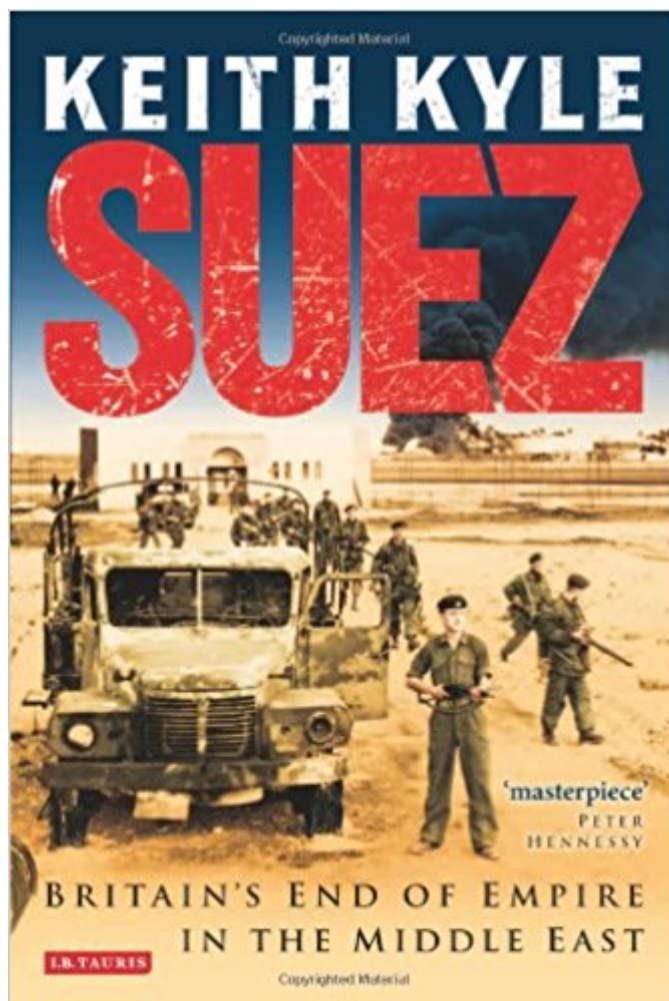


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Suez: Britain's End Of Empire In The Middle East



Synopsis

On July 26, 1956, the British Empire received a blow from which it would never recover. On this day, Egypt's President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company, one of the gems of Britain's imperial portfolio. It was to be a fateful day for Britain as a world power. Britain, France and Israel subsequently colluded in attacking Egypt, ostensibly -- in the case of Britain and France -- to protect the Suez Canal but in reality in an attempt to depose Nasser. The U.S. opposition to this scheme forced an ignominious withdrawal, leaving Nasser triumphant and marking a decisive end to Britain's imperial era. In this, the seminal work on the Suez Crisis, Keith Kyle draws on a wealth of documentary evidence to tell this fascinating political, military and diplomatic story. Including new introductory material, this revised edition of a classic work will be essential reading for anyone interested in the history of the twentieth century, military history and the end of empire.

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Customer Reviews

In July 1956, Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, expelling British oil and embassy officials after London withdrew its pledge of financial support for the Aswan Dam project. Nasser's action set in motion an historic chain of events: Israel invaded Egyptian territory (the Sinai Campaign); Great Britain and France sent armed forces to retake the canal; intervention by the U.N. brought about an armistice, and a U.N. emergency contingent replaced the British and French troops. Working from new documentary sources, Kyle's comprehensive and authoritative history of the Suez crisis deepens our understanding of the decisive American role in the U.N.'s involvement. The study also reveals more clearly how it was that Nasser emerged from the crisis

with greater prestige in the Arab world: he withstood the "triple aggression" of Israel and the two imperial powers, broke the spirit of colonialism and rekindled the dream of Arab unity. Kyle is a research fellow with Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs. Illustrations. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kyle has written a marvelous traditional narrative history, re-creating the complex events leading up to and forming the 1956 Suez crisis, when Britain and France, aligned with Israel, tried to overthrow Nasser and reestablish their imperial domination in the Middle East. He begins with Anthony Eden's ascent to political leadership in Great Britain and conveys Britain's eroding political leadership, while also examining developments in the other key countries--France, the United States, Israel, and Egypt. His clear style and lively language illuminate the complex events and convey fascinating portraits of the personalities involved. This is engaging and balanced history based on extensive research. It is valuable for scholars and highly readable for history buffs wanting a better understanding of an important event in the evolution of the Cold War and the continuing political frustration in the Arab world.- Elizabeth R. Hayford, Associated Colls. of the Midwest, Chicago Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

