Abu Alaa, Maher al-Kurdi and Hassan Asfour from the Palestinian side.

Meetings were held between Abu Alaa and Herchwild in Oslo, at a time when the PLO was in a bad situation, both politically and financially. The atmosphere was one of optimism about reaching an agreement with the Organization. In this regard, Herchwild announced that 'al-Husseini believes that the results of our meetings are the first step towards progress, and the dialogues that were held are complementary to the Washington negotiations'. In addition, Secretary of State Warren Christopher asked the Norwegian foreign minister to come to Washington to brief him on the results of the dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. Key proposals were presented in Oslo to determine the legal framework for self-government and for the resident and temporary Israeli authorities, efforts in this regard having reached a dead end in Washington. Rabin was assured that the principle of 'Gaza first' was in Israel's favour, because the majority of Israelis wanted to get rid of the densely populated and dangerous Gaza. The Oslo meeting proposed an interim period of five years starting from the date of signing the agreement during which autonomy would be granted to the Palestinians until they are ready for independence, whereas, according to the Camp David Agreement of 1978, this step would not begin until all the details of self-government were resolved.⁵⁰

In early May 1993, all the details of the negotiations with the Palestinians were settled for the Israelis, including the points that required the consent of both parties; only the practical details needed to be resolved. The tenth round of negotiations did not lead to anything, especially on the Syrian track, which had to be postponed until after the signing of the Oslo Agreement so that Israel could

benefit from the political and economic results of the agreement. Mahmoud Abbas stated in his memoirs that the meetings between the Palestinians and the Israelis had begun five months before the outbreak of the Intifada on 4 July 1987, Moshe Amiran (member of the Likud) having met with Anwar Nusseibeh to discuss a solution to the Palestinian problem.⁵¹ Abu Mazen added that several meetings had been held between representatives of the Likud and the PLO at that time. They had resulted in a project submitted on 23 September 1987, three months before the Intifada, which the Palestinians had accepted and which stated the Palestinians' right to self-rule. The Israeli plan, backed by the United States, focused on attacking Syrian interests in Lebanon, evidenced by Israeli attacks on Lebanon in July 1993, and was designed to keep the preparations for the Oslo Agreement secret. Israel considered that if Lebanon was overwhelmed by the problem of refugees running away from south Lebanon it could divert the attention from the negotiations going on in Oslo. The agreement marked an end to an impasse that had persisted over two years of talks, which had begun in Madrid. It made the situation between the Palestinians and Israelis more flexible.⁵²

The rapprochement was to open up new horizons for the normalization of relations between Arabs and Israel regardless of any progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Rabin adopted a strategy of manipulation on all tracks, bringing the Palestinians to believe that he was making progress on the Syrian track in order to provide the least possible concessions in his negotiations with the Palestinians; he finally imposed on them a solution similar to the Allon Plan.⁵³ Former Israeli Ambassador in France, Yehuda Lancry, announced in this regard that the Oslo Agreement paved the way to normalization with the Arab countries.⁵⁴

What had prompted the Israelis to sign the Oslo Agreement was that it did not require too many concessions on their part; on the contrary, it gave them numerous gains. Furthermore, Rabin had needed to make progress in the peace process as he was afraid of being obstructed by the opposition lead by the Likud party, which had threatened to block any agreement with the Palestinians and

Arabs.⁵⁵ Also, the Israelis were tired of conflict with the Arabs and of the psychological, social and political implications that this entailed. They recognized that it was an appropriate time to sign an agreement with the Palestinians, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁵⁶ On their side, the Americans were seeking to make sure that Syria did not oppose the peace treaty. President Clinton called President al-Assad to tell him that Syria's time has come to hold peace talks with Israel.⁵⁷ The Oslo Agreement represented a setback for Syria, which was seeking to limit the Israeli influence in the Levant, as it paved the way for normalization of relations between the Israelis and the Arabs. Since Israel had signed a peace agreement with the Palestinians and since both of them recognized each other as a political entity, any contact or communication between any Arab country and Israel became legal. Eventually, the Oslo Agreement would pave the way for an agreement between Israel and Jordan in November 1994, which dealt another blow to Syria.

Towards the end of the peace process

On 4 November 1995, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, present among a large crowd gathered to celebrate the peace agreement with the Palestinians, was assassinated by a Jewish man from the far right, named Yigal Amir. The immediate result of this murder was an outpouring of popular sympathy for the Labour Party led by its new leader, Shimon Peres.⁵⁸ The latter should have been able to take advantage of the situation to move forward in his project to sign a peace agreement with Syria and end the Arab–Israeli conflict. However, he needed first to rearrange the internal structure of the Labour Party.⁵⁹ Because of his failure to do so, the assassination of Rabin left a gap at the top of one of the party's wings, which represented the mainstream wing within the party.⁶⁰ Needless to say, the absence of Rabin made it easier for Peres to form a government of the left. He therefore chose the leftist Haim Ramon to serve as minister of interior and Yossi Beilin to supervise the negotiations portfolio. Furthermore, the mainstream wing of the party recommended

choosing Ehud Barak as minister of foreign affairs.⁶¹ However, Peres made a serious mistake in failing to take advantage of the groundswell of popular sympathy to prove that he was as capable as his predecessor in leading the labour party to victory.⁶² Peres was reluctant to continue the peace process before the elections, which were due in October 1996. Indeed, wanting to prove to the Israeli people that he could be as forceful and powerful as his predecessor, he ordered launching operations against the leaders of Hamas and al-Jihad.⁶³

Although the left effectively controlled the government, Peres found it difficult to make rapid progress in the peace process. He had to take into account what Rabin's assassination meant in terms of divisions within Israeli society and corresponding different attitudes towards the process. He deemed it necessary to be cautious, because the issue might otherwise prove explosive, not only within Israeli society, but also within the Israeli army. In addition, a report on the assassination of Rabin suggested the possible involvement of the Shin Bet (Israel's security service) in the operation, either directly or through negligence.⁶⁴ Taking into account the proximity of the Israeli elections date, Peres felt he could not jeopardize his position by offering what many Israelis would consider as a giving up the land.⁶⁵ At the same time, he needed to make progress on the peace track with Syria in order to score points for the upcoming elections. It is worth mentioning that the new prime minister was going to be elected, for the first time in the history of Israel, directly by the people. So Peres wanted to make progress in the peace process without paying a high price for it, yet any such solution would inevitably be rejected by Syria. As a result, his plan was doomed to failure, leaving him dependent on pressure exercised by the United States on Syria in order to achieve his objectives.

As for Syria, it was clearly unwilling to make concessions to appease Peres without receiving something in return. Peres was in need of progress on the Syrian track without giving al-Assad any concession.⁶⁶ Damascus wanted to push forward negotiations at a time when Peres enjoyed significant popularity, being all too aware

that the peace process would have little chance of success should the Israeli right come to power. Thus, Syria informed Warren Christopher after the assassination of Rabin of its wish to accelerate the peace process.⁶⁷ However, it still insisted on its terms of peace, demanding full Israeli withdrawal to pre-1967 borders and a reduction of Israel's role in the region matched by a corresponding increase in its own.

Peres' decision to suspend negotiations with Syria was accompanied by an increase of operations by Palestinian groups opposing the Oslo Agreement, in particular Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. It is worth noting that some members of the Palestinian groups opposing the Oslo Agreement were imprisoned and tried by the PLO and the Israeli government after the signing of this Agreement. On 26 August, Israel sanctioned the assassination of Fathi al-Shikaki, the Secretary General of the Islamic Jihad Movement, in Malta.⁶⁸ Since the signing of the Oslo Agreement, and while Peres was in power, it was noted that these operations witnessed a serious escalation especially after the assassination of Hamas activist Yahya Ayyash, nicknamed the engineer for his development of the explosives program, and whom Peres – wanting to appear heroic in Israeli eyes – had himself given the order to kill.⁶⁹ These suicide operations against Israeli civilians had a negative impact on Peres in the eyes of the Israeli public. As a result, his popularity declined, while that of his rival, the right-wing leader Benjamin Netanyahu, increased. Despite all his efforts, Peres failed in curbing the activities of the groups responsible for the suicide attacks, especially the Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

The Sharm el-Sheikh summit held in Sinai on March 1996 took place in a context of 'Islamic extremism' on one side and a resurgent Israeli right on the other. This weakened the position of Peres, pushing the Americans, to hold a summit in Egypt and support him against 'terrorism'. This summit – aimed at combating 'Islamic fundamentalism' and the forces that support it, described Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, Iran and Syria as 'enemies who should be confronted'.

From the start, the Syrian position had been not to support the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, because it targeted Syria, giving it just two options: cooperation in the fight against the opponents of

peace – which included the disarmament of Hezbollah, its major ally in Lebanon – and cutting its connections with Iran. This was evident in the declaration of the Egyptian foreign minister Amr Moussa, who stressed that the absence of Syria and Lebanon from the conference would affect the peace process.⁷⁰ Syria did not directly oppose the conference but expressed its refusal through Lebanon, which announced that it would not participate in it.⁷¹ The Syrian response could nonetheless be predicted in the light of minister Farouk al-Sharaa's demand that the United States and Russia should strive to resume negotiations and bring them back to reach the point they had reached before. However, Moussa objected with the excuse that 'the circumstances were not favorable to him'. Moussa's declarations reflected the position of Egypt and other countries participating in Sharm el-Sheikh summit who supported the assault on Hezbollah.⁷²

Tensions escalated in southern Lebanon on 11 April 1996. Syria was suffering at the time from international and regional isolation, only partially ameliorated by support from Iran. The immediate political result of this isolation was an announcement by Prime Minister Rafic Hariri that the Lebanese state was ready to handle its security responsibilities in southern Lebanon in the event of an Israeli withdrawal.⁷³ Syria responded to Hariri's declarations (which Syria believed to have been instigated by the Americans) first through the Lebanese foreign minister, Fares Boueiz, and, second through the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Boueiz said: 'If we really want to overcome this empty loop, we must resist the Israeli opportunism and, instead, activate the peace process to resolve the conflict in the first place, and put an end to the military operations.'⁷⁴

Notes

- 1 Yussuf Al Sayegh, 'Dalalat Al Tahawwolal Al Jawhariya fi Majmouat Al Bouldan Al Ishtirakiya Al Oropiya Bil Nisbati Li Al Watan Al Arabi Wa Qadiyyati Falastin', *Al Mustaqbal Al Arabi* 150, August 1991, 5.
- 2 Mohammad Zakariya Ismael, 'Al Nizam Al Dawli Al Jadid Bayna Al Wahm Wal Haqiqa', *A Mustaqbal Al Arabi* 143, January 1991, 7.
- 3 Richard Hermann, 'Russian Policy in the Middle East: Strategic Change and Tactical Considerations', *Middle East Journal* 84, no. 3, Summer 1994, 454.
- 4 Ibrahim A. Qarawan, 'Arab Dilemmas in the 1990s: Breaking Taboos and Searching for Signposts', *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 3, Summer 1994, 434.
- 5 Alfred Leroy Atherton, 'The Shifting Sands of the Middle East Peace', *Foreign Policy* 83, Spring 1992, 118.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 John P. Hanna, 'At Arms Length: Soviet-Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era' (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Studies, 1989), 5.
- 8 Richard Nixon, 1999: *Victory without War* (Simon Shuster, 1988).
- 9 Ismael, 'Al Nizam Al Dawli Al Jadid Bayna Al Wahm Wal Haqiqa', 15.
- 10 Samir Amin, 'Ba'da Harb Al Khaleej, Al Haymana Al Amirkiya Ila Ayn?' *Al Mustaqbal Al Arabi* 170, April 1993, 15.
- 11 Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ruq'at Al Shataranj Al Kubra*, trans. Amal Al Charfi (Amman: Al Ahliya Lil Nashr, 1991), 12.
- 12 Ibid., 47.
- 13 Ibid., 48.
- 14 Peter Rodman, 'Middle East Policy after the Gulf War', *Foreign Affairs* 70, Spring 1991, 223.
- 15 Graham E. Fuller, 'Moscow and the Gulf War', *Foreign Affairs* 70, Spring 1991, 65.
- 16 Qarawan, 'Arab Dilemmas in the 1990s', 434.
- 17 Atherton, 'The Shifting Sands of the Middle East Peace', 129.
- 18 Mohammad Zakariya Ismail, 'Al Hawiyya Al 'Arabiya fi Mouwajahat Al Salam Al Israili', *Al Mustaqbal Al Arabi* 190, December 1994, 27.
- 19 Moshé Ma'oz, 'Syrian-Israeli Relations and the Middle East Peace Process', *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 3, 1992, 11.
- 20 Paul-Marie De la Gorce, 'Bilan d'une épreuve de force', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 1991, 10.

- 21 Jacques Decarroy, 'Au nom de la démocratie et du marché, la chevauchée américaine pour la direction du monde', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1993, 8.
- 22 Raghida Dergham, 'Rousiya wa Baritania fi 'Amaliyat Al Salam', *Al-Hayat* newspaper, July 1997, 17.
- 23 Paul-Marie De la Gorce, 'Comment préserver l'hégémonie? Washington et la maîtrise du monde', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1992, 15.
- 24 Gilbert Achcar, 'Les Nations-Unies au fil des objectifs américains, des organisations mondiales', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1995, 8.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Marciano Aiguirve, 'Une alliance en quête d'ennemi: l'OTAN au service de quelle sécurité?' *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1996, 11.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Brzezinski, *Ruq'at Al Shataranj Al Kubra*, 12.
- 29 Mohammad Hasanein Haykal, 'Salam Al Awham: Oslo ma Qabluha wa ama Ba'duha' (Cairo: Shourouk Press, 4th edn, 1996), 62-3.
- 30 Hafez al-Assad, *Assafir* newspaper, 9 March 1979.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Jawad Alchti, 'Al Asad Yaqbal Wa'd Bush', *Falastin Al Thawra* 855, 4 August 1991, 17.
- 35 *Assafir* newspaper, 3 February 1992.
- 36 Wahid Abdel Majid, 'Israil Wal Mufawadat Al Jariya' in Mustada Allawi, *Al Mufawadat Al 'Arabiya Al Israiliya wa Mustaqbal Al Salam fi Al Sharq Al Awsat'* (Cairo, 1994), 161.
- 37 *Assafir* newspaper, 15 November 1991.
- 38 Mohammad Muslih, 'Dateline Damascus Asad is Ready', *Foreign Policy* 96, Autumn 1994, 151.
- 39 *Assafir* newspaper, 24 June 1992.
- 40 *Annahar* newspaper and *Assafir* newspaper, 3 July 1992.
- 41 *Assafir* newspaper, 24 January 1993.
- 42 *Yediot Ahronot* newspaper, as quoted in *Assafir* newspaper, 24 January 1993.
- 43 *Assafir* newspaper, 24 January 1993.

- 44 *Annahar* newspaper, 24 May 1993.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 *Annahar* newspaper, 29 May 1993.
- 47 Shimon Peres, *Ma'rakat Al Salam, Yawmiyat Shimon Peres*, trans. Ammar Fadel and Malek Fadel (Amman: Al Ahliya Lil Nashr Wa Al Tawzi', 1995), 370.
- 48 Ibid., 371–5.
- 49 Ibid., 376.
- 50 Ibid., 380–1.
- 51 Mahmud Abbas, *Tariq Oslo, Muwaqqi' Al Ittifaq Yarwi Asrar Al Mufawadat* (Beirut: Sharikat Al Matbu'at, 4th edn, 1995), 64.
- 52 Avi Schlaim, 'Ittifaq Oslo', *Majallat Al Dirasat Al Falastiniya* XXIII, no. 3, Spring 1994, 826–7.
- 53 Eric Rouleau, 'Comment les fractures et surenchères ont affaibli le monde arabe', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1993, 8.
- 54 Yehuda Lancry, 'Entretien avec l'ambassadeur israélien à Paris. Propos recueillis par Régine Dhoquois Cohen. Le processus de paix est irréversible', *La revue d'études palestiniennes* 13, Winter 1994.
- 55 Douglas J. Faith, 'Withdrawal Process not Peace Process: The Tunner's Logic of Israel's Negotiations', *Middle East Quarterly*, March 1996, 13–14.
- 56 Douglas J. Faith, 'Land for no Peace', *Commentary*, June 1994, 3.
- 57 Paul-Marie De la Gorce, 'Washington et la nouvelle donnée, construire la paix au Proche-Orient', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1993, 8.
- 58 Hisham Dajjani, 'Igthiyal Rabin wa Afaq Al Salam Al Sourî Al Israili', *Al-Hayat* newspaper, 26 November 1995, 17.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Benny Morris, 'After Rabin', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, 1996, 77–8.
- 62 Haykal, 'Salam Al Awham', 446.
- 63 Ibid., 447.
- 64 Victor Ostrovsky, 'Tasribat Li Taqrir Al Lajna Touqaddem Tabrirat Qawiya Li Tawato Doubbat Al Shabak fi Igthiyal Rabin', *Taqrir Washinton 'an Shuoun Al Sharq Al Awsat* 16, no. 5, January/February 1998, 30 and 111–12.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 *Assafir* newspaper, 13 November 1995.

67 *Assafir* newspaper, 18 November 1995.

68 *Annahar* newspaper, 27 November 1995.

69 Haykal, 'Salam Al Awham', 448.

70 *Al-Hayat* newspaper, 11 March 1996.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 *Assafir* newspaper, 12 April 1996.

74 Ibid.

Chapter 9

The Middle East in the 1990s

Security and stability in the region will never be achieved without reconciliation between Syria and Israel.

al-Assad was tough, but smart.

After his illness had worsened, al-Assad wanted to return the Golan before his death.

(Words of former US president, Bill Clinton, concerning Syria and President Hafez al-Assad)¹

Turkey and the Arabs during the 1990s

From the 1950s onwards, Turkey constituted a major pillar of Israel's strategy in the Middle East, which aimed to encircle Arab states through an alliance with Turkey and Iran, and to establish a Middle Eastern regional system based on non-Arab regional powers such as Iran, Turkey and Israel. Turkey was the first Muslim country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel in March 1949. The two countries allied with the United States during the Cold War, and both considered themselves as European countries in the East.² Turkey joined NATO after the Second World War, reflecting its hostility towards the Soviet Union – a hostility dating back to the days of the Ottoman Empire and its wars against the Russian Empire, and exacerbated later by threats made by the Soviet leader Stalin to place Turkey under Soviet control.³ Turkish–Arab relations had been cool

during the reign of the Republican People's Party until 1950, warmed for a time during the premiership of Adnan Menderes (1950–1960), but then cooled again until Turgut Ozal came to power in Turkey in 1982. Turkish feelings of bitterness towards the Arabs had begun as a result of the Great Arab Revolution during the First World War.⁴

The elites that ruled Turkey after the establishment of the Republic aimed to join Europe. Atatürk Turkey considered itself a Western secular country in an Islamic surrounding; Israel similarly considered itself a Jewish state in an Islamic surrounding.⁵ There are around a hundred and twenty thousand Jews of Turkish origin in Israel. These form a 'lobby' that aims to improve relations between Israel and Turkey,⁶ and has played a key role in deepening economic relations between the two countries.⁷ Signs of a Syrian–Iranian rapprochement during the 1980s worried Turkey, especially the possibility that the two countries might impact on the region of eastern Anatolia and destabilize the internal situation there.⁸ On the other hand, Israel considered Turkey an asset that could be counted on in facing the Arabs.⁹

During the 1950s and 60s, Israeli–Turkish relations prospered due to the above-mentioned factors, but they subsequently cooled, particularly after the military coup in Turkey in 1980. The 1970s saw an improvement in relations between Turkey and the Arabs, reflecting the emergence of the Arabs as a major political and economic force, and Turkey's need for oil, which was increasing in price.¹⁰ After the 1980 coup, two trends emerged in Turkey: some supported the developing of relations between Turkey and Israel, while others wanted to reduce such relations and seek rapprochement with the Arabs. The Secretary of the Turkish Foreign Ministry during the 1980s, Kamran Guerin, the Turkish ambassador in Washington, Shukri Alekdaj, and the ambassador to the United Nations, Coşkun Kirja, supported rapprochement with Israel. On the other hand, Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, who became head of state in 1989, and the Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Altair Turkmen, wanted to end relations with Israel and develop them instead with the Arabs. The minister of foreign affairs believed that Turkey, through establishing

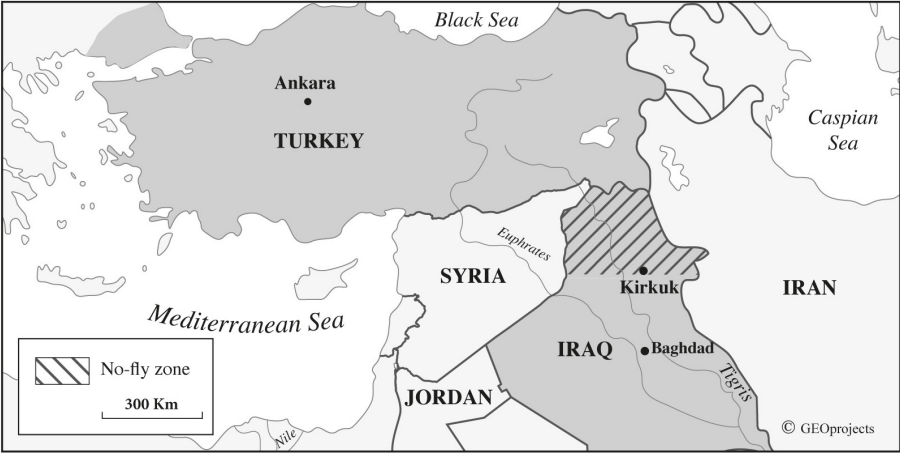
good relations with the Arabs, would be able to buy Arab oil at low prices, significantly increase its exports to Arab states, and secure Arab support for its stance over the growing crisis in Cyprus.

Altair Turkmen conveyed his point of view to the Turkish president, Kenan Evren, and to the National Security Council, which included the heads of the four forces of the Turkish army. During the first meeting of the Council, Turkmen proposed to cut the relations with Israel. However, the majority of the five votes refused this request. Later, Turkmen succeeded in downgrading diplomatic relations with Israel to the level of second secretary.

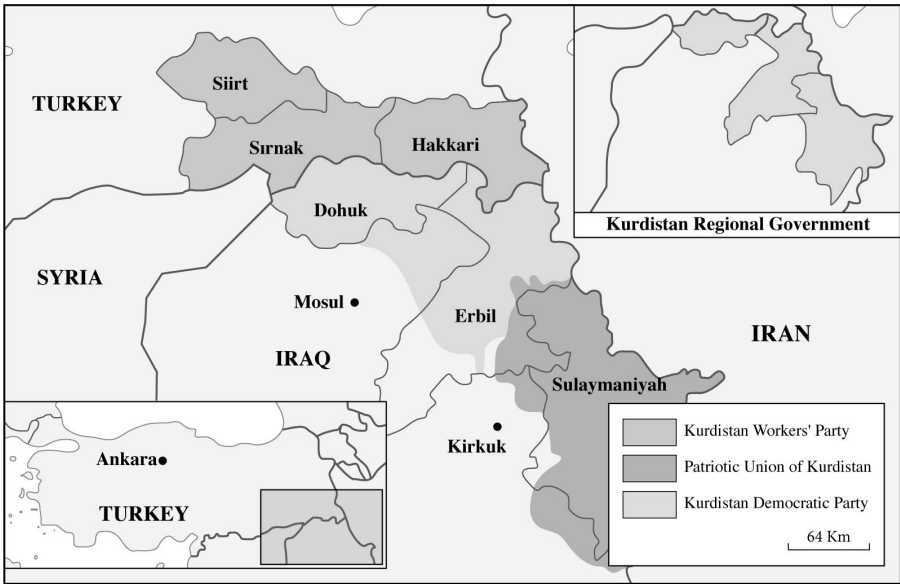
Overall, the 1980s witnessed cold relations between Turkey and Israel, in spite of a secret visit by Ariel Sharon to Istanbul during the summer of 1986. The world had witnessed the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yasser Arafat's implicit recognition of Israel in 1988, and the Gulf War, followed by Arab-Israel peace negotiations in Madrid in the autumn of 1991. These developments paved the way for the revival of relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv.¹¹ Turgut Ozal recognized that the end of the Cold War would significantly affect Turkey's position as a link between Europe and the Middle East, so he looked to develop relations with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq, inviting two of them, Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani, to visit Ankara. He believed openness to the Arab region was essential, given that it is one of the three regions Turkey considers integral to its own security. The other two are the Caucasus and the Balkans. The peace process had allowed Turkey to improve its relations with Israel. Ozal's grasp of the significance of international changes, coupled with his proficiency in understanding the political geography of Turkey and his knowledge of history, enabled him to redirect Turkish politics after the end of the Cold War.¹²

After the sudden death of Ozal in 1993, Turkey witnessed a phase of political instability and a succession of weak governments, which contributed to the escalation of Islamic opposition culminating in its victory in the elections of 1995. The seculars further improved relations with Israel as a reaction to the rise of the islamists.¹³ Turkey had faced growing opposition to its request to join the European

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria



Security zone of Turgut Ozal



Turkish–Iraqi border

Union. It was also concerned about the Kurdish separatist movement in the southeast of the country, and about American and British sympathy with this movement, which was developing firm relationships with Israel. As a result, Ozal drew closer to the United States after the end of the Cold War, in order to ensure that Turkey would not become affected by a redrawing of the geopolitical map of the Middle East. Thus Ozal did not oppose the US military strike against Iraq in 1991, and improved Turkey's relations with Israel to ensure US support for Turkey against the Kurds.¹⁴

The most important stage in the Turkish–Israeli rapprochement came in March 1994, during the premiership of Tansu Çiller. By then, Turkey and Israel had signed a secret security agreement, which was followed by another agreement on 3 November 1994. The latter included provisions on combating drug trafficking, exchange of information, initiating security measures to protect civilians from terrorist acts, and exchange of experiences in the field of combating crime, together with a commitment from both countries not to send any information to a third country without the consent of the second party in the agreement.¹⁵ During Çiller's visit to Israel, Ankara proposed a number of economic projects to Tel Aviv, such as cooperating to develop fibre-optical technology and a communications cabling system in the Middle East; cooperation between Israeli ports and those of Mersin and Iskenderun in Turkey; the establishment of an international company for food transportation; a joint project with regard to hydroelectric power; initiating research concerning the infrastructure of an regional electricity network system; the formation of a multinational consortium for investment in the Gaza Strip and West Bank; and cooperation in the field of agricultural training, irrigation and the environment in the 'al-Ghab' region of southeastern Turkey.¹⁶

The relationship between the two countries developed to the extent of signing a security and military agreement in February 1996. At the time, Perez was facing a crisis in Israel, after suicide attacks carried out by Islamists, which threatened to undermine his peace project. He was well aware that Syria and Iran were providing

assistance to the Palestinian resistance movements. Thus, the agreement served Israel to encircle Syria and Iran, and to have access to former Soviet Republics in central Asia and the Caucasus, due to the historical relations that bound Turkey to these Republics. Israel's aim, in other words, was to use Turkey as an instrument of Israeli policy to put pressure on Syria and isolate Iran.

