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François Massoulié: Middle East Conflicts Study Guide

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CHAPTER ONE: THE HERITAGE OF THE PAST

Background

1. The three areas of Middle East settlement were Egypt (stable, orderly, unitary civilization with three successive, long-lived pharaonic kingdoms), Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia: unstable, rapid rise and decline of kingdoms and empires), and the Arabian peninsula (nomadic and tribal Bedouins of the interior vs. the coastal harbors and marketplaces).

2. The Arabia peninsula (a subcontinent with over a million square miles) is a continuation of the Sahara desert, just as the Red Sea is a continuation of the east African rift valleys. It is a great plateau that rises to 12,000 feet within 30 miles of the Red Sea. Its interior is barren, hot (with cold nights), dry, and studded with occasional grassy oases.

3. The nomadic Bedouins, sustained by a diet of dates and milk, migrated seasonally with their flocks and as pasture conditions required. Camels served as many uses for the Bedouins as the bison did for the American Indians.

4. Prior to Islam, religion was animistic and fatalistic. The center of worship in Mecca was the Qaaba (Ka’ba), a name that has the same root as "cube." It is a stone structure that, according to tradition, was built and rebuilt by the great patriarchs going back to Adam, Abraham, and Ishmael. The sacred Black Stone is embedded in its southeast corner and symbolizes the founders of the Quraish tribe. Allah is believed to have been originally the tribal god of the Quraish who was represented within the Qaaba.

5. At the beginning of the sixth century AD, the Quraish were divided into two factions between Hashim, a wealthy merchant, and his jealous nephew, Umayya. Muhammad was posthumously born c. 569 to a Hashemite merchant. He was orphaned by age six, then raised by his grandfather (Hashim’s successor as tribal chief) and later by his uncle. At age 25, Muhammad married a 40 year-old widow, Khadija, who bore him several children, of whom his daughter Fatima became most renowned. He adopted Ali, the orphaned son of his uncle, who later married Fatima.

6. Influenced by Christians and Jews in the area, Muhammad spent increasing time in religious meditation as he approached the age of 40. The revelations began in a cave near Mecca in 610 during Ramadan when he claimed that the Archangel Gabriel appeared and commanded him to read. There followed many similar visions over several years. Khadija was his first convert; Ali the second. His cousin Abu Bekr converted five other leaders in Mecca, together becoming the Prophet’s six Companions. Muhammad began preaching at the Qaaba, denouncing its worship as idolatry. Persecution resulted but Muhammad was protected by his uncle, Abu Talib. Abu Bekr purchased the freedom of many converted slaves, but because of the persecutions many fled to Abyssinia. In 615, the Hashemite clan withdrew to a secluded quarter of Mecca until they were promised peace by the rest of the Quraish. But in 619, Khadija and Abu Talib died.

7. Problems in Mecca came to a head in 622 after Abu Sufyan, the grandson of Umayya, became the tribal leader. The persecutions were renewed. Informed of a plot to kill him, Muhammad fled and arrived at Medina (Yathrib) two months later. The Hegira (hijra =
flight) of July 16, 622 marks the beginning of the Muslim lunar calendar. It was in Medina that Islam hardened into a fighting faith and repelled repeated attacks by the Quraish until Muhammad was able to return to Mecca, armed but peaceably, first in 629, then as master of the city in 630. His two remaining years were mostly spent at Medina.

8. The Five Pillars of Islam are a credo (shahada), which states that “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet;” the five daily prayers (salat); a purification tax (zakat) paid as alms for the poor; the month-long fast of Ramadan (sawm); and a pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) at least once in a lifetime. The Koran (Qur'an) and the Sunna (hadiths, including sayings, doings, and rulings, of the Prophet and his Companions) are authoritative.

