STATE-BUILDING IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

One Hundred Years of Nationalism, Religion and Politics

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1 A CENTURY OF ELUSIVE STATE-BUILDING IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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The period from the 1910s to the 2020s was a particularly important one in the long history of the Middle East and North Africa. From the Maghreb (the west) to the Mashreq (the east) reaches of the area, history seemed to accelerate during this century. History appeared to do so both in bringing long-festering, slow-building social and political tensions to a cusp and birthing new consequential ones, doing ever so indecisively and without a sense of closure. By the time the twentieth century closed and the twenty-first opened, the sequence had persisted. Analysis and study of the region remained as it had been, dominated by talk of unceasing armed conflicts, open-ended social crises, religious confrontation, ideological contestation and continuous political transformation. Though it had never really lost it all along, the region had in this new *fin de siècle* regained international policy and media attention, notably in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 (an event coming ten months after the fall of the Berlin Wall). That crisis, which continued throughout the 1990s with the United Nations-enforced economic embargo on Iraq and its costly humanitarian consequences, then gave way to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and the Global War on Terror, which in turn were followed by the 2011 Arab Spring and subsequent crises in the Levant, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. Following his election in November 2016, President Donald J. Trump added momentum to this sequence by adopting in January 2017 a so-called 'Muslim Ban', prohibiting citizens from seven Middle Eastern countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen)[1] from entry to the United States, and launching in January 2020 a 'Deal of the Century' peace plan meant to solve the sixty-year-old Israeli–Palestinian conflict. For all their high-profile and urgent nature, these momentous events spanning the 1990s and early 2020s line up, however, more significantly in a historical sequence of developments, which can be traced back revealingly a century ago to the 1910s, and at the heart of which stands centrally the challenge of state-building combined with the primacy of foreign influence.

Against such latter-day and earlier backdrops, this book examines the question of statehood and its underpinnings in the Middle East and North Africa. Its starting point is threefold as it argues that, amidst nationalistic and religious contests and foreign interference, over the past one hundred years or so, the region of the Middle East and North Africa – in its generic understanding also referred to as the Arab world or the Orient[2] – has been wrestling primarily with the challenge of establishing cogent, performative, independent, representative and resilient states. This layered statehood conundrum played out in relation to several dimensions at the forefront of which stand three main founding historical developments: *regional imperial withdrawal, international colonial domination* and *domestic political struggles*. As the Mashreqi and Maghrebi Arab states, as well as the three non-Arab countries of the region (Iran, Israel and Turkey) all experienced a sequence of (i) end of the Ottoman Empire,[3] (ii) rise of Western colonial empires and (iii) emergence of local nationalist and religious movements, several questions that impact the search for statehood arose or were revealed problematically. The aim of this volume is to historicize this statehood trajectory by attempting an unpacking of the above three components against a dual interrogation: why so little statehood and why so much conflict?

Old orders and fleeting statehood

The past one hundred years can be characterized as a century during which the societies of the Middle East and the North African region have been overwhelmingly preoccupied with the project of the establishment of viable and functioning states. At times explicit and at times less so, that project was continuously crucial for them while constituting a distinct preoccupation for their larger international environment. In significant ways, the statehood project remains today a difficult, frustrating, divisive and incomplete endeavour. This shortcoming has also determined the imagery and phraseology resorted to in order to analyse the area. Problematic talk of 'fragile states', 'weak states', 'failed states', 'collapsed states', 'war-torn societies' and 'fractured lands'[4] continues to dominate representation of the region's political, economic and social scene. Where state apparatuses have been set up with a measure of stability, such apparent durability[5] was nonetheless achieved through the artifice of authoritarianism, which invariably – notably in Iraq and Syria, the twin enemy Ba'athist *mukhabarat* (intelligence services) states, or in Algeria and Egypt where the military continues to hold sway over all things political – sowed the seeds of its own crises to come.[6] For decades, these police state systems, divorced from their citizens aspirations for representation and better livelihood, seemed impervious to the internal and external pressures for socioeconomic and political change. In time, the deeply alienating dynamics the regimes had established only made the dead-end of these giants with clay feet more spectacular, as witnessed vividly with the fall of Tunisia's Zein Al Abidin Ben Ali, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi 2011. Elsewhere,

traditional so-called 'tribal-clanic systems', whether initially organized in the form of emirates, former Ottoman provinces or large regional confederations, evolved into state systems quite late during the second half of the twentieth century – doing so more in form than in substance, and often dragging a distinct 'tribes with flags' legacy into their uncertain statehood project, as the Egyptian diplomat Tahseen Bashir once termed it.[7] Similarly, the regionally all-important Palestine question itself – for all its identity, religious and geopolitical aspects – was and remains a state-formation dispute as well as an instance of quest for statehood for both Palestinians and Israelis.[8]

If Middle Eastern and North African statehood has been evanescent, it has been so not merely as result of the underperformance – real and consequential – of the local actors but equally and principally because of a specific historical configuration. The latter came into formation a century ago at the confluence of the three related-but-inherently distinct developments noted, namely the slow end of the Ottoman Empire, the violent encounter with the European colonial powers and the gradual rise of the local nationalistic and religious emancipation movements. In time, these three constellations came to preside over what we can term a *stateness deficit*, one that continues today to be determined largely by these strands. Eminently interrelated in their eventual consequences on statehood or the lack thereof, each of these three aspects of Middle Eastern and North African history, however, initially played out distinctly.

The so-called 'slow end' of the Ottoman Empire is the first and arguably most important of these stories, as it relates to the political and strategic milieu of the nascent, soon-to-be-elusive order. In retrospect, we can see that from about the mid-1860s the diminishing control of the Sublime Porte, as Istanbul was known, over the territories it had been administering directly or holding suzerainty over since the 1500s in the Levant, Arabia, the Nile Valley and the Maghreb both paradoxically enabled the rise of local autonomous movements for emancipation and rendered their project more arduous. The Ottoman twilight played out amidst a series of three successive failed attempts at reforming the empire: the military affairs-focused *nizam-i-cedid* or *nizam-e-jedid* (new order) in 1790–1807, the *tanzimat* (reorganisation) administrative reforms between 1830 and 1876 and the strategic political use of pan-Islamism in the period 1876 to 1908. Though it was ultimately unsuccessful – and fuelled the secular opposition to Sultan Abdul Hamid II led by the Young Turks movement known as the Committee of Ottoman Union, later renamed Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) – the combined historical territorial reach of the Ottoman provinces in the area and the nature of the transcendent religiously couched project, as well indeed as its 'reformist' claims, introduced a pattern whereby what can be termed 'backward-looking forward-moving' Islamist change could be articulated as a political project. One, too, that could be and would be pursued both by state and non-state actors alike. In time, it would be, as it were, precisely in those areas where Istanbul laid down the sword of the Caliphate in 1924 – in and around the Levant – that the

organization of the Islamic State (IS) sought, in 2014, to reclaim it and re-establish that religious-territorial (by now also cyber-virtual) dominion.[9]