The Israeli-Turkish alliance had a significant impact on Syria's position and interests. Once again, Syria found itself restricted, threatened from the north and south.¹⁷ For example, following the signing of the agreement Israeli pilots flew regularly over northern Syria, starting from the Sheriff base.¹⁸ Syria expressed its concern about the implications of this agreement on Arab security and asked Turkey to reconsider it.¹⁹ The situation changed with the rise of Necmettin Erbakan to power in Turkey in 1997, upon which the agreement was frozen.²⁰

The Russians, the French and the Middle East

With the end of the Cold War, the new ruling elite in Russia undermined the importance for Russia of the geopolitical importance of the Middle East and east Europe.²¹ However, various events from 1992 onwards prompted this elite to review the situation. Russia had hoped it would be supported by Western countries economically and politically, which did not occur, causing it to reconsider its foreign policy. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia entered a complex transitional phase which led to the aggravation of many of its problems. During the first phase of its transition to a market economy, it made overtures to the West, seeing the latter as a source of financial resources and advanced technology, and as experienced in administrative affairs, thus being able to assist it in reforming its economy. However, the Russians did not get the expected economic assistance from the West.²² The West's determination to expand eastwards into areas of Eastern Europe that had historically fallen under Russian influence pushed the Russian leadership to reactivate the geopolitical vision set by Peter the Great three centuries earlier.²³

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia noticed that the United States was trying to exert its influence on the countries of Central Asia, through its alliance with Uzbekistan, and on the Caucasus, through its alliance with Georgia and Azerbaijan; in particular, it was seeking to foster the instability in the Chechen Republic and to isolate Ukraine from Russia.²⁴ All this caused Russia to intensify its espionage operations against the United States of America, evidenced by the discovery in 1995 of a Russian spy who had successfully infiltrated the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).²⁵ It also attempted to reassert some kind of control over the republics that had become independent from the Soviet Union.²⁶

After 1993 the Russians reconsidered their traditional policy in the Middle East. In 1993, Moscow sold Iran a nuclear reactor and three submarines, as well as dozens of 'Sukhoi 24' fighter jets, spare parts, tanks, anti-aircraft batteries and other military equipment. In the same year, it provided Syria with a major cache of weapons, estimated as being worth tens of billions of US dollars, and signed an economic cooperation agreement with Iraq. Subsequently, it sent experts to Libya to help in its missiles program, cooperated with Egypt in the development of missile technology, and continued to supply Syria with weapons, despite the latter's huge military debt owed to Moscow.²⁷ The appointment of Yevgeny Primakov as foreign minister, and then as head of the National Security Council upon Boris Yeltsin's rise to power, reinforced Russian influence in the Middle East, Primakov having enjoyed strong relations with the Arabs since the 1960s. The relationship between Russia and Syria saw a remarkable development from 1994 onwards, following the visit of a high-level Russian delegation to Damascus to discuss the development of cooperation between the two countries.²⁸

Europe welcomed Russia's involvement in the Middle East, because it considered it an ally in the region in the face of US hegemony. The Israelis, however, were opposed to any Russian or European role in the peace process,²⁹ and so the United States tried to limit the Russian and European influence in the region. The victory of the Russian Communist Party in legislative elections of

1995 left the USA concerned that Russia would lead an independent role in the Middle East and strengthen its ties with Syria, which could affect negatively the American hegemony.

In parallel with the change in the Russian policy, the 1990s saw renewed French involvement in the Middle East with the ascent of Jacques Chirac to the presidency in 1995. With his leadership the tendency of France to play an independent role in the Middle East was further strengthened. According to the former Syrian ambassador in France, Elias Nijma, Syria found in the emerging French role in the region a support for its own role in the face of Israel.³⁰ Throughout the 1990s, Europe attempted to exercise an independent and balanced role in relation to Syria, and to support the decisions of the United Nations, which were considered as conforming to Syrian interests.³¹ Lebanon formed the gate through which France entered again into the Middle East as a result of a new relationship between Chirac and the Lebanese prime minister Rafic Hariri. France's role became prominent during Israeli aggression against Lebanon in April 1996, when it worked to end the Israeli attack and helped to foster the April Understanding, which included representatives of the United States, France, Lebanon, Israel and Saudi Arabia.³²

A European role in the Middle East was necessary for the security of Europe. The presence of a chaotic region so close to Europe would inevitably affect its own stability. The Barcelona Conference, held on 27 and 28 November 1995, marked an important stage in the development of European policy towards the Middle East and North Africa.³³

Syria saw that the new European orientation could work to its advantage. But there were obstacles to this European approach: first, conflicts between the European countries themselves, and second, US opposition to an independent European role in the Middle East. Traditional British loyalty to the United States was a further obstacle to developing a unified European foreign policy but it was not the only or main factor. Europe had been learning since the 1950s how to deal with Britain's ambivalence towards the vision of united Europe. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, differences

arose between France and Germany, key members of the European Union. A European ruling on 12 July 1994 allowed the German army to intervene in conflicts outside German borders for the first time since the Second World War.³⁴ Germany was determined to integrate Eastern Europe into the European Union.³⁵ In addition, it had to integrate East Germany and deal with the economic problems resulting from this integration, especially the problem of unemployment.³⁶ At the same time, Germany was competing with France over the leadership of the European Union.³⁷ This had its negative impact on the development of an elaborate European Foreign Policy.³⁸

Israel joined the United States in its hostility to the European role in the Arab region, as it did not acknowledge a leading role for Israel in the Middle East.³⁹ This meant the European Union was incapable of breaking free from America. Hence the declaration of the European Envoy to the Middle East, Miguel Angel Moratinos, pointed out that the European and American roles in the Middle East are complementary rather than contradictory.⁴⁰ At best, the Arabs could expect European support for UN resolutions 242, 338 and 425.⁴¹

Regional transformations

Syria would benefit from several factors to limit the damage to its national interests, such as limited support from Egypt and unconditional support from Iran, enabled Syria to strengthen its position in relation to Israel.⁴² Egypt had started to resent attempts by Israel to impose itself as the major regional power in the Middle East, following the signing of the Wadi Araba Agreement with Jordan in 1994. Furthermore, it was concerned that the Turkish–Israeli alliance threatened its role in the region; Egypt had long considered itself the principal power in the Arab world, a role that was necessary to it both strategically and economically. It had only made peace with Israel to avoid costly war, so that it could focus its resources instead on economic development. But it was against the idea that peace should transform Israel into the dominant power in the region. It should

be noted that after the signing of the Wadi Araba Agreement, Israel returned to its traditional policy of marginalizing the Arabs. After 1967, four Arab countries – Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia – had exercised a role in the region. Iraq came under siege after the Gulf War of 1990–1991, which weakened the Syrian position, especially after the signing of the Wadi Araba treaty in 1994. As a result, Israel had to curb the influence of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Israel had been trying since the Casablanca Conference, 1994, to impose its absolute hegemony on the region through various economic projects. The conference was attended by top Israeli officials, headed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and foreign minister Shimon Peres, and by dozens of Israeli businessmen. For Perez, the aim of the conference was to launch a New Middle East in which Israel would play a pivotal political and economic role, and this raised Egyptian concerns as to its own role in the region.⁴³ A verbal altercation took place at the meeting between the Egyptian foreign minister, Amr Moussa, and the Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, who accused Egypt of leading the region into devastation during the five decades over which it had been the dominant regional player.⁴⁴

During the Amman summit, held in 1995, another verbal altercation occurred, this time between the Egyptian and Jordanian foreign ministers, Amr Moussa accusing Jordan of rushing into normalizing relations with Israel. The Saudis were also opposed to a fast normalization of relations with Israel, which benefitted the Syrian position.

Israel had extended its influence to the Red Sea, posing a threat to Egypt's national security.

Israel also attempted to threaten Egypt's national security through creating instability in regions adjacent to the sources of the Nile; for example, causing conflicts between the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, on the shores of Lake Victoria. It also sought to contain the role of Saudi Arabia by establishing relations with Qatar and the Sultanate of Oman and the Emirate of Dubai.⁴⁵ This prompted Egypt and Saudi Arabia to express their opposition to any progress in the normalization of relations with Israel, unless there was progress in

the settlement with Syria, and complete withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem. They reaffirmed this in the Alexandria conference held in January 1995, but US pressure made both Egypt and Saudi Arabia draw back from what they had agreed with Syria. In response, Syria worked to strengthen its relations with Iran and to improve relations with Iraq in an effort to form a Syrian/Iranian/Iraqi alliance.⁴⁶ However, this endeavour encountered many obstacles, the most important being chronic Syrian–Iraqi disagreements.

Notes

- 1 *Al Sharq Al Awsat* newspaper, 26 June 2004.
- 2 Michel Verrier, 'Alliance avec Israël, crise du pouvoir en Turquie', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1996, 18.
- 3 Bassam Al 'Asli, 'Al Tahalof Al Turki Wa Ab'adih', *Al Difa' Al 'Arabi*, August 1998, 26.
- 4 Jinkiz Chandar, 'Al Taqarub Al Israili Al Turki', *Shououn Al Awsat* 51, April/May 1996, 35–6.
- 5 Ihsan Gurkan, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israiliya Al Turkiya wa Mufawadat Al Salam fi Al Sharq Al Awsat', *Al Nahj* 1993, 68.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., 58–87.
- 8 Salim Nassar, 'Kayfa Wazzafat Amirka Al Khatar Al Irani Li Hal Mashakel Al Infisal Al Dakhili: Al Tahaluf Al Turki Al Israili Yo'attil Mufawadat Al Salam Ma' Souriya', *Al-Hayat*, 17 May 1997, 17.
- 9 Report, 'Tchetin fi Israil, Marhala Jadida fi Al Tawafiq wa Al Ikhtilaf', *Shououn Turkiya* 10, Winter 1994, 12.
- 10 Mohammad Nur Al Din, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israiliya Al Turkiya, Al Marahil, Al Dawafi', Wa Al Aafaq', *Al Difa' Al Watani* 22, 102.
- 11 Report, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israiliya Al Turkiya: Al Zira'a wa Al Siyaha wa Al Akrad', *Shououn Turkiya* 9, Autumn 1993, 11–12.
- 12 Chandar, 35–6.
- 13 Ibid., 36–7.

- 14 Report, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israliya Al Turkiya', *Shououn Turkiya* 94, 23–7.
- 15 Nur Al Din, 'Al 'Ilaqat ...', 105–6.
- 16 Ibid., 106–7.
- 17 Jubin Gvodarzi, 'Syria's quest for security', *Middle East International* 561, 24 October 1997, 17–18.
- 18 Nizar Agri, 'Al Ittifaq Al Israili Al Turki Li Al Ta'awon Al 'Askari wa Al Amni', *Shououn Al Awsat* 62, May 1997, 110.
- 19 Mohammad Zuheir Diab, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Souriya Al Turkiya: Husn Jidar aw 'Adawa', *Majallat Al Dirasat Al Falastiniya* 28, Autumn 1996, 33.
- 20 Nassar, 'Kayfa Wazzafat Amirka Al Khatar Al Irani Li Hal Mashakel Al Infisal Al Dakhili ...', 34.
- 21 Michel Yammine, 'Awdat Al Dawe Al Rousi Ila Al Hiwar Al Janoubi Al Sharqi', *Shououn Al Awsat* 63, July 1997, 17.
- 22 Alexander Vilonik, 'Al Masaleh Al Iqtisadiya Al Rousiya fi Al Sharq Al Awsat', *Majallat Al Dirasat Al Falastiniya* 26, Spring 1996, 105.
- 23 Yammine, 17.
- 24 Ibid., 32.
- 25 Larsen Cohn, 'Rousiya Tatahaddar Li La'b Dawr fi Al Sharq Al Awsat', *Al Israa* 9, October 1995, 30.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid., 31.
- 28 Fayez Sara, 'Souriya wa Rousiya, 'Awdat Al Rouh', *Al Sharq Al Awsat* 31, July 1994, 169–70.
- 29 Al 'Asli, 'Al Tahalof Al Turki Wa Ab'adih', 41.
- 30 Interview with Dr Elias Najimeh, Ambassador of Syria in France, 'Pour la Syrie, la paix est un choix stratégique', *Proche Orient* 241, April 1998, 4.
- 31 Interview with Miguel Angel Moratinos, 'Souriya wa Israil Touridan Al Salam wa Lakinnahoma La Ta'rifan Kayfa Tatahawaran', *Al Wasat* 262, 3 February 1997, 26.
- 32 Omar Mahjoub, 'Masarat Al Taswiya Ba'da Madrir wa Al Mutaghayyirat Al Israili Al Lubnani', *Shououn Al Awsat* 58, December 1996, 56.
- 33 Gérard Kebardjian, 'Contre les douteux reculs du libre échange, la Méditerranée, horizon naturel de l'Europe', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1995, 4.
- 34 Bernard Cassen, 'Accélérer la mise en place d'une Europe sur mesure', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1994, 4.

- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., 5.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Mahmoud Awad, 'Mafahim Al Taswiya Al Israiliya: Jouhoud Hathitha Li Fak Al Irtibat Bayna Adla' Al Muthallath Al Tarikhi: Misr, Suriya, wa Al Sou'oudiya', *Al-Hayat*, 24 December 1996.
- 39 Cyril Nowsend, 'Amaliyat Al Salam wa Al Dawr Al Oroppi', *Al-Hayat*, 19 July 1997, 15.
- 40 Interview with Moratinos, *Al Wasat* 262, 3 February 1997, 26.
- 41 Paul-Marie De La Gorce Paul, 'Un tournant occulté, retour honteux de la France dans l'Otan', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1996, 1.
- 42 Rached Al Ghanouchi, 'Afaq Al Harb wa Al Salam wa Dawr Al Harakat Al Islamiya fi Filastin', 25.
- 43 David Bar Illan 'Egypt against Israel', *Commentary*, September 1995, 35–6.
- 44 Mahmoud Awad, 'Mafahim Al Taswiya Al Israiliya: Jouhoud Hathitha Li Fak Al Irtibat Bayna Adla' Al Muthallath Al Tarikhi: Misr, Suriya, wa Al Sou'oudiya', *Al-Hayat*, 24 December 1996.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Majed Kayyali, 'Israil wa Turkiya wa Suriya: Siyasat Al Ihtiwaa Mouqabel Siyasat Al Taqarub Wa Da'm Washington', *Al-Hayat*, July 1997, 17.

Chapter 10

Syria under Bashar al-Assad

Syria under President Hafez al-Assad is the heart of the Arab World and is brimming with vitality, especially after the correctional movement.

(Wilton Dean, head of the *Time* magazine's Middle East bureau)

President Hafez al-Assad gave Syria real power and Syria under him became politically, militarily, and economically strong.

(The French writer and political analyst Paul-Marie De La Grosse)

Bashar al-Assad

At the end of 1983, on the cusp of a great political victory over the Americans in Lebanon, President Hafez al-Assad suffered a heart attack that left him bedridden and comatose in hospital. As a result, his brother Rifaat, who had a year earlier played a crucial role in crushing the Muslim Brotherhood, became the regime's second man. Al-Assad's regime had been built on a delicate equilibrium between various centres of power and, fearful of losing his influence to one or other of them, Rifaat thought it wise to secure the reins of power for himself. He thus deployed his defence brigades around Damascus, ready to seize power in the event of his brother's death. The Saudi heir to the throne at the time, Prince Abdallah, supported Rifaat in his ploy. However, as fate would have it, Hafez al-Assad recovered and, upon his discharge from the hospital, found that the situation threatened his regime. He foiled his brother's plans with his accustomed level-headedness and marginalized his brother, eventually forcing him

into exile. This led, in turn, to Abdelhalim Khaddam becoming the regime's new second man. Khaddam later bolstered his position by forging an alliance with the head of the armed forces at the time, Hikmat al-Shehabi. Clearly, the equilibrium policy that al-Assad had established in Syria was breaking down and he urgently needed to repair it. In 1982 the tribes of Dayr El Zor showed relative sympathy to the insurgency of the Muslim Brothers in Hama. Al-Assad thus needed to find another loyal Sunni rural area to replace Dayr El Zor, which pushed him to give more concessions to the tribes of Deraa and Horan. This explains the emergence of personalities from Horan such as the ex-minister of foreign affairs and current vice-president, Faroud al-Sharaa; the ex-prime minister, Mahmoud El Zou'bi; the vice-general chairman of the Baath Party, Sulaiman al-Qaddah; and General Rustum Ghazaleh.

These changes in Syria were coupled with an attempt to reach a settlement in Lebanon based on a distribution of power between Syria, Saudi Arabia and the United States.¹ The Shiite sect became Syria's allies, while the Christians typically sided with the Americans. Saudi Arabia had the support of the Sunni sect, which was preparing at the time for the new leadership of Rafic Hariri. The Lebanese Sunni leadership was fragmented and Abdelhalim Khaddam being responsible for the relationship with Saudi Arabia started to prepare for the rise of Rafiq Hariri. In 1985, the Progressive Socialist Party and the Amal Movement destroyed the Murabitoon, the strongest Sunni Beiruti militia, after a fierce battle in Beirut. Lebanese Forces, which had forged a strong relationship with Rafic Hariri, assassinated the ex-Prime Minister Rashid Karami in the spring of 1987, thus removing a strong figure from Hariri's path. The Syrian-Saudi-American formula in Lebanon culminated in the Taif Agreement, which was signed in 1989.

In the aftermath of this agreement, Rene Muawwad was elected president of Lebanon. However, he was assassinated seventeen days later and was succeeded by Elias al-Hrawi. Salim El-Hoss was the first prime minister after the Taif Agreement and his government was supposed to repair the national institutions. El-Hoss resigned from

office, however, and Omar Karami was chosen in his stead. He proceeded to incorporate the militias that flourished during the civil war into the government.² On 6 May 1992, a few months before the parliamentary elections scheduled for September, angry demonstrations erupted in Lebanon due to the erosion of the Lebanese pound following financial speculation carried out primarily by Rafic Hariri. This led to the fall of Omar Karami's government.³ Rashid al-Solh formed a new government committed to the task of holding the parliamentary elections. However, most of the candidates on El Solh's list did not get elected. El Solh was humiliated and the leading figures of the Sunni sect lost their credibility, paving the way for Rafic Hariri to ride in on a 'white horse'. In the same elections, former speaker of parliament Hussein El Hussein's list failed to secure election in the Baalbak-Hirmil district, which opened the door for Nabih Berri to emerge as Head of the Parliament.⁴

The formula for division of power between Syria, the US and Saudi Arabia was now reflected in the Lebanese national institutions. The Head of the Parliament, Nabih Berri, was representative of the Syrians, Prime Minister Rafic Hariri emerged as representative of the Saudis, while the Christians were removed from the equation with American consent. General Michel Aoun, for example, was exiled to France and Samir Geagea, head of the Lebanese forces, was sent to prison. Afterwards, Abdelhalim Khaddam used his ties with Rafic Hariri to enforce his position in Syria itself. His relations with Hikmat al-Shehabi, brigadier Ghazi Kenaan (the head of the Syrian intelligence in Lebanon), and Rafic Hariri and his clique began to diversify, and together they tightened their grip on Lebanon and deepened their influence in Syria.⁵ In time, Hariri monopolized the Sunni scene in Lebanon after removing or weakening all the alternative Sunni leaders. At the same time, the trio of Khaddam, al-Shehabi, and Kenaan strengthened their influence in Syria, threatening the balance between the centres of power that Hafez al-Assad was so keen to preserve.

On 10 June 2000, Hafez al-Assad died after a long struggle with illness that had affected his ability control many aspects of the balance of power. This allowed the trio of Khaddam, Shehabi and

Kenaan to cross their predefined boundaries. Al-Assad comprehended how dangerous the situation in Lebanon had become after Hariri gained total control of the Sunni scene, which affected the balance between various sects in Syria itself. He understood that the continuity of the regime and the stability of Syria depended on being fully capable of playing those paradoxes while comprehending their details. He thus began to prepare his eldest son, Bassil, to succeed him by assigning him some tasks in the early 1990s. However, Bassil was killed in a car accident at the beginning of 1994, causing al-Assad Senior to hastily prepare his son Bashar to succeed him instead. Because he knew the extent to which Hariri's, and by extension Saudi Arabia's, influence had reached, and understood the threat that this posed to the equilibrium in Syria, al-Assad decided to remove Hariri from power in Lebanon and to support the trustworthy head of the Lebanese army, Emile Lahoud, as president.

By the spring of 2000, Emile Lahoud had been president of the Lebanese Republic for two years. He had chosen Salim El-Hoss as prime minister who had embarked on a mission of political and economic reform. However, brigadier Ghazi Kenaan, who was close to Rafic Hariri, derailed the reforms. As it later transpired, Kenaan was hoping to succeed then President Hafez al-Assad, and he was pushing for an electoral law that would take Hariri's interests into account. In addition, he was responsible for running the elections of 2000 with the general director of the national security system at the time, brigadier Jamil al-Sayyed, which guaranteed a stunning victory for Hariri and his allies and a crushing defeat for Salim El-Hoss, who became the first prime minister to lose his parliamentary seat in the history of Lebanon. It seemed that a coup was underway against Bashar al-Assad, who had succeeded his father in Syria in July 2000, a month after his death, and this coup would begin in Lebanon. However, support from the 'family' al-Assad and the army, coupled with that of the minister of defence, Mustapha Tlas, secured the ascendancy of Bashar in spite of rumours that Abdel Halim Khaddam aimed at succeeding Hafez al-Assad himself. This would be the last mission that Hafez al-Assad's old friend would

undertake before his retirement. Afterwards, Bashar al-Assad would have to face a series of challenges on the national, regional and international scenes.

The American attack

With the break of the dawn of the new millennium, the Americans had to take a series of crucial decisions that would once and for all put to rest the matter of their undisputed world leadership. They were anxious to ensure that the western shores of the United States would not fall under the influence of China, a rising global power, and to prevent the eastern coast from falling under the influence of Europe. They needed also to placate the hungry minorities of the southern states – Hispanics, African Americans and Asians.

Just as the Second World War helped to create new niches for Germany's increasing population and industry, so the war on terror was necessary to the US as a means of ensuring it could control the Middle East. And just as Germany had used the excuse of 'Polish attacks' on its eastern frontier in September 1939 to justify going to war – attacks that were carried out by German soldiers dressed up as Polish ones – so the US used the attacks of 11 September 2001 on the World Trade Center in New York as an excuse to launch a war to occupy Afghanistan and Iraq.

The war on Afghanistan in the autumn of 2001 was a chance for the US to tighten its grip on the Middle East. It was followed by the invasion of Iraq in March–April 2003. A logical next step would be to topple or undermine the regimes in Iran and Syria in order to fully control the Middle East. The goal of the *coup d'états* staged in Georgia and Ukraine was to control the flanks of the US frontier. The American plan was to establish complete control of the Middle East from the Atlantic Ocean to the Chinese border and therefore to achieve a number of goals: isolating Europe from Africa, blocking any potential agreement between Russia and Europe, preventing Russia from accessing the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, and preventing China from reaching Africa. This was accompanied with the redrawing

of the region's geopolitics, since the American plan for a New Middle East involved the splintering of the region that forms a vital backyard to Israel along sectarian lines: Iraq would be divided into Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite statelets; Syria and Lebanon would be split into Alawi, Christian and Druze statelets after the displacement of the Sunnis and Shiites from the coastal region, the former to the Syrian interior and the latter to the south of Iraq; and two Sunni states would be created in Damascus and Aleppo on the condition that a Druze state extending from Chouf in the west to Hasbaya, the Golan and Jabal al-Druze in the east would serve as a buffer between Israel and those two Sunni states.

