



THE LONGMAN COMPANION TO
THE MIDDLE EAST
SINCE 1914

LONGMAN COMPANIONS TO HISTORY

RITCHIE OVENDALE

The Longman Companion to

The Middle East since 1914

Ritchie Ovendale



Longman

London and New York

Longman Group UK Limited,
Longman House, Burnt Mill,
Harlow, Essex CM20 2JE, England
and Associated Companies throughout the world.

*Published in the United States of America
by Longman Publishing, New York*

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First published 1992
Second impression 1993

0582 06306 X CSD
0582 06305 1 PPR

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ovendale, Ritchie.

The Middle East since 1914 / Ritchie Owendale.

p. cm. - (Longman companions to history)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-582-06306-X(csd) : - ISBN 0-582-06305-1(ppr) :

1. Middle East--History--20th century--Handbooks, manuals, etc.

I. Title. II. Series.

DS62.4.094 1992

956-dc20

91-36351
CIP

Set by 7LL in 10pt New Baskerville

Produced by Longman Singapore Publishers (Pte) Ltd.
Printed in Singapore

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank my colleagues Jane Davis, Clive Jones, Roland Maddock, and James Piscatori for guiding me to sources and loaning me material. Mrs Chris. Chadwick of the Hugh Owen Library, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, gave me an hour of her expertise and made the whole project seem feasible. I am grateful to the staff of the Hugh Owen Library, including Mr A.M.E. Davies, Mrs Elizabeth Howells, Peter James and Ron Job, for their cheerful assistance. Moorhead Wright, Lincoln Ball, Julian Eastwood and Alisdair MacKenzie helped me to operate a computer.

The publishers would like to thank the following for permission to reproduce copyright material: John L. Kennedy, *Oil & Gas Journal* for table 1 from *BP Statistical Review of World Energy* (1991); the British Petroleum Company Plc for tables 2, 3 and 4 from *BP Statistical Review of World Energy* (1991).

Preface

I have used *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 8th edition (1990), as a guide to the form of Arab words incorporated into English. In its form of transliteration the *Concise Oxford* omits diacritical marks (those marks used to indicate different sounds or values of a letter). The following are examples of the forms I have chosen to use: Alawites, Ali, Bahais, Bedouin, Druze, fedayeen, Hadith, hajj, hegira, intifada, Ismailis, jihad, Kaaba, Koran, *mujtahids*, *peshmerga*, *riba*, *Salat*, Sanussis, *Sayyids*, *Shahada*, shariah, Sherifs, Shiite (Shias), Sunna, ulema, Wahhabis, Zeidis. To make an Arabic noun plural I have added an 's' to the singular form. The common spellings of place names have been used. Examples are: Bahrain, Bekaa, Hejaz, Jedda, Kuwait, Mecca, Nejd, Sharm el-Sheikh, Shatila, Shtaura (not Bahrayn, Biqa (Beka'a), Hedjaz, Jeddah, Kuwayt, Mekka, Najd, Sharm al-Sheikh, Chatila, Shtoura). I have also followed the convention of assigning a geographic connotation only to the lands occupied by Israel after the Six Day War: 'Gaza Strip' and 'occupied territories'.

In transliterating Arab names I have retained the definite article ('al-', 'el-', or 'Al') where appropriate. Usually the form 'al-' is used. In the case of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, however, I have observed the convention of using the form 'Al' to denote the ruling dynasty. Also where an Arab author has written in English I have adopted his or her own spellings of the name (for example Anwar el-Sadat not Anwar al-Sadat). The elision system has been avoided as it requires some knowledge of Arabic to make sense of it. Some examples are: Jabir al-Ahmad Al Sabah, Nuri al-Said, Abdullah Al Thani, (not Jabir al-Ahmad as-Sabah, Nuri as-Said, Abdullah ath-Thani). Common practice in Arabic names is to use 'ibn' (or 'bin') to denote 'son of'. In the interests of consistency I have used 'ibn' in this text. 'Abu' indicates 'father of'. Titles generally have been omitted from the lists of rulers, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers. Where titles appear in the text 'sherif' and 'sayyid' are used to designate descendants of the Prophet. Among the titles for religious officials in the Shiite tradition 'Ayatollah' means 'sign of

Allah' and represents the highest officials. 'Pasha' was the title placed after the name of a Turkish officer of high rank in the Ottoman empire; it remained in use in Egypt.

