

The Partition of Palestine

Objectives:

Students will: Understand the issues surrounding the partition of Palestine.

Design a map for the partition of Palestine in 1947 based on contemporaneous data.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Introduction and Part I in the student text and completed..

Handouts:

“Designing Your Partition Plan”

“Palestine Maps and Sources”

(A PowerPoint presentation of these maps is available for download at <www.choices.edu/middleeastmaterials>.)

In the Classroom:

1. Discussing Partition—Review the British decision to give the UN responsibility for Palestine with your students. How did the British originally come to control Palestine and other mandates in the Middle East? Remind students that Palestine was the only mandate that was not granted independence. Why did the British give the UN responsibility for Palestine? What do students think different groups in the region might have wanted at the time? Would they have supported this transfer of power?

The UN then decided to partition Palestine between Jews and Palestinians. Were there any possible pitfalls of this plan?

2. Group Work—Explain that student groups will now be given the opportunity to design their own partition plans for the region after World War II. Divide students into groups of three or four and distribute “Designing Your Partition Plan.” Tell students to follow the directions for Part I of the handout. Give groups five minutes to discuss the factors they think

might be important to consider when creating their own partition plans. Provide students with suggestions as needed to broaden their thinking (see “Factors for Students to Consider When Designing Partition Plans” for suggestions).

3. Understanding Maps, Sources, and Different Perspectives—Now distribute “Palestine Maps and Sources” to each group. If necessary, help students to understand what data the maps show. Have students consider what the perspectives of Jews and Arabs at the time might mean for their partition plans. Explain, if necessary, why the information provided in these maps and sources might be important to incorporate in their partition plans. Have groups use the blank map to devise their own partition plans. Remind students to complete Part II of “Designing Your Partition Plan” while they are drawing their maps.

4. Sharing Conclusions—When groups have completed their maps, ask them to share their decisions. What did different groups aim to achieve with their partition plans? What factors did they incorporate and what compromises did they have to make in designing their plans? What other information did students think would be useful in designing their plans? Encourage groups to point out possible areas where contention or conflict might occur in their own and others’ maps.

You may wish to show your students the following Scholars Online videos: “How do environmental issues affect international politics in the region?” and “What are the challenges of high population growth?” both by Professor Daniel Orenstein of Brown University. Have students assess whether their plans address the issues raised by Professor Orenstein. (Alternatively, have students use these videos as additional resources when designing their partition plans.)

5. Understanding Outcomes—Show students the map that depicts the actual UN plan. How were students' maps different? What do students think about the UN plan? Does it seem reasonable? Can students figure out which factors the UN focused on or what compromises the plan shows? What points of contention can they see in the UN map? You may also wish to show your class maps from later decades that show how the borders in the region have changed since 1947.

Notes:

You might want to do this lesson over two days or use an entire block.

Students need to have a good understanding of the history of the region to complete this task effectively. You may wish to give a mini-lecture or have them re-read “The Birth

of Israel” before you begin this exercise.

Providing additional resources such as contemporary accounts from Palestinian refugees or Holocaust survivors might enrich the lesson.

You might consider having students read only to “The Creation of Israel” in the student text before doing this lesson so that they do not know the outcome of the UN decision before designing their own solutions.

Factors for Students to Consider When Designing Partition Plans

The following are suggestions you may wish to use to prompt student groups' discussion.

1. Population:
 - numbers
 - locations of different groups
2. Land ownership:
 - amounts
 - locations of different groups
3. Quality of land for agriculture
4. Location of natural resources including water
5. Location of cities
6. Shape of a viable state:
 - access to the sea
 - length of the borders (affects ability to control and protect them)
 - size of the state
7. Historical claims and ties
8. Religious claims and ties, including to Jerusalem
9. Previous commitments made
10. The Holocaust
11. Fairness
12. International opinion (i.e. will the plan be recognized and accepted by the world community?)
13. Local opinion (i.e. will the plan be recognized and accepted by those immediately affected?)
14. Military strength of each community (i.e. will one party be able to undermine a plan that it opposes?)