The region's map was handed over for revision, and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan decided upon, before the events of 11 September 2001, which was given as the reason for the invasion. Just over a year before, Israel had withdrawn from the south of Lebanon in order to close down the last Arab war front against it. This would deprive the Lebanese Resistance of its *raison d'être* and pave the way for UN Resolution 1559, forged four years later, which would demand the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. A few months after the Israeli withdrawal, in May 2000, the Maronite Patriarchal Council issued a call for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. This coincided with Lebanese parliamentary elections, which were held according to laws framed by ex-prime minister Rafic Hariri and supported by the head of the Syrian security and scouting forces in Lebanon, Ghazi Kenaan. These laws would form the basis for an attack on Lebanese president Emile Lahoud and on Bashar al-Assad's assumption of power, which his now-deceased father had worked so hard to secure. Subsequently, in June 2004, French president Jacques Chirac and American president George W. Bush agreed on dividing their influence in the Middle East, which culminated in the Security Council passing Resolution 1559, which called for the Syrian army's withdrawal from Lebanon.

It was Rafic Hariri who worked in secret with Chirac to issue the resolution.⁶ France by this time – June 2004 – had moved from trying to confront the US to working with it. When it had opposed

US intervention in Iraq in 2003, it had been counting on the Iraqi resistance lasting for many months, which, it calculated, would embarrass the USA and push it to seek France's help to escape the bloodbath.⁷ However, the Americans were able to end combat operations swiftly, after which the US president, George Bush, attempted to isolate Chirac on the international arena.⁸ Chirac was helped, however, by mounting Iraqi resistance to US occupation, which eventually pushed Bush to seek Chirac's aid in an attempt to widen the international alliance and afford the American occupation an international cover. The US was convinced it could benefit from France by including it in its plans for the Middle East in return for a portion of Syria and Lebanon.⁹ Chirac had supported Bashar al-Assad in his attempt to seize power in Syria in 2000, thinking that he could convince him to lift Syria's custodianship of Lebanon and break ties with Iran.¹⁰ Syria's response had been to do all it could to prolong President Emile Lahoud's tenure, and to foil Hariri's efforts to form a government through supporting Omar Karami's instead. However, attacks on Syria were to be unleashed after the assassination of Hariri on 14 February 2005.

Dream of a Christian state

The Maronite Church as well as the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt had access to the American plans. Furthermore, certain influential figures in the Syrian regime were also part of the American project, which explained the close ties between these figures including vice-president Abdul Halim Khaddam, Brigadier Ghazi Kanaan and Lebanese groups in the March 14 coalition. What was surprising to everyone was that General Michel Aoun, who had returned from his 15-year Parisian exile, changed his political position and opposed the American efforts to undermine Hezbollah. Initially, the Church supported the rebellious general because it needed a strong Christian leader to confront the leadership of the other sects. However, the general's agenda differed from that of the Church. Aoun still believed in Lebanon as a country for all its citizens. He was absolutely against

the division of Lebanon and any change in its demographic structure. This set the Church against him, causing it to unleash its protégé, Samir Geagea, as well as other Christian leaders who had gathered under what was called ‘Qornat Shahwan’, against Aoun.

The American project in the region had peaked with the Israeli assault on Lebanon in July 2006. What the US had not counted on was the Lebanese Resistance’s resolve to face and defeat the Israelis. Michel Aoun had played a major role in this by providing Hezbollah with a national dimension through forging an alliance with them after the signing of the famous pact a few months earlier with the chairman of Hezbollah, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, in Mar Mikhael church. This pushed the Maronite Church and leading figures of the March 14 Movement to put the destruction of Michel Aoun as their number one priority. Subsequently, confrontations between Lebanese Forces and Aoun’s supporters were a recurrent theme in Lebanon’s streets and alleys. The most famous incident was the demonstration that followed the sit-in of December 2006 by protestors in downtown Beirut, which witnessed organized assaults by Lebanese Forces on Aoun’s supporters in various areas of Metn, KISRwan and the north, and clashes between the two on 23 January 2007. The sit-in lasted for a year, finally being lifted just a few weeks before the end of the presidency of President Emile Lahoud. Seven months after the end of Lahoud’s term, the factions agreed on General Michel Sulaiman as president of the republic. Sulaiman’s election as president was a victory for the March 14 group, as he secretly supported them. This became evident from the pressure Sulaiman subsequently exerted on Aoun and his supporters, especially during the parliamentary elections of 2009 and the municipal elections a year later. However, the dream of a Christian state and other sectarian states started to dwindle after the events of the 7 May 2008, when Hezbollah and Amal defeated the Future Movement and its allies.

Walid Jumblatt’s secret

The Druze leader Walid Jumblatt was forced to find his own niche in

Lebanon in the wake of the Taif Agreement, the rise of Saudi influence in the region after the collapse of Iraq, and growing talk of a peace process in the Middle East following the breakdown of the Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War. Jumblatt needed to adapt to a sectarian regime that he himself had participated in helping to revive. Therefore, and contrary to what some have suggested, the 'conflict' between Jumblatt's sometimes seemingly contradictory positions and declarations – for example, feudalism and socialism, sectarianism and nationalism – was not due to any confusion or whim but were consistent with looking after the interests of a small sect that was trying to assume a greater role in Lebanon. Walid Jumblatt was clever when he chose to ally himself to the head of the Sunni sect, Rafic Hariri, for the Maronite and Shiite sects were both rural, with a self-contained fanatical dynamic. The Sunnis, though, had formed themselves into a sect almost by default at the end of the civil war, when all the other sects had already drawn their boundaries. Walid Jumblatt had figured this out twenty years before he attempted to read Ibn Khaldoun's *The Introduction*. By allying himself to Hariri, Jumblatt could use Druze solidarity and the Sunni lack of experienced leadership to augment his influence; he not only became one of the constants in the Lebanese equation but also came to play a greater role than the size of his sect warranted. This is why he balked at comparisons with his father; he was to achieve far more than anything Jumblatt Sr ever achieved.

Walid was aware of the American project and knew he was faced with a difficult choice: he could go along with it, retire from the political arena altogether, or make a stand and risk the possibility of assassination. The latter was something that had befallen several others before him, including some of his close friends. For example, in December 2004, the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat had died in mysterious circumstances. A year later, Rafic Hariri was assassinated for reasons that remain unknown and two years after that, the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was executed after being toppled following the American occupation of Iraq in 2003. Jumblatt took the third option, and emerged as the loudest voice against the 'Lebano-Syrian

security system', launching a barrage of criticism against the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. His ultimate aim was to secure an independent state for the Druze.

On 7 May 2008, Walid Jumblatt woke up to a new reality as battles against Hezbollah broke out in Chouf, Baakleen, the Barouk Hills and in the areas surrounding Dayr El Qamar. His allies in the Future Movement had failed in their confrontation with the Amal Movement under the leadership of the Head of the Parliament, Nabih Berri. The Americans and Israelis had also failed him. A year and a half before these clashes, Walid Jumblatt had counted on Israel dealing a crushing blow to Hezbollah during the assault of July 2006. However, to Jumblatt's dismay, Hezbollah not only came out victorious but also emerged with its influence bolstered at Lebanese, regional, and international levels.

Meanwhile, the American project had foundered in Iraq due to Iraqi resistance. It seemed that the plans for the New Middle East and with it the Druze state were doomed to failure. It was necessary, therefore, for Jumblatt to redraw his plans. There was no Druze state on the horizon so he had to settle for his 'normal role' within the Lebanese equation, as the leader of the sect that ranked fourth in Lebanon after the Maronites, Sunni and Shia. Syria would always play a pivotal role in Lebanon, and he had to mend fences with it.

The rubble of a cause

In November 2004, the head of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, died in mysterious circumstances in Paris, leaving behind the rubble of the district building in which the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, had besieged him for two years. Key figures in Fatah like Mahmoud Abbas, Ahmad Qorei, Jibril Rajjoub and Mohammad Dahlan competed among each others over influence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The West Bank and Gaza were being eroded by ever-increasing Israeli settlement. The activities of the Palestinian Authority during the eleven years since Oslo had resulted in an erosion of popular support for Fatah and left it and its factions as helpless

husks. Hamas had emerged as the number one Palestinian faction, winning the legislative elections held in June 2007 and proceeding to form a government. This victory was the Palestinian people's loudest protest against Oslo and subsequent negotiations with Israel, and constituted a resounding rejection of the manner in which the Palestinian Liberation Organization had acted since the 1970s, failing miserably to secure any rights for the Palestinians.

However, Hamas was not part of the pan-Arab liberation movement and it remained a Palestinian opposition movement born of the Muslim Brotherhood that Arafat himself had been part of in the 1950s. This led to Hamas becoming isolated later. Although it succeeded in opposing a coup organized by Mohammad Dahlan against it and its control of the Gaza Strip, Hamas was contained and the Americans and Israelis were able to take advantage of the situation to crush the Palestinian cause, which after 2008 had become divided between a Fatah-controlled West Bank and a Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Fatah's gateway to the world was Amman, already bound by the Wadi Araba Agreement between Jordan and Israel, while Hamas' gateway was Cairo, bound by the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel. This Palestinian fragmentation meant that the Israeli assault of 2009 did not elicit any reaction in the Arab and international arena.

Obama and the economic crisis

The American victory in Afghanistan and, especially, Iraq was inconclusive. Syria and Iran had supported Iraqi resistance and made the American occupation costly. Russia, meanwhile, had backed an ultimately unsuccessful counter-coup against President Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia and had removed Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine. This, in addition to the economic crisis in the USA, was the main reason for the election of Barack Obama as the first African-American president in the history of the USA. The Americans became aware of their limitations under Obama. They therefore pushed for a political agreement with a pro-American

Iraqi government, which would ease the pressure off them so that they could focus on tightening their grip on Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Iran took advantage of American faltering not only to protect its Islamic regime but also to exert its influence in a number of strategic positions, such as in Lebanon through Hezbollah, in Gaza through Hamas, and in Yemen by supporting the Houthis against the Yemeni and Saudi forces. The American situation thus became reminiscent of Hitler's plight after the Battle of Stalingrad. For as the latter lost all hope in reaching the heart of Asia and the Indian Ocean upon his army's surrender on the banks of the Volga, so the Americans came to realize that their dream of an extended Middle East reaching to the Chinese border was impossible. Similarly, just as Hitler had tried to strengthen his position in Eastern Europe in the Battle of Kursk in order to retain some kind of global dominance, so the USA realized that it had to reinforce the Middle East by retaining its control over the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent – namely Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. For that, the USA had to wage a final decisive war against the opposition forces.

The American plan in the region was essentially spelled out in a US National Security Agency report in which the word 'Islam' as a threat was dropped (it had previously been included since 11 September 2001) although it retained al-Qaeda as an enemy that had to be eradicated. US ideologists working according to the dictates of Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington and Daniel Pipes had failed to redraw the region according to their vision, and it was now time for the pragmatists to redefine a policy that would achieve the US goal of monopolizing control over the Middle East. American hegemony over the eastern part of the Middle East was declining, the situation in Afghanistan was not as stable as the Americans wanted, Pakistan was in an awkward situation, while Iran was increasing its influence and rebelling against the Americans. With its 'revolution and Mullahs', the latter was expanding its influence under the banner of an Islamic revolution, and it was this that posed the main obstacle facing the Americans. They had left it too late to prevent it from becoming a major regional power through a military strike. It seems inevitable

that it will eventually become a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In other words, it is not merely Iran per se that is the problem for the US, but what it represents in terms of Chinese and Russian expansion westwards and southwards. If it is too late, though, for a military strike against Iran, it may still be possible to contain it. Saudi Arabia and Egypt had both failed to achieve this.

Turkey to contain Iran

From the sixteenth through to the end of the nineteenth century, Shiite Iran and the Sunni Ottoman Empire reciprocally contained each other. These centuries also saw the rise of Western global domination. Therefore, America reasoned, why should Muslim Turkey not help to contain the current Islamic Revolution of Iran? According to the USA, setting up an Islamic Turkey in the region would counter the Islamism of Iran. Such a Turkey would carry a huge allure for the Sunni Muslims of Syria, the last Arab nation to leave the Ottoman mantle in 1918. In addition, it would prove attractive to the Islamists of Egypt, who consider themselves to be more ancient than those of Saudi Arabia, albeit less so than those of Turkey and Sudan. And here lies the crux of the matter: Sudan had transformed itself into a base from which China could launch itself on a mission to infiltrate the African continent. Chinese tacit support of President Omar Bashir has allowed him to face up to Western pressure. So then, Washington has calculated, since it has failed to topple the Sudanese regime through an international blockade, why not use the Sudanese Islamists, under Hassan Turabi, to block China's way?

In Turkey, new political developments announced a break from the secular legacy established by Mustapha Kemal Atatürk when he established the Turkish Republic during the early 1920s. This break had many causes, the most important of which was the failure of the secularists to convince Europe that Turkey is 'European'. Europe for the Europeans has been limited to those countries the Vatican deems to be 'Christian', despite all the claims of the secularism

of Europe. From the mid-1990s onwards, the sense of loss Turkey has felt over its failure to be admitted into the European Union has diminished the standing of secularists and promoted that of Islamists. The main issue that the Islamists have raised is the importance of embracing Turkey's Islamic heritage and reincorporating it into the Middle East.

It was the Turkish foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, who drew the outlines of the new Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. In his opinion, there were three pillars of Turkish national security. In the current era, Turkey should abandon its customary policy, which it had adopted since the formation of the Republic, of withdrawing behind its borders, and should follow a more dynamic foreign policy.¹¹ Turkey should defend Istanbul and Thrace from the Adriatic. Thus Turkey had to strengthen its ties with Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia, using the former as a base from which to launch Turkish influence into the Balkans.¹² Davutoglu also recognized that successfully defending eastern Anatolia involves safeguarding not only the borders with Armenia and Iran but also those running along the western coast of the Caspian; thus Azerbaijan could form a base from which Turkish influence could infiltrate the Caucasus.¹³ He also believed that the security of eastern Anatolia does not stop at its border with Iraq and Syria but extends to the line from Karkuk and Mosul in the north of Iraq and Syria – a recognition, in other words, that the Middle East forms the backyard of Turkey – and he thus called for his country to play a role in the region.¹⁴

Syria was the gate through which Turkey could return to the Middle East. Ankara used the faltering peace talks between Damascus and Tel Aviv to establish itself as a mediator between Syria and Israel. This was followed by a summit in Damascus between the Islamist Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, and French president Nicolas Sarkozy. Lebanon was one of the hot topics in this summit. Bashar al-Assad warned of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, which angered delegates of the March 14 Movement. Al-Assad seemed to welcome an active Turkish role in Arab affairs which was not appreciated by the Saudis. They were

effectively a call for a Sunni Islam steeped in a Sunni cultural and intellectual legacy such as that envisaged by the scholar Fathi Yakan, as opposed to a fundamentalist Islam, whose most famous proponent was al-Shahhal. Bashar al-Assad's implicit message was of an Islam supported by Turkey facing the Saudi-styled Islam that had dominated the scene for the last thirty years. We can thus understand the reaction of Saudi Arabia's allies in Lebanon. The head of the Future Movement, Saadeddine Hariri, headed towards Tripoli to resolve differences between the Sunnis of Bab El Tabbaneh and the Alawis of Jabal Mohsen, intent on ensuring that future developments should not go against Saudi Arabia's interests. The Saudis were concerned about the possible emergence of a genuine regional competitor for the first time since Gamal Abdul Nasser. And this time the confrontation would not be between an Islamist project and a secular one but between a fundamentalist Saudi project and a Turkish Islamic one that, as well as forming a reconnection with a past heritage, would also offer a vision of a future that would preserve the region's Islamic cultural identity while facing up to the challenges of globalization.

Notes

- 1 Najah Wakim, *Al Ayadi Al Soud* (Beirut: Sharikat Al Matbou'at Lil Tawzi' Wal Nashr, 9th edn 1998), 9–65.
- 2 Ibid., 50–1.
- 3 Ibid., 53.
- 4 See Albert Mansour, *Al Inqilab 'Ala Al Taef* (Beirut: Dar Al Jadid, 1993).
- 5 See Mansour, *Al Inqilab 'Ala Al Taef*, Part II (Beirut: Sharikat El Matbou'at).
- 6 Richard Labivier, *Al Tahawwol Al Kabir* (Baghdad and Beirut: Dar Al Farabi, 2008), 92–3.
- 7 Vincent Nouzille, *Dans le Secret Des Presidents* (Paris: Fayard, 2010), 395–408.
- 8 Ibid., 409.
- 9 Ibid., 444–9.

- 10 Ibid., 450–1.
- 11 Ahmet Davutoglu, Al ‘Omq Al Istratiji (‘Strategic Depth: Turkey’s Position and Role on the International Arena’), trans. Mohammad Thalji and Tarek Abdel Jalil (Doha: Al Dar Al ‘Arabiyya lil ‘Oloum Nashiroon, 2010), 75–81.
- 12 Ibid., 146–50.
- 13 Ibid., 150–5.
- 14 Ibid., 155–8.

Chapter 11

Syria and the Arab Spring

Saeed bin Hilal narrated that Mu'awiya went to pilgrimage (hajj) and entered on lady Aysha then she said to him: 'Oh Mu'awiya! You killed Hujr bin al-Adbar and his companions! By Allah! I heard that some people will be killed at Adra and Allah and the people of heaven will get angry over that.

(Kanz ul Ummal, Volume 13 page 556 Tradition 37511)¹

Containing the Egyptian revolution

During the winter of 2008–2009, the Gaza Strip was subjected to an Israeli military operation aimed at eradicating Hamas, which, with Iranian support, had terrorized Israel. Hamas' armed resistance had impeded Israel's attempts to impose its own conditions for peace on the Palestinians. The Americans had supported Israel's assault on Gaza because they saw Iran's backing of Hamas as a breach of the frontier they were trying to create in order to prevent Chinese and Russian infiltration into the Mediterranean. According to the US geostrategy, it was not permissible to allow Asia, represented by China and Russia, to reach the Mediterranean or any other body of warm water. Iran by this point had secured access to both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. It had been able to access the Mediterranean since the 1980s by virtue of its relationship with Syria and Hezbollah. Its subsequent relationship with Hamas, and the control the latter exerted over the Gaza Strip, strengthened Iran's position in the Mediterranean and allowed it to separate Egypt from Israel. In addition, the revolt of

the Houthis against President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen, and the inability of the Yemeni and Saudi forces to crush this revolt, caused the USA to worry about its influence over the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Iran, and by extension China, could use their positions to bolster their relationship with Sudan and dig deep into the African continent.

Mubarak's Egypt was as worried about Iranian expansion as the USA. The Egyptian regime had backed the US since the days of Anwar Sadat, and intermittent clashes with Israel had merely been the result of Egypt's desire to play a leading regional role through which it could cosy up to the USA. Therefore, Egypt encouraged Israel to strike Gaza – an area of great concern to Egypt since it was adjacent to it – as a means of eradicating the pockets of resistance there. However, what the Egyptian leadership did not take into account was that Israeli strikes on Gaza were also effectively strikes against Egyptian national security, as Gaza had been intimately tied up with Egyptian national security since the dawn of time, as explored in previous chapters. It was from Gaza that the Hyksos had launched their attacks on ancient Egypt. It was in Gaza that the Memluks stopped the Mongols in the Battle of Ain Jaloot. And it was between Gaza and Beersheba that Gamal Abdul Nasser learned his most important lesson, namely that Gaza is Egypt's Achilles' heel.

Egyptian national security had been severely eroded during the eleven years of Anwar Sadat's rule between 1970 and 1981 and during the thirty years of Hosni Mubarak's rule from 1981 to 2011. Over this time, Egyptian influence had shrunk to its lowest ever in the Arab Orient, especially after the beginning of the Somali civil war in the 1990s, a conflict that threatened the security of the African Horn, which is considered to be a vital element of Egyptian national security. That was followed by the threatening of the source of the Nile River after the massacres in Rwanda and Burundi on the banks of Lake Victoria lost the Hutus – allies of the Egyptians and French – their influence over the Tutsis – allies of the Americans and Israelis. There then followed, at Israel's instigation, Eritrea's occupation of the Yemeni island of Haneish Major, which posed another threat to

the security of the Red Sea. Finally, the embargo on Libya during the 1990s threatened Egyptian national security in the west and in North Africa.

On 9 January 2011, a referendum over independence was held in South Sudan. It resulted in a landslide victory for proponents of independence, due to US pressure aimed at reducing Egyptian influence and separating North Africa and the sub-Saharan countries. The next step would be the breakaway of the oil-rich Darfur region from Sudan, followed by the eastern region, which formed an extension of the southeastern region of Egypt. These developments constituted a serious threat to Egyptian national security, especially as they coincided with the countries of the Nile demanding a larger share of its waters, without reference to Egypt or Sudan. This erosion of Egyptian national security was coupled with a degradation in the quality of life of most Egyptians due to the neoliberal economic policies pursued by Jamal Mubarak, son of the Egyptian president, and businessmen close to him. These combined factors led to an eruption of protests on 25 January 2011. The toppling of the Tunisian president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, on 14 January 2011, after popular protests against him, encouraged the Egyptian youth to organize themselves and take to the streets demanding the abdication of Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian revolution was not anticipated by many analysts, even in the USA, and caused much confusion and anxiety in America for several weeks. Egypt had been used as a base for American activity in the region for four consecutive decades, and its incorporation under the American mantle had been instrumental in helping Ronald Reagan to end the Cold War in the West's favour. Gamal Abdul Nasser had declared in 1969 that the fate of the world would be decided on the banks of the Suez Canal.

The USA had to work swiftly to prevent Egypt from leaving its sphere of influence, and adopted several steps to contain the waves of protests. On 11 February, the military council forced the Egyptian vice-president, Omar Sulaiman, to read a declaration announcing the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, something that surprised even Mubarak himself. The military council took over the reins of

power and, in order to control the street, began to organize with the Muslim Brotherhood and other fundamentalist groups lavishly funded by Saudi Arabia. In the meantime, the USA had to work quickly on a regional level to prevent the spread of the 'Egyptian fire' to other surrounding countries as protests broke out in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and Jordan, further threatening American influence in the Middle East. It resorted to the strategy of lighting smaller fires around the main fire to contain it, encouraging 'revolutions' in regions that were considered an extension of Egyptian national security such as Libya, Yemen and Syria. On the day that Mubarak abdicated, demonstrations started in Yemen demanding the resignation of the Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Three days later, demonstrations erupted in Libya followed by interference from NATO. A few days after that, protests broke out in Syria, starting at Deraa. Notably, the Qatari news channel al-Jazeera played a central role in 'supporting these revolutions'. It is well known that this channel is under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood; this has especially been so since 2003 when the bulk of its key figures and managers made known their allegiance to this organization.

The Syrian protests

At the beginning of February 2011, protests erupted in the city of Deraa against the Syrian regime due to mounting domestic problems. The Baath Party under Hafez al-Assad had monopolized political life in an attempt to isolate Syria from international and regional struggles to infiltrate it. To help enforce this, the Syrian regime had relied heavily on its security services, which resulted in widespread corruption and nepotism in the regime. During the days of Hafez al-Assad, the security services were still controlled by the President. After the death of Hafez al-Assad, his son Bashar took control of the country after he had hastily been prepared for managing the various portfolios. However, this crash course naturally resulted in him not being aware of many of the delicate details. Bashar exhibited a willingness to modernize the regime's political structure by alleviating

the security system's stranglehold on public life and by allowing the private sector to take a larger share of the Syrian gross domestic product. Thereafter, political groups and forums demanding reforms began to spread in what was known as the Spring of Damascus between 2000 and 2002. However, these political forums were stifled by the security services at the end of 2002. A second factor was the merging of the interests of the security services with those of a new class of businessmen who benefited from the liberalization of the Syrian economy – which followed an exponential growth curve after 2005 when many of the regime's old guard, such as Abdelhalim Khaddam and Ghazi Kenaan, retired – to launch an unchecked economic liberalization process. The minister of finance, Abdallah Dardari, influenced by Tunisian economic reforms in the era of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who backed this policy.

These economic reforms benefited the urban bourgeois class at the expense of small and medium industrial firms and crafts, especially since they encouraged an import policy that flooded the market with foreign goods and led to many local factories going bankrupt. They also led to a rise in inflation levels, accelerated by the immigration of Iraqis and by incoming capital from the Gulf States, which led to exponential inflation in the price of real estate and apartments and to an increase in living costs that primarily affected the middle and poor classes. The rural poor classes, who were the regime's main pillar, were the most afflicted by this, which led to an increase in migration from the rural areas of al-Hasaka, Qamishli and Deraa to Damascus and to an increase in the number of Syrian workers in Lebanon despite attacks on them by supporters of the March 14 Movement, which was anti-Syrian. Corruption became so widespread that Syria was ranked 51 at the time on the transparency scale.² Protests erupted in Deraa, a southern rural district that had suffered the most from economic liberalization. The protests were localized and were handled by arresting young people who had written anti-regime slogans on walls. They and their parents were treated extremely cruelly by the district's head of security, Atif Najib, President al-Assad's cousin. Afterwards, protests erupted in many coastal and northern cities and towns,

indicative of the social conditions to which the residents of the urban suburbs and rural towns had been reduced due to the country's economic policies coupled with persecution by the authorities. However, the situation remained calm in the main cities such as Damascus and Aleppo, which reflects their satisfaction with the regime's economic policies.

