

HOMEWORK: NATIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST (SOUTHWEST ASIA)

Directions: Please answer all questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1) What was the mandate system? Why was it considered a “compromise solution”?
- 2) Which countries gained control over new territory under this system? Which lands did they control?
- 3) What was Mustafa Kemal’s goal for the nation of Turkey? What steps did he take to achieve this goal?
- 4) Describe **four** specific reforms Kemal mentions *in the speech excerpts*.
- 5) How did Persia’s status change after WWI? Compare/contrast Reza Shah Pahlavi and Mustafa Kemal.
- 6) If you were a citizen of the new nations of Turkey or Iran, would you be for or against the types of reforms made by Kemal and Pahlavi? Explain your answer.
- 7) What was Pan-Arabism? What was Zionism? How were they similar? Why did tensions grow between Arabs and Jews in the 1930s?
- 8) During the 1920s and 1930s, European and American companies discovered enormous oil deposits in Southwest Asia. Write a paragraph (at least 5 sentences) in which you state and explain a hypothesis about how you think this discovery would affect the future development of the Middle East region.

The Mandate System

Having contributed to the Allied victory, Arab peoples expected to have a say in the outcome of the Great War. But the victorious French and British planned to treat the Middle East like a territory open to colonial rule. The result was a legacy of instability that has persisted to this day.

At the Paris Peace Conference, France, Britain, Italy, and Japan proposed to divide the former German colonies and the territories of the Ottoman Empire among themselves, but their ambitions clashed with President Wilson’s ideal of national self-determination. Eventually, they arrived at a compromise solution called the **mandate system**: colonial rulers would administer the territories but would be accountable to the League of Nations for “the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants.”

The Arab-speaking territories of the old Ottoman Empire were Class A Mandates, meaning they had “reached a state of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of... advice and assistance by a Mandatory, until such time as they are able to stand alone.” Arabs interpreted this as a promise of independence. Britain and France sent troops into the region “for the benefit of its inhabitants.” Palestine (now Israel), Transjordan (now Jordan), and Iraq (formerly Mesopotamia) became British mandates; France claimed Syria and Lebanon.

Turkey Becomes a Republic

At the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire was forced to give up all its territories except Turkey. In 1919, Greek soldiers invaded Turkey and threatened to conquer it. The Turkish sultan was powerless to stop the Greeks. However, in 1922, a brilliant commander, **Mustafa Kemal**, successfully led Turkish nationalists in fighting back the Greeks and their British backers. After winning a peace, the nationalists overthrew the last Ottoman sultan.

In 1923, Kemal became the president of the new Republic of Turkey, the first republic in Southwest Asia. From his leadership, Turkey gained a new sense of its national identity. His influence was so strong that the Turkish people gave him the name Ataturk—“father of the Turks.” To achieve his goal of transforming Turkey into a modern nation, he ushered in these sweeping reforms:

- Islamic law was replaced with a new law code, based on European models.
- The Muslim calendar was replaced with the western (Christian) one.
- People were required to wear western dress.
- State schools were set up. Arabic script was replaced with the western alphabet.
- Women no longer had to wear veils, were allowed to vote, and could work outside their homes.
- Turkey was industrialized. Kemal built roads, railroads, and factories.

Document 6: Excerpts from Mustafa Kemal's Speeches to the Turkish People

1. "Gentlemen, it was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on the heads of our nation as an emblem of ignorance, negligence, fanaticism, and hatred of progress and civilization, to accept in its place the hat, the headgear used by the whole civilized world, and in this way to demonstrate that the Turkish nation, in its mentality as in other respects, in no way diverges from civilized social life...."
2. Gentlemen, the Turkish people who founded the Turkish Republic are civilized; they are civilized in history and in reality. But I tell you as your own brother, as your friend, as your father, that the people of the Turkish Republic, who claim to be civilized, must show and prove that they are civilized, by their ideas and their mentality, by their family life and their way of living. In a word, the truly civilized people of Turkey...must prove in fact that they are civilized and advanced persons also in their outward aspect. I must make these last words clear to you, so that the whole country and the world may easily understand what I mean. I shall put my explanations to you in the form of a question.
3. In some places I have seen women who put a piece of cloth or a towel or something like it over their heads to hide their faces, and who turn their backs or huddle themselves on the ground when a man passes by. What are the meaning and sense of this behaviour? Gentlemen, can the mothers and daughters of a civilized nation adopt this strange manner, this barbarous posture? It is a spectacle that makes the nation an object of ridicule. It must be remedied at once....
4. My friends, our rich and harmonious language will now be able to display itself with new Turkish letters. We must free ourselves from these incomprehensible signs, that for centuries have held our minds in an iron vise. You must learn the new Turkish letters quickly. Teach them to your compatriots, to women and to men, to porters and to boatmen. Regard it as a patriotic and national duty...and when you perform that duty, bear in mind that for a nation to consist of 10 or 20 per cent of literates and 80 or 90 per cent of illiterates is shameful.... The fault is not ours; it is of those who failed to understand the character of the Turk and bound his mind in chains. Now is the time to eradicate the errors of the past. We shall repair these errors, and in doing so I want the participation of all our compatriots.... Our nation will show, with its script and with its mind, that its place is with the civilized world."

Iranian Nationalism

Before World War I, both Great Britain and Russia had established spheres of influence in the ancient country of Persia. After the war, when Russia was still reeling from the Bolshevik Revolution, the British tried to take over all of Persia. This maneuver triggered a nationalist revolt in Persia. In 1921, a Persian army officer seized power. In 1925 he deposed the ruling shah (king). Persia's new leader, **Reza Shah Pahlavi**, like Kemal in Turkey, set out to modernize his country. He established public schools, built roads and railroads, and promoted industrial growth. Islamic law was replaced by secular law, and women were encouraged to take part in public life. Unlike Kemal, Reza Shah Pahlavi kept all power in his own hands. In 1935, he changed the name of the country from the Greek name Persia to the traditional name Iran.

Arab Nationalism

During World War I, many Arabs had helped the Allies. In return they had been promised independence. After the war, however, Britain and France divided up the Ottoman lands between themselves. They set up **mandates**, territories administered by European powers. France had mandates in Syria and Lebanon. Britain had mandates in Palestine and Iraq. In the 1920s and 1930s, Arab nationalists sought to be free of foreign control. Arab nationalism gave rise to **Pan-Arabism**. This movement sought a unity of all Arab peoples based on their shared heritage.

Zionism

Zionism had arisen during the 1890s in Europe and the Middle East. Jewish people wanted to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. The situation was complex, however, since Arab peoples were already living there. The Allies had made conflicting promises during World War I. They had promised Arabs land that included Palestine. They had also pledged to set up a Jewish nation in the same region. As more Jews moved to Palestine to escape persecution in the 1930s, tensions grew.