Review

Hegira (hijra) Five Pillars of Islam Koran and the Sunna

Study Questions

1. Identify the three chief areas of the Middle East. How do the Bedouins differ from the coastal population of Arabia? How did Mohammed unite the Arab tribes? What was the jizya and what privileges did it confer? What are the four types of war, according to Ibn Khaldun? The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) followed the rule of Ali, Mohammed’s cousin and son-in-law, as caliph (successor, also called “the shadow of God on earth). Ali’s assassination marks the beginning of the Sunni/Shiite split. The Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) was centered in Baghdad rather than Damascus. The Abbasid Caliphate was destroyed by the Mongols in 1258 but the Seljuk Turkish sultans had already overshadowed the caliphs. The Ottoman Turks arose in the 14th century, defeating the Serbians at the Battle of Kosovo (1389) but, in turn, defeated by Tamerlane (Timur Lang) in 1402. They made Istanbul (Constantinople) their capital after conquering it in 1453. (11-15)


Scholars are still debating whether the early caliphate was a religious or political office... It seems clear that until the middle of the ninth century the caliph exercised spiritual functions in addition to his political ones, enforcing religious conformity. After a popular reaction against efforts by the Caliph al-Mamun to impose what are sometimes called rationalist doctrines on government officials, through the mihna or ‘inquisition’, the attempt at centralized control was abandoned, and the guardianship of orthodoxy passed to the 'ulama ["learned men"].

The consequences of the caliphal debacle are far-reaching when the destiny of Islamic governance is compared with that of Christianity in the West, where the Church under generally vigorous Papal control retained a monopoly over Christian doctrine and the rituals that guaranteed salvation. Although the Catholic monopoly was eventually broken, the Church’s long hegemony effected social transformations that transcended the bonds of kinship. The occidental state [e]merged as the Church – the ideal corporation embodying the person of Christ – gave birth to secular offspring in the shape of cities and other public entities. The Islamic state, by contrast, never fully transcended its tribal matrix. The implosion of the Arab empire compounded the Caliph’s failure to enforce religious conformity. Apart from the Shi'a, who held to the idea of a transcendent spiritual authority, the lack of any central institution in Islam charged with the task of religious governance impeded the development of its counterweight in the shape of the secular state. The law developed separately from the agencies entrusted with its enforcement, and so military-tribal rule became the norm. As Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds have argued, 'a ruler who has no say at all in the definition of the law by which his subjects
have chosen to live cannot rule those subjects in any but a purely military sense’. To perpetuate itself, such a state must be manned by outsiders, and it is as outsiders, not as representatives of the community, that the rulers are obeyed. Although there was an element of consensus in this relationship, there was also, as Crone and Hinds point out, ‘a total lack of institutional machinery behind [it] . . . . The state was thus something which sat on top of society, not something which was rooted in it: and given that there was minimal interaction between the two, there was also minimal political development: dynasties came and went, but it was only the dynasties that changed.’

3. How was the Ottoman Empire organized? The ‘ulama (plural of ‘alim) were interpreters of Islamic law, the Shari’a. What was the role of the Ottoman Turkish Sultan (authority)? What were the Capitulations? The long decline of the Ottoman empire is marked by a failed siege of Vienna (1529), defeat at the naval Battle of Lepanto (1571), and a second failed siege of Vienna (1683). What happened to the Arabian peninsula after the Umayyad period? How did Wahhabism originate? What were some of the accomplishments of Mehmet Ali? The Janissary warrior caste was made up of boys taken (taxed) from Christian families and raised as Muslim warriors. (15-18)

4. Where did the British set up a trading post in 1639? What was the Trucial Coast (Trucial Oman, now called the United Arab Emirates)? The Sublime Porte, which refers to the Sultanate derives its name from the Felicity Gate at Topkapi Palace. How did the Great Powers use the Capitulations to gain control over Ottoman finances? What did Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca and keeper of the holy places, seek to gain through an alliance with the British (negotiated with McMahon)? Sharif Hussein ibn Ali al Hashem was the 37th in line of descent from Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and her husband Imam Ali. What did the French expect to receive under the Sykes-Picot agreement? What did the Balfour Declaration promise? The Hussein-McMahon correspondence? [See also pp. 56-57]. McMahon denied that he had promised Palestine. How did oil complicate the partition of the Ottoman Empire? What changed as a result of Turkish military successes? To whom did the administration of the holy places pass in 1926? (18-29)