The Ottoman Empire's imprint – primarily present in the dynastic power matrix and heavy administrative structure that it left in the countries of the region (through the prisms of *sultan,* i.e. monarch, and *dawla*, i.e. state) – was accompanied by colonial experience at the hands of European powers. Often captured in reductionist ways in post-Arab Spring analyses heralding 'the end of Sykes-Picot' in the mid-2010s, the secret British-French-Russian agreement in 1916 and the League of Nations' Mandate System combined to introduce from the 1920s to the 1940s a second factor of structural historical disruption of the state-building project, namely external control and interventionism. To be certain, social and political events played out differently across the vast region, but the colonial impediment logic was more often than not systemically the same. In the Levant, the division of newly carved territories between Britain and France led to unrest starting in 1920 and running well into the late 1940s. Western action stunned and paralysed the domestic political power struggles, particularly between nationalists and Islamists – both now resultingly focused on the external arbiter – and cemented the role and place of violence as the chosen method to settle those struggles. Nowhere more than in Iraq (a country amalgamated in 1921 by the British from the former Mosul, Baghdad and Basra provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and given a Hashemite monarch, Faisal bin Hussein bin Ali al Hashemi, brought from the Hejaz by way of Syria, of which he was briefly king) were those dystrophies more visible. The trouble in Iraq built up continuously, ever more violently, during the monarchy years until the bloody revolution of July 1958, into the ruthless Ba'athi regime from July 1968 onwards and in the aftermath of the US invasion in March 2003. In the Maghreb, the Italian control of Libya (1911–1947) and the French one of Algeria (a department from 1830 to 1962), Tunisia (a protectorate from 1881 to 1956), Mauritania (a colony from 1904 to 1960) and Morocco (also a protectorate, from 1912 to 1956) yielded the same type of violent colonial dispossession experience formally ending in the early 1960s only to take new postcolonial forms. The brutality enacted by the British in Iraq was matched by both the Italian and the French, respectively in Libya and Algeria.

The past century was also importantly the scene of a virulent competition between societal projects throughout the region as nationalists and Islamists pursued different and antagonistic visions of nation and state. This existential contest played out amidst active external interference. Even if they tried by the mid-twentieth century to maximize their positions (individually as new states or jointly in regional organizations, notably through the League of Arab States established in 1945), the countries of the region were essentially in majority political systems set up by others and to the benefit of others. Dominated by a sense of peripherality in its very labelling (middle east, *medio oriente*, *moyen-orient*) and malleability (from the 'the Sick Man of Europe' in 1853 to 'the Greater Middle East' in 2004), the region's agency over its destiny and in particular its encounter with modernity

was often hijacked by notions of alleged 'strangeness', 'dangerosity', 'volatility', 'instability' and 'violence', which became the familiar folkloric depictions of the area and simultaneously the geostrategic hallmarks of Orientalism. As Tarak Barkawi and Keith Stanski note:

> Orientalism [was here] not mere bias against Easterners; it [was] *a regime of truth*. Views that in fact amount to grotesque misrepresentation come to be accepted by the authorised experts and by those they communicate with. One such misrepresentation that sits at the core of historical and contemporary Orientalisms concerns the East as a site of disorder and the West as that which brings order to disorder.[10]

That site of disorder has often been identified as 'the Arab state'. These tenets also set the stage for the nationalist/military and the Islamist/insurgency dichotomous forces, which would come to compete indecisively in and for most of these theatres. As socio-historical entities in flux, these two camps – with many sub-fractions on either side (i.e., various denominations of nationalists and different Islamist currents) – were, in point of fact, none too different in their quest for forms of rule and political supremacy. They both sought to instrumentalize power structures for given projects rather than engineer actual states. Nationalists and Islamists were also similar in their populist appeals through ideologies of mass mobilization (in this case identity vs faith, i.e. 'who are you?' vs 'what do you believe in?'). As the post–First World War arrangements – encapsulated in the Sharif Hussein-Henry Mac-Mahon correspondence (14 July 1915 to 10 March 1916), the Sykes-Picot treaty (16 May 1916), the Balfour declaration (2 November 1917) and the Mandate System (inaugurated on 28 June 1919) – revealed themselves untenable, the next forty years would witness increasing clashes between nationalists and Islamists as they moved ever problematically towards the age of decolonization by mid-century.

Against the background of their respective intellectual trajectories during the nineteenth century,[11] nationalists and Islamists sought to present their societies with competing transocial conceptions about the nature of the state and the notion of political legitimacy. Whereas Arab nationalism was paradoxically at once a reaction to Western colonialism *and* a result of Westernizing reform – and therefore carried admittedly an element of statehood anchored in a feeling of cultural commonality (real or imagined) – Islamism in all its four configurations so far – early mobilization (e.g., Hassan al Banna's Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s), post-independence militancy (from Egypt's Gama'at al Islamiya in the 1970s to Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj's Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria in the late 1980s and early 1990s), globalized transnationalism (Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda in the 1990s and 2000s) and insurrectionary (post-Arab Spring in the 2010s, notably the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) – invariably sought to reshape a legacy through (violent or non-violent) rupture from the classical Westernized view on the state.[12] In that sense, the Janus-faced ambition of Islamism has been

to play out both as a liberating force (from the colonial West and then from the repressive states, often simultaneously) and as a restorative conservative movement (of the central place of religion in society, and of the Caliphate). It is important to remember that before jihadi Salafism, the contemporary version of Salafism (in North Africa notably) that emerged during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century originally had a distinct anti-colonial expression and orientation (for instance, in Algeria and in Morocco).[13] With a violent armed group, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), eventually overtaking that project in the 2010s to set up an 'Islamic State' – and doing so with an effective transnational influence on other militant groups across continents as well as on isolated individuals round the world – it remains to be seen in particular what lasting influence will that saga have on non-violent Islamist militancy in the countries of the region, and particularly so as the Middle Eastern and North African political transitions continue into the 2020s. Finally, the tentative set-up of states in the region also coincided with a period of global transformations intensifying and densifying during that same 1910s–2010s century.

A dual colonial mould

Why has the issue of the state remained such a gnawing question in the Middle East and North Africa? As noted, the period between the start of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century marked a key moment in the history of region with a series of momentous transformations. During this phase, the foundations of the modern states of the region were to be established. This process was problematic, difficult and violent. Today, the systems that emerged stand as hollow structures filled almost solely by power and regularly assaulted by a variety of counter-power actors. The history of state-building in the Middle East and North Africa is a history of a colonially determined contest between nationalism and imperialism, and between nationalism and religion, but it is also a history of state versus society, and therefore time and again of power – a power struggle whose drivers were multiple.

