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M. E. Yapp. *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995.* London: Longman, 1996. xvii + 608 pp. $27.45 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-25651-4.

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A Basic History of the Near East

Yapp has provided us with a basic history of the Near East since the the post-WWI political settlements. The treatment of the various states involved, including Israel, is fair and objective and is a good basic text on the history of the modern Near East, suitable for introductory courses.

Yapp deserves praise for bringing together so much material and presenting it as a coherent whole. The book provides not only a detailed view of the political history of the region, but social, demographic, religious, and economic trends as well. Equally important is the inclusion of Turkey and Iran, both of which are often excluded from treatments of the region's contemporary history. Instructors of undergraduate surveys will also be pleased with the maps, lists of rulers, and bibliographic guide, which appear to be geared to an introductory audience.

Perhaps the strongest point of the book is its treatment of Israeli-Arab relations. Rather than the common view of the Near East (read Middle East) a region with one division (Israel and non-Israel), the reader is treated to a more comprehensive perspective on the history of the contemporary Middle East, with problems between Israel and the non-Israeli states receiving less emphasis than one finds elsewhere. Conflicts between non-Israeli states, for example, also receive full treatment.

Still, the book has several drawbacks which warrant mention. First, the treatment of the *region* is actuality a state by state analysis, only broken by several slim chapters which attempt to bring everything together under a regional umbrella. Although an explanation is provided for the application of the term *Near East*, the discussion is brief and insufficient. Second, and this is a problem for advanced students and specialists, one is hard-pressed to find any detailed discussion of the historiography on the period or the different theoretical approaches that the author may have considered in rendering this text. I am uneasy with Yapp's view of history-writing as the author explains it in the preface: "Neither of the two other problems of writing contemporary history which are commonly mentioned–those of sources and perspective–seem to me to present especial difficulties. Sources...are in abundance and although perspectives change it is not demonstrable that new and later perspectives are any better (in the eye of eternity) than older, contemporary ones (p. xvi).

The problem is, of course, that for the historian it is not the number of sources that is important, but what sources and how the historian treats them. One might add, referring to Yapp's view on changing perspectives, that it is the responsibility of the historian to develop better perspectives, and in my view, more recent perspectives are, generally, demonstrably better (that is, more informed, comprehensive, and objective). Coupled with these problems, is the sparse citation which makes difficult the tracking down of the sources upon whom Yapp depends for specific events and perspectives.

These problems aside, Yapp's contribution is still valuable, especially for those teaching undergraduate courses where general texts outside of U.S. and European history are difficult to find. With careful guidance from the instructor, *The Near East Since the First World War* can be an effective teaching tool.

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