

# Nationalism Around the World, 1919-1939

## THE STORY MATTERS...

World War I slowed the push toward independence among colonies in many parts of the world, but the end of the war gave a new strength to these efforts. Mohandas Gandhi was the charismatic leader of the Indian nationalist movement against British rule. He was committed to nonviolent action as a method for political and social change. Using peaceful methods, he eventually led India to independence. His actions inspired people to seek the end of colonialism, racism, and violence.

## Lesson 29-1

# Nationalism in the Middle East

### READING HELPDESK

#### Academic Vocabulary

legislature      element

#### Content Vocabulary

genocide      ethnic cleansing      caliphate

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can political control lead to nationalist movements?
- How does economic exploitation lead to nationalist movements?

### IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The Ottoman Empire ended shortly after World War I. While the new Turkish Republic modernized, Persia evolved into the modern state of Iran and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established. In the Palestine Mandate, tensions mounted as both Arabs and Jews viewed the area as their homeland.

## Decline of the Ottoman Empire

**GUIDING QUESTION** *What led to the final decline and fall of the Ottoman Empire?*

The Ottoman Empire – which once included parts of eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa – had been growing steadily weaker. The empire’s size had decreased dramatically during the nineteenth century when it lost much of its European territory. Ottoman rule also ended in North Africa. In 1876 Ottoman reformers seized control of the empire’s government and adopted a constitution that set up a legislature. However, the sultan they placed on the throne, Abdülhamid Ü, suspended the new constitution. Abdülhamid paid a high price for his authoritarian actions – he lived in constant fear of assassination. He kept 1,000 loaded revolvers hidden throughout his guarded estate. The suspended constitution became a symbol of change to a group of reformers named the Young Turks. This group forced the restoration of the constitution in 1908 and deposed the sultan the following year. However, the Young Turks lacked strong support for their government.

### Impact of World War I

The final blow to the old empire came from World War I. After the Ottoman government allied with Germany, the British sought to undermine Ottoman rule in the Arabian Peninsula by supporting Arab nationalist activities there. The nationalists were aided by the dashing British adventurer T.E. Lawrence, popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia.

In 1916 Arabia declared its independence from Ottoman rule. British troops advanced from Egypt and seized the region of Palestine. After suffering more than 300,000 deaths during the war, the Ottoman Empire made peace with the Allies in October 1918.

### The Armenian Genocide

During the war the Ottoman Turks alienated the Allies with their policies toward minority subjects, especially the Armenians. The Christian Armenian minority had been pressing the Ottoman government for its independence for years. In 1915 the Ottoman government accused the Armenians of supporting the Russians and used those allegations to kill or exile all Armenians.

Within seven months, 600,000 Armenians were killed, and 500,000 were deported. Of those, 400,000 died while marching through the deserts and swamps of Syria and Mesopotamia. By September 1915, an estimated 1 million Armenians were dead. They were victims of **genocide**, the deliberate mass murder of a particular racial, political, or cultural group. (A similar practice would be called **ethnic cleansing** in the Bosnian War of 1993-1996.) One eyewitness to the 1915 Armenian deportation said:

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“[She] saw vultures hovering over children who had fallen dead by the roadside. She saw beings crawling along, maimed, starving and begging for bread.... [S]he passed soldiers driving before them ... whole families, men, women and children, shrieking, pleading, wailing ... setting out for exile into the desert from which there was no return.”

– from *The Nili Spies*, by Anita Engle

By 1918, another 400,000 Armenians were massacred. Russia, France, and Britain denounced the Turkish actions as being “crimes against humanity and civilization.” Because of the war, however, the killings continued.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Summarizing** In what ways did the war effort affect the Ottoman government?

## Middle East Changes

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did the Middle East change after the fall of the Ottoman Empire?*

While Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia emerged as modern states, tensions mounted between the Jewish and Muslim inhabitants in the Palestine Mandate.

### The Modernization of Turkey

At the end of World War 1, the tottering Ottoman Empire collapsed. Great Britain and France made plans to divide Ottoman territories in the Middle East. Only the area of present-day Turkey remained under Ottoman control. Then, Greece invaded Turkey and seized the western parts of the Anatolian Peninsula.

