Introduction

The Paradox of Postcolonial State Expansions

Irredentism, the political project of redeeming lost territories for the nation, is as old as modern nationalism itself.[1] Nineteenth-century Italian nationalists were the first to speak of *terre irredente* (unredeemed lands) situated in the north of what was then the Italian nation-state. Sometimes the claim of redemption was directed at Italian speakers under foreign rule, and sometimes redemption aimed at clearing alien populations from territory that nationalists claimed for the Italian nation alone.[2] Scholars of entrenched ethnic conflicts have described irredentism as the "Macedonian syndrome," a seemingly pathological obsession not just with territory but also with history. In the words of Weiner, irredentist conflicts are not exclusively fought over a piece of land but often over "what to an outsider would appear to be trivial historical points: whether a given work of art belonged to one cultural tradition rather than to another, the etymology of place names, and whether a particular deity, architectural form, or ancient social institution is indigenous or was borrowed from another culture."[3]

While both the nation and its yet unredeemed territory may seem exceptional to the nationalist eye, there is nothing unique about irredentism from a perspective of global history. As Chazan has shown,[4] irredentism as an "expansive form of territorial postindependence nationalism"[5] represents a recurring feature of each global wave of state formation. The first wave of irredentism flared up during nineteenth-century state formation in Europe, when the term was coined in Italy and where the phenomenon structured the Greek-Ottoman confrontation.[6] A second wave accompanied the establishment of nation-states after World War I following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. The third wave of irredentist conflicts was triggered by decolonization after World War II, and the fourth

came to haunt state formation in the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav sphere, whether in the Caucasus or the Balkans.

Until today, expansionist statecraft persists in decidedly postcolonial times, even if formal colonization based on conquest and hierarchical inequality has long been prohibited by international humanitarian law,[7] which has shifted toward an emphasis on formally equal and sovereign nation-states with inviolable borders.[8] However, indirect forms of external control continue to shape both the postcolonial state[9] and the transformation of the former imperial metropole into a "normative Empire."[10] As the Russian takeover of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 illustrates, even the outlawed practice of formal annexation persists.[11] In addition, states continue to engage in demographic engineering as a practice of seizing contested territories,[12] including cases such as "the Philippine settlement of the Moros region in Mindanao; Javanese settlement of Sumatra and other islands; Burman settlement of the Bengali-speaking Rohingya areas near the borders of Bangladesh; Bangladeshi settlement of the Chittagong Hill Tracts with its Buddhist population; . . . Bhutanese settlement of southern Bhutan and the forced deportation of Nepali-speaking residents, . . . Moroccan settlement of the disputed territories in the Western Sahara, and Israeli settlements in the Arab populated West Bank."[13]

This book deals with the third wave of irredentism, a phenomenon that has deeply shaped the process of decolonization and postcolonial state formation. In a closely integrated analysis of irredentist thought and expansionist state practice, the following chapters establish a comparative-historical case study of three state expansions in the modern Middle East: Syria's domination of Lebanon (1976–2005), Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara (since 1975) and Israel's rule over the occupied territories (since 1967). For the purpose of this comparison, state expansions will be defined as the systematic and long-term expansion of state institutions across international borders, resulting in a contested form of rule over a neighboring territory and its population. While all three cases have been described as ghostly recurrences of a bygone colonial era, the comparative case study makes the case for turning this argument on its head: instead of depicting the capture of contested territory, military occupations, and demographic engineering as contradictory to the era of decolonization, we might have to understand expansionism as a constitutive feature of postcolonial state formation.

The book is structured as follows. The introduction discusses the paradox of postcolonial state expansions, both as a state practice and as a topic of discussion in the research literature. Chapter 1 develops a theory

of postcolonial state expansions that consists of three main elements: first, the theoretical framework argues that postcolonial states in the Middle East engaged in expansionist policies as a coping strategy to overcome entrenched crises of legitimacy and sovereignty. Second, the theoretical framework defines different varieties of expansionism[14] by distinguishing between four ideal types of state expansion (patronization, satellization, exclavization, and incorporation) and four corresponding ideal types of state contraction (depatronization, desatellization, deexclavization, and disincorporation). Third, the theoretical framework creates a taxonomy of rule and resistance by linking four types of domination (the coercive apparatus, institutional rule setting, social identities, and historical narratives) with the corresponding types of resistance (counterviolence, counterinstitutions, counteridentities, and counternarratives). In order to apply this theory of postcolonial state expansion to the case studies of Syria, Morocco, and Israel, chapter 2 and chapter 3 analyze the specific institutional legacies that shaped state formation and state expansion in the Middle East. Chapter 4 and chapter 5 discuss the institutional design of state expansions as well as slow-moving institutional shifts over time.

