Atlas of the Near East

Atlas of the Near East

State Formation and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1918–2010

By

Fabrice Balanche

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Introduction

The original French version of this atlas was completed during summer 2011, after four years of intense work to enable this so Near, and at the same time, so complex East to be made intelligible. When the *Atlas du Proche-Orient arabe* was published the Syrian conflict was only just starting. Neither in the original version, nor in the present English translation, is the on-going conflict in Syria chartered. The present volume should therefore be seen as an inventory of facts and processes in the Near East prior to the Syrian conflict.

Up until the Syrian conflict, the Arab-Israeli conflict was the major geopolitical process in the region, even if it has been alleviated in recent times. Since the first Arab-Israeli war from 1948–1949, it has contributed to putting a strain on the region's geography, as this was the major geopolitical process. Since 2011, the Near East has been clearly influenced by other dynamic geopolitics. It has become the epicentre of an arc of crises, awoken by the return of Russia onto the international scene, and the battle between three regional powers, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, to control the Middle East.

However, what takes place in Syria is not a simple geopolitical clash. It is the product of dynamic locales on an economic, social and demographic level, that this atlas highlights. We cannot understand the Syrian crisis without referring to the rapid demographic growth, extensively detailed in the *Atlas of the Near East*. The particular situation in the city of Aleppo, split between the progovernmental West, and the East, held by rebels until December 2016, cannot be understood without referring to the urban geography of the North Syrian mainland. More broadly, the fragile economy of the Near East, highly dependent on the indirect income coming from the Gulf, creates conditions of its political instability and its servitude as regards outside powers.

Until recently, when the subject of the Near East was mentioned, it was often in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The French concept of the "Orient", which had blurry boundaries, eventually came to coincide with the more widely used American definition of the "Middle East". The Near East as a geopolitical construct encompasses Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. Egypt set itself apart from the rest of the Near East when it signed the Camp David Agreements of 1978 with Israel. Egypt has also been much less affected by the conflict than other Arab neighbours of Israel because Egypt existed before 1948, whereas Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan came into existence as independent states at the same time as the state of Israel. In the Near East, national borders, demographics, the economy and, more generally, national constructs are widely influenced by the conflict. Our *Atlas* therefore builds on this major process of the production of territory in the Near East.

THE COUNTRIES OF THE NEAR EAST

The Near East, as addressed in this volume is an ancient geographical entity: the Bilad al-Sham or lands of Syria (often greater Syria). Between Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt, this territory was long contested by foreign conquerors. The term Bilad al-Sham appears in the seventh century under the Umayyad Caliphate, with Damascus as its capital; later the Abbasids moved the centre of their empire to Baghdad. In 1918, the ephemeral Arab kingdom under Faisal sought to unify this territory but failed after the implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. With the establishment of the French and British mandates in the Near East, and Zionist claims over Palestine, political fragmentation was complete.

Since 1948, and undoubtedly for many more decades to come, Israel, the Palestinians, and their Arab neighbours have been in a state of war. This situation adversely affects territorial and national constructs, as well as the integration of the region into the global economy, because this space, which was open during the Ottoman era and acted as an interface between Europe and Asia, was gradually closed off during the twentieth century. Partly as a result of the conflict, investments and trade flows have been diverted away from the region. Above all, however, it has had a significant influence on the construction of the Arab states, even as these states have chosen divergent paths in economic and political issues. The government-controlled economy of Baʿathist Syria contrasts with the more liberal economies of Lebanon and Jordan. However, the differences are not as great as they might seem. These countries belong to the same cultural sphere, which means that their social, economic, and political customs are closely related.

The purview of this *Atlas* is to present the common traits and diversity of the contemporary *Arab* Near East, i.e. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. The study of Israel in its 1967 borders is therefore excluded because Israel's national identity and economy are radically different from that of the other states in the region. Therefore the comparison between the Arab states and Israel would be meaningless. Instead, in this *Atlas* we refer solely to the current territory of Israel in the historical chapters and to Israel as a geopolitical agent. In the chapters devoted to demography, economy, development, and urban matters, we deal with Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan simultaneously, while we have opted to devote a separate chapter to the Palestinian territories, which are in fact Arab territories; however, its destiny remains uncertain due to the Israeli occupation. Consequently socio-economically it should be compared to the occupying power since 1967 rather than to those of the neighbouring Arab states.

Menacing Aridity

Between the Mediterranean and the Desert

From the Amanus range to the Sinai, and the Mediterranean to Mesopotamia, the western part of the Fertile Crescent is an inclined table running from west to east. This is the extreme northwest of the Arabian plate, a region in which the crystalline rocks are covered by layered sedimentary limestone. The region is poor in ores because the crystalline basement does not surface as in Arabia and Egypt. Immense hydrocarbon deposits are located further east, trapped in the vast anticlines of Mesopotamia and the Gulf. In the west, the petroleum of Jazira and the gas in Palmyra represent modest sources of wealth that will soon be depleted. On the other hand, phosphates are plentiful in Syria and Jordan, where they are being intensely exploited, though quantities in these two countries are in no way comparable to the oil revenues of the Gulf countries.

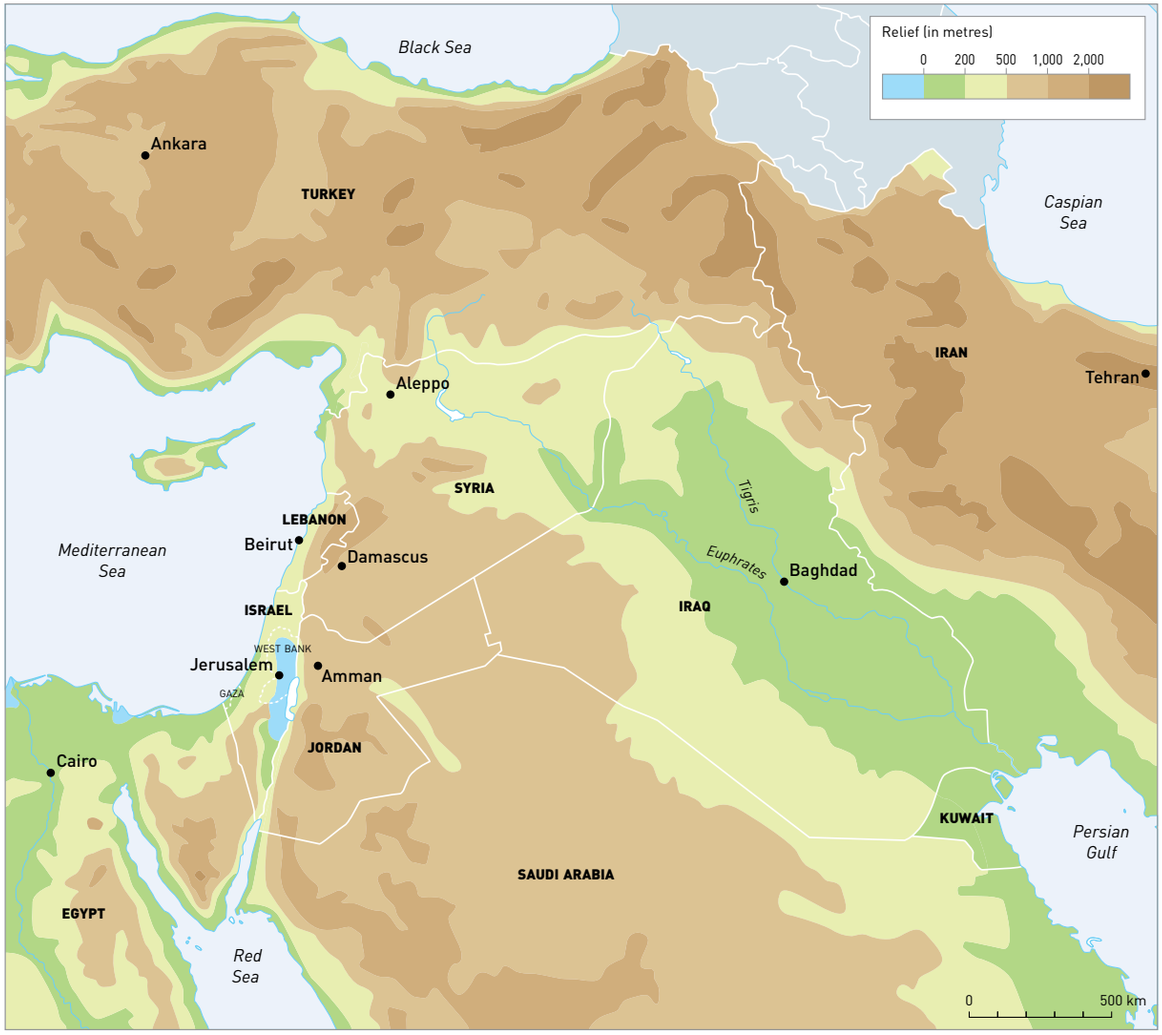
The plain along the Mediterranean coastline is narrow because it runs into the first limestone geology: the Alawite Mountains, Mount Lebanon, and Galilee. In Palestine, south of Jaffa, the coastal plain widens and the Judean Mountains reach heights of only 1,000 metres. This is far from the 3,087 meters of the Lebanese Cedar Forest Massif at the highest point of the region. The eastern slopes of the coastal reliefs are abrupt because they correspond to the trough of the Dead Sea. It is one of the lowest non-submerged places in the world: -392 metres. Further north, the Beqaa plain and the Ghab Plain are also rift valleys born of this great meridian fault. The hydrographic network grew naturally in this depression, creating lakes such as Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) and the Dead Sea. To the east of this rift are the mountainous massifs of Jabal al-Zawiya, the Anti-Lebanon, Jabal Atiyeh, and Jabal Mubarak. Their eastern slopes descend gradually to the plains and plateaus inland. The last mountainous folds that break the monotony of the steppe are anticlinal culminations: Jabal Abd al-Aziz in Syria or Jabal Ithriyat in Jordan. The Jabal al-Druze southeast of Syria was formed through a basaltic effusion.

The Levantine mountains were a natural place of refuge for various Christian and Muslim sects that did not get along well with the religions of the ruling powers: first orthodox Christianity, then Sunni Islam. The Maronites, who had originally settled in the region of Homs, Syria, migrated toward North Lebanon at the end of the eighth century CE. They were joined in the eleventh century CE by the Druze, who, after settling in Hermon, reached the Chouf, southeast of Beirut. At that time, the persecution by the Seljuq and Ayyubid Sunni dynasties of various Shiite sects who had prospered in Syria also led the Alawites to migrate to the coastal mountains they gave their name to. Migration to the mountains was also caused by the desire to gain economic freedom, which the farming system of the plains did not provide. Thus, at the end of the eighteenth century CE, the Druze tribes settled in a basaltic massif, the current Jabal al-Druze, though it had meagre agricultural resources and was subject to regular raids by Bedouins; they did this in order to escape exploitation by the large property owners who dominated the plains. “The most steep, craggy places have always been the refuge of liberty”, the French traveller Baron de Tott informs us; “All along the coastline of Syria we see despotism spreading over every beach but stopping around the mountains, at the first boulder, the first gorge, [which are] easy to defend.”[1]

At the regional level the Near East is like a huge breach running from east to west, connecting the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia. The coastal mountains are not insurmountable obstacles. Modest in altitude and slashed by numerous cols, they offer wide inland passages such as the Homs Gap or the Jezreel Valley (Marj Ibn ʿĀmir) between Haifa and Lake Tiberias. Along the coastline or the inland plateaus north-south communications are very easy. For centuries the meeting point of the great north-south axis connecting Anatolia and Arabia and the natural routes between the Mediterranean coast and Mesopotamia have been a privileged place for a thriving urban life: Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus, Irbid, and Amman are all products of these crossroads. The geological relief is thus not an obstacle for exchanges, on the contrary, this is an open area that was only closed with the advent of state construction in the twentieth century.

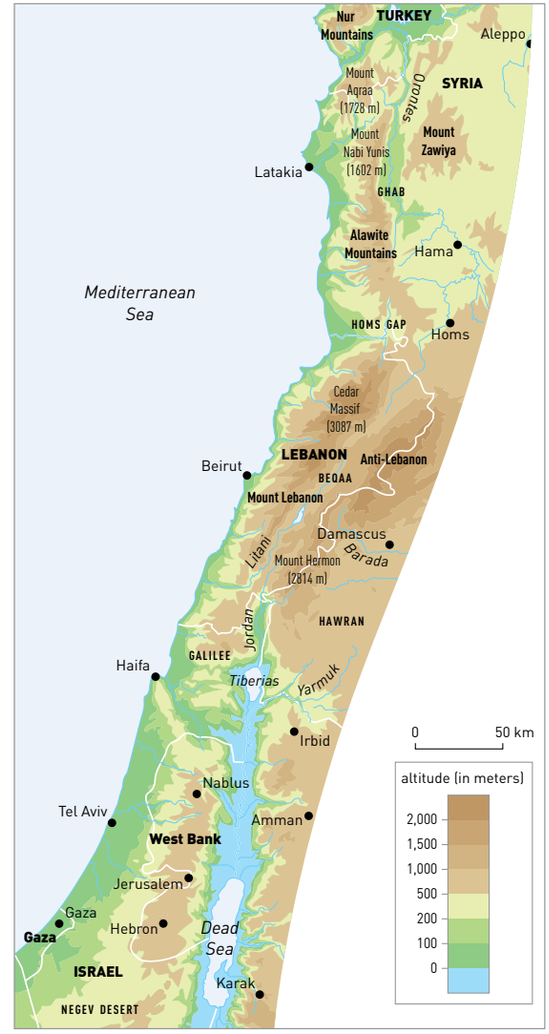
1 *Mémoires de baron de Tott sur les Turcs et les Tartares* (Amsterdam, 1784), vol. 2, p. 147 and vol. 1, p. xxi.

BETWEEN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE PERSIAN GULF



Source: *Atlas TAVO.*

THE LEVANTINE FAÇADE



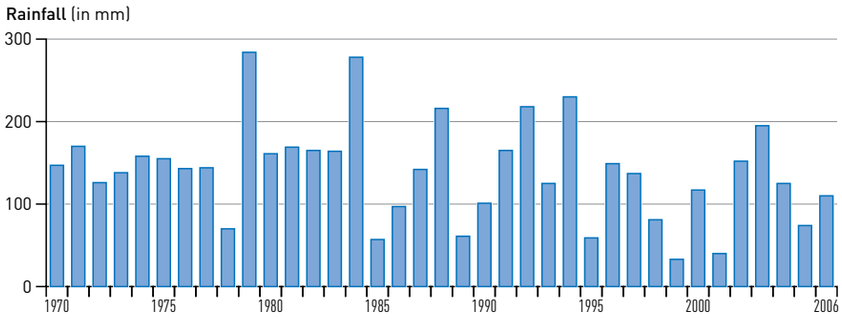
Olivier Barge, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée.

“Levantine” and “Syrian” Climates

The Near East belongs to the Mediterranean domain in its western regions, but beyond the coastal mountain ranges the aridity becomes quickly apparent. The wooded mountains lead to plateaus of dry land farming (the Maamoura), and then a strip of steppe that peters out into the desert. The aridity therefore varies on two gradients: west-east for the rains coming from the Mediterranean and north-south for the latitudinal effect. It ranges from 800 mm of rainfall per year in Beirut to only 150 mm in the vicinity of Damascus and less than 100 mm in Palmyra, in the middle of the Syrian steppe. At a similar longitude and altitude, the rainfall reaches 500 mm in Aleppo and less than 200 mm in Maʿān, in southern Jordan.

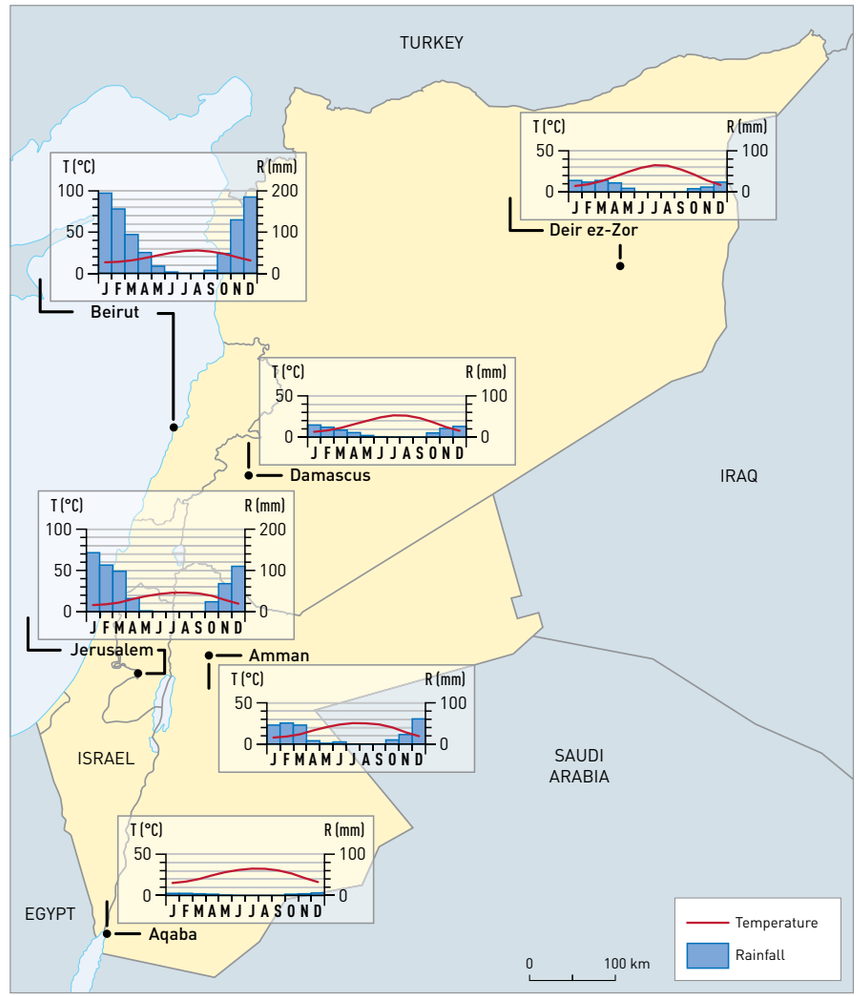
The Levantine climate that prevails along the coastline is a variant of the Mediterranean climate: rainfall occurs between November and April and not between the seasons. Moreover, the dry summer period (from June to October) is particularly harsh. With the exception of a few rare storms in the mountains, the only precipitation is in the form of dew: in summer the sun brings about high levels of humidity comparable to those of tropical countries. This mugginess explains, in part, why in the past the inhabitants preferred to live at an altitude of a few hundred metres; the humid heat made life in the coastal plains particularly difficult and dangerous, given the proliferation of

IRREGULARITY OF RAINFALL IN DAMASCUS



Source: Syrian statistical yearbooks.

COASTAL-INLAND CONTRASTS



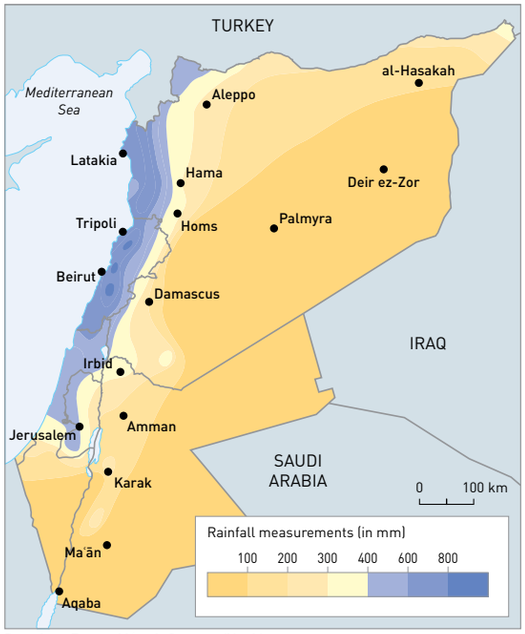
Source: local statistical yearbooks.

mosquitoes. Inland, beyond the coastal mountains, the climate is not at all Mediterranean. The aridity there is evident and there are wide disparities in temperature between summer and winter, as is typical of continental climates, i.e., the Syrian climate. Frost and snow occur frequently, even at low altitudes.

The western slopes of the mountains receive much more rainfall than the eastern ones because the relief creates a kind of protective effect. This is why the region of Damascus, east of the Anti-Lebanon, has an especially dry climate, while northern Jordan, around Irbid, receives twice as much precipitation, since the hills of Galilee do not play the same protective role as the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains. The plains in northern Syria receive more precipitation than those in the south because the barrier of the Zagros and Taurus mountains causes orographic rainfall. In the entire region precipitation is very irregular over time; a series of dry years follow wet ones, narrowing the margins of the sedentary domain. In wet years, the isohyet of 100 mm reaches almost as far as Palmyra and Maʿān in southern Jordan, whereas in dry years the Maamoura retracts as far as Aleppo, Homs, and Jerusalem.

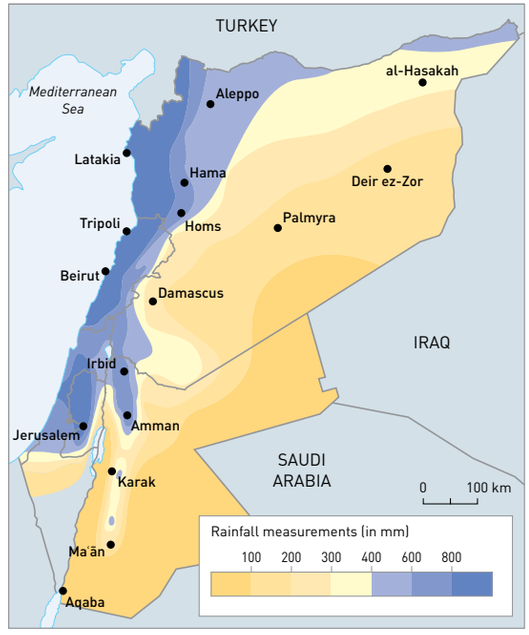
SPATIAL IRREGULARITY OF RAINFALL

AVERAGE YEAR

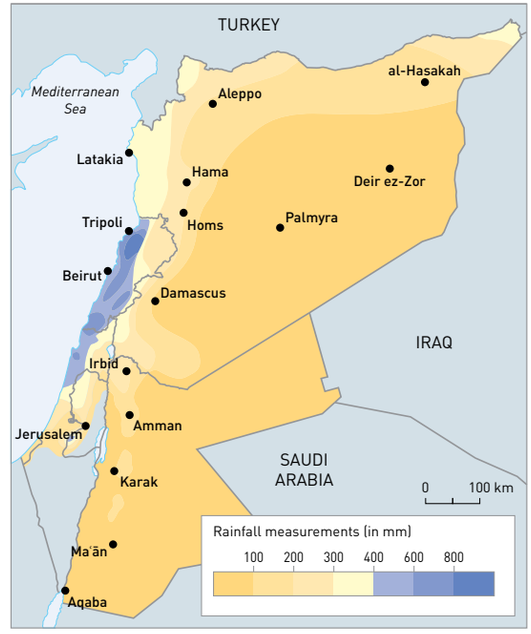


Based on: France Métral, *Steppes d'Arabie.*

HUMID YEAR (1966–1967)



DRY YEAR (1959–1960)

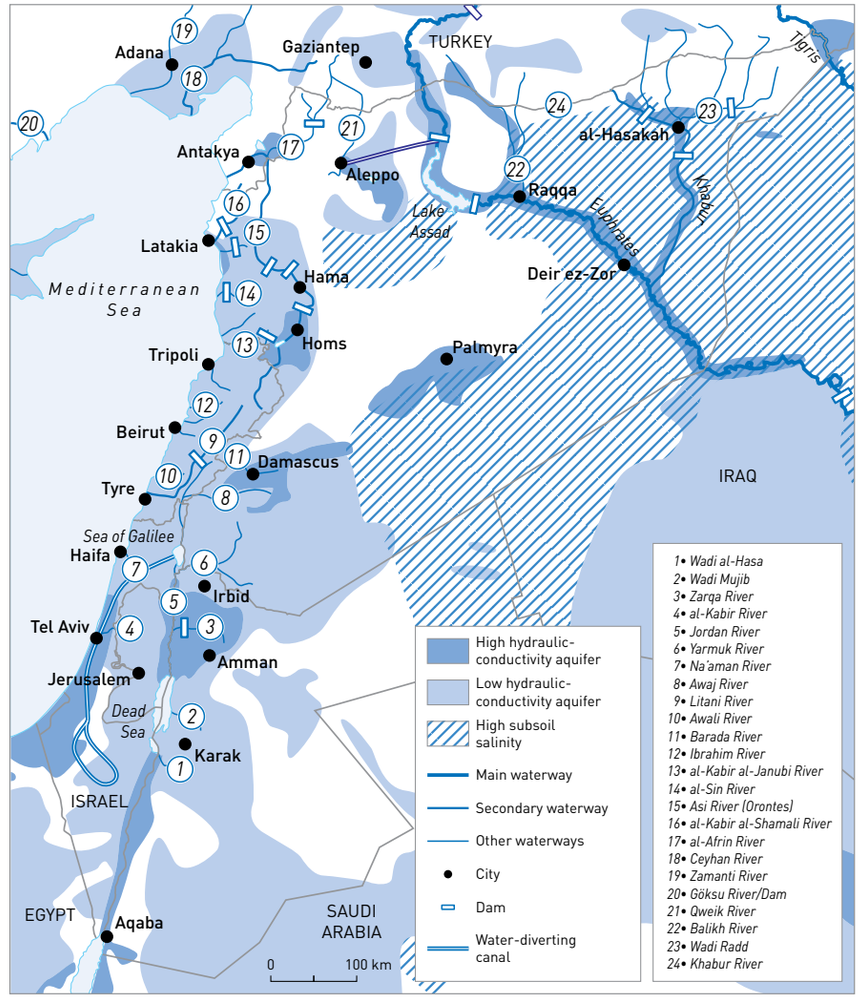


Overexploited Water Resources

The Near East is disadvantaged due to a poor distribution of rainfall over time and space. The coastal mountains receive a great deal of rain during the winter but these water courses are captured by the great tectonic disturbance of the Levant and rarely turn east. The waters of the Jordan River descend to the depression of the Dead Sea where the heat and sun lead to intense evaporation. The waters of the Litani River, al-Sin River, al-Kabir al-Shamali River, and other small coastal rivers empty into the sea after a few dozen kilometres. Only the Orontes River, more than 500 kilometres in length, meanders through the inland plains of Syria before reaching the Ghab Depression and then rejoining the Mediterranean beyond Antioch. Some rivers flow down directly to the east, the most famous one being the Barada River, which has its source in the Anti-Lebanon and which created the Ghouta (an oasis born from an endorheic river) at Damascus. In the Anti-Lebanon and Jordanian mountains, small water sources captured by man create many *ghoutas* in a steppe environment.

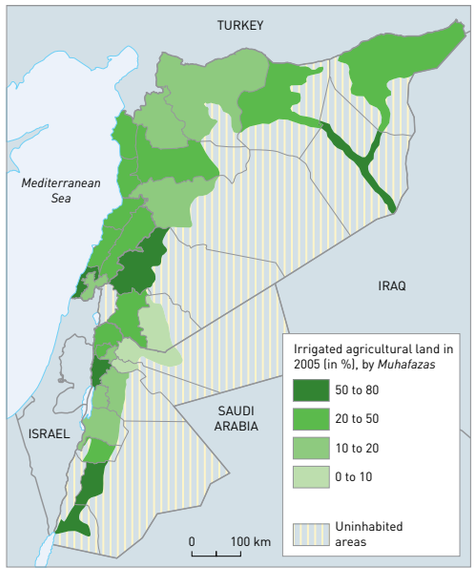
Northern Syria benefits from non-indigenous water courses, notably the Euphrates and its tributaries, the Balikh, which originates just south of the Syrian-Turkish border, and the Khabur, which originates in springs in Turkey. Syria draws two-thirds of its water supply from this basin, especially water used to irrigate the immense agricultural areas in the northeast of the country. However, the Euphrates is not the Nile; its flow volume is less than one-third that of the great African river and the inter-annual irregularity varies from 1 to 4 versus only 1 to 2 for the Nile. Attempts are made to control the variation and retain water by means of dams, but holding it in artificial lakes in an arid and hot climate leads to high levels of evaporation (15 per cent of the available water). The Euphrates runs through an area that is not suited for the retention of underground water because of its geological structure and the high degree of salt in the soil. The cereal-based agriculture of northeast Syria requires extremely large quantities of water as the soil demands considerable drainage to keep the fields from becoming unsuitable for farming. The west and east of the Near East are more propitious for the formation of aquifers, but they must still be supplied by rivers and abundant rainfall. In southern Jordan, the weak water recharge, together with the intensity with which it is drawn, leads to

HYDROGRAPHY AND HYDROGEOLOGY



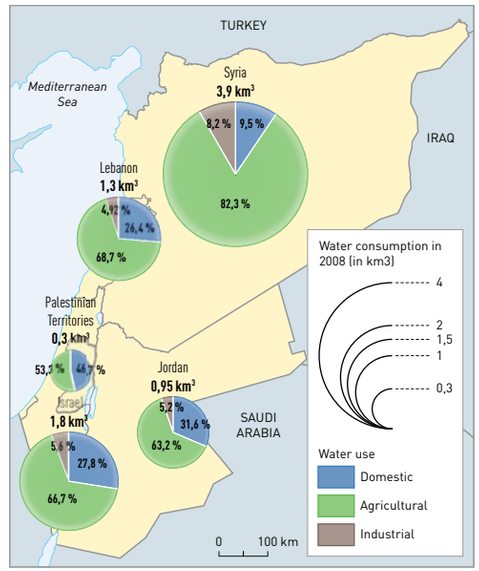
Source: *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients.*

IRRIGATED AGRICULTURAL LAND (2005)



Source: statistical yearbooks from various countries.

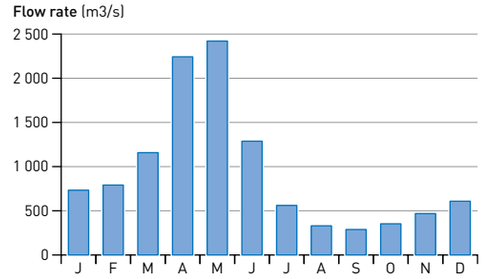
BREAKDOWN OF WATER CONSUMPTION



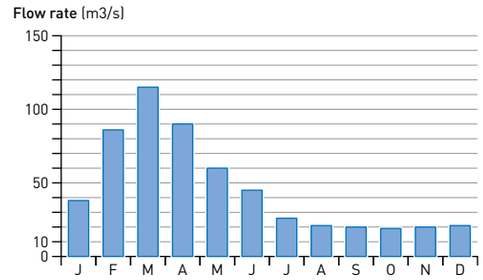
Source: Blue Plan and the Jordanian Ministry of Water.

VERY IRREGULAR FLOW RATES

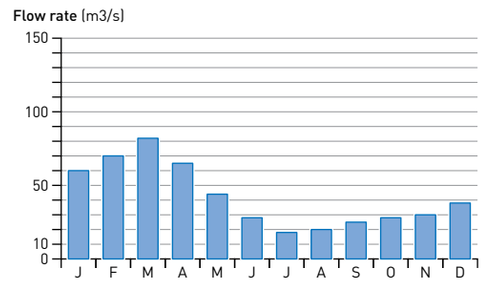
EUPHRATES (on the Syrian-Turkish border)



ORONTES (at Homs)



JORDAN (upstream from the Sea of Galilee)



Source: FAO, *Aquastat*, 2008.

the depletion of the resource. In the case of coastal aquifers, like the one located between Gaza and Haifa, intrusions of seawater lead to groundwater salinisation.

The supply of water from the Jordan River Basin to the Israeli coastline is no longer sufficient to offset the deficit. Israel is obliged to increase the number of desalination plants.

Practically all natural hydraulic resources in the Near East have been implemented. In Lebanon there remains a certain margin to establish facilities, but this has not happened because the absence of a public policy since the civil war (1975–90) limited the construction of hydraulic structures. Everywhere the consumption of water is constantly increasing as a result of the expansion of irrigated areas and the growth of the population and its needs. To satisfy domestic consumption the states reduce the amount of water available for agriculture, the largest consumer sector, and force farmers to modernise their irrigation techniques. However, quite often the costs of modernisation are so prohibitive that the land is simply abandoned to urbanisation or to the steppe. The reprocessing of used water would increase the available water, but once again the costs are very high. Conservation of water resources demands more realistic water prices which many states cannot enforce without risking the social peace.

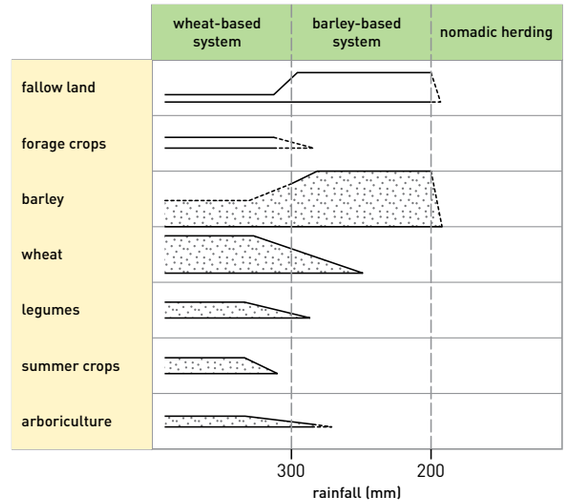
The Deterioration of the Environment

The different types of Mediterranean landscapes along the Levantine coastline (orange fields and market gardening on the plains, olive groves and cereals on the hills and plateaus, scrubland and terraced crops in the mountains) have deteriorated as a result of the growth of uncontrolled urbanisation. The idealized image of Lebanese villages with red rooftops surrounded by terraced gardens has given way to an entanglement of apartment buildings constructed without regard to any kind of land use plan. The Syrian coastline is better preserved, in spite of itself, because of the economic underdevelopment of the country. The pine and cedar forests that once covered the mountains are disappearing nevertheless. In the Cedar Massif in Lebanon there remains only a cluster of trees protected by a stone wall built in the nineteenth century thanks to a donation from Queen Victoria. Clear-cutting and overgrazing since Roman times have done away with these majestic forests. Strict regulations are supposed to protect them, but their application leads to the opposite effect. The law prohibits cutting down the trees and bringing herds into the forest, because the undergrowth then takes over, and they are left more vulnerable to forest fires. Since the forest is of no economic importance to the population, it is sometimes intentionally set on fire to gain farmland or facilitate building activities.

In the Maamoura the natural vegetation, which consists of short grass and bushes, has disappeared and been taken over by bare fields and olive groves, pistachio trees, and other stone fruit trees (cherry, apricot, plum, etc.) that are able to withstand the rigours of winter and the extreme summer heat. The Maamoura is a natural victim of the inter-annual rainfall variability, although the scope of this fluctuation currently depends less on the annual variation of rainfall than on the agricultural overexploitation and urban sprawl. The degradation of the vegetation is extremely pronounced in northern Syria due to predatory agricultural practices and the regression of irrigation. In this context, the climatic evolution in the region is reason to worry for the future. The temperature is expected to rise 3 to 4 degrees centigrade by the year 2050 with rainfall diminishing by 0 to 40 mm per year depending on the area. The decrease in rainfall should be greater in Anatolia (from 0 to 80 mm), and this will have direct repercussions on the flow volume of the Tigris and the Euphrates downstream. Since the 1990s the Syrian government, in an effort to deal with this soil depletion and the overexploitation of water resources, has prohibited farming below the isohyet of 200 mm (with the exception of the areas irrigated by the state). This is an arbitrary limit since this isohyet fluctuates widely according to dry or wet years; still, it makes it possible to protect the arid margins from irreparable destruction. Without vegetation, wind erosion quickly carries away the lighter soils and forms dust winds that damage the cultivated areas; this is similar to the famous dust bowl that occurred in the 1930s in the United States.

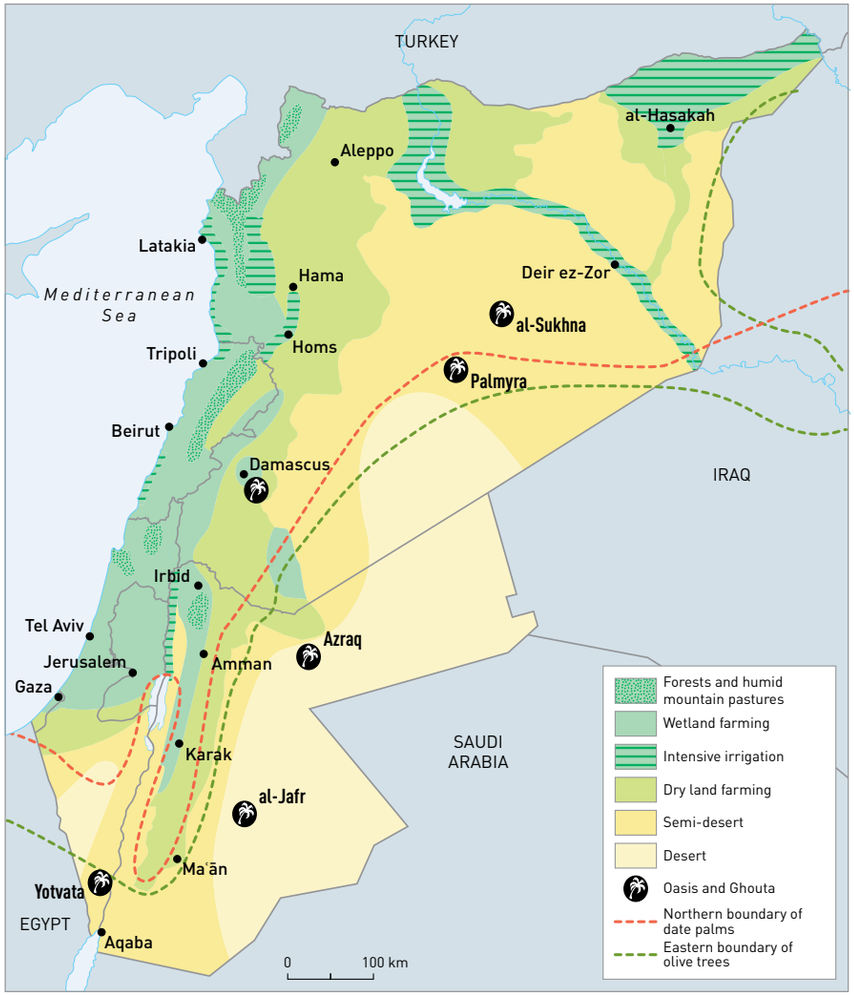
The arid Near East is more steppe than desert. Vegetation is completely absent only in southern Jordan, where the vast Arabian desert begins. The environment is thus favourable for extensive nomadic herding; the herds migrate between the steppe in winter and the stubble fields of the Maamoura in summer. During the dry years the Bedouins go as far as the coastline to feed their herds. Certain tribes have even settled there, giving birth to villages such as Arab al-Chateh, south of Tartus, populated by nomads who brought their herds to graze on the Akkar plain. The steppe has a few oases: Azraq in Jordan, al-Sukhna, and especially Palmyra in Syria. The overpopulation of the oases and the development of tourism bring with them an overexploitation of groundwater that challenges their existence. The situation in Palmyra is especially critical; the construction of a water conduit between the Euphrates and Damascus going through Palmyra would make it possible to save the palm groves, but it is a long and costly project that may not come into being.

TYPOLOGY OF AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS IN SEMI-ARID AREAS



Source: Jones, ICARDA, 1993.

ENVIRONMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Fabrice Balanche, based on *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*.

DEFORESTATION IN LEBANON

Based on: *Atlas du Liban*, CNRS Lebanon, 2004.

Foreign Domination

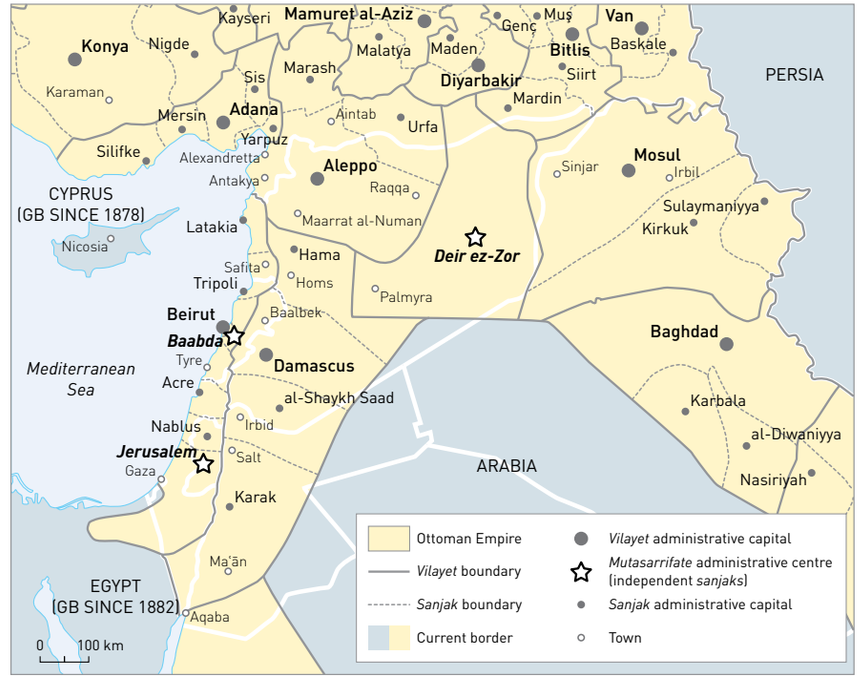
The Ottoman Empire: An Apparent Modernity

Following the Syrian offensive by Ibrahim Pasha, son of the viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, in the Near East (1832–40) and Ottoman military defeats in the Caucasus and the Balkans, the sultan decided to launch a policy of modernisation (the Tanzimat reforms of 1839) for his empire, in order to oppose the European powers that hoped to divide the Ottoman Empire among themselves. The fight against Bedouins, the establishment of a land registry (cadastre), and especially the transition from an indirect to a direct administrative structure were the three main axes of this program. However, the hostility of the populations and the pressure exerted by the European powers led the Ottomans to grant autonomy to two specific territories: the region of Jerusalem in 1856, after the Treaty of Paris that brought an end to the Crimean War, and Mount Lebanon in 1861, after the intervention of France in Lebanon in order to protect the Christians from a massacre. Both became autonomous territories (*mutasarrifates*). The Jazira Bedouins also attained a degree of autonomy, not due to the intervention of any foreign power but because the empire was unable to control them.

Aleppo and Damascus were the two main cities in the region, each with more than 100,000 inhabitants spread over a vast hinterland reaching well beyond the borders of present-day Syria. Aleppo ruled over a *vilayet* (T. province) that extended to the south of Anatolia, encompassing Urfa (Şanlıurfa), Aintab (Gaziantep), and Marash. The vilayet of Syria (or Damascus vilayet) in turn reached from Hama to Maʿān, at the edges of the Arabian Desert. Spurred by the Ottoman reformist policies, the sedentary population began to reconquer the land that had been abandoned to the Bedouins. The city oligarchies invested in the creation of large agricultural estates whose production compensated the reduced revenues of the transit trade, which had been in decline since the sixteenth century. The Levantine coastline achieved greater economic prosperity than the inland regions by developing its relations with Europe. Lebanon benefited particularly from the development of silkworm breeding and the delocalisation of the spinning mills of Lyon. From the middle of the nineteenth century Beirut gained an advantage over its rivals (Acre, Sidon, and Tripoli) as a result of the construction of a modern port that became the main seaport of the Levant. The city became the seat of a narrow but extended Ottoman province reaching from Latakia in the north to Gaza in the south.

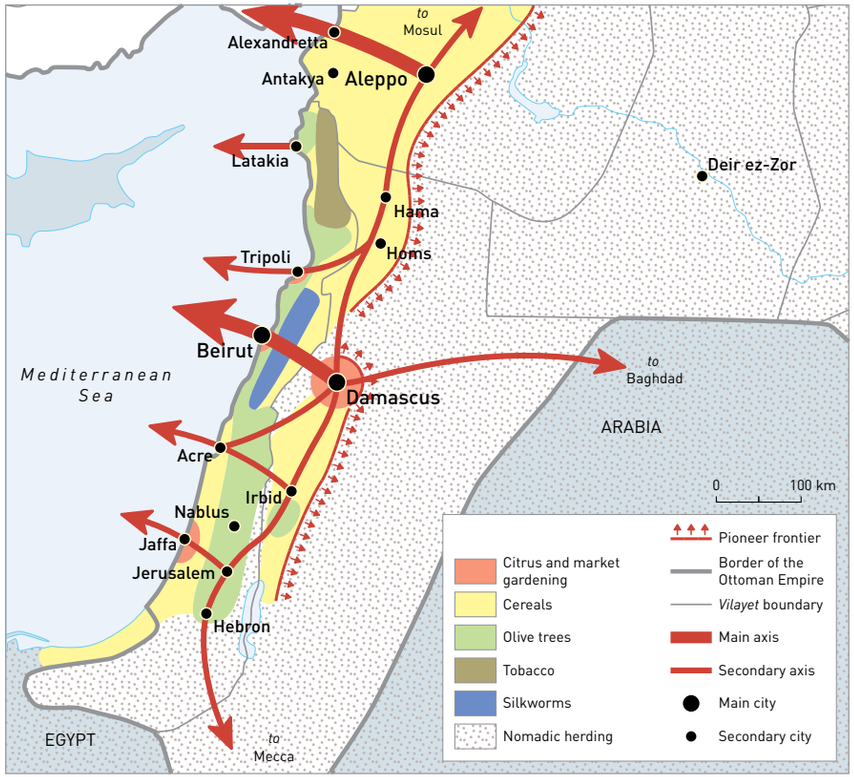
The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the military occupation of Egypt by Great Britain in 1882 increased the pressure on the Near East, subsequently perceived by the British as one of the most strategic zones. Jewish settlement in Palestine coincided with the imperial strategy of Great Britain, which supported the initiative, especially as the British prime minister could not refuse the Rothschild bank, which had facilitated Britain's repurchase of the shares of the Suez Canal held by Egypt in 1879. To counter Great Britain, the sultan favoured the interests of France and Germany in the region, most notably through the construction of a network of roads, then of railways, managed by companies from both countries. The Hejaz railway linked Damascus and Mecca, and, in 1912, by means of what the Germans called the *Bagdadbahn*

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1888



Source: *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*.

THE ECONOMY BEYOND AGRICULTURE



Based on Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie* (Paris, 1890–95).

LAND TRANSPORTATION NETWORK IN 1914

Source: *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*.

Istanbul and Baghdad were connected to Anatolia. The railway promoted trade between the port cities (Jaffa, Acre, Beirut, and Tripoli) and the main inland cities (Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem). The east-west relations became significantly more important than the north-south ones. This prefigured the division of the region after World War I.

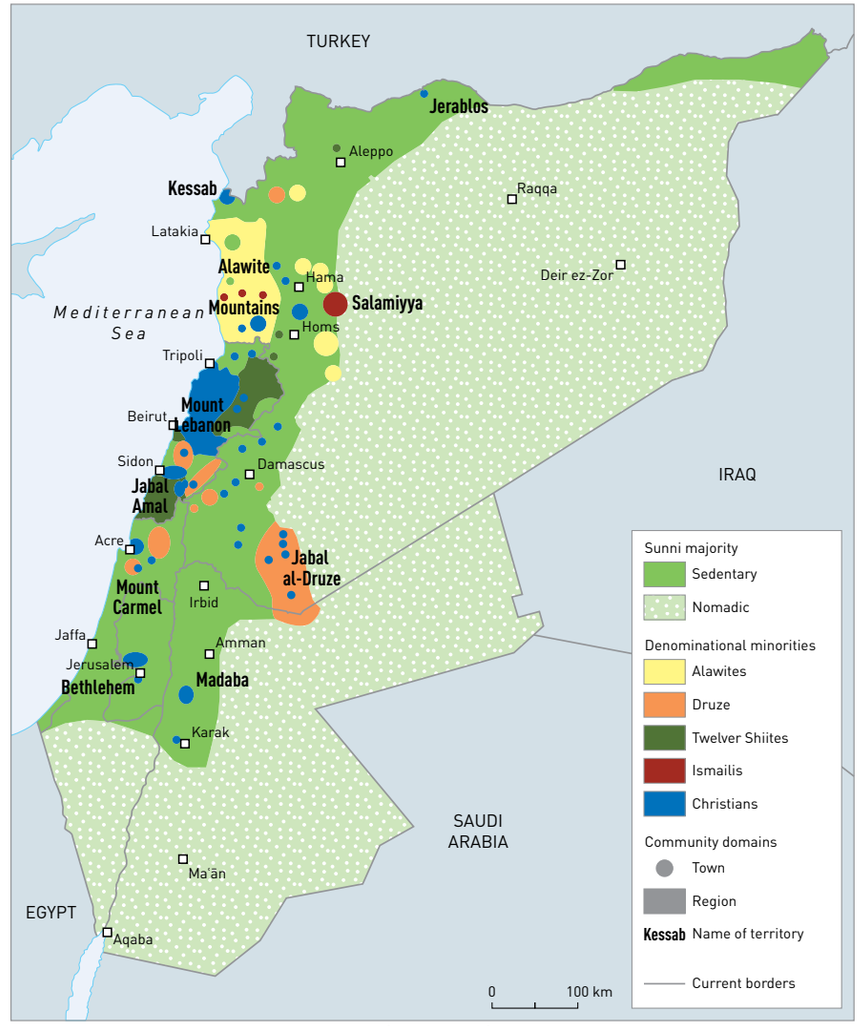
By the time the Ottoman Empire was dissolved in 1923 the Near East was an open space stretching from Anatolia to Egypt and from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, this potential for easy movement did not produce any real economic development; this was due to social inertia and political obstructions from the Ottoman administration, despite its efforts at modernisation. In the early twentieth century the Arab provinces of the empire experienced a cultural renaissance (known as *al-Nahda*) that sustained the political demands of the young Arab nationalist movement. World War I was fatal to the old empire, incapable as it was to resist the appetite of the European powers as well as the nationalist pressures that shook it from within and, most notably, the movement of the Young Turks.

Communitarianism[1]

The Ottoman Empire was made up of multiple communities and was multi-ethnic. Politically, Sunni Islam was the dominant religion because the sultan was also the caliph, that is, the successor of the Prophet. Under the Ottoman system, subjects were defined by their religious communities (*millets*); the Jews and the different Christian churches had their own organisations under the authority of their leaders, whereas Muslims of all persuasions (Sunni and Shia) belonged to the same *umma* (community of Muslim believers). Reality, however, was much more complex: the Alawites, and notably the Druze, were not recognised as Muslims and were socially marginalised. Maronite believers—considered schismatic by the Melkites (Greek Orthodox and Catholics)—were similarly rejected. Ethnically, no distinction was made between subjects. In the Near East, the population was more than 90 per cent Arab; there were Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian populations in the Taurus foothills and in the larger cities. After the conquest of the Caucasus by the Russians, several tens of thousands of Circassians (Adyghes) were exiled to this region. The spread of these communities throughout the space of the Near East shows perfectly the relationships that exist between space, power, and communities. The dominant communities (Sunni Arabs) and their protégés, the Jews and Melkite Christians, lived in the cities, the seats of power and wealth; they possessed the best lands. On the other hand, the heterodox communities (Alawites, Druzes, Twelver Shiis, Maronites, etc.), often persecuted, were marginalised in the outskirts (mountain refuges and marginal steppes). In the cities, each community occupied its own residential quarter; the Muslims lived near the main seats of power and the Friday Mosque; and the Christians and Jews lived close to their churches, synagogues, and denominational schools. With non-Muslims representing less than one third of the urban population, the Sunni Muslims were always the majority.

There was an opposition between the sedentary and the nomadic Sunni Muslims, between the *hadara* (city or civilisation) and the *rif* (countryside or savagery). After two centuries of political weakening, the Ottoman Empire had lost control over large parts of the countryside. The nomadic tribes took advantage of this situation and occupied those lands, progressively forcing small farmers without protection to flee. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the domain of the nomads stretched up to the walls of Damascus and Aleppo.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITIES AT THE END OF THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

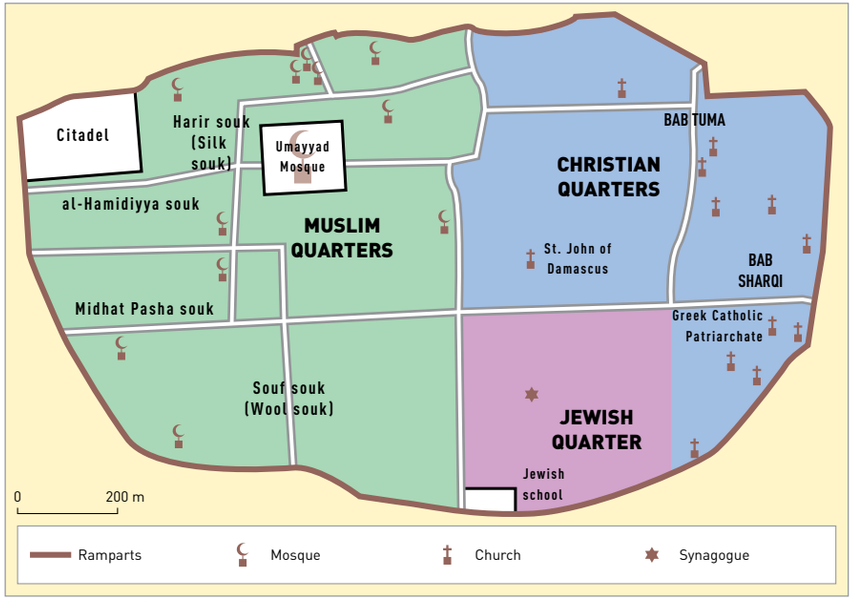


Fabrice Balanche, based on Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie* (Paris, 1890–95).

1 A theory or system of social organisation based on small self-governing communities.

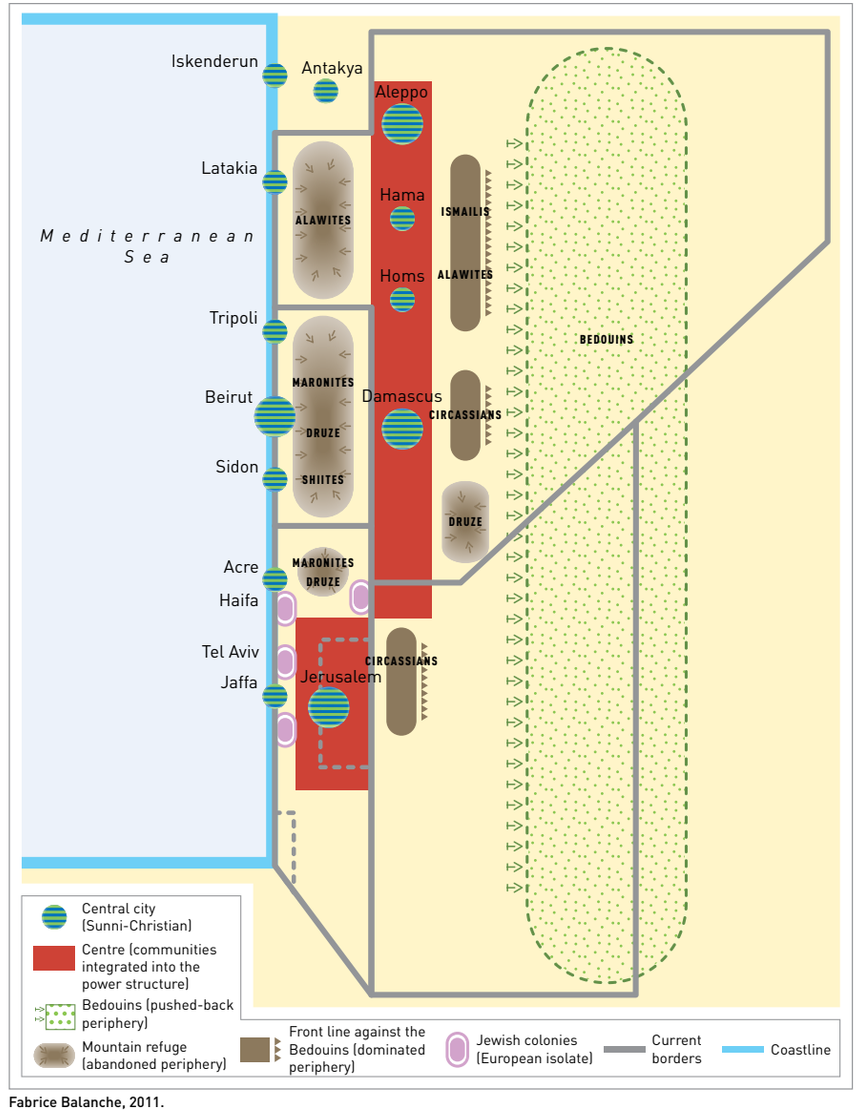
In order to push the Bedouins back and protect the economic hubs, the Ottoman authorities installed buffer populations on the margins of the steppes; Ismailis, Druze, and Alawites were driven from their mountains by internal conflicts or impoverishment as resources became insufficient to feed them. The Circassians who had come from the Caucasus were placed in the front line, especially in present-day Jordan, where they reshaped Amman. On the other side of the Jordan River, Palestine saw the first Jewish settlers arrive in the year 1880. The Zionists established settlements along the coastline and in the northern part of the Jordan Valley; these were the only lands available at that time as the Palestinian population had abandoned them because they were swampy and insalubrious. The development of these lands required techniques and capital that the Palestinians lacked; the Zionists, however, obtained support from European and American capitalist companies.

THE OLD CITY OF DAMASCUS AT THE END OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE



Source: 1932 map of Damascus at 1:5000 scale.

CENTRES AND PERIPHERIES AT THE END OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

> A single Bosporus had thus far sufficed for the troubles of the world; you have created a second one, much more important than the first, because it not only connects two parts of an inland sea, it serves as a corridor of communications to all the great seas of the world. In case of naval warfare, it would be of extreme interest, a point that all would be quick to fight to control. You have thus fixed the scene for the great battles of the future.

Thus Auguste Renan publicly replied to a speech by Ferdinand de Lesseps, the developer of the Suez Canal, who had just become a member of the Académie Française on 23 April 1885. The opening of the Isthmus of Suez had re-launched the competition between European powers for the control of the route to India, of vital importance to the British Empire and, more globally, for relations between Europe and Asia.

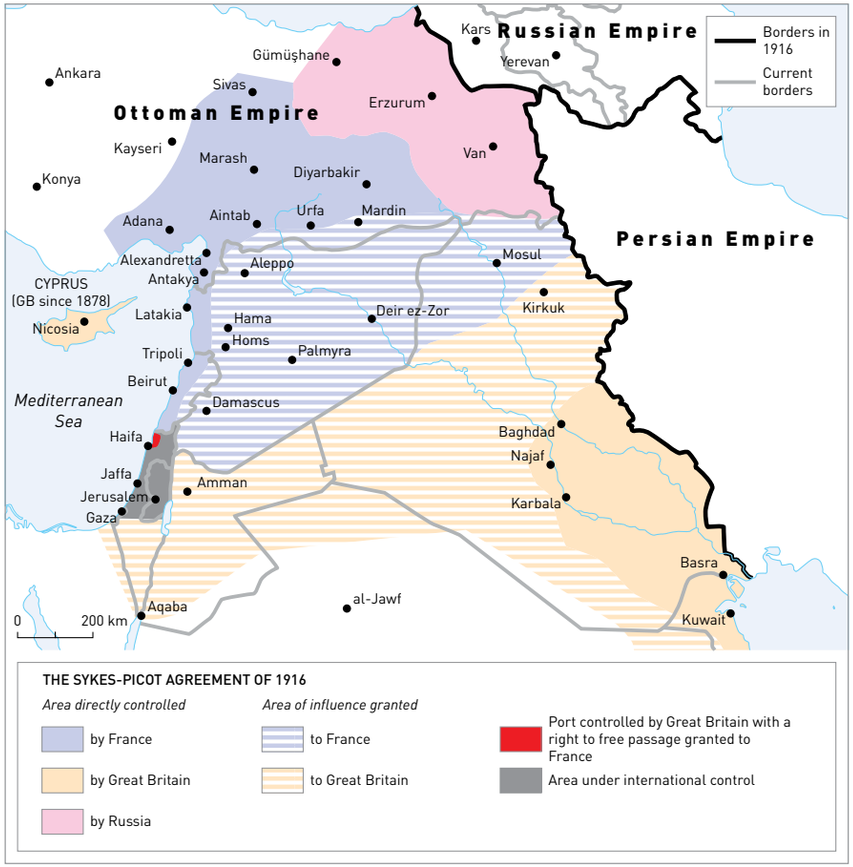
At the end of the nineteenth century three main schemes came into conflict in the Mediterranean: the British wanted to control the sea routes, France had designs to make the Mediterranean a "French lake", and Russia sought direct access to the Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire, the "sick man of Europe", was thus quite coveted. At the same time, this divergence in strategies provided a certain reprieve. In 1878 Great Britain assisted the Ottoman Empire in preventing Russia from taking over the Bosporus; in appreciation it obtained the protectorate of the island of Cyprus. In 1879 it became a majority shareholder of the Suez Canal Company, and subsequently imposed a protectorate in Egypt in 1882, ousting France. From then on the protection of the Suez Canal became an obsession for the British and conditioned their entire policy in the Near East.

