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Jonathan Wyrzten, *Worldmaking in the Long Great War: How Local and Colonial Struggles Shaped the Modern Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022

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Jonathan Wyrzten's *Worldmaking in the Long Great War* is an ambitious book that makes three big "interventions" (12). Wyrzten argues that for the entire Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and adjacent areas,¹ the years 1911–1934 formed a three-phase single period called "the Long Great War," and that the political outcomes (including borders and political systems) resulted from repeated local-colonial warmaking rather than from European colonial impositions. In his words, he uses "a wide-angle frame resembling... [that of] Fernand Braudel" (13) as he "fundamentally rethink[s] the origin story of the modern Middle East" (18), to *inter alia* correct the "obvious but overlooked fact... that [wartime and early postwar European] maps and treaty terms" like the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement "did not translate directly into reality" (7).

The basic idea underlying this book is important. Our understanding of the past is advanced by rethinking periodization, and in that sense, Wyrzten should be applauded. Also, it is indeed possible that the "Long Great War" argument is onto something: it can be seen as war-focused part of a growing literature on Ottoman legacies that has for the last two decades been arguing that late Ottoman structures and issues affected post-Ottoman life.² And *Worldmaking* contains interesting points, which will be highlighted throughout this text. All this being said, *Worldmaking* does not deliver on its larger promise given that it does not engage historiographically with the work of many other scholars (my work offers a rare exception of sorts [12]), and contains methodological and conceptual issues: three problems that will be treated in turn in what follows.

¹ The book touches on "the northern shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, the Caucasus, Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahara" (13).

² Works that focus on the "legacy" lens include Carl Brown, ed., *Imperial Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Frederick Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 149–180, 197–218. Karl Kaser, *Der Balkan und der Nahe Osten* (Wien: Böhlau, 2011), 360–373; Eyal Ginio and Karl Kaser, ed., *Ottoman Legacies in the Contemporary Mediterranean* (Jerusalem: European Forum, 2013); Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires* (London: Routledge, 2001), 207–215; Amy Mills, "The Ottoman Legacy," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 31:1 (2011): 183–195; Bernhard Lory, "Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans," in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, ed. Diana Mishkova and Roumen Daskalov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 3:355–405; Einar Wigen, "Post-Ottoman Studies," in *Building Bridges to Turkish*, ed. Éva Csató (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 313–326; Şuhnaz Yılmaz and İpek Yosmaoğlu, "Fighting the Spectres of the Past," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44 (2007): 677–693. Other works include Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Cyrus Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

Worldmaking is not historiographically situated in the literature of key scholarly fields, including its core subject matter, the MENA literature.³ Concerning warmaking and (colonial) violence, the introduction names five scholars—Charles Tilly, Adom Getachew, Benedict Anderson, Michelle Campos, and Bedross Der Matossian (19–21)⁴—but does not engage the lively debates in this field,⁵ and does not explain how the book is positioned vis-à-vis the few MENA-related works on violence that it cites.⁶ Likewise, *Worldmaking* leaves undiscussed the work of the many MENA historians who have studied in detail how post-World War I MENA borders and politics were co-built by local actors rather than just created by European fiat, which is one of the book’s core arguments. Regarding the Mandates, to take one MENA area, almost a decade ago, in a detailed historiographic overview, Andrew Arsan and I noted that “[W]hereas a majority of first-generation Mandate historians focused on the state, in the last quarter century, most studies” have focused on “interactions between the Mandate state and societal groups.”⁷ It is hard to square this with the assertion that “the record of local political agency” has been “eras[ed]” (xv). To be sure, the book acknowledges that “nuanced studies do focus extensively on local rather than colonial actors, emphasizing the roles of various elite and non-elite groups including urban notables, nationalist movements, the middle class, workers, rural resistance movements, refugees, peasants, women’s groups, or Islamists during and after the war” (16). But it neither cites individual works nor discusses the scholarly conversations they have spawned. Similarly, while the book’s preface and introduction make repeated statements to the effect that relevant scholarship exists,⁸ the most those statements do is name four senior scholars in one single sentence without engaging their arguments (12).⁹ The very paragraph in which Wyrzten acknowledges that his “comparative and synthetic analysis” (26) must “rel[y] on and hopefully highlight the invaluable work of past and present scholars” (26), does not name or cite any work.

