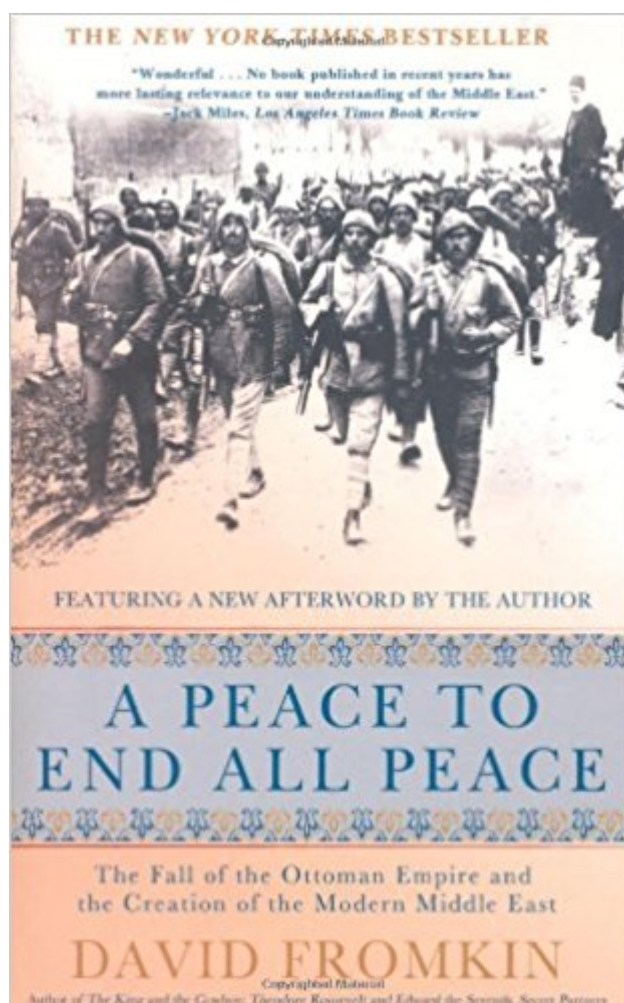


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A Peace To End All Peace: The Fall Of The Ottoman Empire And The Creation Of The Modern Middle East



Synopsis

Published with a new afterword from the author, this is the classic, bestselling account of how the modern Middle East was created. The Middle East has long been a region of rival religions, ideologies, nationalisms, and ambitions. All of these conflicts—including the hostilities between Arabs and Israelis, and the violent challenges posed by Iraq's competing sects—are rooted in the region's political inheritance: the arrangements, unities, and divisions imposed by the Allies after the First World War. In *A Peace to End All Peace*, David Fromkin reveals how and why the Allies drew lines on an empty map that remade the geography and politics of the Middle East. Focusing on the formative years of 1914 to 1922, when all seemed possible, he delivers in this sweeping and magisterial book the definitive account of this defining time, showing how the choices narrowed and the Middle East began along a road that led to the conflicts and confusion that continue to this day. A new afterword from Fromkin, written for this edition of the book, includes his invaluable, updated assessment of this region of the world today, and on what this history has to teach us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Wonderful...No book published in recent years has more lasting relevance to our understanding of the Middle East.”
—Jack Miles, Los Angeles Book

Review “Extraordinarily ambitious, provocative and vividly written...Fromkin unfolds a gripping tale of diplomatic double-dealing, military incompetence and political upheaval.”
—

Reid Beddow, Washington Post Book World “Ambitious and splendid...An epic tale

of ruin and disillusion...of great men, their large deeds and even larger follies. —

— Fouad Ajami, The Wall Street Journal — “[It] achieves an ideal of historical writing: its absorbing narrative not only recounts past events but offers a useful way to think about them....The book demands close attention and repays it. Much of the information here was not available until recent decades, and almost every page brings us news about a past that troubles the present. — Naomi Bliven, The New Yorker — “One of the first books to take an effective panoramic view of what was happening, not only in Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, and the Arab regions of Asia but also in Afghanistan and central Asia....Readers will come away from A Peace to End All Peace not only enlightened but challenged--challenged in a way that is brought home by the irony of the title. — The New York Times Book Review

Historian David Fromkin (1932-2017) was a professor at Boston University and the author of several acclaimed books of nonfiction, including The King and the Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and Edward the Seventh, Secret Partners. He lived in New York City.