The Middle East and North Africa experienced, as it were, a two-layered colonial experience: Ottoman and Western. Though the Ottoman presence in the countries of the Levant, in the Arabian Peninsula, in the Nile Valley and in the Maghreb is usually not understood as colonial in the same way as, say, the French or British ones – and if indeed the Ottoman Empire was itself a Middle Eastern entity – the fact is that Istanbul was a foreign occupying force in Arab lands and therefore clinically a colonial one in these regions. Whatever religious commonalities the Turkish occupiers enjoyed with the (Sunni) Muslim majority in these societies, these links did not alter the political fact of Istanbul's imperial projection over these territories and its political subjugation of their leaders. With such understanding in mind, we can see how much of the matrix, in which the Middle Eastern and North Africa state was designed, owes to the logic and practice of colonialism as

a system. For instance, the naked and brutal language of power, which the new local authorities would themselves soon come to speak in the twentieth century, developed as the direct legacy of the combined and successive oppressive Ottoman and Western imprints. These two actors also regarded the Middle East and North Africa as a space (more precisely a number of related sub-spaces) onto which their power was to be projected, interests secured, populations subjugated, elites co-opted, culture and religion instrumentalized and economic benefits derived.

To be certain, the cultural traits the Ottomans shared with the Arabs and other local populations, and the religious authority Istanbul was exercising over Muslims, stand in substantial contrast to the exogenous European identity of the British, French, Italians and Spaniards who subsequently colonized different parts of the region. The alienating methods and violence of both Ottoman and Western empires were nonetheless similar in essence. Their combined effect on the socio-political milieu of Middle Eastern and North African societies and the mindset of their elites largely determined how power would be understood and how it would be practiced in the following decades – violently, arbitrarily, monopolistically and in the near-absence of accountability. Tracing the genealogy of the contemporary Middle Eastern and North African state, there is no overstating the importance of that influence and the reality of those links.

In truth, the driving force of the contemporary absence of the functioning, viable and cogent state in the region has been this *dual colonial authorship* which historically presided over the local state-building efforts. That exercise in (de) formation was launched amidst a history wherein the region was but destination, prize and bonanza. Such outlook, as brought on by both Ottomans and Europeans, would inevitably generate a similar outlook of exploitation on the part of the vast majority of the nationalist and post-colonial leaders. This was also the result of a far-reaching understanding of the 'purpose' of the region and its 'place' in the international system – that is the 'great game', as Henry Laurens termed it,[14] which it eventually came to represent. Just as was the case in North Africa, colonial expansion in the East was initiated as a combination of individual initiatives by so-called adventurers and by systemic logics of expansion. In the Maghreb, among many others, figures such as the Vendean traveller Paul Imbert exploring from Morocco as early as 1618 or the British Alexander Gordon pushing from Algeria in 1826 (in his case already using the Sahel as a destination for 'strategic depth') were among the forefathers of such logics of modern colonial penetration dictated by metropolitan policy concerns. 'Travelling' to the Orient has, in that regard, always been (and remained so quite late in the colonial sequence)[15] the entry point of indissociable mindsets of discovery and control. These two notions were reconciled and rationalized by a narrative also peddling the thought that the Middle East and North Africa area 'poses problems' to the West – and is thus to be controlled, or kept in check.

To this day, the idea of 'MENA' as a 'problematic' region of the world persists. On 20 January 2005, delivering the State of the Union address before the US Congress

in the aftermath of Al Qaeda's 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, at the height of the inception of the Global War on Terror launched in response to those attacks, President George W. Bush declared: 'We have seen our vulnerability, and we have seen its deepest source. For as long as whole regions of the world simmer in resentment and tyranny – prone to ideologies that feed hatred and excuse murder – violence will gather, and multiply in destructive power, and cross the most defended borders and raise a mortal threat.' Then and now, calls for order abroad have always been coterminous with narratives about the 'barbarity of the native'.[16] Said dangerosity of the Middle East and North Africa – half-expressed here in cultural terms – is also linked to its alleged unreadability and its assertiveness, all of which, it is argued, need to be controlled and tamed. The Orient is a place – writes one analyst decrying the 'scandal of continuity' in analyses of the region – that is seen as 'too historical, literate, complex and self-confident to be turned into an ordinary subject matter'.[17] The lasting cultural constructions have incorporated the very geography of the region.[18] If the region is depicted in such an outlook, it is because the place fundamentally represented a political challenge, a contender long recognized by the West. As Tamim Ansary sums it: 'The Islamic world presented a particular complex psychosocial drama, first, because Western Europeans had a tangled history with Muslims already [since the Crusades at least], and second, because they started trickling into the Muslim world just as the three great Islamic empire were rising toward their peak of power and brilliance.'[19]

Informed by such historical depth demarcated by the end of the Caliphate, on the one hand, and an attempt to re-establish it, on the other, the 1910s–2010s period was the natural temporal arena on which these competitive dynamics landed. It is also where the respective armies of nationalism and religion – in part conjured up to push back against the occupiers, in part independently seeking supremacy over their societies-in-reconstruction – met and clashed. One should be wary, however, of the dangers of exceptionalizing this history, as it relates to the Ottoman Empire, Western powers, nationalists, Islamists or indeed statehood itself. Was, for instance, the 'fall of the Ottoman Empire' so clear-cut a decline as we often discuss it today, its imprint on the region so strong and therefore its influence over the local approach to statehood so consequential? As it were, the long 'decline' of the Ottomans was kick-started as early as 1536 with the signing of a series of commercial agreements, known as Capitulations or *ahidnâme* (bill of oath), between Istanbul and various European Powers, primarily France. These contractual agreements were largely beneficial to the Europeans. Importantly, they set in motion a sequence of Western gradual incursion into the Ottoman realm, with consuls, liaison offices and eventually military alliance with Germany notably. The shift was important and, in a Trojan Horse logic, arguably sealed the fate of the Ottoman Empire. It should be remembered that 'the Ottoman Empire [had] exercised considerable influence in European affairs, partly because of encroachments into European territory and partly because of its control of East-West trade routes. As a consequence, European states and particularly their merchants had always aspired to break the Ottoman monopoly on transregional

trade and to appropriate profits for themselves.'[20] Later on, as noted, a lengthy period of attempted reforms generated political lethargy amidst growing discontent in Istanbul and beyond. By the early twentieth century, that discontent, best embodied in the Young Turks movement, had combined with four other key momentous series of events: the Great Arab Revolt led in Arabia by the Hashemites flanked by the British, the wave of nationalism in the Balkans, the virtual independence of the *bey* and *dey* chieftaincies and their principalities in North Africa and the turmoil and geostrategic competition from Russia. The important legacy of this lengthy sequence concerns centrally the sown seeds of division, the amorphous nature of the pre-national communities, the intensity and scale of rebellion as well as the pregnancy of identity and faith politics – all of which again landing squarely onto the statehood project in the region. It is important to stress anew that both the evolving structure of the Ottoman Empire (from a raiding *ghazi* state from the 1300s to the 1500s to a large administrative and bureaucratic entity subsequently) and its collapse were complex and multifaceted. This is key since the interpretation of the past taking place in contemporary Turkey, as well as in other post-Ottoman nation states, has often involved an exercise in selective memory presenting that empire in static and unchanging ways.[21]