The invasion alarmed key elements in Turkey, who were organized under the leadership of the war hero Colonel Mustafa Kemal. Kemal summoned a national congress calling for the creation of an elected government and a new Republic of Turkey. His forces drove the Greeks from the Anatolian Peninsula. In 1923 the last of the Ottoman sultans fled the country, which was then declared to be the Turkish Republic. The Ottoman Empire had finally come to an end.

President Kemal was now popularly known as Atatürk (AT • uh • TUHRK), or “father Turk.” Over the next several years, he tried to transform Turkey into a modern state. A democratic system was put in place, but Atatürk did not tolerate opposition and harshly suppressed his critics.

Atatürk’s changes went beyond politics. Many Arabic elements were eliminated from the Turkish language, which was now written in the Roman alphabet. Popular education was introduced, and all Turkish citizens were forced to adopt family (last) names, in the European style.

Atatürk also took steps to modernize Turkey’s economy. Factories were established, and a five-year plan provided for state direction over the economy. Atatürk also tried to modernize farming, although he had little effect on the nation’s peasants.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Atatürk’s reform program was his attempt to break the power of the Islamic religion. He wanted to transform Turkey into a secular state – a state that rejects religious influence on its policies. Atatürk said, “Religion is like a heavy blanket that keeps the people of Turkey asleep.”

The **caliphate** was formally abolished in 1924. Men were forbidden to wear the fez, the brimless cap worn by Turkish Muslims. When Atatürk began wearing a Western panama hat, one of his critics remarked, “You cannot make a Turk into a Westerner by giving him a hat.”

Women were strongly discouraged from wearing the veil, a traditional Islamic custom. New laws gave women marriage and inheritance rights equal to men’s. In 1934 women received the right to vote. All citizens were also given the right to convert to other religions.

The legacy of Kemal Atatürk was enormous. In practice, not all of his reforms were widely accepted, especially by devout Muslims. However, most of the changes that he introduced were kept after his death in 1938. By and large, the Turkish Republic was the product of Atatürk’s determined efforts.

### The Beginnings of Modern Iran

A similar process of modernization was underway in Persia. Under the Qajar dynasty (1794-1925), the country had not been very successful in resolving its domestic problems. Increasingly, the dynasty turned to Russia and Great Britain to protect itself from its own people, which led to a growing foreign presence in Persia. The discovery of oil in the southern part of the country in 1908 attracted more foreign interest. Oil exports increased, and most of the profits went to British investors. The growing foreign presence led to the rise of a native Persian nationalist movement. In 1921 Reza Khan, an officer in the Persian army, led a military mutiny that seized control of Tehran, the capital city. In 1925 Reza Khan established himself as shah, or king, and was called Reza Shah Pahlavi. The name of the new dynasty he created, Pahlavi, was the name of the ancient Persian language. During the next few years, Reza Shah Pahlavi tried to follow the example of Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. He introduced a number of reforms to strengthen and modernize the government, the military, and the economic system. Persia became the modern state of Iran in 1935.

Unlike Atatürk, Reza Shah Pahlavi did not try to destroy the power of Islamic beliefs. However, he did encourage the creation of a Western-style educational system and forbade women to wear the veil in public.

Foreign powers continued to harass Iran. To free himself from Great Britain and the Soviet Union, Reza Shah Pahlavi drew closer to Nazi Germany. During World War Ü, the shah rejected the demands of Great Britain and the Soviet Union to expel a large number of Germans from Iran. In response, Great Britain and the Soviet Union sent troops into the country. Reza Shah Pahlavi resigned and was replaced by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

### Arab Nationalism

World War I offered the Arabs an excellent opportunity to escape from Ottoman rule. However, what would replace that rule? The Arabs did not have a nation-state, but they were united by their language and by the Islamic cultural and religious heritage that nearly all of them shared. However, efforts by generations of political leaders to create a single Arab nation have not succeeded.

