

Sectarianism in the Middle East

Sectarianism

----- bigotry, discrimination, or hatred arising from attaching importance to perceived differences between subdivisions within a group, such as between different religious beliefs, cultural heritage, social-economic class, or factions of a political movement.

Sectarianism in Europe

- The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), affecting the Holy Roman Empire including Habsburg__Austria, Bohemia, France, Denmark and Sweden
- The Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) between Spain and the Low Countries
- The French Wars of Religion (1562–1598)
- The Wars of the Three Kingdoms (1639–1651), affecting England, Scotland and Ireland
- Scottish Reformation and Civil Wars
- English Reformation and Civil War
- Irish Confederate Wars and the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland
- The battle of Kappel in Switzerland (1531)
- The German Peasants' War (1524–1525)
- The Schmalkaldic War (1546–1547) in the Holy Roman Empire

--and then came the Peace of Westphalia (1648)

- Cessation of hostilities – (sort of)
- Codified the idea of sovereign states as the building blocks of international order

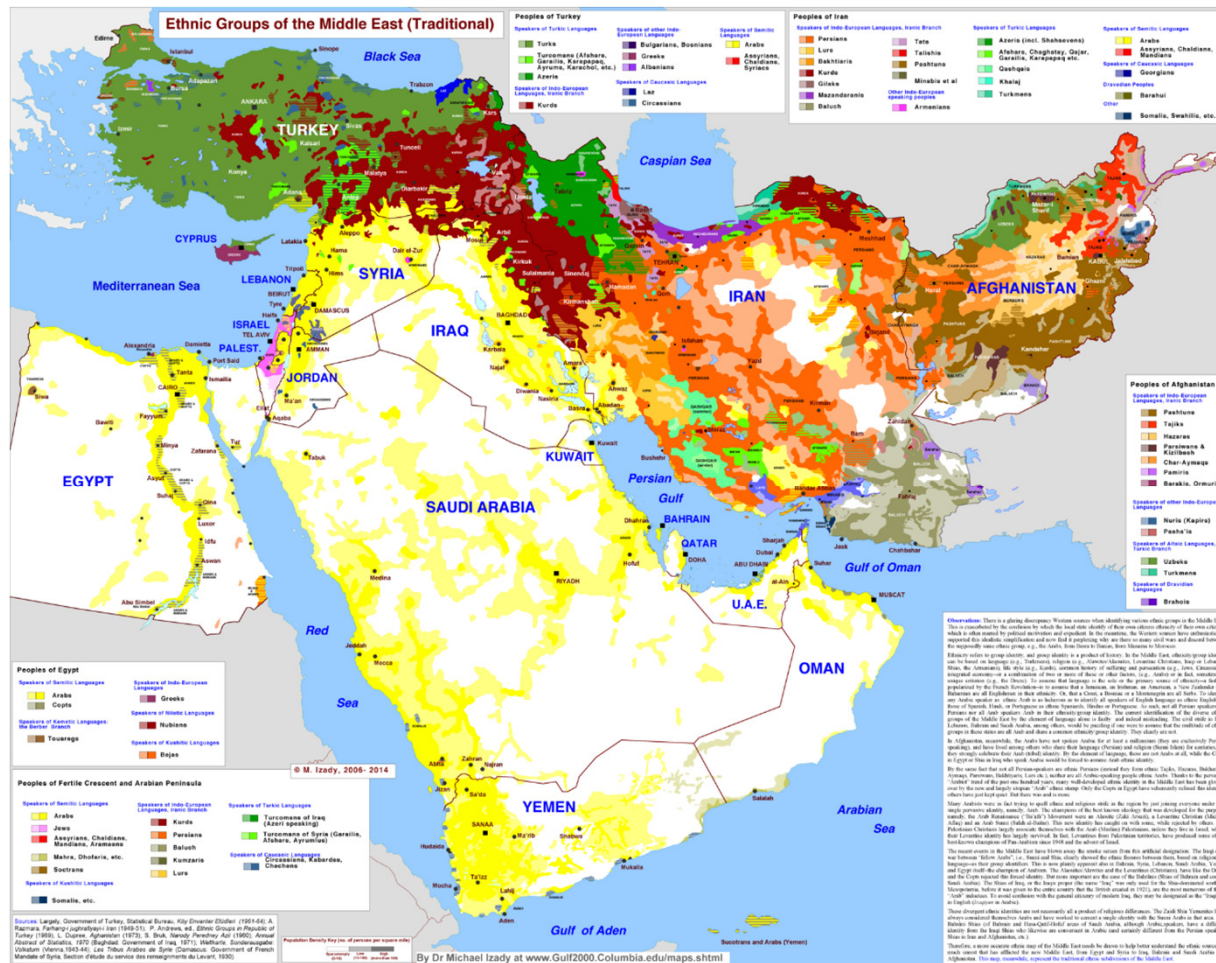
Principles of Westphalia

- The modern state system emerged after a century of sectarian conflict, when the Thirty Years' War brought together representatives of the European powers to establish the Peace of Westphalia. The treaties they concluded codified the idea of sovereign states as the building blocks of international order
- Sovereignty of states and the fundamental right of political self determination
- Legal equality between states
- Non-intervention of one state in the internal affairs of another state
- Lack of other authority over state than the domestic authority (examples of such other authorities being a non-domestic church, a non-domestic political organization, or any other external agent)

Meanwhile (circa 1700)



Middle East Ethnic Mix



Ottoman Millet system -- and more

- Separate legal courts pertaining to personal law under which non-Muslim minorities were allowed to rule themselves.
- The millets set their own laws and collected and distributed their own taxes. All that was required was loyalty to the Empire
- Capitulations