Similarly, European colonialism to which most countries in the region were subject to is a determinant factor of the subsequent state-building sequence. European colonialism follows on, and in places overlaps with, the lengthy Ottoman control, but it is qualitatively different from it in its significant emphasis on violence, racism and de-humanization. In straightforward lineage, the post-colonial Middle Eastern and North African authoritarian state is the child of the dispossessive colonial state. The latter is the 'poisoned well', as one analyst called it,[22] from which these systems drank. Whereas the Ottoman Empire provided a matrix of authority and administration (*divan*, *vizir* and *awqaf*)[23] used by the predatory post-colonial state, European colonialism did also that but was most (de)formative of that state in its emphasis on security and the widespread and systematic use of repression. Italian concentration camps in Libya, British military campaigns in Iraq and French torture in Algeria determined that violence's choreography and tempo.[24] Such methods informed what in time emerged as the police state *mukhabarat* and *istikhbarat* systems of Muammar Gaddafi's Libya, Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Front de Libération National (FLN) in Algeria, or those of Hafez al Assad's and Bashar al Assad's Syria or Hosni Mubarak' Egypt. Above and beyond the violence itself and more fundamentally, as Lisa Anderson remarks, is that, at independence, the rulers of the Arab world were not constrained by institutions actually designed to foster government accountability.[25] Such central trait of emancipation from democratic representativity further normalized the resort to power politics and the use of force; it in effect became second nature to these states.

Finally, there has long been a genuine danger of 'overstating the Arab state', to use Nazih Ayubi's phrase.[26] To be sure, many other forces determined and continue to define in different ways besides statehood what the Middle Eastern and North

African region emerged to be in the period from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first – and indeed whether this period is arguably so particular. Other explanatory variables attached to these variegated forces include political economy, civil society, identity politics and gender. All provide fundamental perspectives on this history allowing us to see the ins and outs of societal contests during the past decades. Similarly, the pursuit of statehood has at times been regarded as a one-dimensional political quest, whereas it was all along characterized by a diversity of perspectives and a plethora of actors; 'intellectual innovators during the formation of the modern Middle East were often landowners, merchants or professionals associated with the small but growing capitalist sectors that emerged, with variable orientations vis-à-vis the state, in the Ottoman Empire, Iran and Egypt'.[27] Because of such variety (a region 'too historical, literate, complex and self-confident' indeed), however, from the very beginning of this sequence, analyses of the region have also at time swung so far as to de-emphasize the role of statehood per se only seeing the role of groups. As Johann Büssow and Astrid Meier write:

> This tendency became even more pronounced when European powers institutionalised their rule over parts of the Ottoman Middle East in the age of colonialism. Many analyses of contemporary Middle Eastern culture and politics, as they are produced across the globe by academics and non-academic intellectuals today, still rely on easy but inaccurate representations of the importance of family, tribe and religious 'sect' as significant categories of social belonging in Middle Eastern countries, instead of confronting the difficulties of such categorisations.[28]

Or indeed replacing them under the umbrella of the state concept (an actor whose very *raison d'être* is to organize and control these actors). Similarly, the role of class has been de-emphasized ignoring what Adam Hanieh identifies as the intertwined development of class and society in the Middle East.[29] The state, however, has occupied and still occupies a particular *primus inter pares* place in this history. Immediately after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and throughout the rest of the century, it became successively a sacred objective, an object of detestation and a contested entity – all elevating its importance and endowing the issue with urgency. The centrality of the state in the region – and thus its inevitability and importance as an analytical lens – stems not so much from its actions but from the gaze so many had over it, the 'longing for it' as Ghassan Salamé argues.[30]

The quest for statehood in the region has been important for other reasons, chief among them is the naked use of force. To the extent that, as Stephanie Cronin remarks,[31] states are inherently coercive (principally by virtue of their activities related to taxation, order maintenance and legislation), such coerciveness was regarded by the Middle Eastern and North African elites as the way to turn their traditional, dynastic, religious or nationalist domination into an institutionalized supra-entity and a set of readily enforceable rule. Secondly, the very abstractness

of the state – that entity that does not yet exist fully and which needs to be built – gave it useful malleability here. The new regimes could and would then align the design and functioning of that nascent state superstructure with their specific parochial interests. If, again, the focus on the state itself is not straightforward – 'the instability of much analysis of the region stems from the fact that it wanders from assessing an all-powerful state to unease about whether … it makes sense to talk of a state at all',[32] writes insightfully Fred Halliday – time and again, its centrality is unquestionable in this recent history.

The Middle Eastern and North African state is at once strong and weak, present and absent, visible and invisible. Its strength has rested in its capacity to impose itself brutally on its society and in its ability to weather all the storms of contestation and uprising for so many years. It is present in that obvious violent way, and yet it is weak and absent since such strength is superficial and such survival is ever so fragile, allowing it to remain merely alive from one crisis to the next. It is visible in the limits and demarcations it arrogantly puts before its populace, crowds standing at the gates of the insultingly grandiose palaces. It is invisible in the very way it functions, privately, secretly, nepotistically and incestuously. Accordingly, the history of the past century in the region has often been written as a series of political crises and conflicts revolving around the establishment of the state, the contest for it or attempts by domestic or foreign actors to influence it. For instance, one author identifies six such 'critical points':

> [T]he first … occurred between 1915 and 1922 with the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Arab Revolt, the Balfour Declaration, the Ottoman defeat during the First World War and the eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the French and British mandates. The second critical turning point occurred in 1948 with the United Nations partition plan of Palestine and the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, which left Syria, Egypt and Jordan defeated. The third critical turning point occurred with the defeat of the Arab armies in the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. The fourth critical turning point occurred in 1979 with the Iranian revolution; the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty; the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia; the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan; and the sending of troops to help the Afghans. The fifth critical turning point occurred between 1987 and 1991 with the First Palestinian Intifada, the end of the Iran–Iraq War, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the First Gulf War and the posting of US troops in the region and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The sixth began with 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan, the Iraq War and support of strategic partners … in the Global War on Terror.[33]

As events and phases, what these key moments point out to ultimately is the pre-eminence of the statehood factor. The primary drivers of this history are the design and composition of the state. Space is determined by borders and time

is diplomatic, all derivative from state concerns and attributes. Revealingly, in the 2020s, not a single country in the region is immune from an overinflated external influence. Indeed, no other region in the world features such layered and multifaceted external interference.

Unsurprisingly, the history of the Middle East and North Africa over the past century can therefore be regarded as being bookended by two events symbolically signalling how the region has been and still is operating 'under influence' in international affairs; the 1916 British-French Sykes-Picot secret agreement to divide the Levant in their respective zones of influence with the agreement of Russia, and Donald Trump's 2020 so-called 'Deal of the Century' to bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians, also at a time of alliance between the American president and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Both events encapsulate the calculations and actions of external actors able to all-too-easily act dismissively of local political sovereigns, and establish, maintain or renew dominion over them, with the latter's complicity, naïveté, incompetence or corruption.

