

2.3 Tensions in Southwest Asia

Maps and
Graphs

Main Idea Israelis and Palestinians have struggled over issues of land, self-rule, and security for many years.

Current tensions in Southwest Asia have a long history. Complicated matters of land, security, and **self-rule**, or the government of a country by its own people, are critical issues for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Founding Modern Israel

After World War I, many territories once ruled by the Ottomans became spheres of European rule. The area of present-day Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip was placed under British control and named the British Mandate. Many Jews immigrated there, joining already established Jewish communities. An increased Jewish presence caused resentment among Palestinian Arabs.

The experience of the Holocaust during World War II prompted the United Nations (UN) to create a state for the Jewish people. In 1947, the UN voted to divide the British Mandate into two parts: Arab and Jewish. Surrounding Arab countries and the Palestinians themselves rejected the UN's decision. The Jews accepted the UN plan and in 1948 declared Israel an independent state.

Immediately, six Arab countries—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon—declared war against Israel. Before the war, many Palestinians fled to neighboring countries or to Arab towns in the West Bank. Israel won the war, and a Palestinian state never formed.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders meet to negotiate peace in 1993.