Designing Your Partition Plan

Instructions: Imagine that it is 1947 and you have been asked to come up with your own plan for the partition of Palestine.

Part I: Answer the following questions with your group members.

1. What factors do you think should be considered in your partition plan? Think about things like geography, history, population, and the promises that were made at the time. What do you and your group members think are the most important issues to be considered?

2. What will your group aim to achieve with your partition plan?

Part II: Your teacher will now provide you with a number of maps and sources. Use these, as well as the information in your reading, to help you develop your own plan to create a Jewish state and an Arab state in Palestine. You may find that you have to make compromises and that not everything can be considered. Be sure to answer the following question with your group members while you are designing your plan. You can draw your plan on the blank map provided.

3. You have been provided with some background information and statistics for the region. What other information do you wish you had? What other sources or kinds of information do you think are important to consider?

Palestine Maps and Sources

Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

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

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour

Statement of British Policy in Palestine Issued by Winston Churchill in June 1922

"...The tension which has prevailed from time to time in Palestine is mainly due to apprehensions, which are entertained both by sections of the Arab and by sections of the Jewish population. These apprehensions, so far as the Arabs are concerned, are partly based upon exaggerated interpretations of the meaning of the [Balfour] Declaration favouring the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.... Unauthorized statements have been made to the effect that the purpose in view is to create a wholly Jewish Palestine. Phrases have been used such as that Palestine is to become 'as Jewish as England is English.' His Majesty's Government regard any such expectation as impracticable and have no such aim in view. Nor have they at any time contemplated...the disappearance or the subordination of the Arabic population, language, or culture in Palestine. They would draw attention to the fact that the terms of the Declaration referred to do not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine...."

Jewish Agency, The Biltmore Program, 1942

"In our generation, and in particular in the course of the past twenty years, the Jewish people have awakened and transformed their ancient homeland; from 50,000 at the end of the last war their numbers have increased to more than 500,000. They have made the waste places bear fruit and the desert to blossom. Their pioneering achievements in agriculture and in industry, embodying new patterns of cooperative endeavor, have written a notable page in the history of colonization.... In the new values thus created, their Arab neighbors in Palestine have shared...."

The Conference urges that the gates of Palestine be opened; that the Jewish Agency be vested with control of immigration into Palestine and with the necessary authority for upbuilding the country, including the development of its unoccupied and uncultivated lands; and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.

Then and only then will the age-old wrong to the Jewish people be righted."

“The Problem of Palestine,” submitted by the Arab Office, Jerusalem, to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, March 1946

“The whole Arab people is unalterably opposed to the attempt to impose Jewish immigration and settlement upon it, and ultimately to establish a Jewish State in Palestine. Its opposition is based primarily upon right. The Arabs of Palestine are descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the country, who have been in occupation of it since the beginning of history; they cannot agree that it is right to subject an indigenous population against its will to alien immigrants, whose claim is based upon a historical connection which ceased effectively many centuries ago. Moreover they form the majority of the population; as such they cannot submit to a policy of immigration which if pursued for long will turn them from a majority into a minority in an alien state; and they claim the democratic right of a majority to make its own decisions in matters of urgent national concern....

...The Palestinian State would be an Arab state not...in any narrow racial sense, nor in the sense that non-Arabs should be placed in a position of inferiority, but because the form and policy of its government would be based on a recognition of two facts: first that the majority of the citizens are Arabs, and secondly that Palestine is part of the Arab world and has no future except through close cooperation with other Arab states....”

Proclamation of the Independence of Israel, 14 May 1948

“The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and national identity was formed. Here they...created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from the Land of Israel, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain their statehood. In recent decades they returned in their masses. They reclaimed the wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages, and established a vigorous and ever-growing community, with its own economic and cultural life. They sought peace yet were prepared to defend themselves. They brought the blessings of progress to all inhabitants of the country and looked forward to sovereign independence....

The recent holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, proved anew the need to solve the problem of homelessness and lack of independence of the Jewish people by means of the re-establishment of the Jewish State, which would open the gates to all Jews and endow the Jewish people with the equality of status among the family of nations.