The state expansions of Syria, Morocco, and Israel not only took on a different shape, they also reacted differently to the countermobilization of Lebanese, Sahrawi, and Palestinian nationalists. Chapter 6 compares the dynamics of state contraction: not least as a result of vigorous political resistance, none of the three countries compared throughout the book succeeded in fully normalizing their control over captured territories and populations. Instead, Syria withdrew from its Lebanese satellite state (desatellization), Israel dismantled its settlement exclaves in the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip (deexclavization), and Morocco came close to terminating its control over Western Sahara (disincorporation). Chapter 7 situates the three Middle Eastern case studies into a broader global comparison: based on examples of contested territories (Cyprus, East Timor, Crimea), the chapter presents the case for applying the varieties of expansionism approach to other regional settings. The conclusion reflects on the reversibility of state expansions and discusses the approach of studying the Israeli case in a Middle Eastern context.

From Greater Indonesia to Greater Israel

How do we theorize irredentist fantasy and expansionist practice as integral elements of the postcolonial state? The best way to approach the paradoxical

nature of state expansions after decolonization might be a closer look at one of the crucial debates in UN history: the debate over the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Resolution 1514 (XV), 1960). In popular culture, the debate might be best known for the shoe-banging incident involving the Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev,[15] who became angry when other representatives effectively called for a decolonization of countries under Soviet domination. However, the Soviet Union was not the only country known for its peculiar mismatch between anticolonial rhetoric and expansionist practice. In fact, in the middle of a pivotal UN debate about decolonization, many state leaders had only one thing on their mind: namely, the capture of contested territory.

Rafic al-Asha for instance, the Syrian-born permanent representative of the United Arab Republic (a short-lived union between Egypt and Syria) put the legitimacy of Lebanon into serious question. When describing a "colonial power [that] has on one occasion divided a small land into five independent states,"[16] al-Asha was in fact referring to the political project of "Greater Syria."[17] Following the template of dissolving smaller ethnosectarian statelets into the unified Syrian Republic in 1936,[18] proponents of Greater Syria called for the next logical step in reunifying this "small land"—the incorporation of Lebanon into Syria. Morocco's permanent representative, Mehdi Ben Aboud, cautioned that colonialism "though leaving by the front door, comes back through the window."[19] This warning, however, did not prevent Morocco's foreign minister, M'hammed Boucetta, from arguing that "Mauritania has at all times formed an integral part of Morocco."[20] In addition to claiming "what is nowadays presented as the independent State of Mauritania," Boucetta also made the case for Moroccan ownership of additional "territories the populations of which still languish under colonial occupation, such as Ifni, Seguia El Hamra, Rio de Oro, Tindouf, Tidikelt, Ceuta and Melilla"[21] (i.e., all of Spanish Sahara and significant parts of Algeria). Israel's foreign minister, Golda Meir, claimed that it was "of course, untrue that Israel pursues expansionist policies of any kind,"[22] but her defense of the Zionist return to the Land of Israel/Palestine[23] already foreshadowed Israel's attempt to incorporate the occupied territories after the Six-Day War: "And did the desert in Israel bloom as long as we were in exile? Did trees cover the Judean hills, were marshes drained? No—rocks, desert, marshes, malaria, trachoma—this is what characterized the country before we came back."[24]

Of course, Syrians, Moroccans, and Israelis were not alone in proclaiming their territorial ambitions. Indonesian president Sukarno

denied that Indonesian nationalism would "seek to impose ourselves on other nations" but laid a determined claim to Netherlands New Guinea, which was "the one-fifth of our national territory which still labours under imperialism" and "a colonial sword poised over Indonesia."[25] In a not-so-hidden reference to Ethiopian domination over Eritrea (formally part of a federal framework), the Ethiopian permanent representative, Haddis Alemayehu, suggested that the "peoples in the liberated countries, left alone without interference from foreign intriguers, will settle their differences in no time."[26] The Somalian permanent representative, Hajji Farah Ali Omar, laid claim to the Somali-populated parts of Ethiopia and emphasized the hope of his compatriots "for an early, happy and peaceful unification with our other Somali brothers who are not yet autonomous."[27] Iraq's permanent representative, Adnan Pachachi, declared his country to be "in the forefront of the fight for the rights of the colonial peoples."[28] Nonetheless, only a few months later, Pachachi would describe Kuwait as "an integral party of our country" since Kuwait was "not more than a small coastal town on the Gulf. There is not and has never been a country or a national entity called Kuwait, never in history."[29] The Palestinian-born ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Ahmed Shukeiry (who would become the first chairman of the PLO), envisioned the day "when the refugees will go back to their homeland, their country emancipated from Zionist occupation; and, with full sovereignty, will join the United Nations as the free and independent State of Palestine."[30]

