

BOOK REVIEWS

SORBY, Karol R.: *Blízky východ v medzinárodnej politike (1918 – 1945)*. (The Middle East in International Politics). Bratislava, EKONÓM Publishing House 2009. 186 pp. ISBN 978-80-2735-4 .

It is encouraging to observe, both in Slovakia and in Czechia, the growing number of research works on historical developments in Asia and Africa. These include works relating to the Arab World – the Middle East and North Africa – areas, which up until recently did not present significant interest to our experts, as well as scientific and educational institutions. One of the educational establishments continuously broadening its range of study programmes in this field is the Faculty of International Relations at the University of Economics in Bratislava.

Karol Sorby, senior research fellow and at present the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, who also teaches at the Faculty of International Relations, recently published (in Slovak) a monograph entitled *The Middle East in International Politics (1918-1945)*. The work summarises the outcomes of the author's research covering this specific period of the history of the Arab East, published in Slovak and English in several science journals in the course of the last decade. Despite being fairly concise, the monograph effectively highlights all the critical issues related to the development of Middle Eastern Arab society in the inter-war period. Whilst being presented at a high academic standard, the work gives a sense of the matters involved in a manner easily understandable to both university students and the broader Slovak and Czech professional public as well as to all interested in this turbulent region.

The structure is well-balanced and conceptually thorough; the author does not deviate from the main line of analysis. The consistent chronological approach supports the overall survey. The division into periods is based on the fact that among the Arabs the secular concept of the nation started to crystallise only at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The decisive moment came with the last stage of the Ottoman Empire, initially as a reaction to the Balkan crisis and later in response to the developments in other parts of the Empire. After the Young Turk revolution, the Turks abandoned the idea of Pan-Ottomanism and adopted that of Turkish nationalism. It could be said that Arab nationalism developed as a reaction to Turkish nationalism and Pan-Arabism was an answer to Pan-Turkism.

The First World War (hereinafter referred to as WWI) was a major global conflict resulting in the disintegration of empires and the establishment of new states. While

Central Europe witnessed the disappearance of the Hapsburg monarchy, the Middle East experienced the dissolution of the last Muslim Great Power: the Ottoman Empire. The fate of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire was decided by the victorious powers at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The decision was motivated by their imperial ambitions to establish their paramountcy over new territories that had, up to that time, remained outside of their control. The interests of the indigenous Arab population of the region were ignored. The disastrous consequences are still being felt all over the area.

All of the chapters in the monograph are supported by the relevant international policy aspects linked to the development of individual Arab countries in the inter-war period. The synthetic approach, applied in chapters one, two and eight, is successfully combined with the analytical method used in the remaining chapters. This consistent chronological approach makes the work easy to survey. The monograph is split into ten sections – an introduction, eight chapters and a conclusion.

The first chapter deals with the formation of the contemporary Arab East as a consequence of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, where the victorious Great Powers divided the 'Ottoman heritage' among themselves. The isolationist policy of the United States in the inter-war period enabled them to pursue their imperial plans disregarding President Wilson's liberal principles and his policy of self-determination that should have granted independence to the Arabs liberated from Ottoman oppression. Consequently, these nations became subjects of the 'mandate' system, another form of colonial exploitation.

The second chapter analyses the foundations of the British Middle Eastern policy. It points out the importance of the Cairo Conference in 1921, when the British under Winston Churchill's leadership planned concrete steps for the implementation of their policies towards the Arabs in the subsequent period. The unequal treaties dictated by the British allowed them to avoid the controls set by the League of Nations for the implementation of fair administration. Monarchies had to be established in the mandatory territories as a prerequisite to these treaties. Whilst a monarchy already existed in Egypt, new monarchies had to be founded in Iraq and Transjordan.

The third chapter deals with French dominance in the Levant, where the French, unlike the British, were far less scrupulous. The French brutally abolished the Arab Kingdom in Syria and made Syria and Lebanon their colonies ruthlessly managed and regulated by the French High Commissioner. Additionally, they annexed parts of Syria to Mount Lebanon thus forming the Greater Lebanon with its current borders. The author shows an erudite insight into the political progress in the period examined and offers interesting observations of this region's development and the Franco-British rivalry during the Second World War (hereinafter referred to as WWII) that accelerated the process of gaining independence for the Syrians and the Lebanese.

The British mandate in Palestine is analysed in the fourth chapter. In the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, the British had promised the Zionist leaders assistance in creating a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. They also made it clear that their mandate administration in Palestine could not act unbiased. 'It was this peculiar circumstance which,' in the words of Michael Ionides, 'gave the Zionists the most favourable means of using His Britannic Majesty's Government as an instrument

through which they imposed their will on the Arabs, and took the place of Arabs of Palestine as owners of the territories which now form the State of Israel.' The indigenous Arab population was not consulted.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the building of Iraqi statehood. Iraq as a political unit originated in 1918 as a result of the post-war settlement in the Middle East based on the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916. The complex situation of the ethnically and religiously differentiated groups of population in the former Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, incorporated into the new state, is presented with both erudition and clarity. In an international context, the author explains the Great Power interests that prevented the establishment of an independent Kurdish state and elucidates the problems created by the Kurdish minority in the Arab majority state. Remarkable is also the journey of the Iraqi society towards a formally independent statehood and the role played by the army in influencing the fate of the monarchy.