When in March 1915 a societally embattled Russia outlined its objectives for the survival of its empire as being 'strategic depth' towards Constantinople and the Dardanelles, this foreign set of concerns – driven by an accelerating, pre-revolutionary domestic crisis brewing since 1905 – was merely materializing to align with the designs of Britain and France over the region. These two countries' foreign policy objectives, which had existed since much earlier in both North Africa and the Middle East, could then logically come to coexist with Russia's, whose foreign minister, Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov, signed on a year later on the agreement between Sir Mark Sykes and Monsieur François Georges-Picot. Much like the 1881 Berlin conference determined the political future of Africa for the next decades, the *longue durée* diplomatic time that followed that agreement (Moudros armistice in October 1918, conferences of San Remo and Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, creation of Israel in 1948, Suez crisis in 1956, oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, Iranian revolution that same year, 1990–1991 Gulf War, 11 September 2001 attacks, Arab Spring of 2011 and its aftermath) is largely in consonance with that impulse long ago.

When in December 2015 presidential candidate Donald Trump promised to declare a ban on Muslims if elected at the White House, he was weaponizing the sum of all hatreds towards Islam that a segment among the American population had been building up since the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, as well as replaying and furthering a colonial imaginary. In North Africa, France had built an imperial republic whose vision and practices were anchored in a representation of Islam as inferior and dangerous,[34] and Italy had done the same in Libya. Elsewhere in the Middle East, the United Kingdom and France had acted similarly in the Levant. The 1920 allocation of the mandates over Syria and Iraq took place in a context of explicit and immanent racism, which persisted with the League of Nations.[35] All along and all over, the issue of power has presided over this sequence, and this has coloured the local statehood story.[36] Resultingly, the Arab state was forged in the matrix of the Western colonial state.

The latter's practice of power functioned on the basis of expansion, centralization, militarism and exceptionalism.[37]

Half-births

If the mid-1910s can be regarded as a founding moment of contemporary Middle Eastern and North African politics, it is because the events that played out during those years remained a forceful referential. Fifty years later, as the region would embark on a new moment led this time not by the colonial state but by its illegitimate postcolonial state offspring, the dispossessive vision set in motion at the start of the century had all along remained operational. In 1961, the success of the Hollywood film *Lawrence of Arabia* would symbolically reveal how much of that Orientalist vision was still appealing to Western military supremacy shrouded in alliance and emancipation. As David Barber remarked, '*Lawrence of Arabia* would be a *cri de cœur* from the dying colonial empire – an explanation for its death, a lament over its loss, a justification of its prior existence and a call for its enlightened continuation.'[38] Amidst such European desire for continuity – or active resistance to change, as seen in the case of Algeria where the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS) was organized to conduct terrorist operations to thwart French President Charles De Gaulle's independence agreement with the Algerian FLN – the next decades would witness the in-built fragility of these 'half-born' Middle Eastern and North African states. Such sequence would play out well into the early twentieth century. The consequential nature of this state incompleteness would be revealed to be initially the result of a disintegrative colonial project from without combined with the societal experience of authoritarianism which came to dominate these systems from the 1960s onwards. As noted, this would further strip the statehood project of its potential democratic representation component, as the new regimes would regularly and unabashedly exercise power on the mode of arbitrariness in lieu of accountability. To a large extent, the new state's centralized structure around a strong man (e.g., Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya or Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia) was also the product of the patrimonial and patriarchal orders that characterized the societies of the region. As Diane King explains:

> In the twentieth century, as the modern state developed in the Middle East, patriliny became the basis of citizenship … [Patriliny] lasted longer in the Middle East region than elsewhere.. [and] the Middle Eastern states recognised patrilineal succession in far more specific categories than citizenship: religion, sect, ethnicity and even residence itself … Moreover, patriliny has served as a basis for legitimacy that is deployed in a wide variety of ways by state leaders.[39]

Today, a century after the modern-day state-building project was launched in the region, the stories continue to play out amidst neo-authoritarianism and

coercive democratization.[40] During this whole period of the second half of the twentieth century, the process of state-building was difficult to observe as a cogent, viable and lasting experience with consistent, reliable and resiliently reproduced state structures. Rather, it remained eminently elusive, a journey whose waystations were but crises, wars and uprisings – all signposts of incomplete statehood fuelled first and foremost by its coercive nature. Importing the state after decolonization – or rather inheriting that Western version of it – of necessity meant boosting the military.[41] And so, liberated from the anti-colonial struggle, the new state was free to turn its attention to another venue of violence, its own society. In the late 1950s in Iraq, Egypt and Syria, and later in Libya, the 'military option' and authoritarianism were widely welcomed by the urban population as the only way of creating a national 'power' able to resist Zionism and imperialism. Likewise, in the three countries, wide sections of the intelligentsia legitimized the military coups and the resulting regimes (*al andhima*).[42] Within twenty-five years, the Algerian FLN had squandered the aura of legitimacy that the national war of liberation had bequeathed onto it. By 1988, a week of riots in Algiers in October of that year revealed vividly the dead-end of the empty project nationalism had become for most Algerians, notably the unemployed youth. In the same vein, whereas the early days of pan-Arabism had opened possibilities for an international 'third way', bringing together Arab, African and Asian nationalists, the postcolonial Arab states ultimately failed to engage with internationalist movements, such as pan-Africanism or Black-Palestinian transnational solidarity movements, leaving these imaginaries to civil society.[43]

In so doing, the postcolonial elites were fundamentally unable to link decolonization with the question of citizenship, namely to choose to help their populations shift from (colonial) subjects to (independent) citizens, politically as well as legally and indeed psychologically. Had this happened, it would have been the most resilient way to preserve the nascent states and bolster their legitimacy. Instead, the regimes opted for a superficial existence which relied on their largely symbolic opposition to Israel and their mere presence in international society. In that regard, Michael Barnett has argued that, in the second part of the twentieth century and notably as result of the 1967 defeat:

> Arab states, which are now routinely characterised as having a 'real' existence and basis in society, seemingly have agreed on some basic 'rules of the game' that are associated with the norms of sovereignty … The consolidation of sovereignty and the emergence of a 'centrist' conception of Arab nationalism enabled Arab states to develop relatively stable expectations and shared norms, that is, to foster regional order.[44]

Yet this so-called Arab regional order that had emerged then – conservatively, negatively and with minimal expectations – was for all practical purposes a myth. Neither nationalism per se nor the League of Arab States as an organization[45] were ever able to produce a cogent and articulated vision of a common future beyond

such passive presence in the international system. To separate the discussion of that 'order' from the notion of state-building is to extract the power issue of its natural and most consequential domestic context. In effect, as Avraham Sela noted, 'the capability of regional systems to establish normative order of security and stability should be perceived as a dependent variable of *entwined historical processes of state formation and international conflicts*.'[46]