The survivors of the disastrous slaughter in Europe, and also Jews from other lands, have not desisted from their efforts to reach Erets-Israel, in face of difficulties, obstacles and perils; and have not ceased to urge their right to a life of dignity, freedom, and honest toil in their ancestral land....”

Statement Issued by the Governments of the Arab League States on the Occasion of the Entry of the Arab Armies into Palestine, 15 May 1948

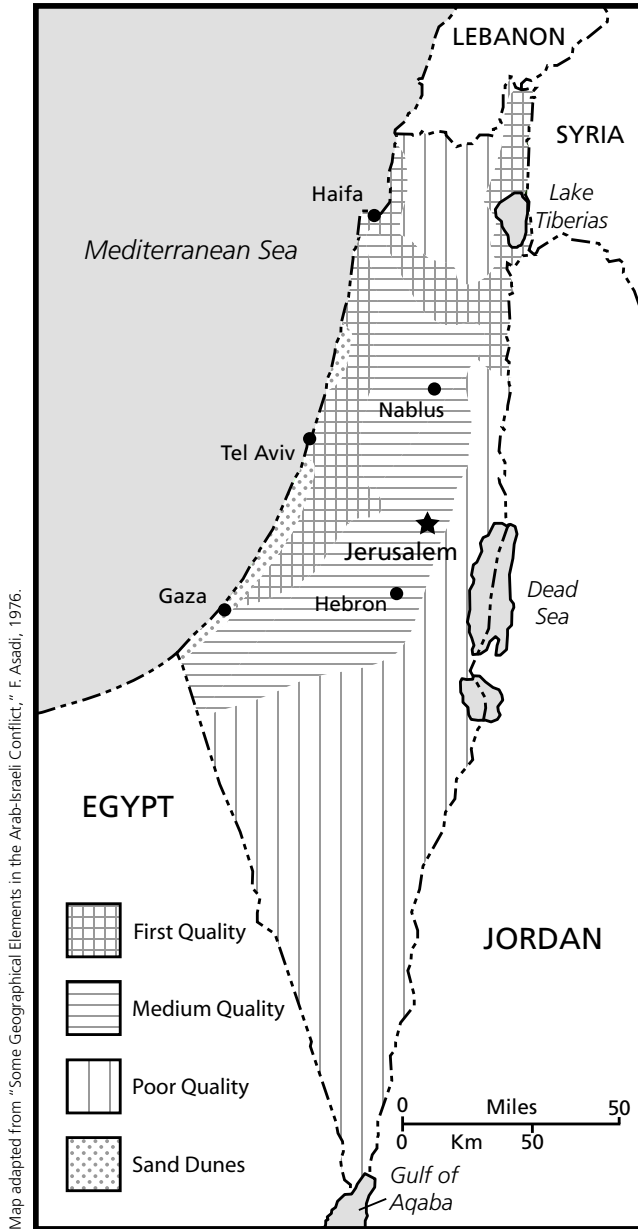
“...The Arabs have always asked for their freedom and independence. On the outbreak of the First World War, and when the Allies declared that they were fighting for the liberation of peoples, the Arabs joined them and fought on their side with a view to realizing their national aspirations and obtaining their independence. England pledged herself to recognize the independence of the Arab countries in Asia, including Palestine....

As Palestine is an Arab country, situated in the heart of the Arab countries and attached to the Arab world by various ties—spiritual, historical, and strategic—the Arab countries...have concerned themselves with the problem of Palestine and have raised it to the international level....

