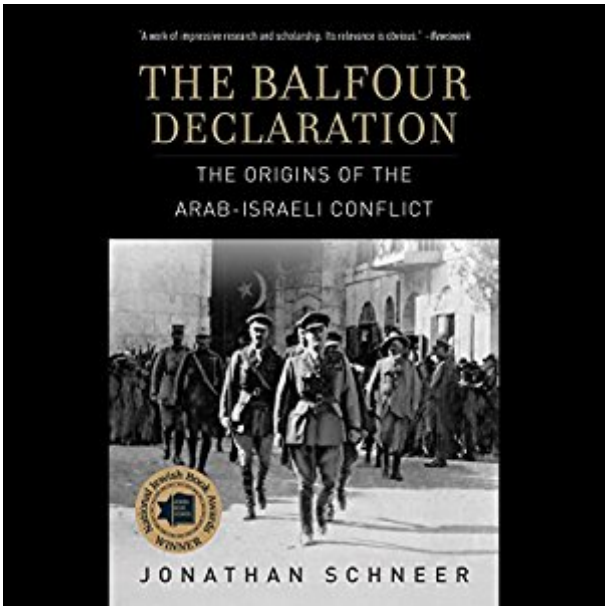
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The Balfour Declaration: The Origins Of The Arab-Israeli Conflict



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Synopsis

Issued in London in 1917, the Balfour Declaration was one of the key documents of the 20th century. It committed Britain to supporting the establishment in Palestine of "a National Home for the Jewish people", and its reverberations continue to be felt to this day. Now the entire fascinating story of the document is revealed in this impressive work of modern history. With new material retrieved from historical archives, scholar Jonathan Schneer recounts in dramatic detail the public and private battles in the early 1900s for a small strip of land in the Middle East, battles that started when the governing Ottoman Empire took Germany’s side in World War I. The Balfour Declaration paints an indelible picture of how Arab nationalists, backed by Britain, fought for their future as Zionists in England battled diplomatically for influence. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to either side or even to most members of the British government, Prime Minister David Lloyd George was telling Turkey that she could keep her flag flying over the disputed territory if only she would agree to a separate peace. The key players in this watershed moment are rendered here in nuanced and detailed relief: Sharif Hussein, the Arab leader who secretly sought British support; Chaim Weizmann, Zionist hero, the folksmensch who charmed British high society; T. E. Lawrence, the legendary "super cerebral" British officer who "set the desert on fire" for the Arabs; Basil Zaharoff, the infamous arms dealer who was Britain’s most important back channel to the Turks; and the other generals and prime ministers, soldiers and negotiators, who shed blood and cut deals to grab or give away the precious land. A book crucial to understanding the Middle East as it is today, The Balfour Declaration is a rich and remarkable achievement, a riveting volume about the ancient faiths and timeless treacheries that continue to drive global events.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thoroughly enjoyable look at the players, maneuvers, promises, misunderstandings and deceptions that led up to the division of the Middle East towards the end of the Great War. Once again, the colonialist nations tried to divide land by geography instead of ethnicity and the consequences are still felt today and will continue in our lifetime. I particularly liked learning about King Hussein and his sons who would subsequently rule Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Iraq. Now I want to read more about the rise of the Ottoman Empire, the genocide of the Armenian people, the immigration of the Jewish people and the circumstances surrounding the decision to carve out Jordan from the British protectorate.I passed my copy along to a college graduate student who took interest when he saw me reading the book. Highly recommended.

I enjoyed this book, probably the most thorough and detailed account of the events surrounding the 1917 Balfour Declaration readily available in one volume. Schneer covers all the main elements in an evenhanded and fair-minded way: the Zionist movement, particularly in the UK; the various players in the Arab world pressing for greater independence as the Ottoman empire went into decline; and the Great Power machinations of the British, French and Russians, in particular the British Government's willingness to promise anything to anyone, if it would help bring about a speedier victory in World War I. My only criticism of the book is that it gets bogged down in complex detail, particularly about the secret negotiations to try to get the Ottoman empire out of the war, thus potentially preventing the creation of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. I would have preferred instead of such a level of detail a bit more about the wider context of attitudes towards Jews and Zionism and more about the underlying context of British, French and others' war aims. Also perhaps a little more at the end about the historical legacy of the Declaration.

There are a plethora of books dealing with WWI and / or the Arab Israeli conflict, but this is one of the more readable ones out there. Written by an American, (Americans are not involved in this affair at the time), so there is no axe to grind here by the author - no sides taken. Although it's 464 pages, nearly 100 pages are devoted to notes and references. However, this is a very dense book. You'll be turning back repeatedly to remind yourself of who the players are.The book is written in alternating chapters devoted to how the British courted the Arabs and the Jews, separately, but promising them both the same thing - Palestine, and then trying to get the French and Russians to

buy into it after making those promises. They even tried to negotiate a peace with Turkey directly, obviating all other negotiations.While a great read, this is a narrowly focused book regarding a specific topic that occurred in a short time period. The sub-title is the Origins of the Arab Israeli Conflict. This book provides a lot of information, but it is not the first or last word on this conflict by any means. If you're really interested in understanding what lies behind today's tensions, I recommend From Time Immemorial in addition to this book.

I was looking for something to explain how today's middle east problems came to be. This book was it.Schneer does a great job of showing how Palestine/Israel became sanctioned by the British as the Zionist's "Homeland." It turns out that it was the result of the perfect storm of Zionist lobbying, practical wartime politics, a lot of diplomatic vagueness and double dealing plus just plain timing. It was also simply the spoils of war.The author covers in great detail the mechanics of the process leading to the Balfour Declaration. He also does a good job of showing the big picture. If you just want the headlines, the final chapter is a superb summary of the entrie book.Despite the abundance of detail, the narrative rarely bogs down. In the Kindle version, a few more maps would have been helpful. Overall, though, this is an extremely enjoyable and informative work of scholarship that I recommend highly.

Book arrived in a timely manner. An excellent read. Also recommend Schneer's lectures that can be found on You Tube

Excellent overview of the WWI events that served as a foundation of the problems faced today in the Middle East. Jonathan Schneer makes a very involved & complex subject easy to understand. He brings to light the astonishing intrigues & betrayals by the world powers of the early 20th century.

Very informative. Great resource if you really want to understand how the conflict in the Middle East really started. Rather dryly written. The detailis sometimes mind numbing.

This book was a bit of a disappointment. Reason: it only told the history from 1900 thru 1915 and I was looking for many more years of Israeli history.

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