Slight's book joins a growing number of histories of Dutch, French, and Russian colonial involvement in the hajj. Departing from previous studies that cite defensive reasons for European involvement in the hajj (following William Roff's "sanitation and security" thesis), Slight argues that British involvement was ultimately and unsuccessfully an attempt to "gain legitimacy among its Muslim subjects" (p. 5). In this sense, Britain acted "like a Muslim power," much like the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires that had also sponsored Islamic practices such as the hajj to bolster their legitimacy, a comparison that Slight urges us to consider.

This book is strongly recommended for courses on British imperial history, comparative empires, global history, and Islamic history.

LAURA ROBSON, *States of Separation: Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2017). Pp. 244. $34.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780520292154

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States of Separation is a comparative historical study examining some key processes that shaped the formation of states in the Middle East following World War I: First, the arrival of refugees displaced from the shatter board regions of the Russian, Austrian, and Turkish empires. Second, the reshaping of communal demographics to foster homogenous and coherent national polities through various schemas of population transfer, including expulsion or semivoluntary migration. Third, the enactment of territorial partition to allocate specific spaces to newly consolidated national groups as exclusive homeland or nation-states. These elements converged in the 1930s into a "massive experiment in demographic engineering" (p. 6).

Studies of state formation are often overdetermined or teleological. Because we know which states actually emerged, researchers tend to focus on the "winners," while ignoring other potential outcomes and false starts. Robson astutely avoids these pitfalls through an innovative framework that compares the Armenians, Assyrian Christians, and Zionist Jews. These relatively small and, except for the latter, overlooked communities are bellwethers in the processes of state-building. All three suffered ethnic cleansing and genocide, with large parts of their communities forced to become refugees. All three sought to engage the international community for protection and possibly vindication. And all three, at various points, saw their efforts to gain political power rebuffed or disappointed, often leading to renewed catastrophe.

The comparison is especially intriguing because each of these communities represent what Yuri Slezkine calls in his 2004 *The Jewish Century* Mercurian "service nomads" (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, p. 14). Unlike their Apollonian neighbors, Mercurians did not own or till soil, and generally lacked political, demographic, or military power. They made up for this by becoming traders, artisans, professionals, merchants, and financiers, mavens of an increasingly globalized and capitalist 19th century. Though Robson does not cite Slezkine, she confronts what he deems a central historical puzzle of the 20th century: how did those rootless Mercurians who survived the generations of persecution, pogroms, and ethnic cleansings come to be "citizens of the new 'revived' Israel or Armenia (which tended to be more Apollonian—and more martial—than Apollo himself)"(Slezkine, 2004, p. 47)?

For Robson, the answer rests in the international community and the machinations of imperial powers. Using American, Israeli, British, League of Nations, and United Nations archives, Robson shows how practices of population transfer evolved as European empires (including the Ottomans) struggled to manage terrains of ethnosectarian diversity. The relocation of refugee

Armenians from Anatolia to Syria, of Assyrians to Iraq, and Jews to Palestine was the natural continuation of the population exchange schemas devised during the Balkan Wars that effectively unmixed Muslims and Christians, a kind of internationally backed ethnic cleansing. The transfer of refugees was inextricable from the establishment of the League of Nations mandate system, which was supposed to cultivate coherent, self-governing states but often served ulterior, imperialist ends. Robson contends that Britain and France implanted Assyrians, Armenians, and Jews into the region to serve as local proxies, counterweights to burgeoning Arab nationalism. She shows how administration of humanitarian relief exacerbated tensions between these communities and their Arab Muslim neighbors and fostered a distinct "nationalization" of minority identity. Although some community members preferred to return to their former homes or to accommodate (or even assimilate within) their newly created states, the imperial powers and their local allies contrived to keep them isolated, a thorn in the side of governments bent on political centralization and national homogenization.

There are, however, limitations to this top-down approach. For one, Robson correctly emphasizes the outside influence that led to enactment of "minority identity" but does not consider endogenous processes of self-nationalization. Despite apparent fluency in Apollonians' cultures, Assyrians, Armenians, and Jews were often keenly aware of their own distinctiveness—different churches, different languages, and ascribed to different homelands, however historically distant. Recent experiences of persecution were a reminder of communal precariousness. Armenian nationalist movements emerged at least in the 1870s and consolidated through repeated rounds of repression. Zionist, Marxist, and liberal Jews discussed the possibilities of Jewish nationhood in the shadow of pogroms decades before Balfour pledged Palestine as a Jewish national home. Thus, Robson grants little agency to the communities themselves in making their own plays for power. For instance, while Robson discusses Assyrian dissatisfaction with their treatment at the hands of the British and Iraqi governments, she cannot explain why Assyrian leaders adopted such starkly nationalist positions after Iraqi independence, demanding territorial autonomy and instigated a disastrous confrontation with the Iraqi state. Similarly, Robson details Zionist schemes for Jewish emigration to South America or Africa, but hardly notes why they failed. Most Jews, it seemed, believed that if they were indigenous anywhere, it must be in Palestine.

Finally and most importantly, Robson struggles to account for the differential outcomes of these ventures in population transfer and territorial partition. If all were pawns in a postwar imperial design, why did Britain and France abandon Assyrians and Armenians to the mercies of more-or-less hostile Arab nationalist governments in the 1930s? And why did Britain tarry in its commitment to enact Jewish statehood until 1948? In the book's final pages, Robson suggests that the British and French faced "impossible practical and logistical" hurdles in the Assyrian and Armenian projects while the Jews could be helped "at relatively low cost" (p. 167). It is not clear why this is so. A more complete answer would have to look more closely at the internal organization and politics of each of these communities.

SHIRA ROBINSON, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013). Pp. 352. $24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780804788007

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doi:10.1017/S0020743817001052

In liberal circles in the United States, it has become a shibboleth to assume that the Palestine–Israel conflict is fundamentally about the occupation and the settlements, and, as former president