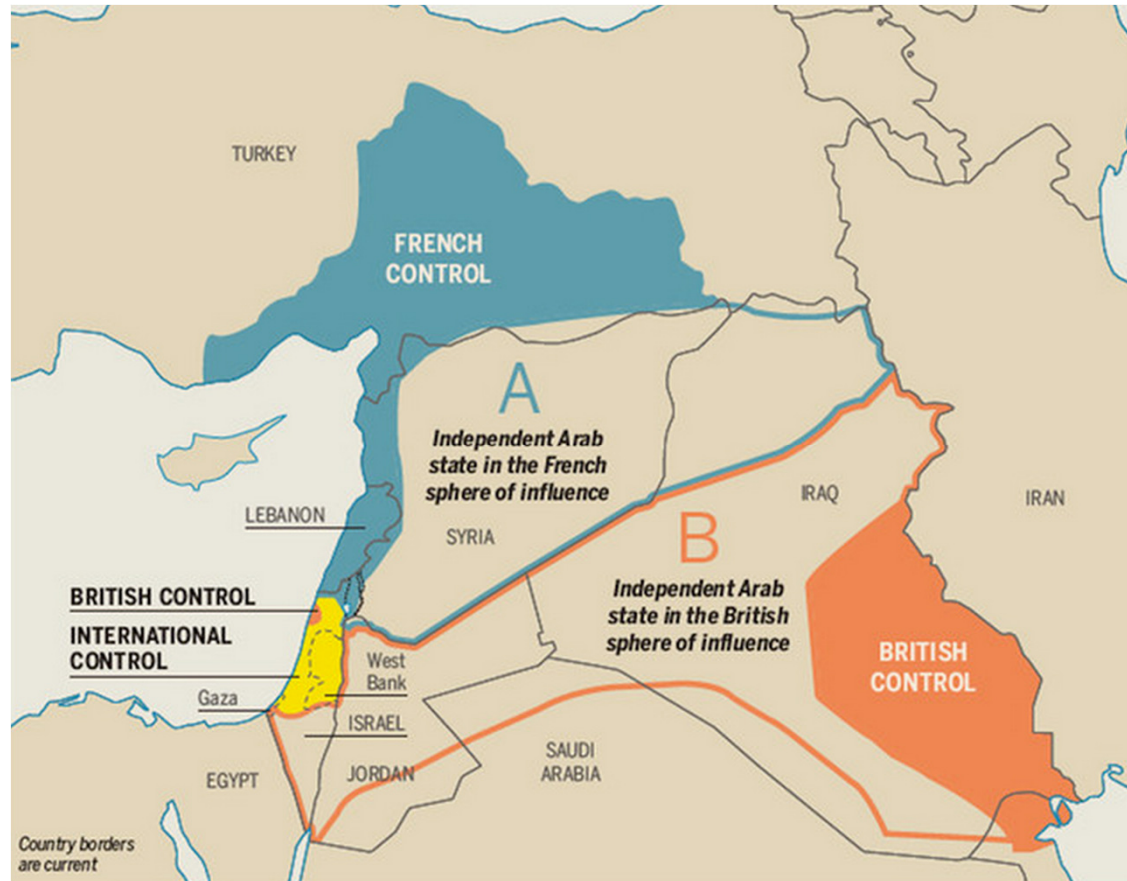
--- and then came “Nationalism”

- The desire of a large group of people who share the same culture, history and language to form a separate and independent nation of their own
- In Europe before the development of nationalism, people were generally loyal to a religion or to a particular leader rather than to their Nation States
- With the emergence of a national public sphere and an integrated, country-wide economy starting in 18th-century England, people began to identify with the country at large, rather than the smaller unit of their family, town or province

Middle East, 1914



The Sykes-Picot treaty - 1916



UN Partition Plan - 1947



Colonial legacies

- Borders marginalized minority groups
- European-style nation-states, that compete with other, older visions of order and power.
- Israel

Nationalism in the Middle East

- Should the 'State' really have supremacy over religion?
- The colonial borders do not represent natural ethnic, cultural, and religious sect groupings so why should we support these Western artifacts?

Arab Nationalism - early 20th Century

- Nationalist ideology celebrating the glories of Arab civilization, the language and literature of the Arabs, calling for rejuvenation and political union in the Arab world
- Its central premise is that the peoples of the Arab World, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea, constitute one nation bound together by common linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical heritage.
- One of the primary goals of Arab nationalism is the end of Western influence in the Arab World, seen as a "nemesis" of Arab strength, and the removal of those Arab governments considered to be dependent upon Western power.

Muslim Brotherhood

- Founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna - “to promote implementing of traditional Islamic sharia law and a social renewal based on an Islamic ethos of altruism and civic duty, in opposition to political and social injustice and to British imperial rule”
- Originating in Egypt, the Brotherhood has taken roots throughout the world.
- The Brotherhood was a driving force in the ‘Arab Spring’ revolutions, and indeed Mohamed Morsi is of the Brotherhood

Islamic Revival aka Political Islam, Islamism

- Arab oil embargo and subsequent quadrupling of the price of oil in the mid-1970s
- Iranian Revolution (1979) that established an Islamic republic in Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini
- The revival is a reversal of the Westernization approach common in Arab and Asian governments earlier in the 20th century
- The revival has also been accompanied by some religious extremism and attacks on civilians and military targets by the extremists representing a part of the revival

“Shia Awakening”

- The Iranian Islamic revolution changed the Shia–Sunni power equation in Muslim countries arousing the traditionally subservient Shia to the alarm of traditionally dominant Sunni .
- Where Iranian revolutionaries saw Arab Nationalism stirrings, Sunnis saw mostly Shia mischief and a threat to Sunni predominance

- Today, the regional order—still composed of European-style nation-states—is threatened by transnational political Islam, in the form of both political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadist groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS