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Sykes-Picot Agreement

1916



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Sykes-Picot Agreement

Map of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

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of [Aleppo](#), while Britain wanted secure access to [India](#) through the [Suez Canal](#) and the [Persian Gulf](#). It was out of a need to coordinate British and French interests in these regions that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was born.

Its provisions were as follows: (1) Russia should acquire the Armenian provinces of [Erzurum](#), Trebizond ([Trabzon](#)), [Van](#), and [Bitlis](#), with some Kurdish territory to the southeast; (2) France should acquire Lebanon and the Syrian littoral, [Adana](#), [Cilicia](#), and the hinterland adjacent to Russia's share, that hinterland including Aintab, [Urfa](#), [Mardin](#), [Diyarbakır](#), and [Mosul](#); (3) Great Britain should acquire southern Mesopotamia, including [Baghdad](#), and also the Mediterranean ports of [Haifa](#) and ['Akko](#) (Acre); (4) between the French and the British acquisitions there should be a confederation of Arab states or a single independent Arab state, divided into French and British spheres of influence; (5) Alexandretta ([İskenderun](#)) should be a free port; and (6) Palestine, because of the holy places, should be under an international regime.

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Turkish Nationalists' victories after the military collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to the gradual abandonment of any Italian projects for Anatolia.

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The [Arabs](#), however, who had learned of the Sykes-Picot Agreement through the publication of it, together with other secret treaties of imperial Russia, by the Soviet Russian government late in 1917, were scandalized by it. This secret arrangement conflicted in the first place with pledges already given by the British to the [Hashemite](#) dynast [Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī](#), sharif of [Mecca](#), during the [Ḥusayn-McMahon Correspondence](#) (1915–16). Based on the understanding that the Arabs would eventually receive independence, Ḥusayn had brought the Arabs of the [Hejaz](#) into revolt against the Turks in June 1916.

Despite the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the British still appeared to support Arab self-determination at first, helping Ḥusayn's son [Fayṣal](#) and his forces press into Syria in 1918 and establish a government in [Damascus](#). In April 1920, however, the [Allied powers](#) agreed to divide governance of the region into separate Class "A" [mandates](#) at the [Conference of San Remo](#), along lines similar to those agreed upon under the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The borders of these [mandates](#) split up Arab lands and ultimately led to the modern borders of Iraq, Israel and the Palestinian territories, [Jordan](#), Lebanon, and Syria.

Even though the borders of the mandates were not determined until several years after the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the fact that the deal set the framework for these borders stoked lingering resentment well into the 21st century. [Pan-Arabists](#) opposed splitting up the mostly Arab-populated territories into separate countries, which they considered to be little

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This article was most recently revised and updated by [Patricia Bauer](#), Assistant Editor.

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