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SECTION I

Chronologies

1. The emergence of modern nation states in the Middle East

1820 Britain concludes a General Treaty of Peace for suppressing piracy and slave traffic with the Arab tribes of the Persian Gulf. The signatories include the sheikhs of Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ajman and Fujairah. Bahrain admitted to treaty a month later. Treaty follows attacks by seafaring Arab tribes on British-flagged ships, British expeditions against pirates in 1806, 1809, and British attacks on the pirate headquarters at Ras al-Khaimah in 1818. First of series of treaties that elaborates the relationship between Britain and the sheikhdoms over the next hundred years. A British squadron is stationed at Ras al-Khaimah.

1839 Captain Stafford Haines of the Indian Navy captures Aden on 16 January. This follows the plunder in 1837 of an Indian ship, flying the British flag, wrecked near Aden. Under the subsequent peace treaty the Sultan of Lahej, in return for an annual payment, agrees to Aden becoming part of the British Empire administered from Bombay. Aden's strategic importance increases later, with the opening of the Suez Canal, and again when oil replaces coal as the major fuel in the 20th century. Aden is also important as a fuelling station, as well as being a source of fresh water.

1850s–1860s Growing Arab national consciousness. With a literary revival in Syria, newly established local societies begin to study Arab history, literature and culture of the golden age of the Arab Empire which is identified with the Abbasid dynasty and lasted for about five hundred years from around 750 until the sack of Baghdad by a Mongol general in 1258. This has political overtones. With a meeting of the Syrian Scientific Society the Arab national movement possibly uttered its first cry: a poem was read praising the achievements of the Arab race, the splendours of Arab literature and inciting the Arabs to go to their own past for inspiration.

1860 Civil war in the area of Mount Lebanon between Druze landlords and Maronite Catholic tenants. Massacre of thousands of Maronites leads to persecution in other parts of Syria, where the

Ottomans had ended Egyptian rule in 1840. A conference of European powers meeting in Beirut decides to create the autonomous province (*sanjak*) of Mount Lebanon, to be ruled by a Christian governor chosen by the Turkish Sultan from outside Lebanon and a Maronite-dominated council formed on a religious (confessional) basis. Mount Lebanon to be protected by Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, Austria and Italy. France becomes the main patron of Catholics in the Arab Levant.

1861 Following political claims by Iran (Persia) and Turkey to Bahrain, a group of islands in the Persian Gulf, the Sheikh of Bahrain undertakes not to prosecute war, piracy and slavery by sea in return for British support against aggression.

1866 Syrian Protestant College founded, under American auspices (later American University of Beirut), and helps to stimulate Arab nationalist sentiment by training new Arab élites.

1869 Suez Canal opened. The ruler of Egypt, Said, had granted a concession to a French engineer, Ferdinand de Lesseps, to build the canal in 1854, and work on it had started in 1859.

1880,1892 Britain assumes responsibility for Bahrain's external affairs; Bahrain becomes seat of British Resident in Gulf.

1881 Against the background of the rise of a nationalist outlook in Egypt, particularly among the young officers in the army who resent the Turkish overlordship, along with liberal reformers, a group of Egyptian army officers led by Arabi Pasha forces the Khedive, Tawfiq, (the title 'Khedive' for the viceroy of Egypt had been given to Ismail Pasha by the Turkish government in 1867 and lasted until 1914) to form a new ministry. Britain and France send a joint note proclaiming their resolve to maintain the Khedive.

1882 After the appointment of Arabi as Minister of War, Britain and France send naval squadrons to Alexandria in May. Egyptian opinion inflamed and Europeans killed in riots in Alexandria in June. Germany and Turkey refuse to send expeditionary force and French Chamber of Deputies disallows French intervention. The French fleet withdrawn in July after a British ultimatum to Arabi to stop building fortifications at Alexandria. After British bombardment Arabi withdraws forces from Alexandria and the Khedive places himself under British protection. A British expeditionary force lands and on 22 September routs Arabi's troops at Tel el-Kebir. British troops occupy Cairo and the Khedive's authority is restored.

