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The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995,

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Review of: The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995, (A History of the Near East)

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At the time of publication, author Heather J. Sharkey was associated with Princeton University. Currently, she is a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Comments

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act as historical “injunction[s] against forgetting” Jewish history and efforts to “marginalize, vilify and obliterate” the Arab history of Palestine (pp. 43, xxxiii); Palestinian subaltern memories as resistance to official narratives, including unpopular and controversial recollections of collaboration and assassination; and finally, how the recodification and revival of memories of the revolt informed the Palestinian intifada that erupted in 1987. This last chapter shows how symbols from the revolt exercise an enduring potency in the present. An example is how, in naming its military wing the Qassam Brigades, the Islamist group Hamas has achieved international name recognition for the revolt’s major, revered martyr, ‘Izz al-din al-Qassam.

Swedenburg demonstrates the complexities of the engaged dynamics of memory and history, and in the process, the very unreliability of assuming any kind of Rankeian notions of “objective,” recoverable historical truth. Subaltern memories, the focus of the book, are not a “unified and coherent outlook on the past, but ... a jumbled composite” (p. xxxiii). Different individuals’ recollections of the past were informed by their class, clan and village associations. Conversely, “official” histories interpreted the revolt according to their own past and ongoing political priorities, particularly through silencing alternative versions and excising certain kinds of information from the narrative. This book shows how much is learned through an examination of the interaction between these different historical interpretations.

ELLEN FLEISCHMANN
Georgetown University

The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995, by M.E. YAPP. (A History of the Near East) 597 pages, index, maps, glossary, bibliographical guide. New York: Longman Group UK, 1996. 19.99 £GB (Paper) ISBN 0-582-25651-8

M.E. Yapp’s first edition of *The Near East Since the First World War* surveyed the history of the region from 1923 to 1989. This second edition extends the story to 1995. It provides up-to-date assessments of recent developments, including Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the Gulf War that followed, the Oslo accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993, with their implications for the Palestinian people and for Middle Eastern relations, and the effects of the Soviet Union’s collapse on regional power politics.

Like all the volumes in Longman’s Near Eastern history series, Yapp’s *The Near East* makes a solid textbook for a rigorous or advanced-level college course, or a reliable reference book for important dates and events. Its coverage of political, economic, demographic and diplomatic history is thorough. It comes equipped with a bibliographic guide, a glossary, regional maps, lists of political leaders by country from circa 1923 and an index. This volume would be suitable not only for history courses, but for courses in political science and international relations as well. Its value is enhanced by the fair-mindedness of Yapp, who shows sympathy for his subject—the peoples of the Near East at large—without

lapsing into partisanship, especially where such issues as Islamism or the Arab-Israeli conflict are concerned.

However, this text would not suit all students, especially those who are complete newcomers to Middle East studies. Densely packed with figures and facts, it makes for dry reading. A more conceptually oriented, less detailed survey—such as Albert Hourani's gracefully written *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991)—might better suit the needs of students in introductory courses.

As a general history, Yapp's *The Near East* also has some basic shortcomings. It is weak on cultural history, for example, and lacks even a cursory discussion of developments in literature, music and the like. Its geographic coverage is also problematic. Yapp covers the states of Arabia, the Levant (including Israel), the Fertile Crescent, Iran, Egypt and Turkey, but omits an important part of the Arab world—namely, the bulk of North Africa. The exclusion of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Sudan from this otherwise dependable study diminishes its value as a general textbook survey of modern Middle Eastern history. Nevertheless, for a dispassionate, reasoned account of a region where political passions smoulder, Yapp's study retains its value as an eminently reliable account.

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Sandcastles: The Arabs in Search of the Modern World, by MILTON VIORST. 414 pages, bibliography, index. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995. \$17.95 (Paper) ISBN 0-8156-0362-2

Milton Viorst is a journalist with extended experience in the Middle East. In *Sandcastles*, he presents an in-depth account of several Middle Eastern countries. "Part scholarship and part journalism," its aim is to "convey a sense—perhaps a *feel*—for Arab society today" (p. xiv). The communities examined are Iraq (in two chapters; one before, one after, the Gulf War), Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinians, Kuwait and Jordan. Each chapter combines a survey of the historical evolution of each society with a lively contemporary portrait based on the author's numerous visits in the late 1980s and early 1990s and his extensive interviews with individuals at all levels of society. A Postscript addresses the repercussions of the Oslo accords on the region.

The book makes worthwhile reading in several respects. Its perspective is both sympathetic to contemporary Arab dilemmas and open-minded in its exposition of alternative Arab (and Turkish) viewpoints. Except for the chapter on Lebanon, where the author had access primarily to the Maronite community, the range of interviews is quite rich, encompassing political leaders, cultural figures and a sampling of the views of "the average man." The descriptions of both urban and rural life are well-crafted and vivid. One does acquire a nuanced and convincing feel for Arab society through reading *Sandcastles*.

Perhaps the most original and important dimension of the book is its discussion of the causes and consequences of the Gulf crisis. Based on extensive interviews with Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials, the book offers considerable evidence