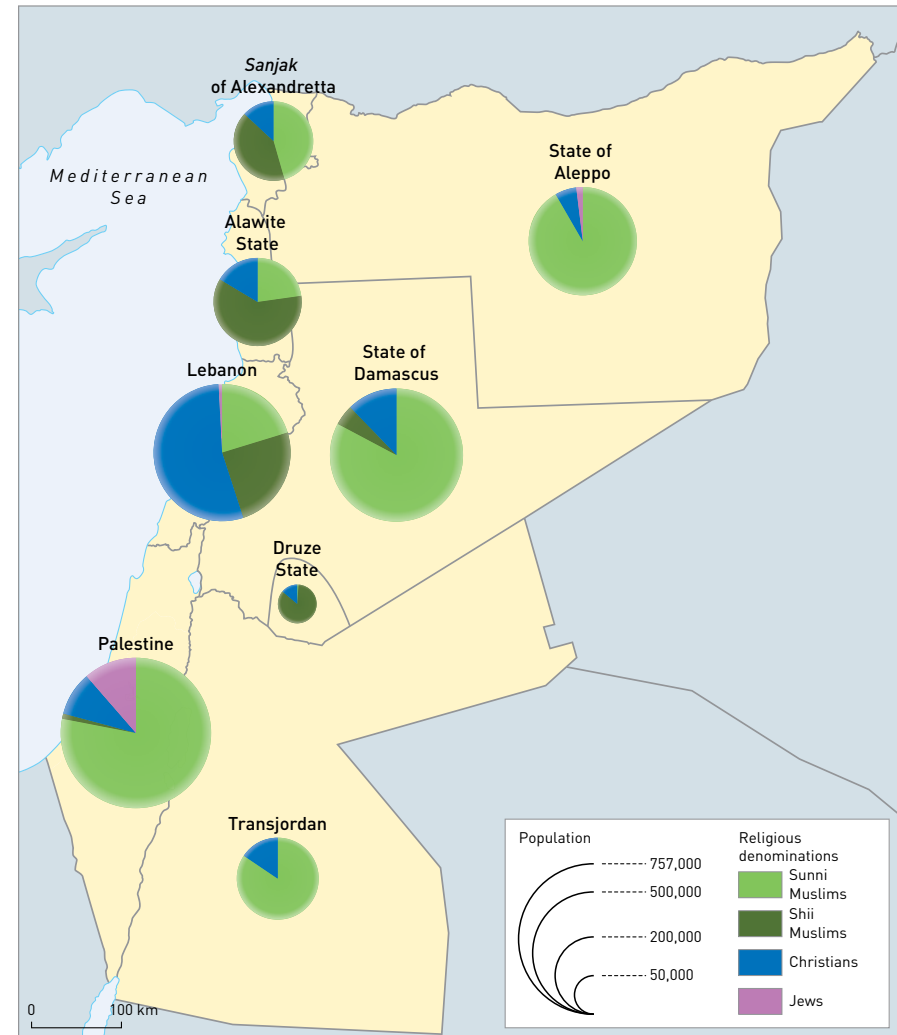


The Franco-British Partition

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was not respected for the following reasons: the exclusion of Russia after the Bolshevik revolution, Franco-British rivalry, and French difficulties in controlling all the territories they claimed. The French army commanded by General Henri J.E. Gouraud took Damascus easily in 1920 and expelled King Faisal; however, the French were not able to subdue Cilicia, or establish themselves in the vilayet of Mosul. The British had occupied this zone since the spring of 1918 and intended to annex it to Iraq. The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, between the Allies and Kemal Turkey, replaced the Treaty of Sevres that had established the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in 1920. The Turkish Republic recovered Cilicia and the Anatolian territories occupied by Italy and Greece but not the vilayet of Mosul, which France finally left to Great Britain in exchange for co-ownership of the Iraq Petroleum Company.

The break-up of the Near East by France and Great Britain set the territorial framework for the future states in the region. The current Near East is the result of international strategies: the protection of the Suez Canal; the economic, political, and religious interests of France; the claims of Lebanese Christians; and especially of the Zionist movement. To which one must add the Saudi offensive, which aimed to gain the Saudis access to the Mediterranean or at least to create a border with Syria. In Palestine, Zionist and British interests converged since the establishment of a Jewish homeland formed part of the defensive plan for the Suez Canal. In its negotiations with France, the British supported the Zionist demands that sought to control the entire Jordan River Basin and were tantamount to annexing the Golan and southern Lebanon. These claims met with refusal on the part of France, which wished to protect the new state of greater Lebanon. On the other hand, in their own zone the British limited Jewish settlement to the right bank of the River Jordan, prohibiting settlements in the new kingdom of Transjordan ruled by Abdullah ibn Hussein al-Hashim, another son of the Sharif of Mecca. Transjordan became a sort of buffer state between Palestine, Syria under French mandate, and the ambitions of Ibn Saud, the Amir of Najd and a rival of the Hashemites of the Hejaz. The demarcation of the eastern border of Transjordan (modified in 1965) aimed to prevent Ibn Saud from reaching Syria and disrupting the British Haifa-Baghdad axis.