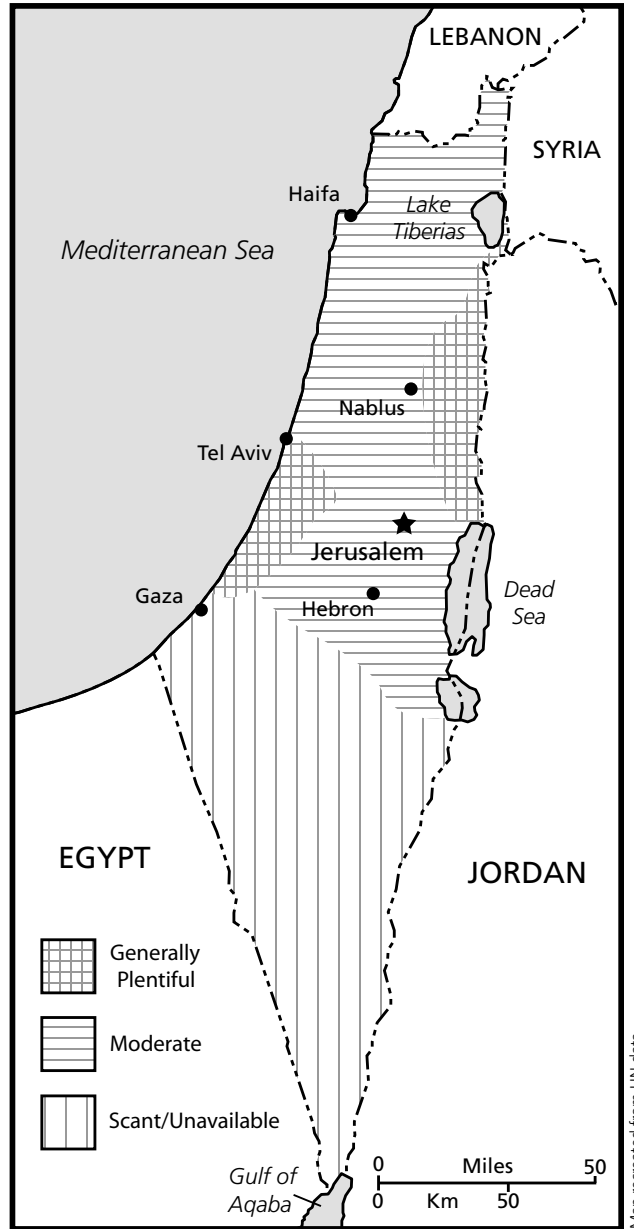
...The Arab League and its Governments have not spared any effort to pursue any course...in order to bring about a just solution of the Palestine problem; [a solution] based upon true democratic principles and compatible with the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the [Charter] of the United Nations, and which would be lasting, guarantee peace and security in the country and prepare it for progress and prosperity....

