somewhat rushed in relation to the deep analysis and meticulous modelling afforded to the early modern period. Given Hoffman's own conclusions regarding the importance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for Europe's global expansion, it seems as though this period receives disproportionately limited attention within the book's narrative.

The book nonetheless provides an important and compelling addition to the burgeoning field of scholarship that seeks to account for Europe's rise to global prominence. Furthermore, Hoffman develops an interesting and useful model for measuring advances in military technologies that could provide fertile ground for further research. It is probably impossible for one book to definitively close the debate on how it is that Europe managed to conquer so much of the world over the course of a few short centuries, given the complexity of the research question and the scope of the relevant material. Nonetheless, Hoffman's rich and highly readable account provides a compelling and well-developed addition to this debate that will be of interest to a wide range of historians.

## The global history of the Balfour Declaration: declared nation

*By Maryanne A. Rhett. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. Pp. xiv + 168. Hardback £110.00, ISBN 978-1-138-11941-3.*

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Zionism – Jewish nationalism – emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, mostly among eastern European Jews. Although confronted by anti-Semitism and exclusionary nationalisms, both of which 'othered' Jewish communities, Jews were slow to embrace the doctrine. It is therefore likely that Zionism would have gone the way of Confederate nationalism and hundreds of other nationalisms that burned themselves out before achieving their goals had it not received the approbation of the British government. That government articulated its support for Zionist goals in the Balfour Declaration, which stated, in part, 'His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object'. After the First World War, when the British acquired the mandate for Palestine from the League of Nations, they integrated the language of the Declaration into the 'draft instrument' that outlined the procedures that Great Britain would be obliged to follow in administering its new charge. A wartime pledge thus became a legally binding statute for the British government.

The year 2017 marks the hundredth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, and a sizeable number of publications have already appeared on the topic. More are likely to appear as 2 November 2017 – the anniversary of the exact date of the Declaration's publication in the pages of *The Times* – comes and goes. None, however, is likely to be more innovative, or more important, than Maryanne A. Rhett's small volume. And if anyone has wondered where the strange phrase 'national home' in the Declaration came from and what its meanings are, Rhett provides the answer.

Rhett's book stands out for a number of reasons. Almost all writings about the Balfour Declaration deal with a limited number of questions, the most common of which concerns the British government's motivations in authorizing its dissemination. Was it the influence of the prominent Zionist Chaim Weizmann, the desire to keep the United States

and Russia in the war, the fear that Germany might beat the British to the punch, or British government ministers' belief that Jews wielded far greater power than they actually did? Rhett touches on this question, but her eyes are on a wider horizon. What makes her book unique is that she focuses on the cultural history of the document. She positions the document in both its global and its imperial contexts to explore the conceptual framework in which it should be situated. As a result, rather than continuing the tradition that holds the Declaration to be sui generis, Rhett demonstrates how unremarkable it actually was, given the span of early twentieth-century ideas about nation and empire; the interplay between Indian, Irish, and Zionist home-rulers/nationalists and the imperial centre; and the experiences of would-be empire-builders such as the Japanese and transnational schemers like those committed to Pan-Islamism.

Rhett begins with a description of each of the eleven iterations of the Balfour Declaration. By tracking the appearances and disappearances of terms such as 'race', 'nation', and 'people', she teases out the meanings that a broad array of actors ascribed to Zionism and its goals and explores the tension inherent in imperial promises of national self-determination. For Rhett, the reason those promises were made in some places yet denied elsewhere had to do with the manner in which the imperial centre situated each national movement – and each nation in the process of formation – in a gendered and racialized hierarchy. Although nationalist movements throughout the empire attempted to create narratives that reflected the imperatives of masculinity and racial standing – the former through emphasis on martial valour and vanquishing the land, for example; the latter through the construction of a mythologized past – the Zionist movement was particularly adept at self-presentation, as any number of books on the topic attest. It was thus able to situate itself above the diasporic Jewish community of Europe, oriental Jews, and the indigenous Arab population of Palestine, and, in effect, aspire to build a hierarchic nation-based empire within an empire.