1883 Unable to incorporate Egypt into the British Empire lest that result in a European war, a revolt in the Sudan and the hostility of France makes a withdrawal of British troops impossible, so British policy becomes based on the report of Lord Dufferin: the Egyptians have to be persuaded that Britain wants to help them to govern themselves 'under the uncompromising aegis of British friendship'. This relationship is managed by Evelyn Baring (later Lord Cromer) who arrives with the title of British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt and stays until 1907.

c.1889 Dissatisfaction with despotism of the Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who set back the educational, political and economic reforms instituted by his predecessors earlier in the century, increases Arab national awareness. Young Turk movement formed. This movement, the successor to the Young Ottomans (a revolutionary secret society formed in 1865 and inspired by a literary revival), spreads rapidly among the students in law, medical and military colleges in Istanbul and the provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

1892 Rulers of emirates along the Trucial Coast in Central and Southern Arabia start to conduct all external affairs through the British government.

1895 Group of Young Turks found a secret society called the Committee of Union and Progress which emphasizes the ideal of unity and equality of all races and creeds within the Ottoman Empire. Contacts made with Turkish exiles in Paris; Committee also attracts support of Freemasons and Jews.

1898 Anglo-Egyptian condominium (joint control) established over Sudan after defeat of the Mahdi's successor, the Caliph Abdal-lahi. (Mahdi: meaning 'the guided one'. The Mahdi had led the Sudanese forces, largely made up of national-religious tribesmen against the Egyptians and the British.)

1899 Treaty signed between Mubarak, the Sheikh of Kuwait, and Britain, recognizes Kuwait as an independent state under British protection. Sheikh wants British protection as he fears a Turkish occupation. Britain wants to thwart German plan to extend Berlin-Istanbul-Baghdad railway to Kuwait. Mubarak agrees not to cede, mortgage or otherwise dispose of his territories to anyone except the British government, nor to enter into any relationship with a foreign government other than the British without British consent.

1903 Germany secures concession for building of Berlin–Istanbul–Baghdad Railway.

1904 April: Britain agrees to recognize the pre-eminence of French interests in Morocco in return for a reciprocal recognition of British interests in Egypt.

1907 Britain and Russia divide Persia (Iran) into spheres of influence.

1908 Shocked by Abd al-Hamid II's mismanagement of Macedonia, the last large Ottoman province in Europe, and alarmed by reports that Edward VII of Britain and Tsar Nicholas of Russia were planning to partition Turkey, important army officers including Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) join the Young Turks and bring with them units of the Macedonian army. They start a rebellion in Salonika, the Macedonian capital, and it spreads quickly. Abdal-Hamid II restores constitutional rule and parliamentary government. The Young Turks proclaim the new order: 'There are no longer Bulgars, Greeks, Romanians, Jews, Muslims; under the same sky we are all equal, we glory in being Ottomans.' The Arabs hope that this means the end of Turkish domination. But Arab expectations of autonomous provinces enabling development of Arab culture are frustrated. Electoral system means Turks are dominant in parliament, though Arabic-speaking Ottoman citizens outnumber Turks in Ottoman Empire.

1909 Abdul Hamid II abdicates after Young Turks send troops to Istanbul to restore order following mutiny of Istanbul garrison.

1911 Italy starts a war against Turkey and secures Libya and the Dodecanese islands.

1912 Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, fearing Young Turks might try to recover Balkans, form a secret alliance and in October launch a war against Turkey, capturing Salonika and Western Thrace by December.

1913 February: after French decision to consolidate its influence in Syria and Lebanon, Quai d'Orsay decides to lay groundwork for this through the Berlin–Istanbul–Baghdad railway negotiations and makes provision for additional French investment in railway and harbour developments in Syria and the expansion of other enterprises. Syrian Arabs disliked the French presence and they had already formed a Reform Committee for Beirut, unfriendly to the

French, and determined to press for decentralization of the Ottoman Empire.