During World War I, the Ottoman Empire allied itself with Germany, an unfortunate strategy. From March of 1915, Great Britain and France negotiated to dismantle the empire. These talks led to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which constitutes the basis for the division into the current Near East. France demanded a protectorate over "natural Syria": from the Taurus to Sinai, and from Mosul to the Mediterranean, while the British wanted to reduce the

FRENCH, RUSSIAN, AND BRITISH IMPERIALISMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

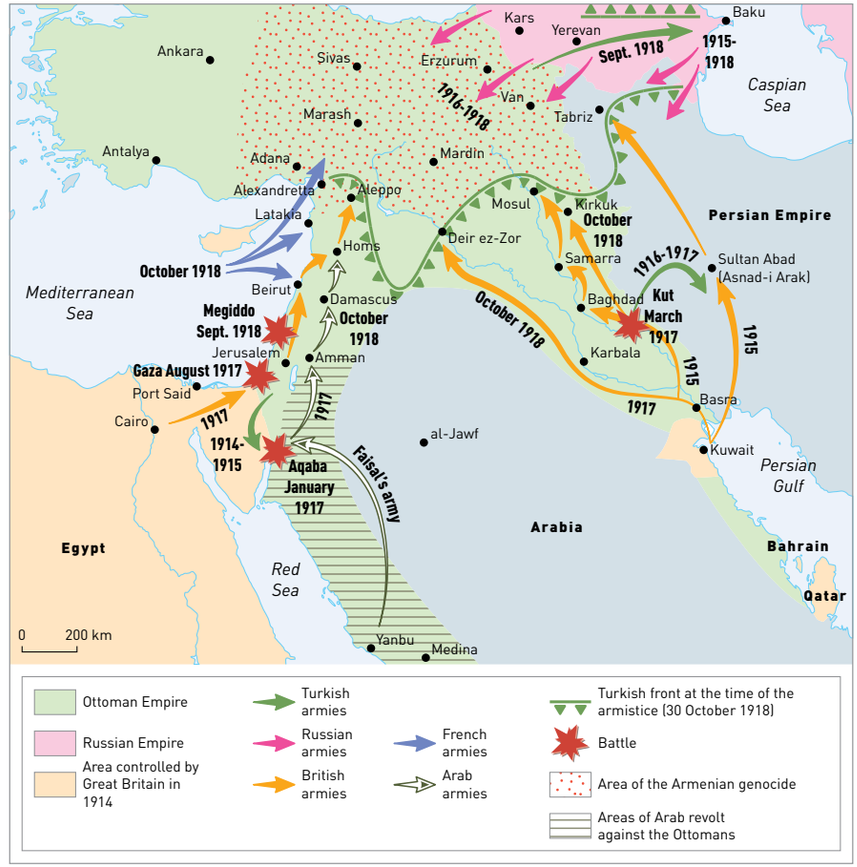
Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT OF 1916



Source: *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients.*

THE MIDDLE EAST DURING WORLD WAR I



Source: *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients.*

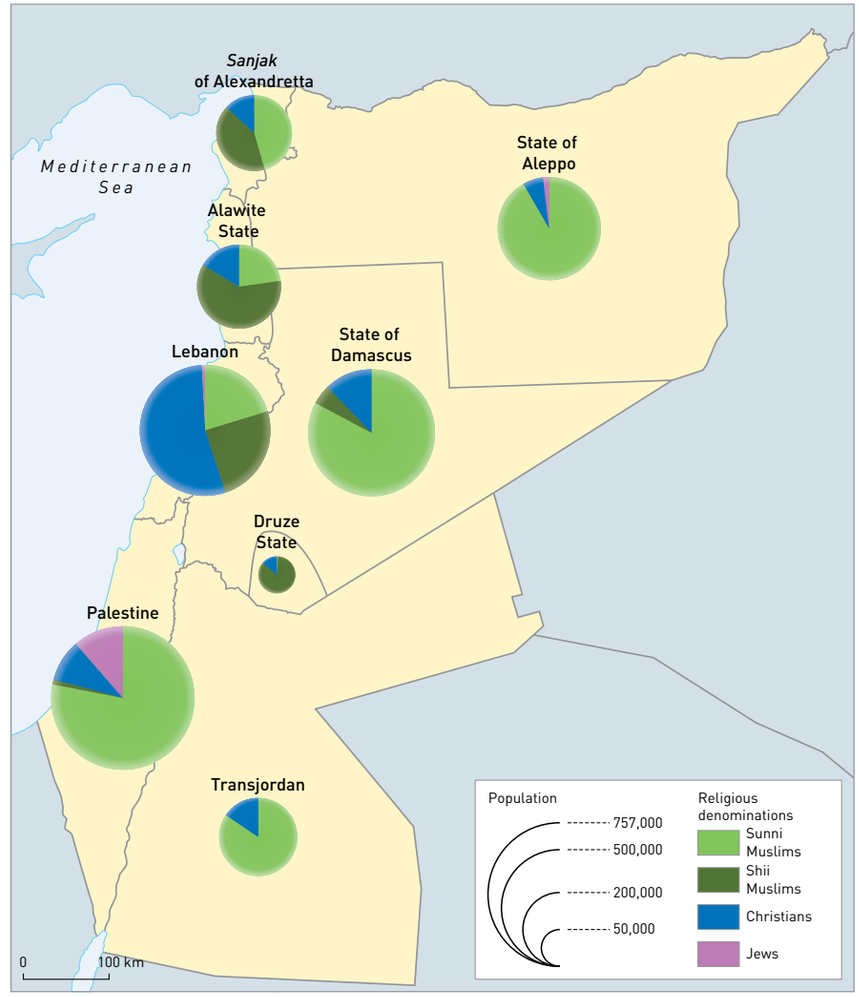
French presence so as to protect the Suez Canal and create an Arab kingdom led by Amir Faisal al-Hashimi, son of the Sharif of Mecca—this was a prerequisite for drawing the Arabs into the fight against the Ottoman Turks. Ultimately, the Lebanese coastline was directly administered by France, the inland region of Syria was a zone of French influence, the south of the future Iraq was administered by Great Britain, and the region of Baghdad was a British zone of influence. Palestine was internationalised, a special status being foreseen for Jerusalem. Britain and France also recognized the interests of Russia (in May of 1916) and Italy (in August of 1917) in the administration of Palestine as well as their claims to spheres of interest in Anatolia.

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 Kemalist 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.

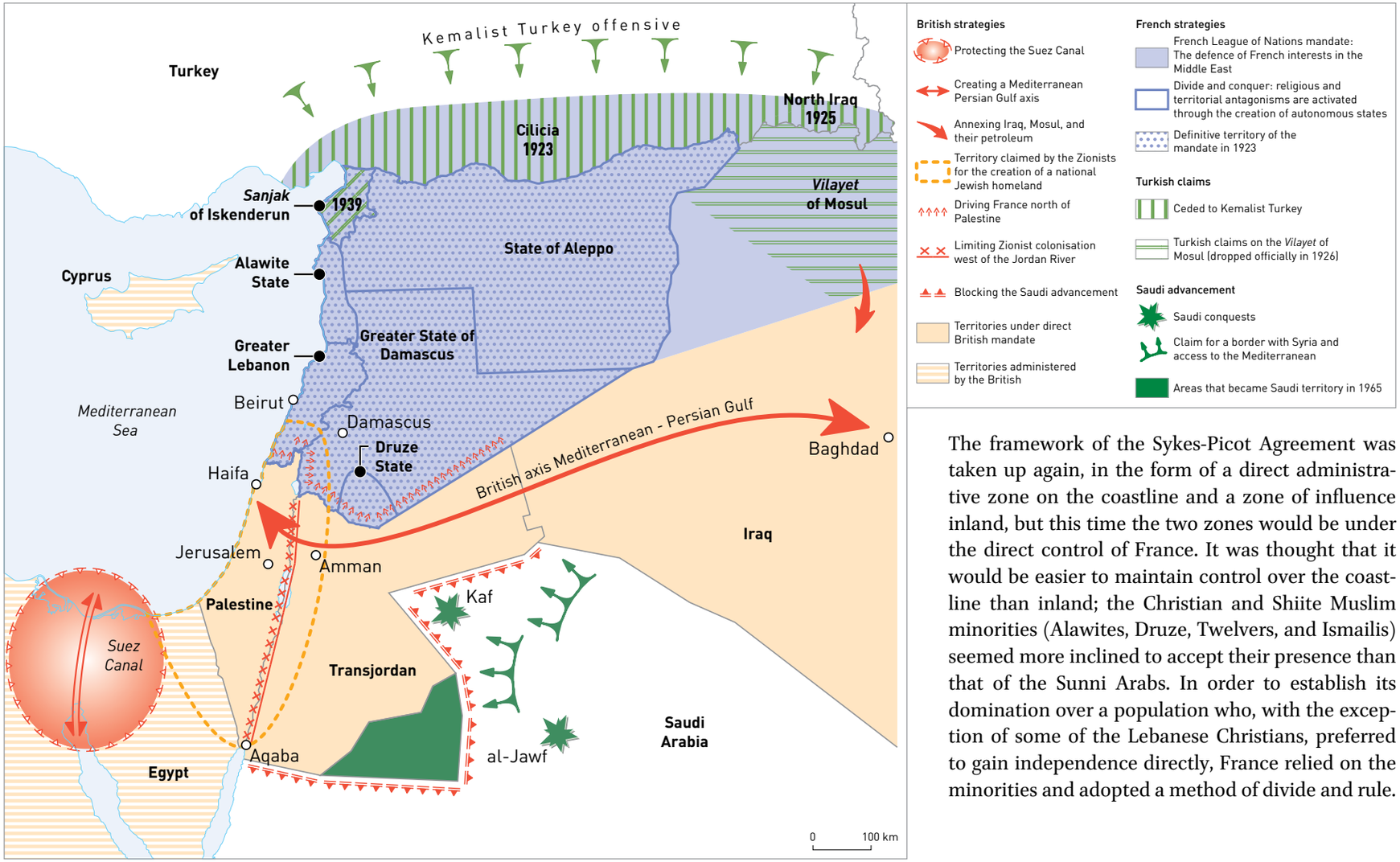
THE POPULATION OF STATES UNDER MANDATE IN 1922



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.

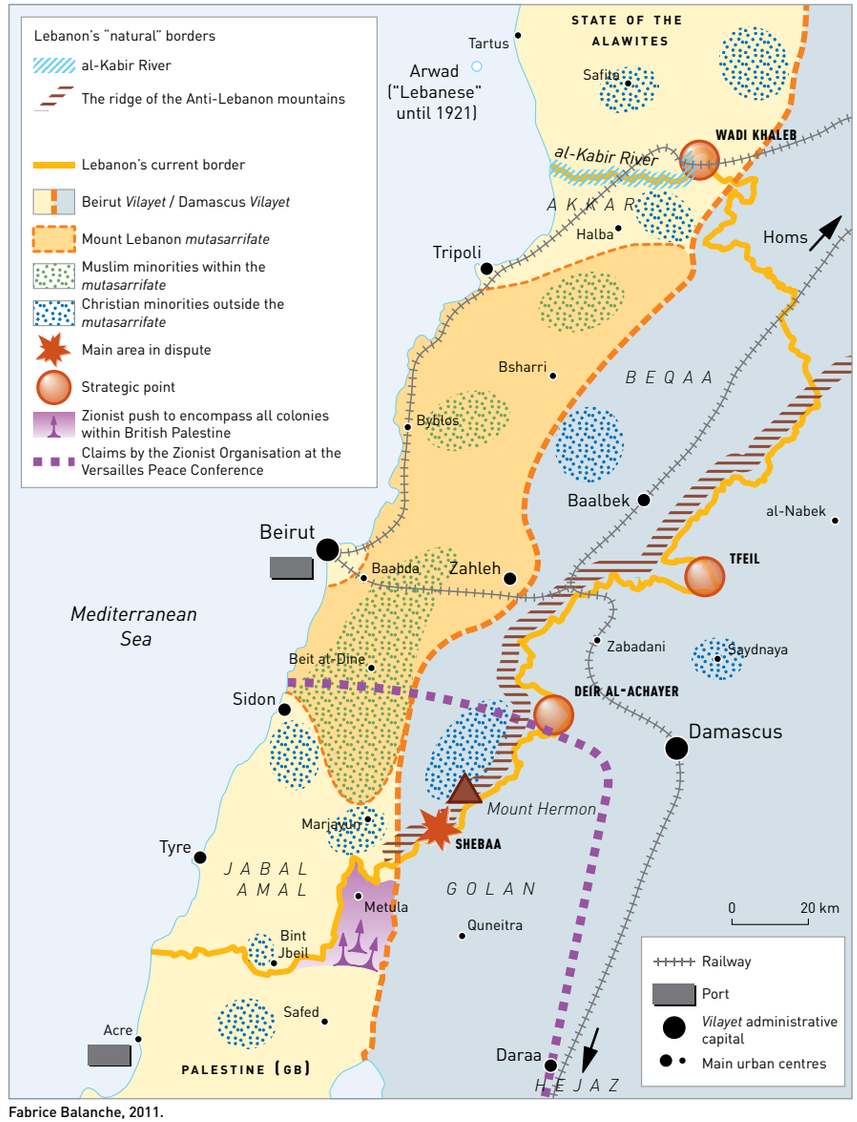
The framework of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was taken up again, in the form of a direct administrative zone on the coastline and a zone of influence inland, but this time the two zones would be under the direct control of France. It was thought that it would be easier to maintain control over the coastline 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.

The State of Greater Lebanon

As early as 10 November 1919, in a letter to the Maronite Patriarch, Elias Hoayek, the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, committed to granting the Lebanese an autonomous government and an independent national statute. While agreeing in principle to an extension of Lebanon's territory, he could not yet fix an exact or definitive delimitation. The delimitation of the border between Lebanon and Syria met the demands of the Maronite Patriarch, who was all too trusting in the ability of the Christians to control a space twice as important as and more populous than the *mutasarrifate* of Mount Lebanon, where Christians represented 80 per cent of the population. Marked by the great famine suffered during World War I, the Christian elites wished to have at their disposal the cereal growing plains. Greater Lebanon was thus expanded to the surrounding plains (Akkar and Beqaa) in spite of the fact that these areas were populated by Muslims and that the Beqaa valley depended on the vilayet of Damascus and not Beirut. The city of Tripoli, where Christians represented only one-fourth of the population, was integrated into Lebanon so as to keep it from becoming the port of Syria and thus a competitor for Beirut. The latter soon eclipsed all other ports of the Levantine states under French mandate, and brought prosperity to the capital of greater Lebanon. In 1924 the borders were established definitively and the state of greater Lebanon was separated from the state of Syria.

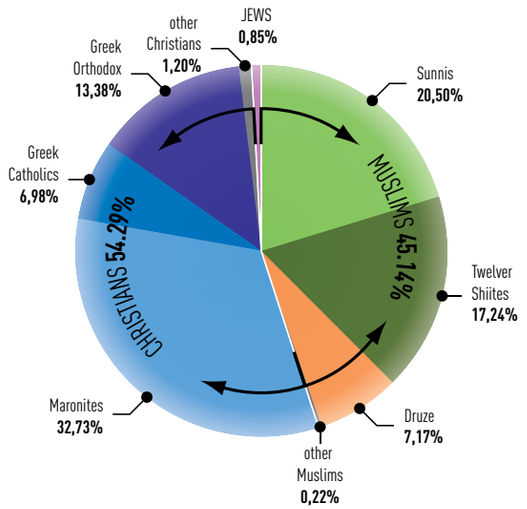
The Northern Great River (*Nahr al-Kabir al-Shamali*) and the ridge line of the Anti-Lebanon to the east were chosen as the "natural" boundaries of Lebanon. However, this ridge line is breached in two places (Deir al-Achayer and Tfeil), pinching as it were the city of Damascus. To the south, the border with Palestine was difficult to draw because the British put forward the claims of the Zionist movement demanding the Jordan River Basin in its entirety, so as to secure the water supply in northern Palestine. France only granted them the depression of Houle so that all the Jewish settlements would be grouped in Palestine, but prohibited the purchase of land by the Zionist movement in southern Lebanon. The incorporation into Lebanon of the Jabal Amal, where the Shiites lived, further reduced Christian preponderance. The smaller Christian Lebanon, which was denominationally viable, thus gave way to the state of greater Lebanon, which was certainly more viable economically but heavily

FROM MOUNT LEBANON TO GREATER LEBANON



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS, AND JEWS IN LEBANON IN 1932



Source: Etienne de Vaumas, "La répartition confessionelle au Liban", *Revue de géografique alpine* 43 (1955), 511–603, based on the 1932 census.

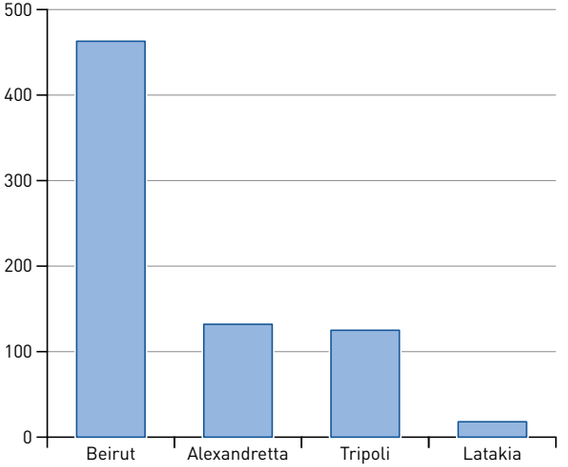
burdened politically since the Christian community there only held a slight majority which continued to decrease.

Greater Lebanon was conceived by France as a refuge for the Christians of the Near East, especially for Armenians and other Christian minorities driven out of Turkey. Those minorities reinforced the importance of existing Christian communities. An attempt to colonise Beqaa was undertaken through the creation of an Armenian colony in Anjar, near the Syrian border, but this project did not meet with the enthusiasm expected by the representative authorities. In fact, the new arrivals were hardly sufficient to replace the emigrants who left seeking fortune overseas or to compensate for falling birth rates. Thanks to the educational missionary institutions, Christians were more highly educated than Muslims, and were thus more likely to emigrate and further reduce their birth rate. Between the beginning and the end of the French mandate, the demographic ratio was reversed in favour of the Muslims, but neither the French authorities nor the Christian elites were willing to admit this, since doing so would have called into question the political preponderance of Christians in the institutions. The 1932 census was therefore the last one held in Lebanon. Apparently, the Christian community had already been overestimated, as the census agents registered many Christian emigrants. Yet it was on this basis that the community quotas for parliamentary representatives were determined in 1943.

France institutionalised and modernised the Ottoman millet system, allocating each community a fixed number of parliamentary representatives and formalizing the connection between an individual's religious affiliation and his or her legal personal status, as it did in the other Levantine states under French mandate. The mandatory power gave power to the Maronites, the country's largest community at the time (one-third of the population). According to an unwritten rule, the president of the republic had to be Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the national assembly a Shii Muslim. The president of the republic had ample prerogatives without being "responsible" to the parliament that elected him (although the constitution of 1926 clearly stipulated that "Lebanon is a Parliamentary Republic"). The other two political figures had very limited powers. The constitution of 1943 gave 54 seats of parliament to the Christians and 45 to the Muslims, thus establishing a national representation contrary to the demographic evolution, which the Christian side opted to ignore. In 1943 the representatives of the main Lebanese communities agreed on a national pact. Signed by Bechara al-Khouri, the Maronite leader of the Constitutional al-Dastur Party who became president of the republic, and Riad al-Solh, a Sunni who assumed the office of prime minister, the pact may be considered the constituent charter of Lebanon and is based on compromise. The Sunnis agreed to the separate independence of Lebanon and Syria in exchange for the Maronites' recognition of the "Arab" character of the Land of Cedars. This agreement recognised the independence of the Lebanese nation with respect to all states in the west and the east. Although Lebanon became officially independent on 8 June 1941, French troops did not leave until 1946. The pact also established that Lebanon was part of the Arab world and that it was obliged to cooperate with its Arab brethren states "to the utmost limits". Lebanon joined the Arab League on 7 April 1945, and in 1948, along with all other countries in the region, opposed the formation of Israel.

PORT TRAFFIC UNDER FRENCH MANDATE IN 1930

Freight of goods (in thousands of tonnes)



Source: Jacques de Monicault, *Le Port de Beyrouth*, 1932.

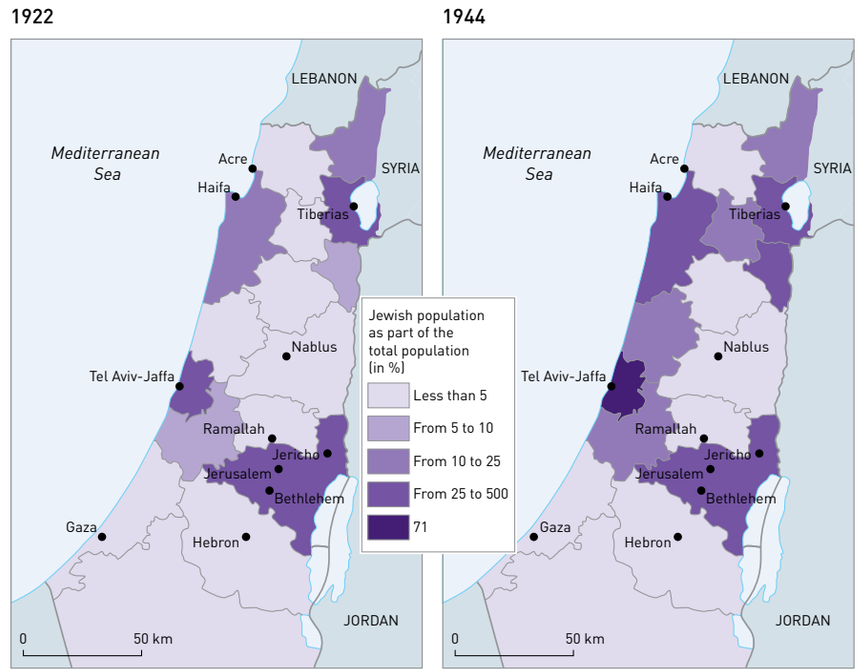
Mandatory Palestine

In 1920 the League of Nations entrusted Great Britain with the mandate over Palestine. The text of the mandate echoed the Balfour Declaration, promising the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Herbert Samuel, the first British High Commissioner in Jerusalem (1920–25), was himself an influential Jewish politician and pro-Zionist. He focused on safeguarding British domination while allowing the Zionist movement to create a springboard to enable it to take over the entire country. Unlike the divided and isolated Palestinian Arab population, the Zionist movement mobilised its worldwide network of institutions, which provided considerable financial, propagandist, and diplomatic means. The Jews comprised only 17 per cent of the Palestinian population in 1922 but, due to the reinforcement of emigration, by 1945 they had become a third of the population, in spite of the Palestinians' high birth rate. Moreover, half of the Arab population was under 20 years of age, versus a quarter of the Jewish population, which was essentially composed of young educated adults brought up and nurtured with a nationalist ideal which the Palestinians lacked. The latter did not understand that the Zionist project was not a simple colonialist undertaking but a national construct that aimed to exclude them. The massive purchase of farms from prominent Arabs allowed the Jews to take over the farmlands, even though their community was primarily made up of city dwellers. According to the 1931 census, 78 per cent of the Jews lived in cities, mostly in Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem, compared to a mere 30 per cent of the Arab population. The income of the Jews was 2.6 times higher than that of the Arabs and their economy grew at a rate of 13 per cent yearly, thanks to investments from abroad; and this was in spite of the great depression of the 1930s. The rate of school enrolment for Jewish children was 77 per cent against 44.5 per cent for Arab children (even though the latter was quite high compared to other Arab countries in the region). The socio-economic gap between the two communities grew during the British mandate, in spite of the general progress of the whole population.

Politically, the British mandate locked the Palestinians in an iron cage. The high commissioner held all the power, there were no parliament or other nationally elected representative institutions, unlike in the states under French mandate. In contrast, the Jewish Agency was guaranteed by the mandate, and while some Jews had access to high positions in the public administration, this was not the case for Arabs. Certain prominent Palestinians obtained some prestigious posts but not leadership positions because the objective of the high commissioner was to accentuate the divisions within the Palestinian elite in order to control the emergence of the Arab nationalist movement.

The great Arab revolt of 1936 coincided with a resurgence of Jewish immigration to Palestine, following three years of extensive land purchases by Jewish organisations. The repression caused 5,000 deaths, injured 10,000, while close to 6,000 were arrested, or 10 per cent of the adult male Arab population. The budding Palestinian national movement was broken. In 1948 the Yishuv

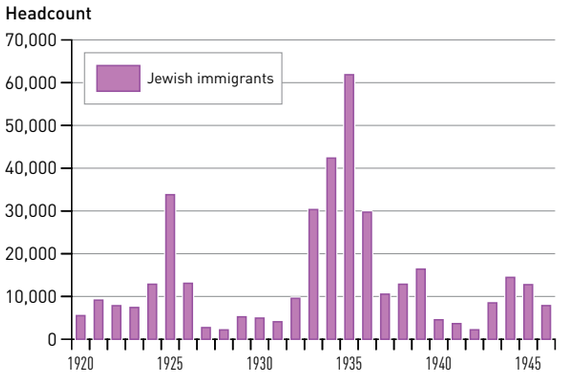
JEWISH POPULATION IN PALESTINE



Source: ARIJ Resource Center.

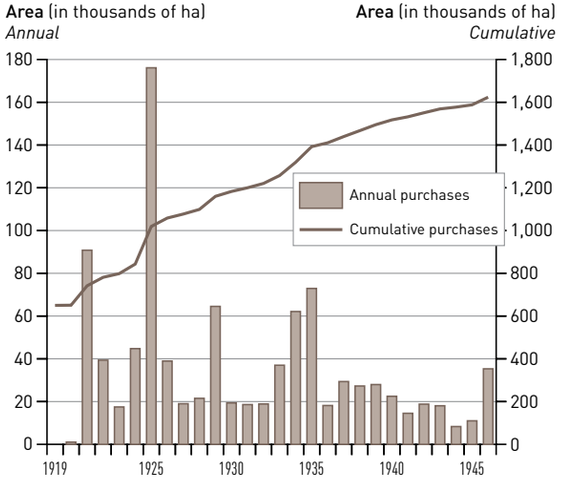
LEGAL JEWISH EMIGRATION TO PALESTINE

(1920-1946)



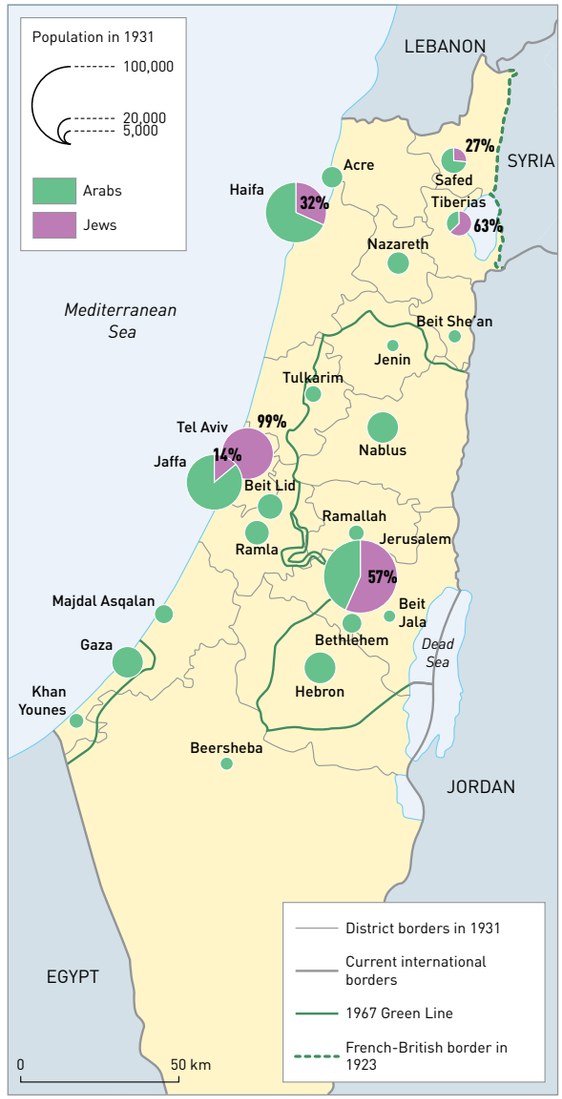
Source: Survey of Palestine.

PURCHASE OF LAND BY JEWS IN PALESTINE



Source: Survey of Palestine.

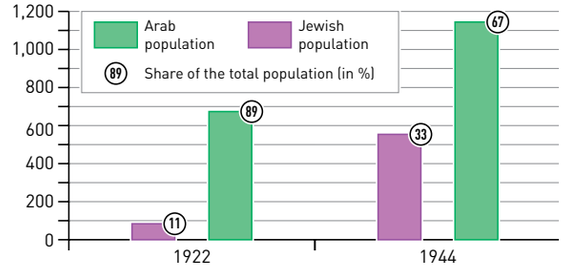
THE URBAN NETWORK IN PALESTINE UNDER THE BRITISH MANDATE



Source: 1931 Census, Survey of Palestine.

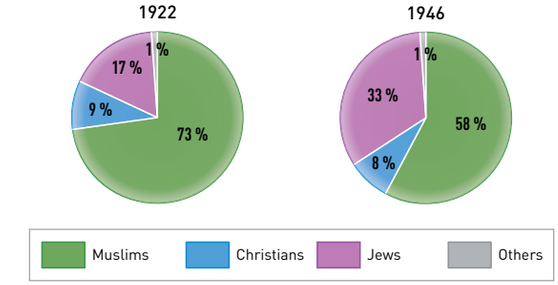
ARABS AND JEWS IN PALESTINE (1922–1944

Headcount (in thousands)



Source: ARIJ Resource Center.

THE EVOLUTION OF FAITHS UNDER THE BRITISH MANDATE



Source: Survey of Palestine.

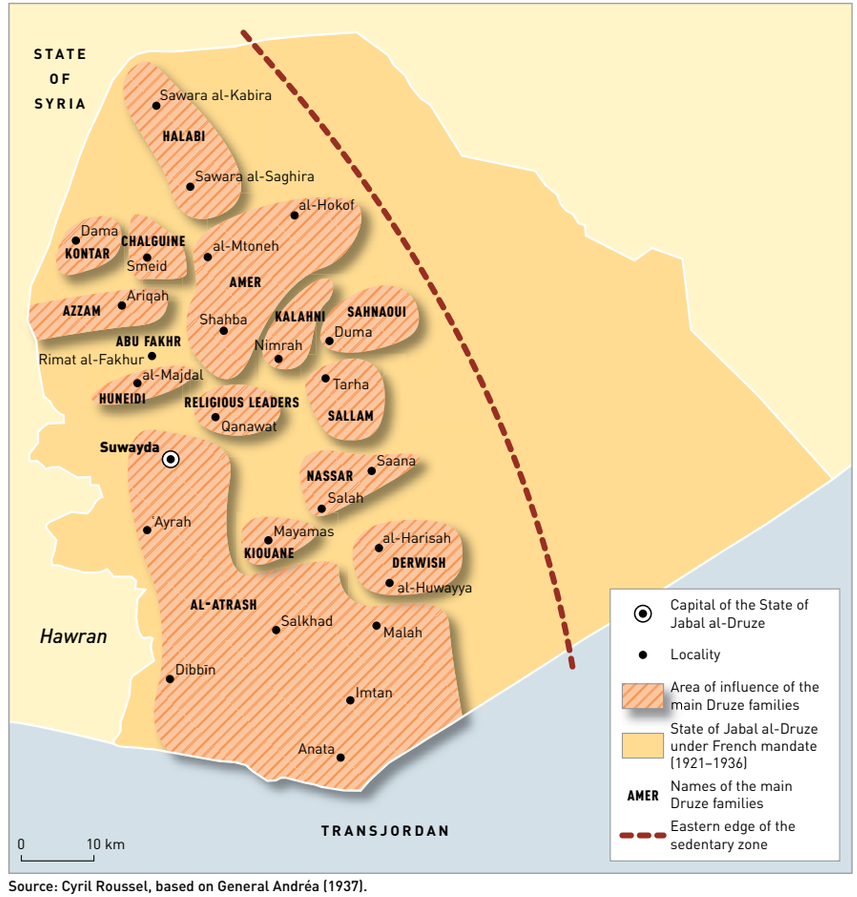
(Jewish population in Palestine), who joined in the British repression, successfully took advantage of the weakened Palestinian resistance to take over the country. The British about-face in 1939, in which they decided to cease Jewish immigration to Palestine in order to accommodate the Arabs, came too late to halt the impetus of the Zionist project.

Ephemeral States

In 1922 France created two communitarian states in Syria: a state for the Alawites and a state for the Druze. Officially they were applying in the Levant the principle of the people's right to self-determination; unofficially, however, for the mandatory power it was more a matter of partitioning the Syrian territory by relying on the rift between the communities. The Alawites and Druzes were two communities held in contempt by Sunni Muslims; they lived reclusively in the mountains, where they preserved a tribal sort of organisation.

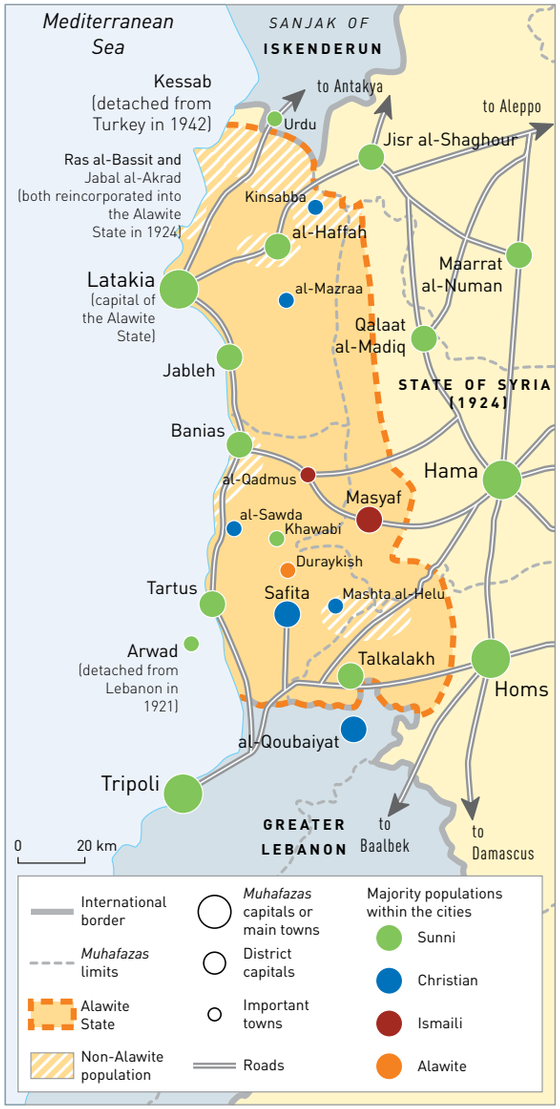
Under the Ottoman Empire, the Alawite Mountains were surrounded by a network of cities and towns whose populations reflected that of the Ottoman Empire: Sunni Muslims, Christians, and Ismailis. The network of roads avoids the Alawite Mountains that were plagued by endemic uprisings. Only one road goes through its centre, connecting Banias and Hama via al-Qadmus and Masyaf—two Ismaili villages considered safer than the Alawite towns. The Ismailis, in conflict with the Alawites, had obtained protection from the Ottomans; in exchange they guaranteed the safety of this little-used route. The mountains did not provide sufficient food for a growing population, so the Alawites were obliged to work as sharecroppers in the landed estates of the Sunni-Christian oligarchy in the surrounding plains. Their integration into the economic system of these landed estates meant, however, that they lost the political protection of their tribe. It was this age-old opposition that France utilised to build an Alawite state in which "those forgotten by history" (an expression used by the French geographer Jacques Weulersse) could free themselves from the tutelage of the land-holding Sunnis and establish a communitarian state protected from nationalist Syria by France. The borders needed to follow closely the communitarian boundaries, but in 1924 it became necessary to breach these principles and integrate the majority Sunni northern territories that depended economically on Latakia and not on Antioch into the sanjak of Alexandretta. In the new state, the Alawites represented two-thirds of the population: 224,000 out of 350,000 inhabitants in 1935. The Sunnis, occupying mostly the cities and the northern part of the state, were the second community, with 64,500 people. The French mandate focused its efforts on education, aiming to create an Alawite elite capable of taking charge of the state's destiny (Sunnis and Christians had always monopolised the key

STATE OF JABAL AL-DRUZE UNDER FRENCH MANDATE



Source: Cyril Roussel, based on General Andréa (1937).

THE ALAWITE STATE: 1920–1936



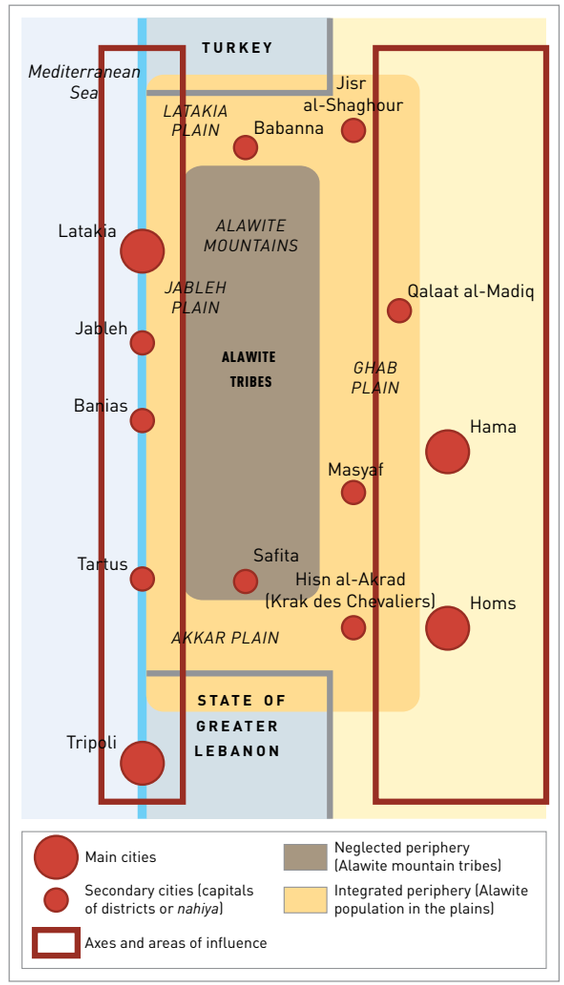
Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

positions). The Levantine army offered professional opportunity and a much faster means of social mobility for illiterate mountain Alawites.

France created the Druze state of Jabal al-Druze on the same principle as the Alawite state. The dividing lines between the Druze and the Sunnis became the western border of the new state; the eastern border ran through an uninhabited steppe that includes the zone used by Druze herders. The new state comprised 50,328 inhabitants, of whom 85 per cent were Druze, and it integrated Christian communities (7,000 people) who had long lived in these mountains in harmony with the Druze. Sunni Muslims were rarer: they included a few sedentary Bedouins and families of civil servants in Soueida (that is, a total of only some 700 individuals). The principal Druze clans accepted the French mandate and the partition from the state of Damascus, as they considered it a means to maintain their hegemony and reinforce their privileges. However, the families that had no representation in the assembly challenged that authority and looked to Arab nationalism. In 1925, a conflict erupted between the French administration and the Druze leaders. Sultan al-Atrash, a secondary member of an elite family from the southern Jabal al-Druze, led the revolt. For two years, the Druze from the mountains eluded the control of the French army, who had to send in the air force to crush the Druze resistance. Nevertheless, the movement spread over the whole of Syria and undermined the French mandate.

The two states were barely viable economically, and the new Druze and Alawite elites, sympathetic to Arab nationalism, campaigned for their integration into the state of Syria, which came into being at the end of 1936. Furthermore, in 1933 the mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husayni, officially recognised

MAIN CITIES AND PERIPHERIES IN THE ALAWITE REGION



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

the Alawites and Druze as part of the Muslim family, thus dispelling religious reservations with regard to their status in a state dominated by Sunni Muslims.

National Constructs

Arab Nationalism and the Struggle against Communitarianism

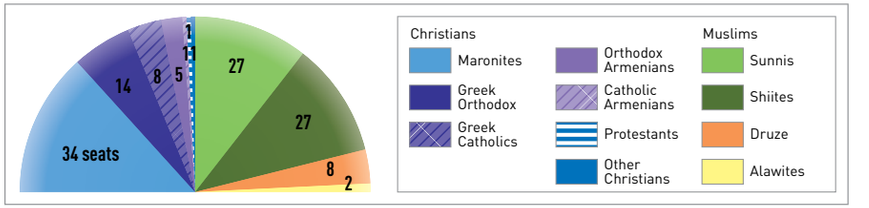
Once independence had been gained, the states of the Near East sought to maintain the territorial cohesion that resulted from the colonial partitioning, and achieve national unity. The task for the new states was to dissolve community-based identities in favour of a national identity. This proved difficult in Lebanon because the unity between Christians and Muslims, through the national pact of 1943, was based on maintaining institutional multiculturalism, or "communitarianism". In Syria, political communitarianism was abolished in 1950, but it endured in Jordan: Christians, Chechens, Circassians, and Bedouins still had seats allocated to them in parliament. In the legal systems of all three countries, religious affiliation was taken into consideration in matters of marriage and inheritance. The absence of civil marriage thus contributed to maintaining a strong communitarian endogamy that states normally try to reduce as part of an effective policy of national integration.

Arabism was used by the states as a factor of national unity against religious divisions. Nevertheless, we must remember that Arab nationalism aimed to unite Arab countries into one political entity, which eventually called into question their individual existence. In 1958 Syria agreed to join Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt to form the United Arab Republic (UAR). Following this example, the Lebanese unionist movement, dominated by Kamal Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party, demanded that Lebanon also join the UAR. Kamal Jumblatt took up arms against the legitimate government of Camille Chamoun, who was only saved through the intervention of the United States. Finally, Syria regained its independence in 1961 when the UAR became more a synonym of annexation than unity. The myth of an Arab national unity continued to mobilise populations until recent times. For example, Hashemite Jordan experienced regular outbreaks of Arab nationalism spurred by domestic opposition and encouraged by neighbours aiming to weaken the regime.

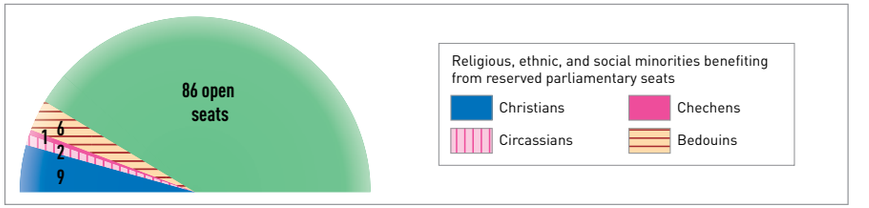
Arab nationalism, in its Syrian version, contributed to discriminate the Kurds (more than 2 million people) and the Turkmen (approximately 200,000 people) who inhabited vast territories near the Turkish border; these groups could call into question the territorial integrity of the country, unlike other non-Arab minorities such as the Armenians and Circassians, who did not constitute any such threat. The political Arabisation launched in the 1950s was

COMMUNITARIANISM IN PARLIAMENT

IN LEBANON



IN JORDAN

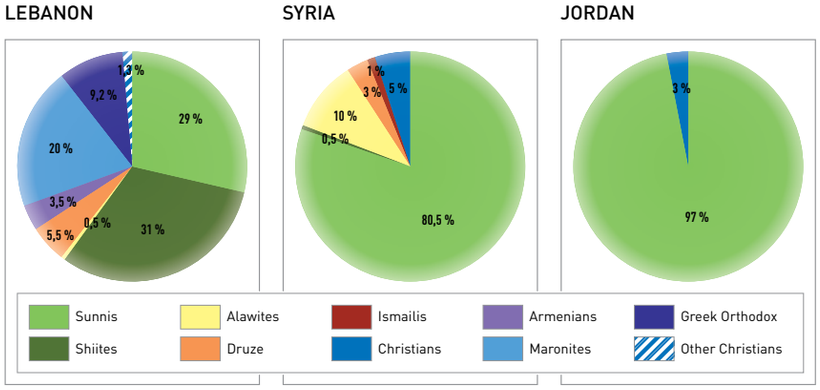


Sources: Lebanese and Jordanian parliaments.

intensified by the Ba'athist regime in 1963. It involved the creation of a string of Arab towns along the Turkish border, the prohibition of the Turkish and Kurdish languages, the revocation of Syrian nationality from part of the Kurdish population (the "*bidun*", or "*sans papiers*," i.e., those without documentation), and especially the regime's abandonment of regions populated by the Kurds and Turkmen; this led to an exodus of the population toward the cities, where it was thought that they would Arabise more readily. This situation caused a revolt of the Kurdish population in 2004 and resulted in more than a hundred deaths. Promises of economic development and the regularisation of undocumented immigrants were not kept.

The Bedouins were also victims of the national constructs since their lifestyle—transhumance between the winter grazing lands in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and the summer grazing lands in Syria and Jordan—had already been constrained by the new borders from the period of the mandate. The reclaiming of land by sedentary groups initiated in the middle of the nineteenth century, and instigated by the Ottoman authorities, intensified with the large agricultural projects of the Euphrates Valley. Blocked by state borders, and deprived of the best grazing lands by agriculture in the summer, the Bedouins gradually became more sedentary. The approximately 400,000 Bedouins of

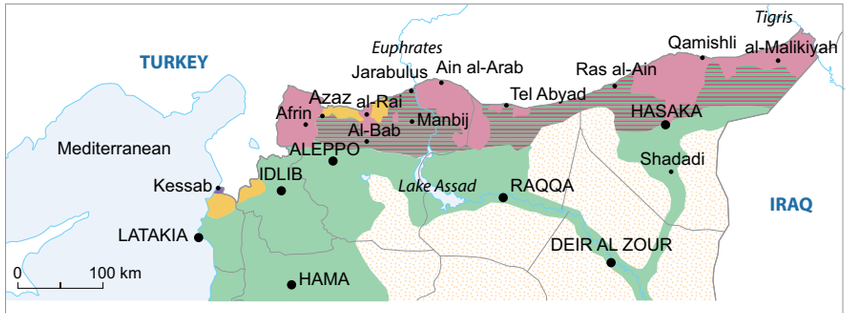
RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, EARLY 21ST CENTURY



Source: Youssef Courbage.

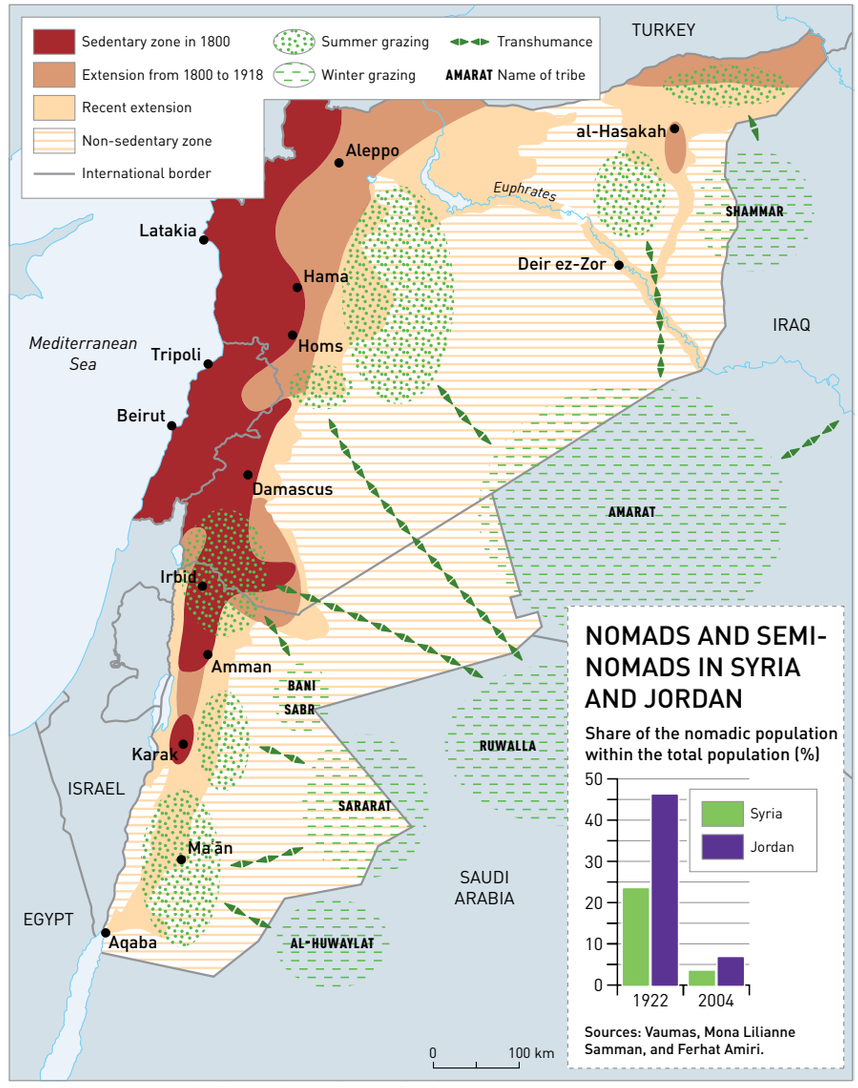
Jordan and the 600,000 of Syria became, for the most part, only semi-nomadic. The authorities tried to condition their sedentarisation by granting them farm land and offering them enhancements: water points, schools, roads, etc. As a migrant population, and consequently one that was difficult to control, their sedentarisation became a natural consequence of the construction of state entities.

KURDS AND TURKMEN IN THE NORTH OF SYRIA



Fabrice Balanche, August 2016.

STAGES OF BEDOUIN SEDENTARISATION



Fabrice Balanche, based on the *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*.

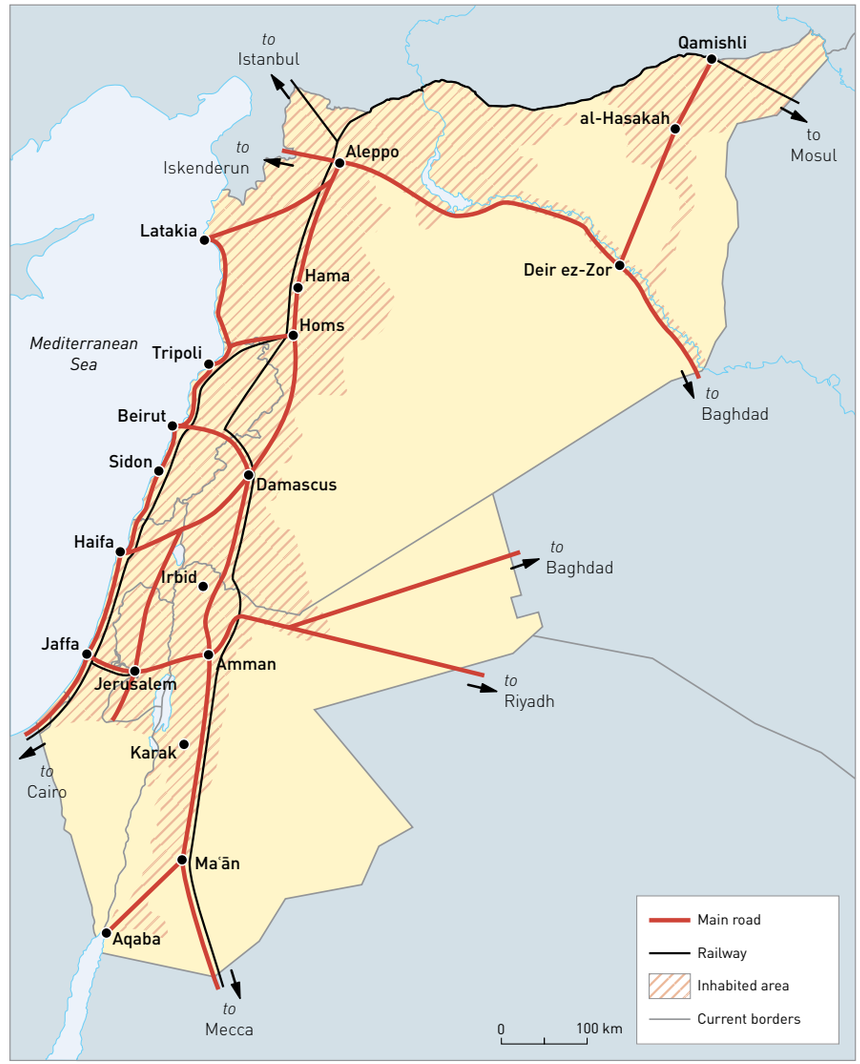
Reorganisation of the Transportation Network after Independence

The reorganisation of the transportation network in the newly independent states perfectly reflected nation-building policies. The networks advanced toward centralisation that focused on the capitals and partitioned the territory. The new barriers generated by the creation of the state of Israel and the separate independence of Syria and Jordan also led to the construction or abandonment of communication routes. Jordan, deprived of the port in Haifa, modernised the Amman-Aqaba link. Syria built a direct route between Homs and Damascus via the Qalamun, so as to avoid the routes of the Lebanese Beqaa. The coastal region of Syria, now the country's only window to the sea after the loss of Alexandretta and Lebanon, was subsequently connected to the larger cities inland.

If the transportation network in Syria and Jordan was a reflection of the political centralisation, the relative strength of local powers in Lebanon made the situation more complex. However, globally the concentration of economic activity in greater Beirut, to the detriment of the peripheral cities, led to the same result as in Syria. Until the 1960s Syria had a bicephalous network of roads around Aleppo and Damascus; a network that attested to the balance of powers between the country's two metropolises. The Ba'athist regime's will to centralise broke this balance in favour of Damascus. The construction of direct routes between the Euphrates Valley and Damascus drew the populations of Syria's Jazira Province away from the city of Aleppo. The absence of a motorway between Aleppo and Latakia forced the traffic of goods to bypass the Alawite Mountains via Homs in order to reach the ports on the Syrian coast. The second largest cities of Lebanon and Jordan, Tripoli and Irbid, found themselves in dead-end situations due to the proximity of the borders with Syria. The expressways that connected them to the capitals did not galvanize them but further emptied them of their vital forces. Tripoli was also a victim of the disaffection of the Christian populations from the hinterlands in favour of Beirut.

The network of roads served to control the territory, particularly on the marginal steppes and national borders. A hundred kilometres from the

1945: TRANSPORTATION NETWORK INTEGRATING AN OPEN MIDDLE EAST



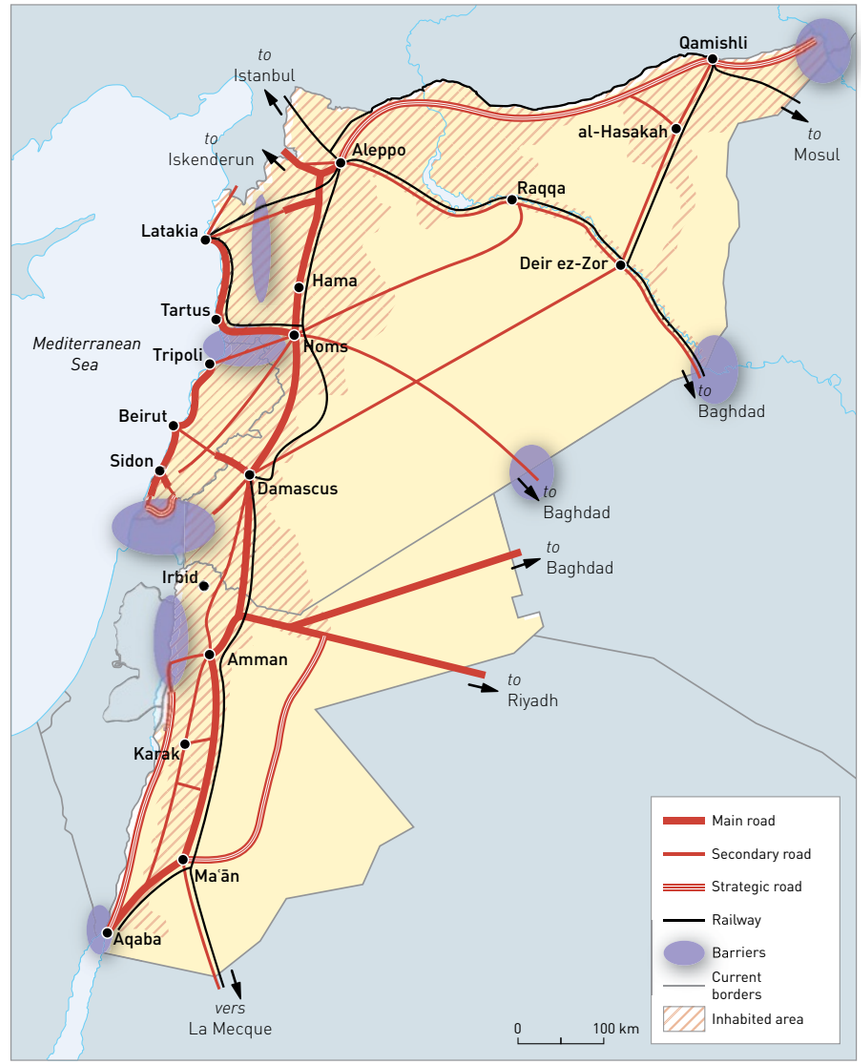
Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

Amman-Ma'ān motorway, the Jordanians inaugurated a new north-south axis, in a space devoid of sedentary population, possibly to facilitate the surveillance of the steppe and eventually serve as settlement grounds for the Bedouin populations. In Syria, the road between Aleppo and Qamishli, completed in 1992, was designed to control the Turkish border. It allowed Aleppo to recover part of its traditional hinterland, which went very much against the state's centralist policy. The growth of the Syrian road network was rapid from the moment of its independence: from 1,500 km of asphalt roads in 1943 to 10,000 km in 1970, and later 40,000 km. The extension of the road network and its extreme ramification contributed to the political centralisation and the building of the nation. All Syrian towns had to be accessible by road, a symbol of modernity embodied by the state.

After independence, only Syria pursued the development of the rail network; in Jordan it declined, and in Lebanon it disappeared. The socialist mode of development adopted by the country and Soviet aid initially favoured that mode of transportation as much for passengers as for goods. Syria had excellent conditions for the transport of heavy freight due to its east-west routes. The opening of a section between Homs and Damascus restored for the Syrian railway system the unity that had been lost with the independence of Lebanon. On the other hand, in the Land of Cedars the railway had not been used since the civil war (1975–90). No plan for rehabilitation was considered, though it might have solved the problem of constant traffic jams along the coast. In Jordan, the railway was only used for the transport of heavy freight; as in the entire region, transportation by road dominated both freight and passenger traffic.

Ground transportation networks were built, above all, to unify the national territory; consequently, international connections were neglected, with the exception of a single road linking the capital to the neighbouring countries. Relations with Israel were limited in the case of Jordan and non-existent for Lebanon and Syria; the roads there remained in almost the same condition they had been in 1948. Political relations between Syria and Iraq were always turbulent, and alternated between the complete break of diplomatic relations and a limited opening of the borders. This situation did not help to promote traffic between the two countries—except from 2003 when there was an influx of Iraqi refugees into Syria—nor, consequently, did it help promote the development of a transportation infrastructure. Between the countries of the Near East, therefore, the border crossings are few in number and heavily controlled by punctilious customs checks.

2011: CENTRALISED AND CLOSED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK WITHIN A FRAGMENTED MIDDLE EAST



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

The Administrative Network in the Service of Centralisation

The administrative terminology was inherited from the Ottoman and mandate periods. The sanjak became *muhafaza* (province or governorate), the *qada* (district) remained *qada* in Lebanon and Jordan but became *mantaqa* in Syria, the subdistrict or canton was called *nahiya* in Syria and *liwa* in Jordan, but did not exist in Lebanon.

The evolution of the administrative system after the independence of the various states reveals the centralisation that prevailed in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. On the one hand, the various regimes sought to reduce the influence of the regional metropolises by granting them only a minor administrative territory, lowering them to the level of recently promoted country towns. Administratively, Irbid was the equivalent of Tafila, Tripoli was equal to Nabatieh, and Aleppo equal to Idlib. On the other hand, the tightening of the administrative network reflected the state's desire to improve its control over the territory, as did the reinforcement of the public institutions. The development of a local administrative machinery entailed the support of the populations, who found that employment in the public sector and benefits from the services provided to the communities were subject to administrative promotion. The correlation between the administrative framework and the distribution of the population was weak because the administrative promotions, with their allotment of public investments, are more likely to benefit communities that are closer to the government.

Jordan was the country with the most developed administrative network. It should be noted that when it gained independence the country had only 350,000 inhabitants, jumping to almost 6 million by 2008 and growing to 9.5 by 2015. Although half of the population was concentrated in greater Amman, the state must still impose its policy on the whole country, and this is especially important in relation to the tribes in the steppe regions, given the ambitions of its powerful Saudi neighbour, who obtained a significant modification of the border in 1965. The number of *muhafaza*s increased from 5 to 12, the number of *qada*s rose from 5 to 39, and the number of *liwa*s went up from 2 to 36. The bulk of these changes took place in the 1970s and early 1980s. During this period, Jordan benefited fully from indirect oil revenues and developed an excessively large bureaucracy in its ministries in Amman, but it also multiplied the number of administrative centres. The former administrative system linked the western farm lands to the steppes, reflecting the traditional Jordanian economic structure: agriculture associated with animal husbandry. The new administrative division discontinued this association in favour of more homogeneous entities.

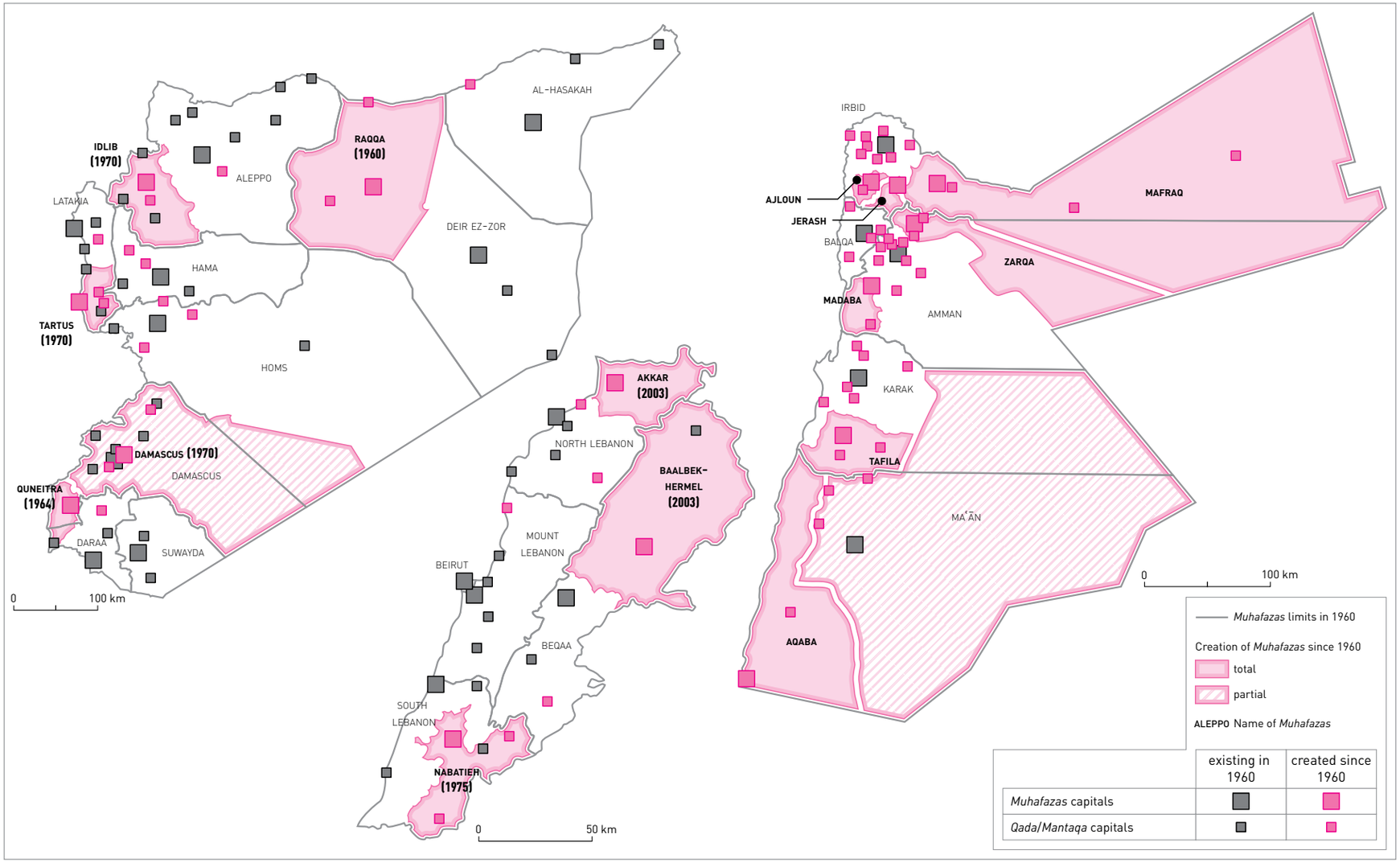
The Baʿathist regime in Syria focused on the small networks of the administrative division, the *nahiya*, which had tripled in number since 1960. The priority for the Baʿathists was to develop the countryside, with the *nahiya*s as service hubs. Some villages, raised to the level of *mantaqa* centres, officially became towns—this was a matter of significance in the Alawite country where the villages of al-Shaykh Badr, Dreykish, and Qardaha, President Hafez al-Assad's home town, were converted into towns in 1970. The selection of central towns did not correspond to territorial management strategies but rather to clientelistic rationales of a political and especially communitarian nature. However, from the early 1990s the pace of administrative promotions slowed down significantly. As in Jordan, Syria no longer had the financial means to keep enlarging its bureaucracy.