The disturbances in Syria had both a regional and international dimension. Events in Egypt had forced the USA to rearrange its affairs in the region so as to minimize the damage to American strategic interests there. This was the reason why they started to consider the option of supporting the rise of some Muslim fundamentalist groups, mainly the Muslim Brothers. Muslim Fundamentalists had participated in the demonstrations and protests and chanted slogans against minority Druze Christians and Alawis.³ Other demonstrators had shouted sectarian slogans against the Alawis and Christians in an attempt to stir up sectarian violence. Most notable was the role of Sheikh Adnan al-Aaroor in his calls for protests against the regime and for targeting Christians and Alawis.⁴ News spread about the involvement of Saudi Arabia and Qatar in the Syrian unrest, which coincided with their interference in Bahrain to support al-Khalifa – who were facing protests against their rule – and its invitation to Jordan to join the Gulf Cooperation Council in order to bolster its own regime and use Jordan as a base from which to infiltrate the heart of Syria. It is worth remembering here that Deraa and Basra formed a natural extension of the Arabian Peninsula and therefore geopolitical logic dictated that those regions, due to the tribal connections between their people and the tribes of Nejd, would be affected by whoever controlled the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, it transpired that members of the Lebanese March 14 Movement were involved in the events in Syria. Most importantly, the public relations section of Lebanese military intelligence announced the arrest of four Lebanese men who had been caught smuggling weapons into Syria.⁵ Afterwards, a boatload of arms was intercepted on its way from Tripoli to the Syrian coast.⁶ As a result, towns and cities close to the Lebanese border witnessed disturbances. In addition, the Kurds

of Iraq encouraged their brethren in Qamishli, al-Hasaka and al-Bou Kamal to rebel, meaning that these regions witnessed similar unrest.⁷ Additionally, Dayr El Zor, whose residents share familial ties with the people of Mosul, also witnessed demonstrations in which fundamentalists participated. It is well known that Saudi Arabia has considerable influence among the people of Mosul and Anbar, due to familial ties with the tribes of Shammar and Iniza, among others, in Nejd. The American president Barack Obama focused in a speech on the Arab revolutions while announcing that Bashar al-Assad had to 'lead the transformation in his country or resign' and that 'the quelling of the protests may lead to international intervention.'⁸

Turkey was one of nations most strongly affected by what was going on in Syria. It shares an 850 kilometre border with Syria while the east Anatolia region is a natural geopolitical extension of Syria. Turkey was worried that the events in Syria would spread to its own domain, and thus expressed concern about what was happening there and called on the Syrian leadership to adopt a policy of reform. The Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Ahmet Davutoglu, rushed to visit Syria at the start of the crisis to express his country's willingness to assist in the reformation process in Syria.⁹ It is worth mentioning that the first weeks of protests did not witness any noticeable events in Syrian regions and towns close to the Turkish border. However, things began to change in May and June as the Turkish prime minister. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, announced that 'the horrors committed in Syria were inexcusable' and called for al-Assad to drop his brother, Maher, whom he considered as 'responsible for quashing the revolts'. He went on to say that 'if those horrors were to continue, Turkey would not defend Syria in the international arena.'¹⁰ This was followed by Ahmet Davutoglu declaring that al-Assad had one week to start with reforms, otherwise the international community would intervene in Syria.¹¹ According to the strategic plan that Ahmet Davutoglu had drawn up, the line of defence of Anatolia cuts deep into the northern regions of Syria, which explains why Turkey started to talk about forming a 'security zone' in the north of Syria.¹² Events in the north of Syria now rapidly escalated, with Jisr al-Shoghoor

– where armed groups killed 120 security personnel – serving as a clear example. The events of Jisr al-Shoghoor led to the Syrian army intervening through a large military operation that led to thousands of people being driven out into Turkey. Davutoglu's talk of a security zone in the north of Syria mirrored Turgut Ozal's move in the early 1990s to create a security zone in the north of Iraq with the aim of fighting the Kurdish Labour Party.

It was clear that the Turks were looking to play a role in the Arab world by intervening in Syria in a manner consistent with American strategic directives aimed at spreading Turkish influence southwards to connect with Jordan and the Persian Gulf, so that the Mediterranean coast remained closed to any Iranian, Russian or Chinese infiltration. This meshed with the role of France, which continued its traditional drive towards controlling the Syrian coastal region. This would explain the French foreign ministry's call to the United Nations and European Union to impose sanctions on Syrian officials,¹³ a declaration by the British Foreign Office that it was working with the French to impose sanctions on Syrian officials,¹⁴ and the imposition of sanctions by the EU on Syrian officials, including al-Assad himself.¹⁵ Clearly the Turkish and European positions were complementary; the Syrian coastal region from Alexandretta in the north to Naqoor in the south could be a French region of influence connected to Israel, while the Syrian interior from Aleppo in the north to Damascus in the south could be a Turkish region of influence connected to the Saudi sphere of influence in the south, which would therefore seal the region against any Iranian, Russian and Chinese influence.

al-Assad supporters

Opposing the international positions of the US and Europe and the regional positions of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which had played a role in supporting the demonstrations against President Bashar al-Assad, were other regional and international players who confessed their support of the regime. Iran was the primary power that politically and unconditionally backed the regime. Its alliance with Damascus

since the days of Hafez al-Assad had proven to be a great boon for Iran in the region. From the first days of the Islamic Revolution, Hafez al-Assad forged a strong alliance with the head of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, thus breaking the isolation that the US was trying to impose on Iran. This also created a strategic infiltration into the Arab region and afforded Iran an outlook onto the Arab and Islamic worlds and, via Syria, onto the Mediterranean, while the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon afforded it a part in the Arab–Israeli struggle. Undermining Syria at a time when the West was attempting to surround Iran meant that Washington and its allies could tighten their grip on Iran in preparation for isolating it and destabilizing the regime, which would serve the strategic interests of the West in locking China and Russia inside Asia such that they remained prevented from reaching warm waters and the Middle East, in addition to India and Africa. This would explain the announcement of the Iranian foreign ministry that the events in Syria ‘are part of a Western conspiracy to destabilize a government that supports resistance against Israel’.¹⁶ Tehran then expressed its opposition to any foreign intervention in Syrian affairs,¹⁷ and its officials objected to Western accusations that Iran was assisting Syrian security forces in suppressing the demonstrations.¹⁸ Hezbollah Leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah also expressed his support to al-Assad,¹⁹ who recognized that losing Syrian support would mean the destruction of the Islamic Resistance.

The demand of most of the demonstrators that the regime in Syria should fall meant that Russia would lose an important ally in the Middle East. Russia’s relationship with Damascus had formed the cornerstone of Russian strategy in the Middle East since before the era of President Hafez al-Assad and Syria had afforded it a strong base on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, something it had aspired to since the days of Peter the Great. Russia had earlier expressed its anger at NATO ‘deception’ when the latter pushed for an international resolution to protect civilians in Libya from Muammar Qaddafi and then used this as an excuse for military intervention in Libya, which was a severe blow to Russia, whose access to the western Mediterranean was through Tripoli. Therefore, Russia clearly voiced

its intent to oppose any international resolution against Syria. It told Syrian opposition groups that visited Moscow that Russia would oppose any international intervention and any destabilization of the regime there; it also coaxed the opposition to start talks with the Syrian regime. Syria's importance for Russia was due to its being Russia's last foothold in the Middle East, thus preventing the region from becoming a totally Western region. The Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, conveyed Russia's staunch opposition to any discussion of the protests in Syria by the Security Council and any condemnation of the Syrian regime and President Bashar al-Assad.²⁰ Syria's importance for Moscow had doubled ever since the Soviet Union lost Egypt in the 1970s, which would explain the support President al-Assad received in his darkest hour, especially between 1982 and 1984, allowing him to stand fast against the USA and its French, British and Italian allies, who had supported President Gemayel in Lebanon. Losing Syria totally to the West meant that the Middle East would be closed to the Russians and therefore that the US could use Turkey to infiltrate the Caucasus and Central Asia and thus destabilize Russia itself by encouraging separatists in Chechnya, Mongolia and Siberia.

China has been the third supporter of Syria and President Bashar al-Assad. It opposed any international resolution against the Syrian regime. Historically, China has tended to withdraw to within its own borders 'because there is nothing it did not own' and 'it needed nothing from the outside.' Arab and Persian merchants had travelled to China since the days before Christ for trade purposes, but China had only gone beyond its borders on two occasions. The first was when it had fallen under the Mongols, whose desire to open trade routes with the external world pushed China out of its isolation; by using the country's vast resources, the Mongols were able to conquer Asia and secure trade routes between China and central Europe. This resulted in the first instance of Eurasian unity, with the rise of China's economic power. A century and a half after its establishment, as the trade routes dried up, the Mongol Empire broke down into weaker states. The second instance of Chinese adventurism came after the collapse of Mongol Empire in China when the Ming Dynasty took

over its rule. Emperor Zhu Di sent out a naval fleet that sailed the world in 1422 before returning to China. Acting on imperial orders, the fleet was dismantled because 'the world has nothing that China needs' and China returned to its isolation.²¹ This insularity is what gave the Western powers the opportunity to besiege the greatest Asian power and transform it into Asia's 'sick man' in the nineteenth century. Nowadays, China no longer has the luxury of secluding itself from the rest of the world because its industrial policy requires foreign oil and markets for its products.

The fall of the regime in Syria raised the possibility of Iran being besieged and its regime toppled, thus closing the Middle East to China. Furthermore, a naval blockade on China by Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Southeast Asia would make it very difficult for China to venture onto the high seas without American consent. No world power with aspirations of playing an international role would accept its routes being under the control of another power, especially one opposed to it. China's only other connection with the world lies through the Middle East, exactly as was the case with the Mongols who had conquered China in the eighth century. It is through the Middle East that China can reach Africa, which China needs for its rich natural resources. This would explain the good relations between China and Sudan, the former's gateway to Africa.

It was China's Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan, who was the first ruler to try to venture onto the high seas but he had come up against Japan, a natural barricade that spans most of the Chinese coast, thus restricting China to the China Sea and preventing it from accessing the Pacific Ocean. This role is still played by Japan to this day, which is why China needs the Middle East to remain open. For this reason it supported Iran and Syria against Western pressures.

The US invasion of Afghanistan put it in close proximity to the Chinese western frontier and created unrest among the Muslim minority in western China, which created a further incentive for China to make sure that the Middle East does not totally fall under US control, because the USA could then extend its control from there to the western regions of China which has a sizeable Muslim population

concentrated there. This would Syrian independence from the West all the more important, and explains China's foreign ministry declaring that 'Syria is a very important nation in the Middle East and it has to remain stable and all problems have to be resolved internally without any external intervention that would lead to complications.'²²

Like father like son

President Bashar al-Assad benefited from Iranian, Russian and Chinese support in withstanding Western pressure on him. He hurriedly issued a series of decrees aimed at containing his country's internal protests. His advisor, Buthaina Shaaban, announced on 24 March al-Assad's intent to introduce political reforms, which included the end of the state of emergency in effect in Syria since 1963, combating corruption, issuing of new laws that would allow for the creation of parties and give more freedom to the press, increasing salaries in the public sector, attempting to curb unemployment, and introducing a raft of social benefits.²³ This was followed by the Syrian authorities freeing a large number of political prisoners, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood,²⁴ passing a resolution that addressed the problem of the Kurds demanding naturalization since 1960,²⁵ forming a new government under Adel Safar with the intention of reversing the economic liberalization policy started by the government of Mohammad Naji Otari,²⁶ reallowing women wearing the niqab to teach in public schools,²⁷ passing a law that revoked the state security supreme court and another allowing for peaceful demonstration,²⁸ and creating a workgroup to pass a new election law that allowed for more political freedom.²⁹

Externally, al-Assad used the Alawi and Kurdish groups inside Turkey to put pressure on Erdogan. It is estimated that the Kurds in Turkey form 20 per cent of its 80 million inhabitants, these being concentrated in the areas of Diyar Bakr and other regions in the eastern Anadol, while the Alawis are estimated to number around 15 million, including Kurds, Arabs and Turks. Turkey at the time was close to legislative elections, which took place on 10 June and resulted

in the victory of the Justice and Development Party with more than 50 per cent of the electoral vote, 3 per cent higher than it had ever achieved in previous elections. However, this increase was not reflected in the number of seats the party gained in parliament, which went down from 331 to 325. Erdogan needed 330 seats in order to introduce amendments to the constitution. The increased votes his party received came from the Western Taurus region, with its Turkish majority, but he lost a large number of the votes he had received in the elections of 2006 from Kurds and Alawis. Most of the Alawis had voted for the Republican People's Party, the largest opposition party, and the far-right National Movement Party; the former garnered 26 per cent of the votes and the latter around 13.2 per cent, while the number of elected members of the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party rose to 36.³⁰

This outcome was serious because it obstructed Erdogan's efforts to transform the Turkish regime into a presidential one. In addition, the results showed more polarization along regional and ethnic lines within Turkey. In Iraq, resistance operations against US occupation intensified, resulting in the death of fifteen American soldiers, the highest number of mortalities among American troops in three years. As a result, al-Assad appeared more confident and relaxed in his speech to the Syrian parliament on 20 June 2011.³¹

Notes

- 1 'Chapter Four: The callous killing of the Sahaba including Hujr bin Adi (ra) and of other innocent Shias', Shie Pen: Revealing the Truth, <http://en.shiopen.com/comprehensive/muawiya/killing-of-hajr-bin-adi.html>.
- 2 'Transparency and Accountability are Critical to Restoring Trust and Turning Back the Tide of Corruption', Transparency International, http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results.
- 3 'Syria's diverse minorities', BBC, 9 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16108755> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 *Assafir* newspaper, 15 May 2011.
- 6 'Suleiman Hails Army as Questions Rise over UNIFIL's Failure to Intercept Ship Smuggling Arms to Syria', Naharnet, 28 April 2012, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/38436> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 7 *Assafir* newspaper, 18 April 2011.
- 8 'Barack Obama's speech on Middle East – full transcript', *The Guardian*, May 19, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/19/barack-obama-speech-middle-east> (accessed on 25 July 2012).
- 9 'Davutoğlu visits crisis spots on day of whirlwind diplomacy', *Today's Zaman*, April 7, 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=240409 (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 10 William deB. Mills, 'Can Erdogan Save Syria?' MWC News, 14 June 2011, <http://mwcnews.net/focus/editorial/11418-can-erdogan-save-syria.html> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 11 Emine Kart and Ceren Kumova, 'Davutoğlu to deliver harsh message to Damascus', *Today's Zaman*, 8 August 2011, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-253150-davutoglu-to-deliver-harsh-message-to-damascus.html> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 12 'Now is the Time for a Safe Zone in Syria', The Foreign Policy Initiative, 16 October 2012, <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/now-time-safe-zone-syria-0> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 13 Louis Charbonneau, 'EU powers push U.N. council to condemn Syria: envoys', *Reuters*, 25 April 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/25/us-syria-un-idUSTRE73O49Q20110425> (accessed on 25 July 2012).
- 14 *Assafir* newspaper, 27 April 2011.
- 15 *Assafir* newspaper, 23 May 2011.

- 16 'Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson blames conspirators for Syria's protests', *Now Lebanon*, 12 April 2011, <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=260937> (accessed on 25 July 2012).
- 17 'Iran will defend Syria against any possible Military Attacks', Global Research, 16 November 2011, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/iran-will-defend-syria-against-any-possible-military-attacks/27700> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 18 *Assafir* newspaper, 15 June 2011.
- 19 *Assafir* newspaper, 26 June 2011.
- 20 'Lavrov reiterates Russian position against UN Security Council resolution on Syria', RIA Novosti, 28 May 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110528/164288616.html> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 21 Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* (London: Bantam Press, 2003).
- 22 'China against foreign intervention in Syria: FM spokesperson', People's Daily online, 25 May 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7390143.html> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 23 'President al-Assad Issues Legislative Decree Amending Decree No. 40 on Salaries', Syrian Arab News Agency, April 1, 2011, <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/2265/Legislative%20Decree%20No.%2044.pdf> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 24 'Crisis in Syria', International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-syria> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 25 'Syria's Assad grants nationality to Hasaka Kurds', BBC, 7 April 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12995174> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 26 'Assad forms new Syrian government', Aljazeera English, 14 April 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/04/201141414535764169.html> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 27 *Assafir* newspaper, 7 April 2011.
- 28 'Assad officially cancels emergency law', *Albawaba News*, 21 April 2011, <http://www.albawaba.com/main-headlines/assad-officially-cancels-emergency-law> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
- 29 *Assafir* newspaper, 12 May 2011.
- 30 Jürgen Gottschlich, 'The AKP's Disappointing Victory: Erdogan Falls Short of Goal in Turkish Elections', *Spiegel Online International*, 13 June 2011,

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-akp-s-disappointing-victory-erdogan-falls-short-of-goal-in-turkish-elections-a-768175.html> (accessed on 25 July 2012).

- 31 *Assafir* newspaper, 21 June 2011.

Epilogue

Syria, or Greater Syria, has been the field on which three geostrategic players in the Middle East have exerted their influence; namely, Mesopotamia (Iraq), Anatolia (Turkey), and Egypt. The struggle between these three players has always been about control of Syria because whoever could control the whole of Greater Syria could influence the other two geopolitical regions. In early times, the fight for Syria was between the Akkadians and the Egyptians, the Akkadians controlling the north of Syria and the Egyptians the south. Then battles ensued between the Egyptians, the Hittites, and the Medes, the first controlling the southern part of Great Syria, the Hittites the northern part, and the latter the eastern part. Since that time, Syria has been divided into several spheres of influence. The eastern part of Syria has always come under the influence of Mesopotamia or any power controlling it, while the northern part has come under the influence of whichever power controlled Cilicia. Finally, the south of Syria has always been an integral part of Egyptian national security since it has always constituted the gateway to Egypt through which all conquests and occupying forces have entered.

Syria has been united when any two of the three spheres of influence or all three were under the rule of one power, as was the case under the Romans, Byzantines, Umayyads and Abbasids. On the other hand, Syria was divided when the three regions, namely Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, were under three different powers as happened in the days of the Ikhshidids, Byzantines and Buyids during the tenth century and then during the days of Fatimids,

Seleucids and Byzantines during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Notably, Syria lacked an internal dynamism that allowed it to act on its own; it always depended, rather, on conflicts between regional powers and international superpowers that allowed it to adopt a reactionary policy and thus buy time; by pitting one regional power against the other it was able to play a greater role than its size would suggest. This was the case during two periods in Syria's long history. The first was during the rule of the Umayyads, which was established by Mu'awiya Bin Abi Sufyan in the seventh century and saw Syria for a whole century as the centre of the world. The second was during the rule of Hafez al-Assad (1970–2000), who was then able to pass on the presidency to his son, as opposed to Saddam Hussein who was executed with his sons after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, Mu'awiya and Hafez al-Assad had to adopt a Machiavellian form of rule, balancing contradictions within Syria. When the Umayyad caliphs could no longer control those paradoxes, the price they paid for it was the fall of their empire. Similarly, Bashar al-Assad's inability to control the paradoxes between the rural and urban regions, coast and the heartland, north and south and eastern and western regions of Syria paved the way for the major crisis that erupted in the spring of 2011.

In the early first millennium BCE, the Assyrians imposed 'global' hegemony by dominating Syria, which opened up the way to controlling Anatolia and Egypt. The eventual breakdown of their empire led one more time to the rise of three regional powers in the Orient, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Egypt who uselessly fought over Syria. This went on until the advent of the Persians in the seventh century BCE, who extended their dominance over the whole of Syria and then went on to control Egypt and Anatolia, thus creating a 'global' hegemony that lasted for two centuries. In the fourth century BCE, Alexander the Great won the Battle of Ephesus and occupied Syria, which allowed him to occupy Egypt. This allowed him to crush the Persians in the Battle of Gaugamela, which took place on a plain not far from modern-day Mosul and allowed Alexander to extend his dominance to the borders of China and India. In the second century

BCE, the collapse of the Seleucid Empire and the rise of the Parthians in Persia led to the return of international struggle over Syria, which caused instability and division between the Ptolemids in Egypt, the Parthians in Persia and Mesopotamia, and the Seleucids in Anatolia. The Romans did not become a superpower until they occupied Syria, which allowed them to control Egypt and establish a global system that lasted until the early fourth century CE.

Later, the Arab Umayyads and Abbasids were able to impose a world order between the late seventh and mid-tenth century by putting Syria under their total control. The rise of the Buyids in Persia and Iraq in the tenth century, in parallel with the rise of the Fatimids in Egypt and North Africa and with the Byzantine Empire regaining its dynamism under the Macedonian dynasty in the same era, led to Syria falling prey to competition between these three forces. The rise of the Seleucids in the mid-eleventh century and their defeat of the Byzantines in the Battle of Manzikert led to their invasion of Anatolia and Syria, which threatened Fatimid rule of Egypt. The Byzantines, and their Fatimid allies, therefore sought the aid of the Franks to help them against the Seleucids by occupying the Syrian coast for two centuries and thus forming a buffer region between the two. Saladin was only finally able to vanquish the Crusaders in the Battle of Hittin after decades of attempts by Imadeddine Zanki and his son Nouredine to extend their control to central and northern Iraq, occupy Edessa, and make contact with the Roman Seleucids in the Anatolian plains so as to occupy Aleppo and Damascus. Saladin was then able to topple the Fatimids in Egypt and unite the latter with the heart of Syria in one state.

The rise of the Memluks in 1260 and their taking control of Syria established them as guardians of the world's Muslims for two and a half centuries. The Memluks' power only finally waned when the Portuguese circumvented the traditional trade routes coming from India to the Arabian Peninsula and thence to the Mediterranean and Europe. The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope tipped the economic balance of power in favour of the West. However, the rising Ottoman state at the time protected the region from Portuguese and

Spanish infiltration. The Ottomans became the number one world superpower until the first half of the eighteenth century due to their control of Syria which allowed them to control Iraq and reach the Persian Gulf, and then occupy Egypt and extend their control to North Africa, the Red Sea and Yemen. Syria, under the Ottomans, lived in peace and prosperity for three whole centuries until the early nineteenth century.

There were a number of factors behind the weakness of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century, which manifested itself in its defeat against Russia in 1877–1878 and in Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1799. Napoleon realized that his position in Egypt remained precarious until he could conquer Syria, partially or totally. His failure to capture Acre led to the collapse of his Egyptian conquest. As a result, the French realized the importance of Syria, a lesson that had been learned by the Crusaders in the Orient many centuries earlier. The international colonial struggle between the five major European powers manifested itself in the struggle for Syria, especially its coastal region and the adjacent mountains, which led to civil wars in Mount Lebanon and eventually to the formation of the Mutasarift in that region in 1860, which reflected a division of the territorial influence on part of coastal Syria.

The covenant of the Allied forces in the First World War produced a Russian–British–French agreement to split the territory in the Near East between them, with France demanding Syria and Cilicia. Fearful of France controlling the whole of Syria, the British insisted on getting a piece of the pie by carving out the southern part of Syria, i.e. Jordan and Palestine, and putting it under British occupation. The appearance of the USA on the scene, competing for global dominance, resulted in competition with the British, who had already removed the French from the Orient. This competition manifested itself in the USA supporting Egypt and Saudi Arabia against the Hashemites in Iraq and Jordan up until 1952 and in supporting several *coup d'états* in Syria in that period. In addition, the United States allied itself with Israel, which had gained control of parts of southern Syria and supported the Hashemites in Jordan.

The Soviet desire to play a global role pushed them to forge strong relations with Egypt during the rule of Gamal Abdul Nasser, which convinced the latter to establish Union with Syria (1958–1961).

During the reign of Hafez al-Assad, Syria was subject to all sorts of regional and international pressures due to its unique geopolitical position. Al-Assad was very capable of playing on the regional and international conflicts to limit their influence on internal and external Syrian policy, demonstrating a rare talent to balance all these paradoxes and turn them in his favour.

The first decade of the third millennium witnessed an attempt by the USA to impose a world order in its favour. It feared that Russia would, under Vladimir Putin, regain its role on the world stage, and also feared the rise of China as a global power and the crystallization of the EU's international role. Determined to remain the sole superpower, Washington used the attacks of 11 September 2001 to put into effect its plan for dominating the Middle East, which would effectively allow it to separate Europe from Africa and Russia as well as isolating the latter from warm waters and China from the Mediterranean; thus the USA would be in control of the transportation crossroads and the balance of world power. A few weeks after the attacks on New York, the USA occupied Afghanistan as a first step towards establishing a new regional order in the Middle East. The occupation of Iraq served to create a state of shock that would facilitate the imposition of the geopolitical changes that the US desired in the region under the name of creative chaos. The assassination of the Lebanese ex-prime minister, Rafic Hariri, led to a political rebellion against Syria's presence in Lebanon and the former's evacuation soon after. The Americans aimed to induce change in Lebanon and disarm Hezbollah, which would eventually lead to the isolation of the Syrian regime and its downfall as a prelude to changing the regional political map.

France entered the scene after 2004. Having failed to obstruct American plans it deemed it wise to align itself with them. However, despite the shock caused by Hariri's assassination, Syria retained its influence in Lebanon and Hezbollah was able to withstand pressures

to disarm and destroy it, notably during the Israeli assault of July 2006.

The popular uprising in Syria beginning in February 2011 can be attributed to several factors. The economic liberalization policy adopted between 2005 and 2011, led by minister of finance Abdallah Dardari, caused an increase in inflation levels which in turn damaged the interests of the middle classes in the cities and the lower classes in the countryside and caused a great migratory movement from the countryside to the cities. The detrimental effect of this policy was intensified by widespread corruption stemming from the emergence of highly influential people in the regime who shared common interests with the urban bourgeoisie. This undermined the ability of the Syrian regime to face pressures resulting from regional and international changes. The Egyptian revolution and collapse of the Mubarak regime negatively affected the Syrian stability at a time when Turkey was redefining its role in the Arab world, intimating that Syria should fall within its sphere of influence because it forms Turkey's gateway to the Arab region. All these factors led to the disruption of the regional balance that Syria had benefited from since the days of Hafez al-Assad, bringing stability since the 1970s until 2010. It now faced renewed competition between Iran, with its increasing influence in Iraq, and Turkey, with its ambition in the Middle East and US backing.