The claim that this book “revises the Sykes-Picot standard narrative” (14–18) exaggerates the way in which specialized texts and best-selling introductions to MENA history treat the 1910s–20s. It is certainly true that some scholars do talk about border artificiality in the *mashriq*—and here, it needs to be highlighted that Wyrzten is entirely right: those borders ended up not quite being artificial. However, many scholars have made this point before.¹⁰ On a related note, Wyrzten’s narrative underplays the relationship between the wartime European agreements to the final borders in postwar *mashriq*. Yes, the Sykes-Picot map’s vague

³ Although Wyrzten is a professor of history, sociology, and international affairs, it is the MENA historical literature that matters to his arguments, and the book’s historiographic engagement hence should be evaluated by how it treats *this* literature. The book only rarely cites sociological works (e.g. 19n24).

⁴ Wyrzten cites Lars Bo Kaspersen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg, eds., *Does War Make States?: Investigations of Charles Tilly’s Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). A key text by Tilly himself is “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁵ See e.g. Dierk Walter, *Colonial Violence* (London: Hurst, 2017) or, after *Worldmaking*’s publication, Caroline Elkins, *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* (New York: Knopf, 2022), and both empirical and conceptual critiques, e.g. <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article/124/4/1430/5581035?login=true> or <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=58568>.

⁶ E.g. Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁷ Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, “Introduction,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, ed. idem (London: Routledge, 2015), 9.

⁸ Wyrzten, *Worldmaking*, xi, para 2; 9, para 2; 10, para 3; 12, para 1; 13, para 2; 16, para 2.

⁹ Wyrzten, *Worldmaking* p. 12, para 1. Otherwise those statements include one single endnote with two-three works (xi, para 2; 13, para 2) or no references or endnotes at all (9, para 2; 10, para 3 (no endnote on MENA history); 16, para 2).

¹⁰ See for example, the special issue of *International Affairs* 93:4 (2017).

borders obviously did *not* correspond to the final postwar borders. What did correspond, however, were the map's general *areas* of control or influence. Britain did end up controlling Mesopotamia (including Mosul), Transjordan, and Palestine (all of it, not only southern Palestine and Haifa, though), and France did end up controlling Lebanon and Syria (without Mosul and southeastern Anatolia, though). This overall correspondence between the 1916 map's areas and the postwar *mashriq* is unsurprising given that those 1916 areas reflected European interests *predating* World War I. Britain wished to secure the lands between Egypt and India, and France desired an economic and cultural say in what it came to call *La Syrie française*. As Rashid Khalidi stated thirty-five years ago, with only some exaggeration: "the war-time territorial partition of the [Ottoman] Empire by the imperialist powers formalized in the Sykes-Picot accords was prefigured by an informal pre-war economic partition."¹¹ As importantly, few scholars claim that wartime and early postwar European "maps and treaty terms...translate[d] directly into reality" on the ground (7).¹² This may be true at the "popular level," the book's illustration being John Oliver's *The Daily Show*, and in some "policy-oriented" texts (xiv). But it is not true for "academic interpretations" (xiv). While Wyrzten includes a long quotation from David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace*, which was published 34 years ago (16), to buttress his point, best-selling contemporary introductions to modern Middle Eastern history sound entirely different.¹³

A point on primary sources. Most scholars, including myself, do not expect big-argument books to draw heavily or at all on primary sources. This is neither necessary nor possible: the ground to cover is too large. Thus, it is very praiseworthy that Wyrzten does use primary sources, including archival material from Spain (especially in chapter 5) and Italy (especially in chapter 6) that one rarely encounters in Anglophone books on modern MENA. However, the statement that the book "draws on a targeted set of primary source material spanning Spanish, French, Italian, and British colonial archives; European and Arabic newspapers, journals, biographies, and pamphlets; and less traditional local sources including songs and poetry" (26), while

¹¹ Rashid Khalidi, "The Economic Partition of the Arab Provinces of the Ottoman Empire before the First World War," *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center) 11:2 (1988): 251-264, here 251.