In Lebanon, the administrative system underwent fewer changes after independence than in Jordan or Syria. The creation of the three new *muhafaza*s of Nabatieh (1975), Akkar (2003), and Baalbek-Hermel (2003) addressed the need to assert the role of the state in the peripheries. Before the civil war, South Lebanon, then the poorest region in the country and disrupted by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, had been a priority. After the civil war, it was North Lebanon and Beqaa that benefited from administrative promotions. North Lebanon became the poorest region in the country; therefore, the creation of a new *muhafaza* in the Akkar, around Halba, could be justified within the framework of a policy of development of the peripheries. However, since communitarian interests had to be respected, promoting the Sunni city of Halba meant that the same had to be done for the Shiite Baalbek.

In all three countries the *muhafaza*s are the most important administrative entities. The *muhafaza*s have effective policy-making power, while the officials responsible at the levels of districts and cantons only execute policies. The governor is appointed by the head of state, and is assisted by an advisory

council that is elected both in Syria and Jordan. The *muhafiz*es (mayors or governors) are transferred after three or four years in order to avoid the formation of local administrative fiefs. These exist nonetheless because junior officials are sedentary. This type of organisation penalises the officially advocated decentralisation. Only Jordan has created three "planned regions": in the north (Irbid), in the centre (Amman), and in the south (Maʿān); this organisation is designed to rebalance the national territory around two provincial hubs.

EVOLUTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS SINCE 1960 IN SYRIA, LEBANON, AND JORDAN



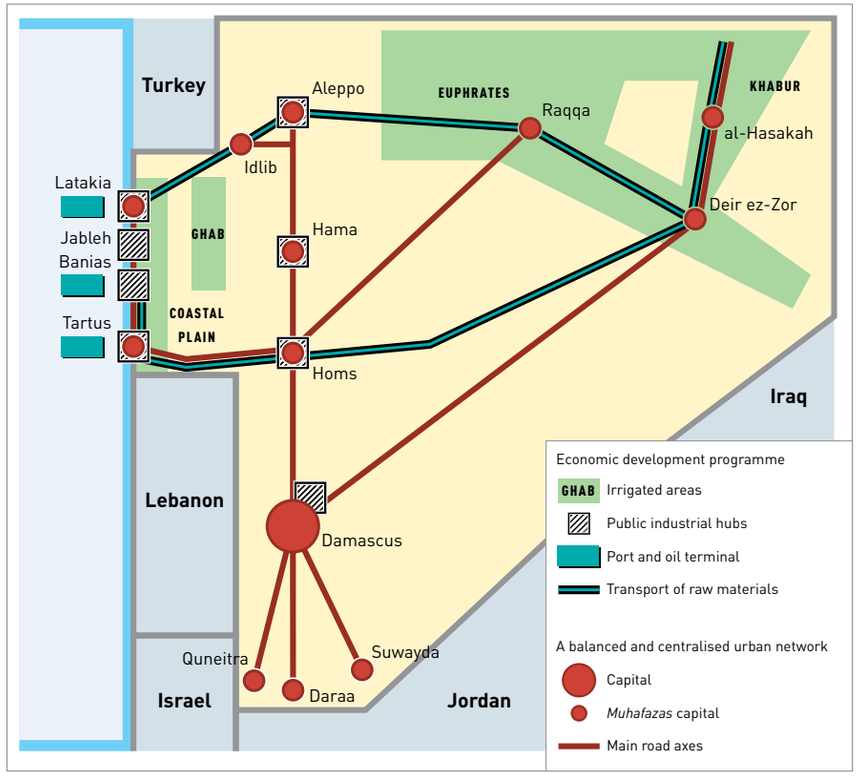
Source: Fabrice Balanche, based on the administrative atlases of the different countries.

Syrian Nation-Building and Baʿathism

From 1945 until 1970 Syria experienced a period of chronic political instability: repeated coups d'état, a union and then separation from Egypt (1958–61), the Baʿathist revolution in 1963, followed by another series of coups d'état ending with that of Hafez al-Assad in November of 1970—a "corrective movement." During the first years of independence, national integration was difficult due to the weakness of the centralised power and the opposition between the two metropolises of Aleppo and Damascus. The different regimes endeavoured to put down the rebellions in the peripheries, which were accustomed to the autonomy granted by the French and to being able to control the Bedouins. The economic liberalism and the absence of a public policy for development caused an increase in social inequality. The situation in the rural part of society, which represented three quarters of the Syrian population, was most worrying; half of the peasant families did not own land, illiteracy was over 80 per cent, and life expectancy at birth was 40 years.

In 1963, a group of officers, members of the Baʿathist party, including the future Syrian president Hafez al-Assad, seized power through a coup d'état. The new regime nationalised the large companies and the banks, and launched an ambitious land reform. The great agricultural estates were dismantled and the land distributed among the peasants. The agricultural sector benefited from significant state support, most notably in matters of irrigation that took the form of the Euphrates Project (20 per cent of public investments between 1970 and 1990), the continuation of the Ghab Plain Project, and similar initiatives in the coastal region. The new regime took control of the industrialisation of the country and created industrial development hubs. The coastal region, the domain of the Alawite community, was favoured by the state, and because of its proximity to sea several large companies were established there. These ended up providing 20 per cent of the public sector industrial employment although the region had only 10 per cent of the Syrian population. Whatever the arrangements, the clientelist, communitarian, and/or political rationales took precedence over economic rationality. Certain Arab oil countries, wanting to support those countries which were in the front line against Israel, supplied funding for this "self-reliant" form of development. From 1973 until 1987, Syria alone received between 500 million and 2 billion dollars of aid every year, the equivalent of a quarter of its GDP – excluding Soviet military aid.

BAʿATHIST TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT, 1963–1986

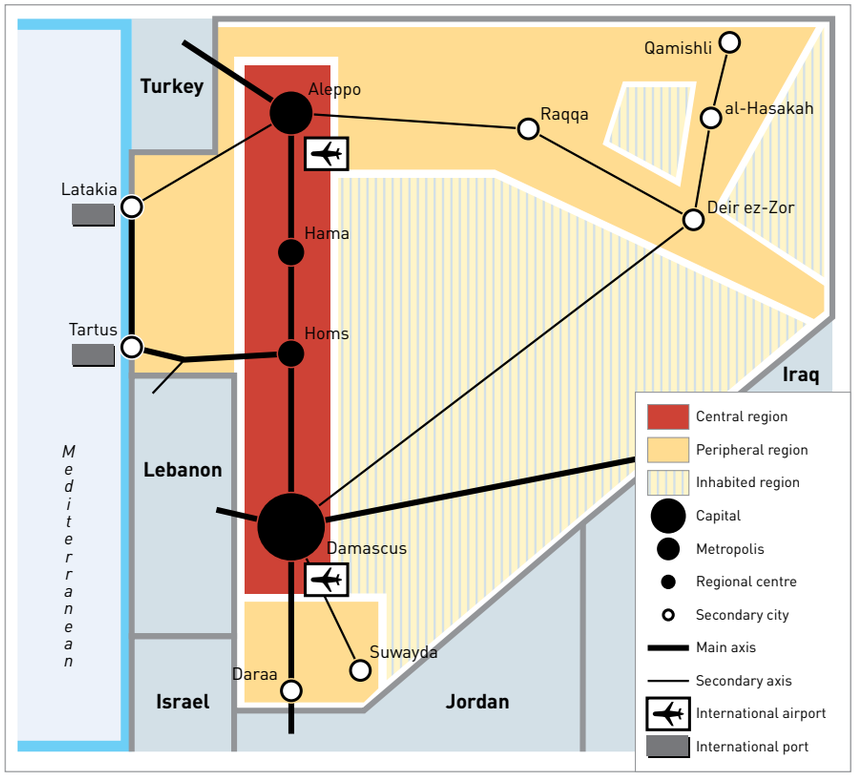


Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

The loss of Arab and Soviet aid caused a serious financial crisis in the mid-1980s, thus illustrating the failure of the "self-reliant mode of development". The Soviets even demanded repayment of 10 billion dollars of debt. However, in the area of nation-building progress in social issues earned the Baʿathist regime the support of the population, and this contributed to national unity. The development of a communications infrastructure opened up the territory and unified the national market.

By the end of the 1980s Hafez al-Assad was obliged to change his economic policy. He embarked upon a gradual liberalisation, taking care not to

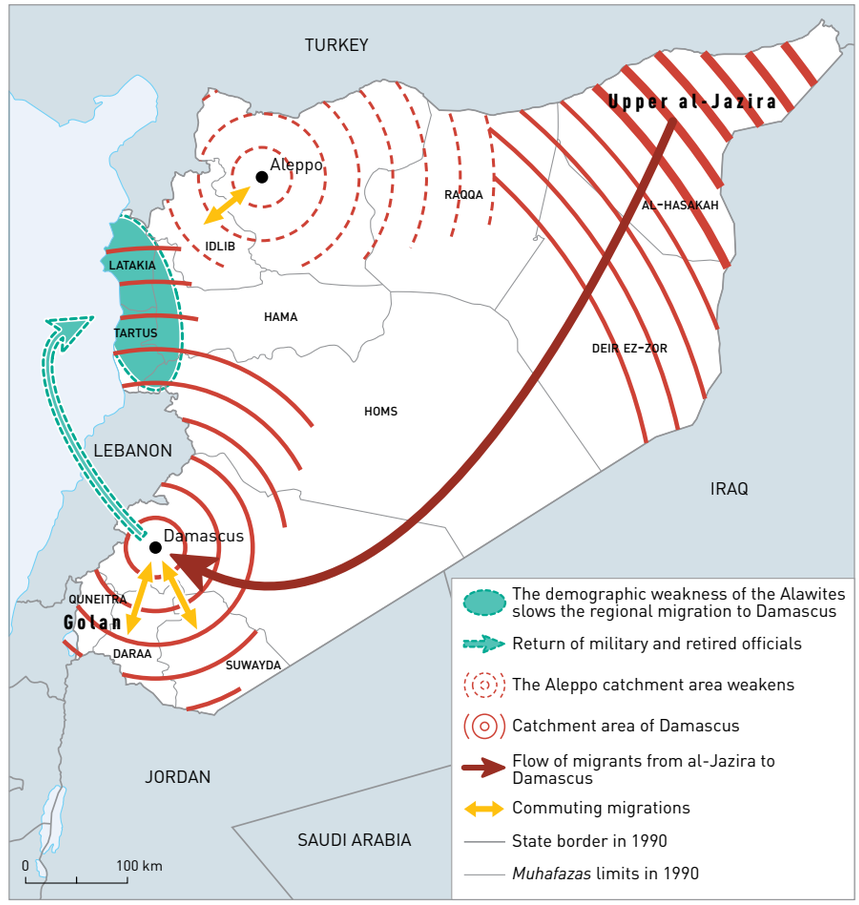
SYRIAN TERRITORY IN 2011: CENTRAL AREA AND PERIPHERIES



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

undermine the authoritarian nature of the regime. Upon the death of his father in June of 2000, Bashar al-Assad took power and gave a new impetus to the process of economic liberalisation, without compromising on the fundamentals of the preceding era: land reform, an industrial public sector, an oversized administration, etc. Yet at the same time he interrupted the costly policy of development in the peripheral regions. The natural tendency to concentrate activities and the population around the four inland metropolises (Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus) continued, while the rivalry between Aleppo

INTERNAL MIGRATIONS IN SYRIA SINCE 1990



Source: Fabrice Balanche, based on Marwan Khawaja, FAFO, 2002.

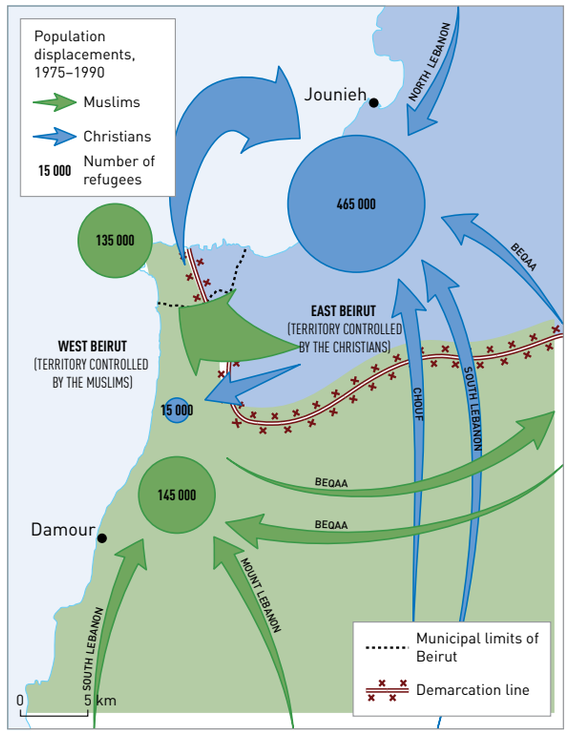
and Damascus disappeared, with the latter truly establishing itself as the capital of the country. The evolution of internal migrations reflects perfectly the change of economic policy in Syria.

Lebanon: The Triumph of Laissez-Faire and Communitarianism

Unlike Syria, Lebanon never undertook a true territorial management policy. Since independence, economic liberalism, poorly suited to political constraints, dominated. The Lebanese state would have benefited from the policy of reconstruction after the civil war (1975–90), and tried to address the territorial imbalances; however, that did not occur, and the Lebanese territory remained just as imbalanced as before. The rate of poverty varied between 6 per cent for the population of Beirut, to 57 per cent in Akkar (the national average was 28.5 per cent). The contrast between the centre and the peripheries was striking. The region of Nabatieh was the only exception to this, and this was thanks to the remittances from Lebanese emigrants to Africa. The indifference on the part of the state toward the peripheries is indicative of the lack of cohesion on the national level. The politicians favoured their electoral territories, and this resulted in ineffectual piecemeal measure and not a real policy of territorial management.

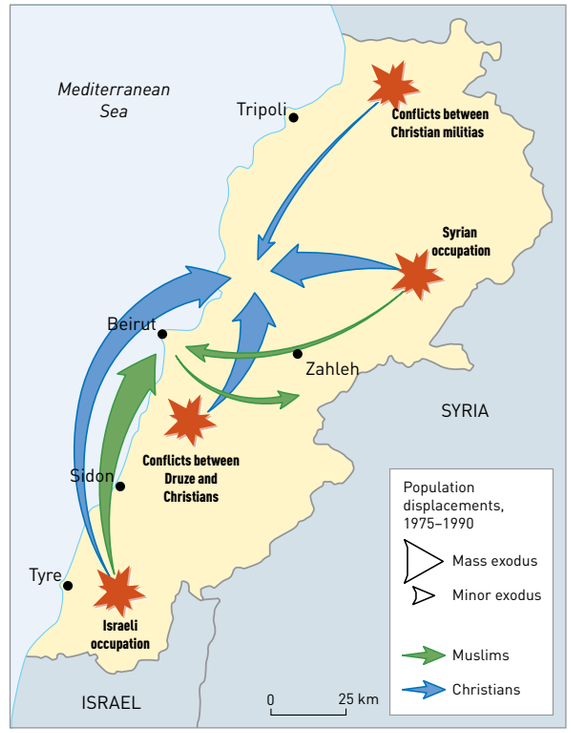
Following the 1958 crisis, the new president of the republic, Fouad Chehab (in office 1958–64), launched a national policy of development designed to address the imbalances between the capital and the peripheries. He encountered much resistance from the "fromagistes" ("embezzlers")—local landholding families who passed on parliamentary seats from father to son and disapproved of the direct intervention of the state in their domains. The notables, on this occasion, therefore allied themselves with the Beirut power brokers aiming to preserve their economic freedom and dreading the creation of a strong state and all the taxation it entails. Fouad Chehab, discouraged, preferred not to run in the presidential election, although he had a majority in the parliament (the president of the republic being elected by parliamentary representatives at the time).

BEIRUT AND POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS DURING THE CIVIL WAR



Source: Boutros Labaki.

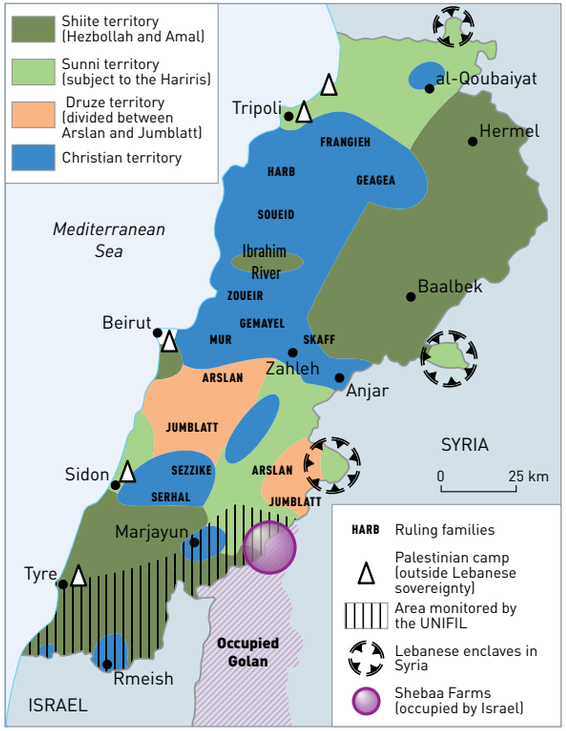
POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS DURING THE CIVIL WAR (1975–1990)



Source: Boutros Labaki.

Fifteen years of civil war brought on the destruction of the communications infrastructure, the electrical network, and entire towns and quarters, including the city centre of Beirut, long a symbol of the coexistence between communities. The confessional purge brought with it the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and caused a veritable fragmentation of the territory along confessional lines. Between 1975 and 1985 the number of definitively displaced persons was 827,000 in an estimated population of 2.6 million. Among them 81 per cent were Christians and 19 per cent were

TERRITORIAL FRAGMENTATION IN LEBANON

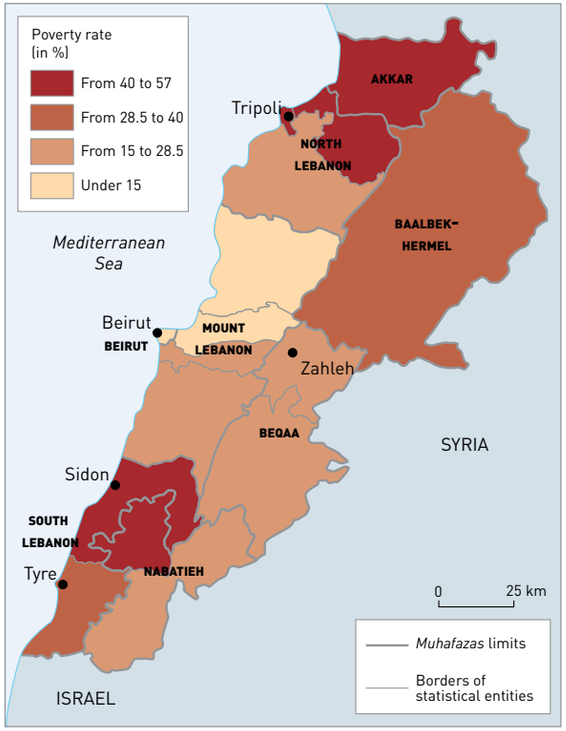


Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

Muslims. Southern Lebanon, the Chouf, and northern Beqaa lost the bulk of their Christian population (300,000 people in all), which took refuge in the eastern part of greater Lebanon, where another 165,000 Christians settled after fleeing West Beirut. In the other direction, 135,000 Muslims took refuge in West Beirut, and 130,000 left South Lebanon, which was occupied by Israel. Twenty years after the civil war, fewer than 20 per cent of the families who had fled had found their way back to their original homes. The reconstruction of Lebanon occurred through reconciliation among the Lebanese. Colossal budgets were thus freed to compensate both the people who had been dispossessed and the illegal occupants who were forced to give back housing.

The "fromagistes" denounced by Fouad Chehab and the new elites that arose during the war directed the reconstruction money toward their own interests. The former Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, took over the reconstruction of Beirut's city centre. The official objective was to restore the city to the stature it had held in the Near East before the civil war. To achieve this primary objective, he left the rest of Lebanon to the various political parties, sprung from the communities and land-holding families. South Lebanon and northern Beqaa were held by the Shiite parties, Hezbollah and Amal, since the former large landowners had lost all their influence there. In Mount Lebanon, the large landowning families (Jumblatt, Mur, Frangieh, etc.) and the new elites that had arisen during the civil war (e.g. Samir Geagea) shared the territory. The elites, like the Arslan and Jumblatt families, competed for control of the Druze domains in the Chouf, Meten, and in the slopes of Mount Hermon. The larger urban centres were no exception to this division or territorial disputes: Saad Hariri ruled in West Beirut, Hezbollah in the southern suburbs, and the Armenian party Tashnag in Bourj Hammoud, in the eastern suburbs. Any territorial management decision by the state required the endorsement of the local potentate, without which the work risked being compromised. The importance of notables within the Christian camp should be noted; they

POVERTY IN LEBANON IN 2005



Source: PNUD, 2005.

had disappeared from the Shiite community (to the benefit of Hezbollah and Amal) and in the Sunni community, in which the Hariri family silenced all opposition from other notables through their financial power.

Too large to be swallowed and too small to be divided, Lebanon remained fragmented along communitarian lines; these divisions only became more intense to the detriment of a national identity that still needed to be built.

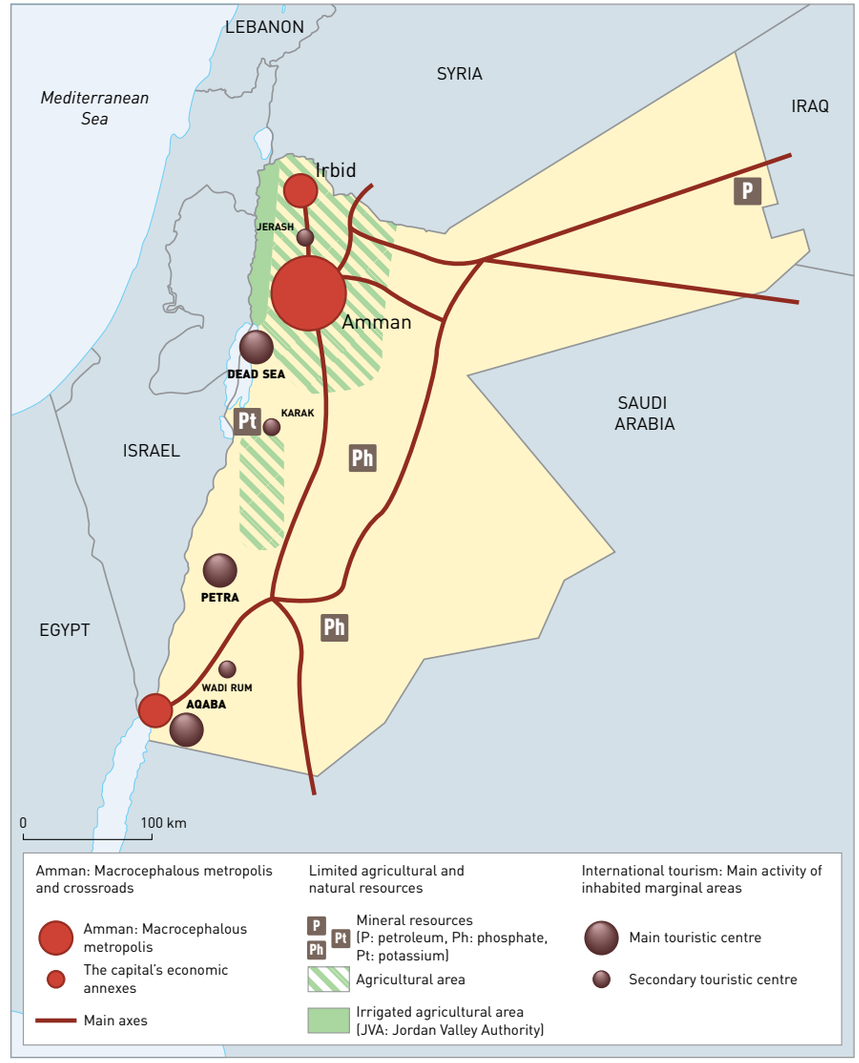
Jordan: An Arabian Monarchy

At the communitarian level, the population of Jordan is the most homogeneous among the three Near Eastern Arab states: more than 95 per cent are Sunni Arabs, the Christian population is estimated at 3 or 4 per cent of the total population, some thirty thousand are Circassians, and there are a few thousand Druze. The Circassians, who are the royal guard, were the community most loyal to the monarchy from the time it rose to the throne in 1920. After independence, the Hashemite monarchs cherished the dream of a great Jordan that would include the Palestinian territories—the West Bank having been an integral part of the kingdom until 1967, when it was occupied by Israel. After the Six-Day War, Jordan maintained the civil administration in the occupied territory, hoping for its return to the Jordanian "bosom". However, the Intifada of 1987 showed that Palestinian nationalism was stronger, and King Hussein decided to give up any claim to the West Bank. He withdrew his administration from the occupied territories in 1988 in order to refocus on the original Transjordan.

Nevertheless, the problem of identity remained, as the majority of the Jordanian population was of Palestinian origin. Although the official census indicated that the inhabitants of Palestinian origin formed less than 50 per cent of the total population, in fact it was as much as 70 per cent, though many did not necessarily feel like foreigners in Jordan and the majority did not plan to return to Palestine. The regime and the "original Jordanians" (Transjordanians) distrusted the Palestinians and their potential for political destabilisation. In September of 1970, "Black September," the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) tried to overthrow King Hussein; they considered him too timid with respect to Israel. For two weeks the Jordanian army and the Palestinians were engaged in violent confrontations, causing several thousand deaths. Yasser Arafat and his fighters were forced to leave Jordan for Lebanon.

To counter the Palestinian influence, the king relied on the Bedouin tribes that made up the greater part of the Jordanian regime's security forces (along with its Circassian guard), thus continuing the process initiated by the British with the creation of the Desert Patrol Force at the time of the mandate. The economic decline of the Bedouins intensified after the country's independence, and they had no other choice but to become the praetorian guard

THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OR THE CITY-STATE OF AMMAN



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

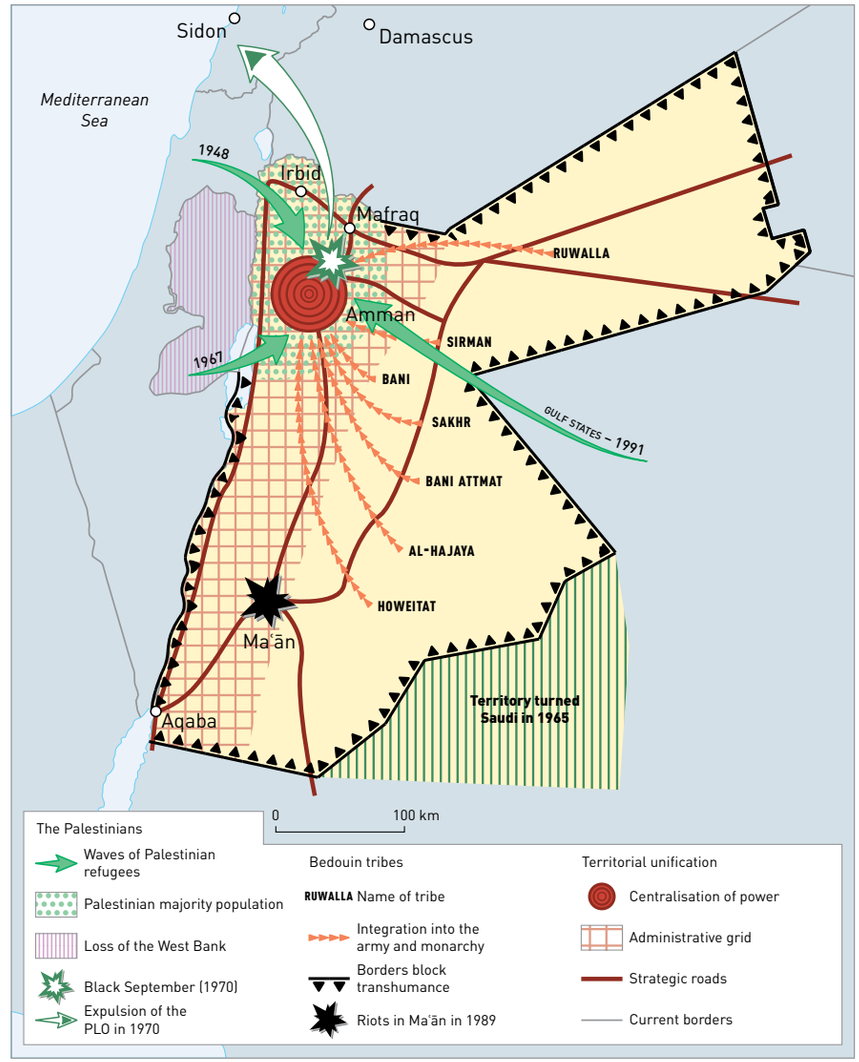
of a regime that did not, however, favour them very much; the tribal zones even bore the consequences of relative governmental negligence. It was in fact the urban zones that benefited fully from state investments. An elite class of

merchants and bureaucrats that emerged from the dynasties of Jordanian notables dominated the country and assured the crown of its support. Palestinian entrepreneurs gradually integrated through their participation in the economy and through marriage with Jordanians. King Abdullah himself set an example by marrying a Jordanian woman of Palestinian origin.

Jordan's territorial management is the result of spatial translation of that political system. Until the early 1970s the state was content to build roads to control the territory. Jordan then benefited from the windfall of rising oil prices. At the Baghdad summit of 1978, the oil-producing Arab countries agreed to contribute 1.25 billion dollars annually to Jordan. Furthermore, throughout the 1970s, when 40 per cent of its working population worked in Gulf states, Jordan received the equivalent of 20 per cent of its GDP from them. This financial manna enabled the state apparatus to hire (foreign) personnel in inordinate proportions. Many towns were promoted to county towns at different levels. The rural exodus began and the agricultural sector collapsed to the benefit of the tertiary sector. A single large-scale development was then carried out: the irrigation of the Jordan Valley, thanks to financial support the United States. In 1983 Jordan experienced the full effects of the oil-glut and the welfare state collapsed. Drastic budget reductions caused revolts in the peripheries, most notably in the tribal zones (e.g., in Maʿān in 1989), which were otherwise known for their loyalty to the monarchy. The expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian and Jordanian workers from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia following the first Gulf War further intensified Jordan's economic depression.

The signing of the peace treaty with Israel in 1994 and Jordan's normalisation of relations with Saudi Arabia enabled it to recover western and Arab economic aid. The country's political stability and economic liberalism attracted direct foreign investments from Europe, North America, and the Gulf oil states. The remittances from its emigrants (still over 20 per cent of its GDP) also helped to sustain consumption and the real estate sector. Naturally, investments were concentrated in greater Amman and its tourist or industrial zones (Aqaba and the Dead Sea), to the detriment of the peripheries. A large part of the population became impoverished and turned to radical Islamism. The role of protecting Israel's eastern borders, to which it had been assigned, also collided with strong pro-Palestinian feelings. The Hashemite monarchy thus found itself in a very uncomfortable situation, caught between the US-Israeli alliance and the pro-Palestinian and Islamic aspiration of its own people.

BUILDING THE JORDANIAN NATION



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

Population and Development

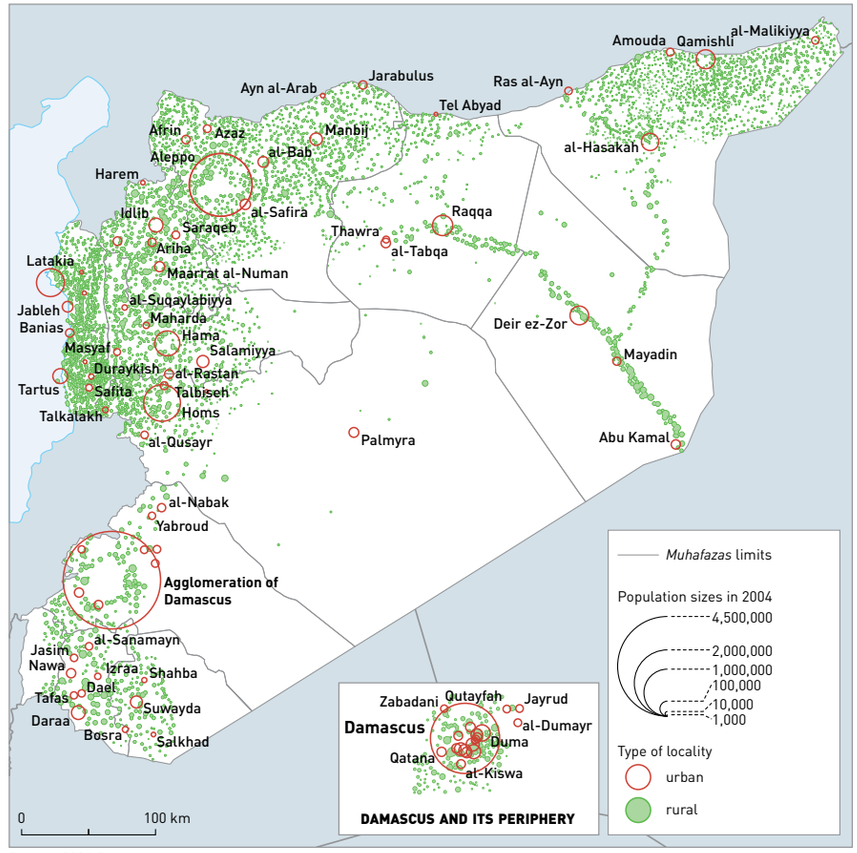
A Dense and Urbanised Population

It may seem paradoxical to write that the Arab Near East is densely populated, as more than half of this territory is virtually a human desert. In fact, the habitable space that Ancient Greek geographers refer to as the ecumene is limited to less than 20 per cent of Jordanian territory and approximately 50 per cent of Syria. In Lebanon, if we exclude the upper parts of the high mountains, the entire territory may be considered as forming the inhabitable space. The actual population densities, calculated from the habitable surface areas, amount to 400 inhabitants per square kilometre in Lebanon, 300 inhabitants per square kilometre in Jordan, and 200 inhabitants per square kilometre in Syria. However, these averages conceal strong disparities between the different parts of the inhabited territory. Three-fourths of the Lebanese live in the narrow coastal strip stretching from Tyre to Tripoli. Nine out of ten Jordanians live in a limited area of 10,000 sq km in the north-western part of the country. In Syria, the population is more dispersed because of its rural, agricultural nature, and because the urban network is more balanced. The importance of Damascus is counterbalanced by that of Aleppo and the four intermediary regional metropolises: Latakia, Homs, Hama, and Deir ez-Zor.

The distribution of the population has become detached from natural constraints, particularly water resources, as urbanisation increases. Certainly, Damascus, Amman, and Aleppo suffer water shortages; the resources of their river basins are insufficient, but they have the means to mobilise resources from increasingly distant places. On the other hand, the small towns and villages do not share these advantages, and consequently the existence of water is crucial to the localisation of the bulk of the population. The presence of people declines with the decrease in rainfall, unless allogenic streams such as the Euphrates or the Khabur give birth to areas of strong linear density; the separation between the inhabitable area and the desert is therefore drastic.

More than 85 per cent of Jordan's population lives in cities, while in Lebanon it is more than 80 per cent urban. The macrocephalous nature of Beirut and Amman partly explains this situation, but the development of small and medium size cities attests to the accelerated transition from rural to urban

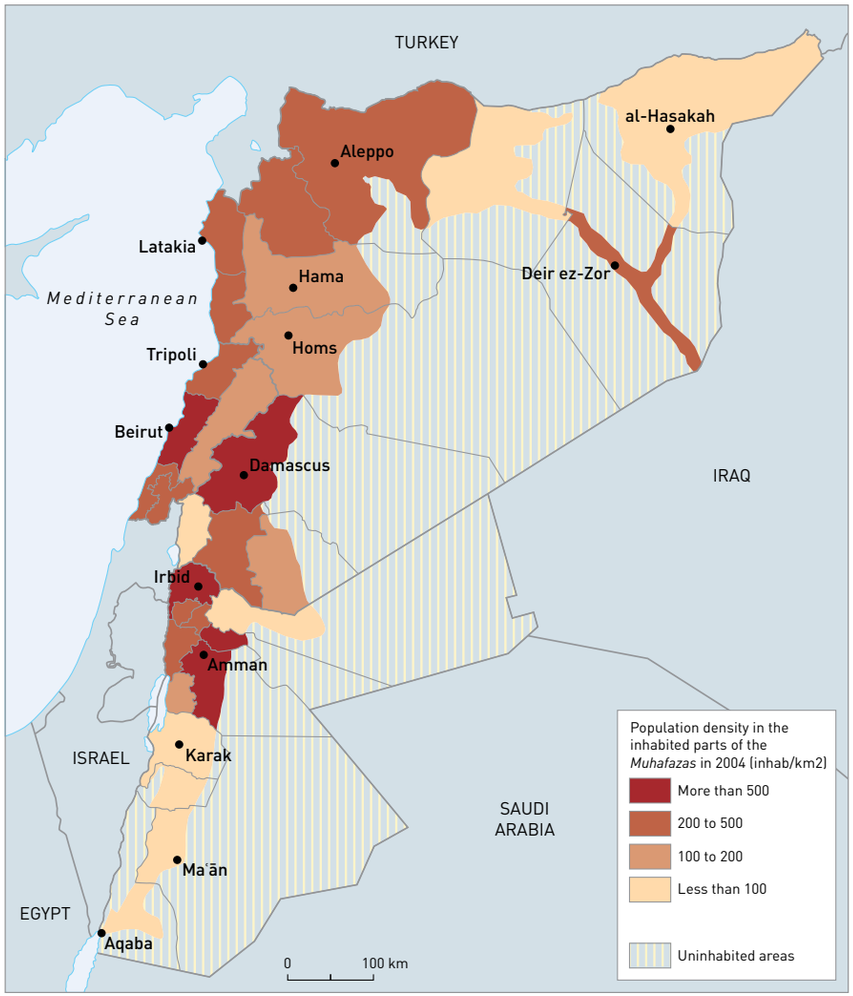
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SYRIAN POPULATION



Source: 2004 Census.

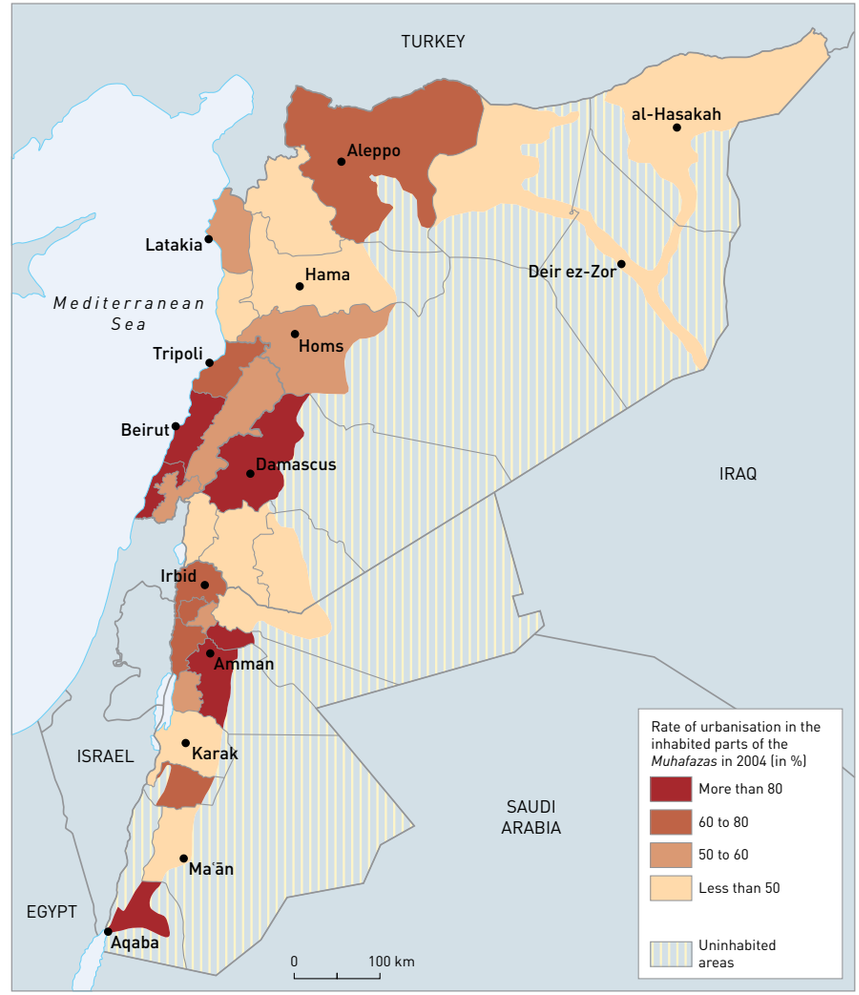
domains in recent decades and cannot be overlooked. In this regard Syria again stands out with a lower rate of urbanisation: 50 per cent according to the official census. However, that rate exceeds 60 per cent if urban communities, or those located within an urban zone but lacking the administrative status of cities, are included. Yet in 8 out of the 14 *muhafaza*s the rural population still forms the majority. In the countryside land reform and other investments by the Ba'athist regime enabled the preservation of a rural and agricultural way

A POPULATION CONCENTRATED IN A LIMITED TERRITORY



Source: Fabrice Balanche, based on the censuses of different countries.

AN URBAN POPULATION



Source: Fabrice Balanche, based on the censuses of different countries.

of life; it almost disappeared in Lebanon and Jordan, where the city-country divide practically ceased to exist, living conditions became similar, with the majority of workers from the rural areas commuting daily into the cities to work. Thus, the countryside in the Near East increasingly resembles that of the northern Mediterranean, which is characterised by dormitory towns incorporated in sprawling urban zones.

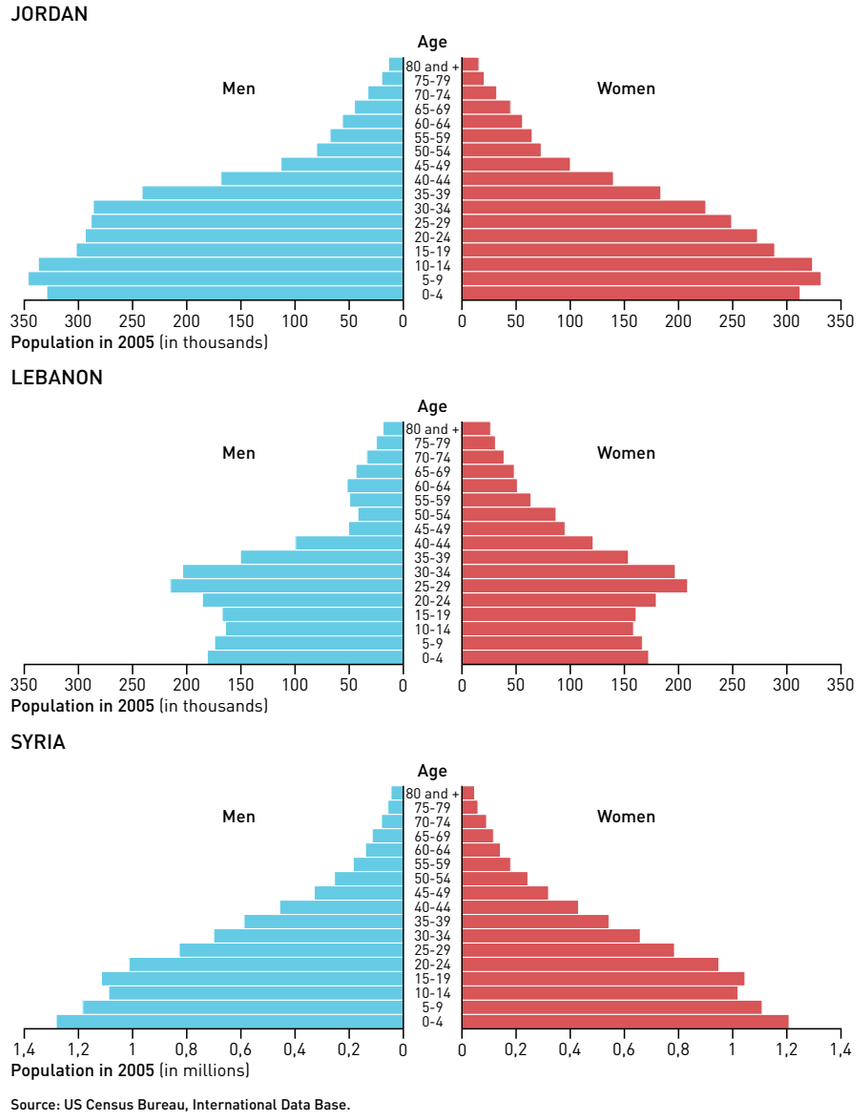
Uncontrolled Population Growth

The countries of the Near East experienced uncontrolled population growth in the second half of the twentieth century. Syria's population rose from 3.25 million inhabitants in 1950 to 17.8 million in the census of 2004, excluding the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees. Jordan saw its population multiply by 15 between independence and the 2004 census: from 350,000 to 5.1 million; in addition, 500,000 Iraqi refugees sought refuge in Jordan. As for Lebanon, despite the civil war and the strong migratory tradition, the population has almost quadrupled since independence. This uncontrolled population growth was caused by two factors: fertility and migration.

In the early 1980s Syria and Jordan were, in terms of fertility, among the top ten countries in the world, with more than 8 children per woman. Since the 1950s Syria and Jordan were fully engaged in a demographic transition: child mortality declined as a result of medical advancements and a consistently high birth rate produced maximum rates of population growth. Lebanon in turn experienced the peak of its population growth in the 1950s and 1960s due to a more precocious transition, although Lebanese demographic behaviour eventually became comparable to that of the Europeans.

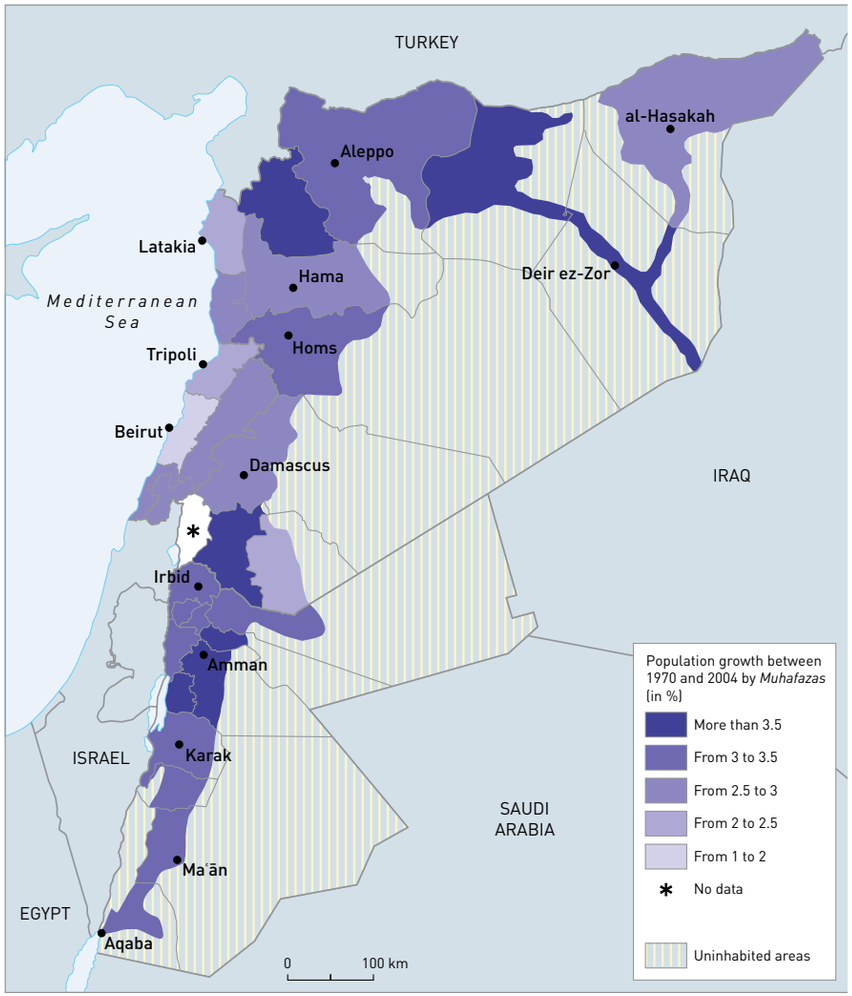
The age pyramids of these three countries clearly show the differences in demographic behaviour. Lebanon's pyramid is shaped like an "ace of spades," typical of a reduction in births, whereas those of Syria and Jordan have a wide base, indicating that each succeeding generation has a consistently larger number of young people under 20. Since the early twentieth century the base of the Jordanian pyramid began to shorten, unlike the Syrian pyramid, which showed a slight drop in the birth rate in the early 1990s and then resumed growth. It is difficult to ascribe the upturn in the Syrian birth rate to a relaxation of family planning policies because these have never really existed in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Since the end of the Ottoman Empire, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan regularly integrated waves of refugees: Armenians and Assyrians in the wake of the World War I, Palestinians in 1948 and 1967, and Iraqis since 2003. The arrival of Palestinian refugees in Jordan greatly contributed to the population growth: half of the population is of Palestinian origin. Lebanon comprises



Source: US Census Bureau, International Data Base.

A VERY FERTILE CRESCENT



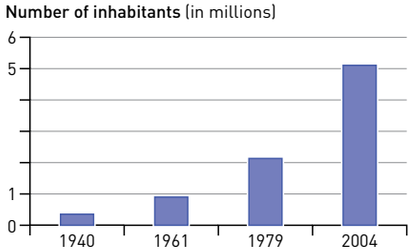
Source: Fabrice Balanche, Youssef Courbage, Paul Sanlaville, and demographic data from the different countries.

approximately 10 per cent Palestinians, and Syria 5 per cent. They appear as such in the censuses, though they do not have the citizenship of the host country; the Iraqis are still considered temporary migrants.

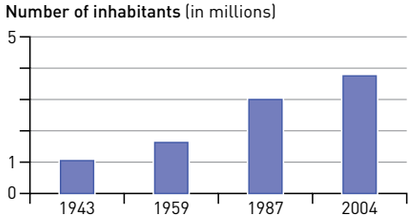
From 1994 population growth fell in Syria and Jordan, indicating a sooner than expected outcome of the demographic transition. The reduction in fertility is associated with improvements in educational levels, particularly among women, as they pursue their studies until university and delay starting families.

QUASI-GEOMETRIC PROGRESSIONS

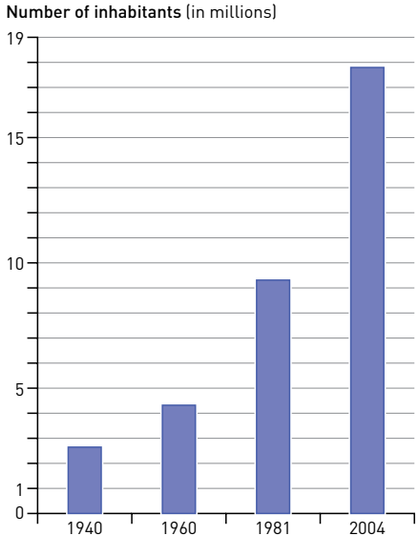
JORDAN



LEBANON



SYRIA



Source: censuses in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

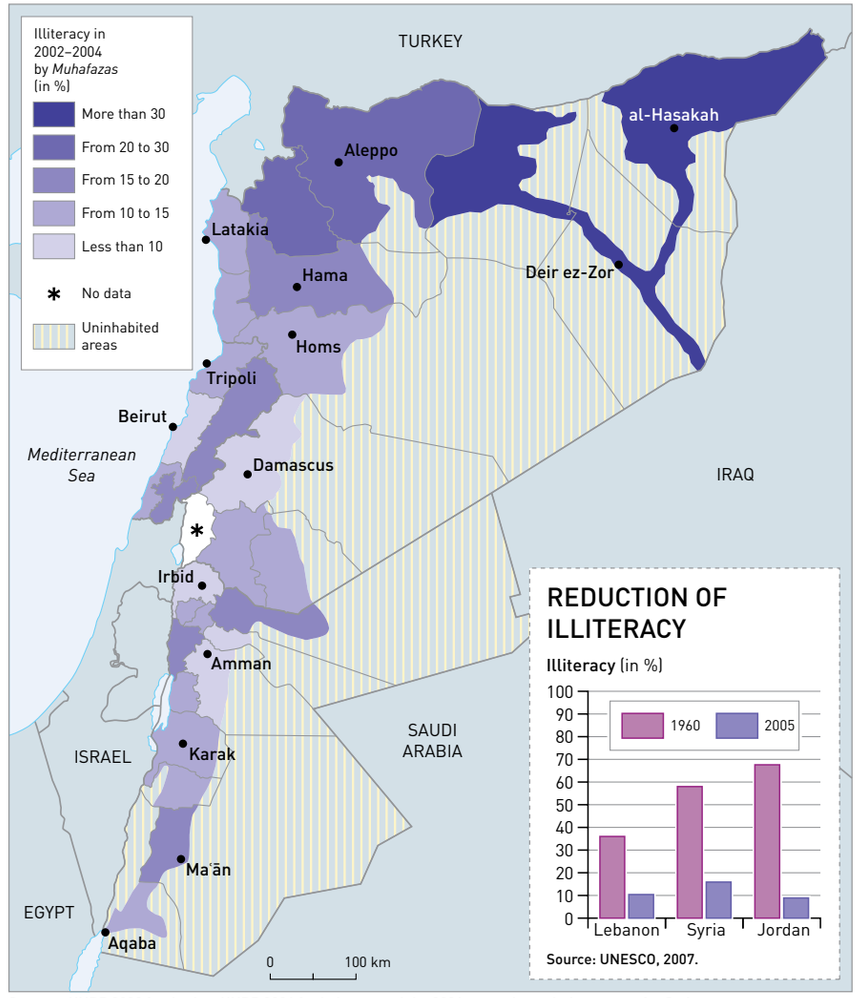
The economic difficulties these countries experienced with the reduction of indirect income brought about a delay in marriage age and a reduced fertility as women's salaries became essential for maintaining the family. In Lebanon, the shortage of eligible males, due to the high number of men emigrating, left a growing number of women single. The accelerated emigration of young adults since 1995, the rise in female celibacy, and the country's economic difficulties contributed to practically stagnant demographics.

An Educated Population

From the 1960s the countries of the Arab Near East made significant progress in matters of education. Illiteracy declined dramatically in all three countries. Hence approximately 90 per cent of the population achieved literacy and women almost caught up with men. Certainly substantial differences still exist between the cities and the countryside, the centre and the peripheries. The rate of illiteracy is still over 20 per cent in Jazira and in North Lebanon. It is also high in the Kurdish and Turkmen regions because education is often equated with Arabisation, which continues to inspire cultural resistance. The degree of access to primary education is greater than 90 per cent in Jordan and Syria but only 80 per cent in Lebanon, although the Land of the Cedars had the highest GDP per inhabitant and the highest rate of urbanisation. Unlike Syria and Jordan, Lebanese public authorities were too weak to impose compulsory education. In Jordan and Lebanon more than 75 per cent of girls as well as boys are enrolled in secondary education. The lowest rate was in Syria: 65 per cent, but the number was increasing significantly—having been only 32 per cent in 1998. The spread of secondary education produced bloated university enrolments, since public higher education was practically free.

In Syria public education was dominant. Only a few private Christian schools remained after the complete nationalisation and Arabisation of the educational system in 1970. Education became a priority for the Ba'athist regime and, consequently, the network of primary and secondary schools spread over the entire territory. Jordan also developed an excellent educational system but there, in contrast to Syria, private education remained prominent. The latter absorbed 30 per cent of the students at the primary level but only 10 per cent at the secondary level. Public secondary schools were of good quality and few Islamic secondary schools were licensed by the government. In Lebanon, most students attended private schools because the quality of public education was often mediocre. Private schools provided instruction in foreign languages from kindergarten on, enabling students to become fully bilingual, even trilingual. When the schools were licensed by the French Ministry of National Education, the students had the option of taking the French Baccalaureate, which directly opened doors to higher education in France.

ILLITERACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Sources: UNDP 2002 for Jordan, UNDP 2004 for Lebanon and the 2004 general population census for Syria.

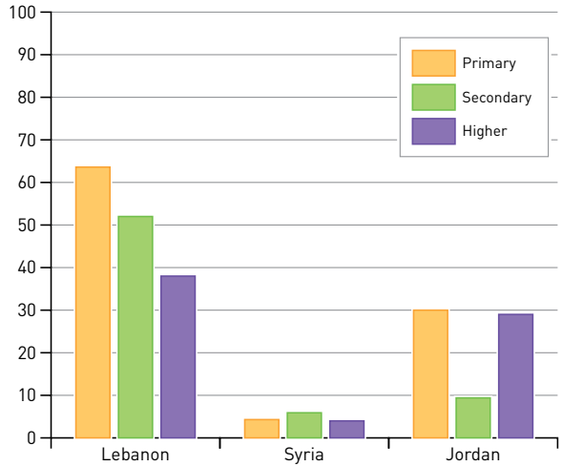
In the Near East higher education has become a very competitive market. State universities are invariably the most important because of the number of registered students, but dozens of private universities compete for students. In Syria, in Jordan, and for certain academic fields (especially medicine and

architecture) in Lebanon, access to public higher education is selective. Depending on the marks obtained in the baccalaureate, students are directed toward one or the other faculty. The most sought-after majors are medicine and architecture, followed by engineering programmes, and finally the humanities and languages; the latter are not very lucrative as they invariably lead to teaching jobs. Despite this selectivity, state universities cannot properly accommodate massive student bodies; amphitheatres are packed and the seminars are unmanageable because public universities lack funds. Bureaucracy and low salaries also demotivate the teaching staff and lead to increased external employment. The wealthier students and the better teachers prefer private universities where the selection is made less according to the marks obtained on the baccalaureate than on the ability to pay registration fees: medical school in Lebanon costs between $10,000 and $20,000 a year. Since the recent opening of higher education to the private sector, some 20 private universities opened their doors in Syria alone. By 2009 they had 16,000 students or 4 per cent of higher education enrolment. The average registration fees amount to $10,000 per year, the equivalent to three years of a Syrian public servant's salary.

Education is a priority for a population that does not hesitate to make enormous sacrifices to offer their children a quality education as a path to professional success. Knowledge of foreign languages is one of the selection criteria for private schools. In Lebanon, the majority of private schools ensure that instruction is entirely in French, though for higher education English prevails. In Syria and Jordan private schools and universities are bilingual in English and Arabic. Private universities have increasingly established agreements with western universities because the equivalence of diplomas facilitates the pursuit of studies abroad, emigration, and employment in the Gulf. These prospects attract students and, in their eyes, justify the prohibitive registration fees.

PRIVATE EDUCATION

Distribution of students in 2007 (in %)



Source: UNESCO.

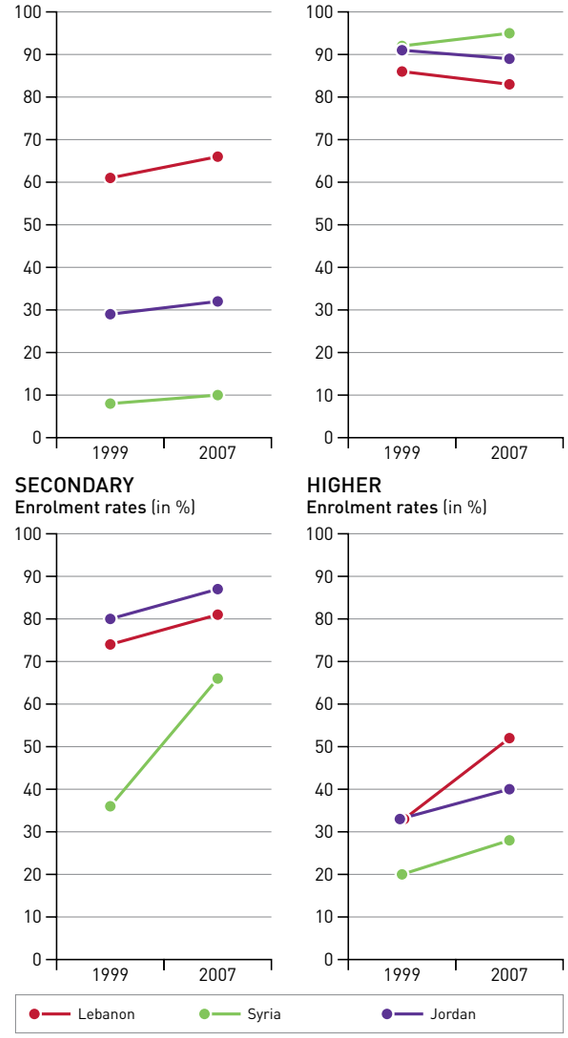
HIGHLY EDUCATED NEW GENERATIONS

PRESCHOOL
Enrolment rates (in %)

PRIMARY
Enrolment rates (in %)

SECONDARY
Enrolment rates (in %)

HIGHER
Enrolment rates (in %)



Source: UNESCO.