Where Rhett misfires is her analysis of nationalism in Chapter 5. She claims that 'At its core, the multifaceted belief structure of Zionism is nearly two thousand years old, but despite this age there is a disconnection between modern political Zionism and traditional religious Zionism' (p. 102). If we are to hold by our definition of Zionism as Jewish nationalism, however, this is clearly a misreading. Nationalism is eminently political (and here Rhett misuses the term 'political Zionism', which actually refers to a tactical approach to achieving Zionist aims by gaining the support of a great power or multiple great powers – which, in effect, was accomplished when the British issued the Balfour Declaration). Nationalism's goal is the establishment of a sovereign state. To posit a nationalism that is not only apolitical but two thousand years old – thus transforming 'traditional religious Zionism' into what Eric Hobsbawm called a 'proto-nationalism' – traps one within the teleological Zionist narrative of itself and conflates two very different orders of phenomena, one cultural, the other political. It also presupposes a theory of stages, whereby proto-nationalisms become nationalisms and Pan-Islamism begets Pan-Arabism which, in turn, begets 'local nationalisms'. All these ideas have been rebutted in recent literature on the subject. Unfortunately, most of the secondary sources that Rhett draws from on this topic date back to the mid 1990s or earlier.

Conceptual confusion about the nature of nationalism as viewed by contemporary social science does not detract, however, from the main thrust of the volume. This is particularly true in the light of Rhett's penetrating analysis of nationalism's symbolic structuration and the role that structuration played in securing a favourable reception for Zionist claims by the

British government. Just when it appeared that there was nothing new to be said about the Balfour Declaration, Rhett offers a nuanced, contextualized reading of the document that should change the way in which future historians approach the topic.

## Eco-cultural networks and the British empire: new views on environmental history

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*Eco-cultural networks and the British empire* is a persuasive anthology, and a worthy addition to the growing canon of scholarship directed at expressing histories of geographical and lived environments, and of the British empire in more transnational and global terms. To that end, the authors introduce the concept of 'eco-cultural networks' to explore the impact of the British empire on environments both within and beyond its formal boundaries.

The volume is divided into two parts – 'Regional eco-cultural networks' and 'Local eco-cultural networks' – and consists of eleven essays which aim to examine, as the editors state in the introductory chapter, 'the pathways of trade, conquest and governance … to highlight the deep dependencies between societies and their environments' as the products of eco-cultural networks (p. 3). The editors claim to have located a gap in knowledge where historians have failed to acknowledge

the importance of environmental factors in the creation of lived spaces in the colonial and imperial sphere. The purpose, as they state, is not to offer a 'synthetic history', but instead to present new vantage points that highlight points of connection between a global narrative of networks and the history of the British empire set among its diverse environs.

The editors' introductory chapter, alongside Chapter 2, 'Climate and empire', by Georgina Endfield and Samuel Randalls, establishes the theoretical framework for the volume. Whereas the editors delineate the book's intentions, Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the authors' interpretation of the potent subtext at the core of environmental discourse, stating that the environment should be considered 'a philosophical and political category as much as it is a material category, one that was deployed by a diversity of actors in changing and sometimes conflicting ways' (p. 21). The framework they cultivate examines several key factors, including: 'imperial ambitions for environmental control'; the use of 'climatic factors to explain away political or economic failings by imperial authorities'; and 'the development and legitimation of particular forms of climate knowledge' (p. 21).

While the term 'eco-cultural networks' is a welcome addition to the lexicon of environmental and global historiography, a number of problems become apparent in the editors' introductory chapter. Their argument that a gap exists where historians of the British empire have failed to acknowledge the environmental factors inherent in the 'creation, maintenance and eventual decline of imperial power' (p. 4) simply does not withstand scrutiny. James Belich's *Replenishing the Earth* (2009) gives a convincing account of the environmental limitations faced by settlers of the 'Wests' in the 'Anglo World'. Sarah Easterby-Smith has accounted for the flow of flora through global networks within and beyond the empires of France and Britain. And