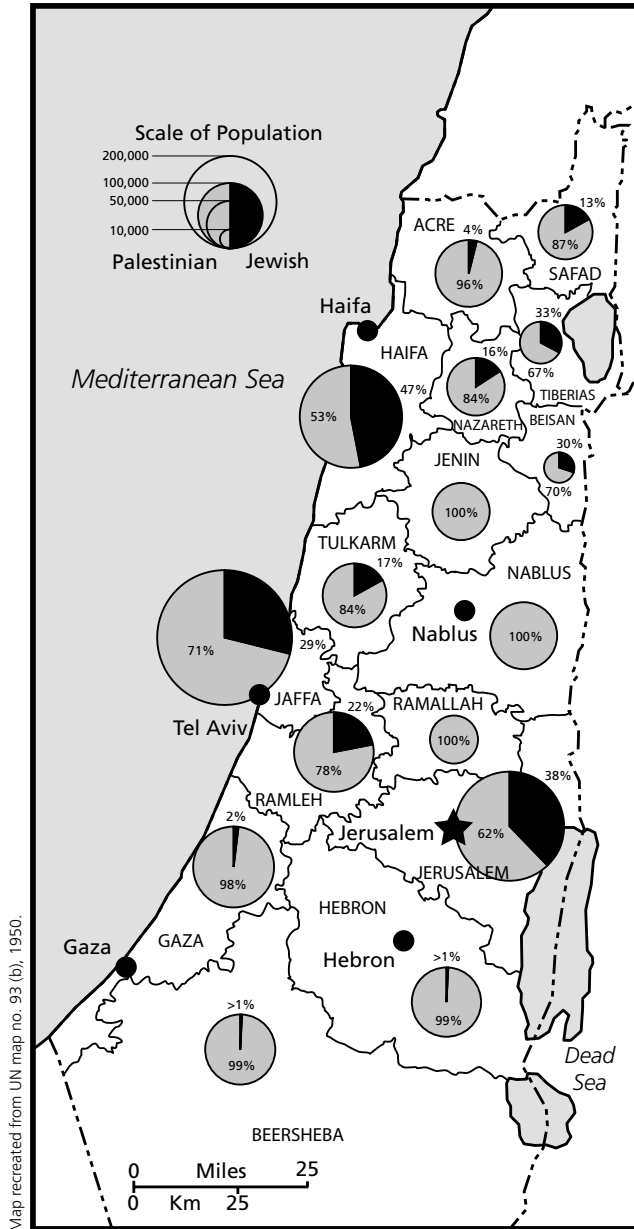
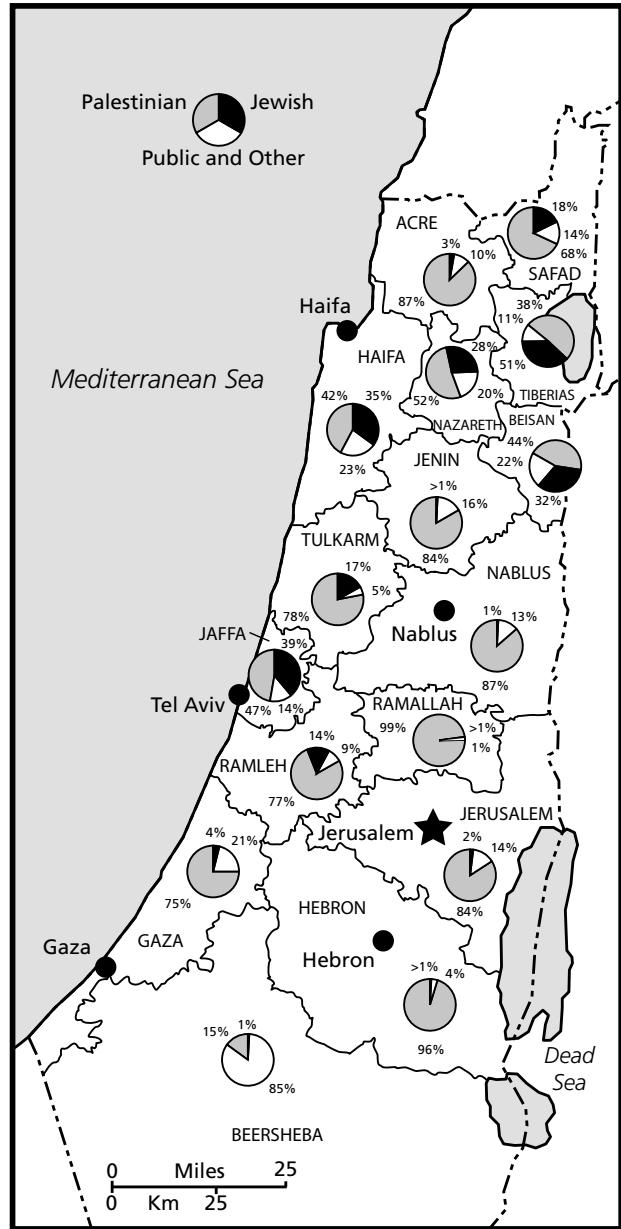
The governments of the Arab States emphasize...that the only just solution of the Palestine problem is the establishment of a unitary Palestinian State....”

Soil Quality



Water Resources



Population Distribution, 1946**Land Ownership, 1945**

The population of Palestine in 1946 was approximately 1.8 million people. Jewish immigration had increased steadily throughout the early twentieth century. The population of Jews in Palestine had increased from 8 percent in 1912 to about 33 percent in 1946. About 67 percent of the population was Palestinian Arab in 1946.

Your Partition Plan

