The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
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This abstract will discuss how the Sykes-Picot agreement divided up the Middle East for the benefit of the West which ultimately led to the creation of the state of Israel and subsequently the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a 1915 agreement between Britain and France, signed by British lieutenant-colonel Mark Sykes and French diplomat Francois Georges-Picot. The secret pact delineated how the British and French would divide and carve out spheres of influence in the Middle East after the Ottoman Empire fell following the end of the first World War. France controlled Syria and Lebanon which was called Greater Syria at the time, and Britain controlled Palestine, Jordan – known back then as trans-Jordan – and Iraq. Through this agreement, it is imperative to understand why Britain wanted to control trans-Jordan and Iraq, and France wanting Greater Syria. Besides, following the distinction between certain protectorates and direct control areas is essential in unveiling the politically discriminatory practices, subjected to specific groups. In "A Peace to End, All Peace" Fromkin discusses the unethical and cynical courses of action taken by Ottomans, Arabs, and Westerners in the creation of the Middle East.

The Balfour Declaration, which arrived shortly after, in 1917, is the result of an agreement between Chaim Weizmann and British banker Lord Rothschild, which held that the British favored a homeland for the Jewish people. This declaration commenced before the Second World War; thus, there was a preconceived notion that the state of Israel would be created for the Jewish homeland, with the outcome of WWII serving as a defining factor. Great Britain controlled Palestine at the time, therefore, making it easier to place the Jewish people in that area. Also, with a Jewish led state, which controlled the port city of Haifa, transporting oil through the pipelines, from Kirkuk, Iraq to Haifa, Israel, was seamless. The Sykes-Picot agreement is the leading force behind British control of Palestine and the reason behind Great
Britain's decision to grant the Jewish people the land, which would become the State of Israel. Moreover, The Sykes-Picot agreement serves as the starting point for the division of the people in the Middle East, which has kept the region from efforts of unification, yet embroiled in conflict, reinforcing the longevity of the dividing lines between Israel & Palestine.

However, the agreement and subsequent declaration did not deter states from embarking on conquests to maintain control and spread what they define as justice and freedom, instead, it has led to their engagement in a wide range of functional equivalents. These include, but are not limited to, resorting to hidden violence to obtain apparent consent from an unwilling population to incorporate into the annexing state; supporting seemingly "independent" puppet governments in conquered territories. Weaving a fictitious history to that conquest can be presented as "reconquests" or as a recovery of the national territory; giving covert support to local militias while claiming that no external forces were used in the acquisition of land, and introducing systems of permanent control that are purportedly only temporary.

Temporarily, together with the principles of self-determination and non-acquisition of territory by force, exists a distinction between occupation and conquest, which could be considered an indefinite occupation. Its distance from the illegal regimes of conquest, colonialism, and apartheid may then become thin or blurred in many if not most cases, endlessly prolonging foreign control of a population that does not enjoy the full range of human rights and is likely treated in a manner vastly different from the occupying power's own citizens, in a regime potentially resembling apartheid, or colonialism.

It is clear that while the Sykes-Picot borders faded, its orders survived, especially when considering the ongoing, humanitarian crisis, political stalemate and socioeconomic catastrophe, that is the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Literature from scholars such as Edward Said, Samuel Huntington, Henry Kissinger and Seyla Benhabib, provide meaningful insights into what the rhetoric, sentiments, and actions of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and Balfour Declaration
generated and what is at the core of the current conflict, the Culture Clash - a probable conclusion considering Frompkiln's points about the cultures and ethnicities of the groups in which decisions were being made for, and the negligence of the power players who carved up the Middle East, in considering them. The struggle to reclaim occupied territory, maintain Zionist nationalism, admittance of refugees, protection from insurgent attacks and the ongoing fight for the restoration of peace, justice, and strengthened institutions, are the reality of present-day Israelis and Palestinians. The consideration of the creation of historical documents, occurrences of Wars and attacks, review of lackluster peace solutions and the general sentiments of anguish shared among the groups, can assist in designing and implementing policies, with attention to culture and leadership management, as reflected in United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions.