Partitioning Palestine: British Policymaking at the End of Empire. Penny Sinanoglou. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. ISBN 9780226665788.

At its core, Penny Sinanoglou's *Partitioning Palestine: British Policymaking at the End of Empire* is a study of partition as it relates to the Palestine Mandate. Sinanoglou traces the history of British partition planning from informal conversations among policymakers in the 1920s and 1930s through its public emergence in the form of the 1937 Peel Report and the various plans that followed, culminating in the 1947 UN Partition Plan. In spite of partition's enduring appeal among British administrators and eventually the international community, none of the proposed plans were ever implemented. Sinanoglou uses the difficulties in enacting partition as a means to highlight the regional, imperial, and international concerns that shaped British policies, arguing that in spite of Britain's privileged position in Palestine, maintaining imperial authority in a period of heightened international scrutiny, in which the future of empire was becoming increasingly uncertain, repeatedly stymied British efforts at implementing partition despite its enduring popularity among policymakers.

In her effort to highlight the limitations placed on British foreign policy and to contextualize officials' decision-making processes as part of a globe-spanning imperial endeavor, Sinanoglou largely reframes British presence in the Palestine Mandate. Rather than present policymakers' preference for partition as an inevitability, Sinanoglou illustrates how realities on the ground, combined with their formal responsibilities to the League of Nations and experiences with territorial delineation in other imperial holdings, steered official policy towards, and at times away from, partition. In doing so, the notion that partition spontaneously germinated in the minds of British officials are by and large dispelled while also firmly situating Palestine within the larger British Empire.

Following her introduction, Sinanoglou utilizes *Partitioning Palestine*'s first proper chapter to establish the greater imperial and international contexts within which the Palestine Mandate existed. In doing so, Sinanoglou firmly situates Palestine within the larger British Empire, highlighting how administrators drew upon their prior experience governing various regions of the empire, particularly other regions where officials had enacted territorial division schemes such as Ireland and Bengal, and how these schemas shaped the British approach to Palestine. The chapter also details the international factors influencing the political situation within the Mandate. International bodies such as the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission and the Zionist Organization exacerbated the tensions in fulfilling Britain's promise to establish a Jewish state while also establishing a self-determining political order for Palestine's Arab population. As the gulf between the two became increasingly deemed to be irreconcilable, partition – or at least cantonization – came to be seen as the natural solution to Britain's woes.

From here, Sinanoglou's work follows a chronological framework. Rather than begin with the oft discussed 1937 Peel Commission, she details the early conversations of British policymakers had on how best to fulfill their international obligations in the 1920s and 1930s. Chapters 3 and 4 revolve around the work of the 1936-37 Peel commission that was triggered by the beginning of the protracted 1936-1939 Arab revolts. Chapter 5 details the swift about-face initiated by the joint rejection of the plan by Zionists and Arabs alike. Combined with the view of the League of Nations that the plan fell short of Britain's mandate responsibilities, partition was officially rejected by the White Paper of 1939 but nonetheless persisted in the minds of British policymakers.

Sinanoglou utilizes the conclusion to discuss the afterlife of partition, particularly its endurance through World War II and the Postwar era until it was eventually revived in the form of the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan. In the end, the UN plan – largely informed by the ten-year-old Peel Report – was never implemented. In an era when Wilsonian ideals of self-determination and governance were spreading across the globe alongside increased international accountability, the unilateral policies that would have enacted partition were often seen as impractical and antithetical to political sentiments of the international community.

Overall, Sinanoglou is successful in her mission to integrate Palestine into British imperial history. In many ways, *Partitioning Palestine* is as much a work of British history as it is one of Middle Eastern history. This is equally evident in her sources. Sinanoglou makes robust use of the various commissions' minutes and reports detailed in her work in addition to a plethora of official British state documents from the various departments involved in partition, as well as the memoirs and personal correspondence of the various officials responsible for British policy in the Mandate such as Reginald Coupland, Archer Cust, and Douglas Harris.

Partitioning Palestine easily finds its niche in the vast scholarship pertaining to the territorial division of Israel and Palestine. The work itself builds upon the foundation of earlier scholars, such as Shmuel Dothan and Itzhak Galnoor, who have focused on the transition from a singular to multinational solution for the Palestine mandate, but these works largely focus on events in Jewish, Zionist, and Arab circles at the expense of the role British officials played in the development of partition. In more recent scholarship, when British partition planning does receive treatment, it tends to be brief and apart from larger imperial contexts. By focusing on how actors within Palestine and abroad influenced and constrained British policy, Sinanoglou's

research greatly expands our understanding of British actions taken in Palestine as well as their impact on the metropole.

Sinanoglou produces a valuable work with relevance beyond the geographic constraints of Palestine. However, at the end of the day, the book's focus is on questions of empire as they relate to Palestine. While Sinanoglou does reference key events of the period, such as the 1929 Buraq Uprising and others like it, she largely examines them in terms of their relation to British policy. Expertise on these events is not essential, but some prior knowledge would likely benefit the reader. Similarly, it is recommended that readers have some background knowledge of late British imperialism so that they can more thoroughly understand the imperial and international concerns Sinanoglou discusses. *Partitioning Palestine* would well serve any student looking to delve into history of the Palestine Mandate beyond the treatment typical of a standard survey while also providing enough nuance that experienced scholars will find its content relevant to more advanced research endeavors.

Ultimately, *Partitioning Palestine* highlights the difficulty in preserving imperial interests in a period where the future of the British Empire was in a state of flux and struggling to adapt to a new political order. The end result is a book with relevance to a wide range of scholars, particularly those concerned with the modern Middle East or questions of empire in the twentieth century at large.

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