



The Hashemites: The Dream of Arabia (Makers of the Modern World)

Robert McNamara

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The story of the Arab Revolt and the Hashemite princes who led it during the First World War is inextricably linked in modern eyes to the legend of Lawrence of Arabia as portrayed in David Lean's 1962 film. But behind this romantic image lies a harsher reality of wartime expediency, double-dealing and dynastic ambition, which shaped the modern Middle East and laid the foundations of many of the conflicts that rack the region to this day. Arab nationalists claim that British instigation for the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire was a commitment to independence for the Arab people, but in this book Robert McNamara shows how the British cultivated the Hashemite Sherifs of Mecca more as an alternative focus during the First World War for Muslim loyalty from the Ottoman Sultan, who as Caliph had declared a jihad against the Allies when the Turks joined the Central Powers, than a leader of an independent and united Arabia. At the same time, the Sykes-Picot Agreement divided up the Middle East between British and French spheres of influence. The sense of betrayal that this caused has coloured Arab nationalists' views of the West ever since. The main countries of the Middle East —Jordan, Syria and Iraq—are all the creations of the post-First World War settlement worked out at the Paris Peace Conference. The story of the Hashemite dynasty at the Paris Peace Conference is the story of the birth of the modern history of a region that is now more than ever at the centre of world affairs.

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