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Supervisor's report on the master thesis "The Division of the Middle East as the Roots of the Problems in Iraq" by Nicholas Smith

The thesis tries to find a correlation between current Middle Eastern problems and the British policies in the region in the first half of the 20th century. Whereas the first six chapters exclusively focus on the early 20th century history describing the decay of the Ottoman empire and British role in the process, the final three chapters address three current issues together with their historical background.

The author may be right that current problems have their roots in historical British "mistakes" and that there are certain analogies between now and then. However, his thesis is not convincing in this respect. Even though the current problems are somewhat described, the hypothesized historical connections are largely missing. On the other hand, the first six chapters include a lot descriptive information which is not connected with the author's argument and which only reproduces well-known facts. To a large extent, this is the consequence of an absent theoretical framework and of an unclear methodology. One would also expect a more extensive engagement with the scholarly literature, especially, that concerning the current situation in the region.

All in all, the thesis is not an example of a good research. On the other hand, it is evident that the author has made a serious effort in his study of the British-Ottoman history. Therefore, he should be given the opportunity to defend his work.

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