¹² Likewise, few really suffer from "the Mashriq myopia ... [that] leaves a host of questions unanswered ... for all the other areas of the Middle East region" (18). Think of a classic text written almost forty years ago: Iliya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab State System," *International Spectator* 20:2 (1985): 20-32. Or consider the fact that best-selling introductions to modern Middle Eastern history include separate chapters or chapter parts on postwar statemaking in newly colonized areas, especially the *mashriq*, in older areas under colonial control such as Egypt, and in countries that defended their independence, especially Turkey and Iran: James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 184-195, 196-207; Betty Anderson, *A History of the Modern Middle East: Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 201-221, 222-237.

¹³ Here are three examples. "Starting in 1915, the entente powers began negotiating secret treaties [like the 1915 Constantinople Agreement] that pledged mutual support for the territorial claims made by themselves or their would-be allies... what makes the Constantinople Agreement important is not what it promised. What makes the agreement important is that it established the principle that entente powers had a right to compensation for fighting their enemies and that at least part of that compensation should come in the form of territory carved out of the Middle East. Other secret treaties soon followed: the Treaty of London, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Treaty of Saint-Jean de Maurienne. All of them applied the principle of compensation...Britain not only initiated or signed on to secret agreement, it also made pledges to local or nationalist groupings...While the secret treaties and pledges set a number of diplomatic and political precedents, *they were relatively ineffective in determining the postwar settlement*. ... The mandatory powers had absolute administrative control over their mandates. They could sever and join the territories under their control as they wished...Even [so], *implementing the mandates system was not as easy as planning it*": Gelvin, *Modern Middle East*, 186-188, 191 (my italics). "The years between 1918 and the early 1920s saw the emergence of the modern states of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, ushered in by European fiat *and local action*" (my italics): Anderson, *History*, 199. "By the time Britain and France reached the [1920 San Remo] peace conference, *the Sykes-Picot Agreement had been overtaken by events*. Most importantly, the Bolshevik Revolution had led to the withdrawal of Russia's claims on Ottoman territory. ... The British position had changed in many ways since 1916 as well:" Eugene Rogan, "The Emergence of the Middle East into the Modern State System," in *International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31 (my italics).

impressively true for European texts, is not so for Arabic texts. The endnotes contain only two Arabic primary sources that are used in the original (265n26; 273n1).¹⁴

In terms of its methodology, *Worldmaking* has two issues. While (to my mind) “the Long Great War” is a particular heuristic device that is useful to interpret certain aspects of the past, in this book it seems to be tantamount to general empirical reality. That is, Wyrzten’s Long Great War includes as well as explains all cases of MENA warmaking (and resulting border- and polity-making) from 1911-1934; and *vice versa* all those cases form the Long Great War. The narrative does not unpack what the Long Great War can and cannot explain, or what it makes us see and overlook.

The second issue concerns the question how we know that the book’s individual warmaking cases indeed form a MENA-wide systemic pattern. Wyrzten holds that those cases are “deeply connected” (xiii) and that they form an “interconnected system” (13, also e.g. 256). And the book indeed keeps asserting those cases’ diachronic and synchronic connections in order to posit their MENA-wide systemic relevance, i.e. to postulate the existence of a singular pattern called the Long Great War. But the primary and secondary sources are used to document individual cases only, not their connections. Put differently, while the posited pattern may well have existed, the book does not substantiate it. Relatedly, while case variations are at times identified, they are not explained, and there is no discussion of how dissimilar local conditions may have factored in them.

There are ways to have demonstrated synchronic and diachronic links and variations, including a combination of two basic approaches. The first involves extensively using primary sources to provide a rich, complex history in which actors “speak”; the second entails the reading of a plethora of secondary sources with and against each other to identify multi-case patterns and variations. As noted above, the first approach would have been difficult given the large writ of this book. This leaves the second approach—and here, the book’s lack of engagement with the historiography means that the cases in the book are not connected.