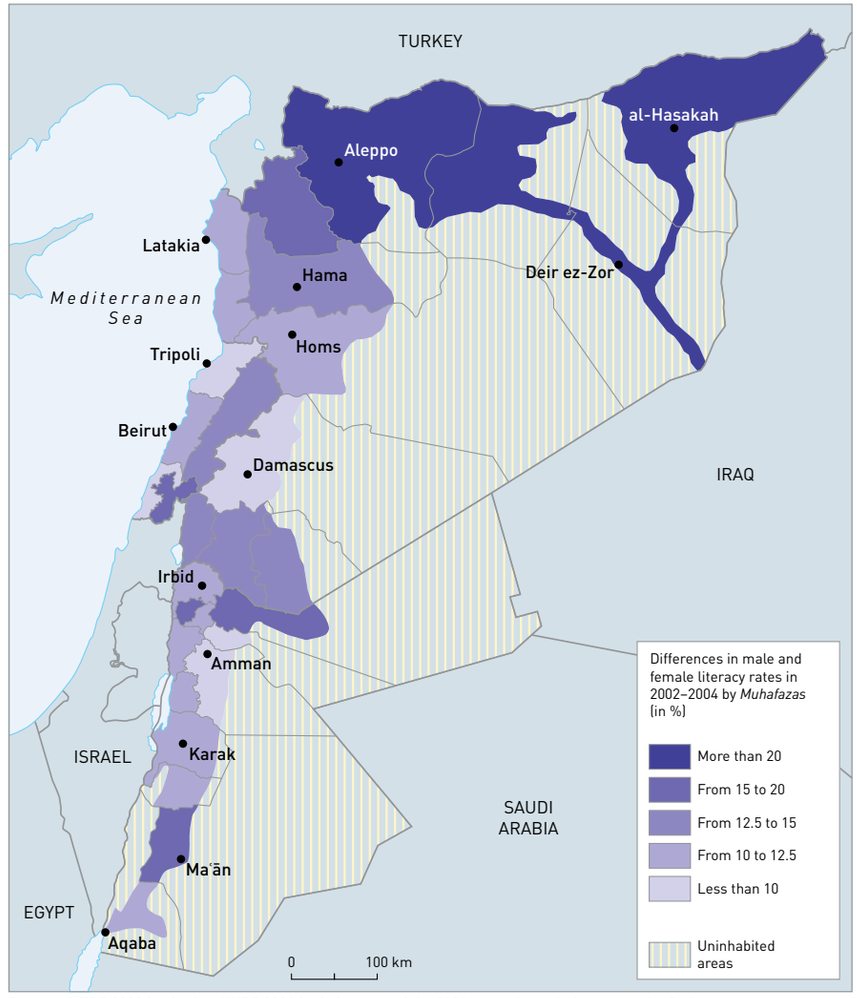
The Increasing Participation of Women in the Economy

The role of women in the economies of the Near East has been increasing. The female employment rate has progressed significantly since the 1990s; since then, 28 per cent of Jordanian women, 34 per cent of Lebanese, and 38 per cent of Syrian women report being active professionally. This is far from the image of the Arab woman as a stay-at-home mother raising her many children. This change is related to the economic and social transformations in the Near East: the expansion of schooling has provided women with better access to education, the development of the tertiary sector of the economy has created more jobs for women, alleviated some economic difficulties and the raised the standard of living. All this has made the female workforce indispensable. At present it is uncommon for a woman to quit her job upon marriage, because the needs of the family require the second salary. Women prefer public rather than private sector jobs for two main reasons. Public sector jobs afford them the time to take care of their households, since sharing domestic tasks with the men is still rare in the Near East. Second, working for a man who is not a member of the family is something that is still frowned upon socially. That is not the case when the employer is the state.

Women are more likely to pursue studies than men because the expenses of marriage and the cost of purchasing and furnishing a home are primarily the man's responsibility. He must therefore find a well-paying job quickly if he wishes to marry. Extensive university studies leading to public sector jobs go against this logic. Many female university graduates have difficulties marrying because they no longer accept male domination; as for men, they fear marrying a woman with a higher education. Over a period of 20 years the rate of single women in the Near East has exploded, mostly due to women's difficulties marrying and their desire to pursue a career. While celibacy is accepted among Christians, it is very poorly looked upon by Islam, which considers marriage almost an obligation: "Marriage is half of religion," according to a hadith. And yet, religion has no more control over this social evolution than over the reduction of the birth rate.

From a legal point of view women are not equal to men. Children take the religion of the father and cannot adopt the nationality of the mother if the father is a foreigner. A married woman is under the guardianship of her husband, who can prevent her from leaving the country and force her to return to the matrimonial domicile. Divorce is governed by the laws of the religious communities; it is forbidden or very much restricted by Christians; for Muslims it

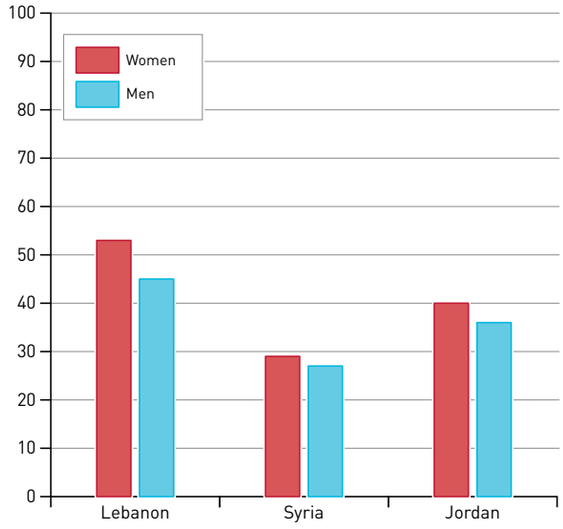
DISPARITIES IN MALE AND FEMALE LITERACY RATES



Sources: UNDP 2002 for Jordan, UNDP 2004 for Lebanon, and the 2004 general population census for Syria.

WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

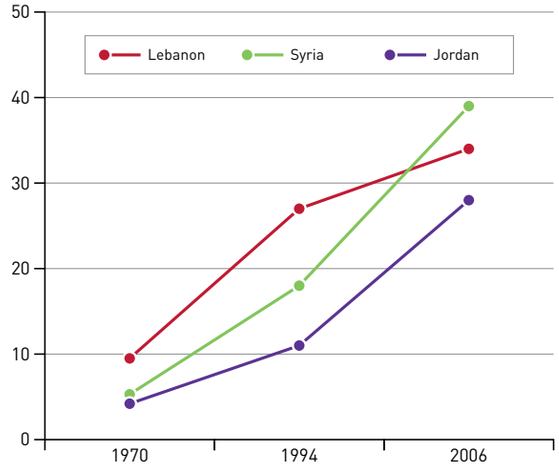
Gross enrolment rate in higher education in 2007 (in %)



Source: UNESCO and the Syrian statistical yearbook.

A GROWING INVESTMENT IN THE LABOUR MARKET

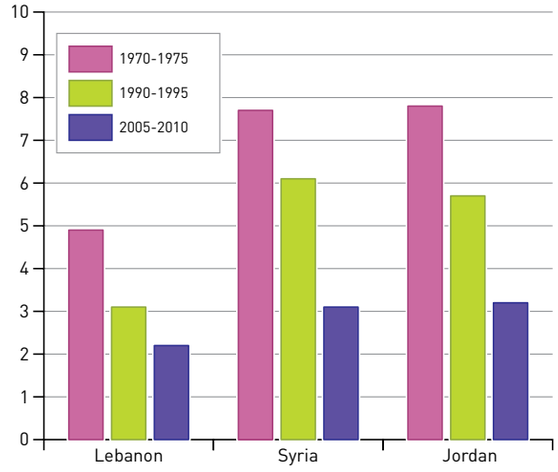
Female employment rate
(in %)



Source: UNDP, 2007.

A RAPID DECLINE IN FERTILITY

Total fertility rate
(number of children per woman)



Source: Youssef Courbage.

is legal but in most cases it is the man who decides whether to repudiate his wife. She cannot invoke adultery as a ground for divorce because polygamy is allowed. In practice, divorce through mutual consent is increasing although it is not officially recognised; it suffices for the woman to relinquish the divorce indemnity stipulated in the marriage contract, often negotiated by her parents to guard her against arbitrary repudiation. Women are still victims of honour killings that are seldom prosecuted by the courts. The Syrian legal reform of 2009 calls for those perpetrating such crimes to be sentenced to a minimum of two years in prison, as opposed to one year previously; this law was adopted as a result of the determination of the president.

The role of women in politics remains very limited. The Lebanese parliament is 2.3 per cent female, 5.5 per cent in Jordan, and 12 per cent in Syria. Since 1990 these figures have been increasing slightly; prior to that women were completely absent from the Lebanese and Jordanian parliaments. By contrast, women made up 9 per cent of the Syrian parliament. It is important to note that Syrian parliamentarians are chosen by the regime in fraudulent elections; female representation is therefore artificial. Some women are members of the government's cabinet, but exclusively in subordinate positions and for fields like culture, the environment, or social matters. Women who embark on political careers tend to be the sisters, widows, or daughters of prominent male politicians. In Lebanon, for example, there are Bahia Hariri, the sister of former prime minister Rafic Hariri, Nayla Moawad, the widow of René Moawad, the President of the Republic who was assassinated in 1976, and Nayla Tueni, daughter of Deputy Prime Minister Gebran Tueni, who was assassinated in December 2005. They carry out a kind of "regency" until their male heirs are able to take up the torch. In Jordan women, like Christians and Bedouins, benefit from a quota of six elected members in parliament. The Palace presents them as a symbol of modernity, in contrast with the Islamic opposition that does not present a single female candidate to the legislative elections.

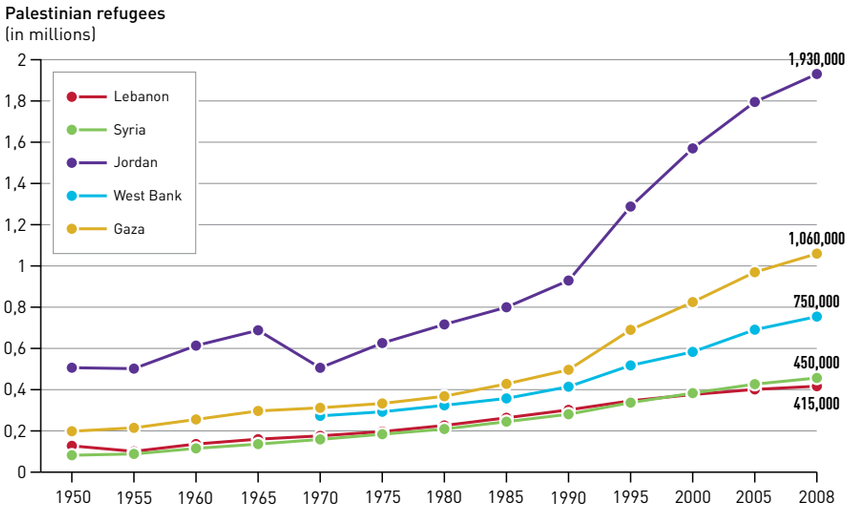
Waves of Refugees

The countries of the Near East are periodically overwhelmed by waves of refugees. In the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of Circassians fleeing the Russian surge in the Caucasus were settled by the Ottoman authorities on the marginal steppes of Bilad al-Sham to claim land occupied by the Bedouins. Between 1918 and 1923 the Christian populations of Cilicia and Anatolia fled before the advancing Kemalist troops. They joined the survivors of the Armenian genocide in Syria and Lebanon. The cession of the sanjak of Alexandretta to Turkey in 1939 caused a new exodus that affected the Arab Muslim populations as well. In 1948 and 1967 close to a million Palestinians found refuge in the countries bordering Palestine. Since 2003, more than two million Iraqis fled their country; this was the most significant forced displacement of a population since World War II, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The presence of Iraqis in Syria and Jordan, the two main host countries, is considered temporary, but so was that of the Palestinians.

The Armenians have been present in the Near East for centuries: in Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut, as well as in some isolated villages such as Kessab to the northwest of Latakia. The survivors of the genocide preferred to settle in the larger cities and draw support from their communities of origin. They created their own specific neighbourhoods, such as Bourj Hammoud in Beirut. Within one or two generations, these refugees, who had arrived empty-handed, were able to attain high social positions, and specialise in professional fields such as mechanics or photography. They own their own educational institutions, which allow them to preserve their language and strong community cohesion. During the French mandate they were nationalised as Syrians or Lebanese and their presence never created problems for the developing nation states because they remained aloof from political conflicts; even during the Lebanese civil war they remained neutral.

The situation of the Palestinian refugees is much more complex. Officially, the Arab League called on the host countries to not naturalise the Palestinians, in order to prevent the dissolution of their national identity, which would be tantamount to accepting Zionist victory. In practice almost all Palestinian refugees in Jordan have been nationalised, except for 120,000 people from the Gaza Strip, which was not under Jordanian sovereignty in 1967. In Lebanon,

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES: EVOLUTION (1950–2008)

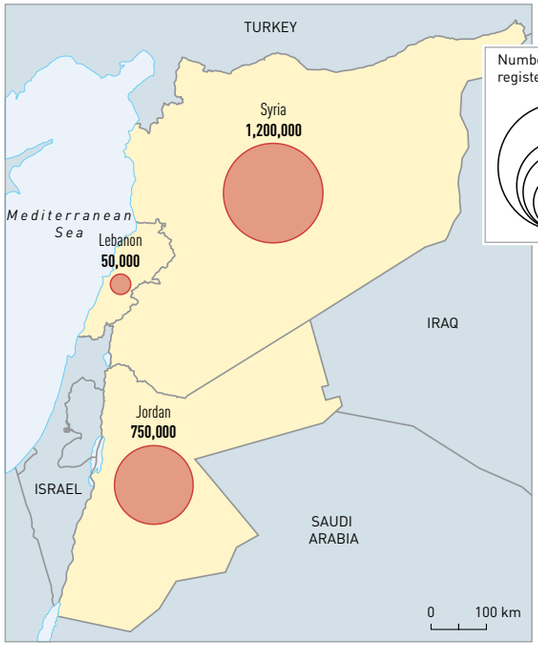


Source: UNRWA, 2010.

practically all Palestinian Christians were naturalised, notably by President Camille Chamoun (in office 1952–1958), who wished to reinforce the weight of the Christian electorate. The debate on the naturalisation of the Palestinians remains relevant in Lebanon. The Sunni government is accused by the Christian and Shiite opposition of wanting to give them Lebanese citizenship in order to reinforce the Sunni camp—99 per cent of the 400,000 Palestinians in Lebanon being Sunni—and to obtain financial aid from the United States. In Syria, the Palestinians are not naturalised but are wholly integrated; they are subject to military service. The majority of Palestinians currently live outside the refugee camps managed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). The former camps of Damascus and Amman have become neighbourhoods like all the others. On the other hand, in Lebanon they are still very much confined and under surveillance by the Lebanese army, although within the camps the Palestinian organisations have sovereignty.

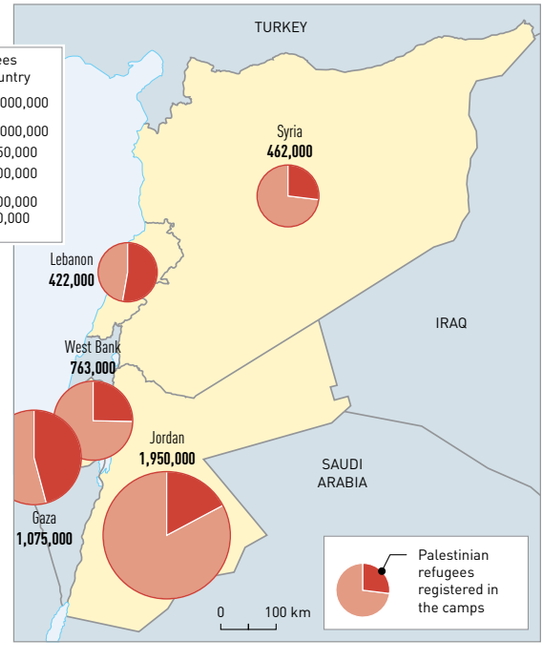
REFUGEES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

IRAQI REFUGEES



Source: UNHCR, 2007.

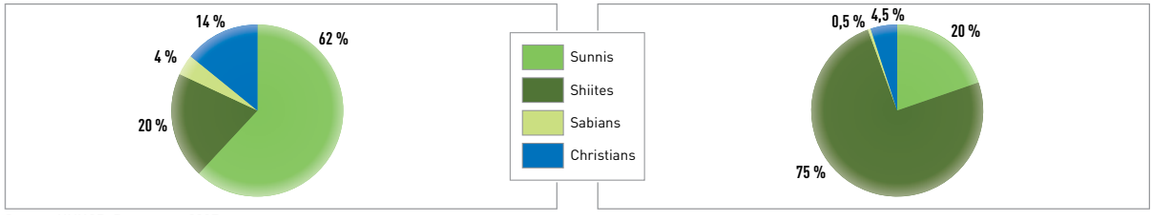
PALESTINIAN REFUGEES



Source: UNRWA, 2008.

DISTRIBUTION OF IRAQI ARABS BY RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION

WITHIN THE REFUGEE POPULATION IN SYRIA



Source: UNHCR, Damascus, 2007.

WITHIN THE POPULATION IN IRAQ

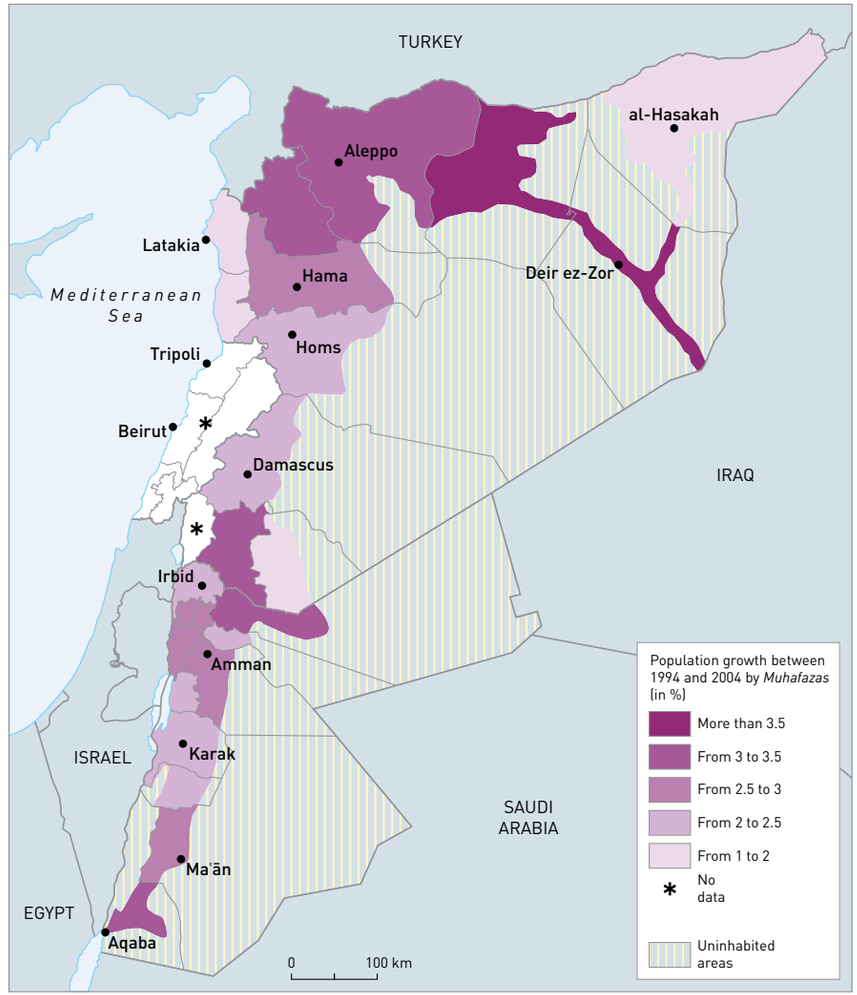
The majority of Iraqi refugees are in Syria (1,2 million in 2007 according to the UNHCR). They chose this country because, until October 2007, it did not require a visa or a residence permit. In the name of pan-Arabism, Syria does not require visas from nationals of other Arab countries; however, faced with the influx of refugees from Iraq, Bashar al-Assad's regime has modified its implementation of this Ba'athist tenet. The low cost of living in Syria also explains why Iraqis preferred Syria over Lebanon or Jordan. The arrival of these refugees is considered temporary, so they are not reflected in the official statistics. They are protected and assisted by the UNHCR but do not live in camps like the Palestinians. They group together along confessional lines and join their Syrian co-religionists in Damascus. Nevertheless, after some months in Syria or Jordan and after exhausting their savings, some families return to Iraq. In Jordan, many Iraqis live in the former Palestinian camps where the rents are low and there are fewer immigration officers.

Finally, it is important to note significant population movements between Syria and Lebanon. In the 1960s many Syrians settled in Lebanon to escape the economic persecutions of the Ba'athist regime: the nationalisation of the banks and industry, and as well as of education, which took place in 1970. Some Lebanese periodically sought refuge in Syria during the civil war (1975–90), but few put down roots. From the hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers in Lebanon, only a few thousand settled permanently in the Land of the Cedars. It is difficult for them to obtain Lebanese citizenship and, since the retreat of the Syrian army in 2005, they are frequently targets of local vindictiveness.

Demographic Issues and Nation-Building

Syrian nationalism was a response to the Arab-Israeli wars and the carving up of the historical "greater Syria" (Bilad al-Sham). The state hence never encouraged a reduction in the fertility rate. The tradition of large families coincided with the desire of the state to populate the country so as to enable it to resist foreign predation. However, since the mid-1990s population growth began to decline, dropping from more than 3 per cent per year since independence (a doubling of the population every 20 years), to 2.6 per cent in the latest intercensal period (1994–2004). The details of the figures by *muhafaza* indicate that population growth in four *muhafaza*s is even below 2 per cent: Tartus, Latakia, al-Suwayda, and al-Hasakah. The case of al-Hasakah is quite surprising; the birth rate in this poor region with a Kurdish majority is very high. In fact, the weak population growth of this *muhafaza* is linked to intense emigration. This was less the consequence of poverty or underdevelopment than the result of the political will of the Baʿathist regime to push the Kurdish population toward Aleppo and Damascus, where it was more likely to become Arabised than if it remained in its original region. Within the framework of the massive irrigation programme in the Euphrates basin, the Baʿathist regime promoted the displacement of Arab populations to Kurdish lands, with the intention of reducing the Kurds' demographic weight there and isolating them from Turkish Kurdistan by means of an "Arab belt." The weak population growth in the coastal region, dominated by the Alawite population (5 to 10 per cent of the population) and in the Jabal al-Druze (3 per cent of the population), is in turn the result of a drop in the fertility rate of those religious minorities. According to Youssef Courbage, the birth rate in the Alawite region is 2.1 children per woman and in Jabal al-Druze it is 1.80. As for the Christians (5 per cent of the population), who are spread throughout the entire Syrian territory, their fertility rate is lower than 2. These minority communities are threatened by the sustained fertility rate of Sunni Arabs (70 per cent of the population), especially in northern Syria and in the Euphrates Valley (5.5 children per woman in Raqqa and 6.2 in Deir ez-Zor). The Alawite regime of Bashar al-Assad relies on its ability to divide the Sunni majority to stay in power, because the Alawite community's demography has been in decline since the 1980s.

A VERY MIXED DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH

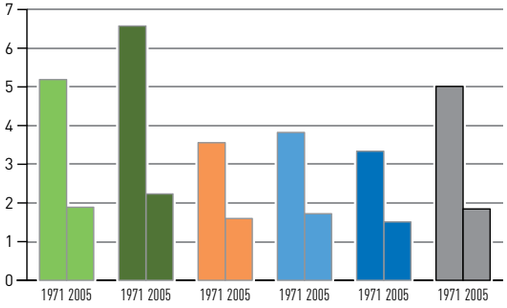


Sources: censuses from the different countries.

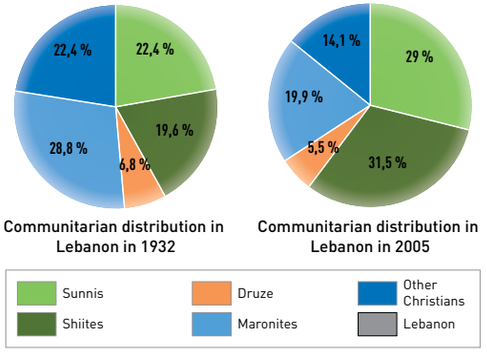
DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITIES IN LEBANON

DECREASING DISPARITIES IN FERTILITY

Total fertility rate (number of children per woman)



TOWARD A NEW COMMUNITARIAN BALANCE



Source: Vaumas, based on the 1932 census and Youssef Courbage, 2007.

In Lebanon demographic problems are exacerbated because the real or pretended numerical importance of the different religious communities determines their political representation. This is one reason an official population census has not been conducted since 1932. The statistics bureau is content with partial surveys and the political leaders extrapolate from the electoral lists. The Shiite community has become the largest community, ahead of the Sunnis (if the Palestinians, who are more than 99 per cent Sunni, are excluded), while the Maronites have been reduced to a fifth of the population. The whole of the Christian population is now little more than 35 per cent of the general population. This demographic decline might call into question the Taif Agreement of 1989 that grants 50 per cent of the parliamentary seats to Christians and imposes a Maronite as the president of the republic. The Lebanese are questioning the continuation of the current demographic processes. Historically the Shiites had the highest fertility rate, but between 1971 and 2005 it has declined significantly from 6.5 to 2.2 children per woman. The demographic dynamics of the Shiites resemble those of the other communities, dispelling the spectre of a Lebanon with a Shiite majority—a spectre invoked by some to justify the alliance of all other communities against the creation of an Iranian-style Islamic Republic.

Jordan is not exempt from such demographic issues or wars of numbers. Still, the country has no communal problems. The Christians and other minorities (less than 5 per cent of the total population) do not suffer persecution and are entirely integrated. Rather, problems relate to national identity, with respect to the place of the Palestinians within the kingdom. This controversy is important domestically as well as abroad. For many Israeli leaders, like Ariel Sharon, the Palestinians have a state in Jordan; they simply need to leave "Judea-Samaria" and settle in the east of Jordan. This is hardly a cause for the Jordanian monarchy to rejoice; they are originally from the Hejaz and rely on the native Jordanian population. Since the civil war of September 1970 ("Black September"), the monarchy fears being overthrown by those of Palestinian origin, who wish to be recognised as founders of modern Jordan and not further marginalised politically.

The marriage of King Abdullah of Jordan in 1993 to a Jordanian woman of Palestinian origin became a symbol of the integration of both components of Jordanian society. In Syria in 2000, young president Bashar al-Assad married a Sunni Muslim. This marriage was seen as an overture to the Sunni majority and a marginalisation of the Alawite community, yet it is clear that the Syrians have not followed the example of Bashar al-Assad: community endogamy remains strong and the mistrust between Alawites and Sunnis continues to grow.

Since the beginning of the uprisings in Syria in 2011, violence between the two communities has increased, especially in the region of Homs. The Alawite Mountains began to recover its role as a refuge for the Alawites dispersed throughout Syria; this could possibly lead to the return of an Alawite state.

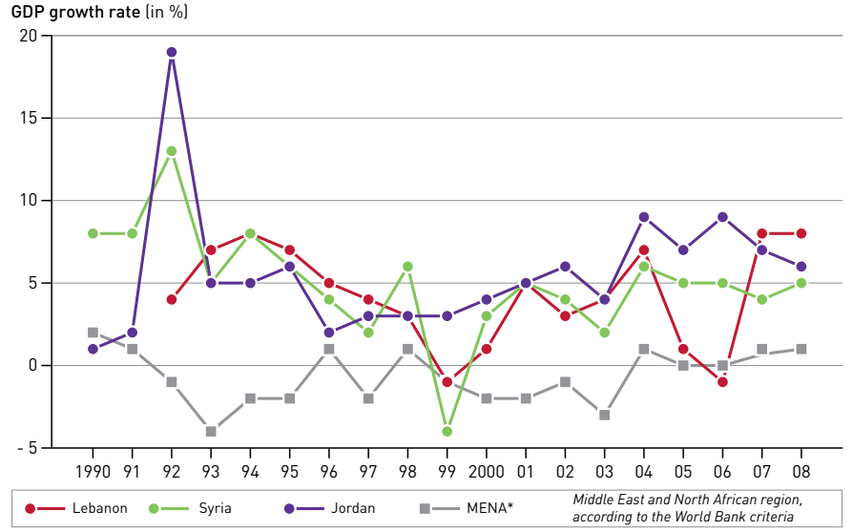
A Fragile Economy

Commerce, Family-Owned Businesses, and the Fear of the State

Business culture in the Near East is based on family and on a deep distrust of the state. Within companies leading positions are often entrusted to family members so as to ensure loyalty. Capital investments from outside are rare; this explains the small scale of companies and their difficulties growing and merging. The state is considered a predator that levies taxes without ensuring services in return. In fact, regulations and bureaucracy slow down or even paralyse economic activity. In Lebanon and Syria, the relative advantage of inexpensive labour is outweighed by the additional costs related to corruption and bureaucratic inertia. In 2009 in terms of levels of corruption these two countries ranked 130th and 126th (of 180 countries), respectively; this considerably reduces their attractiveness to outside investment. Jordan, on the other hand, ranked 49th, at the same level as Bahrain, Israel, and Oman, yet above Saudi Arabia (63th), Turkey (60th), and Egypt (111th). This is an undeniable success for the Hashemite kingdom.

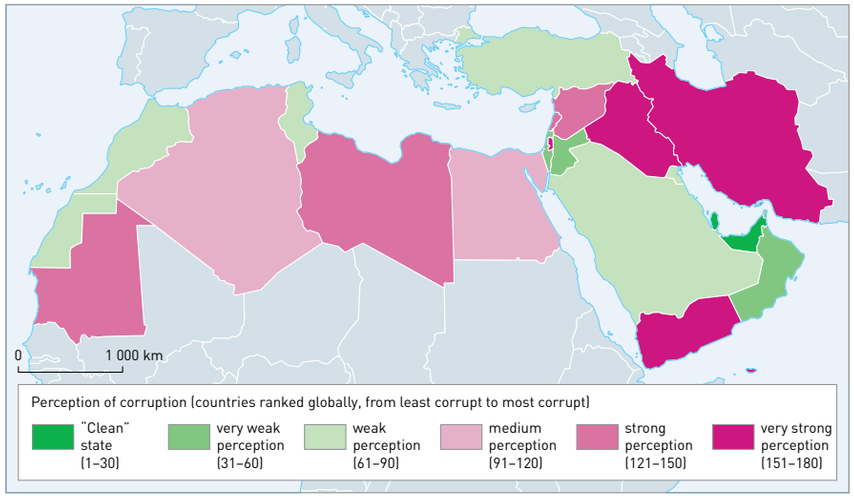
The service sector actively contributes to the GDP in all three countries: 50 per cent in Syria and close to 75 per cent in Jordan and Lebanon. Lebanon's service economy, with its two strong sectors of banking and tourism, is based on imports—exports amounting to only a quarter of the imports, so the trade balance is structurally negative. The Jordanian economy is comparable to that of Lebanon, as only one fifth of its GDP comes from industry, a sector that has been progressing continually since the 1990s; it thus reflects Jordan's will to transition from a resource economy to one of production. Besides pharmaceutical products, phosphates, and textiles, Jordan specialises in information and communications technologies: this element contributed 12 per cent of the GDP in 2008. As for Syria, it is slowly transitioning from a dirigiste economy to a "social market economy," as the Syrian leaders put it. The agricultural, energy, and industrial sectors remain strong, though they are declining compared with services. Exports and imports are balanced out through

ERRATIC GDP (Gross Domestic Product) GROWTH



Source : World Bank, 2009.

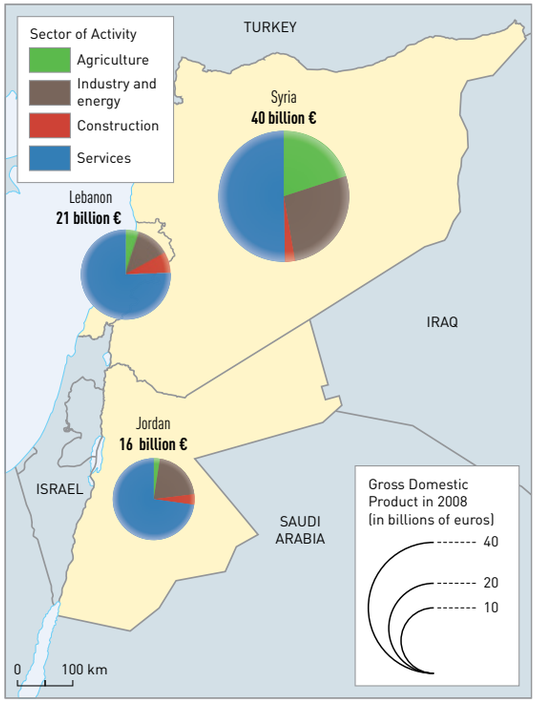
CORRUPTION IN NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST



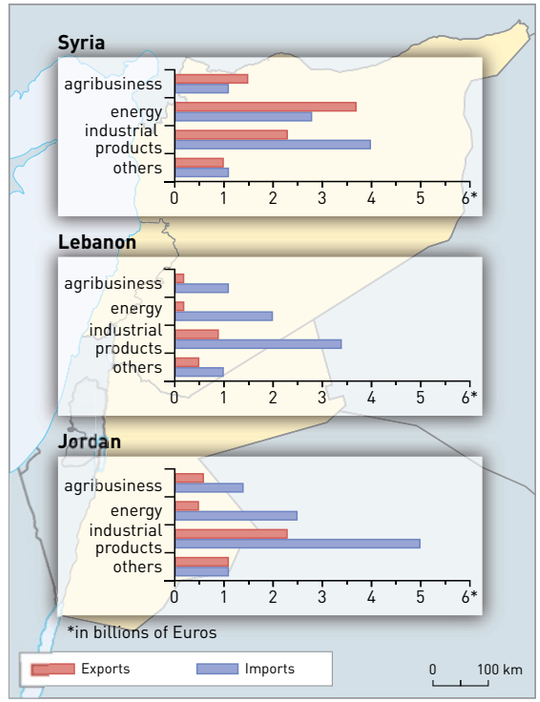
Source: Transparency International, 2009.

DOMINANCE OF SERVICES

CONTRIBUTION TO THE GDP BY SECTOR



IMPORT-EXPORT BY SECTOR



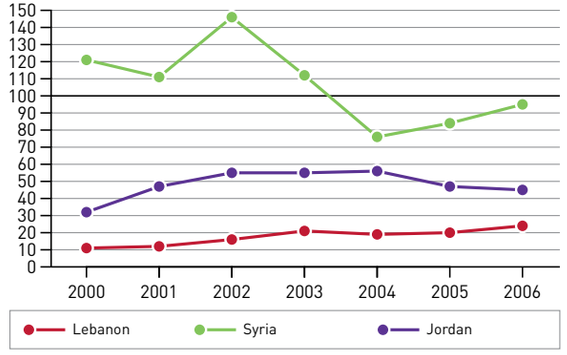
Sources: International Monetary Fund and Eurostat, 2007.

hydrocarbons, which represented 22 per cent of the GDP and 23 per cent of the state revenues in 2010. The steady decline in oil production since 1995 and the rise in domestic consumption caused a decrease in the import coverage ratio. The agricultural and industrial sectors, dominated by small farms and traditional family companies, respectively, and a bloated public sector have been unable to adapt to the new international competition. Their weight in the makeup of the GDP declined as the country liberalised its economy.

From 2001, the Near East has experienced sustained economic growth associated with rising hydrocarbon prices. This increase benefited Syria directly and Jordan and Lebanon indirectly. Remittances from emigrants, primarily in the Gulf countries, officially make up more than 20 per cent of the Lebanese and Jordanian GDP, and nearly 10 per cent of the Syrian GDP. Investments from Gulf countries and their dynamic economies (their growth rate was comparable to that of China between 2001 and 2008), fuelled the real estate sector but also that of new technologies and engineering in the Near East. The erratic evolution of Lebanon's economic growth, linked to the political crisis that followed the assassination of Rafic Hariri in February 2005 and the Israeli attack of 2006, must be seen in perspective. The Lebanese national accounts system fails to properly assess the importance of the informal economy supporting the country. Furthermore, Lebanon is in a critical situation due to its public debt: the third worst in the world in relation to its GDP (50 billion dollars in 2010 or 160 per cent of the GDP). Syria and Jordan are much less indebted (25 per cent of the GDP in Syria and 62 per cent in Jordan) and have been able to reduce their level of indebtedness through better public finance management.

TRADE DEFICITS

Coverage rate (in %)



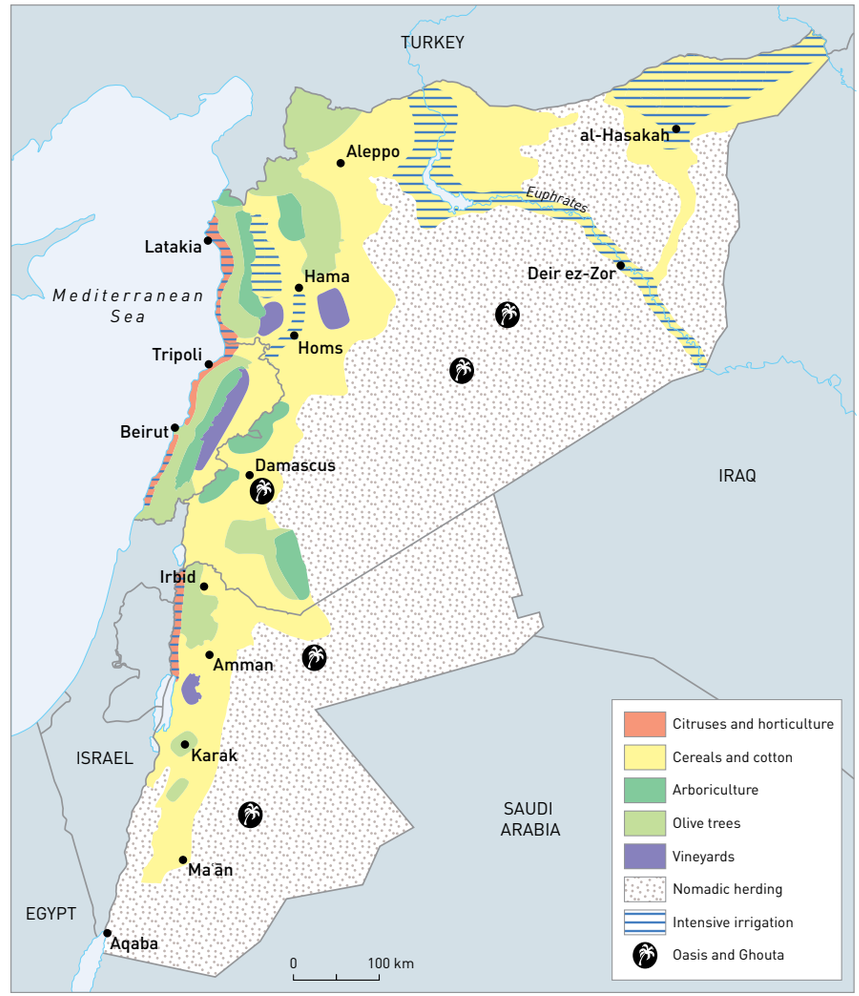
Source: Eurostat, 2007.

A Threatened Farming Sector

Though it was the cradle of agriculture in the Neolithic period, the Fertile Crescent is no longer able to feed its population. The countries of the Near East, like all countries in the Arab world, have had to resort to the massive importation of food products. This dependence has grown as the population increases, while agricultural production has declined as a result of the reduction of water resources allocated to agriculture. In an effort to protect itself from global market fluctuations in agricultural products, Jordan began to rent land from Sudan and Uganda, like Egypt and the Gulf countries that have given up on food self-sufficiency solely from their own national territory. Ba'athist Syria has continued the myth of food self-sufficiency perhaps because it has significant areas of arable land (30 per cent of its territory) and a climate that renders it more independent agriculturally. During the period of Arab nationalism it was even portrayed as one of the great agricultural hopes for the Arab world. In Syria support for agriculture became political, through land reform that broke up the landed estates in favour of small farmers; through policies to establish hydraulic works along the coast, in the Ghab Plain; and especially through the Euphrates project, which aimed to irrigate 640,000 hectares, even though only a third of this was achieved. Jordan is much less well endowed: 4 per cent of its territory is cultivated, and the scarce water resources available for agriculture do not allow for more intensive exploitation, except in the Jordan Valley. As for Lebanon, its situation is paradoxical: it has water and a fourth of its territory is cultivated, but its agriculture has substantially declined. Agriculture has become a marginal element of its GDP because of the lack of organisation in the industrial sectors, the fragmentation of property, the cost of labour, and especially competition from Syrian products flooding the domestic market.

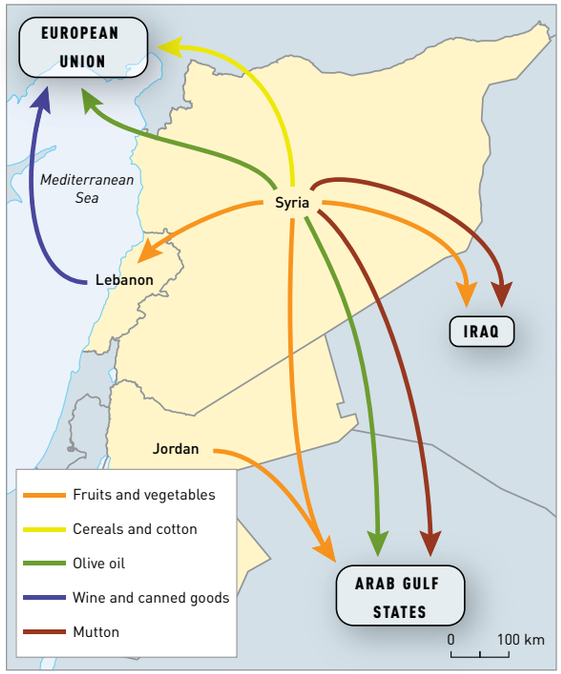
The agricultural sector is no longer the main employer in the Near East: it now represents 8 per cent of the workforce in Lebanon, 10 per cent in Jordan, and 25 per cent in Syria. Agriculture contributes only a limited part of the GDP in Lebanon (5 per cent) and Jordan (2.5 per cent), as opposed to 20 per cent in Syria. However, these figures understate the real importance of agriculture for the greater part of the population that depends on this complementary but indispensable resource. Many public servants are in reality farmers; they go to the office in the morning (the government sector is open from 8 am to 3 pm), and return to their farms in the afternoon. Many derive more income from their farming activities than from their office jobs, but call themselves civil servants rather than farmers—a term with pejorative connotations. This dual activity works to maintain the small farms and hinders modernisation. The land reform law in Syria still limits property to 20 hectares in irrigated areas, and 200 hectares in dry areas. It is certainly possible to circumvent it, but it is an obstacle to the creation of large highly productive capitalist farms

AGRICULTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



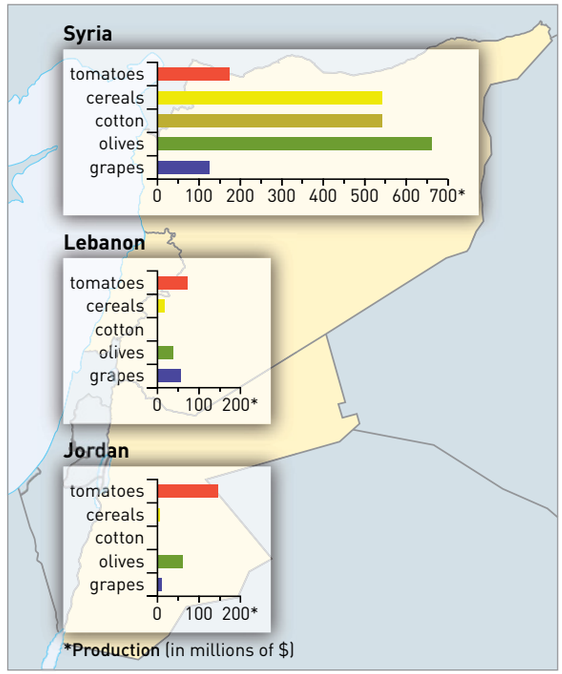
Source: Fabrice Balanche, based on data from the ministries of agriculture of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS



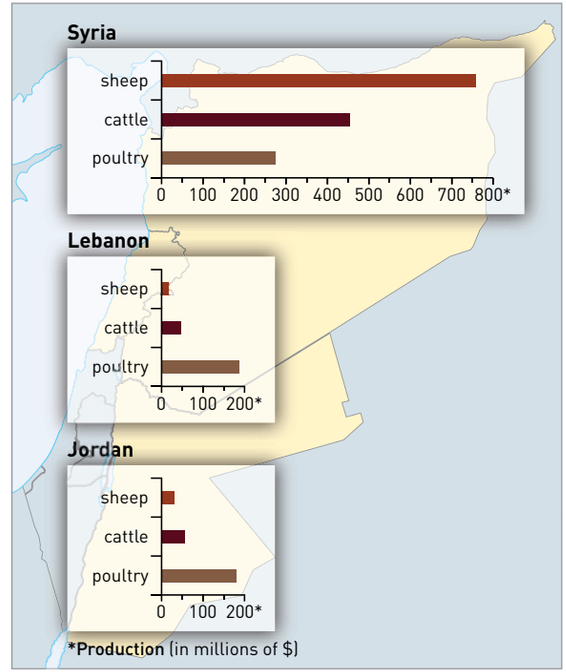
Source: FAO, 2009.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION



Source: FAO, 2007.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY



Source : FAO, 2007.

capable of exporting products in which Syria has comparative advantages. The absence of any real freedom of movement for agricultural products in spite of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), the result of a veiled form of protectionism, is also a hindrance to internal development.

Policies of comparative advantages became prevalent in the Near East as states cut off support to their national agricultural sector. Such countries increasingly export to the Gulf states and the European Union. Syria is one of the main exporters of olive oil in the Mediterranean basin; it doubled its cultivated areas since 1980. The areas devoted to citrus fruits, after a period of strong development between 1980 and 2000, declined due to the lack of foreign markets and the cost of water in this type of production. The country also exports its pure-bred Awaz sheep, renowned in the Gulf countries, and imports sheep from Australia or New Zealand for domestic consumption. Since the early 2000s exports of grain and cotton have been declining as a result of poor weather conditions. Jordan, for its part, has specialised in horticultural production for export to the Gulf countries, particularly tomatoes and cucumbers. As for Lebanon, it exports products of a higher value-added type through a small-scale dynamic food processing industry (fruit juices, wine, appetizer seeds and grains, canned goods, etc.) but also industrial crops (tobacco and sugar) that are often the subject of clientelist state subsidies.

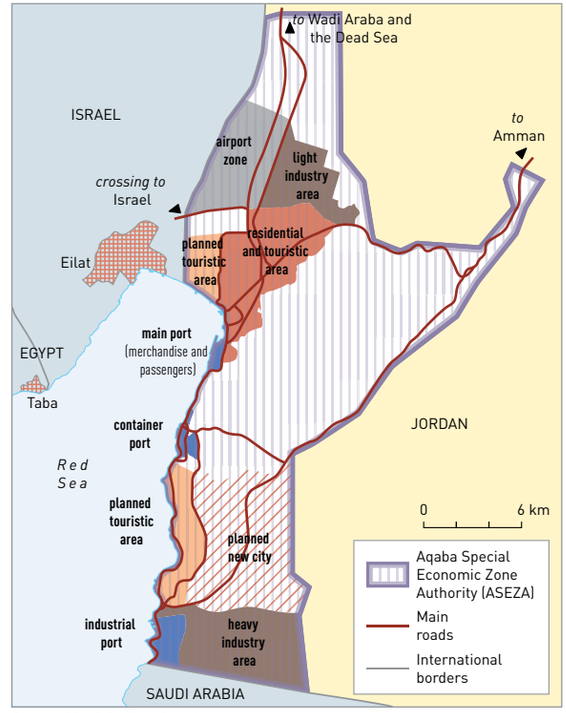
An Industry Victimised by Bureaucracy and East Asia

Shielded by customs protections, the manufacturing industry prospered in the Near East in the years from 1960 to 1970. In Jordan and Syria the state invested in heavy industries: cement plants, oil refineries, and phosphate processing. In Syria, the nationalisations of the 1960s and the socialising development method of the Ba'athist regime led to the creation of a powerful industrial public sector. The private sector was hampered by excessive bureaucratic regulations that persisted until the early 1990s. A law on the "obstruction to the socialist economy" penalised anyone who competed with the production of public industries (shoes, textiles, television sets, cement, etc.), and thus limited the private sector to craftsmanship or forced businessmen to make concessions to the regime in order to secure exemptions. Officially laws no longer restrain private initiatives in the industrial sector but bureaucratic pressure and various dysfunctions have naturally limited the industrial development of the country. In contrast, in Jordan and Lebanon the manufacturing industries were left entirely to private initiative. A small textile industry flourished in these two countries, notably through the initiative of foreign entrepreneurs: Palestinians in Jordan and Armenians in Lebanon.

The Lebanese civil war impeded the development of Lebanese industry and destroyed part of its potential, especially in the petrochemical centre of Tripoli. However, the policy of economic openness of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri finally exhausted the small industries in Lebanon, unable as they were to adapt to international competition. Syrian industry was better able to resist this because it remained protected. However, trade barriers fell gradually and even the Syrian textile industry could not compete against Chinese products. The Syrian textile industry tried to work for European clients such as Adidas or Benetton, but had little success against the competition from East Asia. In contrast, Jordan had industrial free-trade zones that attracted entrepreneurs; in Syria, although labour costs were lower, the free zones were side-stepped by foreign investors on account of bureaucratic obstacles. The share of industry in the GDP therefore improved in Jordan but continued to decline in Syria. Jordan privatised its public industries while Syria continued to prop up an obsolete industrial public sector with an overabundant labour force.

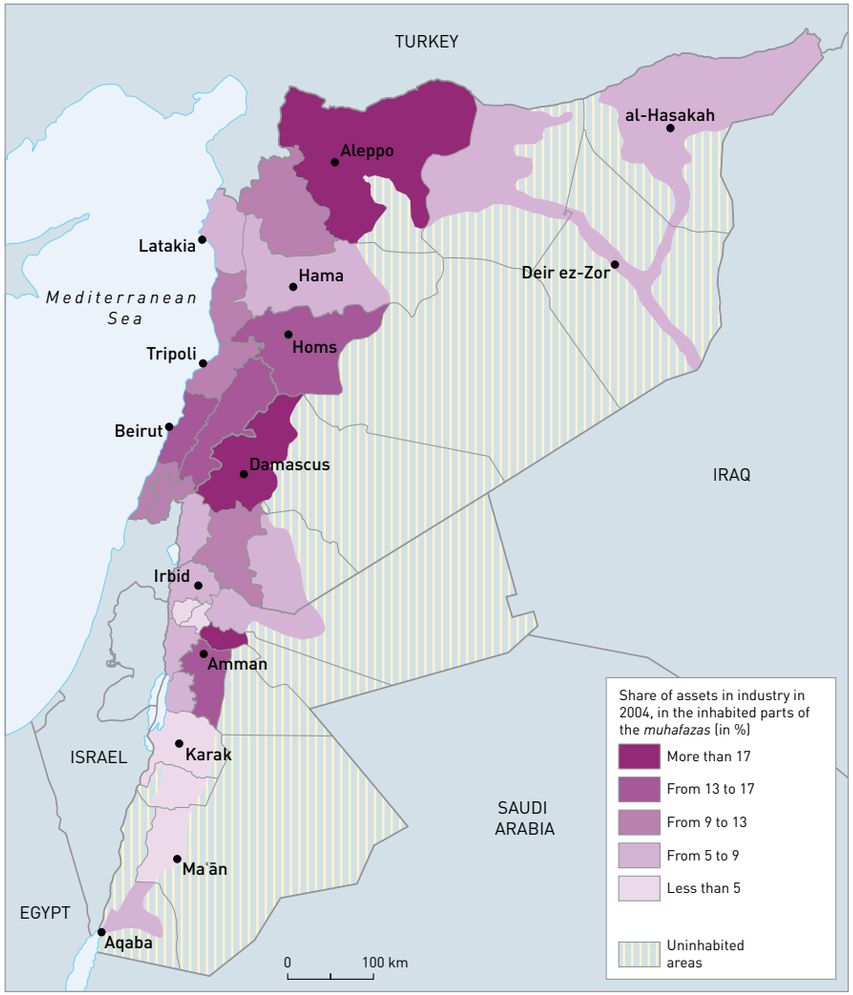
In the 1960s and 1970s industry was perceived as an instrument of social modernisation and spatial planning. The enterprising state spread its industries throughout the whole of its territory in order to drive development to the peripheries, but this often failed in the manner of the "white elephants" of sub-Saharan Africa (i.e. costly development projects without any useful result). Later, the states simply directed the entrepreneurs to the peripheries by means of tax incentives. Industry concentrated in the metropolises and ports. The development of Aqaba from the moment it was declared a Special Economic Zone was quite spectacular for that reason. It was based on an almost complete exemption of fees, a workforce imported from Asia, and privileged access to the US market in the framework of a Jordanian-Israeli partnership. This model will be difficult to transpose to Syria or Lebanon as long as these countries do not make peace with Israel.

AQABA SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE



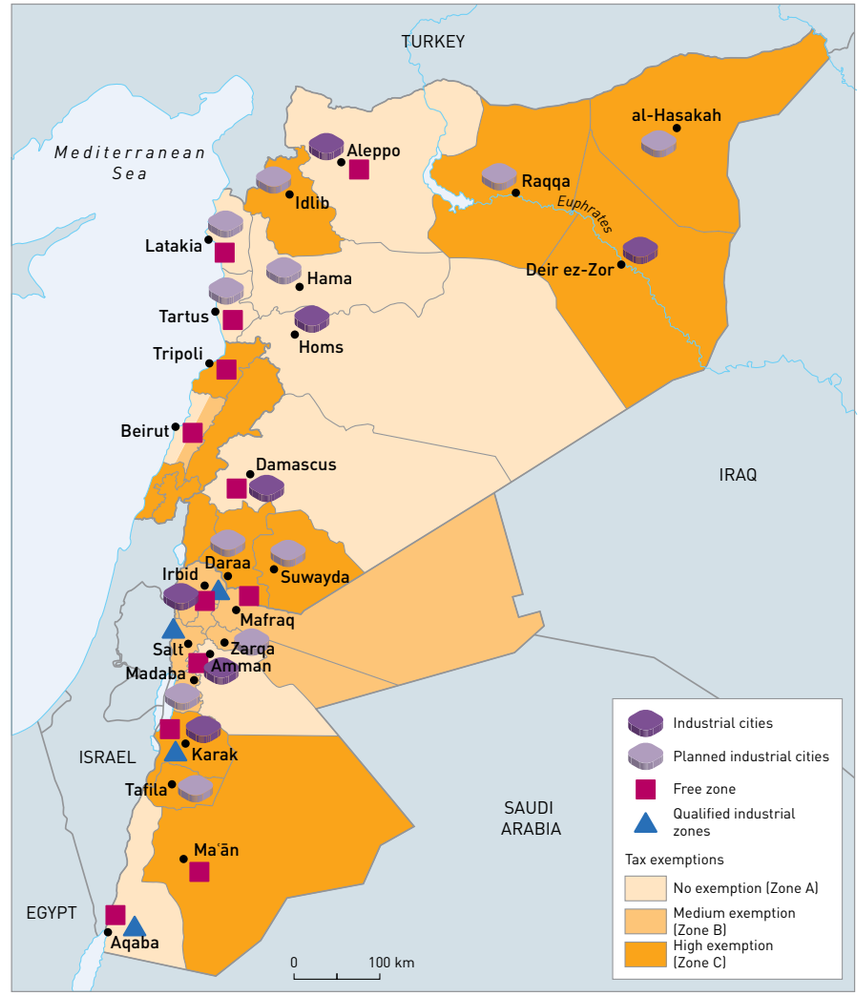
Source: Municipality of Aqaba.

SHARE OF ASSETS IN INDUSTRY



Source: 2004 general population censuses for Syria and Jordan. Survey of Lebanese statistics in 2007.

MEASURES TO FOSTER INDUSTRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

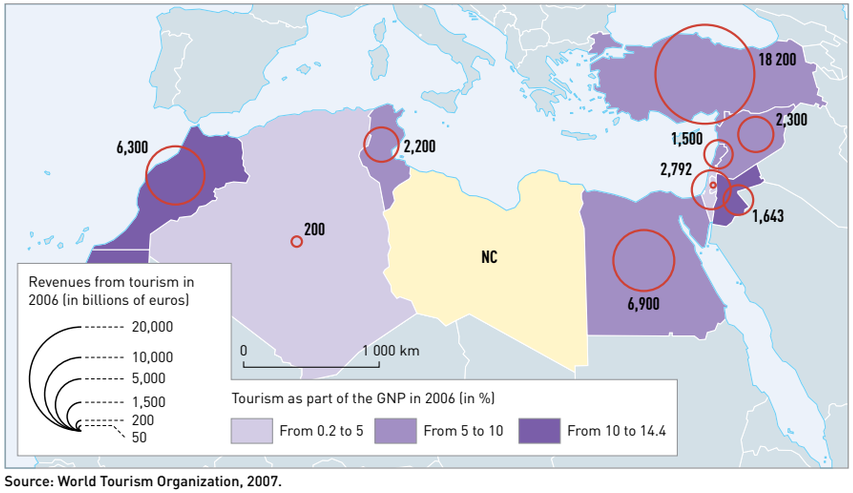


Source: Ministries of Industry of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

Uncertain Tourism

Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are marginal tourist destinations for citizens of the European Union, who more often tend to head to the Mediterranean, to the Maghrib, Turkey or Egypt. Cultural heritage attracts a tourism of "insiders" to Palmyra, Petra, and Baalbek, but that can hardly compete with Egypt in numbers. Nevertheless, Jordan benefits wonderfully from its natural and cultural heritage; this is not the case for Syria, which struggles to promote its archaeological treasures. As for Lebanon, its most highly visited tourist site is not Baalbek or Byblos but the Jeita Grotto near Beirut, more for the quality of the site's showcasing than actual interest in the calcareous concretions. In fact, the majority of foreign tourists that visit the Near East are nationals of Arab Gulf countries. However, emigrants, who are also counted as tourists, are more numerous. The ease of movement between the three countries in the region has also created an important "pendular tourism" between Syria and Lebanon.

TOURIST INDUSTRY REVENUES SOUTH AND EAST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA



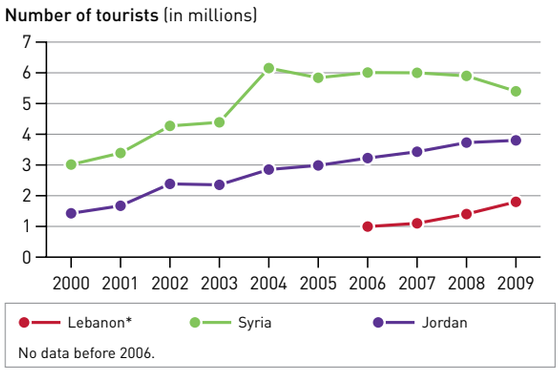
Source: World Tourism Organization, 2007.

THE MAIN TOURIST SITES

Fabrice Balanche, 2011

On Sundays the Lebanese invade Damascus for inexpensive shopping and to take advantage of the difference in the standard of living between the two countries. Trips taken between the three countries professionally or privately

A GROWING NUMBER OF TOURISTS



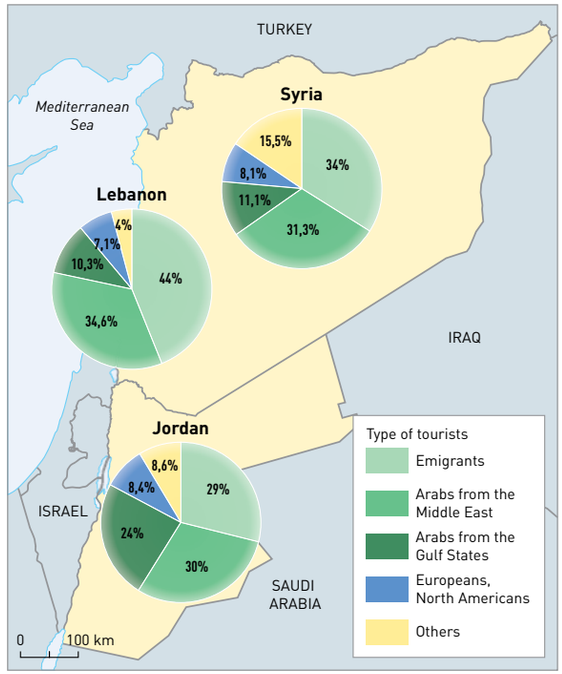
Sources: Eurostat and the ministries of tourism of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

are also counted as tourist visits, and this artificially inflates the statistics.

Arab and emigrant tourists are counted as individuals; tourist groups are rare except for westerners. The expenditures of Arab and emigrant tourists are difficult to calculate because they rent apartments or stay with family and not in hotels. This situation explains the low hotel capacity of the countries of the Near East, compared to that of the Maghreb, Egypt, or Turkey. Still, the revenues obtained from tourism are comparable in terms of the percentage of the GDP. All three countries rely on international tourism to create jobs and maintain the balance of payments. Before the civil war broke out Syria had announced its hope to create 2 million jobs in the tourist sector by 2020, and thus compensate for the loss of oil revenues. Arab tourists are more eagerly awaited than those from the west because they spend more and are less sensitive to the geopolitics of the Near East. The 2006 Lebanon war drove away tourists from the Near East for that year, but by 2007 Arab tourists had returned to Lebanon and Syria, whereas westerners waited until 2009. On the other hand, Arab tourists are less sensitive to the destruction of the environment than westerners; they come to the Near East to consume and enjoy pleasures forbidden (for religious reasons) in their home countries.

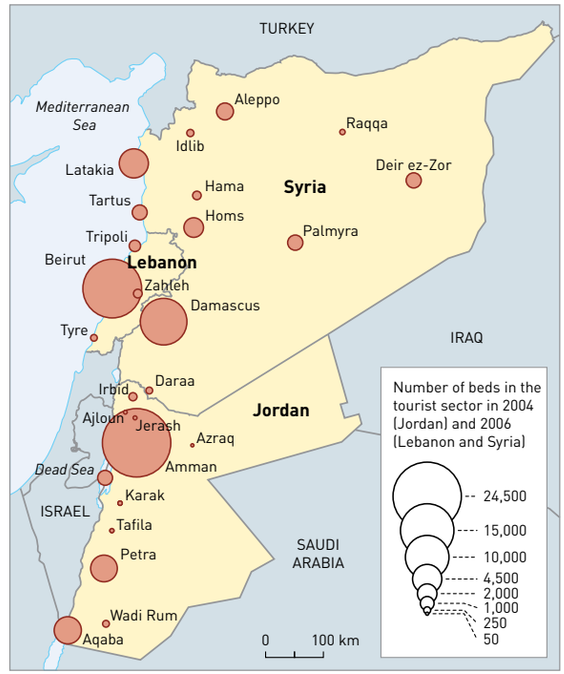
Besides the capitals, the main tourist destinations include the coastal region for its seaside resort tourism, the mountains for summer vacationing, and a few major archaeological sites (Petra and Palmyra). Tourists from the Gulf countries go to the Syrian and Lebanese mountains for their summer vacations. The beaches are more the prerogative of domestic tourists and emigrants who have invested massively in apartments by the seaside, so much so that the Syrian-Lebanese coast has become an almost continuous wall of concrete. The bulk of the hotel capacity is located in the capitals (50 per cent in Damascus, 75 per cent in Amman, and 95 per cent in the greater Beirut area) because in the seaside or summer resorts the accommodation essentially consists of furnished apartments that are more suitable than hotels for domestic and Arab tourism.

ARAB TOURISTS DOMINATE



Source: ministries of tourism of Syria (2006), Lebanon (2006), and Jordan (2004).

HOTEL CAPACITY IN THE MAIN TOURIST SITES



Source: ministries of tourism of Syria (2006), Lebanon (2006), and Jordan (2004).