It took only a few years for the visions of Greater Syria, Greater Ethiopia, and Greater Indonesia to become reality. In 1962 Ethiopia formally annexed Eritrea by abolishing the federal framework separating the two countries.[31] In 1963 Indonesia took over West New Guinea (the former Netherlands New Guinea) and incorporated the territory by force and demographic engineering—a practice that would later be repeated in East Timor after its conquest in 1975.[32] In 1967 Israel occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights and launched a large-scale settlement project.[33] In 1975 Morocco and Mauritania invaded Western Sahara (the former Spanish Sahara) and divided the territory among themselves.[34] In 1976 Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war and established a long-term military occupation.[35] Colonialism, so it seemed, might be over—but expansionist statecraft was clearly not.[36]

Facing the normative pressures of the decolonization regime and the political violence of armed insurgencies, most expanding states followed a generic template of renaming and resettling. First, all memories of previous territorial organization were wiped off the map. West New Guinea

became "Irian Jaya";[37] the West Bank was transformed into "Judea and Samaria";[38] the partitioned Western Sahara was reorganized into three Moroccan provinces in the north (El-Ayoun, Smara, Boujdour) and a single Mauritanian province in the south (Tiris El-Gharbia).[39] Second, political incorporation was enforced by demographic engineering: in other words, colonization. Whether in Indonesia's "new provinces," in the "Moroccan Sahara," in Israel's "liberated territories," or in Chinese-controlled Tibet, expanding states rapidly moved in large numbers of settler-immigrants to permanently claim the newly acquired territories.[40]

For many expansionist states, this deployment of massive state resources in captured territories corresponded to a broader pattern of "authoritarian high-modernist schemes"[41] (according to the diagnosis of James Scott), infused with the spirit of monumentalism, the raw effectiveness of developmentalist state power, and a cult of feasibility. Nonetheless, many state expansions rapidly fell apart. The Somalian-Ethiopian war of 1977–78 put an end to the vision of "Greater Somalia," and the Iraqi vision of reincorporating Kuwait as its nineteenth province collapsed after only a few weeks during the Gulf War of 1990. Other attempts at territorial incorporation unraveled much more slowly: sometimes expanding states were pushed back by prolonged insurgencies (like the Eritrean war against Ethiopia), and sometimes occupying powers were undermined by transnational mobilization (like the East Timorese campaign against Indonesia; see chapter 7). Some states withdrew their military forces after decades of quasi-permanent occupation (like Syria; see chapter 6), and other states decided to entrench their control over occupied territories even at high diplomatic and financial costs, including Morocco and Israel.

Comparison and Exceptionalism in the Research Literature

When Indonesia, China, Morocco, and Israel adopted wide-ranging policies of territorial expansionism and demographic engineering in midst of the process of decolonization, nationalist movements in the newly conquered territories of East Timor, West Papua, Tibet, Xinjiang, Western Sahara, and the West Bank almost immediately described their insurgencies as a rebellion against neocolonialism, secondary colonialism, or Third World colonialism: Maronite intellectuals described the Syrian occupation of Lebanon as merely the latest stage of a "constant struggle against foreign occupiers"[42] since the days of the Phoenicians. Facing the Moroccan-Mauritanian invasion

after the departure of the Spanish army, Sahrawi nationalists assailed the "colonialism of the 'brotherly' neighbors," which had come to replace the "colonialism of the foreign enemy."[43] Not to be outdone, the Palestinian National Covenant from 1968 described the Zionist movement as "racist and fanatic in its nature, aggressive, expansionist and colonial in its aims and fascist in its methods."[44]

Ever since, scholars of postcolonial state formation have been wringing their hands over the question how to deal with the eerie parallels between European colonialism and the postindependence expansionism of newly decolonized countries. Some authors have chosen a strategy of categorical evasion by speaking of "comparable, but somewhat different kinds of anti-colonial struggles in those countries more recently occupied."[45] Others have opted for a strategy of categorical stretching by speaking of "secondary colonialism" or "Third World colonialism."[46] In order to steer clear of terminological confusion and ideological framing, this book will simply deploy the abstract term *state expansion* wherever possible. The discursive framing of these state expansions, however, will be a crucial element in analyzing the dynamics of legitimization and delegitimization: while the governments of expanding states will speak of territorial "return," "redemption," "liberation," and "unification," nationalist insurgents in the captured territories will prefer the terminology of "conquest," "ethnic cleansing," "imperialism," and "settler colonialism."