This methodological problem is least apparent in Part I, “Unmaking the Greater Ottoman Order,” because in the two chapters, which covers the years c. 1911–1918, the Ottoman Empire still existed: it was a *single* polity whose many fronts (like the 1911–12 War in Libya and the 1913 Balkan War) were self-evidently interconnected. Even so, the connection problem is manifest.¹⁵ Also, a terminological-geographical framing device helps Wyrzten assert the unity of military-political theaters. The title of Part I postulates a “Greater Ottoman Order,” a single “system stretching from the neighboring Alawite realm in Morocco to the Qajar Empire in Iran” (33). This bold claim is in need of clarification.

The methodological problem of substantiating case connections to demonstrate a MENA-wide pattern comes fully into focus in Parts II and III, i.e. chapters 3-6. It is tackled in two ways. One way is to highlight the fact that cases happened around the same time: synchronicity is used to assert connectivity. In chapter 3, for example, revolts in Iraq are said to have happened in “parallel” and “in tandem” with events in Syria (116); chapters 5 and 6 do the same.¹⁶ The other way is to posit specific similarities or differences between

¹⁴ Other than these two sources, both of which are memoirs, there is one Arabic memoir quoted by another scholar (281n64); one Arabic newspaper article cited in a British archival source (285n42); three poems that seem to be originally in Tamazight and that are included in a 2002 Moroccan website reproducing poems in French-transliterated Tamazight and in French translation (279n30/34/35); and a Kurdish poem included in a 2014 Turkish-language book (282n11).

¹⁵ Wyrzten asserts, but does not demonstrate, what likely was true: that Italy’s 1911 attack on Ottoman Africa, in present-day Libya, was linked to the 1911 Franco-German Second Moroccan Crisis. He states that Italy had “secured the tacit approval of the other European powers” (44) to attack Libya; and that this happened “as French and German negotiators” (44) solved their crisis.

¹⁶ Chapter 5 invokes “nearly synchronic Kurdish, Riffi, and Syrian jihads” (172); notes that “during the same three months Said’s revolt peaked in Turkish Kurdistan, the League of Nations Mosul Commission was in the field”

individual cases. This is apparent in chapters 3 and 4.¹⁷ But similarities, however interesting, do not equal connections. And while Wyrzten's notes on differences and variation very usefully help structure the narrative, one misses an explanation of these differences, i.e., why they existed, and how the answers affect the overall pattern posited. It is likely that local conditions, including such that predate the 1910s, may often be involved—something Wyrzten sometimes very usefully mentions, for example regarding the Sanusi network (139, 227).

It should be stressed again that the basic idea underlying the book—the re-periodization of the Great War—is important, and that case connections may well have existed. Wyrzten quotes a primary source originally used by Eugene Rogan to show that Syrian rebels in 1925 were thinking about the Rif in Morocco (206n64).¹⁸ But both case connections and the overall pattern those cases form need to be demonstrated and explained.

Finally, a note on the book's conceptual issues, with a focus on warmaking and its relationship to state-making, which are central to *Worldmaking*. One concern involves periodization. The book does not explain why in most MENA areas the Long Great War seems to have ended much earlier than in others. Put differently, why do wars in the Cyrenaica, Arabia, and Turkish Kurdistan c. 1927–1934—the individual cases for those years—mean that the Long Great War lasted into the mid-1930s in *all* of MENA? The reasons for this generalization are not clear. Nor is it clear why, if the time frame extends to the 1930s, one ends in 1934, yet includes a note on the 1937–38 Dersim Revolt (226–227), while excluding the 1936–39 Palestine Revolt, which in the interwar *mashriq* was the longest mainly peasant-driven revolt—one that aspired to change the very structure of Mandate Palestine.¹⁹

There is also a vast literature demonstrating how local and national MENA groups helped shape interwar colonial states *outside* warmaking. It is unclear how the book's focus on warmaking as a key to state-making relates to that literature in general;²⁰ and, more particularly, to the literature that has shown how various

(186); stresses that “[A]t the same moment the Turkish Republic was buffeted by Kurdish uprisings ... the French col state in Morocco was shaken” (188); and emphasizes that “At this very moment [of the Rif War] the French were blindsided...by a massive uprising in the Syrian Mandate” (199). Chapter 6 notes that “[A]t the moment Ibn Saud faced civil war...the Turkish Republic was also dealing with a significant internal threat” (218); stresses that “[I]n the early 1930s the last vestiges of local political autonomy were *also* stamped out in Northern Africa” (218 [my italics]); and concludes that “[I]n the late 1920s and early 1930s, three more synchronic conflicts across the greater Middle East among rival political visions climaxed in the final phase of the Long Great War” (247).