Rather, the regimes were invariably on the lookout for new devices to control their populations. If, by the early twenty-first century, 'security' had become the be-all of politics, in the mid-twentieth century, the regimes were using myth and history itself, specifically nationalism shrouded as 'history', as a way to entrap their people. As Anwar Chejne wrote contemporaneously in 1960:

> [H]istory has become to some degree an instrument in the hands of the newly-arising states. It aims at the diffusion of an historical consciousness through the revival of the past and the glorification of its heroes and accomplishments. History has been approached with a definite orientation for improving the present and setting firm foundations for the future. The impact of the West has definitely played a role in this orientation, as a response to a challenge, a parallel development, an actual influence on Arab intelligentsia, or a combination of these three.[47]

Such nation-building chimeras serve primarily the regimes' survival throughout the first generation of post-colonialism. At the tail end of that sequence, the end of the Cold War opened a new phase in which all the dystrophies of the previous thirty years would come together, vividly illustrating the impasse of the postcolonial state. As noted, that entity had been the offspring of the colonial state. It used and abused a narrative centred around nation and identity, which rapidly showed its limits and alienated the economically aggravated societies. By the late 1970s already, popular culture in the form of comedic Egyptian theatre plays (*masrahiyyat*), televised around the Arab world, was sarcastically poking fun of public authorities and their dogmatic language of 'revolution' (*thawra*), 'reform' (*islah*) or 'opening' (*infitah*) – much like subversive Eastern European literature under Communism (e.g. Milan Kundera's *The Joke*) was subtly mocking the totalitarian state.[48] As noted, in October 1988 in Algeria, the 'children of the revolution' generation, youth born in the 1960s, rioted for days in Algiers – doing so literally on the grounds of the city's Martyrs' Square, erected in memory of the fallen for independence – demanding a better future. The FLN's obvious failure was that of all the region's regimes. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait less than two years later only served to further illustrate the collapse of Arab nationalism. Once again, interference accompanied the sequence as the US military intervention in 1991 and the subsequent embargo on Iraq were additional instance of domestic and external dispossession. But if the postcolonial Middle Eastern and North African state was stuck in looping authoritarianism – in 1992, in response to the riots and

the successful political rise of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the FLN yielded to the military who led a coup and unleashed repression on Algeria birthing the *décennie noire* (dark decade) civil war until 1998[49] – Western interventionism was, for its part, about to be rebooted.

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States conducted by Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda allowed the George W. Bush administration to launch a Global War on Terror (GWOT), which persists to this day. The military and imperial nature of that campaign spelled further impediments to the project of statehood in the Middle East and North Africa. The invasion of Iraq by the United States and the United Kingdom in March 2003 was the key moment in this sequence. Amidst a global moment of rising Islamophobia and anti-Arab feeling, the Middle Eastern state was shown for what it had come to be, or rather remains, half a century or so after decolonization, namely an object of direct or indirect control by Western powers. Over the next decade as transnational radical Islamism, led by Al Qaeda and its offsprings chief among them the Islamic State, raised hell across the region and around the world, the local states were becoming mere spectators to this sequence of regional political, social and security degeneration.

The 'war on terror' only served to fuel further the domestic uproar across the region. In time, the epitome of the Arab police state, Zein al Abidin Ben Ali's Tunisia, unexpectedly took the lead in a series of revolts known as the Arab Spring, which shook the region to its core in 2011 and within months caused the fall of Ben Ali, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Yemen's Ali Abdallah Saleh. Syria's Bashar al Assad managed to mount a resistance with the support of Russia, and the tacit acceptance of Western powers, which initially called for his removal, more concerned by Islamist radicalism than secular authoritarianism. The Arab Spring was an unprecedented moment of social empowerment in the region, notably as regards the youth and women. The movement also took place in the context of a changing grammar of transnational politics. This took the form of the rise of a new era of social activism, and particularly of solidarity politics, which were facilitated by innovations in information and communication technologies that allowed grassroots movements to connect with sympathizers around the globe.[50] For all their acuity and momentum, but for Tunisia, the revolts did not however succeed in reversing the course of the authoritarian state in the region. The Gulf monarchies brutally brought to a halt the uprising in Bahrain and pumped money into their societies further buying off their people's happiness and chasing out the question of a just and rights-respecting social contract. Arguably, because the monarchies had promoted neither populism nor pan-Arab nationalism, they were not as jeopardized by their failure.[51] The post–Arab Spring movement also revealed the extent to which the youth opposition movements could be creative and impactful during the uprising phase but inefficient, divided and often hollow politically during the transitions that followed. Mesmerized by the wizardry of their own technology, these e-revolutionaries used social media not so much to imagine alternative statehoods but merely to conduct guerrilla warfare on the regime – efficiently but often in politically sterile ways.[52]

By the mid-2010s, the authoritarian Middle Eastern state had staged a comeback. Saudi Arabia stood as the unassailable fortress of a despotism to which the United Arab Emirates also gave globalized, tech-savvy and modernized clothes. As the revolt in Syria turned violent and was overtaken by the Islamic State project – constructed simultaneously as quasi-state, insurgency and terrorist campaign[53] – Bashar al Assad played the 'bulwark against terrorism' card deftly, receiving the support of many in the West. He combined that survival tactic with protection he garnered from Russia's Vladimir Putin who was seeking to bring an end to the American Middle East.[54] A century after the Tsar, another Russian leader was similarly seeking strategic depth in the Middle East, equally with a view to protect his annexation of Crimea in March 2014. If the reassertion of the authoritarian state was well on its way before the Arab Spring at the occasion of the Global War on Terror,[55] the Arab Spring and the 2014 migration crisis allowed then that predatory state to renew its lease on Middle Eastern societies. What the Arab Spring fundamentally revealed was that the features of the military had in effect become part of the very mechanics of the state itself.[56] Force, hierarchy, implementation and bureaucracy were rebooting the cartography of that barren state supremacy installed midway into the twentieth century, only this time with the urgency of extraordinary measures, state of siege and the sacrosanct 'fight against terrorism' of the post-9/11 era.

Internationally, the great powers acted in variegated ways to reassert their power over the region, just as they had done a century ago. The 2011 Libya intervention was the opening salvo of a period wherein conflict would return to areas of imperial rivalry rather than isolated events of ruthless despots crushing subject populations.[57] Interventionism became a 'new game redux,' as Bertrand Badie argues.[58] As Dierk Walter sums it up:

> [M]ost informed contemporaries would doubtless concur that 'humanitarian interventions' and the 'War on Terror' of recent decades have few if any parallels in the campaigns of colonial conquest and punitive expeditions conducted during the 'age of imperialism', if only because there are no longer any Western empires that are taking possession of overseas colonies. Even in de facto protectorates like Iraq or Afghanistan, Western nations have refrained from redrawing the map of the world in the manner of the late nineteenth century. However, from the perspective of a longer-term history of the exercise of power and force in the modern world, such constitutional distinctions conceal certain fundamental structural continuities.[59]

Indeed, if, in the most immediate sense, imperialism manifests itself in the division of world among rival powers,[60] the newfound interventionism by both the United States and Russia in the region confirms the materialization of a new imperial moment.

