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Two Pieces in a Global Puzzle: Sykes, Picot and the Post-Ottoman Transition

The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the subsequent postwar arrangement in the Near East were not a foregone conclusion. While it is very likely that the British would have attempted to fill the post-Ottoman vacuum of imperial governance in the region, their strategy for doing so and its implementation were highly susceptible to influence and circumstance, as was the inclusion of France, its rival power. During this transitional period, the 'policymaking trio' of agency, structure, and events which determines the final outcome of strategy was in a state of particular flux. Thus the final articulation of a postwar imperial policy – not just the borders but also who ended up in charge within them and how – could have looked significantly different. In contemporary popular memory, the nature of the post-Ottoman period and its legacy are often oversimplified and misunderstood: instability rather than order prevailed in the majority of cases.