March: conscious of Arab grievances through information from its agents in Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus, French government allows Maronite literary figure, Shukri Ghanim, to arrange the First Arab National Congress in Paris. Ghanim loses control to Nadra Mutran who was thought to oppose the idea of a French protectorate over Syria. French lose control of conference but hope to persuade delegates to 'abandon the chimerical dream of Arab autonomy'.

21 June: Arab National Congress forwards resolution to Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, demanding that the Arabs should be able to exercise their political rights and play an effective role in the administration of the Ottoman Empire; decentralized governments should be established in the Arab provinces.

1914 July: Kaiser of Germany prepares for war and subversion against Britain in the Middle East: assures ruler of Afghanistan of his desire for the Muslim nations to be independent, and of the continuation of the common interests of Germany and the Muslims after the war; General Liman von Sanders, the inspector-general of the Ottoman army and a German is commanded to stay on in Constantinople to promote feeling against Britain; a team is formed under Max von Oppenheim to arrange subversion in Muslim countries and it works in close alliance with German Zionists.

5 November: after commandeering two Turkish battleships in British shipyards, Britain blockades the Dardanelles, and demands that Turkey affirms its neutrality by expelling the German mission, and following British shelling of Turkish ports at entrance to Dardanelles on 3 November, Turkey declares war on the Allies.

Germany makes contact with Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca, who as custodian of the holy places and a lineal descendant of Muhammad is thought to have great influence. Hussein agrees to aid German propaganda, and also to other unspecified operations in the area he controls and is paid by the Germans until at least June 1915. As a reinsurance policy the Germans also contact Ibn Saud, who had recaptured the Saudi capital Riyadh in 1902 and after his conquests of the Nejd and eastern Arabia had been recognized by Britain as 'Sultan of Nejd and its Dependencies', but could not expand further there as the Persian Gulf coast was under British exclusive influence.

An Ottoman-British agreement defines the borders between Kuwait, Nejd and Iraq. Britain had appointed a political agent to

Kuwait in 1904 and after negotiations with Turkey starting in 1909 Britain, in effect, secured the autonomy of Kuwait. By 1914 Kuwait is referred to as being 'under British protection' in communications with the Ottoman Empire.

18 December: Egypt, nominally a province of the Ottoman Empire, is declared a British protectorate. Since the British occupation of 1882, Egypt had become a vital link in Britain's imperial network and could not be abandoned. Britain assumes responsibility for the defence of the Suez Canal. A combination of British and Egyptian officials continues to administer Sudan.

1915 Ibn Saud – who rules over al-Hasa, the coastal region lying beneath Kuwait on the Persian Gulf, and most of the Nejd, the large area in the centre of the Arabian peninsula – concludes an anti-Turkish treaty with Britain through the Viceroy of India.

8 April: H.H. Asquith, the British Prime Minister, sets up an interdepartmental committee, the Committee on Asiatic Turkey, chaired by Sir Maurice de Bunsen, to discuss British desiderata. One member, Mark Sykes, devises a scheme of devolution, dividing the Ottoman Empire into five provinces with Britain able to secure influence in the Asian ones. Committee finally recommends this scheme on 30 June: British desiderata include the fulfilment of the pledges already given to the Gulf and the Arab sheikhs, and generally, of the assurances to the Sherif of Mecca and the Arabs. Palestine is considered a special case which could eventually be settled with the other powers: a self-determining Palestinian people could prove to be a neutral guardian of the holy places in Jerusalem.

14 July: Hussein, Sherif of Mecca, sends message to Britain explaining that the Arabs have decided to regain their freedom and hope for British assistance. Emphasizing the identity of British and Arab interests, the Sherif proposes defensive and conditionally offensive alliance. Terms included British 'recognition' or 'acknowledgement' (depending on translation) of the independence of the Arab countries from Mersina and along the latitude of 37 degrees to the Persian frontier in the north, in the east by the Gulf of Basra, on the south by the Indian Ocean with the exception of Aden, and on the west by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean up to Mersina.

24 October: McMahon (High Commissioner of Egypt), in a cautious and perhaps deliberately obscure letter informs Hussein that the two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo could not be said to be purely Arab and should not be prejudiced, and should therefore be excluded. Britain's existing treaties with