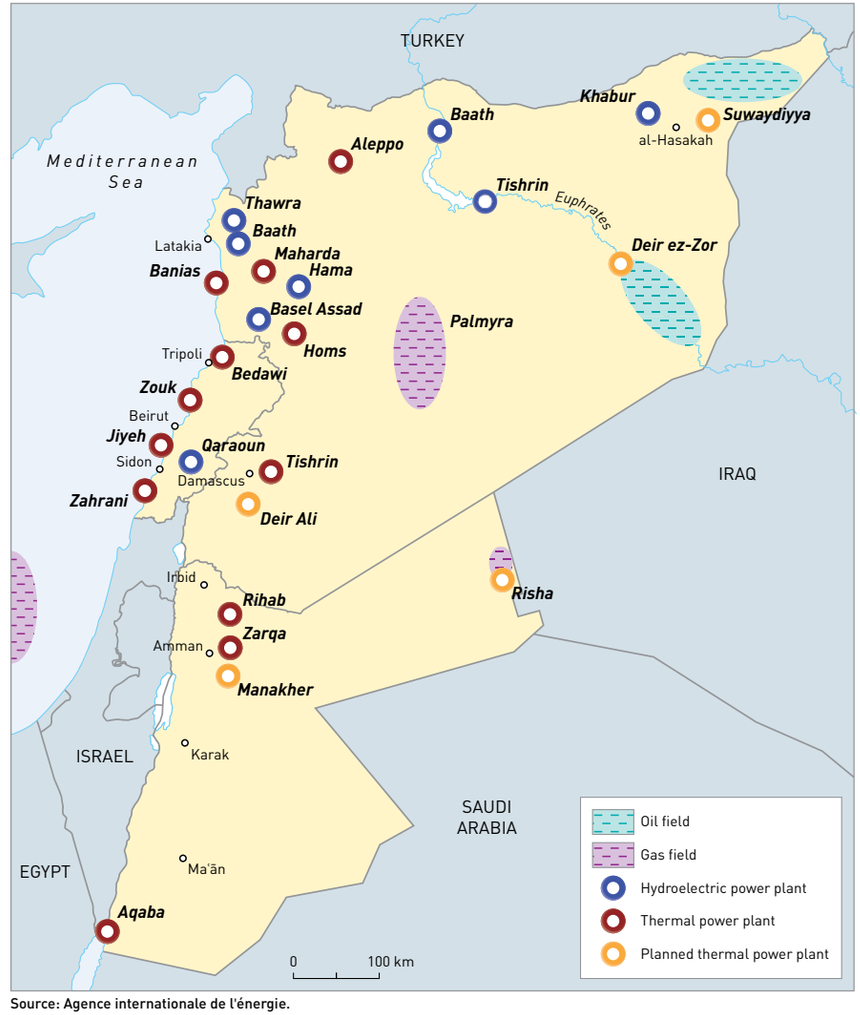
The Energy Challenge

Lebanon and Jordan are poor in energy sources; Jordan has some hydrocarbons and there is a small hydroelectric power plant in Lebanon, but they only cover a small percentage of consumption. On the other hand, Syria has a surplus with its hydrocarbons (gas and petroleum) and the hydroelectric power from the dams built in the Euphrates, the Orontes, and the coastal rivers. However, the increase in demand is such that in the short term Syria will also face a deficit. Syria risks a rapidly and drastically growing energy dependence because Syrians are used to inexpensive energy and this hardly predisposes them to conservation, whereas Jordan and Lebanon have long been used to realistic, unsubsidised prices.

Syria has oil deposits in the northeast of the country and these have been exploited in partnership with foreign companies, most notably Shell and Total. Oil production peaked in 1996 at 690,000 barrels a day, but thereafter it diminished continually, to 370,000 barrels a day in 2010. In the 1990s the reserves were further depleted in the harsh operating conditions set by the Syrian authorities; these conditions do not encourage foreign companies to prospect. In 1996, out of 103 oil producing countries worldwide, Syria was ranked 101th in operating conditions. Legislation has since softened because oil revenues, an estimated 20 to 25 per cent of the state budget, are indispensable to the Syrian government. The drop in production was aggravated by an increase in domestic consumption that was linked to the increase in the proliferation of automobiles and above all the production of electricity in thermal power plants. The exploitation of natural gas deposits in Syria, and the advent of Egyptian gas via a new gas pipeline through Jordan have made it possible to convert some oil powered plants to gas in order to save on oil.

Gas is more economical than oil but requires heavier equipment. Jordan began converting its thermal power plants to gas in 2003 with the advent of the Arab gas pipeline from Egypt, with which an agreement was signed to supply gas for 30 years from 2001. Syria was reluctant to sign a similar agreement in order to maintain its energy autonomy; furthermore, it even hoped to become an exporter of gas thanks to its newly discovered deposits. However, difficulties in the granting of concessions due to bureaucratic inertia and the US embargo caused delays in the exploitation of these deposits, and Syria

PRODUCTION OF HYDROCARBONS AND ELECTRICITY



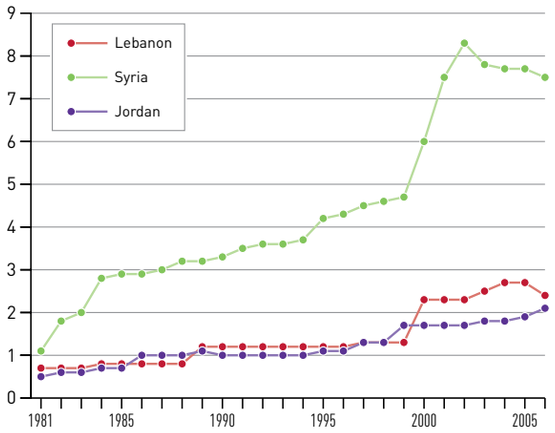
Source: Agence internationale de l'énergie.

also resorted to Egyptian gas. In 2009, Syria made a commitment to realize a connection between the Arab gas pipeline and the Turkish gas pipeline. It thus sought to use its position at the crossroads to ensure new regional energy connections, while at the same time diversifying its supply sources. As for Lebanon, it was still dependent on Syria for its gas supply, be it Egyptian or Syrian gas. In 2005 the electrical power plant in Beddawi, north of Tripoli, was connected to the Syrian terminal of Baniyas, but this power plant still works on oil, like all other Lebanese thermal power plants.

From the 1970s the supply of electricity has been a development issue in these three countries of the Arab Near East. Since then practically all towns have been connected to the electricity network but supply is often erratic. The Jordanians have a regular supply; for them power outages are a rare event. In contrast, the situation is more delicate in Syria and especially in Lebanon, where it is indispensable to have access to a private generator; this raises costs and limits the location of settlements—the further away from large urban centres, the more uncertain the supply of electricity becomes. From 2000 on in Jordan the management of the production and distribution of electricity was progressively privatised. In 2005, the first private concession was granted to a company from the United Arab Emirates to build a power plant east of Amman. All new power plants, which were to allow Jordan to double its production of electricity between 2005 and 2015, were subject to the same procedure. Syria was slow in breaking the public monopoly on the supply of electricity, but it did begin to follow the path laid out by Jordan. The first private concession was granted in 2008 to a company named Sharq (headed by Rami Makhlouf, a cousin of the Syrian president), for the construction of a power plant near Homs. As for Lebanon, it regularly speaks about the privatisation of EDL (the Lebanese power company), a real financial abyss for public funds and incapable of ensuring a successful mission. Problems of governance, lack of investments, and periodic destruction by the Israeli air force explain EDL's lack of efficiency. Yet no concrete plan for modernisation is being implemented and it does not seem feasible as long as Lebanon is not a proper state.

ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION CAPACITY

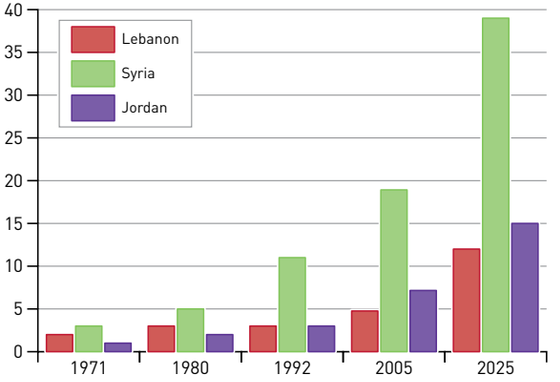
Production of electricity (in gigawatts)



Source: International Energy Agency.

ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

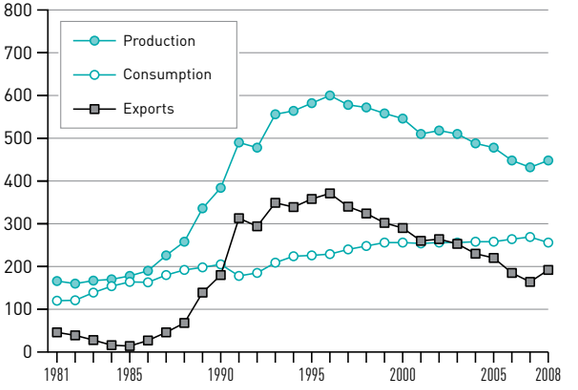
Energy consumption (in million tonnes of oil equivalent)



Source: Blue Plan, 2005.

PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION, AND EXPORTS OF OIL IN SYRIA

Quantity of oil (in millions of barrels)



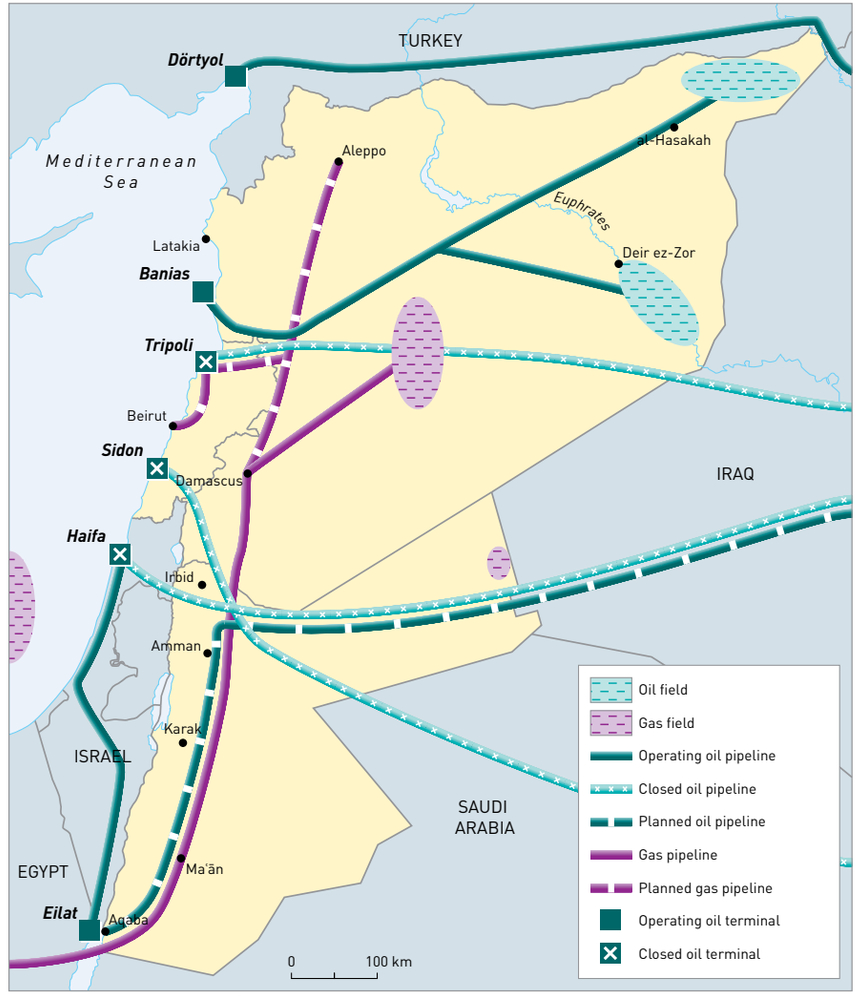
Source: International Energy Agency.

Hydrocarbons Bypassing the Near East

The outflow of Iraqi oil starting in the mandate period gave renewed strategic importance to the areas of the Near East coastline. The French and the British shared Iraqi oil exports going to the Mediterranean. The French built an oil pipeline that ran through Syria and ended in Tripoli. In 1952, a new section supplied Baniyas, in Syria, with part of the oil from the Iraqi Petroleum Company. The British oil pipeline crossed Transjordan and the north of Palestine in order to reach the port of Haifa. After the proclamation of the state of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 the oil terminal in Haifa was closed. The former British oil pipeline was diverted to the north, bypassing Israel through the Syrian Golan, and ending on the Lebanese coast to the south of Sidon (Saida). In 1952, an oil pipeline from Saudi Arabia, the Tapline, followed the same route. However, Israel's occupation of the Golan in 1967 definitively cut off the flow of oil toward southern Lebanon.

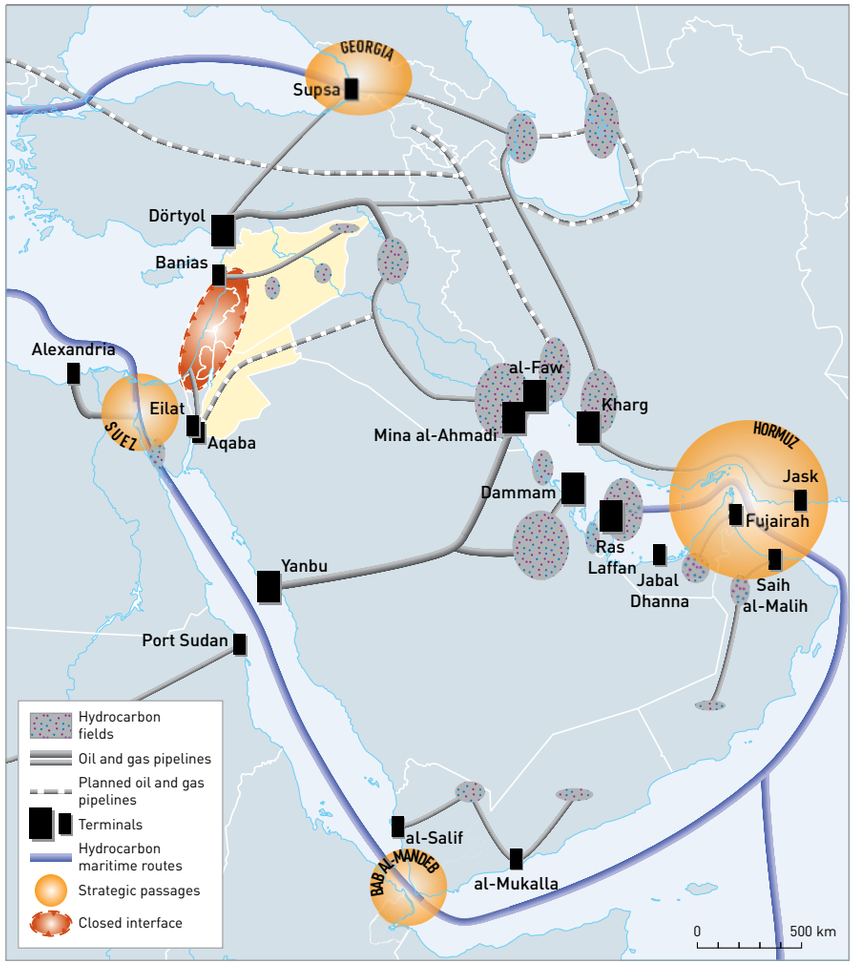
Since the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, the Syrian coastline became the only oil terminal in the Mediterranean that the Saudis and Iraqis could use. However, political rivalries and the increasing financial demands of the Syrians with respect to the transit of oil led the Saudis and the Iraqis to avoid the passage through Syria. In 1976, the transit of Iraqi oil was interrupted; it resumed modestly in 1979, but ended definitively in 1982. Saddam Hussein preferred to avoid Syria in favour of Turkey, which was perceived as more trustworthy. A new oil pipeline circumvented Syria in the north and surfaced at Dörtyol, on the Gulf of Adana. Between 1996 and 2003, Iraqi oil was transported through the Syrian oil pipeline despite the UN embargo, but it did not leave Syrian territory. In fact, Iraq traded oil for agricultural and manufactured products with Syria, who used the Iraqi oil in its refineries and thermal power plants. This barter allowed Syria to export practically all of its oil production and, consequently, to accumulate foreign currency with the tolerance of the international community. The US occupation of Iraq in 2003 put an end to this traffic and meant the decline of Syrian exports. Henceforth oil from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean no longer flowed through Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan but through Turkey and Egypt. A project for the construction of a railway for the transport of Iraqi oil through the port of Aqaba was discussed but no such project existed to go through Syrian territory.

THE TRANSIT OF HYDROCARBONS: A STRONG POTENTIAL



Source: Agence internationale de l'énergie.

THE MIDDLE EAST: A REGIONAL INTERFACE CLOSED TO THE TRANSIT OF HYDROCARBONS

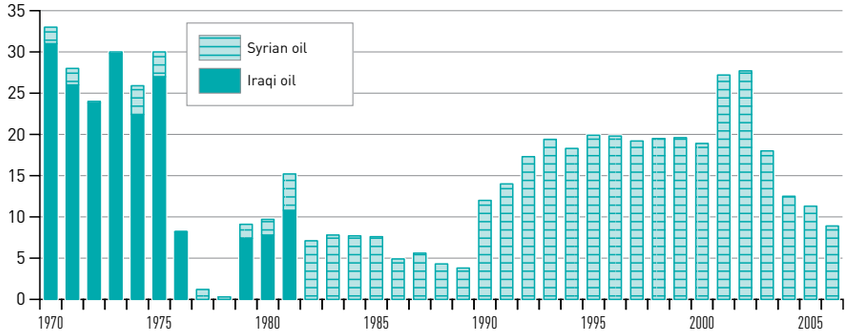


Source: International Energy Agency.

The oil-producing countries diversify their export routes so as not to be dependent on any single neighbour. Direct access to the sea is a privilege, but in geopolitical terms the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf are not considered open seas because, in times of conflict, they can be closed off at Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb, or Suez. Saudi Arabia and Iraq have made efforts to increase their outlets by sea and land so as to avoid a blockage of exports. Distance is therefore not the most important factor because the shortest way is not necessarily the best in geopolitical terms. The countries of the Near East could therefore

OIL TRAFFIC AT THE BANIAS TERMINAL

Oil traffic (in millions of tons)



Source: Central office of statistics, Damascus.

benefit from this strategy of diversification of outlets for hydrocarbons, on the condition that the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved, and the Arab states settle their differences.

The rise in the price of oil led the countries of the Near East to resort to gas to fuel their thermal power plants. The exploitation of Syrian deposits was scheduled to have begun by now but this would not have sufficed to make Syria energy autonomous. Syria continues to resort to Egyptian gas imports, especially as the country's energy demands are increasing. As for Jordan and Lebanon, they have almost no hydrocarbons and are obliged to pay high prices for their imports. The recent discovery of a gas field off the Israeli coast has raised hopes in Lebanon and Syria that they might make a similar discovery in their exclusive economic zone. Gas seems to be the energy of the future in the Near East as well. The geopolitical situation prohibits recourse to nuclear energy, and renewable energies, especially solar, are still in their infancy.

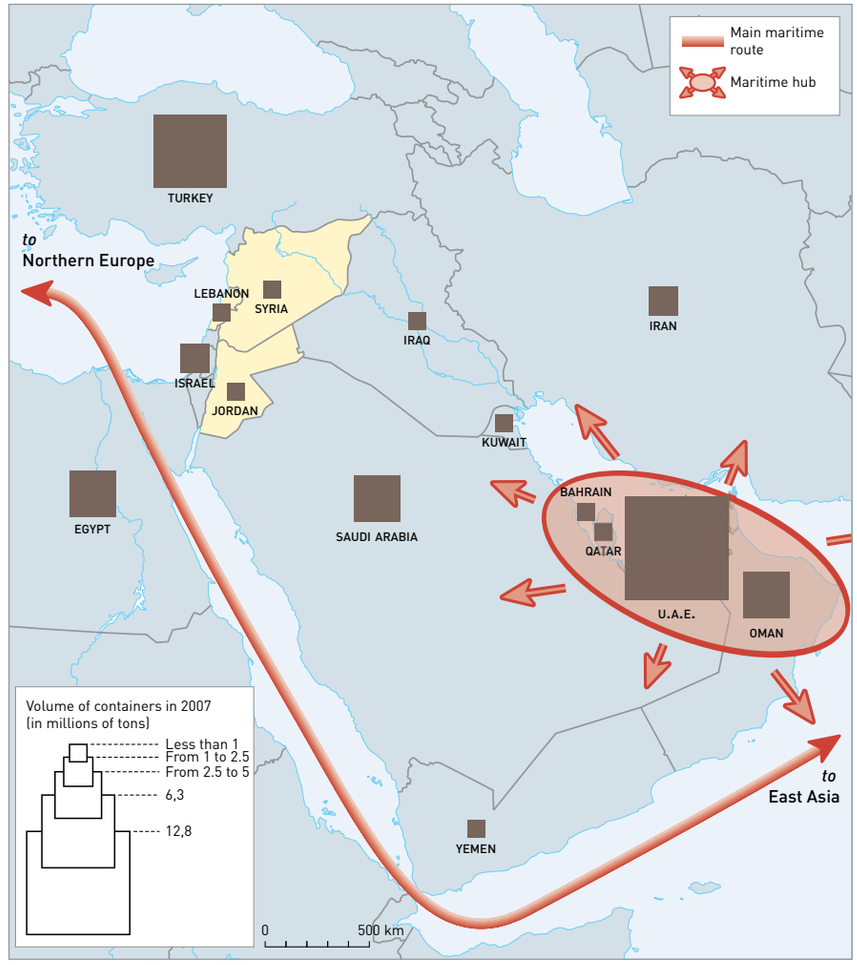
The Marginalisation of the Levantine Coastline in the Near East

In the early twentieth century, the Near East was an open space within the Ottoman Empire. Its role as an international interface has obviously declined, most notably since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. However, the ports of the Levant remain regional hubs of communication between the Mediterranean and Iraq and the Gulf region. Locally, the ports of Jaffa, Haifa, Beirut, Tripoli, and Iskenderun compete with each other. Jaffa is the port of Jerusalem, but also benefits from the development of irrigated agriculture in the coastal plain. North of Palestine, the new port of Haifa may eventually prevail over its rival in Acre, but it is still the second port of Palestine. Thanks to the railway that linked Haifa to the Syrian network in 1905, the port city spread its catchment area to the south of Syria (the Hawran) and the north of present-day Jordan.

In 1920, the divide between the territories under British and French mandate blocked the influence of Haifa on the south of Syria. On the other hand, Haifa captured the traffic destined for Iraq and became the oil terminus of one of the two oil pipelines of the Iraq Petroleum Company. It eventually replaced Jaffa definitively and became the main port of Palestine under the British mandate. Beirut asserted itself as the main port of the states of the Levant under the French mandate, to the detriment of Tripoli and Iskenderun. In 1911, upon completion of the Tripoli-Homs railway that linked the coast to the Aleppo-Damascus-Mecca line, the Aleppines began to turn away from Iskenderun, their traditional outflow. In fact, Iskenderun and Aleppo were late in being linked by railway and, from 1923, it was necessary to transit via Turkey. The cession of the sanjak of Iskenderun to Turkey in 1939 did not have a dramatic influence on Aleppo's trade since that traffic had already been diverted toward the Lebanese ports.

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the separate independence of Lebanon and of Syria in 1943, and the breakup of the economic union between the two countries in 1950 provoked the development of two new ports: Aqaba in Jordan and Latakia in Syria. The new states, particularly Jordan, which could no longer use Haifa, were anxious to ensure their national

THE GULF AS THE MARITIME HUB OF THE MIDDLE EAST



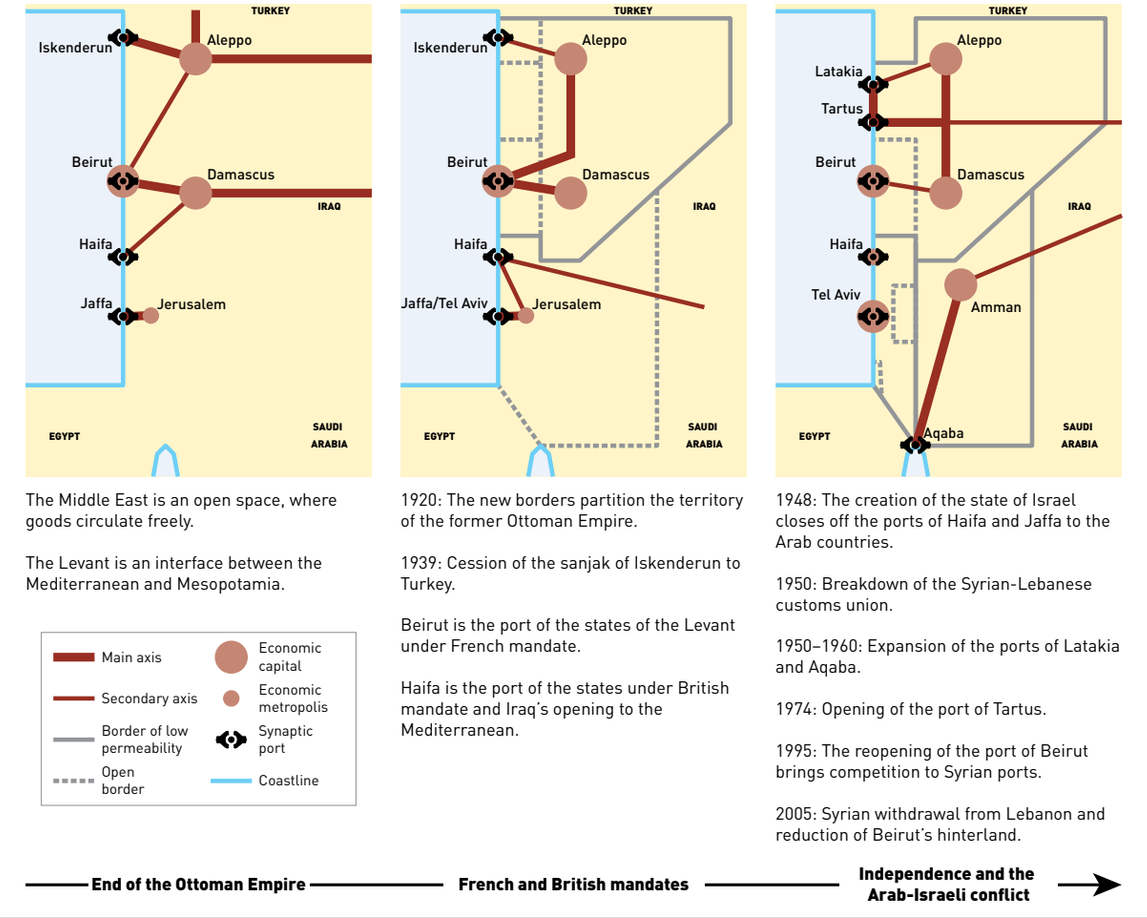
Source: International Yearbook, 2008.

independence. Beirut and Tripoli continued to be used by the Jordanians and Syrians, but as the passage through customs overland became more complicated, especially with the rise to power of the Ba'athist party in Syria, they abandoned them. The transit via Aqaba and Latakia therefore rose gradually until the Lebanese civil war (1975–90), which caused an upsurge of activity in these new international ports, the Lebanese ports remaining closed for the entire duration of the conflict.

In the early 1970s, Syria undertook the construction of a second international port at Tartus, to accommodate the explosion of its maritime traffic and to benefit from its renewed role in transit toward Iraq. However, the bureaucratic management of the ports, fastidious customs controls, and the political problems with Iraq quickly shattered the hopes of the Syrian freight forwarders. Improvements in relations between Syria and Iraq in the late 1990s allowed for a slight recovery of transit in Latakia and Tartus, to the detriment of Aqaba, but this concerned only limited quantities due to the international embargo on Iraq (1990–2003). Thereafter the traffic at the Jordanian, Syrian, and Lebanese ports was essentially domestic. Aqaba became, paradoxically, the port where international traffic was most important, because the time for trans-shipments, including customs, was the shortest there. Lebanese ports performed better than Syrian ports, but the difficulties inherent in passing through the Syrian border cancelled the benefit of unloading in Beirut, rather than in Latakia or in Tartus.

The Levantine coast from Gaza to Lakatia thus lost its appeal for international transit. The ports of the Arab Near East have limited traffic, both for freight and for hydrocarbons, to the extent that it covers only their domestic needs. The flow of trade between Europe and the petro-monarchies of the Gulf avoids this maritime coast with low capacity and often dilapidated port infrastructures that are badly connected to inadequate land networks and known for their obstructive customs procedures. Moreover, the Arab countries of the Gulf have developed multi-modal port and transport infrastructures of a much higher level than those of the Near East, making them world level hubs. The eventual end of the Arab-Israeli conflict will thus not be sufficient to allow for a significant recovery of the port activity in the Near East. At a minimum it will be necessary to create a free trade zone in the region to facilitate commercial exchange in order to compete with the position acquired by the Gulf states.

A CLOSED PORT INTERFACE



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

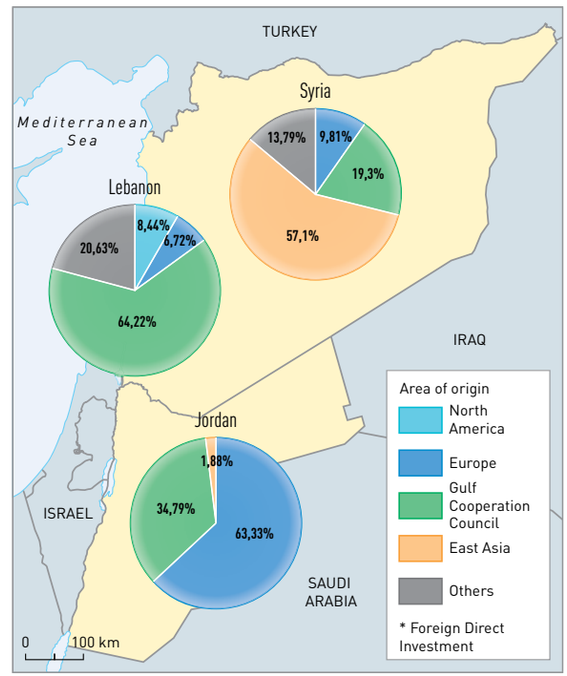
A Growing Dependence on the Petro-Monarchies of the Gulf

Traditionally, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories have benefited from indirect income, that is, the economic benefits from Gulf oil revenues. This indirect income takes on different forms: remittances from emigrants, private investment, and economic aid. In the years from 1970 to 1980, Syria and Jordan, because they are "frontline countries" facing Israel, received aid from the Arab states in the Gulf. This aid was particularly large for Syria: 2 billion euros between 1978 and 1981, or close to one-third of its gross domestic product. With the oil glut of the 1980s, this yearly aid diminished and ultimately disappeared in favour of more modest and regular transfers. During this time Syria and Jordan experienced an economic crisis because both countries had embarked on ambitious development plans which they could not finance without massive foreign aid. Thanks to its participation in the coalition against Iraq in 1990–91, Syria benefited again from aid from the Arab Gulf states, through the financing of infrastructure projects and the employment of Syrian emigrant workers. In contrast, Jordan was punished for supporting Saddam Hussein, notably through the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Jordanians of Palestinian origin; others were accused of collaborating with Iraqi troops in Kuwait. Lebanon still received aid from the Gulf regularly, for example after the 2006 war, but the main contribution came from the remittances of emigrants. It is difficult to ascertain the precise amount of migrant remittances because many transfers circumvent banks, and this excludes goods in kind (cars, audio-visual materials, etc.), but it may be estimated at 20 per cent of the GDP, or the foremost resource for the country.

Until the early 1990s, the countries of the Near East were seldom attractive for investment capital from the Arab Gulf. The war in Lebanon, the dirigiste economy in Syria, and the scarcity of opportunities in Jordan coupled with a certain dirigisme limited investment opportunities. The return to peace in Lebanon, the opening of the Syrian economy, and the hopes for a regional peace settlement after the Oslo Accords of 1993 gradually modified the perception of potential investors. From 1997, the flow of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) into Jordan and Lebanon began to grow rapidly. For Syria this did not happen until the 2000s, when Bashar al-Assad came to power and opened banking to the private sector. This surge of FDIs was primarily from the Arab Gulf states who invested their trade surpluses which were boosted by the rise in the price of oil. The price per barrel soared from $20 to $140 between 2001 and July 2008. The reduction of FDIs from 2008 onwards corresponded to the drop in oil prices and the concomitant financial difficulties in these countries. China took this opportunity to make a striking entrance in Syria with the purchase of a 35 per cent share in Shell-Syria. During the period from 2003 to 2008, the FDIs from Arab countries in the Gulf represented two-thirds of the total flow towards the countries of the eastern Mediterranean (including Egypt), less than 30 per cent going to the European countries. The bulk of investments from Arab Gulf countries was for the construction, transport, and tourist sectors. European projects are more diversified and prioritise energy infrastructure. Jordan is the most attractive country because of the stability

ORIGINS OF THE FDI*

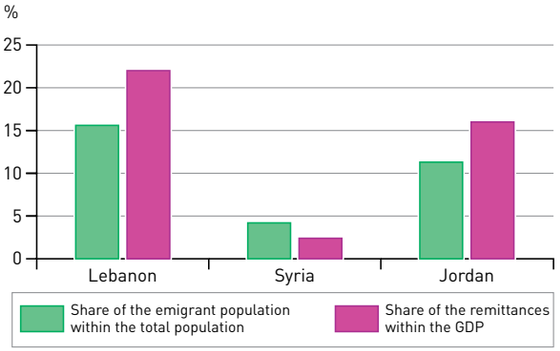
2008-2010



Source: UNCTAD.

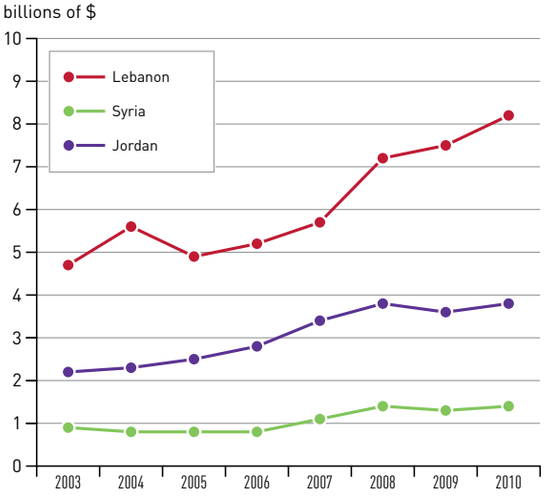
of its regime and its relatively low levels of corruption compared to Lebanon and Syria. On the other hand, in per capita volume it is Lebanon that stands out in the Near East and even in the whole of the southern Mediterranean zone (with the exception of Israel), thanks to its status as a tax haven. The civil war in Syria from March 2011 onwards put an end to foreign investment projects there. In any case, it had not been attractive to investors before either, in spite of Bashar al-Assad's promises to eliminate bureaucratic obstructions and local profiteering. The uncertainties regarding the future of the country finally discouraged even the most daring of investors.

EMIGRANTS AND CURRENCY TRANSFERS IN 2010



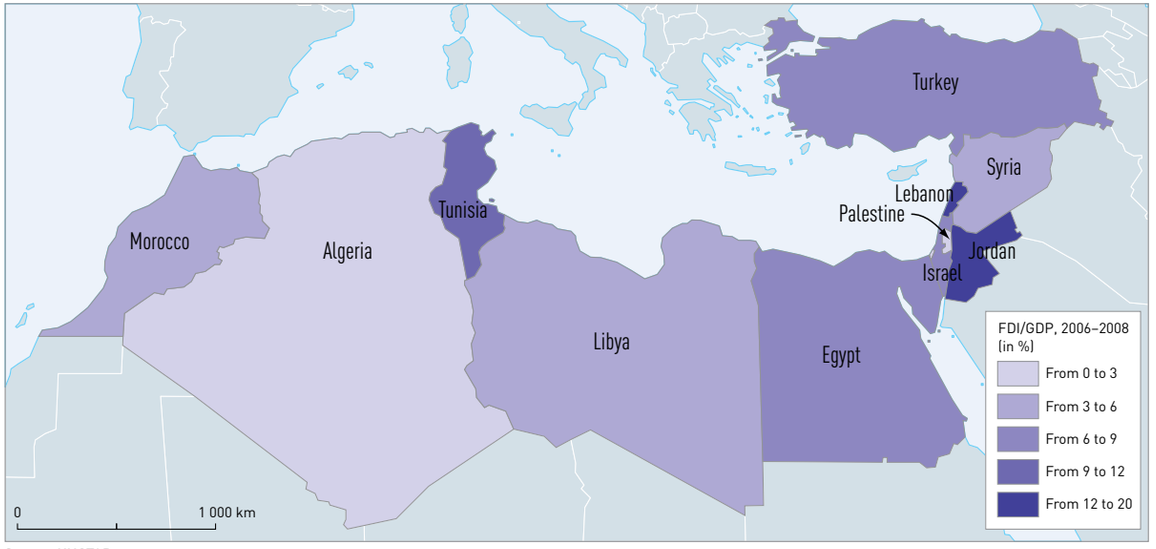
Source: World Bank.

FINANCIAL TRANSFERS FROM EMIGRANTS



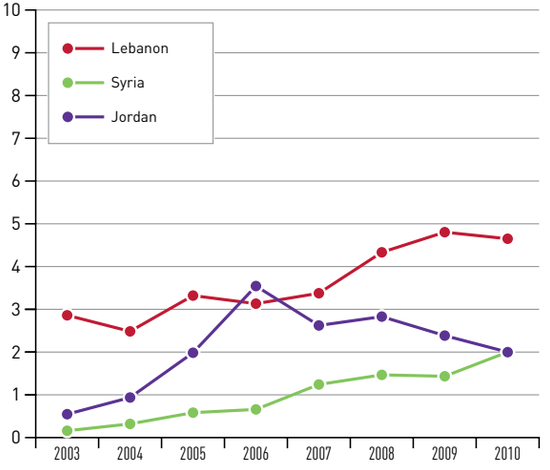
Source: World Bank, 2011.

PERFORMANCE OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN



Source: UNCTAD.

EVOLUTION OF FDI IN THE MIDDLE EAST



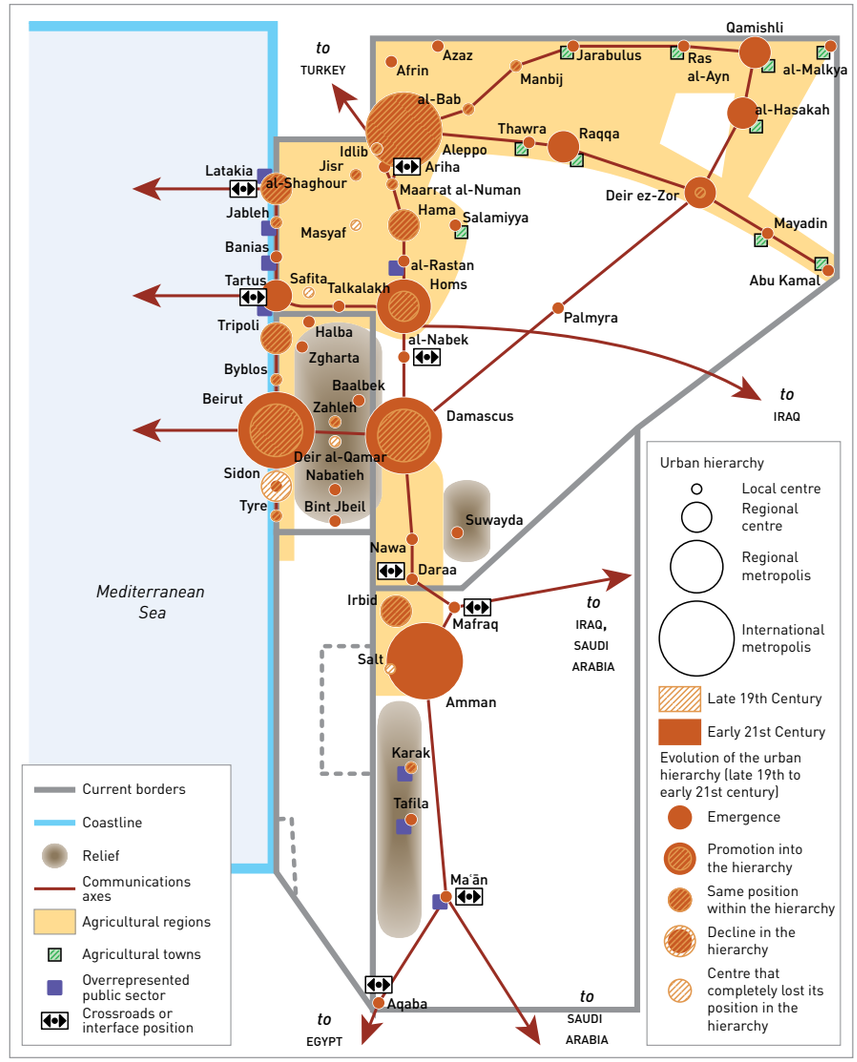
Source: UNCTAD.

The Urban Archipelago of the Near East

An Urban Network Dominated by Four Metropolises

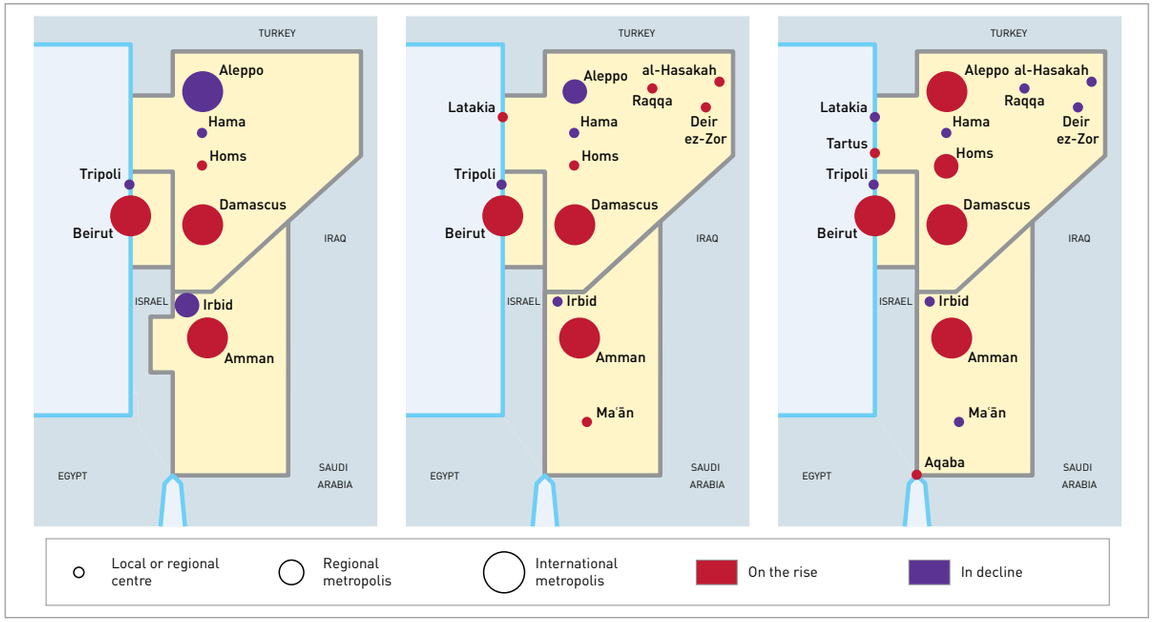
The countries of the Near East are heavily urbanised: Jordan 85 per cent of the population is urban, in Lebanon 80 per cent, and in Syria 60 per cent. Syria stands out for its strong agricultural sector, long encouraged by the Baʿathist regime, which launched wide-reaching land reforms in the 1960s. The limited rural exodus was a consequence of this, particularly when compared to Lebanon and Jordan, where the urbanisation rates in 1950 were 24.5 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, lower even than in Syria (33.2 per cent). Within a context of high population growth, the cities exploded. This uncontrolled urbanisation movement has only recently begun to slow down in Syria and Jordan. In Lebanon the civil war interrupted the population growth in the 1970s, but not the urban growth as the fighting intensified the exodus toward the metropolitan Beirut area. The influence of cities in the Jordanian and Lebanese urban systems continued to increase, to the detriment of the other cities. More than 50 per cent of the population of Lebanon and Jordan, respectively, or two-thirds of the urban population were concentrated in the Beirut and Amman metropolitan areas. The second largest cities followed at a considerable distance: Tripoli in Lebanon (300,000 inhabitants in 1998) and Irbid in Jordan (260,000 inhabitants in 2004). In Syria, metropolitan/greater Damascus had 5 million inhabitants (4 million Syrians and 1 million Iraqis) in 2004, or 40 per cent of the urban population. Aleppo had a population of 2.2 million inhabitants in 2004, or 20 per cent of the urban population. The demographic weight of the two Syrian metropolises thus represents one-third of the Syrian population and 60 per cent of the urban population. In all three countries, the metropolises significantly concentrate the same portions of the urban population. The secondary urban networks, comprising the regional centres, and the tertiary networks consist of the small and medium cities and together make up just one-third of the urban population. The development of the secondary and tertiary networks is related to the proactive space management policies of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, in the 1990s and 2000s, the small and medium-sized cities suffered from the cessation of these policies. In Lebanon, they were

EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN HIERARCHY (LATE 19TH TO EARLY 21ST CENTURY)



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

MUTATIONS IN THE URBAN HIERARCHY

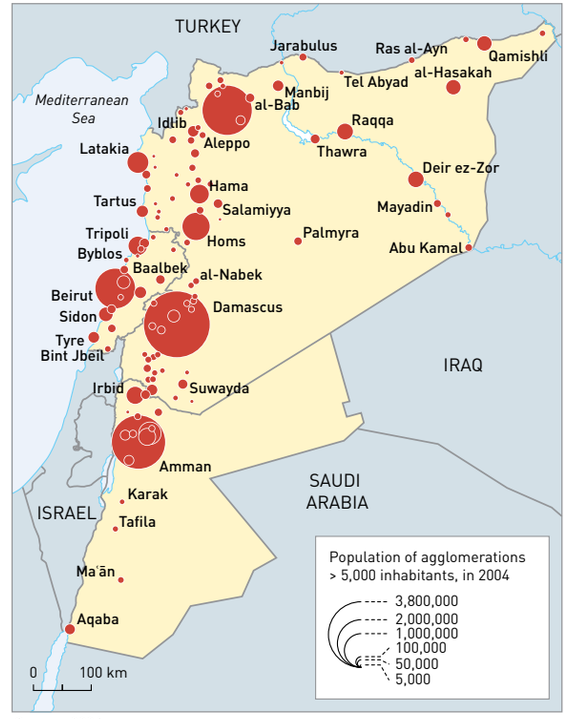


Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

sacrificed by a government that concentrated public investment in the reconstruction of Beirut. The open economy was of little benefit to them because the entry of the Near East into a globalised world strengthened the importance of the metropolises. Certain peripheral regional centres did experience sustained population growth, but this was due more to lagging local communities with respect to the demographic transition than to a recovery of economic appeal.

With a population growth of more than 5 per cent yearly since the 1960s, Amman, Aleppo, and Damascus suffered from many dysfunctions. Population growth was not as high in Beirut, but the civil war and post-war problems rendered it no less fragile. The cities were not able to integrate the regular flows of migrants, flows that became violent and massive when refugees were involved. The Iraqi and Palestinian refugees settled predominantly in the capitals, as did the Lebanese refugees of all faiths who fled South Lebanon, which was occupied by Israel, or the Chouf, when the Druze forces of Walid Jumblatt massacred the Christians in 1983 and 1984. Damascus also received its share of Syrian refugees during the Israeli offensive in the Golan Heights in 1967. Relatively speaking Aleppo was spared these waves of refugees; few Iraqis or Palestinians settled there, although it did receive many of the Syrian Kurdish emigrants. This may be considered a forced migration resulting from the deliberate underdevelopment of Kurdish zones along the Turkish border.

THE URBAN NETWORK IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Source: 2004 censuses.

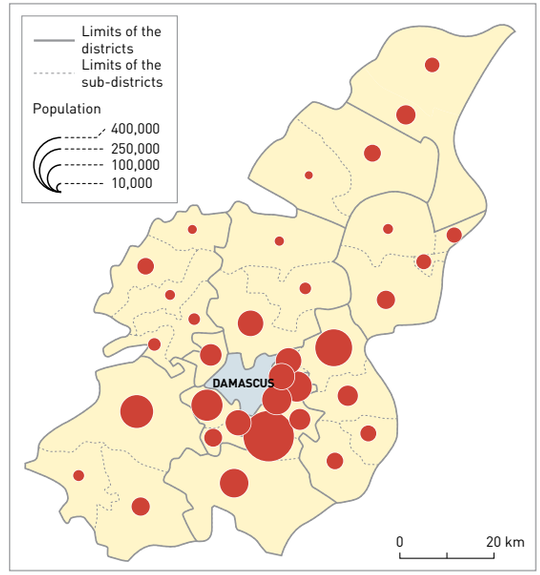
Damascus Devours its Gardens

The Syrian capital is, by virtue of its size, the main metropolis of the Near East. Within its walls it has only 1.6 million inhabitants but the greater metropolitan area has over 5 million inhabitants including the Iraqi refugees (one million people have settled there since 2003). In 1960, the city of Damascus only had 530,000 inhabitants, and 200,000 inhabitants lived in the small cities and peripheral villages (e.g. Douma, Harasta, Tel, Jeramana, Jdeidat Artouz) of the Ghouta. In two generations the population of the metropolitan area multiplied by seven. Urbanised space increased tenfold because the new forms of urbanisation, particularly informal settlements, take up more space than regular neighbourhoods. This urban sprawl was accelerated from the early 1990s as a result of developments in transport, which allowed for a de-concentration of the inhabited space and an increase of informal settlements—more than half of the new urbanised area. Whereas population growth in the metropolitan area slowed from 5 per cent per year on average between 1960 and 1994 to 3 per cent in the last intercensal period (1994–2004), the extension of the urbanised area was accelerated, so much so that by 2025 the Ghouta may well have disappeared.

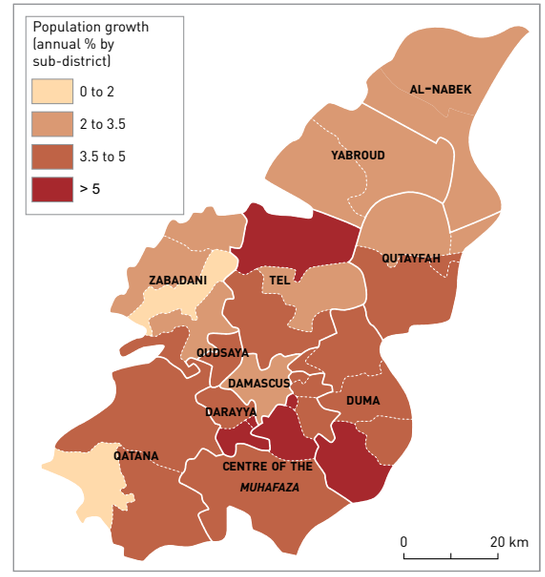
Since the 1980s the appearance of Damascus has changed enormously, from a calm city with just a few cars, covered by an "Arab socialist" patina and surrounded by vast vegetable producing suburbs, to a noisy, polluted, and sprawling metropolis. Damascus henceforth was invaded by a flood of cars clogging the streets and sidewalks for lack of parking space. Living conditions in the central districts rapidly deteriorated, and the upper classes fled toward the new garden cities that appeared along the peripheries such as Yafour, which is connected to Damascus by a highway. The de-concentration movement did not reach the levels of Amman or Cairo, but it was accelerated by the construction of vast real estate projects in the style of the gated communities of Cairo. The new urban projects for the downtown area were slow to complete because of the harsh conditions that the authorities imposed on potential investors. For example, the works on the railway wastelands of Hejaz Station halted in 2003. The Saudi firm that had secured the project withdrew from it, weary of the administrative difficulties and the constant negotiations imposed on it. Only one large-scale project (financed by Saudi

THE POPULATION OF THE PROVINCE OF GREATER DAMASCUS

DISTRIBUTION BY SUB-DISTRICTS IN 2004

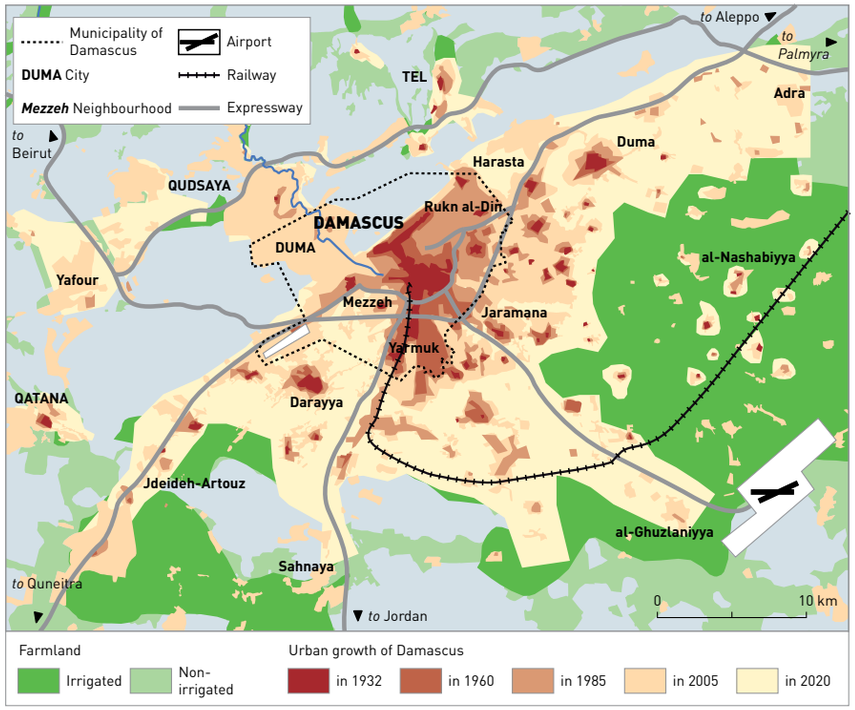


1960–2004 POPULATION GROUTH



Source: Syrian censuses.

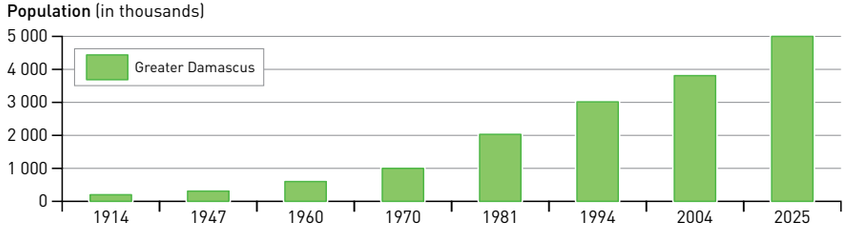
THE URBAN GROWTH OF DAMASCUS (1932–2020)



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

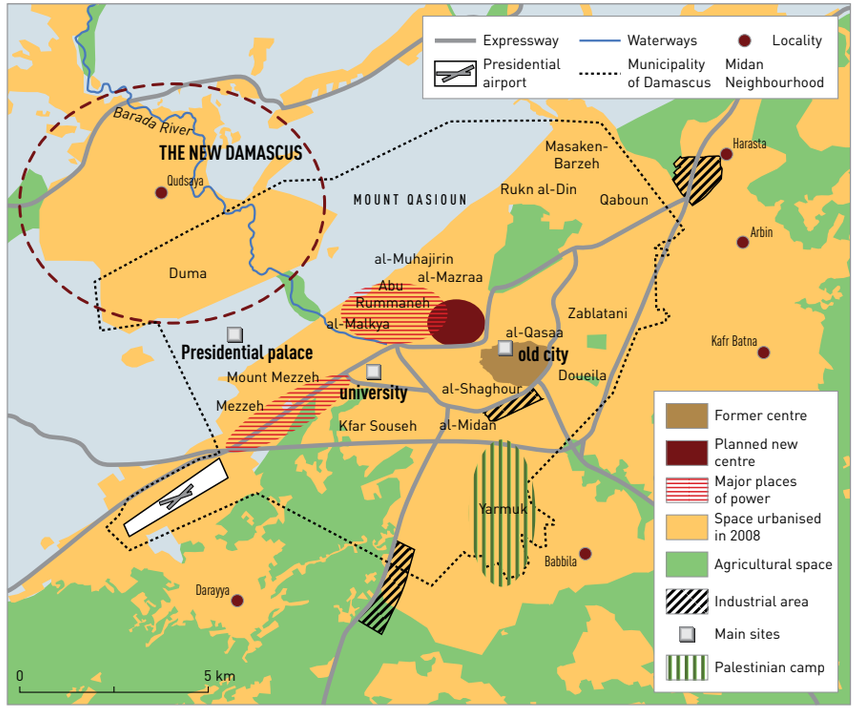
Prince Walid Ibn Talal) was achieved: a huge luxury hotel built right in the heart of Damascus. As one of the world's wealthiest men, he had a certain margin of manoeuvrability with respect to the bureaucracy and he could afford to speak on equal terms with the Syrian president. However, these real estate projects do not fit into any urban planning scheme at the metropolitan level. They simply attract capital from the Gulf to Syria by offering investment opportunities.

THE POPULATION EXPLOSION OF GREATER DAMASCUS



Source: Syrian censuses.

DAMASCUS INVADES THE GHOUTA



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

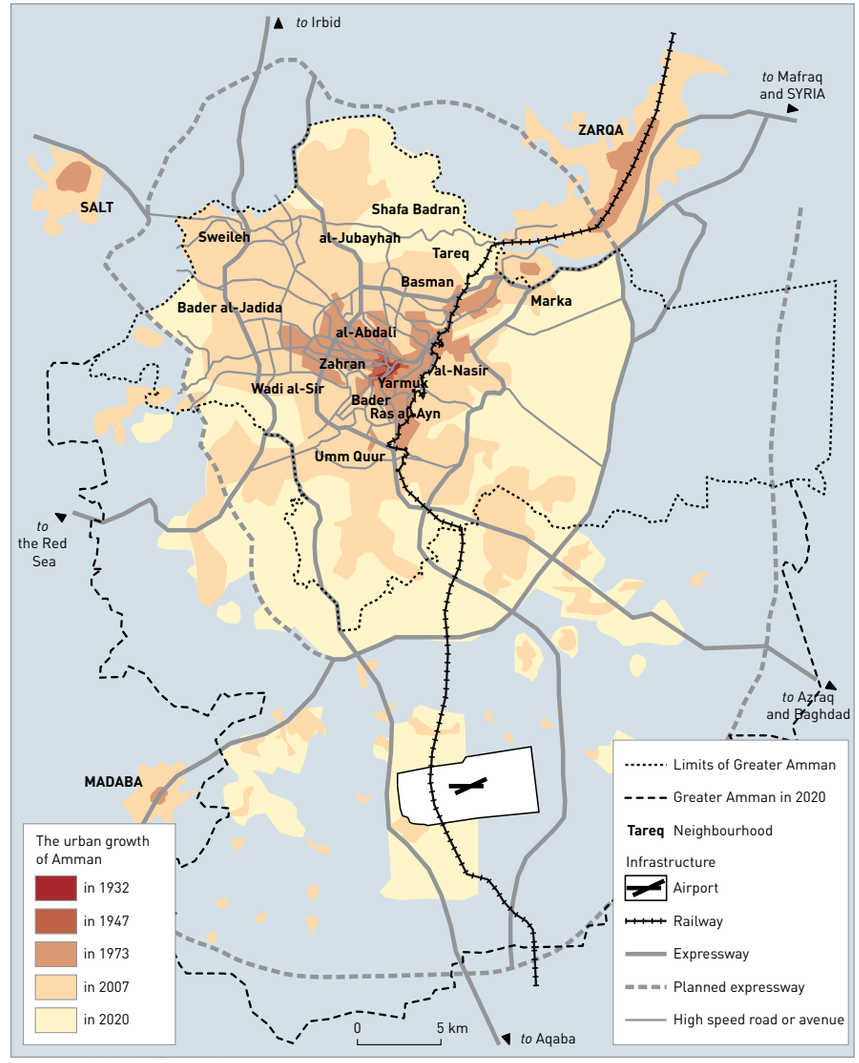
Amman, Capital of an Emirate Without Oil

Amman came into being at the end of the nineteenth century, a Roman ruin reoccupied by Circassian Muslim refugees fleeing from the eastern Caucasus. In 1914 it was only a small farming town of a few thousand souls; the administrative and commercial capital of the region was Salt. In 1920 Amman became the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. Amman only experienced demographic expansion with the arrival of Palestinian refugees. In the census of 1952, the city had 120,000 inhabitants, more than one-third of whom lived in the refugee camps; after the Six-Day War (1967) a new influx took place in Amman: the urban district of Amman-Zarqa, the industrial suburbs, received three-fourths of the 430,000 refugees that made their way to Jordan. The naturally high growth rate of the Jordanian population and the arrival of new waves of refugees, the Palestinians driven out of the Gulf countries after 1991 and the Iraqis in 2003, both accelerated the growth of the Jordanian capital. Greater Amman reached close to 3 million inhabitants. The metropolitan area henceforth comprised the surrounding towns of Zarqa, Salt, and even Madaba, located 40 kilometres to the southwest of the centre of the capital.

Amman is more like a Gulf city and less like other cities in the Near East: it has no souk, ancient mosques or hammam. It is an inorganic world of small buildings arranged around large avenues and roundabouts. The only landmarks in the city are the great hotels that rise above the dwellings: the Royal in Jabal Amman, recognisable by its Ziggurat shaped architecture. The old city centre, "al-balad", is the only truly animated place in the city, with its shops and traditional restaurants whose names often evoke Palestine. In the rest of the city, commercial activity is concentrated along the roundabouts or in the malls. Places of leisure and cultural activities are characteristically catered to by the grand hotels and consequently attract only a minority of the Jordanian population. In the evening the streets are void of passers-by, and traffic is much more fluid, completely different from the traffic jams of the day or evenings in Damascus and Beirut.

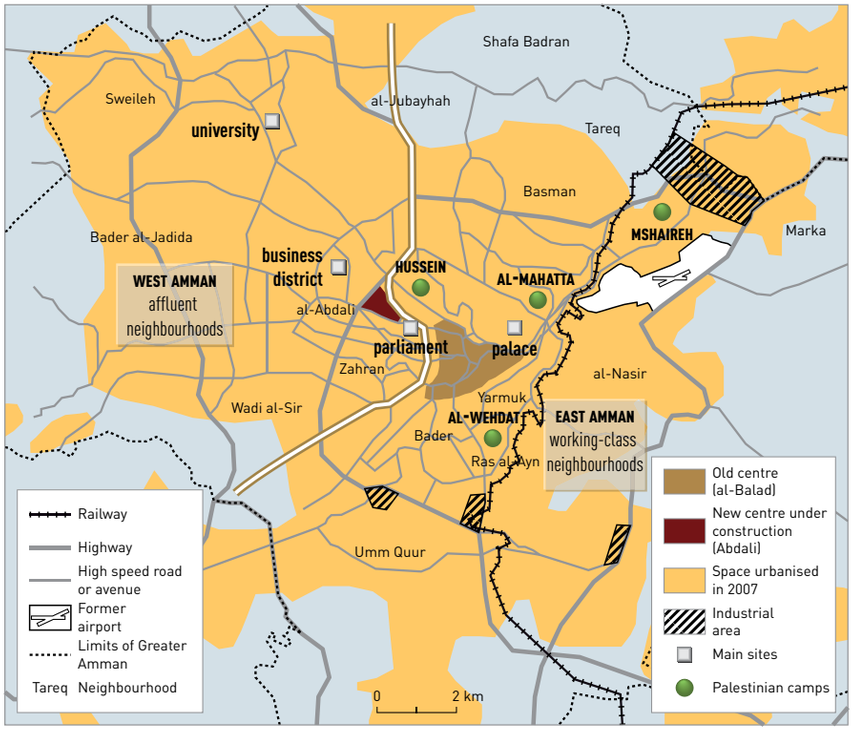
Amman spread like an oil stain beyond the ring roads that soon became inner city boulevards. Outside the hills of Jabal Amman, the diplomatic district, and Jabal Webdeh, the Christian district, the wealthy class settled in the western periphery, taking advantage of the Dead Sea highway to carry out their pendular migrations to the centre. The eastern quarters in turn are much

THE URBAN GROWTH OF AMMAN (1932–2020)



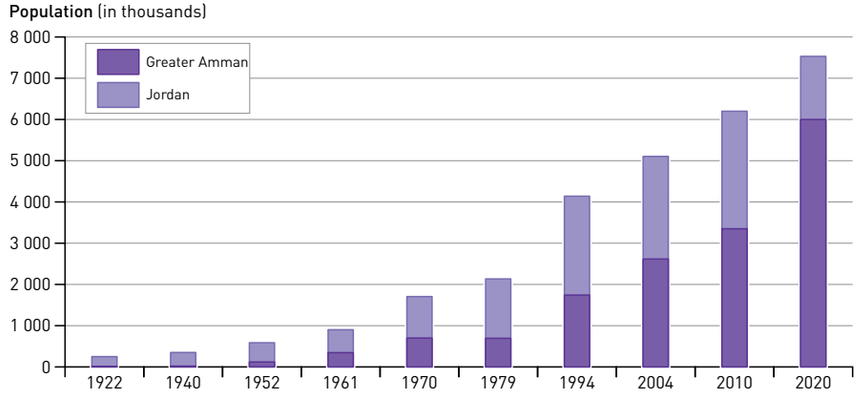
Source: municipality of Greater Amman.

