Mandated territory. After World War I ended in 1918, certain colonies and territories were taken from the defeated nations and placed under the administration of one or more of the victorious nations. These areas were called mandated territories. The League of Nations, a forerunner of the United Nations (UN), supervised the governing countries in the administration of the territories. The League expected the governing countries to improve living conditions in the territories, and to prepare the people for self-government.

Britain received mandates for Mesopotamia (later renamed Iraq); Tanganyika (now part of Tanzania); and Palestine. Palestine was later divided into Palestine and Transjordan (later renamed Jordan). France received Syria, which was later divided into Syria and Lebanon. Both Britain and France were given parts of the Cameroons and Togoland. Belgium received Ruanda-Urundi. Japan was given German islands in the North Pacific Ocean. Australia received German islands in the South Pacific, including the northeastern section of New Guinea and Nauru. New Zealand received Western Samoa, and the Union of South Africa (now called South Africa) got German Southwest Africa (now called Namibia).

The mandate system ended in 1947. By that time, several mandated territories, including Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, had become independent countries. The remaining territories, except Namibia, were placed under the stronger United Nations trusteeship system. The same countries continued to administer the territories, but they were under the control of the UN. Namibia became independent in 1990.

Contributor: Anthony D'Amato, Ph.D., Judd and Mary Morris Leighton Prof. of Law, Northwestern Univ. Law School.