With the Trump administration ascendancy to power, neo-authoritarianism was cemented in the Middle East and North Africa – even as a Muslim Ban

was adopted in January 2016 with no protest on the part of the major Arab and Muslim countries' governments.[61] The United States turned a blind eye or directly supported reinvigorated autocrats such as Abdelfattah al Sisi in Egypt, Mohammed Bin Salman in Saudi Arabia and Mohammed Bin Zayed al Nahyan in the United Arab Emirates, while, in the Maghreb, Libya's post-Gaddafi chaos persisted, and in Algeria, the military was able to survive another wave of mass national protests in 2019–2020.

Conclusions and departures

Against this historical canvass, a series of questions arise. The main one concerns statehood itself: its past, present and future in the region. What, ultimately, is that state that somehow should be built in this region of the world? Beyond the lasting politico-security coerciveness and socioeconomic intrusiveness of the Middle Eastern and North African regimes, what sort of social contract can be engineered constructively so as to establish viable, lasting and representative states?

As the state's history is traced and its potential future is imagined, consideration of state elusiveness should not fall prey to a sort of fetishization of the Westphalian nature it would be expected to adopt or the Weberian traits it ought of necessity display. The particular nature of the half-born Middle Eastern and North African states provides us with an opportunity to think beyond Western statehood. There is more to the state in this region than dynastic lineage versus republicanism, regimes versus armed groups, civil society versus elites, or indeed nationalists versus Islamists.[62] For all its modernization dynamics and the demand for statehood, the state can lose currency even before achieving full supremacy. Similarly, statehood is not necessarily subject to a linear logic.

The 1910–2020 history of the state in the Middle East and North Africa is but a specific experience impacted by the given actions of domestic and foreign actors, in a context of transforming international relations. Ultimately, whether in the Middle East and North Africa or elsewhere, the state is fundamentally an umbrella notion and one that, here, has only been a subject of historical concern for a century. In the final analysis, as the chapters in this volume endeavour to, discussion of statehood in the Middle East and North Africa must embrace its complexity and its paradoxes.

Notes

1   Formally known as Executive Order 13769 Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States, the order was signed on 27 January 2017. On 31 January 2020, six other countries were added to the list of countries targeted with restricted travel: Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and Tanzania. In December 2020, President-elect Joe Biden promised to revoke the Muslim ban, and did so, once elected, on 20 January 2021.

2   As Giorgio Hadi Curti notes: 'As much as the region loosely stands together and endures in the popular and academic mind with somewhat simplified and essentialising representations, there is very little material extant coherency to its very geographical name'; see his 'The Middle of Where? Media Geography and the Middle East', *Aether*, VIII, B, September 2011, p. 2.

3   Mauritania and Morocco did not experience Ottoman rule. Morocco enjoyed a lengthy pre-colonial evolution in the stateness realm; see Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

4   For an illustration, see the *New York Times* August 2016 series for the period 2003–2016, Scott Anderson, 'Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart', *The New York Times*, August 2016.

5   Eva Bellin, among others, covered this aspect in her article 'The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective', *Comparative Politics*, 36, 2, January 2004, pp. 139–58.

6   See, notably, Eberhard Kienle's study, *Ba'th vs. Ba'th – The Conflict Between Iraq and Syria, 1968-1989*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1990; and Olivier Schlumberger, ed., *Debating Arab Authoritarianism – Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes, Stanford*, California: Stanford University Press, 2007.

7   The phrase inspired several works such as Charles Glass, *Tribes with Flags – A Dangerous Passage through the Chaos of the Middle East*, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990.

8   On that aspect, and looking at the Palestinian side, Rashid Khalidi speaks of 'two failures of state-building – one in the past and the other ongoing' (p. ix); see his 'Writing Middle Eastern History in a Time of Historical Amnesia', in *The Iron Cage – The Story of Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.

9   See the works of Reza Pankhurst (*The Inevitable Caliphate*, 2013) and Salman Sayyid (*Recalling the Caliphate*, 2014) on this issue.

10 Tarak Barkawi and Keith Stanski, 'Introduction: Orientalism and War', in Tarak Barkawi and Keith Stanski, eds., *Orientalism and War*, London: Hurst and Company, 2012, pp. 5–6, emphasis added.

11 Transnationalism was present even then with European influences (Johann Fichte and Giuseppe Mazzini impacted the thinking of the likes of Rifaa al Tahtawi, Abderrahman al Kawakibi and Sati al Husri) flavouring the Arab nationalism debate and Asian ones the Islamist discussion in the region (Jamal al Din al Afghani's views on a modern Islamic state fed into the philosophies of Muhammad Abdu, Rashid Ridha and Hassan al Banna).

12 See Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, 'In Search of the Non-Western State: Historicising and De-Westphalianising Statehood', in Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Political Science – A Global Perspective*, London: Sage, 2020, pp. 1335–48.

13 Ricardo René Laremont, 'Sufism and Salafism in the Maghreb – Political Implications', in Osama Abi-Mershed, ed., *Social Currents in North Africa*, London: Hurst and Company, 2018, p. 41.

14 Henry Laurens, *Le Grand Jeu – Orient Arabe et Rivalités Internationales depuis 1945*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1991.

15 See Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers – Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994.

16 One such early political-security myth was the claim made by British agents that Ibn Saud's irregular forces had killed 400,000 to 800,000 people – a genocide, in effect – during their conquest of Arabian Peninsula. For a debunking of that claim, see Jeff Eden, 'Did Ibn Saud's Militants Cause 400,000 Casualties? Myths and Evidence

about the Wahhabi Conquests, 1902-1925', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, February 2018.

17   Judith Scheele and Andrew Shryock, 'On the Left-Hand of Knowledge', in Judith Scheele and Andrew Shryock, eds., *The Scandal of Continuity in Middle East Anthropology – Forms, Duration, Difference*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019, p. 10.

18   See Diana K. Davis, ed., *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013.

19   Tamim Ansary, *Destiny Disrupted – A History of the World through Islamic Eyes*, New York: Public Affairs, 2009, p. 219.

20   Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael, *Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East – Continuity and Change*, London: Routledge, 2011, p. 23.

21   Stefano Taglia, 'Ottomanism Then and Now: Historical and Contemporary Meanings – An Introduction', *Die Welt des Islams*, 56, 2016, p. 288.

22   Roger Hardy, *The Poisoned Well – Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East*, London: Hurst and Company, 2018.

23   Ministry, high official and philanthropy.

24   See Claudio G. Segrè, *Fourth Shore – The Italian Colonisation of Libya*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq – Contriving King and Country*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1976; and Alistair Horne, *A Savage War or Peace – Algeria, 1954-1962*, New York: New York Review of Books, 1977.

25   Lisa Anderson, 'The State and Its Competitors', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 50, 2, 2018, p. 319.