5. Dilip Hiro on the Sykes-Picot Pact (1916): “Its provisions contradicted various British statements and declarations (one of them in conjunction with France) during the war, as well as the contents of the correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon . . . and Hussein ibn Ali. . . . After the victory Russia was to acquire Constantinople (now Istanbul), a strip on each side of the Bosphorus Straits and large parts of the four provinces of Turkey bordering Russia. As for the Ottoman Empire’s Arab territory, in which Russia was uninterested, Britain and France made the following deal: British hegemony in the Baghdad and Basra provinces of Mesopotamia; French hegemony in Ottoman (Greater) Syria and lesser Armenia (in Turkey); and an international zone in Palestine, much smaller than the Palestine mandated to Britain in 1922. The rest was to be constituted into an independent Arab state or federation, divided into British and French spheres of influence.”

Review

Wahhabite movement  Mehmet Ali  Ibn Saud
Abd al-Wahhab  Sharif of Mecca  Hussein
king of Najd and Hijaz  1916 Arab Revolt  Faisal
T. E. Lawrence  Mustapha Kemal  Capitulations
Ka’ba  Shari’a  ulama
Balfour Declaration  Sykes-Picot Agreement  ikhwan
emirates: Kuwait, Kab, Qatar  Armenia  caliphs
geography: Fertile Crescent, Egypt, Arab peninsula  Persia
capitals: Mecca, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo  Basra
CHAPTER TWO: OPPOSING VIEWS

Study Questions

1. How and why was the Treaty of Sèvres revised? What course was adopted by Mustapha Kemal Atatürk? Who were the chief authors of political Islam? [See Also Hoveyda on al-Afghani, Abdoh, and al-Banna]. How did the perceptions and objectives of Hassan al-Banna’s Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) differ from those of Saad Zaghlul’s Wafd party? What was the former’s program of action for the umma (community)? What happened to the liberal voice of Islam? (31-35)

2. What contributed to the initial success of the Muslim Brotherhood? According to al-Banna, what are the stages of jihad (Holy War)? What led to al-Banna’s assassination in 1949? Another response to the breakup of the Ottoman Empire was Arab nationalism (Pan-Arabism). What were the objectives of Michel ‘Aflaq, founder of the Ba’ath movement, and other nationalists? How did they conflict with Islam? What anomalies (paradoxical situations) resulted in Egypt and Arabia? In Egypt, the Wafd developed “an Egyptian nationalism with Pharaonic overtones.” Why did Arab nationalism develop in Syria and Lebanon (the Levant)? Some of its early leaders were Christians. What led to the rift between Sunni and Shi’ite Islam? What are the chief Shi’ite beliefs? Identify the principal divisions of Islam. (35-41)

3. What were the objectives of the General Syrian Congress and Antun Sa’adé’s Syrian Nationalist Party? Syrian “irredentism” is a reference to the goal of Italian nationalists to expand Italy to include the “unredeemed” parts of Italy, Italia Irredenta. What tactic (the old Roman divide et impera) was used by the (League of Nations) mandatory powers, Britain and France? How did the French undermine the legitimacy of Syria? How were the Capitulations used to the same effect? How did the French promote nationalism within the Ottoman Empire? What happened to the Assyrian Christians in the region of Hakkâri? How was “democracy” introduced? Fascism? (40-47)

Review

the Ottoman Empire and its caliphate  myth of the "Golden Age"  Shari’a.
Hassan al-Banna  Muslim Brotherhood  Michel ‘Aflaq
Ali  fascistic and irredentist Syrian Nationalist party
Syrian National Congress of 1918  Antun Sa’adé  Saad Zaghlul
Wafd  Ba’ath party  jihad
Copts  Maronites  Nestorians
Islamic sects: Druze, Alawites, Shiites, Sunni  Assyrians
Hakkâri