AMMAN: AN EAST/WEST DIVIDE



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

THE JORDANIAN POPULATION CONCENTRATED IN GREATER AMMAN

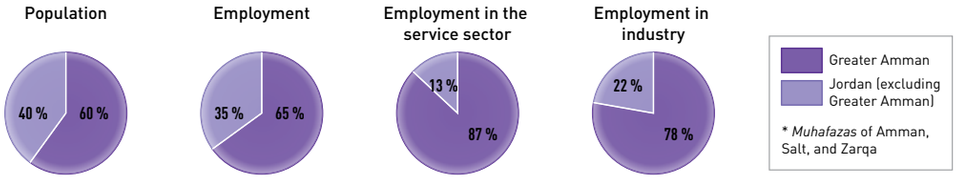


Source: Amman Plan for Metropolitan Growth, 2007.

more popular and more often areas of informal settlements. Vast areas of illegal settlements exist in the very centre of Amman. These are the Palestinian camps and their outgrowths. The Jordanian developers and their British advisers did not consider these districts when drawing up their urban plans. They built a city based solely on the car, in the space-hungry style of Los Angeles, except the central business district (CBD). The urban plan for 2020 does not challenge this logic.

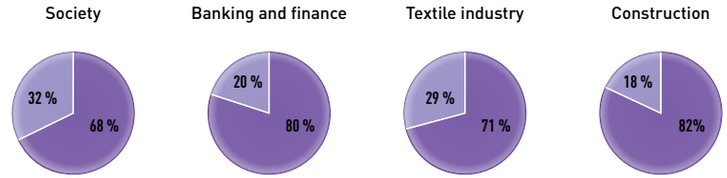
AMMAN AND THE JORDANIAN DESERT

GREATER AMMAN*: POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN JORDAN



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Amman, 2006.

GREATER AMMAN*: CONCENTRATION OF ECONOMIC SECTORS

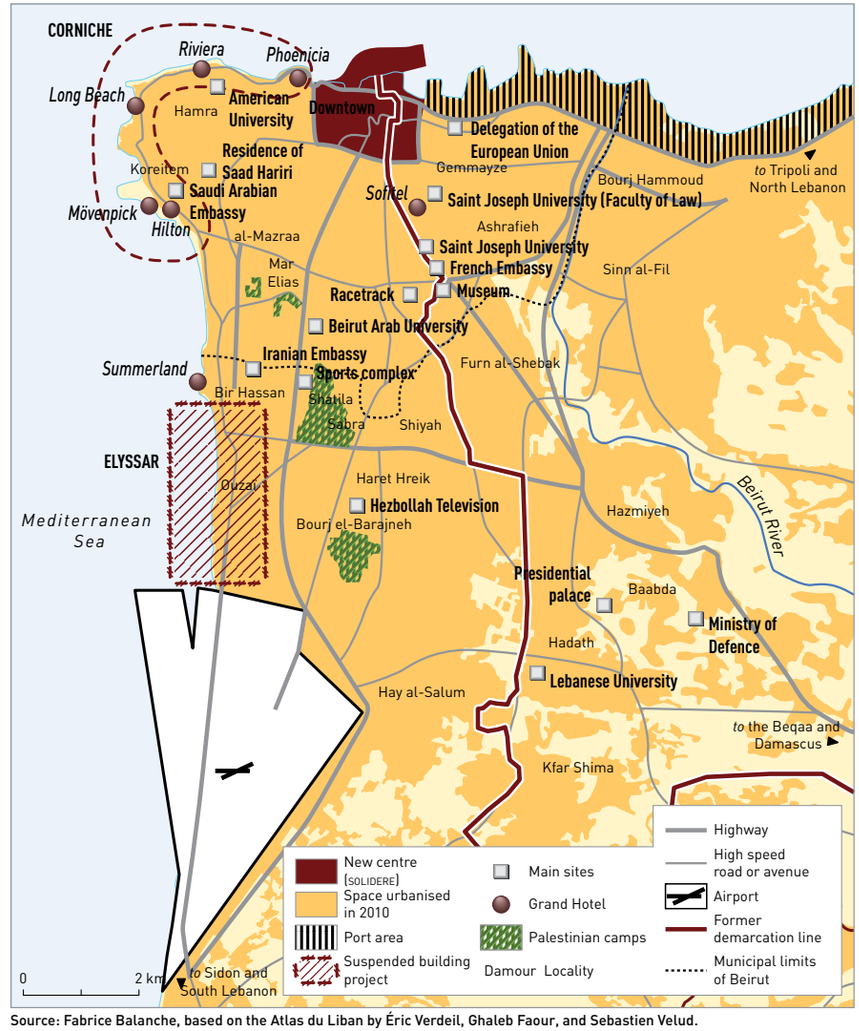


Beirut, A Shattered City

The city of Beirut owes its rise to the construction of a modern port that became the main maritime outlet for the Levantine coastline. This allowed it to prevail over the competing cities of Tripoli, Sidon (Saida), Acre, and Jaffa. In 1914 Beirut already had 130,000 inhabitants compared to a mere 50,000 in Tripoli. Under the French mandate Beirut's influence over Syria increased, but it decreased in Palestine, which came under the British mandate. The port of Beirut no longer faced competition from the new infrastructure in Haifa, and drew two-thirds of the port traffic from other Levantine nations under French mandate. The city continued to grow following independence in 1946 (when the French troops left) thanks to the arrival of Egyptian and Syrian economic elites. The latter were fleeing the nationalisation and economic dirigisme that were instituted by Nasser in Egypt in 1952, by the United Arab Republic in Syria between 1958 and 1961, and by the Ba'athists after the revolution of 1963. In a Near East that was turning toward socialism, the liberalism of Lebanon was an exception. Beirut became synonymous with economic success, pleasure, and freedom.

The prosperity of Lebanon was interrupted by the civil war (1975–90). Beirut became a battlefield of militias continually confronting each other. The city was first divided into the "Christian" east and the "Muslim" west, and then into as many territorial entities as there were militias. The downtown area, which had deteriorated throughout the fighting, was finished off by Rafic Hariri's bulldozers, part of a post-war reconstruction plan that began in 1983. The population of the Beirut metropolitan area continued to grow during this period as many refugees settled in the capital; these included the displaced people from the Chouf, from the mountain war in 1983 and 1984, and the populations of South Lebanon, who were victims of the Israeli occupation. From 1978 on, masses of refugees arrived and Beirutis residing near the combat zones departed, causing a significant urban sprawl in the peripheries. From Antelias to Byblos (Jubayl) new central areas appeared for the Christians, while the Shiite populations gathered in the southern suburbs, called "Dahieh." In the absence of a functioning government, real estate developers gave free rein to their imagination. With the advent of peace this phenomenon was not interrupted, rather it became even stronger. The reconstruction policy was concentrated in

WEST BEIRUT - EAST BEIRUT

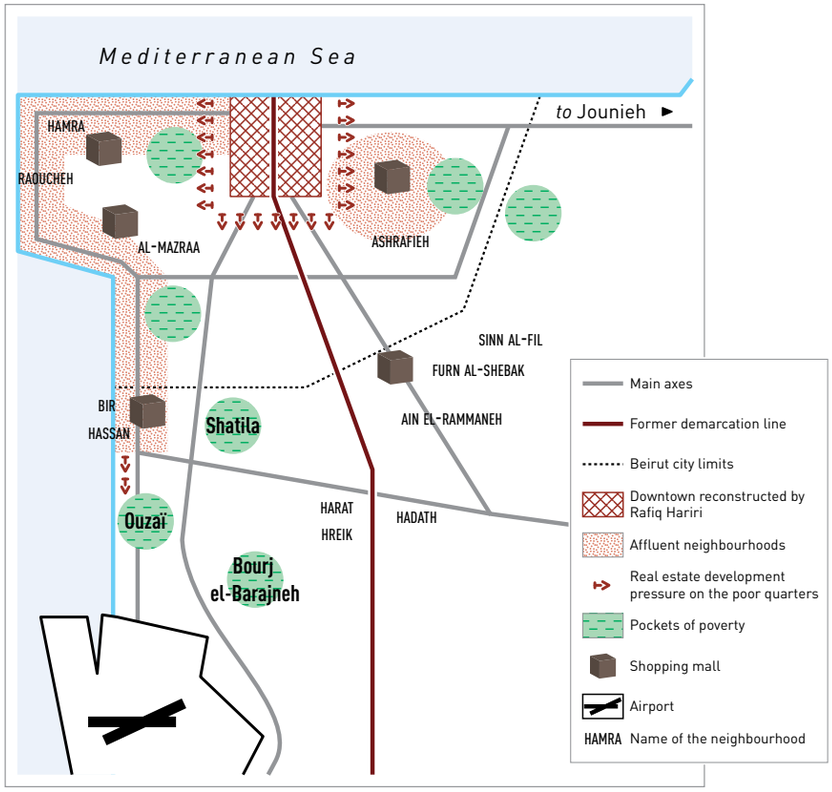


Source: Fabrice Balanche, based on the Atlas du Liban by Éric Verdeil, Ghaleb Faour, and Sebastien Velud.

intra muros Beirut. The Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, wished to restore it to its pre-war status in the Near East and to compete with Dubai. The construction of a new city centre by the company Solidere was a symbol of this policy based on tourism and international finance. The success of this centre was supposed

THE TERRITORIES OF BEIRUT

WEALTH AND POVERTY



SUNNIS, SHIITES, AND CHRISTIANS

Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

to have brought with it prosperity for the rest of the city and Lebanon. One cannot deny the architectural success of the new centre and the appeal it had for the Gulf tourists returning to Lebanon.

Yet Beirut was far from catching up to Dubai in matters of international finance. It even lagged behind Amman. As for the port of Beirut, which was to have regained its role as the interface between Europe and the Near East, it served only Lebanon, with freight volumes oscillating from 4 to 6 million tons per year compared to the 100 million tons at the port of Jabal Ali in Dubai. The Gulf countries had financial and transport infrastructures that met international standards and they no longer needed Beirut. Moreover, there was no quick resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as some had expected after the Oslo Accords (1993). Thus the sword of Damocles hung over Lebanon's head, as became evident with the Israeli attack in the summer of 2006 (from 12 July until 14 August).

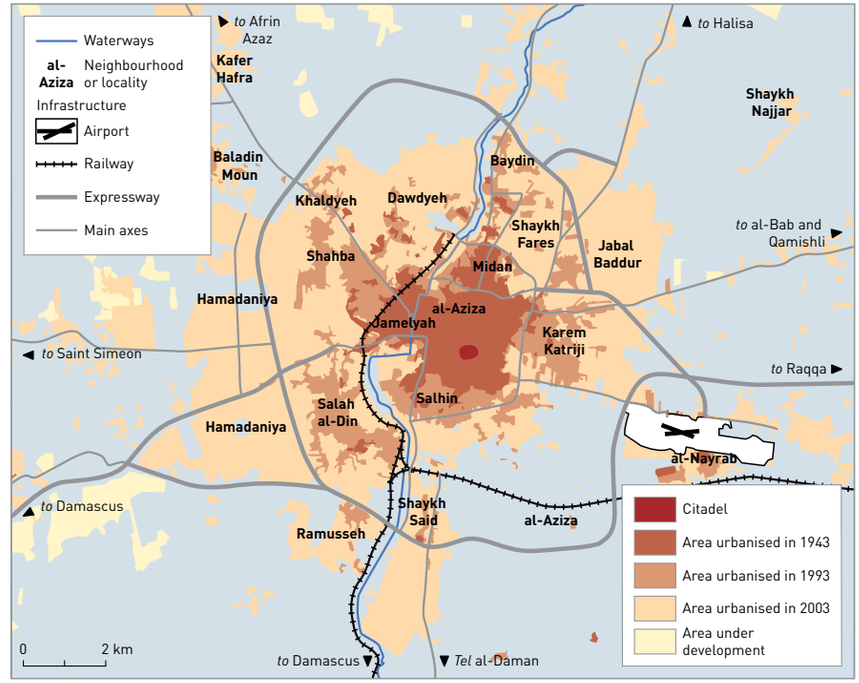
Almost twenty years after the civil war, the city of Beirut was still fragmented into several central areas. The new downtown area had the appearance of an imposed graft, which many Lebanese refused to visit—from their point of view, it belonged more to tourists from the Gulf than to the Beirutis.

Aleppo, A City Reactivated by an Open Economy

In the nineteenth century Aleppo, the metropolis of northern Syria, was the second most important city in the Ottoman Empire. As an age-old staging post on the Silk Road, radiant against the backdrop of a rich countryside with a strong and rich artisanal tradition, the city of Aleppo was also the capital of a vast province that covered the southeast of Anatolia and the plains of northern Syria. The splendour of its souk, the caravanserais, bourgeois houses from the Ottoman and the French mandate periods all testify to its erstwhile prosperity. Aleppo was deprived of its Anatolian hinterland through the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which constrained it to redeploy its networks toward the Jazira, and to refocus on industry. This produced a certain success, because until independence the city had a larger population than that of Damascus: 343,000 inhabitants in 1947 against the capital's 310,000. However, Aleppo began to decline just as Damascus asserted itself. In 1960 it had only 425,000 inhabitants against the 530,000 of Damascus. A significant portion of the Christian population emigrated to Beirut in the 1950s; this was accelerated after Syria's political union with Egypt in 1958, when the first nationalisations also took place. Aleppo was the victim of the centralisation of the Syrian state, which only increased with the Ba'athist regime from 1963. In 2004, the Syrian census reported 2.2 million inhabitants in the Aleppo metropolitan area. The separation between the city and the metropolitan area is still not clearly defined because the city has a municipal area much larger than Damascus. During the last intercensal period (1994–2004), Aleppo's population growth became, for the first time since independence, greater than that of Damascus: 3.5 per cent per year against 2.5 per cent in Damascus; this was due to a demographic transition that was prolonged in Aleppo and its region and provoked a strong rural exodus from the countryside to the regional metropolis. On the other hand, Aleppo seldom attracts Iraqi refugees and very few Syrians from other large cities. As in Damascus, strong population growth generated an expansion of the city into vast informal suburbs, while the garden cities to the west increased, as congested traffic on the highway from Damascus degraded the downtown area.

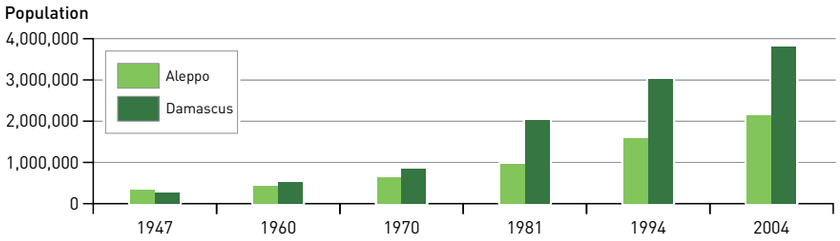
After some thirty years of compromising with the Ba'athist regime, the rebellious Aleppo began to ingratiate itself vis-à-vis the regime. The support the merchants of Aleppo had given to the uprisings of the Muslim Brotherhood (1979–82) seemed forgiven. Bashar al-Assad visited Aleppo frequently and assured the local elites of his support. Damascus had become too powerful. The Alawite *asabiyya* (sectarianism), faithful to its policy of divide and conquer, strove to reactivate Aleppo so as to compete against Damascus. The city's economy recovered in the 1990s. The city expected much from the Syrian-Turkish free trade agreement of 2005. The airport in Aleppo began to be served by Turkish Airlines, which connected it to the world via the hub of Istanbul. This new line made it independent from Damascus and the unreliable connection provided by Syrian Air. However, the open economy has more than just advantages; the small and medium-sized companies of Aleppo suffer in competition with Turkish and Chinese products. Significant bankruptcies in the textile sector have taken place over the last few years before the civil war broke out. The food and pharmaceutical industries were more resilient thanks to the protection provided by a rigorous legislation.

THE URBAN GROWTH OF ALEPPO (1943–2003)



Sources: topographic maps of Aleppo, master plans. Fabrice Balanche and Olivier Barge.

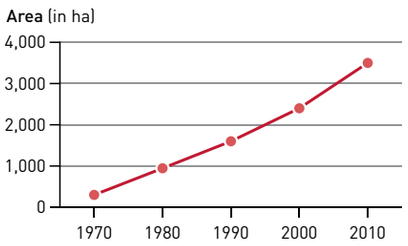
ALEPPO, A CITY OUTSTRIPPED BY DAMASCUS



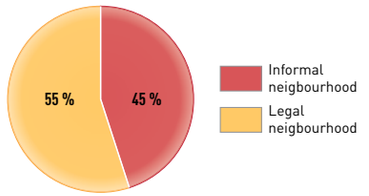
Source: Syrian censuses.

EXPLOSION IN THE NUMBER OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

SPATIAL GROWTH

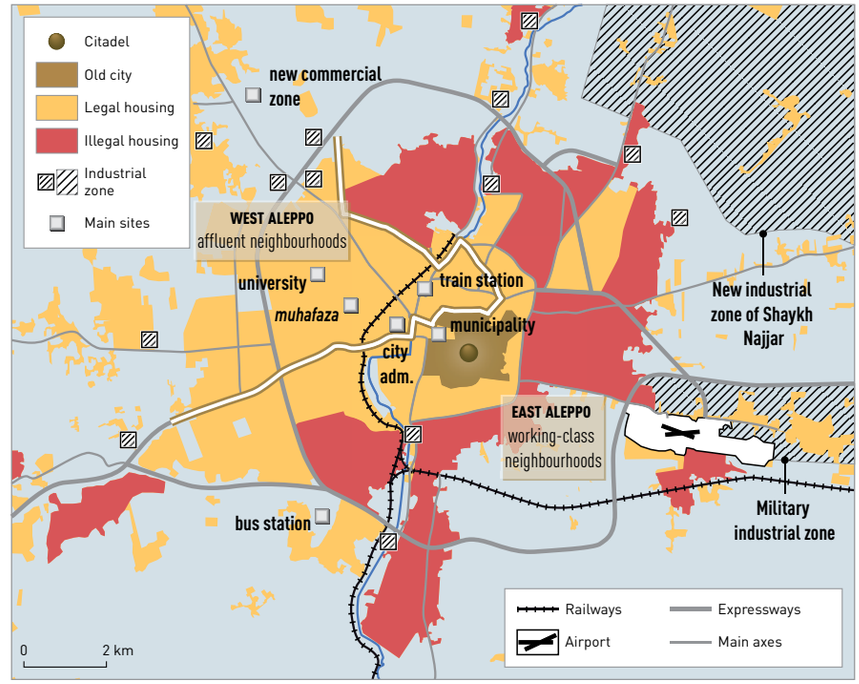


POPULATION IN 2010



Source: municipality of Aleppo.

ALEPPO, A CITY SURROUNDED BY INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS



Sources: topographic maps of Aleppo, master plans. Fabrice Balanche and Olivier Barge.

Aleppo is not centrally located in Syria. It became progressively marginalised through the construction of direct roads between Jazira and Damascus, and as a result of the modernisation of the Latakia-Tartus-Damascus axis, while the Latakia-Aleppo axis remained in the same state the French mandate had left it. The motorway construction work between Aleppo and Latakia was interrupted in 1981 to punish Aleppo for its role in the rebellion of the Muslim Brotherhood. The works resumed in 1998 thanks to a Kuwaiti loan, but in the early 2010s it seemed reasonable to expect that it would take another decade to complete the work in its pre-war pace. This motorway will considerably reduce transport time between Latakia and Aleppo and alleviate the necessity for trucks to circumvent the Alawite Mountains via Homs; at present truck drivers must cover 600 km instead of 200 km via the direct route. The motorway will contribute to opening the coastal region to the influence of Aleppo and restore balance in relations with Damascus.

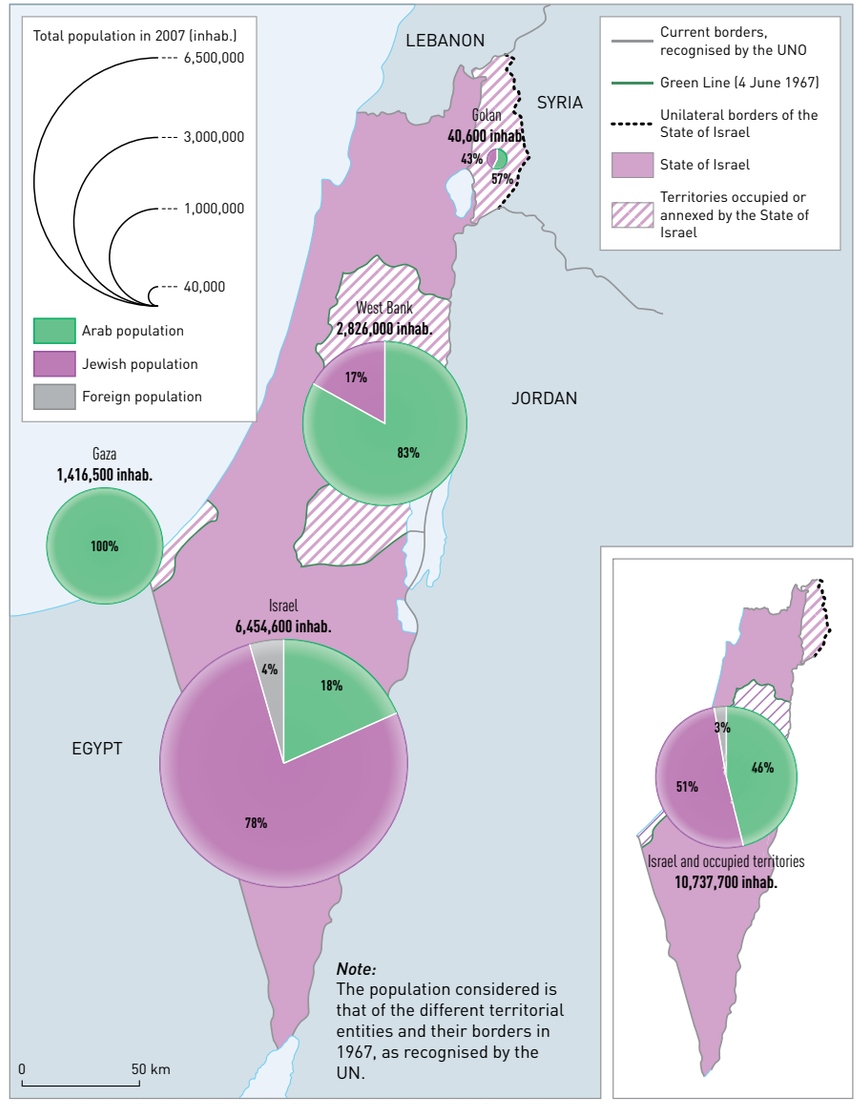
Palestine Partitioned

Territories and Populations

It is difficult to address the spatial distribution of the Palestinian population without first defining the boundaries of the territories and the methodology for the demographic calculations. The state of Israel and the Palestinian Authority do not recognise the same borders; therefore we must rely on those recognised by the United Nations (UN), that is, the Green Line that separated the belligerents until 4 June 1967, the date which marked the beginning of the Six-Day War that enabled Israel to occupy Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Sinai was returned to Egypt following the Camp David Accords in 1978, and the Israelis evacuated the Gaza Strip in 2005 but it remains under Israeli control as the Palestinians have no authority over the borders and are subject to a blockade. The Golan Heights were unilaterally annexed by Israel in 1981 and East Jerusalem in 1967, which explains the difference between its official area (22,070 sq km) and the area recognised by the United Nations (22,770 sq km).

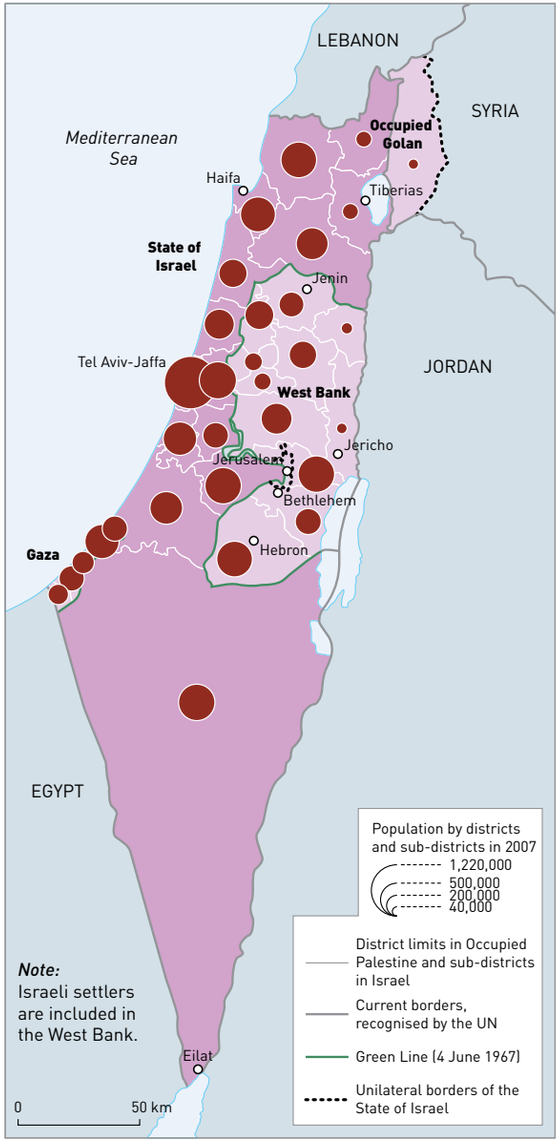
The population differences between the Palestinian and Israeli censuses may be partially explained by the fact that they do not take into account the same territorial limits, but also because the Israeli settlers in the West Bank, numbering 500,000 in 2010 according to the Israeli NGO B'tselem, are not reflected in the Palestinian census, whereas they do appear in the Israeli census. Some appear as residents of East Jerusalem and therefore as an integral part of Israel, and the others in "Judea and Samaria," the Israel term for occupied Palestinian territory, but they are still recorded as Israeli residents and not as Israeli residents abroad. The populations of the Golan Heights are considered Israelis, and this includes the 20,000 Syrian inhabitants that refused Israeli citizenship at the time of the official annexation in 1981. The maps and figures presented here integrate these variations. Moreover, to avoid any unproductive controversy, we have deliberately rounded off the figures so that the concern for detail does not obscure the overall understanding of this space. Finally, the decision to present the Palestinian territories in the Israeli spatial context is intentional; even if the Palestinians are not living in symbiosis with the Israelis, the Palestinian space is subject to the political, economic, and military influence of Israel.

POPULATION OF ISRAEL AND OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN 2007



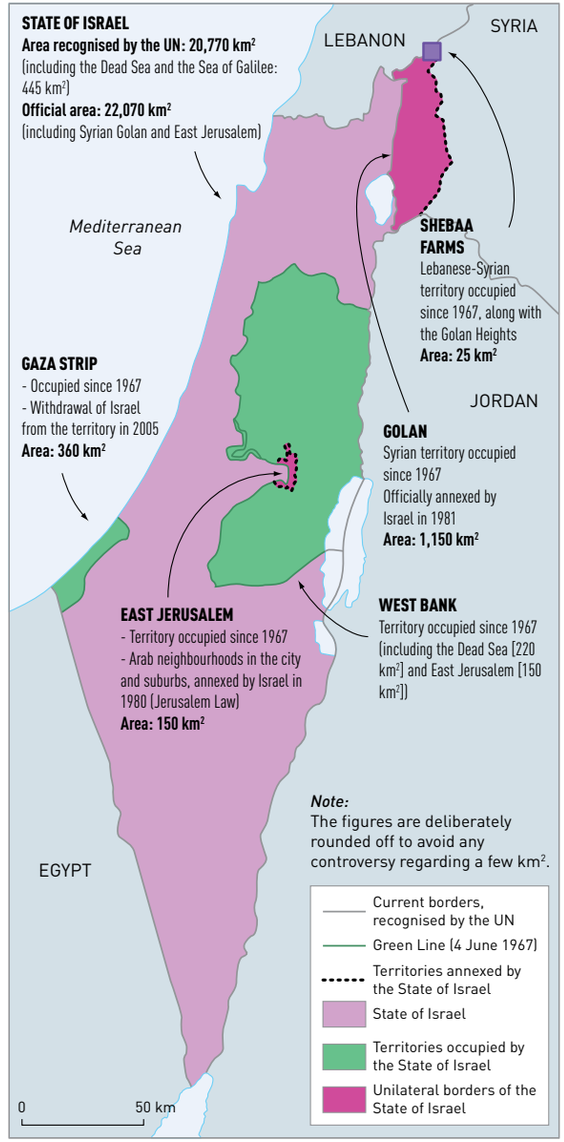
Source of the data: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION IN 2007



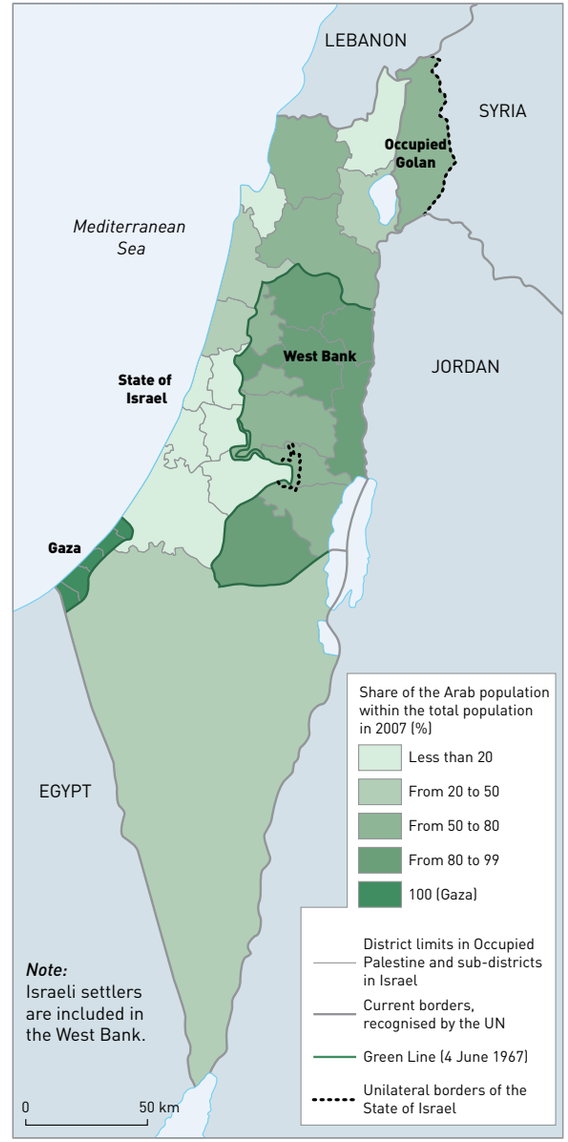
Sources: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

DIVISION OF TERRITORY



Sources: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

JEWS AND ARABS IN 2007



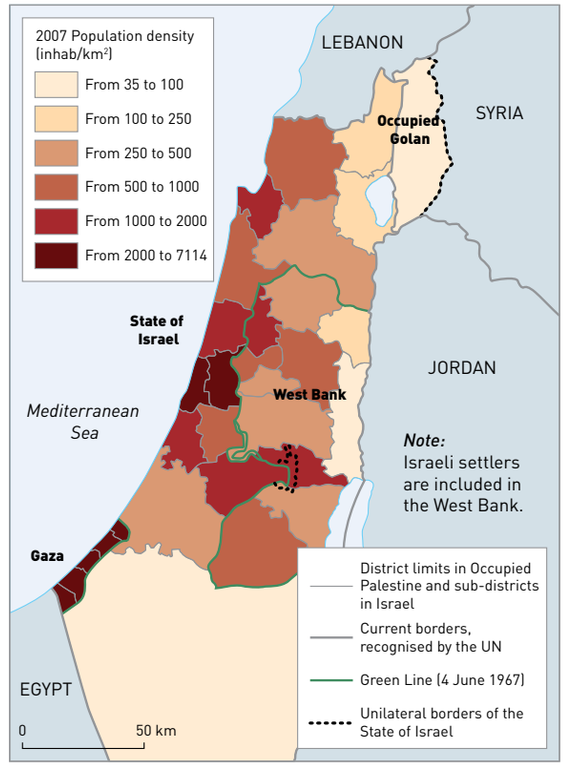
Sources: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

High Densities and Urbanisation

The very high population density on either side of the Green Line is immediately apparent. Israel has more than 300 inhabitants/sq km and even 500 inhabitants/sq km if the desert area of Negev is excluded, which is comparable to that of the West Bank. However, if we calculate the Arab population density of the West Bank in relation to the area that is actually accessible, zones A and B, as defined by the Oslo Accords (1993), the density of Palestinian Arabs reaches 1,000 inhabitants/sq km. As for the territory in the Gaza Strip, its density is one of the highest on the planet, with 4,000 inhabitants/sq km. The pressure on the environment is extreme and only increases with the sustained population growth that affects all Palestinian territories. The rural lifestyle has practically disappeared in favour of a generalised urbanisation.

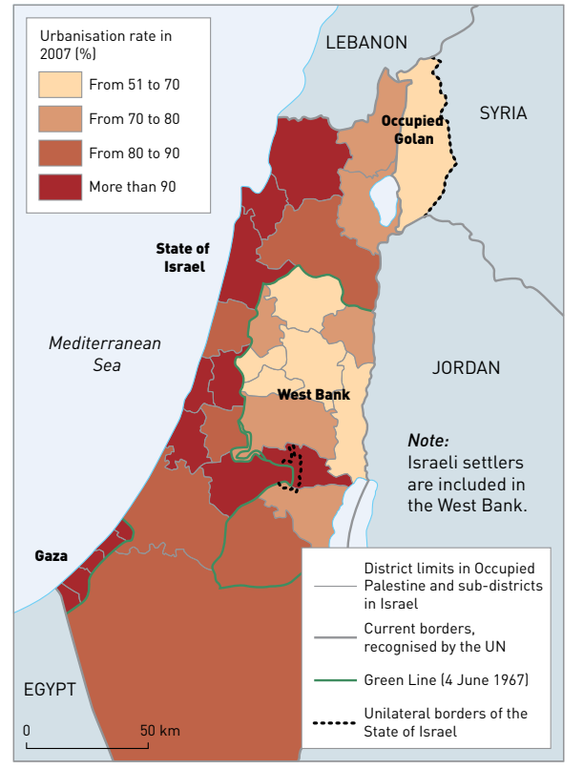
The population of Israel and the occupied territories is highly urbanised: 90 per cent and 75 per cent. The Gaza Strip may be considered 100 per cent urbanised. On the West Bank, urbanisation reached 75 per cent with a clear difference between the south and the north, the latter having remained more rural. The urban network is dominated by the central agglomeration of Ramallah-Jerusalem-Bethlehem which comprises, including the settlements, 1.1 million inhabitants (800,000 Arabs and 300,000 Jews). Hebron and Nablus polarise the rest of the West Bank, but are not overwhelmed by the central urban area because the obstacles Palestinians have travelling there limit their appeal. The compartmentalisation of the territory favours the maintenance of secondary cities and of a stratum of small cities, as is the case around Hebron, which under normal circumstances would be crushed by the power of a metropolis in such proximity.

POPULATION DENSITY IN 2007



Sources: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

URBANISATION IN 2007



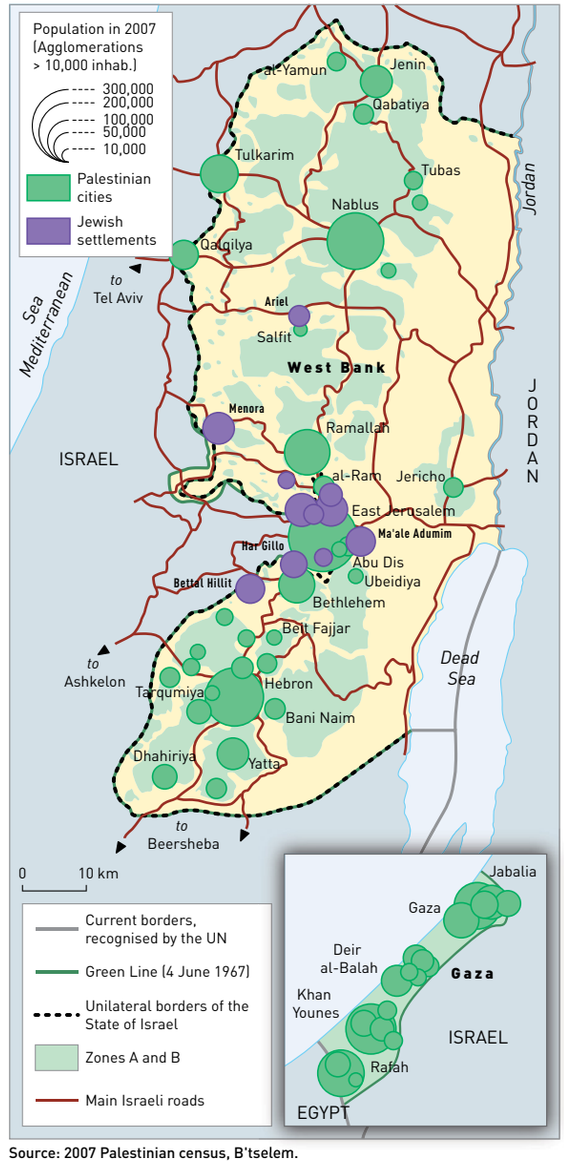
Sources: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli colonisation divided the territory into four sections that today constitute the four main metropolitan areas of the territory: Gaza, Deir al-Balah, Khan Younes, and Rafah. Since the withdrawal of the Israelis in 2005,

THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN 2007

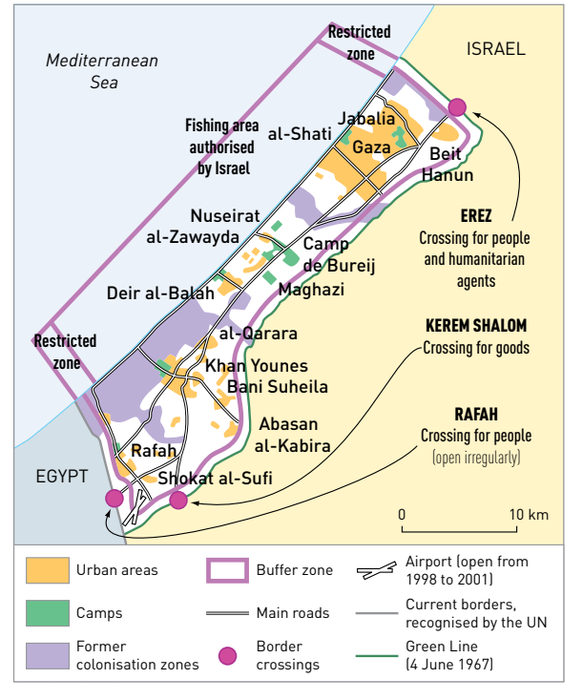
Source: UNRWA.

THE URBAN NETWORK IN 2007



Source: 2007 Palestinian census, B'tselem.

THE GAZA STRIP



Based on B'tselem

the gaps between sections have been filled by the urban expansion that accompanies strong population growth. The lack of financial means and the Israeli blockade prevent the construction of modern buildings and favour instead a spontaneous spreading of the habitat. One-third of the population continues to live in refugee camps (50 per cent of all refugees) against less than 8 per cent in the West Bank (25 per cent of the refugees).

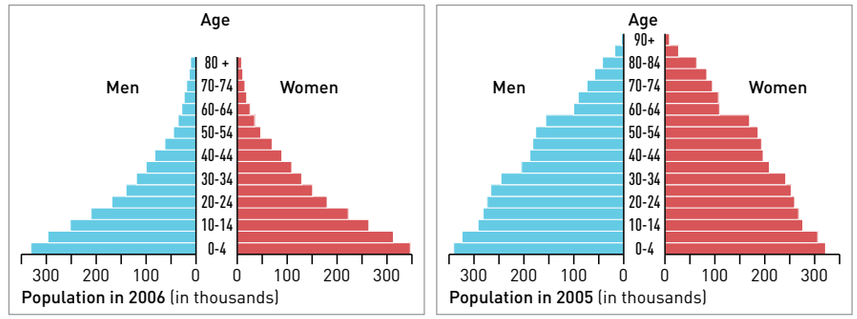
The Demographic Battle

In *Le rendez-vous des civilisations* (The meeting of civilisations) Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd emphasise that the demography of the Palestinians, Israeli Arabs or those residing in the occupied territories cannot be studied without reference to the Israeli Jews, because this is a region in which demography is a political instrument that leads to two major anomalies:

> The Palestinians, initially one of the most highly educated peoples, find themselves involved in a demographic competition that has substantially diverted them from a normal trajectory. The fertility of Israeli Jewish women represents in the developed world another anomaly, nowhere else to be seen for a GDP per capita of 30,000 dollars. With 2.60 children per woman in 2005, these women appear much less Western than those of the various Lebanese communities, including the Shiites.[1]

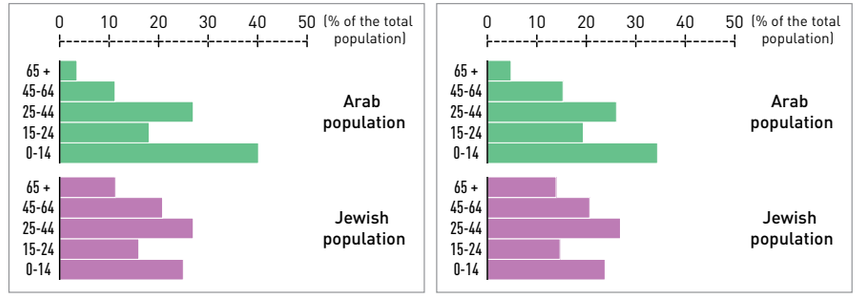
In *The Jewish State*, Théodore Herzl wrote that Jewish immigration to Palestine was likely to slow down eventually, and that, consequently, a continued colonisation would have to rely on the vigour of Jewish fertility. However, in order for Jews who immigrated from Europe to be able to have many children, the cost of raising a child had to be borne by the community within the framework of the kibbutzim at the beginning of Jewish settlement in Palestine, by the Yishuv during the British mandate, and then by the state of Israel after 1948. This policy culminated in the settlements, where the state invested billions of dollars in various types of aid for families. Since 2000 the birth rate of the Jewish population in the West Bank is higher than that of the Palestinians. In contrast, the Israeli Arabs have a still higher birth rate than that of the Israeli Jews; the Israeli Arab birth rate makes up 20 per cent of the Israeli population now against only 10 per cent in 1950, and that in spite of the vigour of the Jewish immigration since independence. The strong birth rate of the Israeli Arabs is considered an internal threat by Zionist leaders who divide this population for statistical reasons, into Christians, Druze, Bedouins, and Muslims, in order to reduce their political weight.

POPULATION PYRAMIDS FOR A DEMOGRAPHIC BATTLE



Sources: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

JEWS AND ARABS IN ISRAEL CLASSIFIED BY AGE

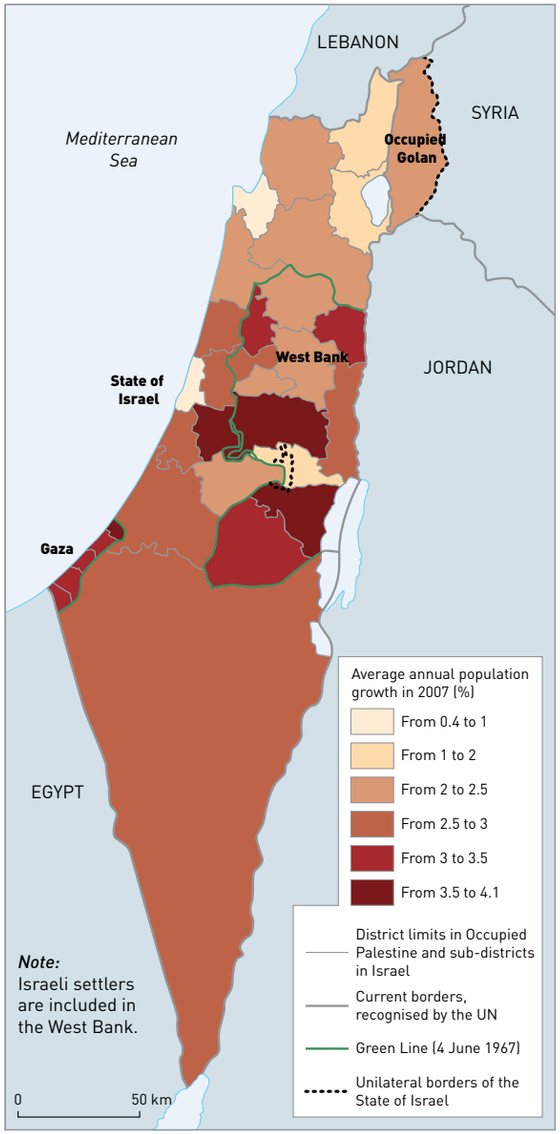


Source: Statistical office of the State of Israel.

Palestinian society was mostly rural and peasant until 1948. The birth rate was therefore very high, one of the highest in the Arab world, because it benefited from the British healthcare system and from the awareness of the importance of a competing birth rate: it is a way to resist the rampant conquest of

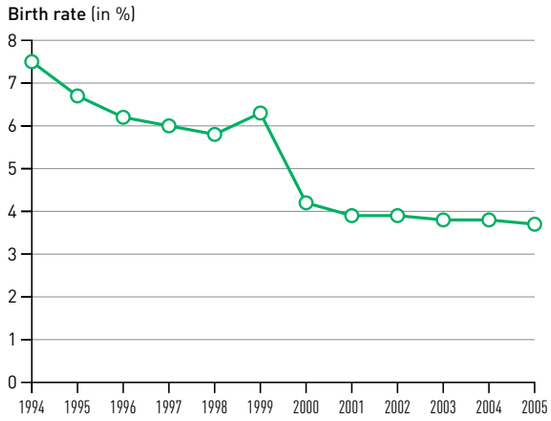
1 Youssef Courbage and Todd Emmanuel (2007), *Le Rendez-vous des civilisations*, Paris, Seuil.

POPULATION GROWTH 1997–2007



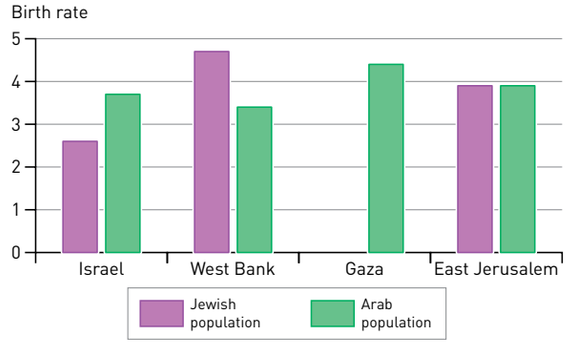
Sources: Statistical offices of the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel.

COLLAPSE OF THE PALESTINIAN BIRTH RATE



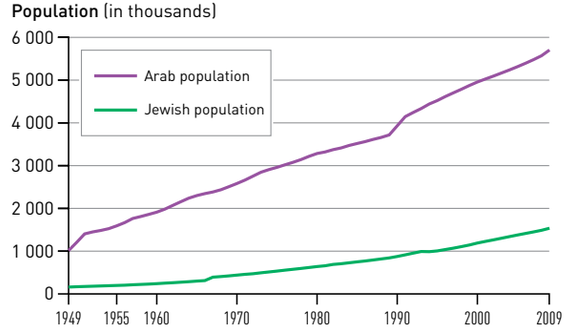
Source: Youssef Courbage.

A FERTILITY BATTLE IN ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



Source: Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd.

JEWISH AND ARAB POPULATION GROWTH IN ISRAEL



Source: Statistical office of the State of Israel.

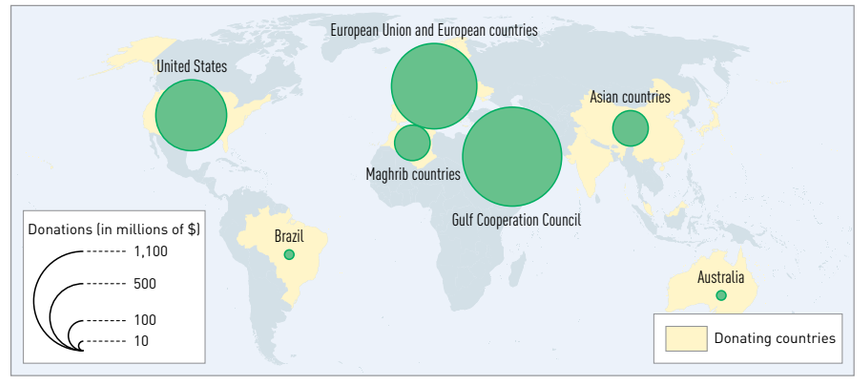
the territory through immigration and land appropriation. After the Nakba, the Israeli threat blocked the natural demographic development in the occupied territories (West Bank and Gaza) and even caused a rise in the birth rate, despite advances in education and urbanisation, two factors that anywhere else in the world lead to a drop of the birth rate. In 1990, in the middle of the first Intifada, the birth rate for Palestinian women in the occupied territories peaked at 7.57, making it the highest in the world. Palestinian women thus participated in the struggle to protect Arab territory by responding to Yasser Arafat's call to bear 12 children: 10 for the battle and 2 for the family. After holding at more than 6 children per woman during the 1990s, in the occupied territories the Palestinian birth rate plummeted in the early 2000s. The new Intifada did not bring about an increase in the birth rate; growing economic difficulties, linked to the closing-off of the occupied territories and the blocked peace process all weighed on the morale of families, who reduced their offspring in spite of the accelerated Jewish settlements.

An Aided and Controlled Economy

Since 1967 the Palestinian economy has suffered deeply from the Israeli occupation, which has prevented it from experiencing normal growth. The Oslo Accords were supposed to enable the economic recovery of the occupied territories, with a view to create jobs for a growing population, and to restore the trade balance, which was markedly in a deficit in favour of Israel. It must be noted that these hopes, supported by massive international aid, were not crowned with the success anticipated so enthusiastically at the peace accords. Per capita GDP stagnated in the West Bank and dropped sharply in the Gaza Strip. Foreign aid took on a significant role in restoring the balance of payments; it increased from 200 million dollars in 1998 to 2 billion dollars in 2008. At the Paris conference of 2006 donor countries committed to providing 7.4 billion over a three year period (2007–10) in order to support the Palestinian Authority and its economic programme. The Sharm El Sheikh conference in January 2009 provided 2 billion more for the reconstruction of Gaza after the Israeli "Cast Lead" operation (December 2008 to January 2009). This influx of capital supported consumption and the construction of infrastructure, which attracted private capital: 1.5 billion of FDIs (Foreign Direct Investments) in 2008, primarily from the Palestinian diaspora living in the Gulf countries, Jordan, and the United States.

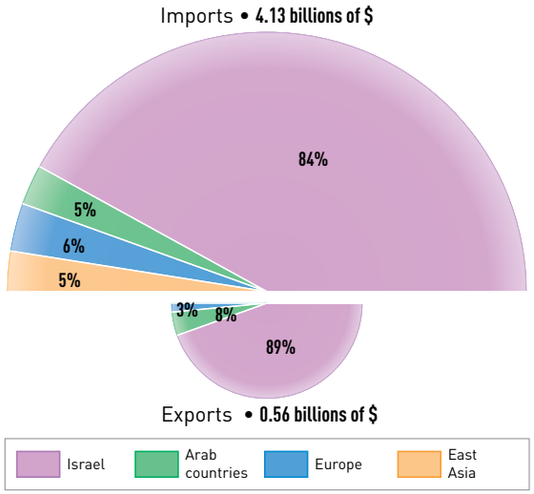
In 2010 the French car company Renault decided to set up business in the future Franco-Palestinian industrial zone of Bethlehem. But other projects for the industrial zones in the West Bank and Gaza, in cooperation with Japan and Germany, were abandoned. Foreign investments focused primarily on IT services and telecommunications because, compared to industrial production, those sectors suffer less from the Israeli restrictions of movement imposed on people and merchandise. The manufacturing sector, on which the Palestinian government had based so many of its hopes, stagnated. The checkpoints and constant closures render any viable economic development of the Palestinian territories almost impossible. And yet, the Palestinian Authority instituted a regulatory framework favourable to potential investors and signed commercial agreements with the European Union, the United States, Canada, Jordan, Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the GAFTA, and even with Israel. This essentially benefited the West Bank, notably Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, which enjoyed an exceptional influx of investments in residential real estate. In contrast, the hospitality industry did not do well because the groups of pilgrims who visit the Holy Land tend to seek accommodation in Israel. In Gaza the possibilities for economic development are limited by the lack of space and the Israeli blockade. Production activities can neither procure the raw materials nor export their production. This is, notably, a problem for the intensive market garden agriculture, which, furthermore, lacks water for irrigation. The informal economy cannot reduce the underemployment that results from this exceptional situation. The Palestinian Authority is obliged to create public sector jobs to control unemployment, the official rate of which is 40 per cent of the labour force. The public sector is the only motor driving Gaza's economy; the latter represents an extreme case of a globally-aided economy. The lifting of the Israeli blockade would make it possible to improve the conditions of the population, but it would not solve the deeper economic problem of this landlocked and overpopulated strip of land.

CONFERENCE OF DONORS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF GAZA, SHARM EL-SHEIKH, 2009



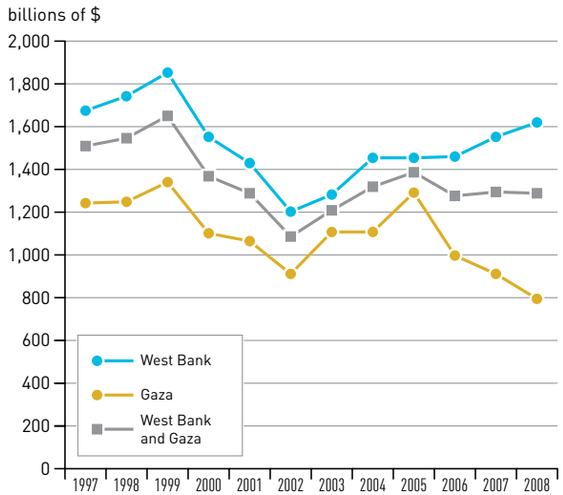
Source: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

UNBALANCED FOREIGN TRADE



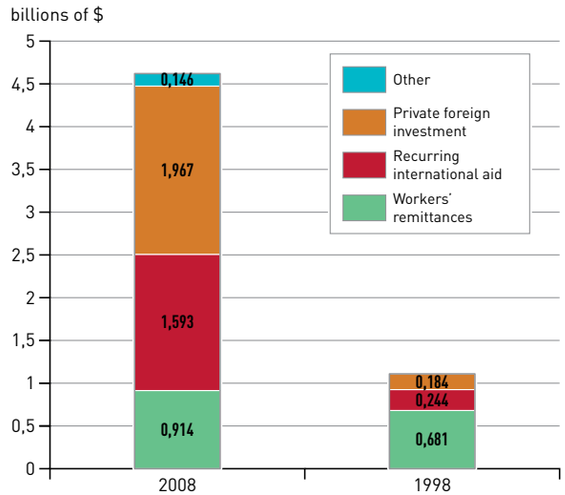
Source: World Bank.

EVOLUTION OF GDP



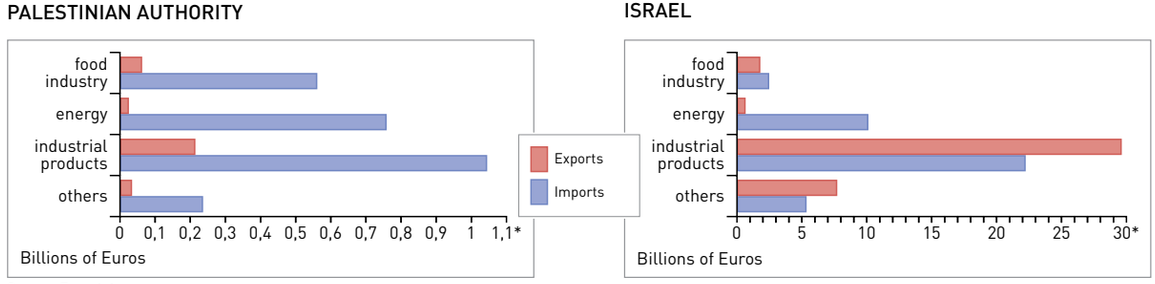
Source: PCBS.

REVENUES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



Source: PCBS.

PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI FOREIGN TRADE BY SECTORS IN 2007



Source: Eurostat

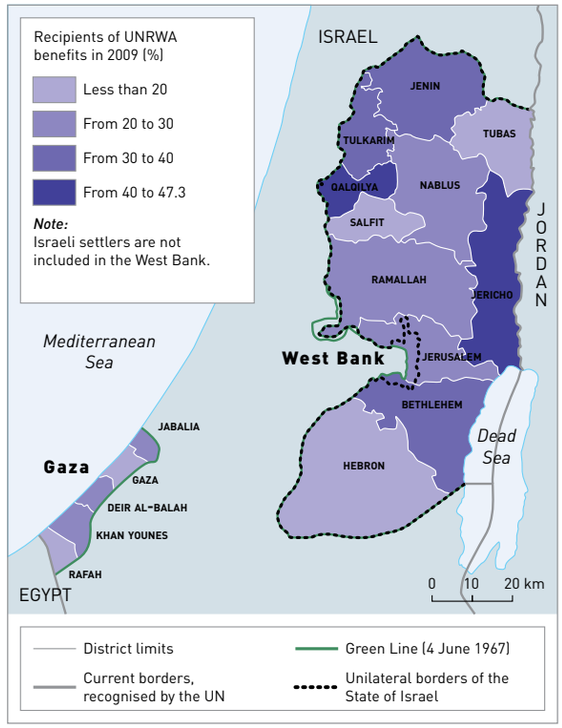
Almost 90 per cent of the imports in the occupied territories come from Israel; this provides the Israeli economy with substantial profits given that Palestinian exports are so weak. Until the late 1990s, the deficit in the balance of payments was partially compensated by the salaries of Palestinians employed in Israel and in its settlements. However, their numbers were reduced by half following the Intifada of 2000, and even to zero in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli withdrawal of 2005. The Israelis preferred to hire a foreign workforce over employing Palestinians. Moreover, Israeli industry has turned toward high technology and thus requires less unskilled labour. The agricultural sector has been modernised and employs few Palestinian seasonal workers except at harvest time. Only the construction industry continues to call on Palestinians, somewhat ironically, to expand the settlements and complete the separation wall. The Palestinian economy continues to be dominated by traditional activities. The success of a few Palestinian start-ups in new technologies should not delude us from understanding the real picture. The Internet will not be able to circumvent the multiple obstacles that the occupied territories face and the absence of direct relations with the world. The economic dependence of Palestine constitutes a means of pressure commonly used by the international community to oblige the Palestinians to negotiate with the Israelis, despite the on-going settlements in the occupied territories.

Unemployment and Poverty

Until recently the Palestinian population was the most highly educated in the Near East. The rate of literacy of the adult population was 94 per cent and the rates of entry into secondary and higher education remained above those of other Arab countries in the region. In contrast, the rate of primary school enrolment, close to 100 per cent in 1998, experienced a drop of 20 per cent; this contrasts radically with the situation in previous decades and with regional trends. Henceforth many children were taken out of school to do odd jobs in order to help their families who have been struck by poverty and unemployment. This can be attributed to the closing off of the Palestinian territories by the Israeli army, and the arrival on the job market of youths belonging to the Palestinian baby boom, all in the context of a hopeless economic situation. Despite the massive aid from the international community, unemployment and its corollary, poverty, rose significantly over the decade. The Gaza Strip found itself in a particularly critical situation with, officially, more than 40 per cent unemployment. The official unemployment figures are 25 per cent for the population in the occupied territories, but in reality it is much higher because few women are counted as seeking employment. Since the Intifada of 2000–01, the discrepancy in unemployment rates between Gaza and the West Bank widened sharply, notably because of the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip.