The situation of the Arab peninsula is the subject of the sixth chapter. The 1920s are marked by the decline of the Ḥijāzī Kingdom and the rise of the Saudi dynasty. The key role in this process was played by Emir ʿAbdalazīz ibn ʿAbdarraḥmān, better known as Ibn Saʿūd who founded the great Saudi monarchy. On the background of this political and social development, the author also illustrates the issues related to the search and extraction of crude oil which became a source of huge income for the monarchy after WWII.

The seventh chapter deals with the political developments in Egypt and the Sudan – two countries which became in turn objects of British colonial supremacy. The author follows the anti-colonial struggle of Egyptian society and explains the interrelationship within what was known in Egypt as the 'power triangle', consisting of the British, the King and the Wafd. Attention is further paid to the rise of the first radical movement in Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood, and its position in Egyptian society. During WWII, Egypt represented an important centre for British military engagement in the Middle East. Even though the country itself was not the battleground, for the majority of Egyptians the years of the war brought an immense amount of suffering. Developments in the Sudan, which in the 19th century was a part of Egypt and from 1899 also a British-Egyptian condominium, were marked with the British ousting the Egyptians from the country and its transformation into a colony under direct British control.

The final eighth chapter considers the endeavours of the Arabs to unify themselves, as isolated anti-colonial rebellions had no chance to succeed. In the course of WWII, the British cabinet understood the existing strong trends to create a sort of Arab union which prompted it to support the idea of creating a regional organisation uniting all independent Arab states. The British government also recognised the importance of Egypt participating in such an organisation, since Egypt was the richest, the most populous and the most developed Arab country. As the leader of the Arab bloc, but still under British supremacy, Egypt could more efficiently serve British interests than any other Arab state. Consequently, the Pact of the Arab League was ratified on 22nd March 1945 in Cairo.

To conclude, I would like to point out some especially important facts examined in the monograph which are essential to the understanding of Middle Eastern political developments. First of all, it is a well-documented analysis of the formative years of the

various Arab states. Secondly, the historical background of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the imperial policy of the victorious Great Powers after WWI are both examined. No less important is the critical evaluation of the dramatic developments in Palestine under the British mandate and its aftermath after WWII, which has continued to the present day in an even more turbulent form. Sorby's monograph is a welcomed enrichment to Slovak and Czech historiography, which will undoubtedly attract both the relevant experts and the broader professional public.

Ladislav Drozdík

WALTISBERG, Michael: *Satzkomplex und Funktion, Syndese und Asyndese im Althocharabischen* (Sentence complex and function. Syndetism and asyndetism in Classical Arabic). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009. 393 p. ISBN 978-3-447-05993-0.

Waltisberg's monograph is one of the very few treatises offering a comprehensive description and classification of complex sentence construction from the general perspective of syndetism and asyndetism. The syntactic material that is examined involves constructions previously studied by various authors at various times (ranging from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries) and with very different aims and techniques, mostly in reference to the general feature of coordination and related structures, as well as to the *ḥāl*-sentences* (*Zustandssätze* or the author's neologism *Umstandssätze*), final, temporal and some other circumstantial clauses, and the like.

The book consists of eight chapters. Chapter I, Topic's presentation (Problemstellung, pp. 1–12) introduces basic notions, aims of the inquiry, the list and content of the subsequent analytic parts of the monograph, numbered model constructions referred to later in the text, and technical remarks.

Chapter II, Constructions (Konstruktionen, pp. 13–54), is a listing of constructions examined in the monograph as well as those excluded out of consideration (unberücksichtigte Konstruktionen).

Syndetic constructions are identified with: *ḥāl*-sentence, antecedent (vorzeitiger Umstandssatz), type *fa-ntabaha wa-qad šaddūhu*, and simultaneous (gleichzeitiger U.); types *mātat ʿāminatu wa-hija rāḡiʿatun ilā makkata*, or *ʿahraḡū saʿdan wa-huwa marīḡun*; syndetic final sentence (syndetischer Finalsatz); type: *tub li-jaḡfira laka llāhu*; asyndetic final sentence (asyndetischer Finalsatz), type: *ʿatā ʿilā ʿajni māʿin jašrabu*. Asyndetic constructions involve, among others: asyndetic modal sentence

*Since there is no generally accepted English term (Wright ii, 1898, 5: 'clauses expressing a state or condition /āll', or thoroughly unacceptable Badawi's et al., 2004, 156, 456: 'circumstantial qualifier'), we prefer the native term *ḥāl* and related derivatives.