¹⁷ Wyrzten, *Worldmaking*, e.g. 119, 122, 133, 137, 139, 148.

¹⁸ Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 230. See also e.g. Awad Halabi, “Liminal Loyalties: Ottomanism and Palestinian Responses to the Turkish War of Independence, 1919–22,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41:3 (2012): 19–37; Raja Adel, “Constructing Transnational Islam: The East-West Network of Shakib Arslan,” in *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World*, ed. Stéphane Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao, and Kosugi Yasushi (London: Routledge, 2006), 176–210; and more broadly and going back to the war and prewar years: Alp Yenen and Ramazan Öztan, “Age of Rogues: Transgressive Politics at the Frontiers of the Ottoman Empire,” in *Age of Rogues*, ed. idem (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 3–52.

¹⁹ Ted Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry in the Big Revolt,” in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury, and Mary Wilson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 467–502; Mahmoud Yazbak, “From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine,” *Middle Eastern Studies* [MES] 36:3 (2000): 93–113; Charles Anderson, “State Formation from Below and the Great Revolt in Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47:1 (2017): 39–55; Anderson, “The British Mandate and the Crisis of Palestinian Landlessness, 1929–1936,” *MES* 54:2 (2018): 171–215; Jacob Norris, “Repression and Rebellion: Britain's Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936–1939,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36:1 (2008): 25–45; Matthew Hughes, *Britain's Pacification of Palestine: The British Army, the Colonial State, and the Arab Revolt, 1936–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

²⁰ Regarding the Mandates, Schayegh and Arsan argued in 2015 that “[W]hereas a majority of first-generation Mandate historians focused on the state, in the last quarter century, most studies” have focused on “interactions between the Mandate state and societal groups”; “Introduction,” in *Routledge Handbook*, 9, which analyzes a large number of studies; for the entire historiography section, see 5–14.

Ottoman traits deeply shaped the 1920s (and, to some authors, the 1930s).²¹ Relatedly, one wonders how the book is positioned vis-à-vis the equally vast secondary literature on border-making, including the role of local actors. Here, two literatures are especially noteworthy. One shows how local-national demands helped legitimize borders of the units France and Britain created.²² The other one studies how variedly local actors helped influence border demarcation, shaped how borders were actually lived and experienced, and hence influenced how post-war politics functioned.²³

In addition, the reasoning behind the book's focus on open rebellions and warmaking, rather than more low-level endemic local-colonial violence, which helped form states, too, and on which there is a considerable

²¹ Wyrzten, *Worldmaking*, 12, names “Zürcher, Philliou, Schayegh, and Provence” in one single sentence without explaining what they say or how his argument differs. Neither does he address introductions like Anderson, *History*, 201, who sees postwar “state formation [occurring] between 1918 and the early 1930s ... in Turkey, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan, and Saudi Arabia.”

²² Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Asher Kaufman, *Contested Frontiers in the Syria-Lebanon-Israel Region: Cartography, Sovereignty, and Conflict* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014); Daniel Meier, *Shaping Lebanon's Borderlands* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016); Carol Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia* (London: Tauris, 2004); Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon. Nationalism and the State under the Mandate* (London: Tauris, 2003). Related, see a host of sometimes older texts on the continued relevance of Greater Syrian plans in the interwar period: Meir Zamir, “Faysal and the Lebanese Question, 1918-1920,” *MES* 27 (1991): 404-426; Philip Khoury, “Divided Loyalties? Syria and the Question of Palestine, 1919-1939,” *MES* 21 (1985): 324-348; Najla' Sa'id Makāwī, *Mashru' Suriyya al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 2010), 51-76; Muḥannad Salhi, *Palestine in the Evolution of Syrian Nationalism (1918-1920)* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2008); Nur Masalha, “Faisal's Pan-Arabism, 1921-33,” *MES* 27 (1991): 679-693 at 679-683; Ernest Dawn, “The Formation of Pan-Arab Nationalism in the Interwar Period,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies [IJMES]* 20 (1988): 67-91; Nadine Méouchy “Les nationalistes arabes de la première génération en Syrie (1918-1928),” *BEO* 47 (1995): 109-128; Kais Firro, “Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism,” *MES* 40 (2004): 1-27; Muhammad Muslih, “The rise of local nationalism in the Arab East,” in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 167-185.