26   Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State – Politics and Society in the Middle East*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1995.

27   Ewan Stein, 'Beyond Arabism vs. Sovereignty: Relocating Ideas in the International Relations of the Middle East', *Review of International Studies*, 38, 2012, p. 898.

28   Johann Büssow and Astrid Meier, 'Ottoman Corporatism, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries: Beyond the State-Society Paradigm in Middle Eastern History', in Bettina Graf, Birgit Krawietz and Schirin Amir-Moazami, eds., *Ways of Knowing Muslim Cultures and Societies – Studies in Honour of Gudrun Krämer*, Leiden: Brill, 2019, pp. 82–3.

29   Adam Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt – Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013, p. 9.

30   See Ghassan Salamé's chapter in this volume, 'Chapter Ten: Longing for the State, Mistrusting the State'.

31   See her *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East – Politics, Nationalism and Military Reform*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2014.

32   Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations – Power, Politics and Ideology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 29.

33   Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan et al., *Critical Turning Points in the Middle East, 1915–2015*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 8–9.

34   See Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Ennemis Mortels – Représentations de l'Islam et Politiques Musulmanes en France à l'Epoque Coloniale*, Paris: La Découverte, 2019; and *La République Impériale – Politique et Racisme d'État*, Paris: La Découverte, 2009.

35   See the discussion of this by Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics – The Birth of American International Relations*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2015, notably Chapter Four, 'Imperialism and Internationalism in the 1920s'.

36   See, for instance, the analysis in Mehran Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, London: Hurst and Company, 2018.

37   See Fatemah Alzubairi, *Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism and Anti-Terrorism Law in the Arab World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, especially Chapter One, 'On Imperialism, Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism', pp. 19–49.

38   David Barber, 'Lawrence of Arabia: A Dying Empire's Cri de Coeur', *Film and History*, 47, 1, Summer 2017, p. 28.

39   Diane E. King, 'Patriliny and Modern States in the Middle East', in John L. Brooke, Julia C. Strauss and Greg Anderson, eds., *State Formations – Global Histories and Cultures of Statehood*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 311. Also see, notably on the Levant, Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens – Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

40   As discussed, for instance, in Juan Cole's chapter in Shahram Akbarzadeh, James Piscatori, Benjamin MacQueen and Amin Saikal, eds., *American Democracy Promotion in the Changing Middle East – From Bush to Obama*, London: Routledge, 2013.

41   See David B. Ralston, *Importing the European Army – The Introduction of European Military Techniques and Institutions into the Extra-European World, 1600–1814*, Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

42   Hamit Bozarslan, 'Rethinking the Ba'thist Period', in Jordi Tejel, Peter Sluglett, Riccardo Bocco and Hamit Bozarslan, eds., *Writing the Modern History of Iraq – Historiographical and Political Challenges*, London: World Scientific, 2012, p. 143.

43   See, for instance, Noura Erakat and Marc Lamont Hill, 'Black-Palestinian Transnational Solidarity: Renewals, Returns and Practice', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 192, XLVIII, 4, Summer 2019, pp. 7–16; and Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation – The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

44   Michael N. Barnett, 'Sovereignty, Nationalism and Regional Order in the Arab States System', *International Organization*, 49, 3, Summer 1995, pp. 480–1.

45   See, Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, 'Arab Agency and the UN Project: The League of Arab States between Universality and Regionalism', *Third World Quarterly*, 37, 7, July 2016, pp. 1219–33.

46   Avraham Sela, 'The Vicissitudes of the Arab States System: From Its Emergence to the Arab Spring', *India Quarterly*, 73, 2, 2017, p. 147, emphasis added.

47   Anwar G. Chejne, 'The Use of History by Modern Arab Writers', *The Middle East Journal*, 14, 4, Autumn 1960, p. 383.

48   Among the key Egyptian plays were, notably, *Madrasat al Mushaghebeen* (The School of the Mischievous, 1973), *Shahad Ma Shafsh Haga* (The Witness Who Did Not See Anything, 1976), *Al Motazawegoon* (The Married, 1978) and *El Eyal Kebret* (The Children Have Grown Up, 1979).

49   See Mohammed Samraoui, *Chronique des Années de Sang*, Paris: Denöel, 2003.

50   Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South – Race, Radicalism and Transnational Identity*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2018, p. 203.

51   Michele Penner Angrist, 'The Making of Middle East Politics', in Michele Penner Angrist, ed., *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynn Reinner, 2019, p. 23.

52   On the digital activism, see Tarek El-Ariss, *Leaks, Hacks and Scandals – Arab Culture in the Digital Age*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018. Also see Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, 'Neo-Orientalism and the e-Revolutionary: Self-Representation and the Post-Arab Spring', *Middle East Law and Governance*, 7, 2015, pp. 120–31.

53   See Scott Englund and Michael Stohl, 'The World versus Daesh – Constructing a Contemporary Threat', in Michael Stohl, Richard Burchill and Scott Englund, eds., *Constructions of Terrorism – An Interdisciplinary Approach to Research and Policy*, Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017, pp. 208–21.

54   See Brian T. Edwards, *After the American Century – The Ends of US Culture in the Middle East*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017; and Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, 'The End of Pax Americana', *Foreign Affairs*, 94, 6, November/ December 2015, pp. 2–10.

55   On pre-Arab Spring neo-authoritarian dynamics in the region, see Oliver Schlumberger, ed., *Debating Arab Authoritarianism – Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007; and Stephen J. King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009.

56   Khaled Abou El Fadl, 'The Praetorian State in the Arab Spring', *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 34, 2, 2013, p. 307.

57   Sagar Sanyal, 'Closing the R2P Chapter – Opening a Dissident Current within Philosophy of War', in C. A. J. Coady, Ned Dobos and Sagar Sanyal, eds., *Challenges for Humanitarian Intervention – Ethical Demand and Political Reality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 216.

58   See his analysis in Chapter Nine of this volume, 'Authoritarianism, Weakness and the New Great Game'.

59   Dierk Walter, *Colonial Violence – European Empires and the Use of Force*, London: Hurst and Company, 2017, p. 2–3.

60   Emanuel Saccarelli and Latha Varadarajan, *Imperialism – Past and Present*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, P. 57.

61   See Clara Eroukhmanoff, 'It's Not a Muslim Ban! Indirect Speech Acts and the Securitisation of Islam in the United States Post-9/11', *Global Discourse*, 8, 1, 2018, pp. 5–25. Eroukhmanoff remarks that 'security actors do not always need to invoke a security language of enmity to securitize. On the contrary, securitisation can be successful by mobilising a language of amity' (p. 22).

62   The latter opposition – Islamists versus liberals – was itself once a potentially bridgeable division in the name of democracy, as Elizabeth F. Thomson shows in her discussion of Syrian actors circa 1920. See her *How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs – The Syrian Arab Congress of 1920 and the Destruction of Its Historic Liberal-Islamic Alliance*, New York: Grove Atlantic, 2020.