It was thus not surprising that anti-regime demonstrations started in the southern part of the country – that is, Deraa – which had always been influenced by what was going on in Egypt. Nor was it surprising that fundamentalist Muslims took part in the demonstrations, as these were encouraged to do so by the Saudi heir to the throne, Sultan Bin Abdelaziz, and his son Bandar. The southeastern parts of Greater Syria have always been influenced by events in the Arabian Peninsula, and in modern times this has taken the shape of a fundamentalism that mirrors the Saudi Arabian regime's ideology.

Lebanon has also been a player in recent events in Syria, as some Lebanese parties supported Syrian opposition groups, which is natural from a geopolitical perspective, since the two countries were

one until the early twentieth century, Lebanon being considered part of Greater Syria alongside Palestine and Jordan. Furthermore, because Lebanon shares a long border with Syria, interaction between the two countries is normal. Lebanon has always been a gateway through which to interfere in Syrian affairs since the former was created in 1840 by token of the Dual Qaimaqamiyya then the Mutasarrifiyyah systems. Nowadays, Lebanon appears to be the gateway through which France aspires to dig its heels into the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

Turkey initially expressed concern regarding the events in Syria only to pressurize the regime later due to American pressure on Ankara to act. The USA wants Turkey to play the role that the Ottoman Empire had played in the nineteenth century, when it served as a buffer state between Russia and warm waters (the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean), which preserved British interests. The USA, after having inherited the British strategy, tried to control the Middle East to create a barrier between Europe and Africa on the one hand and Europe and the Indian Ocean on the other. It has adjusted its policy to give Turkey a role in the Middle East so that Iranian influence, and that of Russia and China by extension, can be contained. Turkey agreed to play this part as it offers an opportunity for it to fulfil its new strategic directives outlined by the foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu in his book *The Strategic Depth*. In this book, Davutoglu observes that Turkey and the USA are in agreement concerning the three centres that interest it – namely, the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Arab world. Iran views this agreement as a threat to its interests and an attempt to isolate it in case the Syrian regime should fall, so it has attempted to support the latter. Russia and China have followed suit, fearing the fall of the whole of the Middle East under US hegemony should the regime in Syria fall and be replaced with an Islamic regime that falls into line with the redrawing of the political geography of Syria and the whole region. The USA wants to hand the running of Arab countries to ‘moderate’ Islamists shaped after the Turkish example, so that they will stand up against increasing Iranian influence – something that Saudi Arabia has found itself impotent to do.

The 'Syrian Spring' was, at least in part, a struggle between the superpowers and regional powers for the heart of the Middle East shaped by the United States' desire to impose full control on Syria and thus establish a world order that maintains it as the number one power in the world. The USA knows that whoever controls Syria can tighten their grip on Iraq, Turkey and Egypt, which are all connected by the former. Whoever controls those three geopolitical regions can exert their influence on the whole of the Middle East. And whoever does that can control the world.

Bibliography

Resources in Arabic

- Abbas, Mahmoud, *Tariq Oslo, Muwaqqi' Al Ittifaq Yarwi Asrar Al Mufawadat* (Beirut: Sharikat Al Matbu'at, 4th edn 1995).
- Abu Khalil, Joseph, *Qissat Al-Mawarina fil Al-Harb*.
- Agri, Nizar, 'Al Ittifaq Al Israili Al Turki Li Al Ta'awon Al 'Askari wa Al Amni', *Shououn Al Awsat* 62, May 1997.
- Al 'Asli, Bassam, 'Al Dawr Al Rousi Al Oropi fi Al Taswiya Al Silmiya', *Al Difa' Al 'Arabi*, November 1998.
- Al 'Asli, Bassam, 'Al Tahalof Al Turki Wa Ab'adih', *Al Difa' Al 'Arabi*, August 1998.
- Al Din Dillo, Bourhan, *Jazirat Al 'Arab Qabl Al Islam, Parts 1–2*, Beirut: Al Farabi, 1989.
- Al Ghanouchi, Rached, *Afaq Al Harb wa Al Salam wa Dawr Al Harakat Al Islamiya fi Filastin*.
- Al Khansa, Afaf Sobhi, *Al Tanafus Al Inglizi Al Faransi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Qomati, 2010).
- Al Rubay'i, Fadel, *Al Masih Al 'Arabi, Al Nasraniya fi Al Jazira Al 'Arabiya Wal Sira' Al Bizanti Al Farisi* (Beirut: Riad Al Rayyes, 2009).
- Al Sayegh, Yusuf, 'Dalalat Al Tahawwolat Al Jawhariya fi Majmou'at Al Buldan Al Ishtirakiya Al Oropiyya Bil Nisbati Ila Al Watan Al 'Arabi wa Qadiyyat Filastin', *Al Mustaqbal Al 'Arabi* 150, August 1991.
- Al Sayyad, Fouad Abdel Mo'ti, *Mouarrekh Al Maghoul Al Kabir Rashid Al Din Fadl Allah Al Hamazani* (Cairo: Dar Al Kitab Al 'Arabi).

- Alchti, Jawad, 'Al Asad Yaqbal Wa'd Bush', *Falastin Al Thawra* 855, 4 August 1991.
- Amin, Samir, 'Ba'da Harb Al Khalij, Al Haymana Al Amirkiya Ila Ayn?' *Al Mustaqbal Al 'Arabi*, April 1993.
- Awad, Mahmoud, 'Mafahim Al Taswiya Al Israiliya: Jouhoud Hathitha Li Fak Al Irtibat Bayna Adla' Al Muthallath Al Tarikhi: Misr, Souriya wa Al Sou'oudiya', *Al-Hayat*, 24 December 1996.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *Ruq'at Al Shataranj Al Kubra*, trans. Amal Al Charfi (Amman: Al Ahliya Lil Nashr, 1991).
- Chandar, Jinkiz, 'Al Taqarub Al Israili Al Turki', *Shououn Al Awsat* 51, April/May 1996.
- Cohn, Larsen, 'Rousiya Tatahaddar Li La'b Dawr fi Al Sharq Al Awsat', *Al Israa* 9, October 1995.
- Dajjani, Hisham, 'Igthiyal Rabin wa Afaq Al Salam Al Souri Al Israili', *Al-Hayat*, 26 November 1995.
- Davutoglu, Ahmet, *Al 'Om q Al Istratiji, Mawqi' Turkiya wa Dawroha fi Al Saha Al Dawliya (Strategic Depth: Turkey's Position and Role on the International Arena)*, trans. Mohammad Thalji and Tarek Abdel Jalil (Doha: Al Dar Al 'Arabiya Lil 'Oloum Nashiroon, 2010).
- Dergham, Raghida, 'Rousiya wa Baritania fi 'Amaliyat Al Salam', *Al-Hayat*, July 1997.
- Diab, Mohammad Zuheir, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Souriya Al Turkiya: Husn Jidar aw 'Adawa', *Majallat Al Dirasat Al Falastiniya* 28, Autumn 1996.
- Gurkan, Ihsan, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israiliya Al Turkiya wa Mufawadat Al Salam fi Al Sharq Al Awsat', *Al Nahj*, 1993.
- Haykal, Mohammad Hasanein, 'Salam Al Awham: Oslo ma Qabloha wa ma Ba'doha' (Cairo: Dar Al Shuruq, 4th edn, November 1996).
- Hilou, Abdallah, *Sira' Al Mamalik Fi Al Tarikh Al Souri Al Qadim, Ma Bayn Al 'Asr Al Soumari Wa Souqout Al Mamlaka Al Tadmouriyya* (Beirut: Bissan, 1999).
- Ismail, Mohammad Zakariya, 'Al Nizam Al Dawli Al Jadid Bayna al Wahm wal Khadi'a', *Al Mustaqbal Al 'Arabi* 143, January 1991.

- Ismail, Mohammad Zakariya 'Al Hawiya Al 'Arabiya fi Mowajahat Al Salam Al Israili', *Al Mustaqbal Al 'Arabi* 190, December 1994.
- Ivanov, Nikolai, *al-Fath al-Outhmani Lil Aqtar al-Arabiya 1516–1574* (Beirut: Farabi, 2004).
- Ja'far, Qassem Mohammad, *Souriya wal Ittihad Al Sovieti, Dirasa fi Al 'Ilaqat Al 'Arabiya Al Sovieti* (London: Dar Riad Najib Al Rayyes, 1987).
- Kayyali, Majed, 'Israil wa Turkiya wa Souriya: Siyasat Al Ihtiwaa Mouqabel Siyasat Al Taqarub Wa Da'm Washington', *Al-Hayat*, July 1997.
- Labiviere, Richard, *Al Tahawwol Al Kabir* (Baghdad and Beirut: Dar Al Farabi, 2008).
- Mahjoub, Omar, 'Masarat Al Taswiya Ba'da Madrir wa Al Mutaghayyirat Al Israili Al Lubnani', *Shououn Al Awsat* 58, December 1996.
- Majid, Wahid Abdel, 'Israil wal Mofawadat Al Jariya', in Ilwi Mustafa (ed), *Al Mufawadat Al Arabiya Al Israiliya wa Mustaqbal Al Salam fi Al Sharq Al Awsat* (The Sixth Conference of Political Sciences, Cairo, 1994).
- Mansour, Albert, *Al Inqilab 'Ala Al Taef* (Beirut: Dar Al Jadid, 1993).
- Mauratinos, Miguel Angel (interview), *Al Wasat* 262, 3 February 1997.
- Miguel Angel Mauratinos (interview), 'Souriya wa Israil Touridan Al Salam wa Lakinnahoma La Ta'rifan Kayfa Tatahawaran', *Al Wasat* 262, 3 February 1997.
- Nassar, Salim, 'Kayfa Wazzafat Amirka Al Khatar Al Irani Li Hal Mashakel Al Infisal Al Dakhili: Al Tahaluf Al Turki Al Israili Yo'attil Mufawadat Al Salam Ma' Souriya', *Al-Hayat*, 17 May 1997.
- Nasser, Gamal Abdul, *Falsafat Al Thawra* (Cairo: Bayt Al 'Arab Lil Tawthiq, 1996).
- Nixon, Richard, 1999: *Victory without War*, (London: Pocket Books, 1989).
- Nur Al Dir, Mohammad, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israiliya Al Turkiya, Al Marahel, Al Dawafe' wal Afaq', *Al Difa' Al Watani*, October 1997.

- Ostrovsky, Victor, 'Tasribat Li Taqrir Al Lajna Touqaddem Tabrirat Qawiya Li Tawato Doubbat Al Shabak fi Ightiyal Rabin', *Taqrir Washington 'An Shuoun Al Sharq Al Awsat* 16, no. 5, January/February 1998.
- Peres, Shimon, *Ma'rakat Al Salam, Yawmiya Shimon Peres*, trans. 'Ammar Fadel and Malik Fadel (Amman: Al Ahliya Lil Nashr wal Tawzi', 1995).
- Randal, Jonathan, *Harb Al Alf 'Am fi Lubnan*, trans. Fandi Al Sha'ar (Beirut: Dar Al Mourouj, 1984).
- Report, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israiliya Al Turkiya: Al Zira'a wa Al Siyaha wa Al Akrad', *Shououn Turkiya* 9, Autumn 1993.
- Report, 'Al 'Ilaqat Al Israiliya Al Turkiya', *Shououn Turkiya* 49, 1994.
- Report, 'Tchetin fi Israil, Marhala Jadida fi Al Tawafoq wa Al Ikhtilaf', *Shououn Turkiya* 10, Winter 1994.
- Sara, Fayez 'Souriya wa Rousiya, 'Awdat Al Rouh', *Al Sharq Al Awsat* 31, July 1994.
- Sayegh, Nasri, *Abdul Hamid Karami, Rajul Liqadiyya* (Beirut: All Prints, 2011).
- Schiffer, Shimon, *Amaliyat Kurat Al thalj-Asrar Al Ghazou Al Israili Li Lubnan*, trans. Kamil Dagher, (Beirut: Dar al Nidal, 1985).
- Schlaim, Avi 'Ittifaq Oslo', *Majallat Al Dirasat Al Falastiniya* XXIII, no. 3, Spring 1994.
- Seale, Patrick, *Al Assad, Al Siraa Ala Al Sharq Al Awsat* (Beirut: Al Muassassa Al Arabiya Lil Dirassat Wal Nashr, 1987).
- Townsend, Cyril, "Amaliyat Al Salam wa Al Dawr Al Oropi", *Al-Hayat*, 19 July 1997.
- Vilonik, Alexander, 'Al Masaleh Al Iqtisadiya Al Rousiya fi Al Sharq Al Awsat', *Majallat Al Dirasat Al Falastiniya* 26, Spring 1996.
- Wakim, Najah, *Al Ayadi Al Soud* (Beirut: Sharikat Al Matbou'at Lil Tawzi' Wal Nashr, 9th edn, 1998).
- Yamine, Michel, "Awdat Al Dawe Al Rousi Ila Al Hiwar Al Janoubi Al Sharqi", *Shououn Al Awsat* 63, July 1997.
- Zaydan, Jurji, *Al 'Arab Qabla Al Islam* (Beirut: Dar Al Hayat).

Resources in French

- Abdel Fadil, Mahmud, 'Reconstruire le Proche-Orient, une coopération économique déséquilibrée en faveur d'Israël', *Le monde diplomatique*, August 1994.
- Achcar, Gilbert, 'Les Nations-Unies au fil des objectifs américains, des organisations mondiales', *Le monde diplomatique*, October 1995.
- Aiguirve, Marciano, 'Une alliance en quête d'ennemi: l'OTAN au service de quelle sécurité?' *Le monde diplomatique*, April 1996.
- Algazy, Joseph, 'Quarante cinq ans après Hiroshima, l'arsenal israélien sort du brouillard', *Le monde diplomatique*, January 1991.
- Algazy, Joseph, 'Blocage des négociations, pressions américaines: la Paix, enjeu des élections en Israël', *Le monde diplomatique*, June 1992.
- Arronson, Geoffrey, 'Nouvelles espérances persistantes inquiétude au Proche-Orient, Israël peut-il renoncer à l'arme nucléaire?' *Le monde diplomatique*, October 1992.
- Broucke, Jeanne, *L'Empire arabe D'Ibn Saoud* (Brussels: Librairie Falk Fils, 1929).
- Cassen, Bernard, 'Accélérer la mise en place d'une Europe sur mesure', *Le monde diplomatique*, October 1994.
- Claude, Julien, 'Amère victoire', *Le monde diplomatique*, August 1992.
- Corm, Georges, 'Alors que résistent de nombreux contentieux: Illusoire intégration au Proche-Orient', *Le monde diplomatique*, March 1996.
- Dagher, Carole, 'Syrie-Liban: Les jeux ne sont pas encore faits', *Confluences méditerranées* 9, Winter 1994.
- Dan, Leon, 'Israël: une nouvelle donnée', *Confluences méditerranéennes* 20, Winter 1996–1997, 99–106.
- Decarroy, Jacques, 'Au nom de la démocratie et du marché, la chevauchée américaine pour la direction du monde', *Le monde diplomatique*, November 1993.
- De la Gorce, Paul-Marie, 'Négociations dans l'impasse, nouveaux rapports de force, la défense israélienne en état d'alerte', *Le monde diplomatique*, September 1990.

- De la Gorce, Paul-Marie, 'Bilan d'une épreuve de force', *Le monde diplomatique*, August 1991.
- De la Gorce, Paul-Marie, 'Comment préserver l'hégémonie? Washington et la maîtrise du monde', *Le monde diplomatique*, April 1992.
- De la Gorce, Paul-Marie, 'Le vieux continent face aux nouvelles crises de l'Est, l'OTAN et la prépondérance des États-Unis en Europe', *Le monde diplomatique*, March 1993.
- De la Gorce, Paul-Marie, 'Washington et la nouvelle donnée, construire la paix au Proche-Orient', *Le monde diplomatique*, October 1993.
- De La Gorce, Paul- Marie, 'Un tournant occulté, retour honteux de la France dans l'Otan', *Le monde diplomatique*, January 1996.
- De la Gorce, Paul-Marie, 'Nouveaux défis au Proche Orient, guerre au Liban, élections en Israël', *Le monde diplomatique*, June 1996.
- De Loge, Olivier, 'Regain d'activisme dans le Golf, illusoire sécurité collective sans l'Irak et l'Iran', *Le monde diplomatique*, February 1993.
- Duby, Georges, *Histoire de la France* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1988).
- Elezzi, Ghassan, 'De la paix en Galilée à la relance de la guerre civile, quand l'armée israélienne "sauvait" le Liban', *Le monde diplomatique*, June 1992.
- Evron, Baas, 'Réaménagement régional et destins du nationalisme au Proche Orient, sionisme et judaïsme encore plus irréconciliables?' *Le monde diplomatique*, December 1992.
- Gresh, Alain, 'Modeler dans la guerre un ordre de paix au Proche-Orient', *Le monde diplomatique*, February 1991.
- Gresh, Alain, 'Les États-Unis fortifient leur emprise militaire, regain d'activisme dans le Golf', *Le monde diplomatique*, February 1993.
- Gresh, Alain: 'Quel ordre régional au Proche-Orient? A pas comptés, la Syrie sur le chemin de la paix', *Le monde diplomatique*, April 1995.
- Haghigat, Chapour, 'Comment les États-Unis avaient prévu d'écraser l'Irak: les dessous de la guerre du Golfe', *Le monde diplomatique*, April 1992.

- Halimi, Serge: 'Quel ordre régional au Proche-Orient? Israël plus que jamais, enfant chéri de l'Amérique', *Le monde diplomatique*, May 1991.
- Hallaq, Boutrous, 'Prophétisme et barbarie, une voix dissidente en Israël', *Le monde diplomatique*, July 1995.
- Kebardjian, Gérard, 'Contre les douteux reculs du libre échange, la Méditerranée, horizon naturel de l'Europe', *Le monde diplomatique*, November 1995.
- Kapeliouk, Amnon, 'Laborieux remodelage de l'ordre régional au Proche-Orient, le gouvernement de m. Rabin peut-il conclure la paix?' *Le monde diplomatique*, May 1994.
- Kapeliouk, Amnon, 'Le gouvernement de M. Netanyahu contre la paix', *Le monde diplomatique*, July 1996.
- Kassir, Samir, 'Au Liban, fragile domination syrienne', *Le monde diplomatique*, March 1991.
- Kassir, Samir, 'Guerre au Liban, élections en Israël: une aussi bonne frontière', *Le monde diplomatique*, June 1996.
- Klairs, Michael T., 'Parler de paix en vendant des armes: Le Golf frontière avancée de la sécurité américaine', *Le monde diplomatique*, January 1995.
- Klane, Michael T., 'Priorités contradictoires dans un monde sans repère: M. Clinton en quête d'une nouvelle vision diplomatique', *Le monde diplomatique*, February 1993.
- Kodmani- Darwich, Bassma, 'Le prix à payer pour l'intégration d'Israël dans la région', *Confluences méditerranées* 26, Summer 1998.
- Lancry, Yehuda, 'Entretien avec l'ambassadeur israélien à Paris. Propos recueillis par Régine Dhoquois Cohen. Le processus de paix est irréversible', *La revue d'études palestiniennes* 13, Winter 1994.
- Lapitz, Pierre, 'Le Gatt contre l'Europe, un instrument de l'hégémonie américain', *Le monde diplomatique*, November 1993.
- Laurens, Henri, 'Un labyrinthe de contradictions, les atouts de l'hégémonie américaine au Proche-Orient', *Le monde diplomatique*, July 1991.

- Laurens, Henri, 'Pourquoi Ryad préfère le parapluie américain?' *Le monde diplomatique*, August 1992.
- Laurens, Henri, *Le retour des exilés, la lutte pour la Palestine de 1869 à 1997* (Paris: édition Robert Laffont, 1998).
- Laurens, Henri, *L'Orient Arabe, Arabisme et Islamisme de 1798 à 1945* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2nd edn, 2000).
- Laurens, Henri, *L'Orient Arabe de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2001).
- Laurent, Annie and Antoine Basbous, *Guerres secrètes au Liban* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).
- Laurent, Eric, *La Guerre de Bush, Les secrets inavouables d'un conflit* (Paris: Plon, 2003).
- Morris, Benny, 'Tensions avec Washington, poursuite de la colonisation, Israël s'interroge sur ses choix', *Le monde diplomatique*, April 1992.
- Najimeh (Interview with Dr Elias Najimeh, Syrian ambassador in France), 'Pour la Syrie, la paix est un choix stratégique', *Proche Orient* 241, April 1998.
- Nouzille, Vincent, *Dans le Secret Des Presidents* (Paris: Fayard, 2010).
- Rouleau, Eric, 'Comment les fractures et surenchères ont affaibli le monde arabe', *Le monde diplomatique*, October 1993.
- Sarkis, Nicolas, 'Le pétrole du Golf toujours plus convoité brise toute résistance au Moyen-Orient', *Le monde diplomatique*, November 1994.
- Thobie, Jacques, 'De l'Atlantique aux confins de la Perse: les frontières brûlantes cicatrices des partages coloniales', *Le monde diplomatique*, November 1990.
- Toinet, Marie-France, 'M. Bush, seul décideur', *Le monde diplomatique*, February 1991.
- Toinet, Marie-France, 'l'Europe désordonnée par le nouveau protectionnisme américain, le Gatt c'est l'Amérique d'abord', *Le monde diplomatique*, April 1993.
- Verrier, Michel, 'Alliance avec Israël, crise du pouvoir en Turquie', *Le monde diplomatique*, June 1996.

- Vidal, Dominique, 'Troublante normalisation pour la société israélienne, sur fond d'attentats et de bombardements', *Le monde diplomatique*, May 1996.
- Warchawski, Michel, 'Sur fond d'occupation et de crise morale et économique, les équivoques de la victoire travailliste en Israël', *Le monde diplomatique*, July 1992.
- Zvilli, Nissim, 'La paix risque de créer des problèmes sociaux en Israël', *L'arclu* 434, November 1993.

Resources in English

- Abisaab, Rula Jurdi, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).
- Ajami, Fouad, 'The End of Pan Arabism', *Foreign Affairs* 11, no. 2, 1978–1979.
- Akins, James E., 'The New Arabia', *Foreign Affairs* 70, Summer 1991.
- Al Nasrawi, Abbas, 'US Foreign Policy in the Middle East' *Arab Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 1, Winter 1989.
- Alexander, Edgar, 'Russian Messianism and the Middle East', in Ernest Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952).
- Allashtal, Saleh (Interview with ambassador), 'The Gulf Crisis, the UN and the World Order', *Journal of Palestine Studies* XX, no. 3, Spring 1991.
- Al Assad Abou Khalil, 'Syria and the Arab–Israeli Conflict', *Current History*, February 1994.
- Atherton, Alfred Leroy, 'The Shifting Sands of the Middle East Peace', *Foreign Policy* 83, Spring 1992.
- Bandov, Doug, 'Avoiding War', *Foreign Policy* 89, Winter 1992–1993.
- Bar Illan, David, 'Israel after the Gulf War', *Commentary*, May 1991.
- Bar Illan, David 'Egypt against Israel', *Commentary*, September 1995.
- Batatu, Hanna 'Syria's Muslim Brethren', *Merip Reports*, November/December 1982.

- Batatu, Hanna, 'Some Observations on the Social Roots of the Syrian Political Elite', *The Middle East Journal* XXV, Summer 1991.
- Batatu, Hanna, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of its Lesser Rural Notables, and their Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- Baugh, Daniel, *The Global Seven Years War 1754–1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (Harlow: Pearson, 2011).
- Ben-Meir, Alon, 'The Israeli–Syrian Battle for Equitable Peace', *Middle East Policy* 1, 1994.
- Ben-Meir, Alon, 'Israel and Syria: The Search for a Risk Free Peace', *Middle East Policy* 1–2, September 1995.
- Beres, Louis René Shoval Zalman, 'Golan Demilitarization Would Not Work', *Foreign Affairs*, November 1995.
- Boll, Michael M., *National Security, Power and International Relations* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988).
- Bulloch, John, *Final Conflict: The War in Lebanon* (Century Publishing, 1983).
- Callahan, Patrick, 'Commitment', in Patrick Callahan, Linda Brady and Margaret G. Herrman (eds), *Prescribing Foreign Policy Behavior* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982).
- Chalala, Elie, 'Syrian Policy in Lebanon, Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means', *Journal of Arab Affairs* 4, no. 1, 1985.
- Church, Georges, 'Does Land Still Buy Security?' *Time*, April 1991.
- Cohen, Eliot A., 'Israel after Heroism', *Foreign Affairs* 6, November/December 1998.
- Crowley, Roger, *1453, the Holy War for Constantinople and the Clash of Islam and the West* (New York: Hyperion, 2005).
- Crowley, Roger, *Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Centre of the World* (London: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009).
- Deeb, Marius, *Party Politics in Egypt: the Wafd & its Rivals, 1919–1939* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979).
- Devlin, John, *Syria: Modern State in an Ancient Land* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983).