CHAPTER THREE: NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM

Study Questions

1. How and why did the Zionist movement originate? How did the proximity of the Wailing Wall to the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque complicate Jewish-Muslim relations? Before giving preference to Mecca after a dispute with Jewish leaders, Muhammad had commanded Muslims to turn their prayers to Jerusalem. How did the
**1.** What examples of Jewish persecution (*pogroms*) helped change attitudes? [See Chaim Potok’s novel, *The Chosen*]. What events inspired Theodor Herzl to call for a Jewish state? Where did he consider establishing a Jewish homeland? How did the objectives of Ahad Ha’am (“One of the People,” Hebrew pseud. of Asher Hirsch Ginsberg, founder of Cultural Zionism) and Hebrew University (not founded by Ha’am) differ from those of the Mizrahi Party? What are some other factions within the Zionist movement? Vladimir Jabotinsky’s Revisionist Zionists helped start Irgun and, later, the Likud party. Chaim Arlosoroff helped found Mapai, which formed the basis for the Labour Party, and helped organize the Ha’avara program that allowed German Jews to transfer some of their property to Palestine. Arlosoroff was murdered in Tel Aviv in June 1933, possibly by Revisionists. (49-53)

2. What historical factors contributed to the ethnic and religious diversity of Palestine in the late nineteenth century? What was the character of the old *Yishuv* community? Why was HaShomer (Guild of Watchmen) founded during the second *aliya* (ascent)? What British interests were reflected in the *Balfour Declaration*? Why was it unpopular with Arabs? Why did the Palestinian Mandate make no provision for an autonomous government which represented the people? What was the dilemma, as Churchill recognized? How did the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, make matters worse for the Palestinians? Why did the *Yishuv* double in size in the 1930s? (54-63)

3. What was the *Haganah* (which succeeded HaShomer in 1920)? The Irgun? What was the Peel Commission’s recommendation? What was the new direction taken by the *White Paper* in 1939? Why? What was the Jewish response? The Irgun, which blew up the King David Hotel, was once led by Menachem Begin. The Stern Gang (Lehi) was once led by Yitzhak Shamir, who was accused of (but denied) murdering the Swedish diplomat, Count Bernadotte. Both men later served as Israeli prime ministers under the Likud Party. The period of resistance to British rule was in many ways a civil war. What was the * Exodus* incident? How was Palestine partitioned? What happened at Deir Yassin? During the same period a massacre of Jewish settlers occurred at Gush Etzion. How was the partition revised and the territory distributed under the 1949 armistice? Where did Palestinian refugees settle? What was Israel’s *Law of Return*? (63-71)

**Review**

| Law of Return | Odessa pogroms of 1881 |
| Grand Mufti of Jerusalem | Theodor Herzl |
| HaShomer | Amin al-Husseini |
| Partition Plan | *Haganah* |
| | Balfour Declaration |

**CHAPTER FOUR: NASSER’S MIDDLE EAST**

**Study Questions**

1. What was the first objective of the Arab League in 1945? What were the chief divisions within it? When were rivalries the greatest? What were the consequences of the 1948 Arab defeat in the *Arab-Israeli War*? What started Gamal Abdel Nasser on his road to power? What were some of the harbingers (early signs or heralds) of political instability in the region? (73-75)
2. How successful was Nasser’s leadership in the Middle East and among non-aligned states generally? How did Nasser respond to Israel’s attack into 1955? Why did France, Britain, and Saudi Arabia take their various positions vis-à-vis Egypt? What led to the Suez Crisis? What was of symbolic importance about Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez company? How did Britain, France, and Israel plan to regain control of the canal? How did Cold War politics frustrate this plan and with what result? How did the United States squander an opportunity? What were some of the key events in the career of David Ben-Gurion? (76-84)

3. How did Nasser’s example of the populist military strongman (rais) spread? Where did it destabilize traditional regimes? Why did Syria propose joining with Egypt in the United Arab Republic? How did the East-West conflict complicate inter-Arab relations? What view did Charles DeGaulle take of Israel’s actions in the Six-Day War? The fedaiyeen were originally anti-Jewish suicide squads organized in 1919 by Haj Amin el-Husseini, who was later appointed the Mufti of Jerusalem. In the 1950s Egyptian intelligence trained fedaiyeen to infiltrate Israel as terrorists. The final provocation that led to the 1967 war was closure of the Gulf of Aqaba. What were the results of the quick Israeli offensive? What was UN Resolution 242? What was Nasser’s War of Attrition? What was the final balance sheet? The bulk of the Palestinian refugees ended up in camps in Jordan and Lebanon. A new terrorist campaign aimed at airplanes and airports began in 1968 with a hijacking of an El Al airliner leaving Rome. (84-91)