²³ After Wyrzten's *Worldmaking* went to publication: Ramazan Oztan and Jordi Tejel, ed., *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918-1946* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021). Before *Worldmaking's* publication: Matthew H. Ellis, “Over the Borderline? Rethinking Territoriality at the Margins of Empire and Nation in the Modern Middle East (Part II),” *History Compass* 13:8 (2015): 411-22; Jordi Tejel, “Making Borders from Below: The Emergence of the Turkish-Iraqi Frontier, 1918-1925” *MES* 54:5 (2018): 811-26; Jordi Tejel, “States of Rumors: Politics of Information along the Turkish-Syrian Border, 1925-1945,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (first online) (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2020.1719866>; Ramazan Hakkı Oztan, “The Great Depression and the Making of the Turkish-Syrian Border,” *IJMES* 52 (2020): 311-26; Samuel Dolbee, “The Locust and the Starling: People, Insects, and Disease in the Ottoman Jazira and After, 1860-1940” (PhD diss., New York University, 2017); Seda Altuğ, “The Turkish-Syrian Border and Politics of Difference in Turkey and Syria (1921-1939),” in *Syria: Borders, Boundaries, and the State*, ed. Matthieu Cimino (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 47-73; Jean-David Mizrahi, “Un “nationalisme de la frontière”: Bandes armées et sociabilités politiques sur la frontière turco-syrienne au début des années 1920,” *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire* 78 (2003): 19-34; Anthony B. Toth, “Tribes and tribulations: Bedouin losses in the Saudi and Iraqi struggles over Kuwait's frontiers, 1921-1943,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32:2 (2005): 145-67; Soheila Mamelī-Ghaderi, “Le trace de la frontière entre la Syrie et la Turquie (1921-1929),” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 207 (2002): 125-38; Frank Peter, *Les entrepreneurs de Damas: nation, imperialisme et industrialisation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010), *passim*; Nurit Kliot, “The Evolution of the Egypt-Israel Boundary,” *Boundary and Territory Briefing* 1 :8 (1995): 1-10; Yitzhak Gil-Har, “Egypt's North-Eastern Boundary in Sinai,” *MES* 29:1 (1993): 135-48. See also Cimino, *Syria*; Inga Brandell (ed.), *State Frontiers. Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

MENA literature, for example on tribes,²⁴ peasants,²⁵ or “banditry” and related phenomena e.g. in the Syrian-Turkish borderlands, are not outlined.²⁶ The narrative does not discuss these literatures and their arguments, even though *Worldmaking* is described as “centering rural history” (14). The book’s focus—in this case, on full-scale rebellions—is legitimate, but not explained.

Further, *Worldmaking* combines cases of “local” warmaking with colonial governments with cases where “locals” fought the Turkish and Iranian nation-state governments and the nascent, rather tribal Saudi state. While treating all these cases together is in principle an interesting move, it also is really complex and in need of conceptual reflection. Wyrzten very usefully suggests a possible empirical connection when he notes similar state tactics such as the use of air power (e.g. 31, 194, 197, 207, 211, 224). Left unexplained are what such similarities signify, and whether it matters that they existed beyond MENA, too.²⁷ These questions are not solved by an invocation of Turkey’s “internal colonization” and by the note that the latter happened at the same time as other “colonial state-building projects in the region” (171).