- Diab, Muhammad Zuhayr, 'Syrian Security Requirements in a Peace Settlement with Israel', *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 4, Summer 1995.
- Dickey, Christopher, 'Assad and His Allies, Irreconcilable Differences', *Foreign Affairs* 66, Autumn 1987.
- Drysdale, Alasdair, 'The Syrian Political Elite, 1966–1976: A Spatial and Social Analysis', *Middle Eastern Studies* XVII, January 1981.
- Drysdale Alasdair, 'The Assad Regime and its Troubles', *Merip Reports*, November/December 1982.
- Drysdale, Alasdair and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1991).
- Eisenstadt, Michael, *Arming for Peace? Syria's Elusive Quest for Strategic Parity* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992).
- El Baz, Osama, 'Expect an Arab–Israeli Peace in Two Years' (Interview with Daniel Pipes), *Middle East Quarterly*, December 1997.
- El Gindy, Khaled, 'Aipac 1995: Politics and Priorities', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, Summer 1995.
- Faith, Douglas J., 'Land for No Peace', *Commentary*, June 1994.
- Faith, Douglas J., 'Withdrawal Process not Peace Process: The Tunner's Logic of Israel's Negotiations', *Middle East Quarterly*, March 1996.
- Faksh, Mahmud, 'The Alawi Community of Syria, a New Dominant Political Elite', *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, April 1984.
- Ferguson, Niall, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).
- Fuller, Graham E., 'Moscow and the Gulf War', *Foreign Affairs* 70, Summer 1991.
- Gerges, Fawaz A., 'Regional Security after the Gulf Crisis: The American Role', *Journal of Palestine Studies* XX, no. 4, Summer 1991.
- Glinot, Louis, 'And in this Death They were Divided', *Midstream* 24, no. 1, January 1998.

- Gold, Dore, 'Where is the Peace Process Going?' *Commentary*, August 1995.
- Gottschlich, Jürgen, 'The AKP's Disappointing Victory: Erdogan Falls Short of Goal in Turkish Elections', *Spiegel Online International*, 13 June 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-akp-s-disappointing-victory-erdogan-falls-short-of-goal-in-turkish-elections-a-768175.html> (accessed on 25 July 2012).
- Gran, Peter, *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996).
- Gvodarzi, Jubin: 'Syria's Quest for Security', *Middle East International* 561, no. 24 October 1997.
- Hadar, Leon T., 'The 1992 Electoral Earthquake and the Fall of the Second Republic', *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 4, Autumn 1992.
- Hamilton, Lee, 'Challenges for the United States Policy in the Middle East', *Middle Eastern Journal* 43, no. 1, Winter 1989.
- Hanna, John P., 'At Arms Length: Soviet–Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era' (Washington, DC: Washington institute for Near East Studies, 1989).
- Harris, William, 'Syria in Lebanon', *Merip Reports*, July/August 1985.
- Haynes, Jeffrey, 'Politics, Identity and Religious Nationalism in Turkey: From Ataturk to the AKP', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 3, 312–27, June 2010, 314.
- Heikal, Mohamed H., *Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (New York: Arbor House, 1987).
- Hermann, Richard, 'Russian Policy in the Middle East: Strategic Change and Tactical Considerations', *Middle East Journal* 84, no. 3, Summer 1994.
- Hinnebusch, Raymond A., 'Syria: The Politics of Peace and Regime Survival', *Middle East Policy* 4, April 1995.
- Hinnebusch, Raymond, 'Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian Israeli Peace Negotiations', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 101, Autumn 1996.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Revolution, Europe 1789–1848* (London:

- Abacus, Vintage Books, 1962).
- Hopwood, Derek, *Syria 1945–1986: Politics and Society* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).
- Hughes, Lindsey, *Peter the Great: A Biography* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004).
- Human Rights Watch, *Syria Unmasked* (Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Press, 1991).
- Inbar, Efraim, 'Israeli Negotiations with Syria', *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 4, Summer 1995.
- Jackh, Ernest 'The Geostrategic Uniqueness of the Middle East', in Ernest Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952).
- Jankowski, James, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2001).
- Jansen, Michael, *The Battle of Beirut: Why Israel Invaded Lebanon* (London: Zed Press, 1982).
- Jarbawi, Ali, 'The Triangle of Conflict', *Foreign Policy* 1000, Autumn 1995.
- Jensen, Lloyd, *Explaining Foreign Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1982).
- Karawan, Ibrahim A., 'Arab Dilemmas in the 1990's: Breaking Taboos and Searching for Signposts', *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 3, Summer 1994.
- Karsh, Efraim, *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Assad Years* (London: Chaltan House Papers; Routledge, 1988).
- Kienle, Eberhard, *Baath vs Baath: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 3rd edn, 1993).
- Kirsh, George Klay Jr, 'Western Imperialism in the Middle East: The Case of the United States Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 1, Winter 1992.
- Lesh, Ann Mosely, 'Contrasting Reactions to the Persian Gulf Crisis: Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the Palestinians', *Middle East Journal* 45, no. 1, Winter 1991.

- Lewis, Bernard, *The Arabs in History* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001).
- Lewis, Bernard, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect In Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
- Ma'oz, Moshé, 'The Emergence of Modern Syria', in Moshé Ma'oz and Evner Yaniv (eds), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).
- Ma'oz, Moshé, *Assad the Sphinx of Damascus: A Political Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988).
- Ma'oz, Moshé, 'Syrian-Israeli Relations and the Middle East Peace Process', *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 3, 1992.
- Ma'oz, Moshé and Evner Yaniv, 'On a Short Leash, Syria and the PLO', in Moshé Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv (eds), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).
- Mackey, Sandra, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1989).
- Mahler, Gregory, 'Israel's New Electoral System: Effects and Politics', *Meria Reports* 2, July 1997.
- Makovsky, David, 'Time is Running Out for a Deal with Syria', *Jerusalem Post*, 30 September 1994.
- Marcus, Jonathan, 'Toward a Fragmented Policy? Politics, the Peace Process, and the 1996 Election', *The Washington Quarterly* 19, no. 4, Autumn 1996.
- Marr, Phebe, 'The United States, Europe and the Middle East: An Uneasy Triangle', *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 2, Spring 1994.
- Mclaurin, R. D., Muhammad Mughisuddin and Abraham Wagner, *Foreign Policy Making in the Middle East: Domestic Influences on Policy in Egypt, Iraq and Syria* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987).
- McNeill, William H., *History Handbook of Western Civilization* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

- Menderes, Adnan, *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2012).
- Menzies, Gavin, *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* (London: Bantam Press, 2003).
- Morris, Bency, 'After Rabin', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, 1996.
- Muslih, Muhammad, 'The Golan: Israel, Syria and Strategic Calculations', *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 4, Autumn 1993.
- Muslih, Muhammad, 'Dateline Damascus: Asad is Ready', *Foreign Policy* 96, Autumn 1994.
- Nasr, John Imad, *Nationalism and Modernism in Antoun Saadeh's Nushu' Al Uman* (M.A. Thesis, American University of Beirut, 2006).
- Nelan, Bruce W., 'Waiting for the Holdout', *Times* n 8, 19 August 1994.
- Nneff, Donald, 'The US, Iraq, Israel and Iran: Backdrop to War', *Journal of Palestine Studies* XX, no. 4, Summer 1991.
- Ostrovsky, Victor, 'Commission Report Leaks Make Strong Case for Complicity of Shabak Officers in Rabin Assassination' *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 16, no. 5. January/February 1998.
- Pail, Meir, 'The Golan Heights in Exchange for Peace: A Military Plan', *New Outlook*, April/May 1991.
- Peres, Shimon, *The New Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993).
- Perthes, Volker, 'Incremental Change in Syria', *Current History*, January 1993.
- Perthes, Volker, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Assad* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).
- Peterson, Gary Dean, *Warrior Kings of Sweden: The Rise of an Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (McFarland & Company, 2007).
- Pipes, Daniel, 'Is Damascus Ready for Peace?' *Foreign Affairs*, Autumn 1991.
- Plant, Steven, 'Continue the Peace Process? No, It's Heading for Disaster', *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1995.

- Podhoretz, Norman, 'The Peace Process So Far', *Commentary*, December 1994.
- Province, Michael, *The Great Syrian Revolt, and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).
- Quandt, William B., 'The Middle East in 1990', *Foreign Affairs* 70, 1990/91.
- Rabinovitch, Itamar, 'The Changing Prism', in Moshé Ma'oz and Evner Yaniv (eds), *Syria under Asad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).
- Raich, Bernard, 'The United States in the Middle East', *Current History*, January 1991.
- Reitzel, William, 'The Importance of the Mediterranean', in Ernest Jackh, *Background of the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952).
- Rodman, Peter, 'Middle East Policy after the Gulf War', *Foreign Affairs* 70, Spring 1991.
- Rynhold, Jonathan, 'Labour, Likud, the Special Relationship and the Peace Process, 1988–1996', *Israel Affairs* 3, no. 3–4, Spring/Summer 1997.
- Salamé, Ghassan, 'Torn between the Atlantic and the Middle East in the Post-Cold War Era', *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 2, Spring 1994.
- Saliba, Najib, 'Syrian–Lebanese Relations', in Halim Barakat (ed.), *Toward a Viable Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988).
- Salibi, Kamal, *A History of Arabia* (New York: Caravan, 1980).
- Salibi, Kamal, *Who Was Jesus: A Conspiracy in Jerusalem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).
- Salibi, Kamal, *Syria under Islam, 634–1097* (Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2009).
- Satloff, Robert, 'The Path to Peace', *Foreign Policy* 100, Autumn 1995.
- Schiff, Ze'ev, 'Israel after the War', *Foreign Affairs* 70, Spring 1991.
- Seale, Patrick, *The Struggle for Syria: A study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945–1958* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).

- Shaw, Stanford J., *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
- Thomas, Lewis, 'European Imperialism in the Middle East', in Ernest Jackh (ed.), *Background of the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952).
- Tibawi, Abdullatif, *A Modern History of Syria* (London: Macmillan, St Martin's Press, 1st edn, 1969).
- Tibi, Bassam, *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry*, trans. Marion Farouk-Shiyett and Peter Sniggett (London: MacMillan, 1981).
- Van Dam, Nikolas, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Sectarianism, Regionalism and Tribalism in Politics, 1961–1978* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).
- Vasiliev, A. A., *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vols I–II (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1984).
- Von Glahn, Gerhard, *Law among Nations: An Introduction to Public International Law* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 7th edn, 1995).
- Yaniv, Evner, 'Syria and Israel: The Politics of Escalation', in Moshé Ma'oz and Evner Yaniv, *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).
- Zeine, Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence* (Beyrouth: Khayats, 1960).
- Zeine, Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism* (Beyrouth: Khayats, 2nd edn, 1966).

Newspapers

- Assafir*, Lebanese newspaper founded in 1974 and based in Beirut.
- Annahar*, Lebanese newspaper founded in 1932 and based in Beirut.
- Al-Hayat*, Pan-Arab newspaper founded in 1946 and based in London.
- Al Sharq Al Awsat*, Pan-Arab newspaper founded in 1978 and based in London.

Index

Page numbers in *italics* refer to figures.

9/11 attacks, 189

A

al-Aaroor, Adnan, sheikh, 174

Abbas, Mahmoud, 130, 162

Abbasid Caliphate, 19, 20, 20, 32, 185, 187

Abdallah, Prince, heir to Saudi throne, 153

Abdelqader al-Jazeeri, emir, 65

Abdul Aziz, King of Saudi Arabia, 89

Abdul Hamid II, sultan, 65–7, 69

Abdul Rahman Shahbandar, 78

Abdullah I, Prince, ruler of Jordan, 77, 81, 83, 84, 92–3, 96

Abdulmajid, sultan, 64

Abdulrahman Pasha, 77

Abou Qir, 59, 60

Abu al-Hawl, 126

Abu Alaa, 129

Abu Jihad, 126, 127

Abu Mazen, 130

Abud Iyad, 126

Abyssinia, 15, 16, 36

Achaemenid Persian Empire, 7–8, 8

Achcar, Gilbert, 122

Acre, 33, 60

Aden, 63, 65

al-Adid, caliph, 30

Afghanistan, 26, 92, 119, 122, 157, 189

Aflaq, Michel, 82, 96, 98

Africa

British in, 65

liberation from colonialism, 94

Ottoman expansion in, 38

slave trade, 45

Spanish raids, 36

trade route round, 34, 35, 41

agrarian reforms, in Egypt, 96

agriculture, 2, 77

Ain Jalut, Battle of (1260 CE), 33

air intelligence, Syrian, 106

Akkadian Empire, 3, 3, 4

Akkadians, 185

Alaska, 52

Alawis

in the army and intelligence services, 106

in the Baath Party, 98

of East Anatolia, 79

avored by France, 98

of Jabal Mohsen, 167

mobilization, 98

Muslim Brotherhood against, 174

reunification of state, 78

rise to power, 98–9, 100

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- state in the Syrian Arab Republic, 74, 79
- in Turkey, 180–1
- Albania, 166
- Albuquerque, Afonso de, 35, 42
- Alekdej, Shukri, 140
- Aleppo
 - Arab rebels in, 70
 - decline of, 77
 - under Faisal, 73
 - Hafiz from, 97
 - Hamdanids in, 20
 - Hannawi from, 90
 - Ikhshidids in, 20
 - Imad Din Zangi in, 29
 - marginalization of, 76
 - Mongols in, 33
 - rebellion against French rule, 75–6
 - relations with Turkey, 79
 - Saladin in, 30
 - as a Sunni state, 74
- Alexander the Great, 186
 - Empire of, 8–9, 9
- Alexander VI, Pope, 44
- Alexandretta, 176
- Alexandria, 15, 17, 59, 149
- Alexius Comnenus, emperor, 28
- Algeria, 53, 64, 94, 124
- Almisfarah, Battle of (1925), 76
- Almoravids, 26
- Aloni, Shulamit, 127
- alphabet, hieroglyphic, 60
- Amal Movement, 115, 123–4, 154, 160, 161
- Amalfi, 28
- Amalric I, King of Jerusalem, 29–30
- Amer, Marshal Abdul Hakim, 97
- America, discovery by Columbus, 43
- American Civil War (1859–1865), 66
- American University, Beirut, 80
- Amir, Yigal, 131
- Amiran, Moshe, 130
- Amman summit (1995), 148
- Amr Bin El Aas, 41
- Anadol Plateau, 65, 180
- Anatolia
 - Alawis in, 79
 - Armenian kingdom in, 33
 - Byzantines in, 16, 17
 - defending in 21st century, 166, 175–6
 - failure of 1095 ‘popular Crusade’ in, 28
 - Greek Orthodox faith in, 15
 - Hellenic culture, 15
 - Hittites in, 7
 - Macedonians in, 8
 - Ottomans in, 35, 36, 53
 - Persians in, 7, 16
 - Romans in, 13
 - Seleucids in, 9, 10
 - Seljuks in, 26, 29
 - trade routes to, 7, 16, 21
 - Umayyads in, 18
- Anbar, 175
- Andropov, Yuri, 114
- Angola, 122
- Antioch, 9, 12, 28, 33
- Aoun, General Michel, 121, 124–5, 159–60
- April Understanding (1996), 146
- Arab–Israeli conflict, 107–8, 125
- Arab Kingdom, French plan for, 64–5
- Arab League, 85
- Arab Muslims, 17
- Arab nationalism *see* pan-Arab nationalism
- Arab Nationalist Movement, 69
- Arab Studies Society, Jerusalem, 127

Arabia/Arabs

- Bedouin migrations from, 2
- British in, 67
- Byzantine challenge to Persian hegemony in, 14, 16
- Byzantine Christianity in, 16
- diversion of trade from, 42
- Egyptian and Mesopotamian hegemonies, 4
- Empire, 17
- First World War (1914–1918), 67
- Hira, 12
- Hyksos from, 4
- liberation from colonialism, 94
- and the Middle East in the 1990s, 139–44
- Moabites descendents of, 12
- nationalist movements, 69–70
- Ottomans in, 37, 53
- under Persian hegemony, 13
- Portuguese in, 36, 41
- reaction to establishment of Israel, 100
- rise of Mecca, 16
- sailing skills, 35
- in Spain, 26
- and Syria, 4, 5
- trade routes, 34–5, 54
- tribes from Nejd, 61
- see also* Saudi Arabia

Arabian Desert, extent, 4

Arafat, Yasser

- anti-terrorist document, 123
- appointed leader of the PLO, 101
- death, 160, 162
- on Gaza, 127
- peace negotiations, 126
- relations with Hafiz al-Assad, 109
- on self-determination, 124

see also PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)

Aragon, Kingdom of, 35–6

see also Castille and Aragon

Archangel (port), 52

Arctic Sea, 51, 55

Aref, Abdul Salam, 97

Armenia, 26, 33, 64, 98, 166

army, Syrian Arab Republic, 106

Asfour, Hassan, 129

Ashkalon, 29

Ashkelon, 6, 16

Ashrawi, Hanan, 128

Asia, cultural influence on Russia, 53

al-Assad, Bashar, 166, 172–3, 175, 180–1, 186

Syria under, 156–68

al-Assad, Bassil, 156

al-Assad, Hafez

army under, 106

death, 155–6

heart attack, 153

as minister of defence, 100, 103–4

opposition to Camp David, 124

passing of presidency to son, 186

phone call with President Clinton, 131

relations with Iran, 177

relations with Russia, 177

similarities with son, 180–1

Syria under, 103–18

al-Assad, Maher, 175

al-Assad, Rifaat, 103, 106, 153–4

Assyria, rise, 6–7

Assyrians, 186

Astrakhan, 51

Aswan, High Dam, 94

Atasi, Nur Din, 99

al-Atassi, Nouredine, President of Syria, 104

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

Ataturk, Mustafa Kemal, 76, 85, 91, 140, 165

Athraa *see* Deraa

Atlantic Ocean, trade routes, 34

Atlas Mountains, 37

al-Atrash Pasha, sultan, 76, 78, 83

Attar, Issam, 109

Attasi, Hashim, President of Syria, 78

Augustus II, King of Poland, 49, 52

Auon, General Michel, 155

Austria, 44, 47, 54, 63, 68

Ayyash, Yahya, 133

Ayyubid Empire/Ayyubids, 31, 31, 32, 33

Azerbaijan, 64, 145, 166

Azov, Sea of, 52

B

Baakleen, 161

Baalbek, 155

Baath Party

assassination of Malki, 93

under Hafez al-Assad, 172

Hafiz al-Assad and, 104, 106

Jadid and, 103–4

Nasser and, 96

versus the SSNP, 80, 81

support for Hafiz, 97–8

Bab El Tabbaneh, 167

Babyars, Memluk general (later leader), 33

Babylon, 8

al-Badiya al-Souriyya, 4

Baghdad

caliphs of, 20

geostrategic importance, 65

Mongol sacking of, 32

Ottoman conquest of, 37

railway from Berlin, 66, 67

Baker, James, 125

Balfour Declaration (1917), 86

Balkan Wars (1912, 1913), 69

Balkans

Austro–Russian differences, 68

Greek Orthodox faith in, 15

Macedonians in, 8, 9

Ottomans in, 35, 53

Russians in, 63, 68–9

Turkey and, 141, 166

see also individual countries

Baltic Sea

Russian access to, 54, 55

Swedish control of, 48, 52

Bandung Convention (1954), 93–4

Banna, Hassan, 87

Barak, Ehud, 132

Barcelona Conference (1995), 146

Barmakids, 19

Barouk Hills, 161

Barzani, Massoud, 141

Bashir, Omar, 165

Basra, 65, 174

Batatu, Hanna, 98

Bayezid I ('the Thunderbolt'), sultan, 53

al-Baz, Osama, 127–8

Bedouin, 2, 104–5

Begin, Menachem, 112, 113, 124

Beijing, 32

Beilin, Yossi, 128, 131

Beirut

1982 attacks, 113

American University, 80

fighting in, 154

French use of port, 77

refugee camps, 123–4

as a trade centre, 79

Bekaa, 1982 attacks, 113

Belgrade–Constantinople road, 65

Belgrade–Thessaloniki road, 65

Ben Ali, Zine El Abidine, 171, 173

- Ben Gurion, David, 86
Beneventum, Battle of (275 BCE), 60
Bengal, Nawab of, 55–6
Berlin–Baghdad railway, 66, 67
Berri, Nabih, 155, 161
Bethlehem, 32
Beyar, Jelal, 91, 96
Bilad al-Sham *see* Levant
Bin Abdelaziz, Bandar, 190
Bin Abdelaziz, sultan, 190
Bismarck, Otto Von, 68
Bitar, Salah Din, 82, 96, 98
Black Sea
 Crimean War (1853–1856), 64
 Ottoman control over, 37, 52, 53
 Russian access to, 55
 trade routes, 31, 35
Boer War, Second (1899–1902), 65
Bombay, 35, 55
Bonaparte, Napoleon *see* Napoleon
 Bonaparte
Bosnia, 166
Bosphorus, importance of, 53
al-Bou Kamal, 79, 175
Boueiz, Fares, 134
Bourbons, 47
Brazil, 41, 45
Britain/British
 in Aden, 63
 alliance against Mohammad Ali
 Pasha, 63
 alliance with the Dutch against
 France, 47
 Battle of Navarino (1827), 62
 control of Indian Ocean trade routes,
 56, 86
 control of Mediterranean, 60
 Crimean War (1853–1856), 64
 defeat of Spanish in eighteenth
 century, 47
 in Egypt, 65, 89–90, 92, 94
 expansionism, 63–5, 67
 fighting the French in North America
 and the Indian Ocean, 55
 fighting the French in the Indian
 Ocean, 55
 Foreign Office, 83
 geopolitical approach, 56
 in India, 55–6
 in Jordan, 77
 in Lebanon, 84, 90
 missionaries in Syria, 63
 Napoleonic wars, 59
 in the Near East, 90
 oil taplines, 90
 in the Persian Gulf, 63, 86
 relations with the US, 146–7
 Saudi attitude towards, 89
 SSNP support, 93
 in Sudan, 65
 Sykes–Picot Agreement, 83
 in Syria, 84, 90
 Tippo Sahib and, 59
 trade routes, 55
 withdrawal from the Suez Canal, 92
 Zionist support, 86
 see also England
British Empire, 83
 map, 46
Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 120
Bulgaria, 64
bulls, transportation using, 2
Burundi, 170
Bush, George H. W., US President,
 126
Bush, George, US President, 159
Bush, George W., US President, 158
Busra, 16
Buyids, 20, 21, 25, 185, 187
Byzans *see* Constantinople

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

Byzantine Empire/Byzantines, 26
aid from Crusaders, 28
aid from Venice, 28
in Antioch, 28
Battle of Manzikert (1071 CE), 26
Crusaders and, 29, 31
Duch of Moscow heir to, 51
expulsion of Nestorians, 15
in Iraq, 17
retreat to Anatolia, 17, 18
Seljuk attacks on, 26–7
in the sixth century, 13–14, 14
support for Abyssinian invasion of
Yemen, 15
in Syria, 16, 17, 21, 185, 186
war with Persians, 16–17
Byzantium, Macedonian dynasty, 25

C

Cairo, 20, 59
Calicut, 35
Calicut, Zamorin of, 42
camels, 2, 7
Camp David, 109, 112, 113, 124
Camp David Agreement, 129, 163
Cape of Good Hope, 34, 41, 187
Casablanca, 125, 148
Caspian Sea, 55
Castille and Aragon, 43
Castille, Kingdom of, 34, 36, 41
Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia,
54
Catholics, conflict with Protestants,
47
Caucasus
Duchy of Moscow up to, 51
Ottomans up to, 37, 53
Russian war to gain, 63–4
Turkey and, 141, 144, 166
Umayyad control over, 18
CENTO (Pact of Baghdad), 92–3, 99
Central America, Spanish in, 43
Central Asia, 7, 32, 54, 66, 144
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), US,
145
Ceuta, 36
Chad, 64
Chamoun, Camille, President of
Lebanon, 96
Champollion, Jean-François, 60
Charles XII, King of Sweden, 48–50
Chechen Republic, 145, 178
Chechens, 64
children's crusade, 31
China
African interest, 165, 179
borderlands, 7, 17, 18
Mediterranean interest, 169, 176
Ming Dynasty, 178–9
Mongols in, 32
rise of, 189
support for Bashar al-Assad, 178–9
trade routes, 7, 10, 15, 32, 54, 179
Chirac, Jacques, 146, 158, 159
Chouf, 113, 115, 158, 161
Christianity/Christians
Byzantine, 16
Druze as, 174
favored by France in Syria, 74, 98
Greek Orthodox faith, 15, 52–3, 64,
80, 82
in Lebanon, 111, 112, 154
Monophysite, 15
Najran massacre, 15
Nestorianism, 15
as the religion of the Roman Empire,
14–15
rulers of Mount Lebanon as, 63
Syria as a Christian state, 159–60
Christopher, Warren, 127–8, 129, 133

Cilicia

- Assyrians in, 7
 - end of French claim, 73
 - French in, 73, 76
 - Hittites in, 4
 - Mamluks in, 33
 - Memluks in, 36
 - Mohammad Ali Pasha in, 63
 - Ottomans in, 38
 - as part of proposed Syrian nation, 80
 - Saladin in, 30
 - Seleucids in, 10
 - in southern Syria, 185
 - Taurus Mountains, 65
 - trade routes through, 33
 - Umayyads in, 18
- Çiller, Tansu, 143
- Circassians, 64, 98
- Clermont, council of, 28
- Clinton, Bill, US President, 131
- Cold War, 90, 99, 121, 139, 141
- Columbus, Christopher, 43
- Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), 69
- Commu, 93
- Communist Party, in Syria, 82, 93, 96
- Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe, Paris (1985), 119
- Congress of Vienna (1814–15), 68
- Constantine, Roman emperor, 14–15
- Constantinople
- Constantine's capital moved to, 14
 - Greek Orthodox faith in, 15
 - Latin kingdom in, 31
 - Ottomans in, 35, 51
 - road to from Belgrade, 65
 - Russian drive for, 52–3
 - Umayyad attempts to conquer, 17

see also Istanbul

- Corsica, 35
- Crimea, 55
- Crimean War (1853–1856), 68
- see also individual countries*
- Cromwellian period, 47
- Crusaders, 29, 30, 33, 86, 188
- Battle of Hittin (1187 CE), 30
- Crusades, 27, 28
- children's crusade, 31
 - Eighth, 32
 - Fifth, 31
 - First, 28–9
 - Fourth, 31
 - Second, 29–30
 - Seventh, 32
 - Sixth, 31–2
 - Third, 31
- cultivation of land, 2
- CUP (Committee of Union and Progress), 69
- Cyprus, 80, 141
- Cyrus the Great (Cyrus II of Persia), 7
- Czechoslovakia, arms through, 93, 99