Review

Arab-Israeli War, 1948  1956 Suez Crisis  1967 Six-Day War
consequences of refusal of the United States to help finance the Aswan High Dam project
King Farouk  Gamal Abdel Nasser  David Ben-Gurion

fedaiyeen

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PALESTINIANS CAUGHT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARABS

Study Questions

1. Why did a Palestine state not come about in 1949? What groups contributed to the doubling of Israel’s population between 1948 and 1951? What happened to the Palestinian Arabs who remained in Israel? How did both Israel and the neighboring Arab states engage in divide and rule tactics? What is the gist of United Nations Resolution 242? How was the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) originally established in 1964? How did Yasir Arafat’s Al Fatah (Victory), founded in Kuwait in 1958, differ? By the late 1960s it had become the largest member of the PLO. George Habash’s Marxist-Leninist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was founded in 1968. Its hijacking of three airlines to Jordan in 1970 and blowing them up led to the “Black September” ousting of the Palestinian leadership from Jordan. Another member of the PLO, Ahmad Jibril’s PFLP-General Command, planted a bomb aboard a Swissair flight that exploded in February 1970. It was also originally blamed for the 1988 bombing of a Pan-Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland. Saiqa (Saiqa =Thunderbolt), the military wing of the Vanguards of the Popular War of Liberation, was sponsored by the Syrian Ba’ath Party in 1967, had close ties to the Soviet Union, and subsequently opposed Arafat’s support of Saddam Hussein and the Oslo Accord between Israel and the PLO. (93-97)

2. What was Black September (1970)? What did Arafat seek in 1974? The recent Yom Kippur War (October 1973), beginning with a surprise attack by Egypt and Syria, had
somewhat strengthened the hand of Egypt’s Sadat and led to a lengthy oil embargo against supporters of Israel. How and why did the PLO change direction in 1977? What was the Rejection Front? What were the chief Palestinian grievances? What happened to moderate leaders within the PLO? During the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, who was blamed by an Israeli commission for the massacre in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila? (97-104)

3. What did Yigal Allon propose? Allon’s rival, Moshe Dayan, pushed for annexation of the Occupied Territories and helped create Jewish colonies there. Neither plan was officially adopted. Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) was founded in 1974 to advocate Jewish settlement in the Occupied Territories. The 1984 arrest of extremists who had planted bombs on Arab buses revealed plans to destroy Muslim shrines, including the Dome of the Rock (Noble Sanctuary) and al Aqsa Mosque. What was the Intifada? Hamas was established soon after the outbreak of the Intifada by leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Occupied Territories to end Israeli occupation and establish an Islamic state, ultimately to include all of the former Palestinian mandate. What did the Palestine National Council (PLC) decide at Algiers in 1988? What happened as a result of the PLO’s support of Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War? American rabbi Meir Kahane’s Jewish fundamentalist Kach (Thus) party, established in 1976, opposed all forms of association with non-Jews and held that only Jews had the right to live in the biblical Land of Israel. Kahane had earlier established the militant Jewish Defense League in the mid-1960s. In Lebanon Islamic Jihad was formed as a pro-Iranian Shia’ group in 1983. It allied itself with the pro-Syrian and Shi’ite Amal later led by Nabih Berri and the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of Allah) in 1982. The latter has ties with Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, took western hostages during the Iran-Iraq War, and was partially financed through Iran’s Foundation of the Martyrs. How was the Oslo Accord reached? To what did Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat agree? What factors weakened (and may ultimately destroy) it? What has been accomplished? (104-11)

Review

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<td>new form of international terrorism that was born in 1968</td>
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CHAPTER SIX: FROM CAMP DAVID TO THE GULF WAR

