

Turkey “should also be included in a new regional order and should not be used only to counter the influence of Iran and Syria. Alliances such as those between Turkey and Israel, on the one hand, and Iran and Syria, on the other, increase security risks for U.S. interests and the parties concerned.” Although Moussalli leaves this point implicit, it is certain that Turkey is showing great potential to be among what we could call the “new mediators,” capable of fulfilling a key role as interlocutor with all participants to resolve Middle Eastern conflicts. Turkey is an indispensable me-

diator between Israel and Syria, respected by Iran and, as the Gaza crisis has shown, an irreplaceable mediator between Hamas and the international community, as well as an interlocutor between Arabs and Palestinians. We should not forget that Turkey was the only country present at both the summits in Qatar and Kuwait. All in all, this book is a welcome addition to the literature on foreign policy and religion in the context of U.S. - Middle Eastern relations.

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American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region

By *W. Taylor Fain*

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 283 pp., ISBN 9780230601512.

This book examines the shifting balance of power between two western allies in the tumultuous Middle East. British interest in the Persian Gulf increased significantly during the nineteenth century, since the region functioned geographically as a liaison between the Mediterranean and the Indian subcontinent. Britain’s political domination of the region began in the 1820s, culminating in the Treaty of Maritime Peace of 1853, which created the system of trucial states along the Arabian coast. The treaty secured the political and economic stability of the region, which was vital for the maintenance of Britain’s Indian trade routes. British influence in the Gulf continued uninterrupted up until the period immediately following WWII. The post-war period not only

brought about the demise of the old modes of imperialism but also gave way to the rise of new international political actors like the United States and the Soviet Union. The US entered the region as a powerful actor after the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia, and later extended its domination over other regions in the Middle East. W. Taylor Fain’s study focuses on “the Persian Gulf region” and analyzes diplomatic relations between the US and Britain from the 1950s to the 1970s. For Fain, this period of power politics witnessed how the interests of the two Western powers overlapped, and especially how they conflicted. Put more elegantly, “this book underscores the fragility of the vaunted Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ during the Cold War” (11).

The first chapter of Fain's study is dedicated to an analysis of how the Gulf region came to be an important centerpiece in British foreign policy, a status that began with the foundation of trading factories in Basra in Ottoman Iraq. In the following decades, Britain extended its control over the rest of the region. In addition to providing background on the importance of the region for the British, this chapter illustrates how the British insistence on maintaining the old modes of imperialism collided with the priority in American foreign policy of containing Soviet communism, which surfaced prominently during the nationalization of oil in Iran. The chapter ends with the oil crisis in Iran during the 1950s. The second chapter, which covers the period from 1950 to 1956, skillfully shows how mistrust arose between British and American policymakers. "British officials," Fain argues, "viewed the Americans as political interlopers" (74). The Suez Crisis of 1956, when the Americans opposed an Anglo-French attack on Egypt, was the peak point of these policy conflicts. The third chapter, which focuses on the period between 1957 and 1960, successfully shows that the attempts of the Eisenhower and Macmillan administrations to re-ground their special relationship on more friendly terms proved useful, while at the same time, the regional priorities of each nation, Saudi Arabia in the American case and the small Gulf states in the British, created further tensions between the two transatlantic allies. The Revolution of 1958 in Iraq in particular deepened the divide; the US decided to support the over-arching nationalism of Nasser while the British encouraged Qasim against Nasser.

The fourth chapter, which focuses on a relatively short period from 1961 to 1963,

illustrates how the previous dynamics of foreign relations between the US and Britain continued unchanged. Even though the similarities between national policies towards the region were emphasized at every public occasion, the way each country wanted to handle the threat of Arab nationalism differed markedly, and Washington feared the heavy-handed military options that London might bring to bear in times of crisis. The fifth chapter analyzes the period from 1964 to 1968 in which Britain experienced further domestic economic troubles. The Sterling Crisis of November 1967 devalued the pound and the British balance of payments deteriorated. Such economic difficulties, coupled with changing British strategies for oil in the region, heralded the British departure in 1971, leaving America the field. The last chapter of Fain's study deals with the British decision to leave, how it shocked politicians in Washington, and the attempts made by the Americans to fill the void left by the British departure. The US chose Saudi Arabia and Iran as "two pillars" of Western support in the region, a decision that would create more troubles in the coming decades. Fain concludes that British and American policy towards the region had many various layers of differing importance, which overlapped and conflicted from time to time. For Fain, the relationship between the two "is marked by tension and littered with important failures more often than it is characterized by lasting successes" (208).

Fain's study is a solid piece of scholarship, which deals with a topic that is, in his own words, 'a well-trodden territory.' In contrast to the works of Wm. Roger Louis, Nathan J. Citino, Aaron David Miller, and others, the scope of Fain's study is much

broader, yet less nuanced, which makes his work vulnerable as some of historical complexity of the Middle East is lost in his account. Although Fain's argument that the special relationship between the US and Britain faced tough times in the Middle East is not terribly new, his conclusions on the topic further strengthen the normative perception of diplomatic history between the transatlantic allies. Moreover, Fain's use of every available secondary source and his command of the various archival sources is simply mind boggling. His study is very accessible, written in a clear academic fashion, and chronologically structured, which makes it a good choice for classroom use, particularly as it provides a broad perspective on the diplomatic relationship between the US and Britain in the Middle East. For specialists, on the other hand, the book tends to get little bit repetitive, especially in chapter four.

While there is much to praise in Fain's study, I found his use of the term "Persian Gulf region" inopportune. In the opening pages, he makes clear that the term for him means a region ranging from Egypt to the Arabian Peninsula and from the Gulf States to the East Indian Ocean. He claims

that all of these regions are interconnected in American and British foreign policy-making. While I understand his insistence on limiting his focus to the Gulf region – otherwise such a project would simply have been undoable – I cannot help but wonder whether the policy choices of the US and the British go beyond these artificial boundaries. Particularly, the instances in the first half of the book when Fain discusses the oil crisis in Iran in 1951, the Suez Crisis of 1956, and the Iraqi Revolution of 1958, it is clear that "the Persian Gulf region" as a political and geographic designator is used too loosely to include these important watersheds in Middle Eastern history. In the second half of the study, this seems to be a less of a problem, to be fair.

Overall, I found Fain's study of utmost importance to the field. It contributes to our understanding of the history of the region and the diplomatic relationship between the US and Britain and it convincingly portrays how the nature of this special relationship came to evolve over the middle decades of the twentieth century. Students and scholars interested in these topics will greatly benefit from his insights.

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Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages

By *Mark R. Cohen*

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"Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages" by Mark Cohen is a useful work for those interested in the question of the status of Jews under Christian rule and Muslim rule in the Middle Ages. This

book boldly attempts to analyze the history of Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim relations and compare their similarities and differences over a period of nearly one thousand years.