D

- Dagestanis, 64
- Dahlan, Mohammad, 162, 163
- Damascus
- Abdelqader al-Jazeeri in, 65
 - Arab rebels in, 70
 - Byzantines in, 16
 - as capital of Syria, 17
 - Damascus Spring, 173–4, 190, 192
 - under Faisal, 73
 - Ikhshidids in, 20
 - Israeli threat to, 107
 - Lakhmids in, 13
 - loyalty to Hafiz al-Assad, 104, 109, 110

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

mercantile class, 78, 95–6, 97, 99,
104, 109
migration to, 173
Mongols in, 33
Seljuks in, 26
as a Sunni state, 74, 76
taken by Nur Di Zangi, 29
as a trade centre, 16, 17, 19, 76
upper class, 106
Damascus–Hijaz railway, 66
Damascus Spring, 173–4, 190, 192
Danube River, 64, 68
Dardari, Abdallah, 173, 190
Darfur, 171
Darius III of Persia, 8
al-Dariyya, 62
David, line of, 12
Davutoglu, Ahmet, 166, 175, 191
Dayr El Qamar, 161
Dayr El Zor, 73, 75, 98, 106, 154, 175
Dean, Wilton, 153
Declaration of Damascus (2005), 121
Defense Brigades, Syrian, 106
demography, of Syria, 104–5
Denmark, 48–9, 52
Deraa (formerly Athraa), 62, 77, 104,
106, 154, 172, 173, 190
Dhour Shwayr, 80
Dhu Nuwas, Himyarite king, 15
Diaz, Bartholomew, 41
Dirgham (overthrower of Shawar), 29,
30
Diu, Battle of (1509), 42
Diyar Bakr, 180
Dneiper River, 51
donkeys, 2
Droubi, Alaadine, 77
Druze
alliance with Alawis, 98–9
in the Baath Party, 98

British support for, 63, 77
as Christians, 174
relations with Jordan, 79
reunification of state, 78
state in Syria, 74, 76, 158
support for Syrian attack on
Lebanon, 115
see also Jumblatt, Walid
Dual Qaimaqamiyya, 191
Dubai, 148
Dutch Empire/Dutch, 44–5/47, 45
Dyar Bakir, 29

E

East Africa, 35, 37, 54
East India Company, 55
Eastern Europe, 35, 54, 122
economics, global crisis, 26
economy, Syrian, 172–3
Edde, Emile, 90
Eden, Anthony, 85
Edessa, Kingdom of, 29
Egypt/Egyptians
2011 revolution, 169–72
allies of the Moabites, 12
Arab Muslims in, 17
arms deal with the Soviet Union, 93,
99
Assyrians in, 7
attempted invasion by Amalric I,
29–30
attitude towards the British, 87
Ayyubids in, 31
Battle of Marj Dabeq (1516), 36
bilateral negotiations with Israel,
111–12
British in, 65, 83, 85
Byzantines in, 16, 17
Camp David Agreement, 109, 112,
113

- in CENTO, 92
- children sold into slavery in, 31
- compared with Mesopotamia, 2
- in competition with the Mitannis and the Hittites over Syria, 5
- control of the Mediterranean, 34
- control over southern Syria, 8
- control over the Red Sea, 32
- Crusaders and, 29
- Crusades against, 29, 31, 32
- cultural identity, 15
- effect of establishment of Israel, 86–7
- Egyptian culture, 15
- Fatimids in, 20, 21, 25, 27, 29–30
- Hellenic culture, 15
- hieroglyphic alphabet, 60
- Hyksos in, 4
- Ikhshidids in, 20
- independence, 8
- versus Iraq, 82–5
- isolation, 84
- against Israel (1967), 100
- Macedonians in, 8
- Memluks in, 33, 35, 36
- modernization process, 61
- Mohammad Ali Pasha's withdrawal to, 63
- Monophysite Christianity in, 15
- Napoleon in, 59–61
- under Nasser, 91–6
- Ottoman control of, 53
- Ottomans in, 37, 37–8
- peace negotiations, 127–8
- peace treaties with Israel, 92, 108, 109
- peace treaty with the Hittites, 1, 6
- Persians in, 7, 16
- under the Ptolemids, 9, 10
- as a regional power, 20
- relations with Israel, 148–9, 170
- relations with Saudi Arabia, 95
- relations with Syria, 95–6, 105, 107–8, 189
- revolution (1919), 85
- Romans in, 9, 12, 13
- Saladin in, 30
- security of, 60
- Seljuk threat to, 27
- society, 2
- in Syria, 185
- trade, 2, 3, 6
- Umayyads in, 18
- Wafd Party, 85
- Egyptian Empire, 4, 6
- Eisenhower, General Dwight, 99
- El-Hoss, Salim, 154–5, 156
- Elbe River, 48
- Elizabeth I, Queen of England, 44
- Empire of Alexander the Great, 9
- England
 - conflict with France, 47
 - pre-eighteenth century, 44–5
 - pro-Dutch in sixteenth century, 44–5
 - against Spain in sixteenth century, 44–5
 - trade, 47, 48
 - wars with Holland, 47
- Ephesus, Battle of, 186
- Erbakan, Necmettin, 144
- Erdogan, Recep Tayyip, 166, 175, 180–1
- Eretrea, 170–1
- Estonia, 48
- Eurasian axis, 12, 32
- Europe
 - defined, 165–6
 - in the Middle East, 121–2
 - post-Waterloo, 67–9
 - relations with North Africa, 146
 - relations with Russia, 122, 145–6
 - relations with the Middle East, 146

trade routes to, 16
European Union, 147, 176
Evren, Kenan, 141

F

FAFO (Fafo Research Foundation), 128
Faisal, King of Syria and Iraq, 73, 76, 83
Falluja, 92
Falsafat Al Thawra (Nasser), 93
Farouq, King of Egypt, 85, 87, 89, 91, 92
Fatah, 100, 101, 126–7, 162, 163
Fatih, Muhammad, 35
Fatimid Caliphate/Fatimids
 abolition, 30
 Crusaders and, 29
 in Egypt, 20, 21, 25, 29–30, 187
 map, 21
 in North Africa, 20, 187
 Seljuk attacks on, 26–7
 in Syria, 185–6
 trade with Italian city states, 28
 in Tunisia, 20
Faysal II, King of Iraq, 96
Ferdinand, King of Aragon, 36, 43
Fertile Crescent, 90, 164
First World War (1914–1918), 67,
 67–70, 83, 188
Foreign Office, British, 83
Fort Manuel, 42
Fouad, King of Egypt, 85
France/French
 in Algeria, 94
 Battle of Navarino (1827), 62
 campaign in Egypt, 59–60
 in Cilicia, 73
 colonial conflicts, 47–8
 conflict with England, 47
 Crimean War (1853–1856), 64
 custody of Holy Places in Jerusalem,
 64

 ‘divide and rule’ policy, 74
 Dutch and British against, 47
 expansionism, 63–5
 fighting the British in North
 America, 55
 fighting the British in the Indian
 Ocean, 55–6
 in Iraq, 73
 King Louis IX, 32
 Lebanese independence from, 84
 in Lebanon, 73, 189
 loss of Indian possessions, 48
 loss of Quebec, 48
 and the Middle East in the 1990s,
 146–7
 missionaries in Syria, 63
 in Mosul, 73
 nationalism, 81
 naval battles, 47–8
 rapprochement with Ottomans, 44
 relations with Syria, 61, 86, 146
 Spanish threat, 44
 Sykes–Picot Agreement, 83
 in Syria, 73–88, 98
 Syrian independence from, 84
 Third Republic, 68
 Vichy government, 84
Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), 64,
 68
Franklin–Bouillon Agreement (1921),
 76
Franks, 187
Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria,
 assassination, 69
Frederik II, King of Germany and Italy,
 32
French Empire, 46, 47
French Revolution, 44, 48
Future Movement, 160, 167

G

Gallipoli, 70
Gama, Vasco Da, 35, 41
Gaugamela, Battle of (331 BCE), 8, 186
Gaul, 14
Gaza, 113, 127–8, 129, 143, 149, 162–3, 169
Gaza Khan, ruler of Persia, 25
Geagea, Samir, 160
Gemayel, Amin, 114–15, 125
Gemayel, Bashir, 113
Geneva, Arab–Israeli Peace Conference, 108, 111
Genghis Khan (Timujin), Mongol ruler, 32
Genoa, 28
Georgia, 63, 145, 157, 163
Germany, 32, 48, 66–7, 68, 147
al-Ghab, 143
Ghassanids, 15–16, 16–17
Ghazaleh, General Rustum, 154
Gibraltar, 60
globalization, 7, 26
GOI (Government of India), 83, 84
Golan Heights, 99, 105, 107, 158
Golden Horde, 51
Gorbachev, Mikhail, 119, 119–20, 122, 123
Gouraud, Henri, General, 73
Government of India (GOI), 83, 84
grain trade, 77
Granicus, Battle of (334 BCE), 8
Great Babylonian Empire, 4
Greater Syria concept, 108
Greece, 8, 9, 62
Greek Orthodox faith, 15, 52–3, 64, 80, 82
Greeks, insurgents in Istanbul, 62
Grenada, 36
Grosse, Paul-Marie De La, 153

Guerin, Kamran, 140
Guiscard, Robert, king of southern Italy, 28
Gujarat, Sultan of, 42
Gulf Cooperation Council, 174
Gulf States, 121, 122, 173
Gulf War (1981), 121, 148
Gulf War (1990–91), 148

H

Hafiz, Amin, 97–8
Haig, Alexander, 113
Hail, 67
al-Hakim, caliph, 25
Hama, 90, 109, 154
Hamas, 132, 133, 163, 169
Hamdanids, 20, 21
Hananu, Ibrahim, 75–6
Hannawi, Sami, General, 90
Hapsburgs, 44, 47
Hariri, Rafic, 134, 146, 154, 155, 156, 158–9, 160, 189
Hariri, Saadeddine, 167
Haroun Rashid, 19
al-Hasaka, 79, 173, 175
Hasbayya, 158
al-Hashashin (the Assassins), 27
Hashemites, 81, 85, 93, 96, 188
Hatoum, Salim, 98
Hauran, 77, 79
Haurani, Akram, 98
Hellenism, 15
Helsinki Conference (1975), 119
Herchwild, Yair, 129
Hercules, Byzantine emperor, 17
Hezbollah, 134, 159, 160, 161, 164, 169, 189, 189–90
hieroglyphic alphabet, 60
Hijaz
Ibn Saud in, 85

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

rebellion against Ottoman rule, 70
recovery from Wahhabis, 61
Saladin in, 30
trade route through, 6, 16
Wahhabis in, 62
Hijaz railway, 66
Himyarites, 15, 16
Hindenburg, Paul Von, 67
Hira, 12
Hitler, Adolf, 81, 84, 87
Hittin, Battle of (1187 CE), 30
Hittite Empire/Hittites, 1, 4, 5, 5, 6, 185
Hneish Major, 170–1
Holland, wars with England, 47
Holy Roman Empire, 48
Homs
 Battle of (1260 CE), 33
 Battle of Qadesh near, 6
Horan, 154
Hormuz, 35
Hoss, Salim, 125
Houthis, 164, 170
al-Hrawi, Elias, 154
Hula valley, 99
Hulagu Khan, Mongol ruler, 32–3
Hungary, 53
Hussein, Saddam, 110, 120–1, 121, 160, 186
Hussein, Sherif, ruler of Mecca, 70, 85
al-Husseini, 129
Husseini, Faisal, 127
El Husseini, Hussein, 155
Hutus, 148, 170
Hyksos, 4

I
Iberian Peninsula, 34, 44
Ibn Khaldoun, 160
Ibn Majid, Ahmad, 35
Ibn Saud of Nejd, 85

Ibn Tulun, Ahmad, governor of Egypt, 19
Ibrahim Pasha, son of Mohammad Ali Pasha, 62
Ikshshidids, 20, 185
Ilkhanate, Mongol, 32, 36
Imad Din Zangi, 29
India
 Assyrian control of trade routes, 7
 boundary of Seleucid Empire, 9
 British in, 55
 loss of French possessions, 48
 Persians in, 7
 Portuguese in, 41, 42
 trade routes from, 6, 10, 11, 16, 32, 37, 54
 trade routes to, 41
 trade with, 4, 15, 19, 33, 34–5, 55
Indian Ocean, trade routes, 32, 33, 34–5, 48, 55, 64
industrialization, 66
Ingria, 48
Iniza, 175
Inonu, Ismet, 91
intelligence agencies, in Syria, 106
international relations, role of Syria, 1
Introduction, The (Ibn Khaldoun), 160
Iran
 in CENTO, 92
 influence in the Gulf, 121
 Mediterranean interest, 176
 relations with Russia, 145
 relations with Turkey, 139, 140, 165–7
 struggle with Ottomans, 37
 support for Bashar al-Assad, 176–7
 support for Lebanon, 134
 support for Palestinians, 144
Iraq
 1990-1991 Gulf War, 148

- 2003 invasion, 157, 159, 189
 - Abbasid centre of power in, 19
 - access to the Persian Gulf, 86
 - Arab Muslims in, 17
 - Arabian Desert in, 4
 - British in, 73, 84
 - Buyids in, 25
 - division of, 121, 158
 - effect of establishment of Israel, 86
 - versus Egypt, 82–5
 - First World War (1914–1918), 67, 83
 - French claim to, 73
 - Imad Din Zangi in, 29
 - immigration, 173
 - Kurds in, 141, 174–5, 176
 - Macedonians in, 8
 - Mongols in, 32, 36
 - nationalist regime, 96
 - opposition to US presence, 181
 - Ottomans in, 37, 53
 - as part of proposed Syrian nation, 80, 81
 - Persians in, 16
 - relations with Syria, 99, 121, 149
 - Safavid attempts to control, 36
 - Seljuks in, 26
 - Shias in, 83
 - Sunnis in, 83
 - ties with Saudi Arabia, 175
 - Zangids in, 30
 - Isabella, Queen of Castille, 36, 43
 - Iskenderun, 143
 - Islam
 - defending Islamic lands, 62
 - spread of, 36
 - Islamic folk culture, in Turkey, 91
 - Islamic fundamentalism, 166–7
 - Islamic Jihad (al-Jihad), 1996
 - operations, 132, 133
 - Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, 65
 - Ismailis, 98
 - Israel
 - 1973 war, 107–8
 - 1982 attacks on Syrian sites, 113
 - 1982 invasion of Lebanon, 113–14
 - 1991 peace conference, 125
 - 1994 agreement with Jordan, 131
 - 2006 assault on Hezbollah, 190
 - 2008–2009 attacks on Gaza, 169
 - bilateral negotiations with Syria, 111–12
 - against Egypt (1967), 99–100
 - establishment of, 86–7
 - Fatah assassinations, 126–7
 - Hafiz al-Assad's attitude towards, 105
 - Islamist suicide attacks, 143
 - peace negotiations, 123–4, 126, 127–31, 131–4
 - peace treaties with Egypt, 92, 108, 109
 - relations with Egypt, 148–9
 - relations with Jordan, 147
 - relations with Saudi Arabia, 148–9
 - relations with Turkey, 139, 141, 143–4
 - withdrawal from Lebanon, 158
 - Issus, Battle of (333 BCE), 8
 - Istanbul, 62, 65
 - see also* Constantinople
 - Istanbul Archaeological Museum, 6
 - Italy, 26, 28, 32, 34, 61, 178
 - Ivan III (Ivan the Great) of Russia, 51
 - Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) of Russia, 51
 - Ivan V, Tsar of Russia, 52
- J**
- Jabal al-Druze, 158
 - Jadid, Ghassan, 93, 99
 - Jadid, Salah, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- Jaffa, 29
Jahangir, Mughal emperor, 55
Jahiliyya wars, 16
Jalfar (Ras El Khaimah), 63
Jamal Pasha, Governor of Syria, 67, 70
James II, King of Great Britain, 47
Jamil, Naji, 98, 106
Janberdi Ghazali, ruler of Damascus, 36
Japan, 123, 179
Jassy, Treaty of (1792), 55
al-Jazeera, 172
Jeddah, 36, 44
Jericho, 128
Jerusalem, 26, 28, 29–30, 31, 32, 64
Jewish state, in Palestine, 61
Jewish tradition, King of Israel from line of David, 12
Jews
 relations with the Achaemenids, 12
 relations with the Parthians, 11
 of Turkish origin in Israel, 140
al-Jihad (Islamic Jihad), 1996
 operations, 132, 133
Jisr al-Shoghoor, 175–6
Jordan
 1994 agreement with Israel, 131
 Arab Muslims in, 17
 and CENTO, 92–3
 Ghassanids in, 15
 Hashemites in, 188
 invitation to join the Gulf Cooperation Council, 174
 Nabateans in, 10
 oil tapline, 90
 proposed union with Palestinians, 127–8
 relations with Israel, 125, 147
 relations with Syria, 77, 79, 83, 108–9
 Umayyads in, 18
 see also Syria: southern
Jordan River, 12, 16
Judaism, 16
Julius Caesar, 9
Jumblatt, Kamal, 110
Jumblatt, Walid, 159, 160–2
Jundi, Abdel Karim, 98
Justice and Development Party, Turkey, 180–1
Justin, Byzantine emperor, 14
Justinian the Great, Byzantine emperor, 13–14, 15–16
- K**
al-Kabir, Battle of (1925), 76
al-Kadah, Sulaiman, 106
Kafr Takharim, 75
Karachays, 64
Karami, Omar, 155, 159
Karami, Rashid, 115, 154
Karkuk, 166
Kassim, Abdul Karim, 97
Kassites, 4
Kautsky, Karl, 79
Kaylani, Rashid Ali, 84
Kazan, 51
Kenaan, Ghazi, 155–6, 156, 158, 159, 173
Kenya, 65
Ketbuga, leader of Mongol army, 33
Kexholm, 48
Khaddam, Abdelhalim, 154, 155–6, 156–7, 159, 173
al-Khalifa, 174
Khayer Bey, ruler of Egypt, 36
Khomeini, Ayatollah, 177
El Khouri, Bshara, 90
Khrushchev, Nikita, 94
Khuzestan, 86
Khwarizm, 32

- Kinda tribe, 16
Kirja, Coşkun, 140
Kisrwan, 160
Kissinger, Henry, 119
Kochi, Maharaja of, 42
Kolikovo, Battle of (1380), 51
Konya, 62
Kosovo, 166
Koura, 63
Kozikhode, Raja of, 42
Kublai Khan, 179
al-Kurdi, Maher, 129
Kurdish Labour Party, Iraq, 176
Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party,
 Turkey, 181
Kurds
 in Iraq, 121, 141, 158, 174–5
 naturalization demands, 180
 in Syria, 79
 in Turkey, 121, 143, 180–1
Kutschuk Kainardzhi, Treaty of (1783),
 55
Kuwait, 63, 80, 121
al-Kuzbari, Haydar, 97
- L**
Labour Party, Israel, 126, 131–2
Lahoud, Emile, 156, 159, 160
Lake Tiberias, 107
Lake Victoria, 148, 170
Lakhmids, 12–13, 15
Lancry, Yehuda, 130
Larsen, Terry Rod, 128
Latin America, 43, 94
Lavrov, Sergei, 178
Lebanese Front, 110–11, 111, 112
Lebanese National Movement, 110, 111
Lebanon
 1980s, 154–6
 1982 Israeli invasion, 113–14
 1996 tensions in southern, 134
 British in, 84, 90
 and CENTO, 92–3
 Christians in, 154
 execution of Saade, 90
 French in, 76, 146
 Italo–German commission, 84
 Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifiyyah, 63
 overthrow of Auon, 121
 refugee problem, 130
 relations with Syria, 108–9, 110–11,
 115, 190–1
 Shia scholars' conversion of Persians,
 36
 SSNP in, 82
 Syria in, 110–12, 158, 189–90
 Syrian workers in, 173
Lebanon, Mount, 63
Lepanto, Battle of (1571), 44
Levant, 73, 77, 105, 108
 see also individual countries
Libya, 30, 53, 65, 171, 172
Likud Party, Israel, 125–6, 130
Lipanto, Battle of (1571), 60
Lithuania, 48, 51
Louis IX, King of France (Saint Louis),
 32
Louis XIV, King of France, 47
Ludendorf, Erich Von, 67
- M**
Macedon(ia), 7, 8–9, 60
Macedonian dynasty, in Byzantium, 25
Mackinder, Halford, 120
Madras, 55
Madrid, 1991 peace conference, 125,
 130
Maharaja of Kochi, 42
Malki, Adnan, 93
Malta, 59, 60, 133

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

Mamluks, Battle of Homs (1260 CE), 33
Manchuria, 66
Manzikert, Battle of (1071 CE), 26, 187
maps
 Abbasid Caliphate, 20
 Achaemenid Persian Empire, 8
 Akkadian Empire, 3
 Ayyubid Empire, 31
 British Empire, 46
 Byzantine Empire, 14, 26
 Dutch Empire, 45
 Empire of Alexander the Great, 9
 Fatimid Caliphate, 21
 French Empire, 46
 Hittite Empire, 5
 Memluk Empire, 34
 Ottoman Empire, 38
 Parthian Empire, 11
 Portuguese Empire, 42
 Roman Empire, 13
 Russian Empire, 50
 security zone of Turgat Ozal, 142
 Seleucid Empire, 10
 Seljuk Caliphate, 27
 Spanish Empire, 43
 Swedish Empire, 49
 Sykes–Picot Agreement, 74
 Syria as divided by the French
 mandate, 75
 Syria upon achieving independence
 in 1943, 78
 Turkish-Iraqi border, 142
 Umayyad Caliphate, 18
 United Arab Republic, 95
Mar Mikhael church, 160
March 14 Movement, 166, 173, 174
Marinids, 34
Marj Dabeq, Battle of (1516), 36
Maronites, 63, 158, 159, 160
Mauritius, 48

Mauwwad, Rene, 154
al-Mazraa, Battle of (1925), 76
Mecca, 16, 17, 44, 66
Medes, 185
Mediterranean
 British control over, 60
 east
 Assyrian control over, 7
 Egyptian control over, 4, 41
 Ottoman control over, 35, 38, 43,
 53
 Portuguese blocking of, 54
 trade between Fatimids and
 Byzantines, 20
 trade routes to, 6, 10
 Umayyad control over, 17–18
 importance of, 12, 26, 60, 61
 Roman control over, 12
 trade routes, 33, 34
 west
 Aragonese control over, 35, 36, 41,
 43
 Byzantine control over, 14
 Ottoman control over, 38
Melilla, 36, 44
Memluk Empire/Memlucks, 32–5, 34
 in Acre, 33
 in Antioch, 33
 Battle of Ain Jalut (1260 CE), 33
 Battle of Marj Dabeq (1516), 36
 battles with Mongols, 33
 decline, 35, 61
 defeat by Napoleon in Cairo, 59
 defeat of fleet, 35
 in Egypt, 33, 42, 59, 61
 Islamic, 33
 planned Ottoman alliance with, 36
 rise of, 187–8
 trade, 33, 35
 in Tripoli, 33

- Menderes, Adnan, 91, 96, 140
- Mer al-Kabir, 44
- mercantile class, 95–6, 97, 99, 104, 109
- Mersin, 143
- Mesopotamia
- Arab Muslims in, 17
 - Assyrians in, 7
 - compared with Egypt, 2
 - first settlements, 1–2
 - Mamluks in, 33
 - mercantile economy, 2–3
 - Nestorianism in, 15
 - Parthians in, 10, 12
 - Persians in, 7
 - Seleucids in, 10
 - society, 2
 - trade routes, 6, 7, 19
 - Umayyads in, 18
- Messina, 6
- Metn, 160
- Metternich, Klemens von, 68
- Middle East
- in the 1990s, 139–51
 - regional transformations, 147–9
 - Russians and French, 144–7
 - Turkey and the Arabs, 139–44
 - 1991 peace conference, 125
 - competition for, 65
 - Ottoman Empire in, 37
 - relations with Europe, 146
 - relations with the Soviet Union, 119–20
 - United States in, 89–90, 114–15, 120
- Minin, Kuzma, 51
- El Mir, Mahmoud, 98
- missionaries, in Syria, 63
- Mitanni state/Mitannis, 4, 5, 6
- Mitelay II, Hittite king, 1
- Moabites, 12
- Mohammad Ali Pasha, 61–3, 84
- Moldavia, 64
- Mongolia, 178
- Mongols, 32–3, 36, 178
- Battle of Ain Jalut (1260 CE), 33
 - Battle of Homs (1260 CE), 33
- Monophysite Christianity, 15
- Monsoon winds, 35
- Montenegro, 64
- Moratinos, Miguel Angel, 147
- Morocco, 34, 36, 65
- Moscow, Peter the Great and, 49
- Moscow, Duchy of, 51
- Mosul, 4, 29, 73, 90, 166, 175
- Mount Lebanon, 63, 73, 80, 188
- Moussa, Amr, 134
- Mu'awiya, caliph, 17, 103
- Mubarak, Hosni, 170, 171–2
- Mubarak, Jamal, 171
- Muhammad V, sultan, 69
- Mu'awiya Bin Abi Sufyan, 186
- Mujir Din, ruler of Damascus, 29
- al-Mukhabarat al-Jawiiyya (Syrian air intelligence), 106
- al-Mulkiye Law School, 75–6
- Murabitoon, 154
- Muscat, 35, 42
- Muslim Brotherhood, 87, 109–10, 153, 154, 163, 172, 174, 180
- Muslims, in Spain, 26
- Mustapha Nahas Pasha, 85
- Mutasarifit, 188
- Mutasarrifiyyah, 191
- al-Mutawakkil, 19
- N**
- Nabateans, 10, 11
- Nahas Pasha, 91
- Nahlawi, Abdul Karim, 97
- Najd *see* Nejd
- Naji Otari, Mohammad, 180