Study Questions

1. Describe the circumstances of the Yom Kippur War and the fallout from it. What did Anwar al-Sadat seek to accomplish by going to Jerusalem to address the Knesset? Why did his larger purpose fail? What was agreed to in the Camp David Accords? What action was taken by the “Steadfast Front?” Why did it ultimately fail? Identify the major consequences of Camp David. (113-18)

2. What led to the emergence of radical Islamic protests? What factors favored the rise of Islamism? How did the authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Algeria respond? What reforms were undertaken by Reza Shah Pahlavi? What problems were created by the 1963 modernization policies (known as the White Revolution) of his son, Muhammad Reza Shah? What was the Savak (which had ties with the CIA, Israel’s Mossad, and Turkey’s National Intelligence Service)? What circumstances brought Ayatollah Khomeini to power? What was his idea of the velayate faqih? How did the constitution structure the government? How did the Iran-Iraq War end? What has become of the
Revolution since the death of Khomeini? (118-24)

3. What kind of connection bound France to Iraq? Why was a fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie? By whom? How have Iranian actions changed international relations? What were some of the consequences of the Iran-Iraq War? Why did the oil production policies of the Gulf monarchies differ from those, like Iran, Iraq, and Algeria, that have a high-density population? Why was OPEC created in 1960? What are some of the economic, political, and demographic consequences of oil wealth in the region? Characterize Muammar Qaddafi. (124-31)

4. What role has Saddam Hussein played in the politics of the Middle East? Why did he arouse so much support after his seizure of Kuwait? What are some of the consequences of the Gulf War? You might also read the Conclusion in this regard. (131-33)

Review

Anwar al-Sadat Ayatollah Khomeini Reza Shah Pahlavi
Salman Rushdie Muammar Qaddafi Camp David Accords
increase of oil revenues of Saudi Arabia investment of Gulf oil
oil production strategy of low-density Gulf monarchies vs. the high-density petroleum producers
1973 Yom Kippur War

CHAPTER SEVEN: LEBANON AT THE CENTER OF THE TURMOIL

Study Questions

1. Much of the tragedy of Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s is that it became the site of a proxy war between the United States, Israel, and the Christian Phalange vs. the Soviet Union, Syria, and the Palestinians. How was Lebanon shaped after the First World War? What role did the Druze leader Fakhredine play in its creation four centuries ago? What was the relationship between the Druze and the Maronite Christians? How and why did it change in the nineteenth century? What was behind the bloodshed that followed? What was the origin of “Small Lebanon”? Who first proposed the idea of the nahda (Arab renaissance, which inspired pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism)? What was the origin of Greater Lebanon? How did the demography of Lebanon change as a result? Why was Lebanon threatened by Syrian irredentism? Upon what “double renunciation” was the 1943 National Pact founded? How was political power distributed? Who was Kamal Jumblatt and why did civil warfare erupt in 1975? (135-40)

2. What role did Ethnarch (Archbishop) Makarios, who supported Enôsis, play in the politics of Cyprus? What is the “Attila Line”? Why was the PLO established as a “State with a State” under the Cairo Accords of 1969? What accounts for “Maronism”? What was Pierre Gemayel’s Phalange (phalanx, bone of finger or toe)? What are the goals of Amal and Hezbollah? [See notes for Chapter Five]. How would you characterize the Lebanese Wars and role of the militias? Who are the Maronites and the Druze (founded during the caliphate of al-Hakim)? What do they believe? Why did Syria intervene to help the central government under Suleiman Franjiyeh? How did Israel respond? What role did it play in South Lebanon, along with the “South Lebanon Army” (SLA)? (140-47)

3. What was Operation “Peace for Galilee”? Who led it? What factors reduced the prospects of confrontation between Israel and Syria? What happened at the Sabra and Shatila camps? Why did Syria finally seize control over the country? How does water
factor into Middle East conflicts? The concept of “resource wars” has been introduced into international discussions in recent years. A *casus belli* is a cause of war. (147-51)

### Review

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consequences of creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920