Because Britain supported the efforts of Arab nationalists in 1916, the nationalists hoped this support would continue after the war. Instead, Britain agreed with

France to create mandates in the area. These were former Ottoman territories that the new League of Nations now supervised. The League, in turn, granted its members the right to govern particular mandates. The Iraq and Palestine Mandates (which included Transjordan) were assigned to Great Britain; the Syria and Lebanon Mandates were assigned to France.

For the most part, Europeans created the modern map of the Middle East. The Europeans determined future borders and divided the peoples. In general, the people in these states had no strong identification with their designated country. However, a sense of Arab nationalism remained.

## Analyzing PRIMARY SOURCES

### The Balfour Declaration

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

– from the Balfour Declaration

### DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

How does the Balfour Declaration simultaneously acknowledge the Zionist desire for a Jewish state and the challenges in the region?

### Saudi Arabia

In the early 1920s, a reform leader, Ibn Sa’ūd, united Arabs in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula. Devout and gifted, Ibn Sa’ūd won broad support. He established the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

At first, the new kingdom, which consisted mostly of the vast central desert of the Arabian Peninsula, was desperately poor. Its main source of income came from the Muslim pilgrims who visited Makkah (Mecca) and Madinah (Medina). During the 1930s, however, U.S. prospectors began to explore for oil. Standard Oil made a successful strike at Dhahran, on the Persian Gulf, in 1938. Soon, the Arabian-American oil company Ararnco was created. The isolated kingdom was suddenly flooded with Western oil industries that brought the promise of wealth.

### Palestine and the Balfour Declaration

The situation in the Palestine Mandate complicated matters in the Middle East even more. Although the land of Israel had been the home of the Jews in antiquity, some Jews were forced into exile in the first century A.D. A Jewish presence always remained, but Muslim Arabs made

up about 80 percent of the region’s population. In the Palestine Mandate, the nationalism of Jews and Arabs came into conflict because both groups viewed the area as a potential national state.

Since the 1890s, Zionists – Jewish nationalists – had advocated that a Jewish state be re-established in the ancient Jewish homeland. Jews recalled that the ancient state of Israel was located there. Arabs pointed out that their ancestors also had lived in the region of Palestine for centuries. As a result of the Zionist movement and growing anti-Semitism in Europe, more Jews began to migrate to Palestine. Then during World War 1, the British government, hoping to win Jewish support for the Allies, issued the Balfour Declaration. It expressed support for a national home for the Jews in Palestine, and added that this goal should not undermine the rights of the non-Jewish peoples living there or the rights of Jews living in other countries. The League of Nations’ British Mandate for Palestine (1922) incorporated the Balfour Declaration.

The Balfour Declaration drew even more Jews to the Palestine Mandate. In 1933 the Nazi regime in Germany began policies that later led to the Holocaust and the murder of 6 million Jews. During the 1930s, many Jews fled to the Palestine Mandate. Violence flared between Arab and Jewish inhabitants.

In 1936, Arabs in the Palestine Mandate revolted, demanding both independence from Britain and an end to Jewish immigration. Trying to end the revolt, the British declared in 1939, on the eve of the Holocaust, that only 75,000 Jewish people would be allowed to immigrate to the Mandate over the next five years; after that, no more Jews could do so. This decision, which closed one of the only escape routes for Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, only intensified the tension and increased the bloodshed.

## CONNECTIONS TO Today

Saudi Arabia has the largest oil reserves in the world, possessing one-fifth of Earth’s known supplies. The Saudi reserves are estimated to be more than 260 billion barrels. Saudi Arabia is also the location of the world’s largest oil field, Al-Ghawar, which was discovered in 1948 and still holds 70 billion barrels after 60 years of production. Following Saudi Arabia in estimated oil reserves are Canada, Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait. The United States, with estimated reserves of 19 billion barrels, ranks only 14th, just behind China.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Contrasting** Contrast the emergence of modern Turkey and Iran.

## REVIEWING VOCABULARY

<b>genocide</b>	the deliberate mass murder or physical extinction of a particular racial, political, or cultural group
<b>ethnic cleansing</b>	a policy of killing or forcibly removing an ethnic group from its lands; used by the Serbs against the Muslim minority in Bosnia
<b>caliphate</b>	the office of the caliph