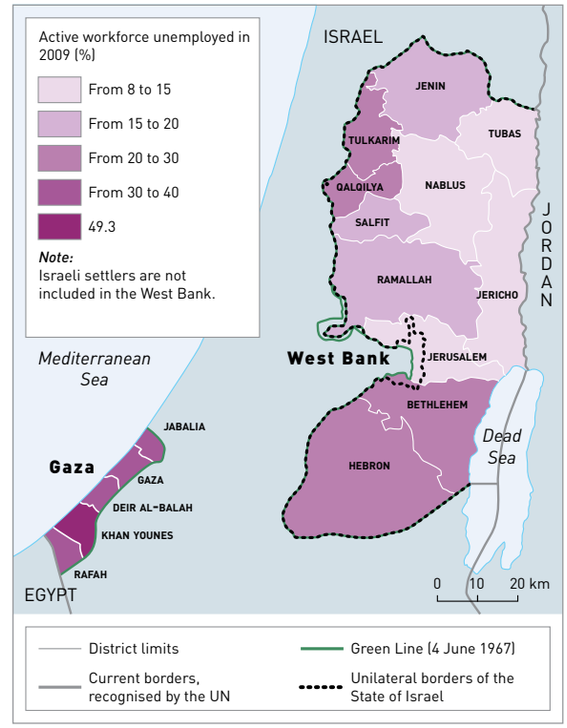
According to a study carried out by the United Nations in 2006, close to 70 per cent of Palestinians live below the poverty line. In 2006, 79 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip was considered poor. The situation was far from improving after the Israeli attack of December 2008. In the West Bank it was less dramatic and more varied since, in the centre of the West Bank (East Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Jericho), the majority of the population lives above the poverty line compared to just one-fourth in the north and south of the West Bank. On a daily basis this leads to a high level of food

REFUGEES REGISTERED BY UNRWA IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN 2009



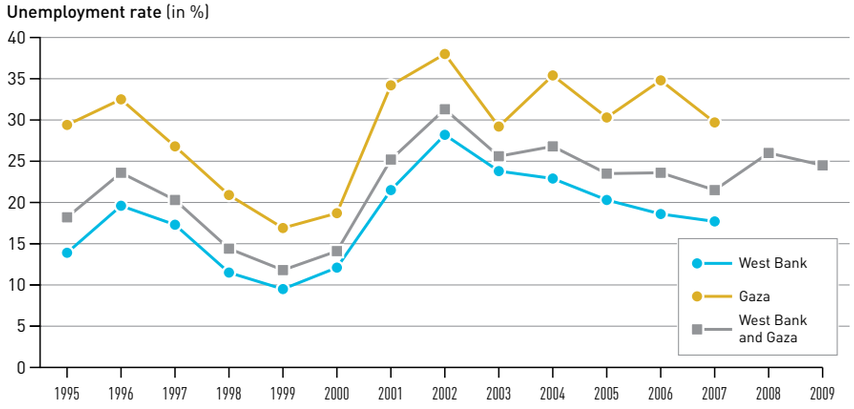
Source: UNRWA.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN 2009



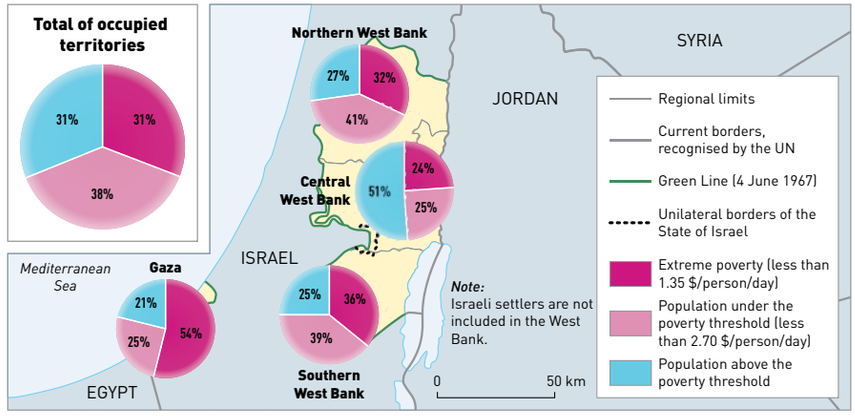
Source: Statistical office of the Palestinian Authority.

EVOLUTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



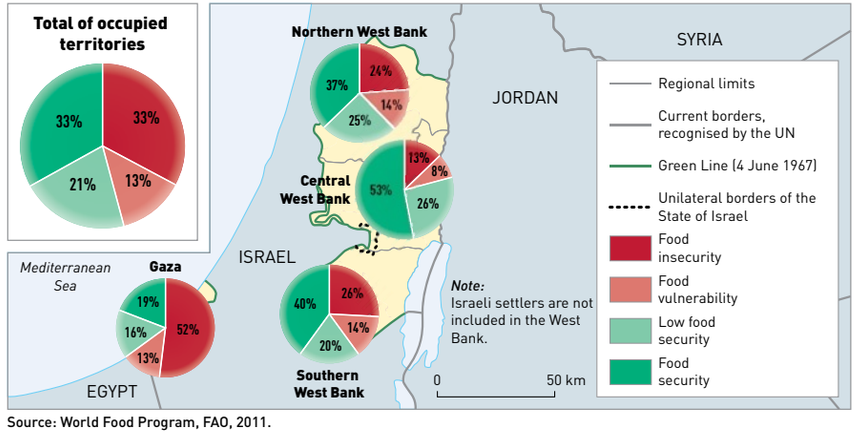
Source: PCBS.

POVERTY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN 2006



Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

FOOD INSECURITY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN 2010



Source: World Food Program, FAO, 2011.

insecurity. According to a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) World Food Programme carried out in 2010, one-third of the Palestinians are faced with of food insecurity. The situation is most critical in Gaza, where food insecurity affects a majority of the population; only 19 per cent of Gazans experience a sustainable food situation. In this context, international food aid, notably distributed to the refugees through the intermediary of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA for Palestinian refugees in the Near East), proves to be essential. Created by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 8 December 1949, UNRWA provides aid to Palestinian refugees in the Near East by managing education, health, and social services. In total, 4.8 million people are eligible for UNRWA benefits but less than half resort to them. In 2010 in the occupied territories the number of refugees was estimated at 1.9 million people, of whom approximately 900,000 had UNRWA beneficiary cards, in the camps or outside of them. UNRWA is financed primarily by European countries and the United States; the contribution from Arab countries does not exceed 5 per cent. In 2010 the UNRWA budget rose to 600 million dollars, half of which was devoted to the occupied territories. The work of UNRWA is therefore indispensable in mitigating the consequences of the Israeli occupation.

The Service Sector Domination of Employment

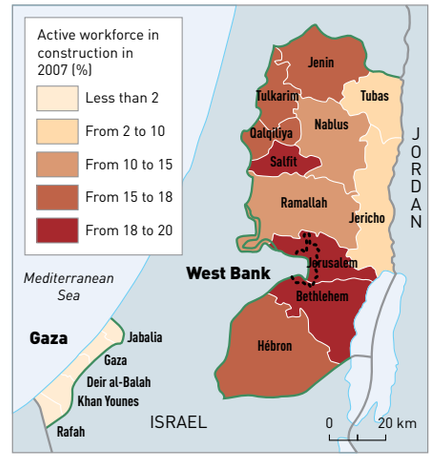
Structurally Palestinian employment is dominated by services (75 per cent). Agriculture, construction, and industry are secondary sectors that have lost importance over time, especially because Israel's regular blockage of the occupied territories hinders the development of production activities. The public sector, which had hardly developed before the emergence of the Palestinian Authority, has grown more powerful over the last 15 years, and now employs around one-third of the employed workforce. Government employment is a way of reducing unemployment while exercising clientelism over the population. Public service employs close to one out of every two employed persons in Gaza but only one of six in the West Bank, where employment opportunities are more diversified.

Work in Israel and in the Jewish settlements is beneficial for the West Bank economy, particularly in the central West Bank—Arabs residing in East Jerusalem are able to move freely into Israel. However, since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Palestinians from this territory are no longer authorised to work in Israel. Israel relies less on Palestinian labour; they have replaced them with immigrants from East Asia or sub-Saharan Africa, but the decrease is also a result of industrial delocalisation to special economic zones in Jordan. The bulk of Palestinian workers in Israel and in the settlements are employed in low-skilled positions, especially in the construction industry.

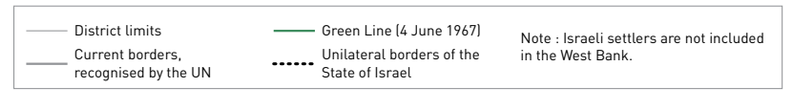
Women represent only 18 per cent of the employed population, the lowest rate of female employment in the region. In official statistics they are not more affected by unemployment than men but the difficulty of finding a job makes them more likely to give up the search and declare themselves "housewives." Women are overrepresented in agriculture and private services but not in the public sector, where only 22 per cent of women are employed, as opposed to 35 per cent of men. Public service jobs are relatively well paid. They provide job security that makes them more appealing to men than in the other Arab countries of the region. In spite of their educational level, Palestinian women are unable to significantly improve their situation in the labour force because, in the general context of shrinking employment opportunities, men are privileged.

THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

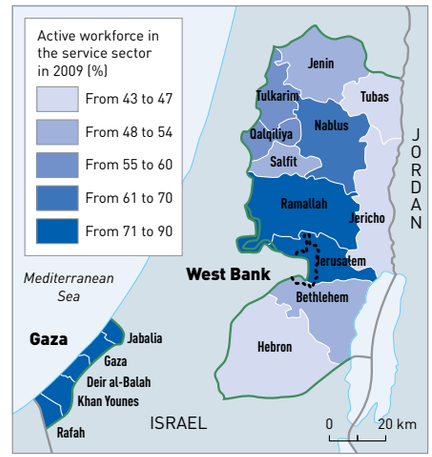
ACTIVE WORKFORCE IN CONSTRUCTION 2007



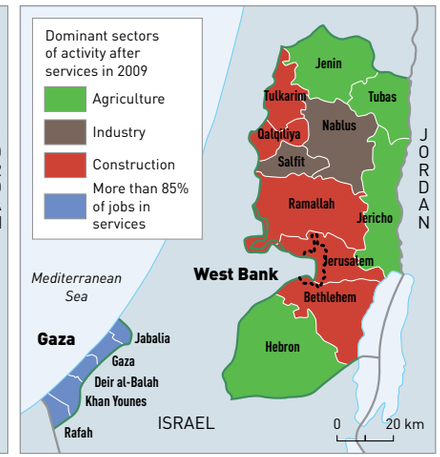
ACTIVE WORKFORCE IN AGRICULTURE IN 2007



ACTIVE WORKFORCE IN SERVICES



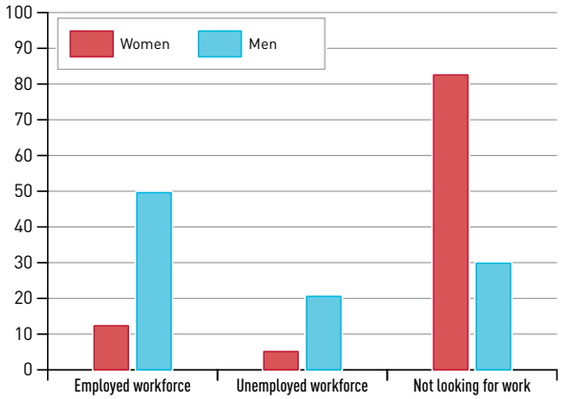
DOMINANT SECTORS OF ACTIVITY



Source: Statistical office of the Palestinian Authority.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE WORKFORCE

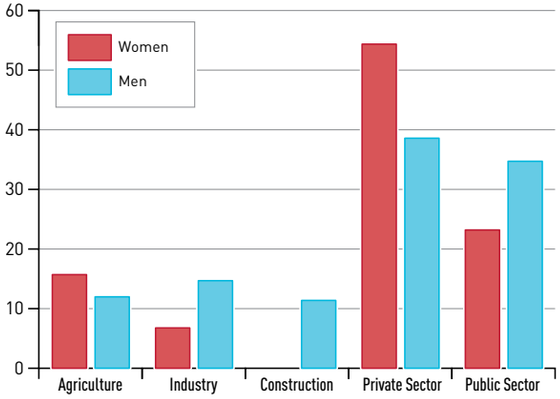
Active workforce in 2009 (in %)



Source: UNRWA, 2010.

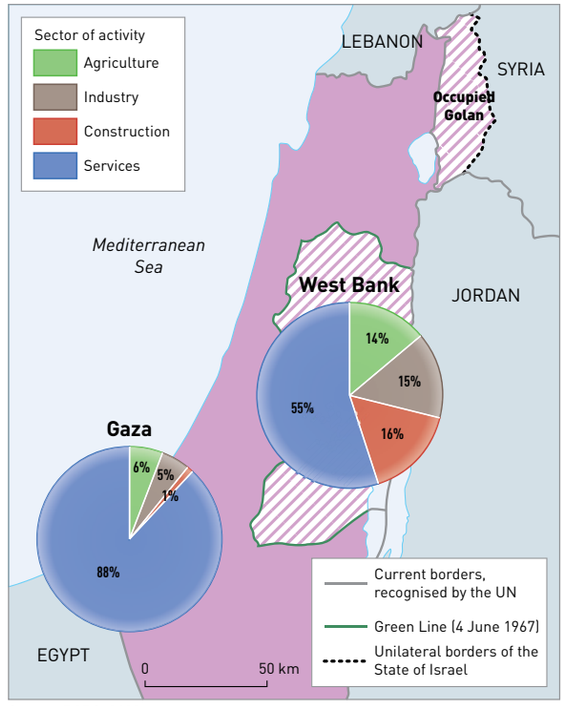
MALE/FEMALE DISTRIBUTION BY SECTOR

Active workforce in 2009 (in %)



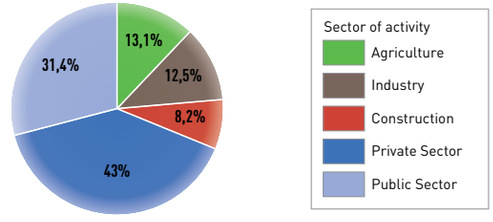
Source : UNRWA, 2010.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ACTIVE PALESTINIAN POPULATION IN 2009



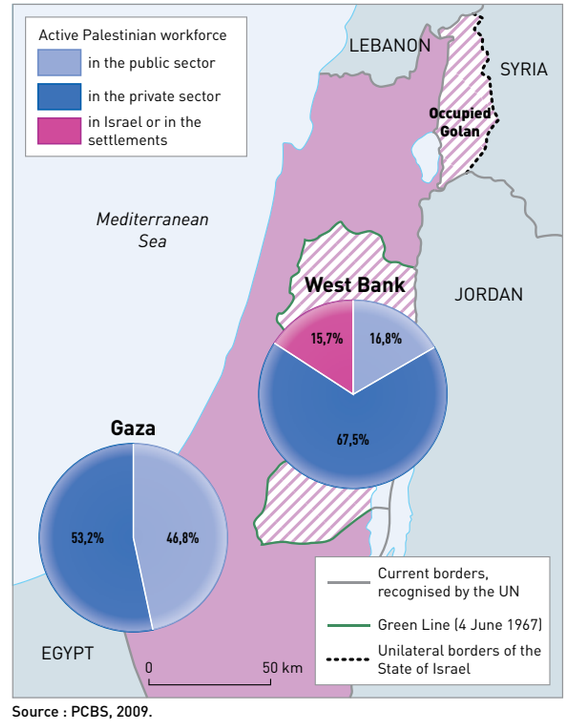
Source: PCBS, 2009.

ACTIVE WORKFORCE BY SECTOR



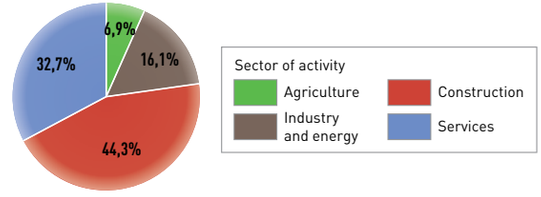
Source : UNRWA, 2010.

PUBLIC SECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR, AND WORK IN ISRAEL OR IN THE SETTLEMENTS



Source : PCBS, 2009.

ACTIVITY OF PALESTINIAN WORKERS IN ISRAEL AND IN THE SETTLEMENTS

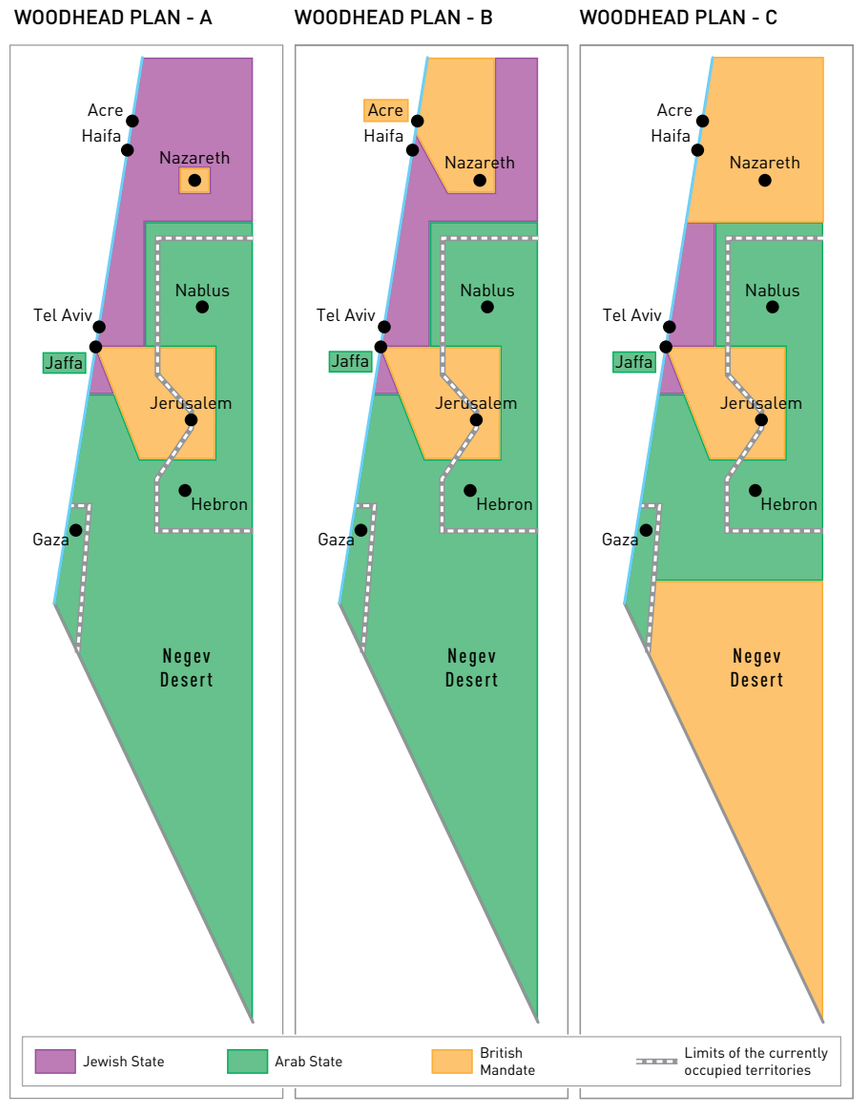


Source : PCBS, 2009.

The Partition of Palestine 1936–49

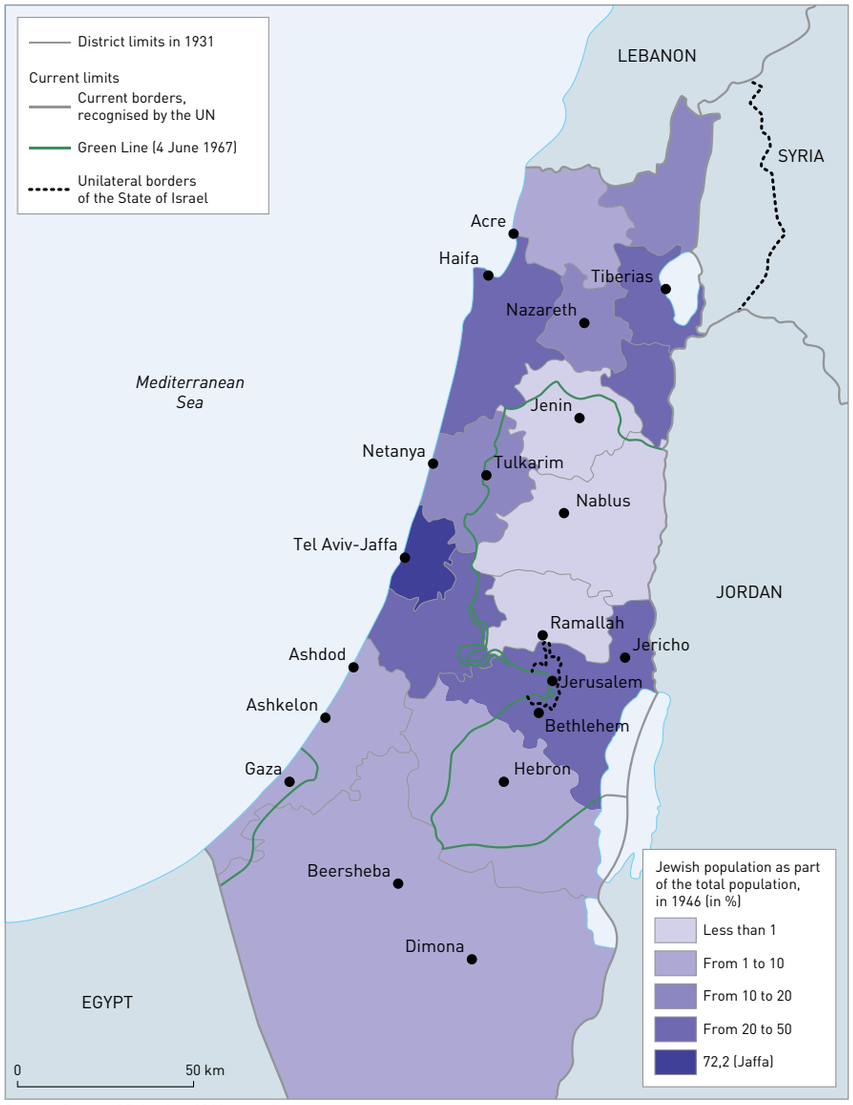
From 1936 the British proposed plans to partition Palestine so as to avoid conflicts between Jews and Arabs. The first plan was put forward by the Peel Commission in 1937 and promptly rejected by the Palestinians. In 1938, a new commission, led by Lord Woodhead, proposed three plans, including again the Peel Plan (Plan Woodhead A), but it was Woodhead Plan C that the British deemed the most realistic. This plan reduced the future Zionist state to a narrow strip of land along the coast with Tel Aviv as its centre. By contrast, the UN plan of 1947 was much more generous, granting the Zionists an outlet to the Red Sea through the Negev desert, although the Jewish population there was very much a minority. Jerusalem was to remain under international control. From its adoption by the United Nations on 29 November 1947, the partition plan was rejected by the Arabs, who considered it an injustice because it denied the population their right to self-determination. For their part, the Zionists accepted the UN plan that gave them half of Mandate Palestine. However, within this entity the Jews were barely a majority and the Arabs remained the main landowners. Conflicts increased among the communities; the Zionist militias were larger in numbers, were well organised and better armed than the Arab forces; they soon gained the lead, profiting from the British refusal to maintain order. Before the neighbouring Arab countries could intervene militarily, the Zionist militias expelled the Arab population from the territory intended for the state of Israel, leading to a first wave of displacements, which are estimated at 300,000 people. The Arab relief armies, inferior in numbers to the Zionist forces and not as well coordinated, were defeated separately. Jordan took over the West Bank, in accordance with secret agreements concluded between King Abdullah and the Zionist leaders. The Gaza Strip fell under the Egyptian administration. The ceasefire lines became international borders at the request of Israel, which thus obtained 78 per cent of Mandate Palestine and a territory where the Jews subsequently represented 85 per cent of the population. Of the Arab population, 80 per cent had fled or was expelled definitively because Israel refused to implement UN Resolution 194 (11 December 1948) which called for the return of the Palestinian Arab refugees.

THE BRITISH PLANS



Source: Woodhead Commission.

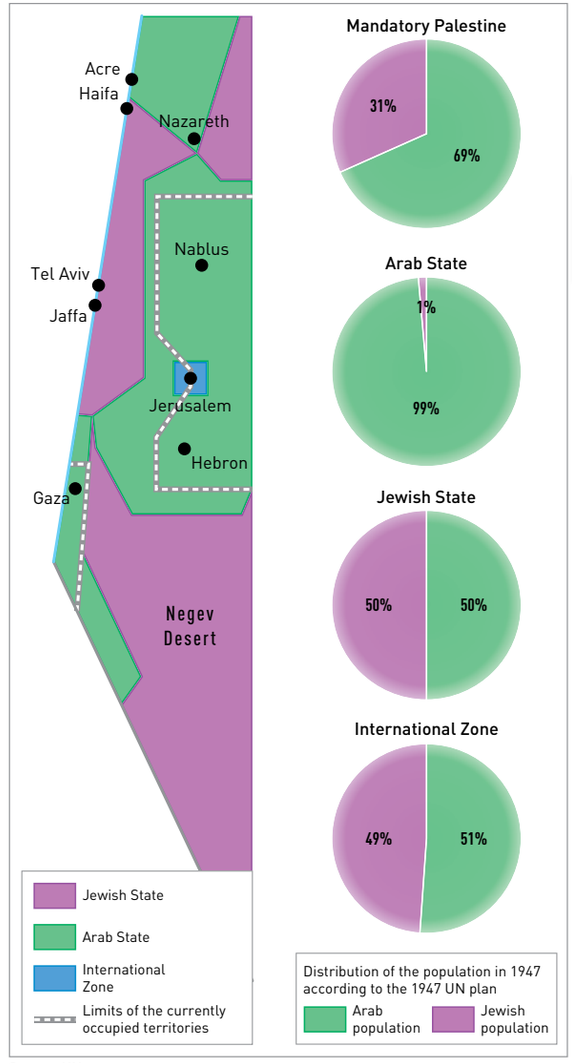
JEWISH POPULATION JUST BEFORE THE UN PARTITION PLAN



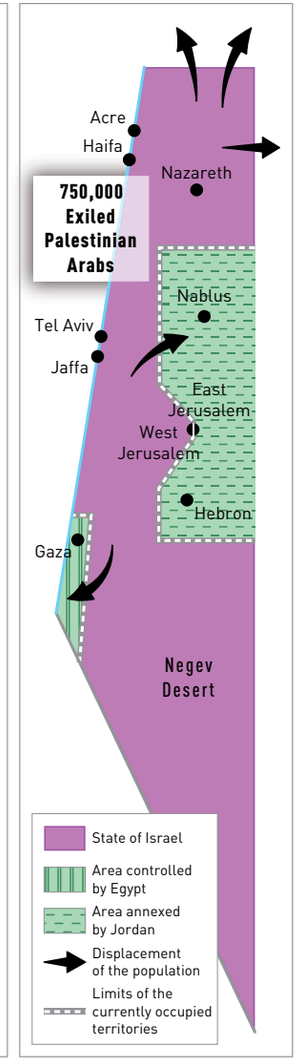
Source : Survey of Palestine, 1946.

THE FAILURE OF THE UN

UN PLAN FROM 1947



1949 ARMISTICE



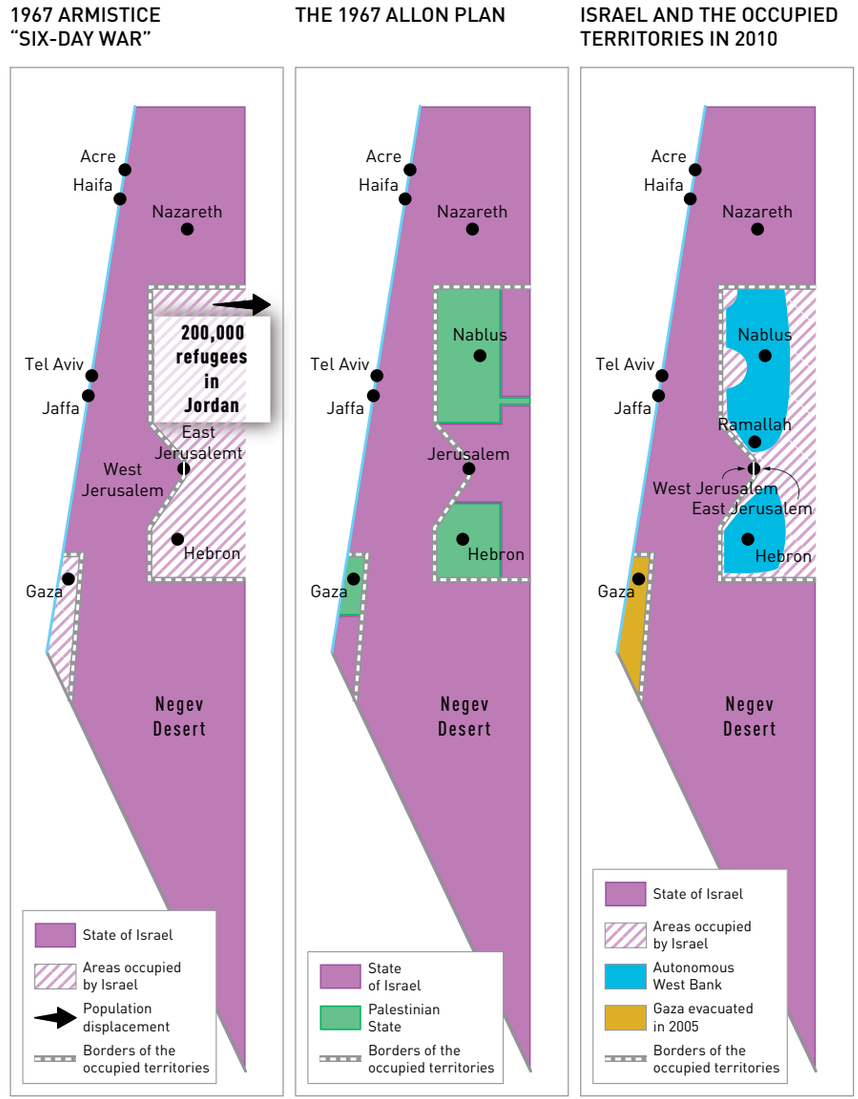
Source: UN

The Partition of the Occupied Territories

After the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza. The colonisation of the occupied Arab territories began according to the principles then set forth by the Israeli general Yigal Allon: annexation of the Jordan Valley, of the territories between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, and the establishment of settlements on the borders to ensure their continuity. The Palestinian uprisings (Intifada) of 1987–90 and the first Gulf War (1990–91) temporarily called into question this process of the dissolution of Palestinian territory. The parallel between the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and that of the territories occupied by Israel created an opening of negotiations regarding their future. The Madrid Conference of November 1991 and the Oslo Accords of 1993 led to a process of gradual empowerment for the West Bank and Gaza, but decisions about the substantive issues (the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for refugees) were postponed. The Palestinian Authority was created for six years (1993–99) with Ramallah as its headquarters in order to prepare for the construction of the future state of Palestine. However, the peace process quickly stalled and the Israeli settlement policy resumed with greater intensity: the number of settlers rose from 200,000 to 500,000 between 1995 and 2010, despite a newsworthy dismantling of settlements (9,000 settlers) in Gaza in 2005, and a few settlements (500 settlers) in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority eventually gained control over only 40 per cent of the occupied territories (Zones A and B of the Oslo Accords); the borders and the transit of people and merchandise remained under Israeli control.

The "security fence", erected by the Israelis, officially to protect themselves against attacks, became a wall of separation prefiguring a unilateral partition of the territory. The Palestinian state that eventually emerged was reduced to less than 3,000 sq km or 15 per cent of British Mandate Palestine. This was divided into three main entities: the northern West Bank, the southern West Bank, and Gaza, with Israeli enclaves close to the separation wall and in order to maintain the Jordan Valley under Israeli control. Jerusalem entirely eluded the Palestinian Authority, whose capital, at best, might be the city of Abu Dis on the periphery of Jerusalem. The plan drawn up by General Allon after the war of 1967 is clearly becoming a reality through the recent American-Israeli proposals for the partition of the occupied territories (2000 and 2008).

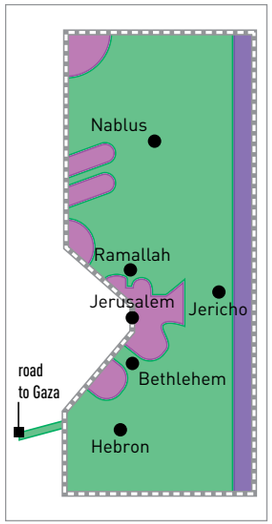
PARTITION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



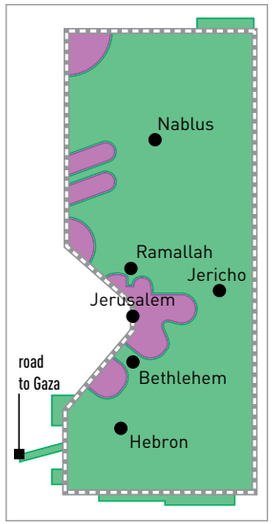
Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

RECENT ISRAELI-AMERICAN PROPOSALS

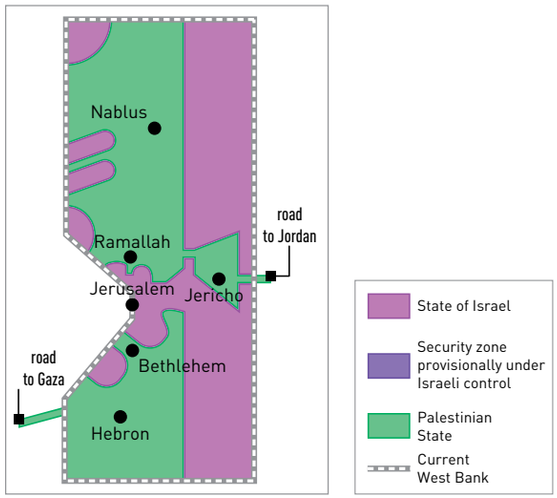
THE 2000 CLINTON PLAN



THE 2008 OLMERT PLAN

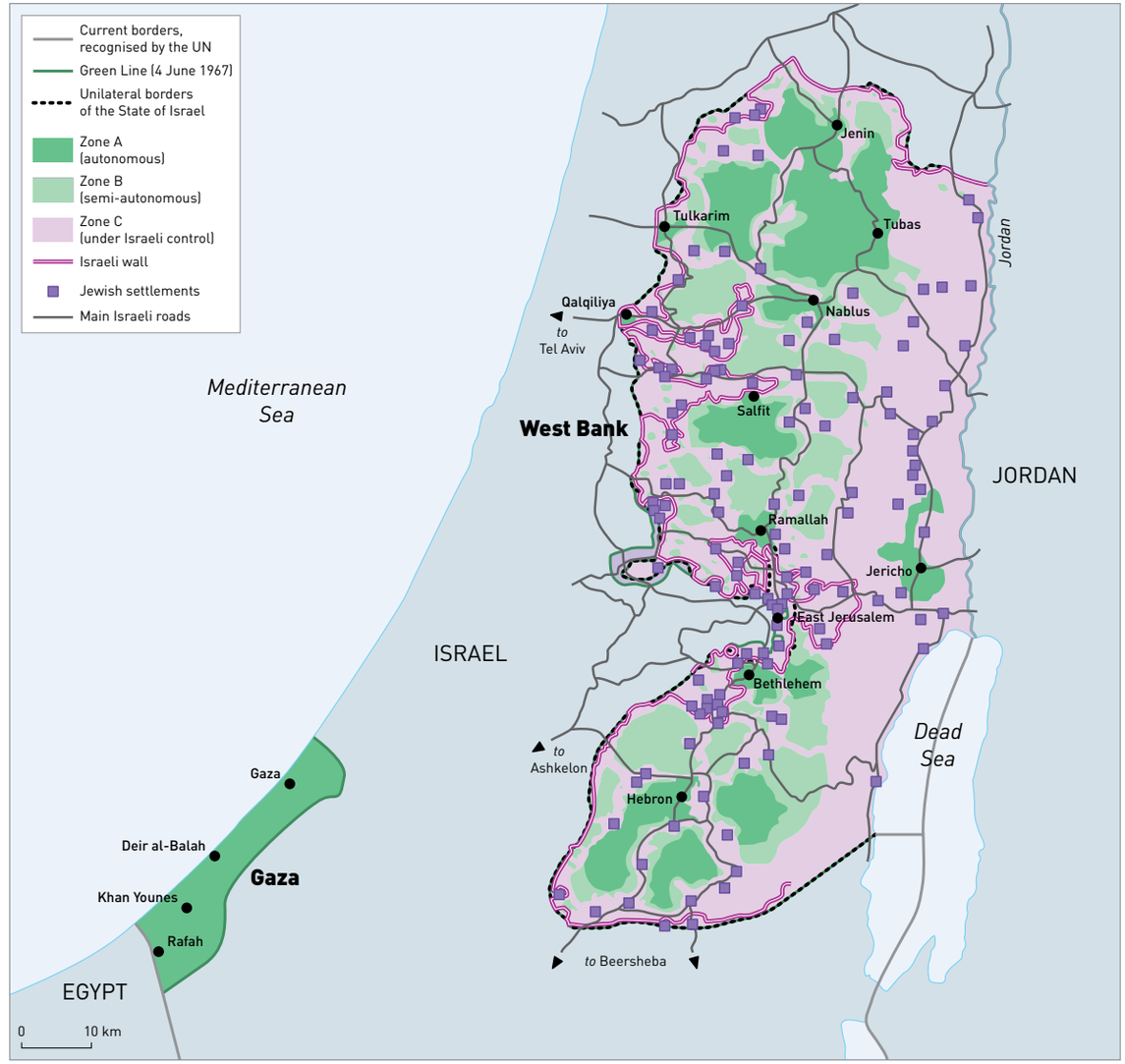


THE 2008 MOFAZ PLAN



Source: Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA



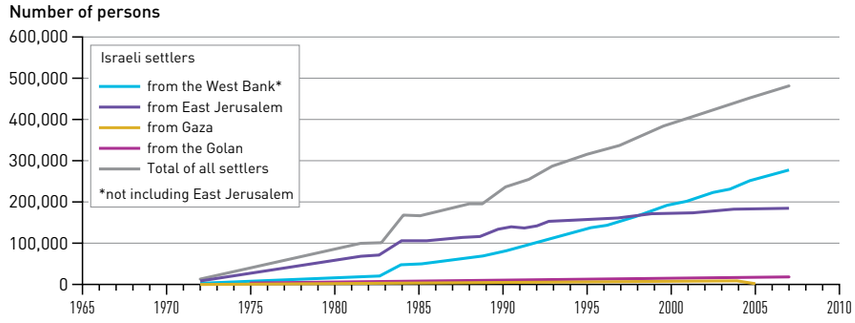
Source : B'tselem, 2010.

Jewish Colonisation

The Jewish colonisation movement in Palestine has been compared with Israel's strategy of conquering occupied territories since 1967. However, it must not be forgotten that the colonisation movement already began at the end of the nineteenth century with the creation of the first rural settlements, some of which took the form of kibbutzim. The Jewish colonies spread in the areas that were least populated at the time: the coastal plain from Jaffa to Acre, the Jezreel Valley, and the upper Jordan River. The Arab population, more than 80 per cent rural, resided in the hills where the climate was healthier than along the coastal region. This population practiced a traditional Mediterranean agriculture of tenant farming based on wheat, vines, and olives. The Jewish settlers developed an irrigated and intensive agriculture that quickly established itself but did not lead to the modernisation of Arab agriculture. The policy of hiring only "Hebrew labour" meant that Arab farmers did not work on Jewish farms and thus were unable to acquire the know-how essential for agricultural development. The massive Jewish purchases of land under the British mandate and the exclusion of Arab peasants contributed to the Arab uprising of 1936. At that time, only 10 per cent of the farming land in Palestine was owned by Jews, but it was the most fertile land. In 1947 the Zionist leaders relied on the network of Jewish settlements to claim the territory of the Jewish state, although the majority of the Jewish population lived in cities and only a minority lived in the countryside, unlike the Arab population.

Following the conquest of 1967 colonisation continued in the territories occupied by Israel: the Sinai (until its restitution to Egypt), the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. Its participants were motivated by Zionist ideals, but they also included citizens wishing to benefit from inexpensive housing and reduced tuition fees, as these were subsidised by the state of Israel in the settlements. The settlements, whether considered legal or illegal, were part of a global strategy to conquer Palestinian territory and to raise the stakes within the framework of the negotiations with Palestinian interlocutors and Arab belligerents. The Israeli leaders did not hesitate to sacrifice settlements if the situation demanded it. Peace with Egypt was contingent on the restitution of Sinai and the destruction of settlements. The progressive integration of Jerusalem into the state of Israel was accompanied by the withdrawal from

POPULATION GROWTH AMONG ISRAELI SETTLERS

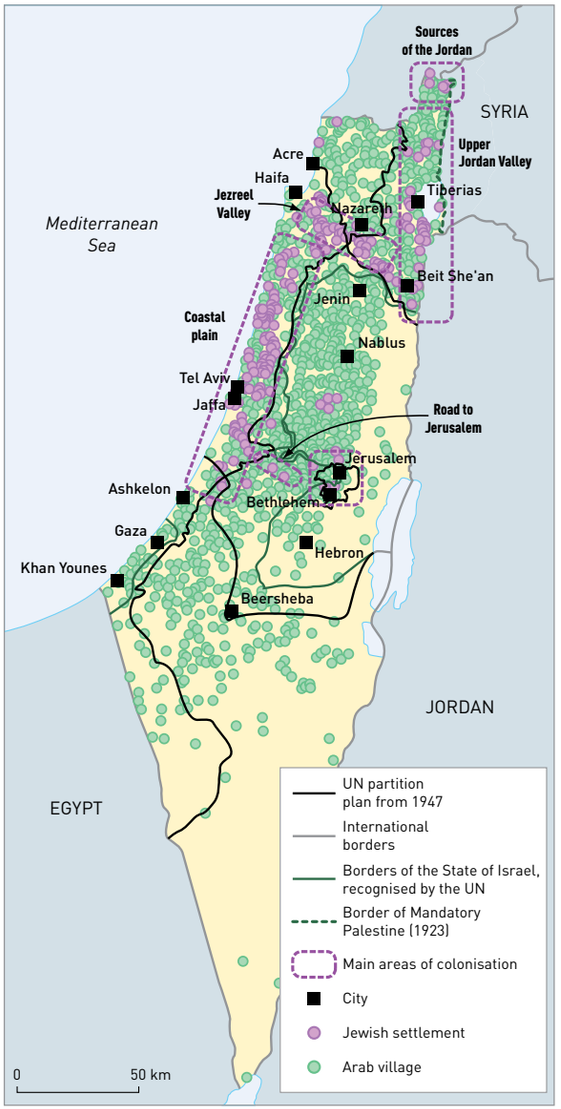


Source : B'tselem.

Gaza in 2005. Eventual peace with Syria might translate into the surrender of settlements in the Golan Heights.

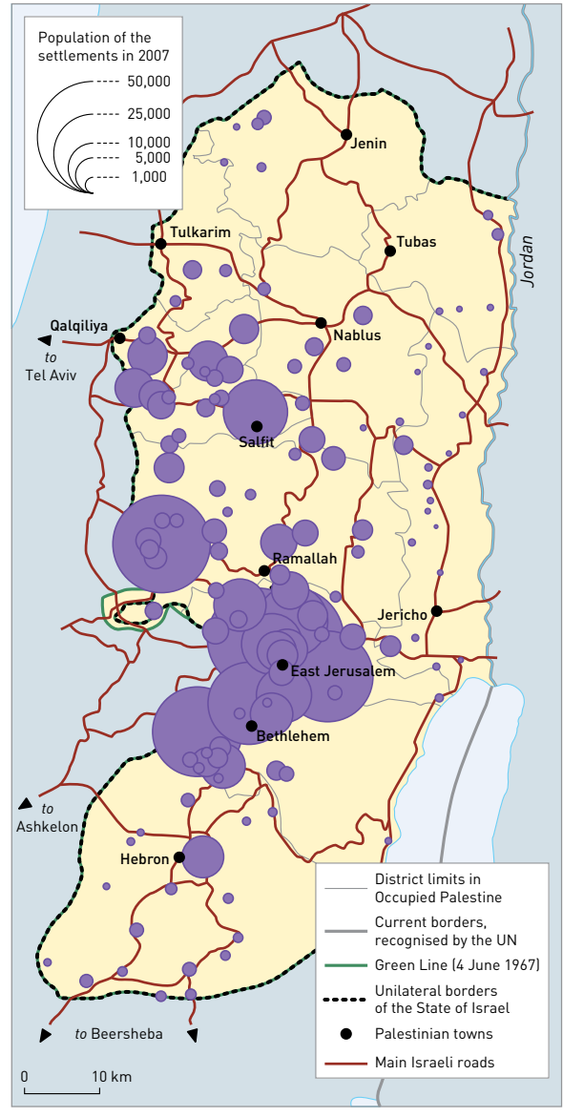
Between 1967 and 1973 colonisation took place primarily in the Jordan Valley and around Jerusalem. The aim was to control the border with Jordan and occupy a territory that was relatively lightly populated compared to the rest of the West Bank. Since the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and until 1980 Israeli efforts focused on creating a Jerusalem-Dead Sea axis that cut the West Bank in two. In the 1980s the central hills around Nablus and Hebron were divided up, and the satellite settlements in the conurbation of Tel Aviv were also developed to the east of the Green Line. The West Bank was divided and controlled through a network of roads (reserved for settlers) which connected the settlements to each other and to Israeli territory. Any territorial continuity of the West Bank was henceforth impossible. From 1991, when the Oslo process began, the creation of legal settlements was limited. But unauthorised settlements grew in numbers on the central ridge, and the whole area experienced an exceptional population growth; the Jewish population in the West Bank went from 200,000 in 1991 to 500,000 in 2010, or close to 20 per cent of the population, which may be considered the "threshold of irreversibility," beyond which it is no longer possible to detach the West Bank from Israel. The Council for Jewish Settlements wants to see a million Israelis in the West Bank alone by 2020, or 1.7 million including East Jerusalem. That figure is enormous, but, at the current pace of colonisation, it is not unrealistic.

PALESTINIAN VILLAGES AND JEWISH SETTLEMENTS IN 1945



Source: Atlas of Palestine - ARIJ Resource Center 2000.

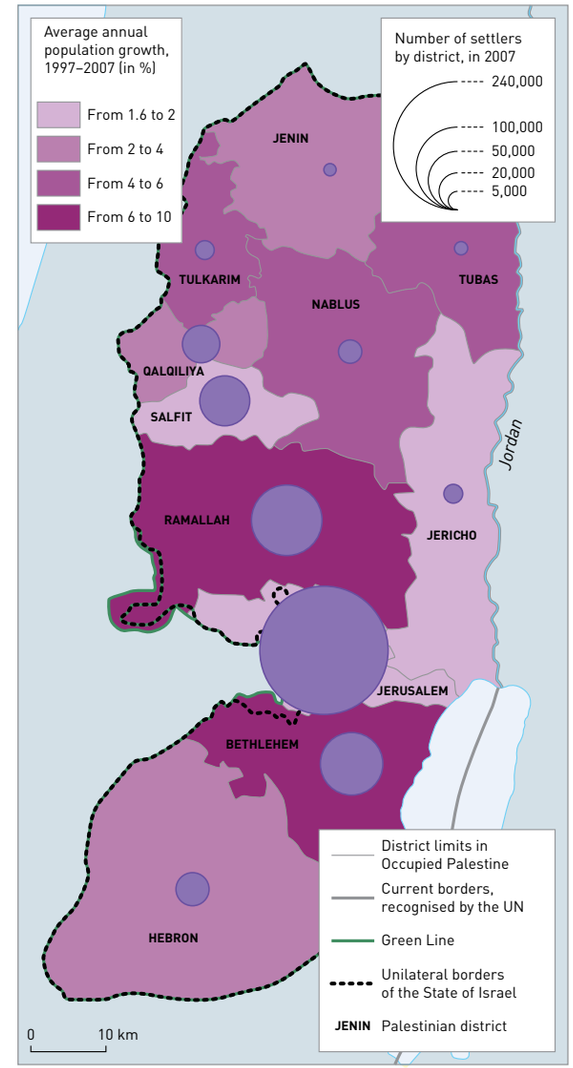
POPULATION OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK IN 2007



Source : B'tselem, 2010.

POPULATION GROWTH OF ISRAELI SETTLERS IN THE WEST BANK

1997-2007



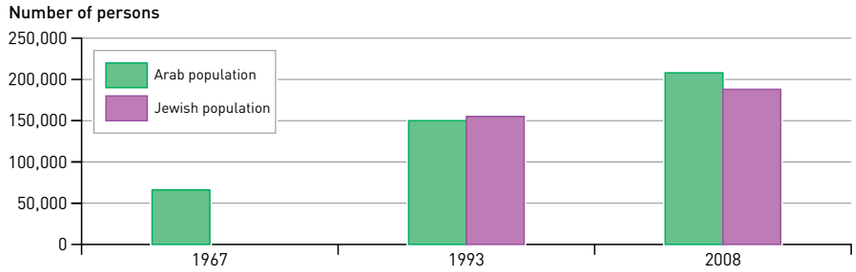
Source : B'tselem, 2010.

The Judaisation of Jerusalem

In 1947 the UN partition plan envisioned placing Jerusalem under international control to guarantee access to the holy places to adherents of all religions. The Arab-Israeli war prevented the application of that plan. According to the plan, Jerusalem would be divided into two parts that correspond, approximately, to the community divisions of the city: the state of Israel was to occupy the western part and Jordan to control the eastern part, including the old city. Following the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel seized East Jerusalem and officially annexed it to its territory, after extending its municipal limits to the occupied West Bank. In 1980, the Israeli parliament officially made Jerusalem the capital of the state of Israel and progressively transferred the administration from Tel Aviv. However, the international community maintains its representations in Tel Aviv, and continues to consider it the capital of Israel. In 1995, the "metropolitan plan of Jerusalem" accelerated the process of the Judaisation of Jerusalem and its eastern peripheries to the detriment of the Arab populations. In effect it prepares for the separation of the two populations: new settlements, the extension of old ones, roads, industrial zones, and the separation wall that permits Israel to cut off the Arab quarters of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. The aim is to achieve a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem and prevent the city from becoming the capital of the future state of Palestine, because the Palestinian Authority claims East Jerusalem as its capital and not Ramallah or Abu Dis, a small city in the southern suburbs that the Israelis eventually accepted as the capital of the Palestinian state.

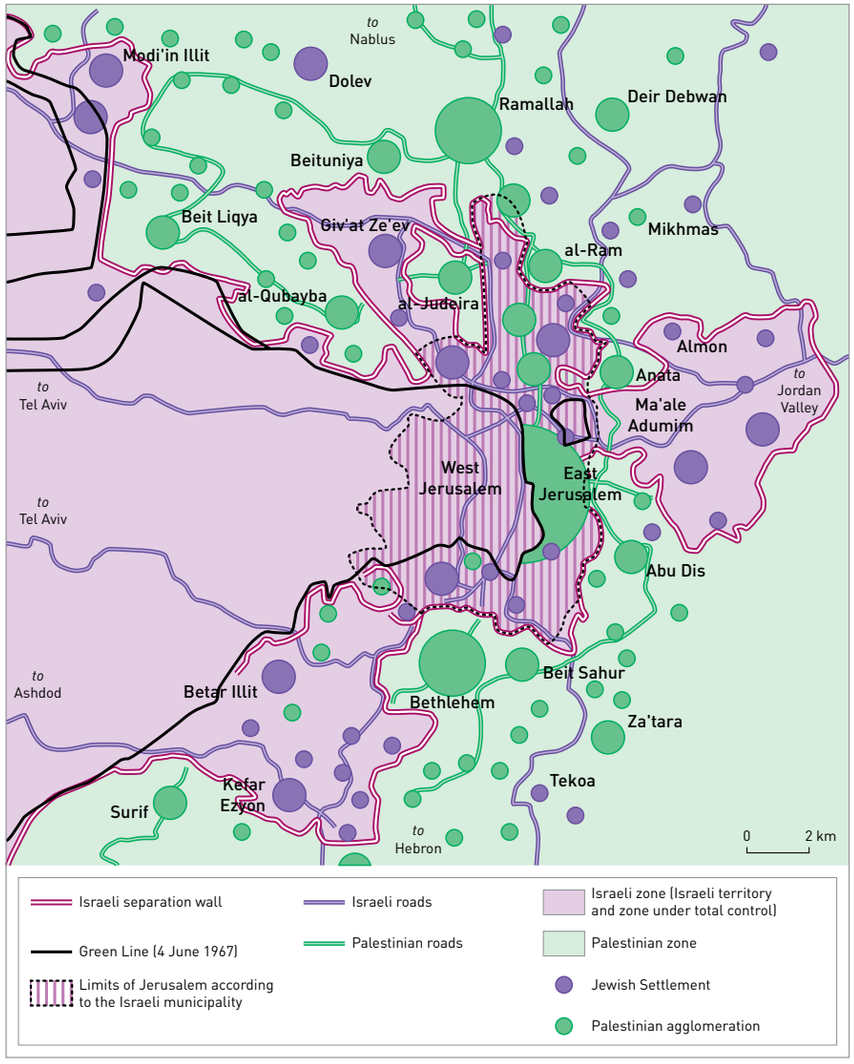
At the end of 2009 the population of Jerusalem within the Israeli municipal limits comprised 488,000 Jews (63 per cent), 261,000 Arabs (36 per cent) and 10,000 people with no declared religion (1 per cent). The Arabs in East Jerusalem (Christians and Muslims) do not have Israeli citizenship but rather a simple residence permit, which grants them more rights than those in territories considered as "occupied." Approximately 190,000 Israeli Jews live in the eastern part of the city and more than 100,000 live in the settlements on the periphery, including Ma'ale Adumim, close to Jerusalem, which is incorporated in the enclosure of the Israeli security fence. To reduce the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities withdrew residence permits from those living in the non-annexed occupied territories, or those living abroad for more than 7 years. The Israeli municipality destroys "illegal" Palestinian homes and blocks the construction of new housing for the Palestinians. In the old city the purchase of dwellings by Jews in the Arab quarters appears to be at the initiative of individuals or associations, but in fact it is part of a strategy to eliminate the esplanade of the mosques, site of the ancient temple of Solomon. Despite this struggle over East Jerusalem, since the 1990s the migratory balance in the municipality of Jerusalem has been negative. The city's population has not decreased, however, due to the high birth rate among both Arabs and Jews (3.94 per cent and 3.95 per cent children per woman, respectively, in 2005). The population of Jerusalem increased by 187 per cent between 1967 and 2008: the actual Jewish population rose by 150 per cent whereas the Arab demographic jumped by 291 per cent. This strong population growth has created a phenomenon of migration toward the periphery where housing is less costly. While the pendular migrations do not pose any problems for the Israelis from the point of view of permits or transport, the same is not true for Palestinians, who are regularly blocked at checkpoints and may eventually have their residence permits revoked, such that they will no longer have free access to Jerusalem.

THE POPULATION OF EAST JERUSALEM



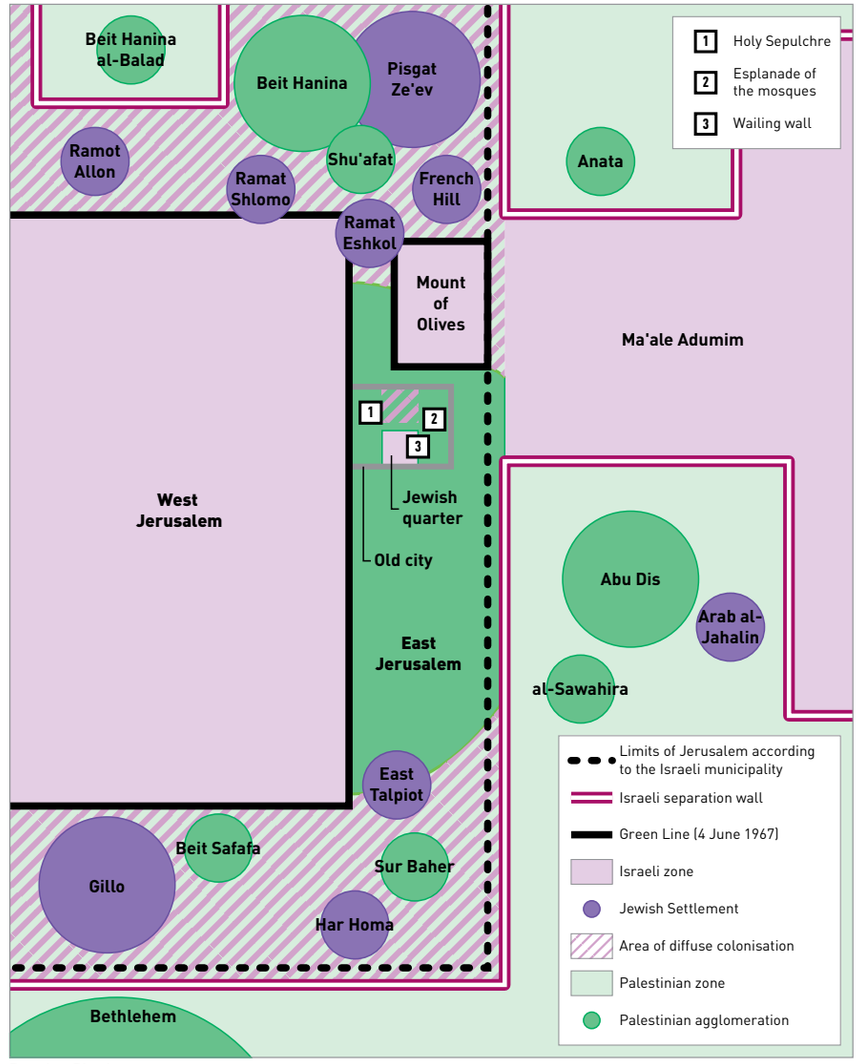
Source: UN Reports (1967, 1993) and B'tselem (2008).

THE COLONISATION OF THE EAST JERUSALEM AGGLOMERATION



Source : B'tselem.

THE ANNEXATION OF EAST JERUSALEM



Based on B'tselem.

The Geopolitics of the Near East

The Arab-Israeli Conflict: From One Cold War to Another

The Arab-Israeli conflict was quickly incorporated into the Cold War. The support that the state of Israel had received from western countries drove Arab countries to the Soviet camp, not as ideological allies but as strategic ones. Certainly, the Nasserite and Ba'athist regimes had adopted socialist measures, but more to eliminate the class of notables than out of any Marxist-Leninist ideals. In 1956 the Suez crisis discredited France and Great Britain and gave the United States and the USSR free rein in the region. From then on the Arab-Israeli conflict became a confrontation between the two superpowers who supplied the belligerents with arms and utilised them as pawns on the global chessboard. Yet this conflict had its own dynamics that the end of the Cold War did not call into question. At best the conflict became less violent because the adversaries of Israel did not possess the means to respond with as much force as Israel. Syria and Egypt sought to achieve strategic parity with Israel but were unsuccessful because, despite being numerically inferior, the Israeli army had always benefited from American weaponry that was more sophisticated than that supplied to its enemies by the Soviets. Poor coordination between the Arab armies or even within individual armies also benefited Israel in 1967 and 1973. In 1982 the Syrian air force was destroyed in the Beqaa Valley of Lebanon by the Israeli air force, which had successfully scrambled the radar system of the Syrian MIGs; this ended the drive for strategic parity.

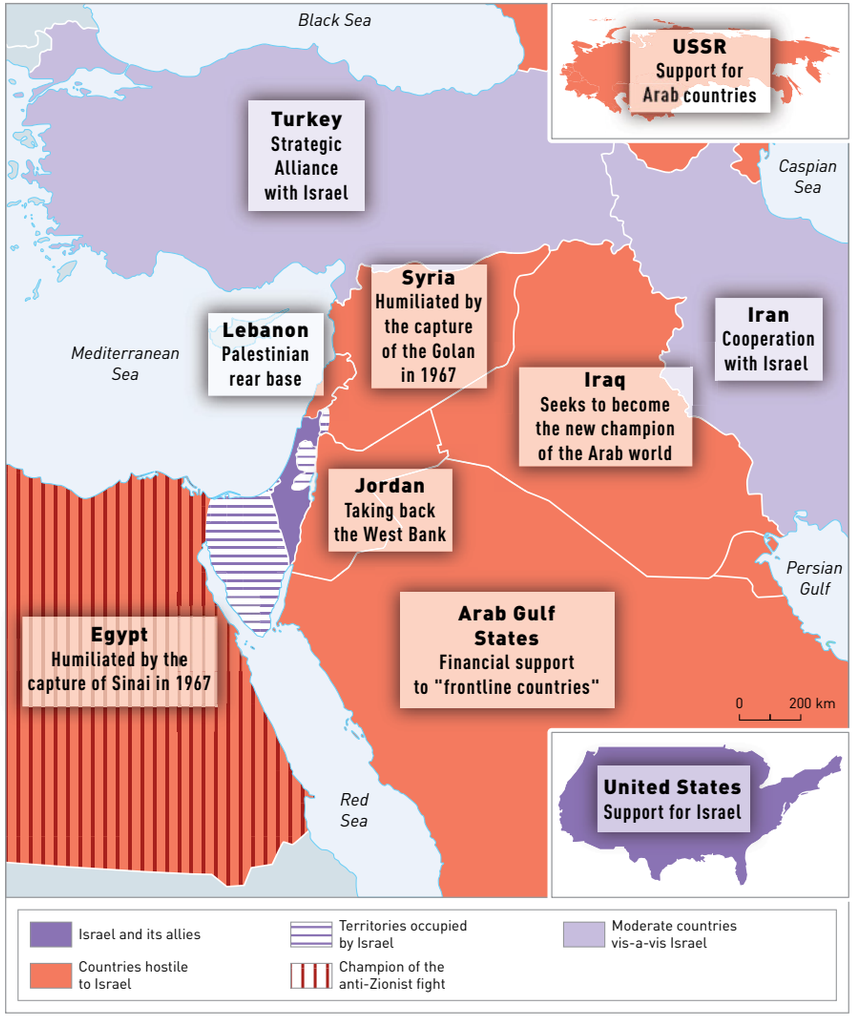
After the first Arab-Israeli war (1948), the conflict went through various phases. From the Suez crisis to the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and during the prelude to the peace accords between Egypt and Israel, Egypt was Israel's main adversary. Israel's military efforts therefore focused on its southern flank. On the eastern flank Jordan was never a serious danger because of the conciliatory attitude of the Hashemite monarchy. The northern border, Lebanon and Syria, was only a secondary front. When Egypt entered into peace negotiations with Israel, the northern front gained importance. Lebanon became the theatre of Israeli confrontations with Syria and the PLO, which had found refuge there after the "Black September" of 1970. On the one hand, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 enabled Israel to eliminate the Palestinian military force; the headquarters of the PLO was transferred to Tunis and the Palestinian troops dispersed throughout the Arab countries. On the other hand, Israel failed in its attempt to create an anti-Syrian Christian state under the leadership of the Lebanese Phalange party.