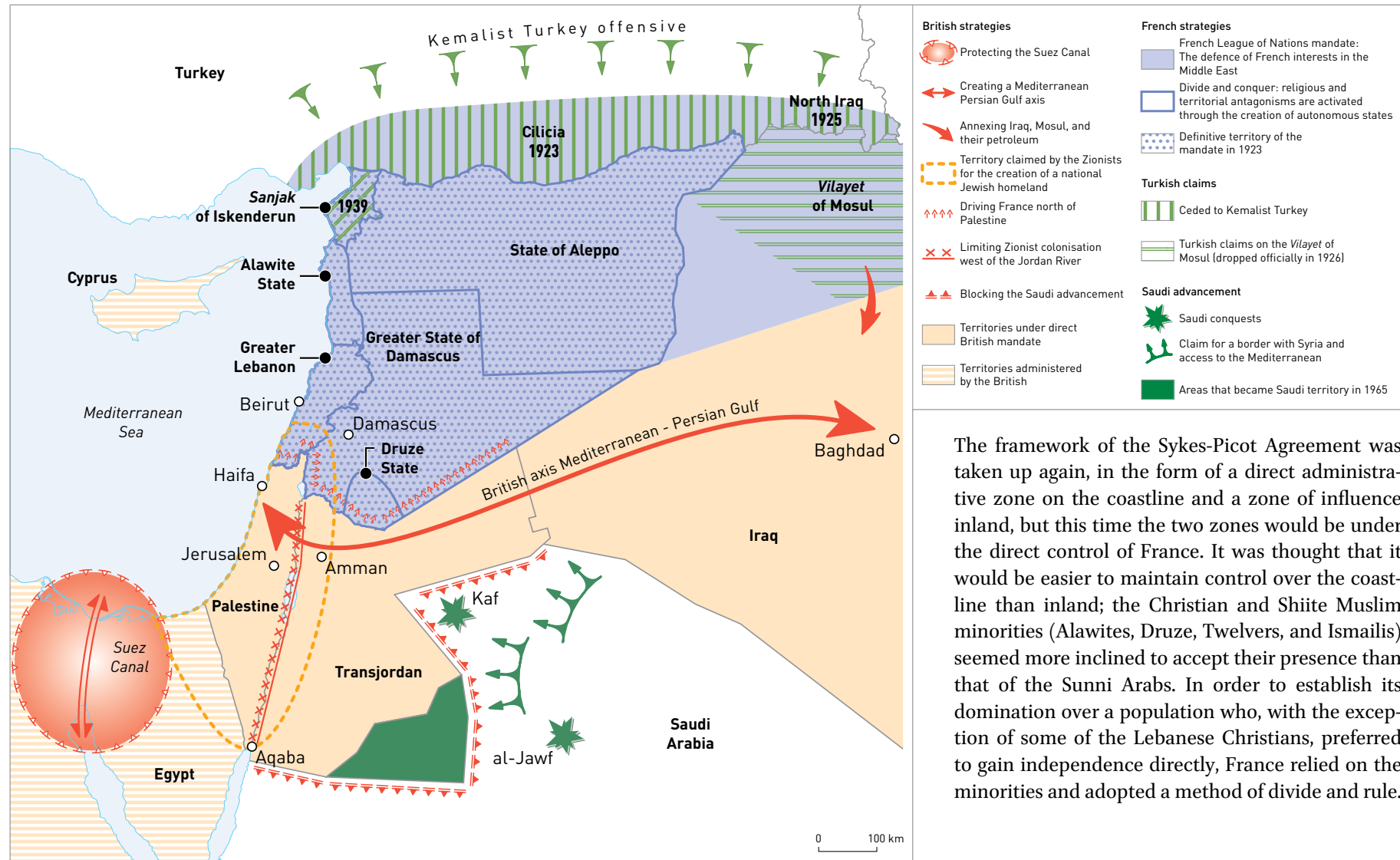
THE POPULATION OF STATES UNDER MANDATE IN 1922



Source: Augustin Bernard, *Annales de Géographie*, Paris, 1924.

The loss of Cilicia and the vilayet of Mosul reduced the extension of the territories under the French mandate to what is now Lebanon and Syria, as well as the sanjak of Alexandretta, ceded to Turkey in 1939, and the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967. The goal of France was to create a Christian Lebanon separate from inland Syria, which lacked access to the sea, through the creation of an Alawite state and the autonomous sanjak of Alexandretta.

THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1920, AFTER THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

The framework of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was taken up again, in the form of a direct administrative zone on the coastline and a zone of influence inland, but this time the two zones would be under the direct control of France. It was thought that it would be easier to maintain control over the coastline than inland; the Christian and Shiite Muslim minorities (Alawites, Druze, Twelvers, and Ismailis) seemed more inclined to accept their presence than that of the Sunni Arabs. In order to establish its domination over a population who, with the exception of some of the Lebanese Christians, preferred to gain independence directly, France relied on the minorities and adopted a method of divide and rule.