As a x2 Iraq vet, I was always troubled and interested in the modern history of the middle east. If you want a really gut wrenching account of how the west completely screwed up an entire region, look no further. The incompetence of civic leaders, their blatant arrogance and greed, their backdoor dealings and re-dealings, the political swings, the sheer luck of some incidents, and the silliness of so-called "intellectuals", comes to the fore in this great book. If you have dreams of quality international politics or agreements, this book will shatter them. Many of the accounts could easily have been written today and be believable. The book is well divided into chapters, but requires careful reading to keep up with the people, places, and politics. A quick bio of key players right at the outset would have been quite beneficial. Only giving it four stars because it really needs some full-page maps, particularly for the campaigns and showing national boundaries in the 1918s. Finding a quality map of the late Ottoman empire and modern middle east is essential if you're going to follow the campaigns, as the map is unfortunately devoid of any maps. GoogleEarth was a great help, and you can also get an idea for the key terrain (Hejaz for example)

Fromkin has created a brilliant history of the Middle East following WW1. With almost 600 pages, it is not a quick read, and with so many different countries, personalities, prejudices, and perfidies involved, it does get confusing at times and takes a lot of concentration to keep the various players separate (especially when they keep changing sides and opinions). With Britain, France, Russia,

Turkey, Italy, Greece, India, Bulgaria and others, plus multiple sects of Arabs and Jews, all trying to protect their own interests, no wonder the Middle East was put in chaos then. It still is in chaos, and Fromkin thinks that it may take 1500 years to quiet region, as it took Europe after Rome fell. But, he knows very well that this region is comparable to none because of religious history. Until radical Islam changes, it's only going to get more bloody. The author covers how boundaries of current Middle East were determined, Britain's struggles to keep their empire although the country was broke after WW1, Arabs determination to break free of British rule, Russian role in eliminating British influence in the area, French-British conflicts, and so much chaos created by so many different Moslem groups wanting independence. This book makes sense of how the region got to be the tinderbox that it is currently. Although a quest for oil played a small part, colonialism, religion, and inter-sect conflicts and political power has caused most of the problems.

Fromkin provides a clear, detailed, and nuanced review of the great-power politics and diplomacy in the opening two decades of the 20th century that made the modern-day "Middle East" the mess it is today. Told largely from the British point of view it's a tale of failures of British intelligence, poor diplomacy, and a basic misunderstanding of key motivations and capabilities of the major players as the Ottoman empire was breaking up. The end result was a situation that served no one well, not even Britain itself. But the mistakes made will continue to cause problems for decades.

This is a fascinating book. It's probably fairly common knowledge that the modern national boundaries of the Middle East were imposed by the Allies after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in WWI, but for me (and I'm guessing most people), this was a pretty vague knowledge. This book gives a very thorough account of what that means, how it came about, and its implications, starting from how the Ottoman Empire entered the war and continuing through the Settlement of 1922. The lessons of the book are still highly relevant today (depressingly so, in fact), and indeed, the author provides an afterward to the 2009 edition (the book was originally published in 1989) that draws a clear line from the events 100 years ago to more recent infamous events. Despite covering such a complex subject so thoroughly, this is a very readable book. Fromkin organizes the book well, concentrating on particular spheres of action methodically in succession, but I think what really drives its readability is how he focuses the action around a succession of the interesting and influential characters -- people such as Churchill, Kitchener, Lawrence, Lloyd George, and Mark Sykes. The book thereby becomes more than an extensive litany of events and facts, it becomes a succession of characters studies and personal stories, just enough to draw in the reader, but not so

much as to overshadow the events and facts. That said, the book is very long, and the device loses steam as Fromkin runs out of new characters to introduce, but I hardly think anyone could pull the subject into readable form any better while retaining all the density and comprehensiveness required by the subject. Throughout, one gets a good sense for the fundamentally condescending and sometimes just plain mistaken attitudes and policies of the Western powers towards the Middle East. International diplomacy is frighteningly error prone for something so impactful, and the best laid plans go awry as a matter of course. At the end, the situation dissolves into a mess of ruined political careers, face-saving, and not-so-graceful exits as the Allies realize the economic limits of military power and face the realities of trying to hold the prizes they had claimed. The final chapter ties it up well, providing summary and perspective. The Allies tried to impose European-style, nationalistic, secular statism where loyalties were more sectarian and local. Fundamentally, it did not fit, not to mention the bungled execution as they imposed rulers more to appease their political alliances than to serve the local people. Moreover, they did so in the last throes of the imperialistic impulse which they had been used to, but then they could not follow through on the impulse as the imperial eras were on the wane for many powers. In other words, they completely disrupted the region but had no capability to hold it together afterwards. Does any of this sound familiar?

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