Calm returned to Lebanon and Palestine with the collapse of the USSR and the first Gulf War (1990–91). Hafez al-Assad, a fine strategist, understood that he should seek a closer relationship with the United States to save his regime. In exchange for his participation in the coalition against Saddam Hussein, he obtained control over Lebanon, with the exception of the southern part of the country which was occupied by Israel. Jordan officially made peace with Israel in 1994, while the Syrians and the Israelis started to negotiate conditions for the restitution of the Golan Heights. The failure of these negotiations, both with regard to the creation of the Palestinian state and concerning the Golan Heights, interrupted the peace process in the early 2000s. The Near East got caught up in a new Cold War between the United States and Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to become the regional power in Southwest Asia, and thus it is in conflict with Saudi Arabia. The confrontation entails a religious dimension, as Iran sees itself as a protector of Shiite communities while Saudi Arabia protects the Sunnis. Lebanon is a perfect example of this geopolitical tension manifesting itself as the opposition of communities. Iran, which wants to extend its protection to all Muslims, denounces the complicity of the Arab monarchies with Israel, and presents itself as the champion of the anti-Zionist struggle. From 2005, with the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President of Iran, the regime heightened its rhetoric with regard to Israel denying its right to exist. Iran wanted to present itself as the only defender of Palestine. It was, however, only a media campaign. During the Israeli offensives in Lebanon in 2006 and in Gaza in 2008 Iran did not come to the aid of Hezbollah or Hamas. In fact, in Iran this strategy of confrontation with Israel and the United States was contested because it did not appear to be strategically beneficial for the country. After the election of Barack Obama in 2008 tensions between the United States and Iran declined significantly, but the

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT IN 1970

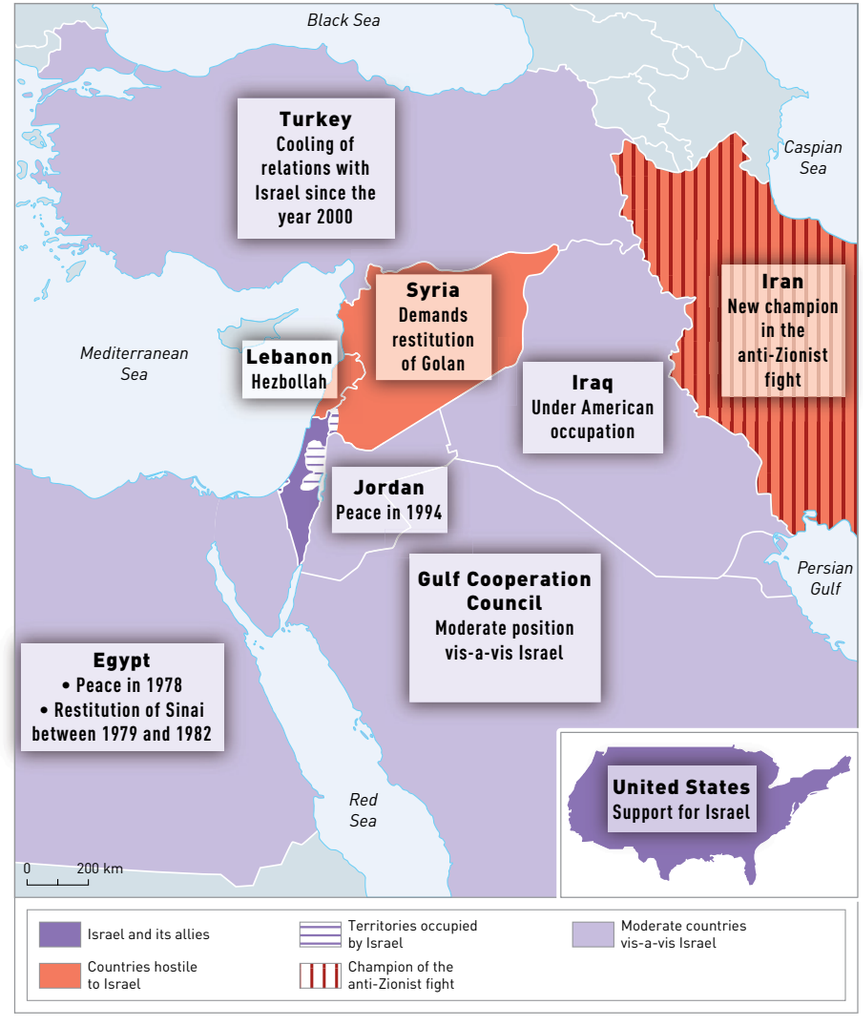
ARAB COUNTRIES UNITED AGAINST ISRAEL



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT TODAY

ARAB COUNTRIES DIVIDED IN A COLD PEACE



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

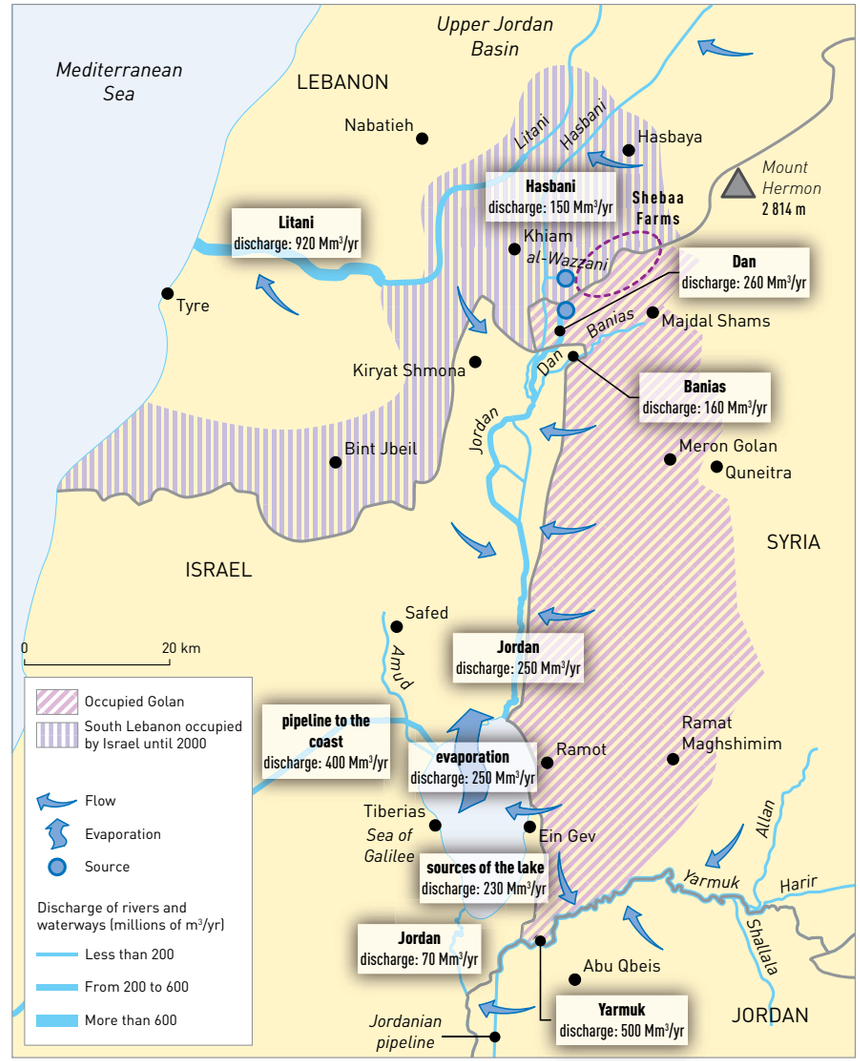
modus vivendi remained fragile. The Near East thus became a zone of confrontation between two powers, the United States and Iran, who both wanted to avoid a direct confrontation. Consequently, the Palestinian problem will probably be used by the Iranians until they arrive at a satisfactory agreement with the United States or the Islamic Republic is replaced by a pro-American regime, as it had been before 1979.

Water and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

From the beginning of Jewish colonisation in Palestine, the Zionist movement claimed the right to the sources of the Jordan River, and even of the Litani River, as a means of ensuring water security for the future state of Israel. Before 1914 the increase in the number of settlements in the upper Jordan had no purpose other than to control what is currently southern Lebanon. When the demarcation of the mandates was carried out in 1920, France firmly opposed the Zionist claims on southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights as put forward by Great Britain. Israel has a much greater need for water than its natural resources can provide. At one point more than half of Israel's water resources were located beyond the borders recognised by the UN (Line of 4 June 1967), and even more than two-thirds if only the natural resources are taken into account (with the exception of the reprocessing of waste water or the desalination of seawater). One-third of the renewable resources comes from the groundwater in the West Bank, and another third comes from the Lebanese-Syrian Upper Jordan basin. The Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias) serves as a reservoir for Israel, which transfers the water to the basins of the coast and to the northern Negev through a canal, the National Water Carrier, which was completed in 1964. Under international law this practice is illegal because the resources of an international water source are not to be diverted to another basin without an agreement between the residents. In fact, more often than not water rights belong to the strongest party.

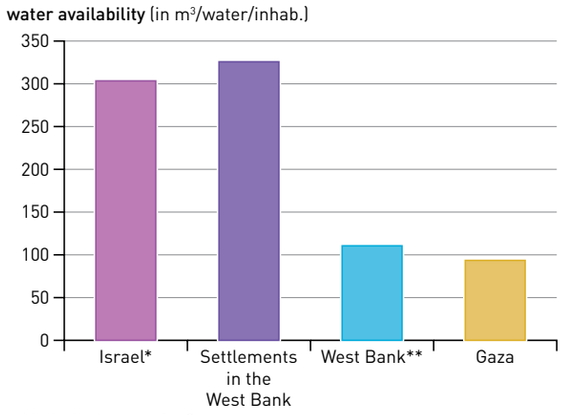
The distribution of water from the Jordan River basin was the subject of several mediations by the United Nations in the 1950s; this resulted in the Johnston plan, which was officially rejected by the residents but nonetheless serves as jurisprudence legal precedent. That plan was rendered obsolete by the Six-Day War of 1967, and again by the occupation of southern Lebanon in 1978, which gave Israel practical control of the catchment area of the Jordan. This allowed it to draw water at will from the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias); it forbade under penalty of military intervention any retention of water upstream in Lebanon on Jordan River tributaries. Israel thus seized the opportunity of the 2006 war against Lebanon to destroy the irrigation canal under construction between Lake Qaraoun and the central Beqaa Valley.

THE UPPER JORDAN RIVER BASIN



Source: FAO, Aquastat, 2008.

WATER AVAILABILITY

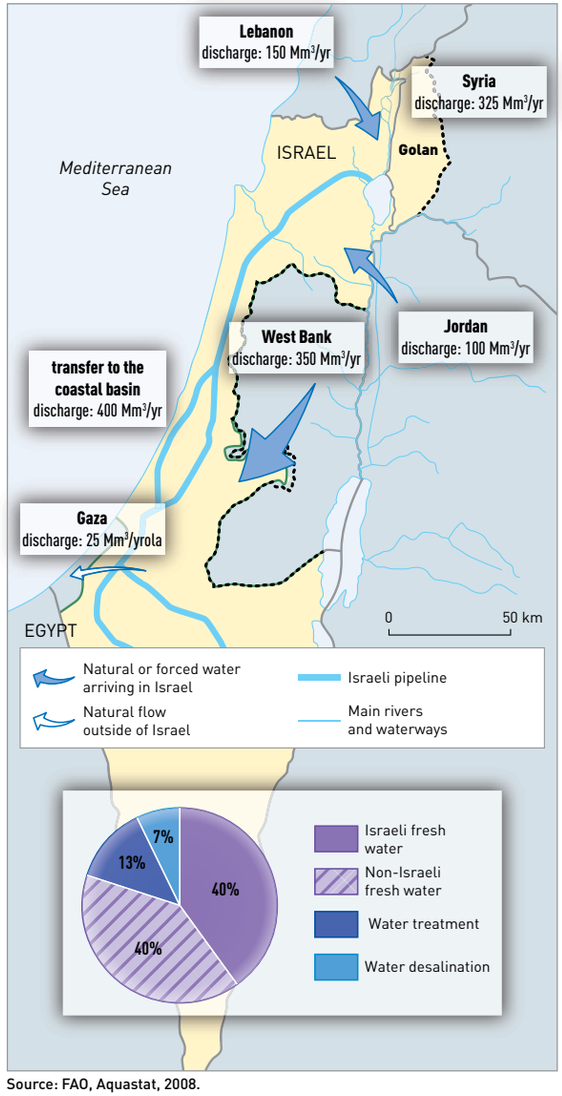


* including the occupied Golan
** only the Palestinian population was considered

Source: FAO, Aquastat, 2008.

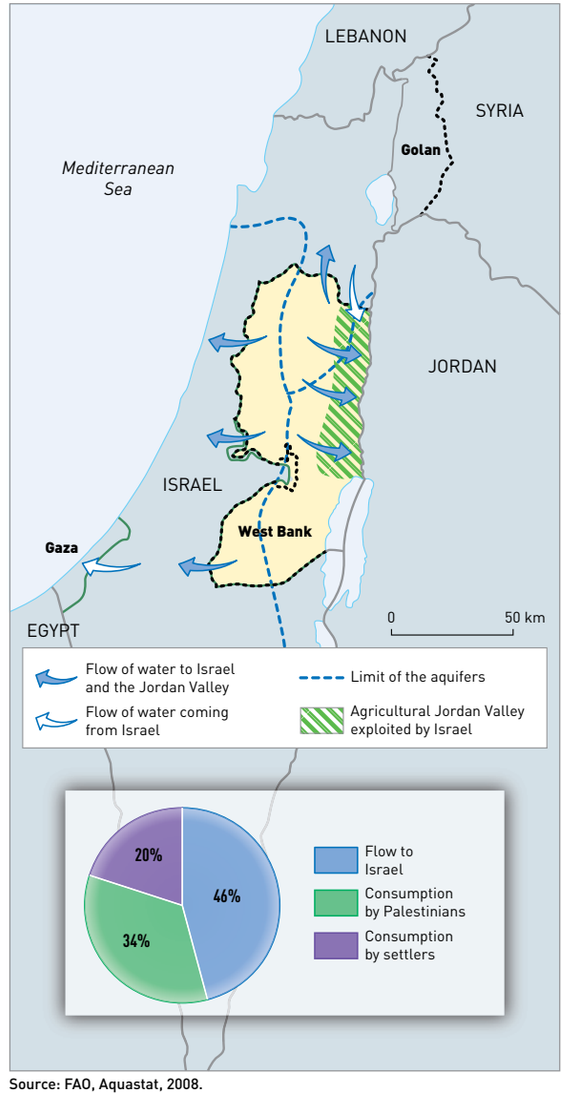
The groundwater of the West Bank flows naturally toward peripheral areas controlled by Israel. This contributes notably to replenishing the coastal groundwater which forms the water supply for Israel's irrigated agriculture and the large Israeli urban conglomerations. To conserve this resource Israel rations the water supply to the Palestinian population of the West Bank. This has the further advantage of rendering tens of thousands of hectares of agricultural land unfarmable for the Palestinians, who then leave the land; this benefits the Israeli settlers, who in turn have privileged access to water. The situation is especially critical for the 60,000 Palestinians in the lower Jordan Valley: they are completely under Israeli control (Zone C), but their water supply is handled neither by the Palestinian Authority nor by Israel. The situation also benefits the 6,000 Jewish settlers who maintain the large agricultural farms in this region. In fact, several NGOs have denounced the lack of water reprocessing in Israeli settlements, which discharge their waste water into the environment, although the practice is forbidden within Israel.

SOURCE OF WATER CONSUMED IN ISRAEL IN 2005



Source: FAO, Aquastat, 2008.

WATER DISTRIBUTION IN THE WEST BANK IN 2005



Source: FAO, Aquastat, 2008.

The Golan Heights or the Alsace-Lorraine of Syria

On 14 December 1981 Israel officially annexed the Golan Heights, which its army had occupied since 1967. This annexation was not recognised by the international community, who considers the Golan Heights occupied territory in the same way as the West Bank and Gaza. On 26 January 1999 the Israeli parliament passed a law reinforcing the Israeli character of the Golan Heights, and stated that it would henceforth require a two-thirds majority in the Knesset, or 65 per cent of the votes in a referendum, to restore the Golan Heights to Syria. This measure clearly complicated any negotiation with Syria, as the Golan Heights became, on Israeli constitutional grounds, more difficult to cede than the Palestinian occupied territories.

The Syrian population in the Golan Heights rejected the Israeli citizenship they had been offered and continued to demonstrate their attachment to Syria. Although mostly Druze, they persisted in refusing to integrate into the Jewish state, unlike the rest of the Druze community in Israel. The 5,000 Syrians that remained in the Golan Heights in 1967, in a population of approximately 80,000 people, increased to 22,000 by virtue of the demographic battle between the two parties. They are confined to five villages (excluding Ghajar) in the north of the plateau, while 95 per cent of the area of the Golan Heights is occupied by 20,000 Israeli settlers grouped in 34 settlements founded on the sites of destroyed Syrian villages. Unlike in the West Bank, colonisation levelled off because of the distance to the larger urban centres and fears over its return to Syria, although there has been an ambitious plan to bring in 200,000 Jewish settlers.

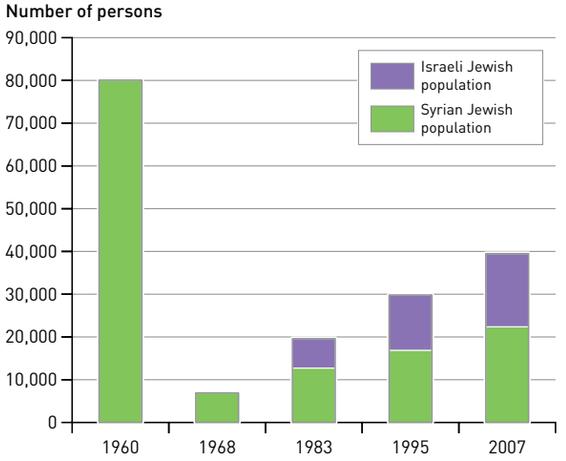
Israel presents the Golan Heights as indispensable to its security. On the one hand, this plateau overlooks the north of Israel and constitutes a natural barrier to any Syrian offensive; furthermore, Israeli surveillance stations monitor the south of Syria. On the other hand, the river basin of the Golan feeds the Sea of Galilee, from which Israel draws more than one-third of its water. In March of 2000 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and the Syrian president, Hafez al-Assad, seemed close to reaching a peace agreement in exchange for the return of the Golan Heights to Syria based on the model of Egyptian Sinai. However, the negotiations failed, essentially over the question of the delineation of ten metres of the border that would give Syria access to the Sea of Galilee. This detail about the status of the Sea of Galilee is crucial because it would mean that it is an international lake and, what is more, the greater part of its catchment area would be in Syrian territory. Israel would therefore need to officially negotiate with Syria on issues related to the utilisation of the water. In the north of the Golan Heights, the matter of whether the Shebaa Farms (25 sq km) and the village of Ghajar belong to Syria or to Lebanon is unresolved because it also raises the problem of the border demarcation between Israel and Lebanon (the Blue Line). After their retreat from southern Lebanon, the Israelis stayed in these two territories under the pretext that they were conquered from the Syrian army in 1967. However, according to a report by the United Nations in 2007, they in fact belong to Lebanon. This position is, of course, defended by Lebanon and provides Hezbollah with an argument to continue its military struggle against Israel, since it means that a part of Lebanese territory has yet to be liberated.

The aforementioned details show how difficult it was to demarcate the border between the French and British mandates in the region of the Sea of Galilee, precisely because of the Zionist claims to water resources. According to the Sykes-Picot Agreement the Sea of Galilee was shared by France and Great Britain, and the agreements of 1923 pushed the border 10 metres to the east of the lake, so that it was entirely within Palestine, leaving Syria only the right to fish in and navigate the Sea of Galilee. During the first Arab-Israeli war Syria conquered the eastern shore of the lake, which became the Armistice Line of 1949. The demilitarised zones were progressively reoccupied by the belligerents, but Syria kept the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee until the Israeli offensive of 4 June 1967 (the Six-Day War) that detached it from the Golan. They successfully recovered part of the plateau during the 1973 war; this part has since been under UN control.

The boundary claimed by Israel for its international borders is commonly called the “Line of June 4, 1967” because it preceded the Six-Day War. However, during the negotiations with Syria in 2000, Ehud Barak wished to negotiate only on the basis of the 1923 borders, which are more advantageous to Israel

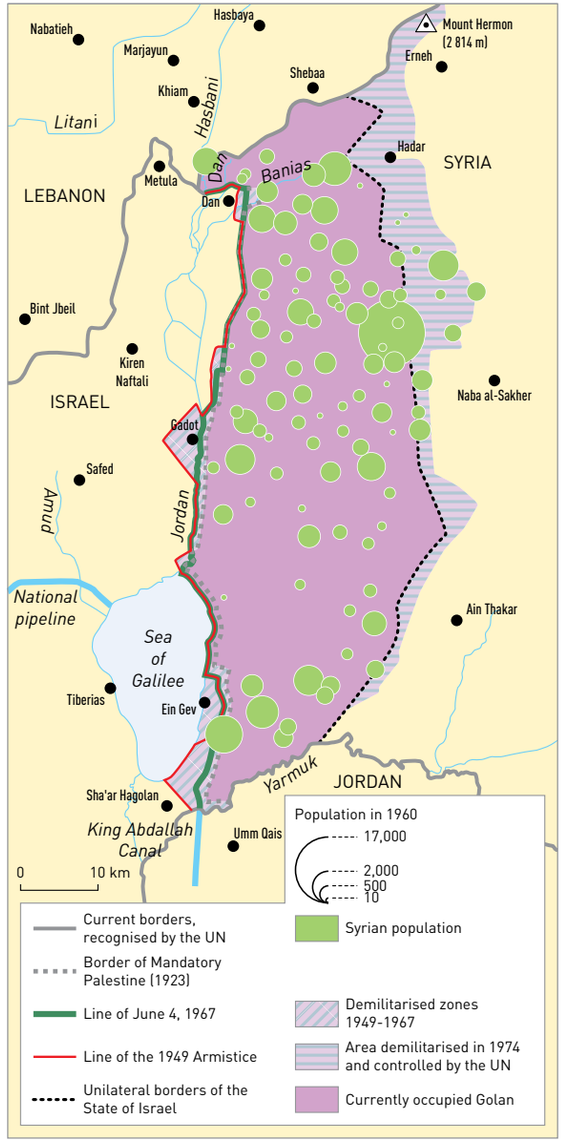
SYRIAN AND ISRAELI JEWISH POPULATIONS IN THE OCCUPIED GOLAN

1960-2007



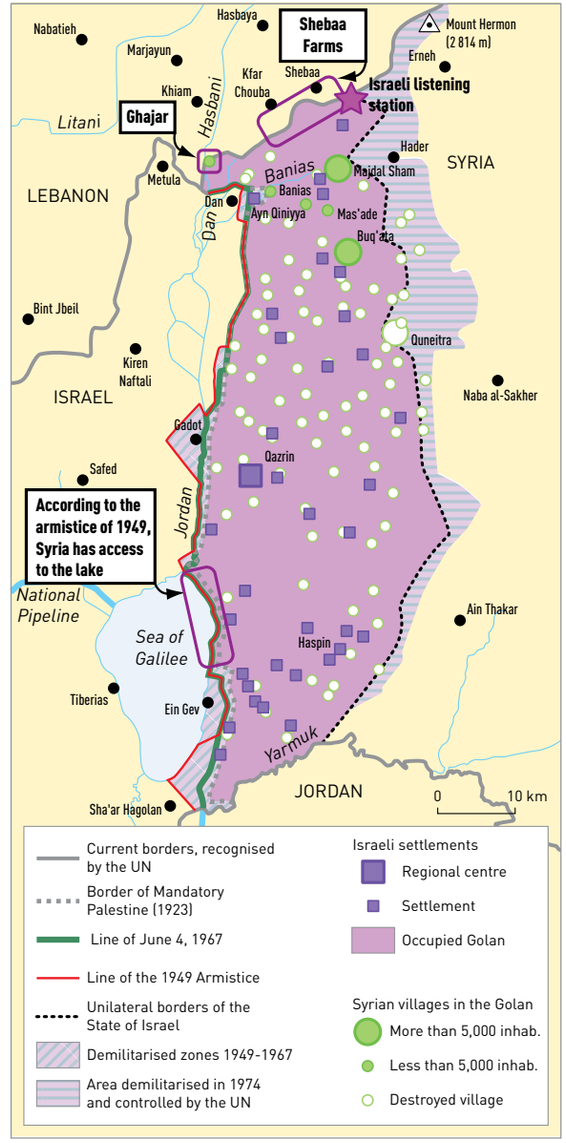
Source: 1960 Syrian census and Israeli censuses.

THE GOLAN HEIGHTS IN 1960



Source: general census of the Syrian population, 1960.

THE GOLAN HEIGHTS TODAY



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

than the "Line of June 4, 1967" in the zone of Tiberias, much to the chagrin of Hafez al-Assad, who concluded that Israel was not sincere in its wish for peace. The distrust between Syria and Israel was such that the peace accords had little chance of succeeding in the short term, especially as both camps had very comfortably adapted to the status quo. The Israeli-Syrian border was calm after 1974. The Israelis preferred a cold confrontation to a hot peace.

For Syria, the Golan Heights is what Alsace-Lorraine might have been for the French Third Republic: the Golan Heights are the equivalent of the French "Blue line of the Vosges," cherished by all generations of Syrian school children since 1967. In October of 1973 the reconquest of part of the plateau, including the "martyr city of Quneitra," was a victory for Syria and contributed to legitimising the regime of Hafez al-Assad in relation to the previous Ba'athists, which had lost the Golan Heights.

In May of 2011, Bashar al-Assad organised demonstrations over the issue of the Golan Heights in an attempt to rally the Syrian population behind his threatened regime, but it did not bring about the expected burst of nationalism in Damascus.

The American Strategy

After the end of the Cold War the United States became the main geopolitical player in the Near East. Russia timidly attempted a comeback, but it no longer had the weight it had had in the days of the Soviet Union. The European Union played only a marginal political role. Certainly, after the Israeli offensive in the summer of 2006 France pushed its partners to intervene in Lebanon in the framework of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), but in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and in relations between Syria and Israel, the Americans remained the true arbitrators. The Near East is on the periphery of a zone of higher interest: the Gulf and its hydrocarbon resources. Therefore, for the United States it is a matter of securing this zone with the objective of protecting the oil monarchies of the Gulf. The Quincy Agreement of 1945 between President Roosevelt and King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia offered the Americans a virtual monopoly over the exploitation of Saudi hydrocarbons in exchange for unfailing military support, as when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990.

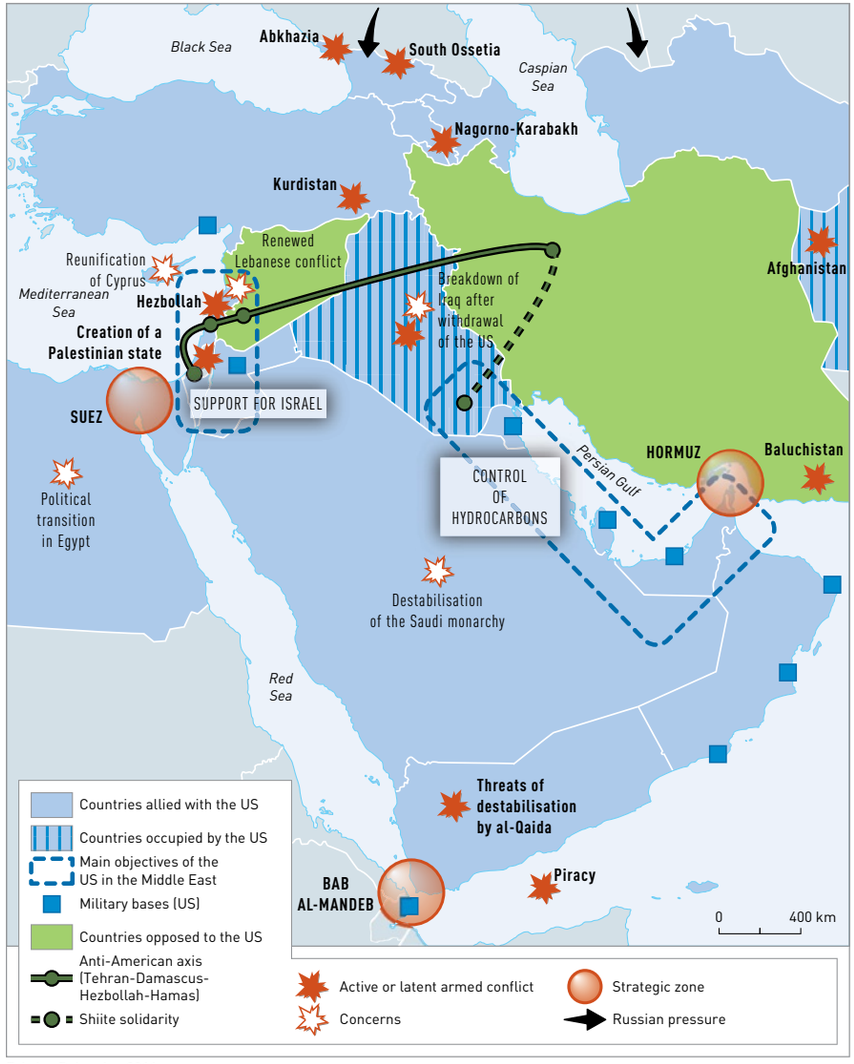
The defense of Israel is the second axis of US policy in this region. Since Jimmy Carter's stroke of brilliance with the Camp David Accords in 1978, Arab-Israeli peace has been an objective for every American president, whatever the results or method. Both George Bush and George W. Bush failed, however, as did Bill Clinton; Barack Obama tackled the problem head on from the beginning of his presidential mandate but without better results. Since the end of the Cold War, American support for Israel seems anachronistic because it is no longer justifiable geopolitically. On the contrary, it works against the interests of the United States in the Arab and Muslim world. Israel should have been obliged to negotiate a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians like South Africa was forced to abandon the policy of apartheid. Yet, despite the on-going Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the lack of progress on the Golan Heights, the United States continues to support Israel, for reasons that seem to have more to do with domestic electoral politics than any possible geopolitical pragmatism. Indeed, American presidential candidates commonly visit Israel as part of their electoral campaigns, as if it were the 51st state of the union.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States seems to have converted more to Israeli views on the Arab world than it has successfully influenced Israeli attitudes. Gunboat diplomacy has prevailed: Afghanistan and Iraq for the United States, Lebanon and Gaza for the Israelis. George W. Bush's project for a "Great Middle East" corresponds perfectly to the principles that Israeli foreign policy has tried to implement, especially in Lebanon, by favouring the emergence of sectarian states. The United States assumes that the centralised nation state model has failed in the Middle East because of sectarian differences (religious or tribal) that divide society. Thus it is necessary to impose a new form of governance based on a federal principle that guarantees the autonomy of the communities and respects democracy. Iraq is the laboratory of the Great Middle East with its three entities: the Kurds, the Sunni Arabs, and the Shiite Arabs. Syria and Lebanon have everything to fear for their territorial unity and the regime of Bashar al-Assad particularly is in the crosshairs. Certainly, the hypothesis of a redistribution of states based on communitarian criteria has advocates in certain minority populations, notably among Syrian Kurds and Lebanese Christians. However, the principle of "divide and conquer" allows the United States to consolidate its domination in the region and ensure the security of Israel, thereby legitimising the very existence of a Jewish state in the region, as one of several other sectarian states.

The election of Barack Obama in 2008 marked a turning point in American policy in the Middle East, but not a radical change. The United States intends to preserve its hegemony over Gulf states with hydrocarbons. To that end it must neutralise Iran while avoiding a military conflict; keep the Russians at bay as they try to regain a foothold in the Near East after returning to spread their zone of influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia; and finally break up the anti-American axis developing between Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, especially given the way the Arab Spring has destabilised allied countries such as Egypt and Yemen. There again, the regime of Bashar al-Assad is targeted as it seems to be the weakest link in this axis: the Sunni majority in Syria is hostile to the Iranian alliance imposed by their president.

AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SUPPORTING ISRAEL AND CONTROLLING THE HYDROCARBONS OF THE GULF



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

THE MIDDLE EAST REDESIGNED BY THE AMERICAN HAWKS

ETHNIC AND CONFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Source : Ralph Peters.

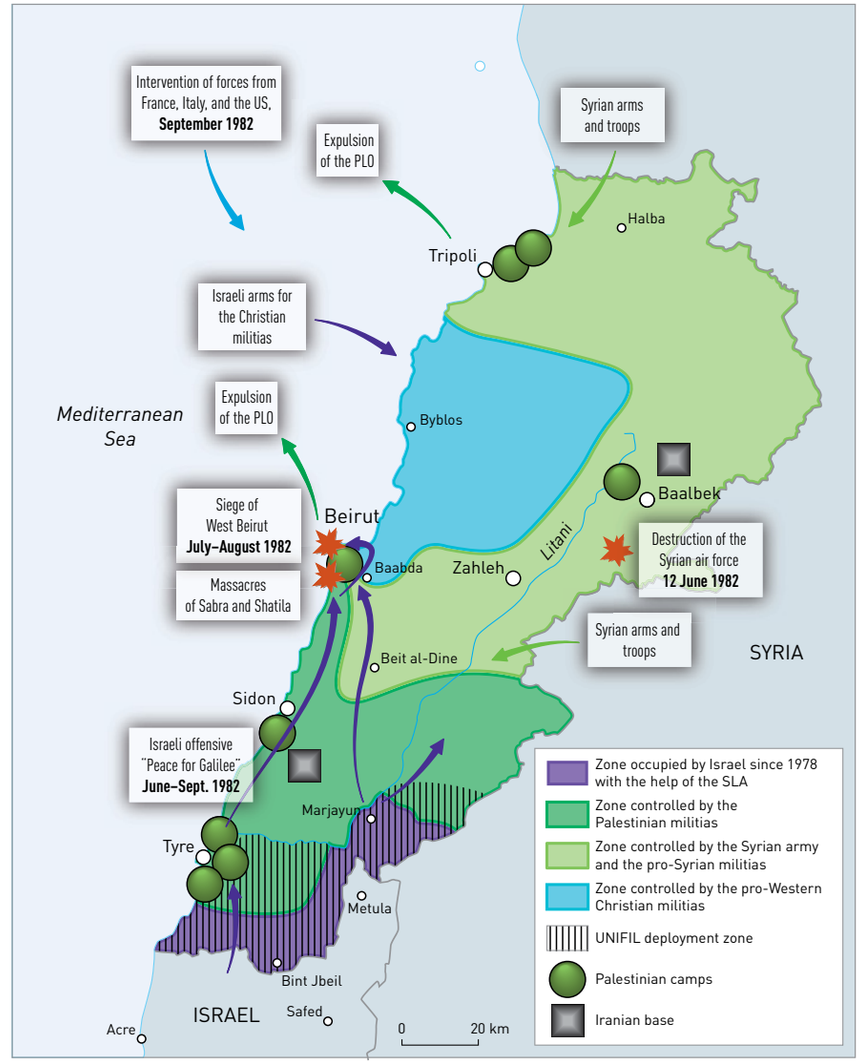
Lebanon: A Buffer State

The term "buffer state," borrowed from Georges Corm, the former Lebanese Minister of Finance and historian, is perfectly suited for Lebanon, given that, since independence, it has been the theatre of confrontations between foreign powers. This is because of the weakness of the central state and the lack of national unity. The title of the national anthem, "Kullunā li-l-watan" ("All of us for the fatherland") hardly represents Lebanese political reality. The different parties, manifestations of communities and clans, do not hesitate to seek support abroad, nor to respond favourably to requests from elements abroad that wish to impose themselves in Lebanon.

Lebanon's neighbours, Israel and Syria, confront each other on Lebanese land, and through these two actors, three international policies emerge: that of the United States and its allies (Israel and Saudi Arabia); that of the Iranian camp, to which Syria belongs, tacitly supported by Russia; and finally that of the European Union, the international actor who has the most to lose in the Iran/US confrontation and continues to try desperately to extinguish peripheral fires.

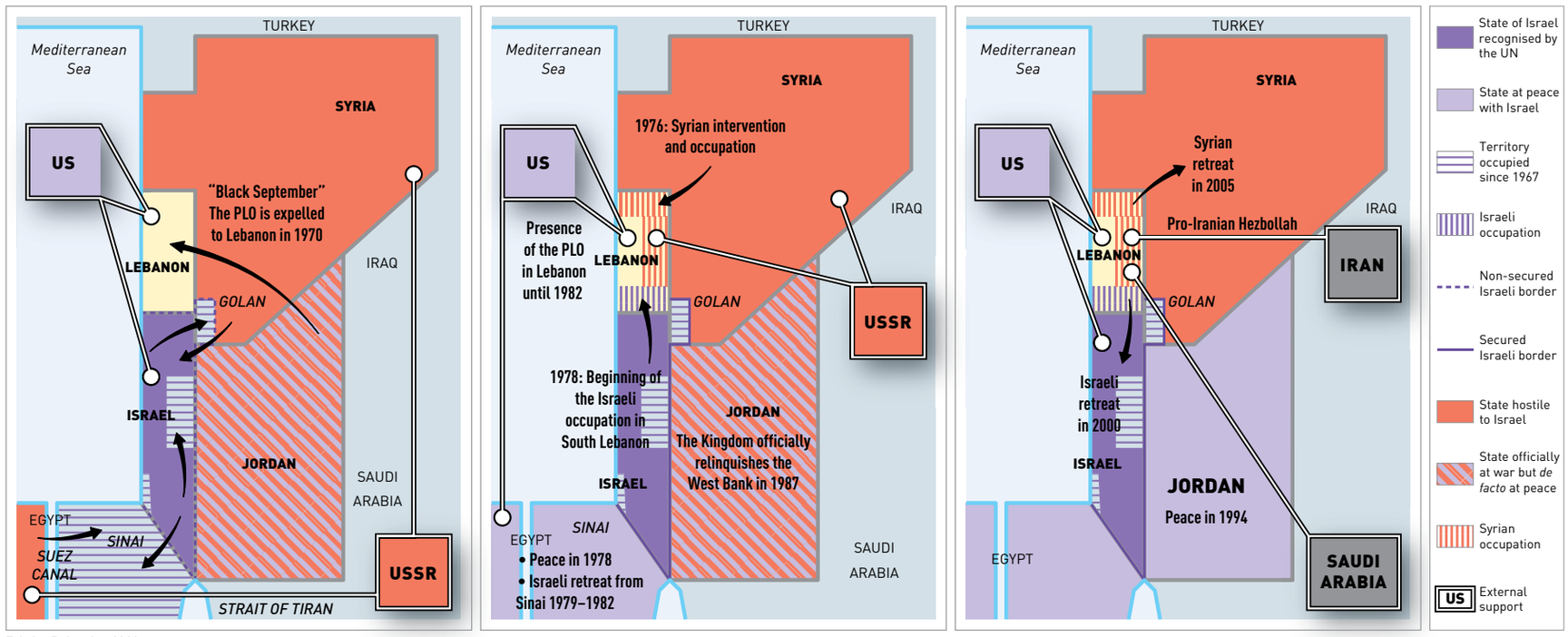
Syria has always rejected its separation from Lebanon. Consequently, the Syrians have continued to impede Lebanon's progress, for example, through the breakdown of the customs union in 1950, the blocking of the border, etc. This was true even under liberal Syrian governments. With the rise to power of the Baʿath Party, champions of Arab nationalism, the pressure increased. In 1976 Syria took advantage of the civil war to intervene in Lebanon (at the request of the Lebanese government), and prevent the Palestinians and their allies from taking power. In 1990 the United States offered Lebanon to Syria in exchange for Syrian support in the first Gulf War. Was that Syrian protectorate durable in the minds of President Bush Sr. and his administration? Did it offer Lebanon to Syria in exchange for its renunciation of the Golan Heights? After Hafez al-Assad's death in June of 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad had difficulties establishing himself. Syria was obliged to abandon Lebanon amidst suspicions of Syria's role in the assassination of the former prime minister Rafic Hariri in February of 2005.

THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON (JUNE–SEPTEMBER 1982)



Fabrice Balanche, based on Georges Corm.

LEBANON IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

Israel wanted to secure its border in the north from attacks by the Palestinians and Hezbollah. In 1978 Israel occupied southern Lebanon (the so-called "security" zone) with the help of a Lebanese militia, the South Lebanon Army, led by Major Saad Hadad. In 2000 it left this territory except for the region of Shebaa on the slopes of Mount Hermon. Israel carried out destructive interventions on Lebanese territory that caused thousands of civilian casualties: in 1982 in the invasion of Lebanon and siege of West Beirut; in 1996 in Operation "Grapes of Wrath" and the Massacre of Qana; and in the summer of 2006 in the "War of 33 Days".

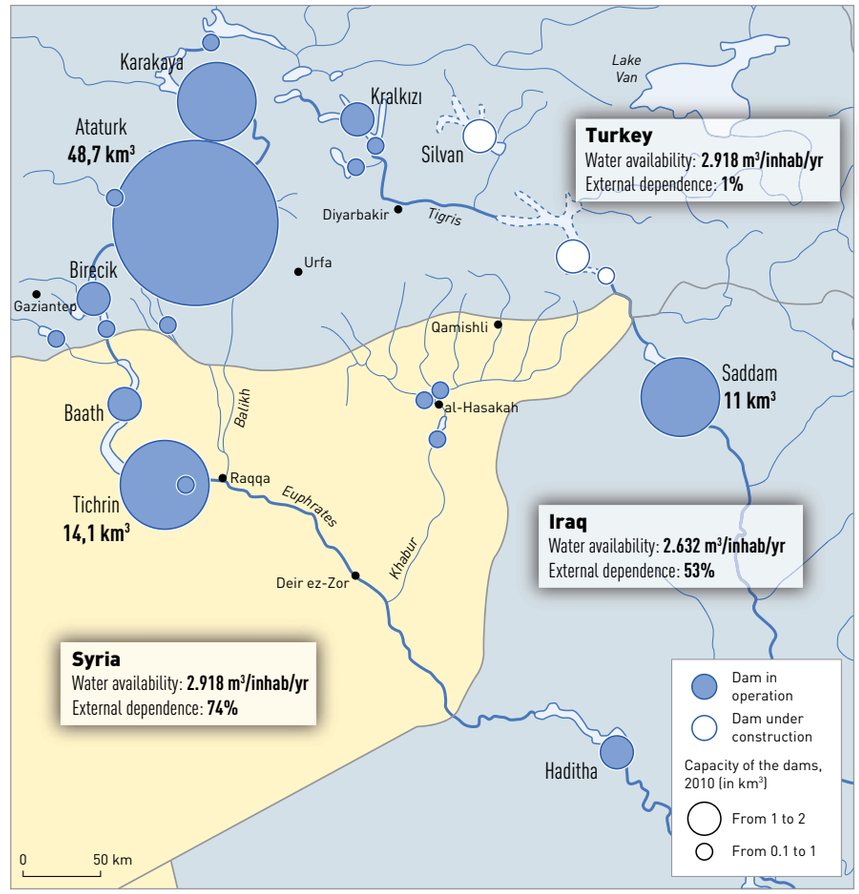
Certainly Hezbollah is a real menace to the security of Israel because it has sophisticated weapons capable of reaching main Israeli population centres. However, the sporadic shooting of rockets from the border zone north of Israel has caused, for some years, few victims on the Israeli side. In fact, Israel remains beyond the reach of a massive attack by Hezbollah. Otherwise, Israel would not have retreated from southern Lebanon in 2000. Israel knows perfectly well that the Lebanese government is too weak to prevent Hezbollah from firing into its territory. How could the fragile Lebanese army disarm a movement that is disciplined in combat, acclaimed for the "liberation" of southern Lebanon, and that enjoys the firm support of Iran and Syria? How can one believe that Syria would abandon a major asset in the global settlement of its conflict with the state of Israel? Hezbollah makes it possible for Syria to avoid direct confrontation with Israel, while maintaining its legitimate demands for the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967.

Turkey's Resurgence

The episode of the "Freedom flotilla" headed to Gaza in June of 2010 with the intention of breaking the Israeli-Egyptian blockade of Gaza, with its nine Turkish casualties at the hands of Israeli special forces, damaged relations between Israel and Turkey. Turkey was already aggrieved, at the end of 2008, by the Israeli attack on Gaza, which took place while Turkey was mediating between Syria and Israel. Turkey is no longer Israel's trusted ally in the Near East; it even stands up for the Palestinians much more than many Arab countries. Nevertheless, Turkey was one of the first Muslim countries to recognise Israel in March of 1949, and one of the last to recognise the PLO in 1988. Is this cooling off a passing phase, or a genuine divorce from the state of Israel? The agreements for military cooperation signed in 1996 between the two countries have not been officially rescinded. The Turkish-Brazilian Agreement with Iran in May of 2010 for the supply of enriched uranium to the Islamic Republic also antagonised Israel deeply, but the state of Israel did not, however, call into question its own sales of sophisticated arms to Turkey.

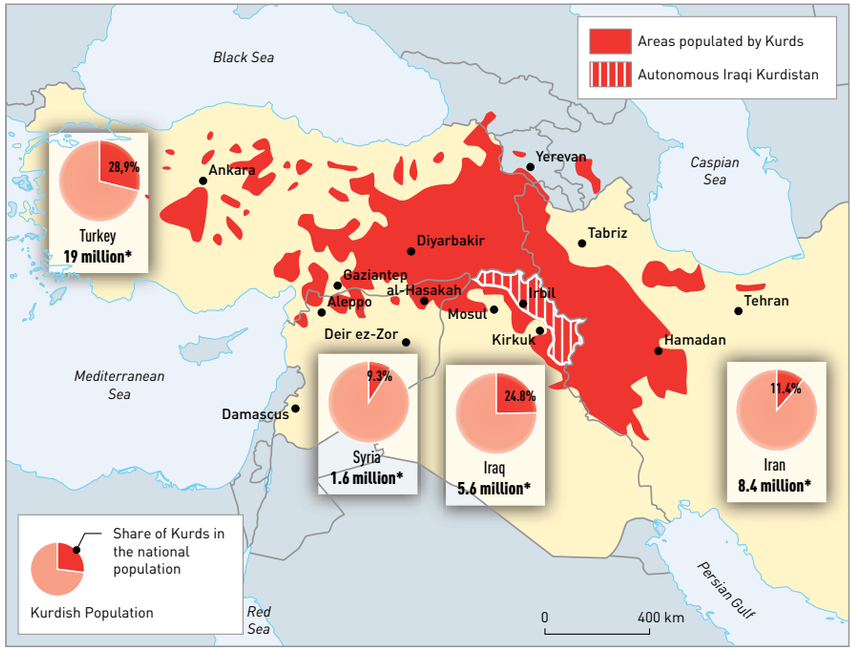
During the Cold War, Turkey joined the western camp so as to be protected against the territorial ambitions of the Soviet Union. It hosted American missiles and bases and fully participated in the apparatus encircling the Soviet Union. Turkey had two main points of contention with Syria: the sanjak of Iskenderun, which Turkey annexed in 1939, and the rights to the water of the Euphrates through the construction of the Great Anatolian Project (GAP), a vast network of dams built in the 1980s on the upper course of the Euphrates, which greatly limited the river's flow downstream. Syria, in turn, supported the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) which used Syrian territory as a rear base and the Lebanese Beqaa under Syrian control as a training camp. In the 1990s tensions were high between Syria and Turkey over the Kurdish issue and the sharing of water. Turkey bombed the PKK camps in the Beqaa, demanded the expulsion of its leader Abdullah Öcalan who had taken refuge in Syria, and in 1998 assembled several divisions on the Syrian border. The flow of the

HYDRAULIC POWER IN TURKEY



Source : GAP, 2010.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE KURDISH POPULATION

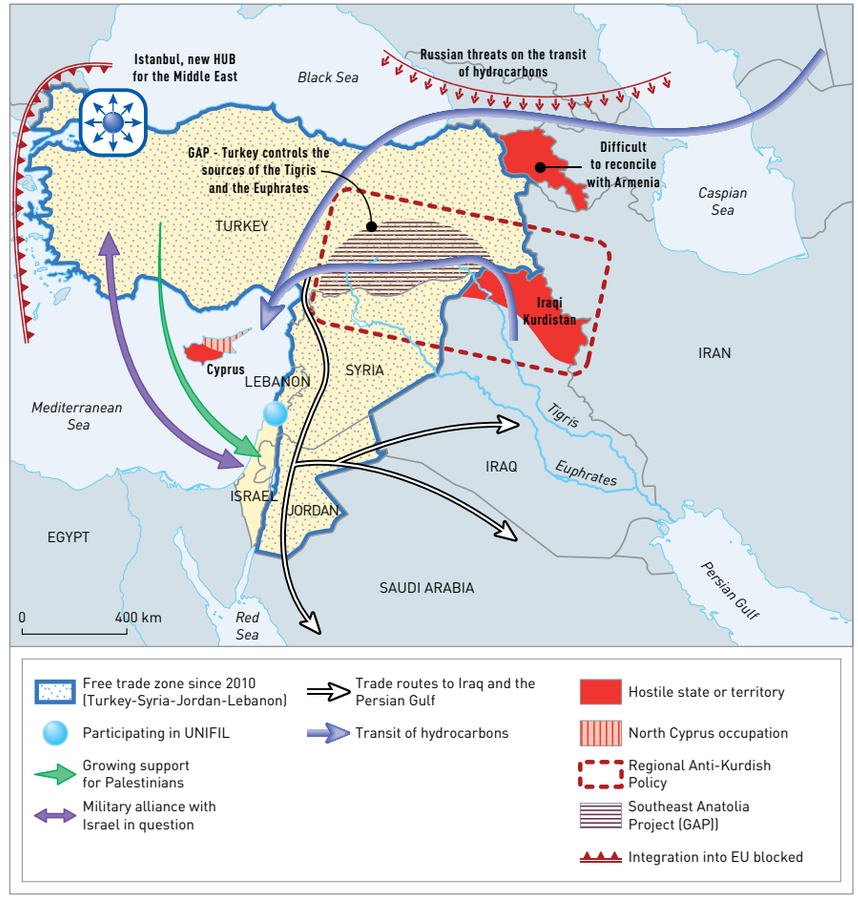


Source: Kurdish Institute of Paris, 2000.

Euphrates was slowed under the pretext of filling Turkish reservoirs; this was disastrous for Syrian agriculture. Syria could do little but acquiesce.

Bashar al-Assad normalised relations between the two countries. Syria's claims with regard to Iskendrun were abandoned by the free trade treaty of 2004 between Syria and Turkey: an addendum to the protocol stipulated the mutual recognition of borders. After resolving this delicate issue, both countries were able to focus on the danger that Kurdish irredentism (as manifest in the creation of the Iraqi Kurdistan) represented to their territorial integrity. Moreover, Syria was an essential element that enabled Turkish economic expansion toward the Arabian Peninsula. Following a long period of disinterest in its former Arab provinces, the new emergent power renewed strong ties based on Muslim solidarity and economic pragmatism. The European Union remains Turkey's main trade partner but its procrastination in integrating Turkey into the Union encouraged it to create its own economic space. In June of 2010, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan officially established a free trade zone.

THE GEOPOLITICAL POWER OF AN EMERGING COUNTRY



Fabrice Balanche, 2011.

The economic relations of Turkey with the Near East (in 2008, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan represented approximately 1 per cent of Turkish foreign trade, or less Israel's share), seemed modest compared to Europe (60 per cent of trade), but this trade was increasing steadily. Thus, the Syrian-Turkish border shifted from a fractured state to that of an interface, at least until the events of 2011 in Syria, which for the time being bring into question the process of regional economic integration.

Conclusion

The current situation in the Arab Near East is intimately linked to the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, the resolution of this conflict will not solve all the problems pointed out in this atlas. The Near East is a buffer zone dominated by foreign powers: the United States, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and now Turkey is back on centre stage, especially given its role in relation to Syria in 2011. Foreign intervention is facilitated by the internal weaknesses of the Arab states in the Near East, divided as they are along ethnic and territorial lines that national constructs have not erased. While communitarianism is a constituent element of the Lebanese state, it is the hidden face of the Syrian regime. The Palestinian state cannot emerge because of the Israeli occupation, but can it ever exist with a territory divided between Gaza, the West Bank (which is itself divided by the network of settlements)? As for Jordan—in 1920 the most contrived state in the Near East, led by a foreign monarchy, in the frontline of the Arab-Israeli conflict—it has endured and now appears to be the most stable country of the Arab Near East. Undoubtedly, the religious legitimacy of the Hashemite dynasty and the confessional and ethnic homogeneity of its population have contributed to this stability, unlike in Lebanon and Syria.

In the Near East, politics take precedence over the economy at all levels. The plans for development established by the different regimes since independence were only conceived as means of political control, economic objectives being secondary; this was the cause of their failure. The situation of indirect revenues has also not favoured the establishment of rational policies in which effectiveness is prioritised over power relationships. Therefore the region is not well integrated in the global economic system because of its structural problems, although it has quite a formidable potential as a geographic interface between Europe and the Gulf. The Arab Near East has become peripheral to the oil producing Gulf states, the true economic centre of the Near East. This situation contrasts with that of Israel, which has experienced very strong economic growth linked to the development of new technologies and its excellent position in global markets. The relations between Israel and the Arab hinterland are limited by the conflict; only Jordan, influenced by the United States, has developed mixed industrial zones with the state of Israel. As for the Palestinian territories, their economy is increasingly dependent on international aid, paid in exchange for the Palestinians' moderation on the ground and in their negotiations with Israel.

In concluding this work, we wish to underscore the importance of the spatial approach to understanding the Near East; discourses may lie, space does not. Therefore, it is important to identify the main strata that are superimposed upon this space. The first is that of the raw matter, what is visible and inherited: the natural conditions, the distribution of the population, and the political constructs. It is a space modelled by national constructs since the end of the Ottoman Empire, but that is a process that has since lost momentum. The second stratum consists of the very contemporary effects caused by policies of economic liberalisation in relation to globalisation. The latter has influenced different countries and territories unevenly: Jordan more so than Syria, and metropolises more than smaller peripheral cities. The Near East is reconnecting with the ancient Ottoman logic of a space open to the world, which had been put on hold during the construction phase of the nation states. And yet, although it has re-emerged in force over the last twenty years, it is restrained by regional geopolitics. The new spatial process did not destroy the old one; it accompanies it or dominates it depending on the case. The third stratum is the combination of geopolitics and a reactivated communitarianism. Socio-spatial differentiation, driven by globalisation as well as by external and internal political pressures, has led to territorial fragmentation at many levels. This final view is the most difficult to grasp because we are dealing with a hidden dimension of space, one normally reserved for the initiates of power, who seldom share their secrets with the uninitiated: "Power is not easily represented but it is nevertheless decipherable. We only need to know how to do it; otherwise we would always be able to read it."[1]

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1 Claude Raffestin, *Pour une géographie du pouvoir* (Paris: Librairies techniques, 1980).

Glossary

Alawism: Alawis or Alawites, also called Nusayris, are a branch of Shiism. The founder of the Nusayris was Muhammad b. Nusayr al-Namiri al-Abdi (d. 884). The doctrine is founded on the idea that the divine message has a hidden meaning that is reserved for the initiated, a message that the mass of the infidels ignore. The Alawites believe in reincarnation, like the Druze; this marginalises them among Muslims; so much so that Sunni and Shiite theologians are divided as to whether or not they can be considered Muslims at all.

***asabiyya*:** This Arabic term refers to a "solidarity group" founded on relations of blood, community, territory, or simply a common objective such as the taking of power. The concept goes back to Ibn Khaldun and his main work or *Prolegomena*, in which he interprets the movement of history in the Arab world through the idea of *asabiyya*.

Baʿathism: This doctrine combines Arab socialism and pan-Arab nationalism. The Baʿath Party was founded in 1947 in Damascus by Syrian thinkers, primarily Michel Aflaq (an Orthodox Christian), Salah al-Din al-Bitar (a Sunni), and Zaki al-Arsuzi (an Alawite). The Baʿath Party led Syria since 1963 and was in power in Iraq from 1968 until 2003, although the two branches of Baʿathism have always been in opposition. A few sister parties have surged in other Arab countries but have never grown beyond the stage of small groups.

***Bagdadbahn*:** The Baghdad railway is a railway line built between 1903 and 1940 in the Ottoman Empire to connect Konya, in Turkey, with Baghdad. It was one of the modernisation projects of the Ottoman Empire undertaken by Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909) to ensure the cohesion of the empire against the pressures from European powers. The works were entrusted to Germany and completed after World War I by the British in Iraq.

***bidun*:** Literally, "without"; that is, in the Syrian context "without Syrian nationality." It applies to the 120,000 Syrian Kurds deprived of Syrian nationality in 1962 and considered foreigners.

Chouf Mountains: A region located to the southeast of Beirut in the Mount Lebanon range. The Chouf is inhabited by a mix of mostly Druze and Maronite Christians. It is a traditional Druze stronghold, along with Wadi al-Taym (region of Hasbaya-Rachaya) in Lebanon and Jabal al-Druze in Syria.

Circassians: A Caucasian Muslim people who were expelled by the Russians in the middle of the nineteenth century; they fled to the Ottoman Empire. They were settled on the marginal steppes to protect the *maamoura* from Bedouin attacks, as was the case in Amman in Jordan. They served as elite recruits for the armies of the French and British mandate authorities. Jordan's Royal Guard consists exclusively of Circassians.

***Destour*:** Generally translated as "constitution," this term is likely of Persian origin. In 1920, the name was applied to a Tunisian political party that aimed to free the country from the French protectorate. Its president was Habib Bourguiba. It is also the name of a Lebanese political party.

Druze: This heterodox offshoot of Shiism is based on philosophical initiation. It derives its name from Ismailism; it is a synthesis of different religious and intellectual currents. As with the Alawites, Druze doctrine is secret, is reserved for initiates, and relies on metempsychosis. The Druze are concentrated in Lebanon, in the mountains of the Chouf, and in Syria, where the Jabal al-Druze southeast of Damascus is their main centre.

dust bowl: This term indicates an ecological catastrophe that occurred in the 1930s in the United States and Canada when very strong dust storms ravaged the great plains. The phenomenon, caused by excessive ploughing and a lack of vegetative cover, caused severe erosion.

GAFTA: The Greater Arab Free Trade Area; a pan-Arab free trade zone created in 1997.

***ghazu*:** This Arabic term means raid, invasion or conquest. It is more commonly translated as "razzia," meaning a rapid incursion into foreign territory with the objective of obtaining spoils. Throughout history, the sedentary people of the marginal steppes have particularly feared the Bedouin tribes.

***ghuta*:** The Arabic word *ghuta* refers to an oasis formed by an endorheic river. The Ghouta of Damascus has its source in the Barada River.

Hashemites: Originally from the Arabian Peninsula, this dynasty descends from the Prophet Muhammad. Hashemites dominated the Hejaz and were

the protectors of Mecca until its conquest by the Saudis in 1925. During World War I, they allied themselves with the British against the Turks who had promised them an Arab kingdom with Damascus as its capital. However, it did not last long and King Faisal was obliged to leave Damascus for Baghdad, where the British gave him the throne of Iraq. His brother Abdullah became king of Transjordan.

Ismailism: This Shiite sect dates back to the death of the sixth Shiite imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, in 765. The Ismailis followed Ismail rather than his younger brother Musa al-Kadhim (like the Twelver Shiites). Unlike other Shiites, their imam is living: the Aga Khan. They represent less than 1 per cent of the Syrian population and live primarily in Salamiya.

Kemalism: The founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk ("father of the Turks"), inspired this political doctrine. It may be summarised in six fundamental principles: republicanism, populism, secularism, revolutionism, nationalism, and statism.

***liwa*:** This term describes a district and is synonymous with the Turkish term sanjak. The sanjak of Alexandretta, given to Turkey by France in 1939, is called in Arabic *liwa Iskandirun*. Following the Ottoman period, it was replaced by *qada* or *mantiqa* as administrative levels.

***maamoura*:** This word is derived from the terms "inhabit" or "accommodate." It refers to the "inhabited land" of sedentary populations, as opposed to the *badya* or steppe of the Bedouins. In the Near East, it is the strip of land stretching from the coastal mountains and the steppe of Aleppo to Amman.

Maronites: This Eastern Church arose around 400 in central Syria around a hermit named Maron. Persecuted in the ninth century CE, the Maronites took refuge in Mount Lebanon, where the community flourished. With the crusades, relations with Rome became stronger and, in the twelfth century, the Maronite Church officially became Catholic. Worldwide, the Maronites number 3 million, of which one-fourth are in Lebanon and constitute 20 per cent of the population.

Melkites: This word comes from the Syriac *melek* meaning "sovereign." It came into use after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 to designate the group of churches remaining loyal to the Emperor of Byzantium (Malik), as opposed to the monophysite churches that did not recognise the dual nature of Christ (divine and human). Subsequently, this designation was reserved for the Byzantine Church that was united in orthodoxy with Rome in the seventeenth century, so as to distinguish it from the Greek Orthodox Church from which it stemmed.

Mufti: A Sunni Muslim scholar interpreting Islamic law; he has the authority to issue legal opinions called fatwas. He may be consulted by private individuals or official bodies to ascertain the exact position to be adopted on cultural, judicial or political issues, so as to be in compliance with Islamic law. He generally has more authority than the ulema (lit., scholars); the ulema normally choose the mufti, unless it is the prerogative of the head of state. For Shiites, muftis are called mullahs.

Mutasarrifate: Following the Christian massacres in 1860, the European powers forced the Ottoman Empire to grant Mount Lebanon an autonomous status. It was administered by a governor called the "Mutasarrif," an Ottoman national, non-Lebanese but Christian in faith. He was assisted by an administrative council of twelve members representing the different communities. The region of Jerusalem experienced the same administrative evolution, as did Deir ez-Zor, with the difference that in eastern Syria it was more a matter of pleasing the Bedouin tribes and not the great powers who sought to protect the eastern Christians.

***Nahda*:** During the nineteenth century, the decline of the Ottoman Empire provoked a modern Arab renaissance movement. It began in Egypt, driven by Pasha Muhammad Ali and spread to the Near East. It was, simultaneously, a political, cultural, and religious movement.

Nakba: The massive exodus of Palestinians in 1948, fleeing from Zionist militias, or chased by the same. It is reported that 750,000 Palestinians (80 per cent of the Arab population) fled the current territory of Israel within a period of six months and took refuge in neighbouring countries, in the West Bank, and in Gaza.

Shiism: Shiism is one of the three main branches of Islam along with Sunnism and Kharijism; it comprises approximately 10 to 15 per cent of Muslims. Twelver Shiites, those who follow the twelfth imam, are the most numerous among the sects (Ismailis, Alawites, Druze, Zaydis, etc.). They make up "Orthodox Shiism."

Sunnism: It represents the main current of Islam, which consists of 90 per cent of Muslims. It derives from the Sunna, Muhammad's practice, which acquired the status of law. Sunnis generally follow one of four schools of law: Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi'i, and Hanbali, of which a recent manifestation is the Wahhabi branch.

Tanzimat: The term refers to the Ottoman period from 1839 to 1876 and means "reorganisation" or reform; during this time the first constitution was promulgated. The project aimed at combatting the decline of the empire in the face of the European powers that were hoping to divide it among themselves. A direct form of administration succeeded the indirect one of the preceding period. The sultan tried to build a modern state based on the European model, though he was not as successful as the Meiji reform in Japan.

***umma*:** The universal community of Muslims. Regardless of sect, whether Shiite or Sunni, all Muslims belong to a single community that transcends clan-based or tribal divides. Under the Ottoman Empire, the millet system acknowledged only one millet for the Muslims, whereas each of the various Christian communities had its own.

UNRWA: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was founded in 1949 by the United Nations to assist Palestinian refugees. UNRWA defines "Palestine refugees" as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." This also applies to the descendants of refugees, which raises the number to five million people in 2011 (up from 750,000 in 1950).

***vilayet*:** A Turkish term that describes an administrative district at the head of which was a pasha. It comes from the Arabic *wilaya* (governorate) led by a *wali* (governor).

Yishuv: This term refers to all the Jews present in Palestine before the creation of the state of Israel. The Old Yishuv comprised the Jews that lived in Ottoman Palestine before 1882; the New Yishuv applies to those who came afterwards as part of the Zionist movement to create the state of Israel.

Yom Kippur War; also called the Ramadan War, the October War, and the 1973 Arab-Israeli War; it lasted from 6 October to 24 October 1973—in it, Israel opposed a coalition led by Egypt and Syria. On Yom Kippur (a day of fasting and a public holiday in Israel), which coincided with Ramadan, the Egyptians and Syrians attacked Israel simultaneously and by surprise on the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights.

Zionism: An ideology that owes its name to Mount Zion, the hill on which Jerusalem was built. It was founded by Theodor Herzl in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and formalised at the Congress of Basel in 1897. It advocates the existence of a spiritual, territorial or state centre populated by Jews in the Land of Israel—a land that corresponded to Ottoman Palestine and then to British Mandate Palestine, and is believed by Jews to be the land promised to them by God.

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