At 600+ pages this is the definitive and highly detailed history of the Suez Crisis of 1956. Very interesting and relevant to neo-conservatives and Bush Era US Middle East adventures. In summer of 1956 Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. Ike and John Foster Dulles were blinded by the Cold War dichotomy and their US Panama Canal concerns and failed to properly monitor allies France, Israel and especially Anthony Eden's British government as they marched to war with Egypt, as the three cavalierly hoped for US, UN and international mediation to fail. The Franco-Anglo-Israeli effort was complicated by the Soviet and Yugoslavian presence in the Canal and a 1950s Hashemite / Anglo regimes in Jordan, Syria and Iraq. I wish I could say that Kyle wrote it well (he was at the Economist at the time) but I cannot. I don't question the DETAIL per se, the memos, letters, minutes, briefs are all important--but his writing style was way too wordy. Any history professor today could easily scratch out 20% of the words, asides, modifiers, subjunctives, repetition etc., it is needlessly complicated and unnecessarily roundabout and Victorian in style-- (& The St. Martin Press evidently failed to use the red pen). But Kyle's SUEZ is worth wading through for a final and definitive view of the Athony Eden debacle and as a basic 1950's Cold War Middle East history. Ba'athists, Moshe Dayan, Anwar Sadat, Dag Hammarskjold, Golda Meir, Harold McMillan, Louis

Mountbatten, David Ben-Gurion and the French commandos from Algeria all play a role in this massive cock up of all cock ups

This is a review of the 2011 edition, with new foreward and afterward. Do keep in mind that there are also the original 1991 and later 2003 editions. The 2003 and 2010 editions have an additional chapter, Suez 1991-2001, as well as the modified Epilogue. Unfortunately, Kyle placed new information gleaned from files released after the 1st edition in their own chapter, rather than intergrating them into the book. So the new chapter comes across more as an information dump, that is a bit hard for the reader to fully integrate after they've already read the initial material. Thus, for example, we get an additional page related to the Soviets, yet this information would've been much more useful if put into the proper place in the book. Any reader absolutely must keep in mind that Kyle is attempting to write a detailed, essentially reasonably exhaustive magisterial work on this crisis. As seen from the key political leaders on all sides. His extensive sourcing favors the UK material, but he tries his best to cover the American, French, Israeli, Soviet, and UN angles as well. And because this crisis developed rather slowly after Nasser's sudden nationalization announcement, with so many players getting involved at various times (e.g., leaders from Australia, Canada, & India), some readers may feel it a bit plodding at times. But that is the nature of this unique crisis. It developed in front of the world's eyes not in a flash but over nearly 3 1/2 months (end of July through the middle of November), with an additional 6 weeks for the withdrawal and a couple more months of haggling over canal-, oil-, and financial-related details. Kyle is at his absolute best setting up the pre-history to the crisis. So this means discussing the UK's relations with Egypt and Israel in the 1940s and 1950s. As well as France's war in Algeria and her relations in the Middle East. And the bigger picture, including the Baghdad Pact, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. The reader will have a very good idea why the canal was so important to England as well as why the UK, France and Israel wanted Nasser removed from power. The reader does well to consult the extensive notes. There is a plethora of useful and additional information buried here! The Bibliography is outstanding as is the Index. I suspect those who won't like this work are readers more interested in the military aspects of the crisis. Kyle does cover the key events, including the build-up and withdrawal, but one never gets a good feel for what it meant to the average sailor, airman, soldier, or commando in combat. Kyle covers the military action but somewhat perfunctorily, and with limited information from the Egyptian perspective. Anyone interested in the military aspects of the crisis (esp. air and naval) should read a book focused on that; this isn't a book for those wanting in depth military history of the crisis. I heartily recommend this work to anyone

interested in the politics of this amazing misadventure, one that covers all the players and attempts to give them all their due. While with hindsight Kyle obviously believes the military action and cover up were wrong or unnecessary, he is surprisingly fair to the key players (A. Eden, G. Mollet, D. Ben-Gurion, & JF Dulles). His treatment of British Prime Minister Eden, esp. his "fall" afterwards, is most kind but in an honest manner, the fall of a mighty figure who was blinded by his own obsessions and past. Too bad there isn't nearly the detail about French Prime Minister Mollet. Thankfully there are three full-page maps at the front of the work that are sufficiently large to be readable and which do a good job showing the areas mentioned in the book. There is also a good selection of photographs on eight pages in the middle of the book. Part of what makes this work so fascinating and so useful is that Kyle was writing for The Economist (London) at the time, stationed in Washington, DC. So he both fully lived through and experienced the Suez Crisis, in its political form, as it unfolded slowly in real time. But this is its own unique event. I don't think it does the average reader much good to attempt to compare this crisis to events in the Middle East in the 1980s-2000s. Enjoy it for the history it provides!

A great many critics (here, too) claim Kyle has written a book that is very much hampered by his excruciating tendency to relate the most obscure details. While this is true, it in no way detracts from the merits of this great book. It may not be the most pleasant read on the 1956 Suez Crisis, but it is hard to find any other account that is as complete as Kyle's. For scholars and students Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East contains a wealth of useful information. If readers want personal colour (or, in Shuckburgh's case, to be distracted), they should read Shuckburgh's diary (note his words on his garden flowers), Nuttings account or Eden's biography by Rhodes James.

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