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- Najib, Atif, 173
Najib, Mohammad, General, 92
Najran, 15
Namibia, 65, 122
Napoleon Bonaparte, 59–61, 68, 86, 188
Napoleon III, King of France, 64, 64–5, 68
Naqoor, 176
Narva, Battle of, 49
Nasrallah, Sayyed Hassan, 134, 160, 177
Nasrids, 35–6
Nasser, Gamal Abdul, 87, 89, 91–4, 94–6, 189
national identity, pan-Arab Syrian, 77
National Palestinian Congress, 100
National Progressive Front, Syria, 104
National Security Agency, US, 164
National Security Council, Russia, 145
National Security Council, Turkey, 141
nationalization, 99
NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 122, 122–3, 139, 172, 177
Navarino, Battle of (1827), 62
Navigation Acts 1651 (England), 47
Nazareth, 32
Nazi nationalism, 80–1
Near East
 al-Hashashin threat, 27
 Assyrian control of trade routes, 7
 British geostrategy, 67
 British in, 90
 global economy and, 26
 reuniting, 29–32
 under Seleucid, Ptolemaic and Parthian control, 10
Nejd, 16, 61, 62, 63, 67, 85, 174
Nestorianism, 15
Nestorius, bishop, 15
Netanyahu, Benjamin, 133
Nicaea, 28
Nicaragua, 122
Nijma, Elias, 146
Nile River, 1–2
niqab, women wearing, 180
Nizam al-Mulk, vizier, 27
nomads, 4
Normans, 26, 28
North Africa
 Almoravids in, 26
 Byzantines in, 14
 Fatimids in, 20
 French in, 64
 Germans in, 84
 Ottomans in, 65
 relations with Europe, 146
 Spanish in, 44
 Umayyads in, 18
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
 see NATO
North German Federation, 68
Novoye Vremya (periodical), 53
Nur Din Zangi, 29–30
Nusseibeh, Anwar, 130

O
Obama, Barack, US President, 163–5, 175
Occupied Territories, 100, 107–8, 124, 126, 130
 see also Gaza; West Bank
Odaenathus, ruler of Palmyra, 13
Oder River, 48
oil
 in Darfur, 171
 taplines, 90
 Turkey and, 140–1
 US control of taplines, 120
Oman, 16, 45, 148
Omar Bin El Khattab, caliph, 41

Omar, caliph, 17
Omran, Muhammad, 98
Oran, 44
Orontes River, 9
Oslo peace negotiations, 128–31
Ottoman Empire/Ottomans
 abolition of Caliphate, 85
 alliance to oust the Portuguese from
 the Indian Ocean, 42
 in Anatolia, 36
 in Arabia, 67
 Battle of Lepanto (1571), 44
 Battle of Marj Dabeq (1516), 36
 clashes with Russians over Armenia,
 64
 collapse, 73
 in Constantinople, 35, 51
 control of trade routes, 37, 52, 54
 Crimean War (1853–1856), 64
 decline, 54, 65
 defeat by Russia, 54–5
 defeat by the Greeks, 62
 economy, 54
 in Egypt, 37, 44
 extent, 37, 54
 Greek Orthodox faith in, 64
 in Iraq, 37
 map, 38
 against Napoleon, 59–60
 in North Africa, 37
 offer of refuge to Charles XII, 50
 planned alliance with the Memluks,
 36
 rapprochement with French, 44
 relations with Germany, 66
 rise of, 35–8, 187–8
 supremacy and challenges, 53–4
 in Syria, 37, 38, 44
Ozal, Turgat, 140, 141, 142, 176

P

Pacific Ocean, Russians reaching, 51–2
Pact of Baghdad (CENTO), 92–3, 99
pagan religions, 15
Pakistan, 92
Palestine/Palestinians
 1991 peace conference, 125
 claimed by Faisal, 73
 Crusaders in, 29
 First World War (1914–1918), 67
 Iranian support for, 144
 Israelite rebellion against Hellenic
 hegemony, 11
 Jewish state in, 61, 86, 87
 Memluks in, 33
 Moabites in, 12
 Mongols heading towards, 33
 Napoleon in, 60
 proposed union with Jordanians,
 127–8
 Ptoleuids in, 10
 rebellion against Persian rule, 8
 revolution (1936–1939), 85
 right to self-determination, 100–1,
 130
 self-determination, 124
 Syrian support for, 105, 107, 144
 Umayyads in, 18
 see also Syria: southern
Palestine Liberation Organization
 see PLO
Palestinian Authority, 162–3
Palestinian Intifada, 124, 130
Palmyra, 4
Palmyra, Kingdom of, 13
pan-Arab nationalism, 77, 80
Paris, 1985 Conference, 119
Parthian Empire, 10–11, 11, 12, 187
Pas de Calais, 44
Pax-Persiana, 7

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- Peres, Shimon, 127, 128, 131–3, 143, 148
- Perseus, King of Macedon, 60
- Persia/Persians
- alliance with the Dutch, 45
 - Arab Muslims in, 17
 - in Arabia, 14, 16
 - Buyids in, 185, 187
 - clashes with Russians over Azerbaijan, 64
 - Macedonians in, 8
 - Mongols in, 32, 36
 - northern, under Assyrian control, 7
 - opposition to Umayyads, 19
 - Parthians in, 10
 - Safavids in, 36, 53
 - Sassanids in, 12
 - Seleucids in, 10
 - Seljuks in, 26
 - Shia Islam in, 36
 - sponsorship of Judaism, 16
 - trade routes through, 32, 37
 - war with Byzantines, 16–17
- Persian Empire, 7–8, 8
- Persian Gulf
- British ‘protection,’ 63
 - geostrategic importance, 65
 - Kinda tribe in, 16
 - Ottoman control over, 37, 53
 - Portuguese control over, 35, 54
 - trade through, 4, 6, 10, 32
 - Wahhabi presence, 62
- Persian plateau, 4, 7
- Persians *see* Persia/Persians
- Peter the Great, Tsar, 49, 50, 52, 54
- Petra, 10–11
- Pharaohs, control of trade, 2, 3
- Philip II, King of Spain, 44
- Philip, King of Macedon, 8
- Phoenician city states, 8
- Pipes, Daniel, 164
- Pisa, 28
- Plassey, Battle of (1757), 55
- PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)
- Palestinian rejection of, 163
 - peace negotiations, 123–4, 127–31
 - radicalization of charter, 100–1
 - relations with Syria, 108–9, 111
 - treatment of opposers to Oslo Agreement, 133
 - withdrawal from Lebanon, 113
 - see also* Arafat, Yasser
- Poland, 48–9, 51, 52, 53, 119
- Poltava, Battle of (1709), 50, 52
- popes, influence of, 28
- Portugal/Portuguese
- alliance to oust from the Indian Ocean, 42, 45
 - alliance with Abyssinia, 36
 - in Arabia, 44
 - attack on Jeddah, 36
 - Battle of Diu (1509), 42
 - control of Indian Ocean trade routes, 34, 35, 37, 41, 42, 54
 - exploration of African coast, 41
 - pre-eighteenth century, 41–2, 43–4
 - Red Sea trade, 36, 44
 - slave trade, 45
 - Spanish in, 44
 - spice trade, 41
- Portuguese Empire, 41, 42, 45
- Pozarsky, Prince Dmitry, 51
- Primakov, Yevgeny, 145
- Princip, Gavrilo, 69
- Progressive Socialist Party, 154
- Protestantism, 44, 47, 48
- Prussia, 63, 68
- Ptolemids, 9, 10, 11, 187
- Ptolemy, 9

Pundak, Ron, 129
Putin, Vladimir, 189

Q

Qaddafi, Muammar, 177
al-Qaddah, 154
Qadish, Battle of (1284 BCE), 1, 6
al-Qaeda, 164
Qamishli, 79, 173, 175
Qatar, 148, 174
Qorei, Ahmad, 162
'Qornat Shahwan,' 160
al-Qrayya, 76
Quebec, French loss of, 48
Quraysh, 17
Qutuz, Mamluk leader, 33
Qutwatli, Shukri, 89, 90, 95
Quwatli, Shukri, President of Syria, 78

R

Rabin, Yitzhak, 127, 129, 130, 148
 assassination, 131, 132
Raguazan republic, 42
railways, 66–7
rainfall, dealing with lack of sufficient, 2
Rajjoub, Jibril, 162
Ramon, Haim, 131
Ramesses II, Pharaoh of Egypt, 1, 6, 60
Ras El Khaimah (Jalfar), 63
al-Rashids, 67
al-Rastan, 98, 106
Reagan, Ronald, US President, 112, 114, 122
Red Sea
 Egyptian control over, 4, 28, 32
 Israeli influence, 148
 Ottoman control over, 37, 53
 trade through, 4, 6, 11, 15, 19–20, 21, 30, 33, 36

refugee camps, 113, 123–4
religious wars
 see also Crusades
religious wars, in Europe, 44–5
Republican Guards, Syrian Arab Republic, 106
Republican People's Party (RPP), Turkey, 91, 140, 181
Rhineland, 68
Rhodesia, 65
rivers, trade routes along, 2
Roman Empire/Romans, 9, 12, 13, 185
 Battle of Beneventum (275 BCE), 60
Romania, 53, 64
Romanos IV Diogenes, emperor, 26
Romanov dynasty, 51
Rommel, Erwin, 84
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 89
rural areas, of Syria, 76, 97–9
Rurik dynasty, 51
Russia
 1991 Madrid peace conference sponsor, 125
 alliance against Mohammad Ali Pasha, 63
 Crimean War (1853–1856), 64
 custody of Holy Places in Jerusalem, 64
 defeat of Ottomans, 54–5, 188
 expansionism, 63–5, 66
 map of Russian Empire, 50
 Mediterranean interest, 169, 176
 and the Middle East in the 1990s, 144–6
 modernization process, 54–5
 navy in Istanbul, 62
 protectors of the Greek Orthodox faith in the Ottoman Empire, 64
 relations with Europe, 122
 relations with Iran, 145

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

relations with Syria, 145
relations with the US, 122
rise of, 51–3, 189
Second World War (1939–1945), 84
seventeenth-century, 50
support for Bashar al-Assad, 177–8
Swedes in, 48
trade routes, 35, 37, 52, 55
war with Sweden, 48–9, 52, 54
see also Soviet Union
Rwanda, 148, 170

S

Saad Zaghloul, 85
Saade, Antoun, 80–1, 90
Saakashvili, Mikheil, President of Georgia, 163
al-Sabbah, Hassan, 27
Sabra, refugee camp, 113
al-Sadat, Anwar, President of Egypt, 87, 107–8, 124, 170
Saeed, Nuri, 96
al-Saeka (Syrian special troops), 106, 111
Safar, Adel, 180
Safavids, 36, 37, 53, 54
Safir, Uri, 127
Saida, 78, 90
Saladin, 30–1, 73, 187
Saleh, Ali Abdullah, President of Yemen, 170, 172
Salkhad, Battle of (1925), 76
SAR *see* Syrian Arab Republic
Saraya Difaa (Defense Brigades), 106
Sardinia, 35, 43
Sargon of Akkad, 3
Sarkozy, Nicolas, 166
Sassanids, 12, 15, 16–17
al-Saud, Abdul Aziz, 67
Saud, King, 95

Saudi Arabia
attitude towards the British, 89
involvement in Syrian unrest, 174
Islamic fundamentalism in, 166–7, 172
Lebanese involvement, 154–6
oil tapline, 90
relations with Egypt, 95
relations with Israel, 148–9
relations with Syria, 99, 105, 107, 121
ties with Iraq, 175
see also Arabia/Arabs
Saxony, war with Sweden, 52
Sayf al-Dawla, 20, 21
al-Sayyed, Jamil, 156
Scandinavia, 26
Scottish throne, accession of William of Orange to, 47
Sebastian, King of Portugal, 44
Second World War (1939–1945), 83–4
Seleucid Empire/Seleucids, 9–10, 10, 10, 11, 186, 187
Seleucos I, 9
Selim III, sultan, 60
Selim, sultan, 37
Seljuk Caliphate/Seljuks, 25–9, 27
Serbia, 64, 69
‘Serbian nationalist’ (Gavrilo Princip), 69
Seven Years War (1756), 48, 56
Seves, General, 62
Seychelles, 85
Shaaban, Buthaina, 180
al-Shahhal, 167
Sham Sharif *see* Syria
‘Sham Shariff’, 38
Shamir, Yitzhak, 124, 125, 125–6
Shammar tribal confederation, 79, 175
Shamoun, Camille, 90, 92

- Shanghai Corporation Organization, 165
- Shapur, Persian emperor, 13
- al-Shaqfa, Mohammed Riad, 110
- al-Sharaa, Faroud, 154
- al-Sharaa, Farouk, 106
- al-Sharass, Farouk, 134
- Sharm el-Sheikh, 1996 summit, 133–4
- Sharon, Ariel, 112, 141, 162
- Shartouni, Habib, 113
- Shatila refugee camp, 113
- Shawar, vizier, 29, 30
- al-Shehabi, Hikmat, 154, 155–6
- Shiites
- allies of Syria, 154
 - in Iraq, 83, 121, 158
 - in Lebanon, 114, 123–4
 - in Persia, 36
 - Safavids as, 36
- al-Shikaki, Fathi, 133
- Shin Bet (Israeli security service), 132–3
- Shirkuh, Kurdish general (later vizier), 30
- Shishakli, Adib, General, 90, 93
- Shouf, 63
- Shultz, George, 123
- Siberia, 51, 178
- Sicily
- Aragonese control of, 35, 43
 - Normans in, 26, 28
- Sidon, 8, 16
- Silk Road, 19, 32
- Sinai Peninsula
- 1973 war, 107–8
 - 1974 and 1975 agreements, 108
 - under Egyptian control, 4
 - French plan for, 64
 - Hyksos in, 4
 - Nasser in, 99
 - Ottoman army in, 60
 - as part of proposed Syrian nation, 80
 - Seljuks on border, 26
- slave trade, 45
- Social Darwinism, 81
- Social National Party, Syria, 113
- Socotra, 35, 42
- Sofia, Russian regent, 52
- al-Solh, Rashid, 155
- Somalia, 123
- South Africa, British in, 65
- South Sudan, 171
- Southeast Asia, 41, 94
- al-Souwayda, Battle of (1925), 76
- Soviet Union
- in Africa, 94, 99
 - Arab–Israeli Peace Conference in Geneva, 108
 - in Arabia, 94, 120–1
 - arms deal with Egypt, 93, 99
 - in Asia, 99
 - CENTO against, 92
 - collapse, 119
 - in Latin America, 99
 - relations with Egypt, 189
 - relations with Syria, 99, 109, 112, 114, 119–20
 - relations with the US, 112, 114
 - see also* Russia
- Spain/Spanish
- Almoravids in, 26
 - Battle of Lepanto (1571), 44
 - Bourbon, 47
 - Byzantines in, 14
 - defeated by the British in eighteenth century, 47
 - Dutch rebellion against, 44
 - Hapsburgs, 47
 - map of the Spanish Empire, 43
 - Nasrids in, 35–6

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

- in North Africa, 36, 37
- in Portugal, 44
- pre-eighteenth century, 41, 43–4, 44–5
- threat to France, 44
- in Tripoli (Libya), 36
- Umayyads in, 25
- Spanish Armada, 45
- Special Forces (al-Saeeka), Syrian, 106, 111
- spice trade, 35, 41, 43, 45, 47
- SSNP (Syrian Social National Party), 80–2, 93, 96
- Stalin, Joseph, 139
- Strait of Mandab, 37
- Strategic Depth, The* (Davutoglu), 191
- Streltsy, 52
- Sudan, 62, 65, 165
 - see also* South Sudan
- Suez Canal
 - British withdrawal from, 92
 - First World War (1914–1918), 67
 - geostrategic importance, 65
 - inauguration (1869), 65
 - Nasser and, 94
 - Roosevelt visit, 89
- Sulaiman, General Michel, 160
- Sulaiman, Omar, 171
- Sulaiman Pasha al-Fransawi, 62
- Suleiman the Magnificent, sultan, 37, 53
- Sunnis
 - in the Baath Party, 98, 106
 - in Hauran, 79
 - in Iraq, 83, 121, 158
 - in Lebanon, 154, 155, 160
 - not favored by France, 98
 - states in the Syrian Arab Republic, 74
- Surat, 55
- Sweden, wars, 48–50, 51, 52, 54
- Swedish Empire, 49
- Sykes–Picot Agreement, 73, 74, 83
- Syria
 - 1973 constitution, 106
 - 1973 war, 107–8
 - 1982 rebellion of northern cities, 109, 110
 - in the 1990s, 147–9
 - Arab Spring and, 169–84
 - al-Assad: like father like son, 180–1
 - Bashar al-Assad supporters, 176–80
 - containing the Egyptian revolution, 169–72
 - Syrian protests, 172–6
 - under Bashar al-Assad, 153–68
 - American attack, 157–9
 - dream of a Christian state, 159–60
 - Obama and the economic crisis, 163–5
 - rubble of a cause, 162–3
 - Turkey to contain Iran, 165–7
 - Walid Jumblatt's secret, 160–2
 - Christianity in, 15
 - coastal, 6, 16
 - cultural identity, 15
 - demography, 104–5
 - early history until the Middle Ages, 1–23
 - Arabs in, 16–18
 - Egyptians, Hittites and Mitannis in, 5–7
 - Near East in antiquity, 1–4
 - Persian and Hellenic age, 7–12
 - Romans-Byzantines vs Parthians-Sassanids, 12–16
 - eastern, Buyids in, 21
 - effect of establishment of Israel, 87
 - eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, 25–39
 - Memluks in, 32–5

- Ottomans in, 35–8, 53
 - reuniting the Near East, 29–32
 - Seljuks, the Crusades and Fatimids, 25–9
 - ethnic fragmentation in, 74
 - geostrategic importance, 5, 19–21, 53, 104
 - under Hafez al-Assad, 1970s–1980s, 103–18
 - 1982–1984, 112–15
 - in Lebanon, 110–12
 - regional developments during the 1970s, 107–10
 - a system designed for al-Assad? 103–6
 - Hellenic culture, 15
 - Italo–German commission, 84
 - Macedonians in, 8
 - under the mandate, 73–88
 - a case for Israel, 86–7
 - as divided by the French mandate, 75
 - a fragmented state? 79–80
 - Iraq vs Egypt, 82–5
 - rebellions, 75–8
 - SSNP vs Baath, 80–2
 - Sykes–Picot Agreement, 74
 - upon achieving independence in 1943, 78
 - missionaries in, 63
 - nationalist movements, 69
 - in the nineteenth century, 59–71
 - Abdul Hamid II and the great powers, 65–7
 - the First World War, 67–70
 - Mohammad Ali and, 61–3
 - Napoleon in Egypt, 59–61
 - Russian, French and British expansionism, 63–5
 - northern, 4, 9, 16, 21, 26
 - relation to the security of Egypt, 60
 - relations with France, 146
 - relations with Iraq, 149
 - relations with Russia, 145
 - slavery in, 31
 - southern
 - Egyptians in, 4, 6, 8, 9
 - Fatimids in, 21
 - Ghassanids in, 15, 15–16
 - Ikhshidids in, 20
 - Wahhabis in, 62
 - Syriac culture, 15
 - Syriac language, 7
 - on the threshold of the new world system, 119–38
 - international changes, 119–23
 - Middle East peace conference, 123–5
 - towards Oslo, 125–31
 - towards the end of the peace process, 131–4
 - trade routes, 16, 19, 78
 - turbulent years of independence, 89–102
 - coup d'états, 89–91
 - defeat in 1967, 99–101
 - Nasser and the Syrians, 94–6
 - rise of Nasser, 91–4
 - ruralization, 97–9
 - Syriac culture, 15
 - Syriac language, 7
 - Syrian Arab Republic (SAR), 74
 - Syrian Desert, 4, 13, 19
 - Syrian–Egyptian Unity Agreement, 89
 - Syrian Social National Party *see* SSNP
- T**
- Taif Agreement (1989), 121, 154
 - Talabani, Jalal, 141
 - Tamerlane, Turkik ruler, 33, 53

Tanganyika, 65
Tartars, 51
Taurus Mountains, 6, 17, 18, 63, 64, 65, 181
Thessaloniki, road to from Belgrade, 65
Thirty Years War (1618–1648), 48
Thrace, 7, 8
Tiberias, Lake, 107
Timujin (Genghis Khan), Mongol ruler, 32
Tippo Sahib, Indian ruler, 59
Tlas, Mustafa, 98, 106, 156
Tordesillas, Treaty of, 43–4
trade, development of, 2, 7
transportation systems, 2, 12, 61, 66–7
tribal confederations, rise in, 26
Tripoli (Lebanon), 30, 33, 77, 78, 174
Tripoli (Libya), 36, 44, 177
Tulunids, 20
Tunisia
 2011 protests, 171
 Crusade against, 32
 Fatimids in, 20
 French in, 65
 Ottoman control of, 53
 role in Middle East peace negotiations, 127
 Spanish in, 44
Turabi, Hassan, 165
Turkey
 1980 coup, 140
 in CENTO, 92
 effect of establishment of Israel, 86
 effect of Syrian unrest, 175–6
 in the Middle East, 91
 and the Middle East in the 1990s, 139–44
 relations with Iran, 165–7
 relations with Syria, 180–1, 191
 relations with the US, 143

 trade routes, 79
Turkification, 69
Turkish Central Bank, 91
Turkish-Iraqi border, 142
Turkmen, Safavids as Shia, 36
Turkmen, Altair, 140–1
Tutsis, 148, 170

U

UAE, 63
Uganda, 62, 65
Ukraine, 37, 51, 53, 55, 145, 157, 163
Umayyad Caliphate/Umayyads, 17–19, 18, 25, 185, 186, 187
UN (United Nations)
 call for sanctions on Syrian officials, 176
 observers, 125
 Resolution 242, 100, 125
 Resolution 338, 125
 Resolution 1559, 158
 use by the US, 122
 withdrawal from Egypt, 99
United Arab Republic, map, 95
United Nations *see* UN
United States
 1991 Madrid peace conference sponsor, 125
 2001 war on Afghanistan, 157, 179–80, 189
 2003 invasion of Iraq, 157, 159, 189
 Arab–Israeli Peace Conference in Geneva, 108
 geostrategy, 169–70
 in Lebanon, 113–14, 124–5, 154–5, 159–62
 in the Middle East, 89–90, 99, 113, 120, 122, 163–5, 174
 missionaries in Syria, 63
 oil taplines, 90

relations with Britain, 146–7
relations with Egypt, 171–2
relations with Iraq, 120, 181
relations with Russia, 122
relations with Syria, 114
relations with the Soviet Union, 112,
114
relations with Turkey, 143–4
support for Israel, 169
support for Lebanese Front, 110–11,
111–12
support for Nasser, 92
world hegemony, 122–4, 188
Urban, II, pope, 28
Uzbekistan, 145

V

Van, Lake, 26
Vatican, canonization of King Louis IX,
32
Venetian republic/Venice, 28, 31, 42, 43
Victoria, Lake, 62, 148, 170
Vienna
besieged by Ottomans, 37, 53
Congress of (1814–15), 68
Treaty of, 60
‘Voice of the Arabs’ radio station, 127
Vranitzky, Franz, 127

W

Wadi Araba Agreement (1994), 147–8,
163
Wadi Sarhan, 77
Wafd Party, Egypt, 85
Wahhabis, 61–2
Wallachia, 52, 64
Walloon provinces, 44
Waterloo, Battle of (1815), 67
Wazzan, Shafik, 115
Weser River, 48

West Africa, French in, 64
West Bank, 99, 113, 128, 143, 149,
162–3
Western Europe, 26, 28
Wilhelm II, Kaiser of Germany, 66
William of Orange, 44, 47
world pre-eighteenth century, 41–57
World Trade Center, New York, 9/11
attacks, 157
World Trade Organization, 122, 123
writing, development of, 2, 2–3

X

Xerxes I of Persia, 7

Y

Yakan, Fathi, 167
Yarmuk River, battle between
Byzantines and Arab Muslims, 17
Yazid bin Abi Soufyan, governor of
Syria, 17
Yediot Ahronot (newspaper), 127
Yeltsin, Boris, 145
Yemen
Abyssinians in, 15, 16
Arab Muslims in, 17
British in, 67
demonstrations in, 172
Eretreans in, 170–1
Houthi revolt, 164, 169–70
Iranian support for, 164
Mohammad Ali Pasha in, 63
Ottomans in, 53
Saladin in, 30
trade routes through, 6, 16
Yugoslavia, 123
Yushchenko, Viktor, 163
Yussef (nephew of Shirkuh) *see* Saladin

The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria

Z

Zaim, Husni, 90

Zaire, 62

Zamorin of Calicut, 42

Zangids, 30

Zanki, Imadeddine, 187

Zanki, Nouredine, 187

Zhu Di, Chinese Emperor, 179

Zionists, 86, 87, 124

Zoubi, Mahmoud, 106

El Zou'bi, 154