²⁴ An ongoing project is Nora Barakat’s: <https://history.stanford.edu/people/nora-elizabeth-barakat>. Also after *Worldmaking* went to press: Laura Stocker, “The ‘Camel Dispute’: Cross-border Mobility and Tribal Conflicts in the Iraqi-Syrian Borderland, 1929-34,” in *Regimes of Mobility*, 319-50. Before *Worldmaking*’s publication: Philip S. Khoury, “The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy, and the Nationalist Movement in Syria between the Two World Wars,” *MES* 18:2 (1982): 180-93; Norman Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syrian and Jordan, 1800–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Christian Velud, “French Mandate Policy in the Syrian steppe,” in *The Transformation of Nomadic Society in the Arab East*, ed. Martha Mundy and Basim Musallam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 63-81; Katharina Lange, ‘Heroic Faces, Disruptive Deeds: Remembering the Tribal Shaykh on the Syrian Euphrates’, in Dawn Chatty, ed., *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st century* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 99-122; Johann Bussow, “Negotiating the Future of a Bedouin Polity in Mandatory Syria: Political Dynamics of the Sba’a-‘Abada during the 1930s,” *Nomadic Peoples*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2011): 70-95; Robert Fletcher, *British Imperialism and ‘the Tribal Question’: Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919–1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Johann Bussow, Kurt Franz and Stefan Leder, “The Arab East and the Bedouin Component in Modern History: Emerging Perspectives on the Arid Lands as a Social Space,” *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:1/2 (2015): 1-19; Dolbee, “Locust and Starling,” M. Talha Cicek, *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East. Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

²⁵ A classic overview is Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Some *masbriq* case studies: Samuel Dolbee, “Seferberlik and Bare Feet: Rural Hardship, Cited Dreams, and Social Belonging in 1920s Syria,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 51 (2012): 21-35; Elizabeth Williams, “Mapping the Cadastre, Producing the Fellah: Technologies and Discourses of Rule in French Mandate Syria and Lebanon,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, ed. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (London: Routledge, 2015), 170-182; Birgit Schaebler, “Protecting Musha”: Common Lands and the Common Good in Southern Syria under the Ottomans and the French,” in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 241-307; Abdullah Hanna, “The Attitude of the French Mandatory Authorities towards Land Ownership in Syria,” in *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 457-75; Anderson, “Palestinian Landlessness,” Yazbak, “Economic Factors,” Amos Nadan, *The Palestinian Peasant Economy under the Mandate. A Story of Colonial Bungling* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2006); Martin Bunton, *Colonial Land Policies in Palestine, 1917-1936* (Oxford University Press, 2007); Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²⁶ Outstanding and key: Jean-David Mizrahi, *Genèse de l’Etat mandataire* (Paris: Sorbonne, 2002), as well as Nadine Méouchy, “From the Great War to the Syrian Armed Resistance Movement (1919–1921): The Military and the Mujahidin in Action,” *The World in World Wars*, ed. Heike Liebau, Katrin Bromber, Katharina Lange, Dyla Hamza, and Ravi Ahuja (Leiden: Brill, 2010). After *Worldmaking*’s publication: Katharina Lange’s excellent “Contested Terrain: Cross-border Violence, Politics and Memory in Syria’s Kurd Dagh Region,” in *Regimes of Mobility*, 170-203.

²⁷ Such connections beyond MENA have been traced for instance for Palestine (influenced by policies first developed in India). E.g. Gad Kroizer, “From Dowbiggin to Tegar: Revolutionary Change in the Colonial Police in Palestine during the 1930s,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32:2 (2004): 115–33.

Last, however interesting warmaking cases are in and of themselves, Wyrzten claims is that they were key in shaping MENA politics. As such, the book ought to show not only (and in fact not so much) what happened during warmaking, but how warmaking affected a country's political system after warmaking was over.

In conclusion, the objective that drives *Worldmaking*—the re-periodization of the late Ottoman and early post-Ottoman MENA—is a praiseworthy one. While the book does not substantiate a MENA-wide Long Great War, and does not “retell the origin story of the modern Middle East” (vii), it is a useful enumeration of individual military-political cases of warmaking in different parts of MENA from the early 1910s to the mid-1930s.

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