At a time when the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is again in deep crisis, it is useful to revisit the experience of the British, who played a critical role in shaping this conflict. Tom Segev's wonderful book analyzes the central influence of Great Britain and the mandate period in the creation of Israel and the triumph for Jews and tragedy for Palestinians it brought.

Segev weaves a fascinating tale that brings to life the struggle between Jews and Arabs in Palestine under British rule from the perspective of all three parties. Drawing on newly mined archives and personal diaries of major and minor participants, he adds color and human drama to this tragic conflict, and makes some controversial but well-supported judgments. Segev's approach is sometimes acerbic, but it is also compassionate and nonpartisan, true to his reputation as one of Israel's leading "post-Zionist" writers.

Segev faults both the British and the Jews for their early assumption that creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine could be reconciled with the interests of the Arabs who regarded the area as their homeland. He attributes this to Eurocentric myopia and colonialist arrogance by both the British and the Jews, who at first believed the Arabs would welcome Jewish immigration as a beneficial, civilizing influence -- or that they could be bought off or intimidated by force if they resisted. But by the 1930s, Arab opposition and growing violence made it clear that Jewish and Palestinian nationalism were fundamentally in conflict. Besides vague promises to protect the interests of both sides, the British had no effective or consistent policy to deal with the dilemma they had done so much to create.

The Jews were more focused and determined. David Ben-Gurion and other Jewish leaders understood the need for a Jewish majority to win a Jewish state and overcome the Arabs' huge demographic advantage. They knew that the Zionist slogan "a land without people for a people without land" was propaganda. Immigration was their main strategy to build a majority. But Segev also cites ample evidence that "transfer" of Arabs was deeply rooted in Zionist ideology and a logical outgrowth of the desire for a state, based on European culture, segregated from the Arabs, and of Arab opposition to a Jewish state in any part of Palestine. Involuntary transfer of Arabs was widely, albeit quietly, discussed by the Jewish leadership, and the Jewish Agency created a "Committee on Population Transfer." (The British also considered transfer of Arabs as a means of accomplishing the first partition scheme recommended in the abortive...
Colin Shindler explores Palestine under the British mandate in One Palestine, Complete by Tom Segev. Yet both had played the game under Ottoman rule. The imams of the Al Aqsa mosque had called for a jihad or holy war in Turkey's name, while the Jews of Tel Aviv had celebrated Lord Kitchener's loss at sea. A few weeks earlier, the British government had issued the Balfour Declaration, which had promised "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. This was, in part, due to the diplomatic contacts that CP Snow, the editor of the Manchester Guardian, had facilitated for Chaim Weizmann, later the first President of Israel. One Palestine, Complete explores the tumultuous period before the creation of the state of Israel. This was the time of the British Mandate, when Britain's promise to both Jews and Arabs that they would inherit the land, set in motion the conflict that haunts the region to this day. Read full review.

LibraryThing Review. User Review - Polaris- - LibraryThing. A superb account of the background to and implications of the British rule in Palestine 1917-1948. Completely unbiased in his appraisal, Segev doesn't shy away from either the Zionists own failings Read full review.