The desire to transcend partisan modes of writing also stands behind the theoretical framework at the center of this book (see chapter 1), which builds on the three elements of comparative-historical analysis, an emphasis on political resistance, and intraregional case selection. All three elements respond to specific gaps in the research literature on state expansions in the modern Middle East: the approach of comparative-historical analysis seeks to move beyond the fallacy of ahistorical history; resistance is emphasized as a counterweight to the postpositivist fascination with authoritarian rule as an all-powerful Foucauldian panopticon, and the intraregional case selection seeks to overcome a tendency toward exceptionalism.[47]

First, regarding the fallacy of ahistorical history, the close temporal proximity between European decolonization and non-European recolonization has tempted many authors to pursue the colonial analogy.[48] This approach adopts a historically, culturally, and legally specific framework of expansionism to analyze (as Young puts it) a "comparable, but somewhat different"[49] process in another period, with another cultural disposition and another legal framework, thereby frequently confusing colonization and colonialism.[50]

The toolbox of expansionist state policies is of course limited, and much can be learned from colonial attempts at "right-sizing and right-peopling the State"[51] for our understanding of postcolonial state expansions. The formation of a nationalist Sahrawi consciousness, for instance, would have been impossible without its framing as an *indigenous* claim to national self-determination, struggling against Spanish and Moroccan colonialism alike. Similarly, the creation of transnational support networks for the Palestinian cause would have been unthinkable without the element of "transcolonial identification," defined by Harrison as "processes of identification that are rooted in a common colonial genealogy and a shared perception of (neo) colonial subjection."[52] Nonetheless, facile depictions of Morocco's rule over Western Sahara as "colonialism, Moroccan style,"[53] accusations of Chinese "genocide" in Tibet[54] or fashionable depictions of Israel's settlement project (or the entire Zionist project) as "settler colonialism"[55] fail to acknowledge the specific normative and institutional context of state expansions *after* decolonization.

By reading Syrian, Moroccan, and Israeli expansionism through the lens of European colonialism, the colonial analogy tends to produce ahistorical history, defined by Cooper as "modes of writing . . . which purport to address the relationship of past to present but [which] do so without interrogating the way processes unfold over time."[56] While institutional parallels between European colonialism and "Third World colonialism" deserve close scrutiny, a careless parallelization runs the risk of committing an epochal fallacy. Anachronistic equations with European colonialism tend to dislocate postcolonial state expansions from time and space, thereby erasing both the specific historical and regional context.

In terms of *historical context*, fundamental disputes over the nature of the postcolonial state in the Middle East (ranging from its borders to its very existence) can be traced back to its predecessor, the late colonial "self-destruct state."[57] The imperial powers of Great Britain, France, and Spain systematically encouraged territorial division and ethnic infighting, thereby creating postcolonial states that were essentially contested (see chapter 2). This historical context created an incentive for irredentist foreign policies: state-building elites systematically leveraged territorial expansion as a strategy to solve fundamental disputes over the basic nature of the nation-state (see chapter 3). In terms of *regional context*, the Middle East's internal structure as a "perennial conflict formation"[58] systematically contributed to the region's "built-in irredentism"[59]: In contrast to the "Pax Asiatica" of East Asia, the "Bella Levantina" of the Middle East provided the ideal opportunity structure

for state expansions, shaped by military occupation, armed insurgencies, and various forms of proxy warfare[60] (see chapter 4).

Second, regarding the question of resistance, the extreme power inequalities of expansionism often result in analytical frameworks that underestimate the impact of organized political opposition, whether violent or nonviolent. Postpositivist authors in particular tend to elevate the mind-numbing mundanity of Israel's military occupation into an all-encompassing, all-powerful Foucauldian panopticon. According to this approach, Israel's military administration allegedly encompasses an "amalgam of surveillance methods involving Foucauldian 'discipline' and Deleuzian 'control,' "[61] additionally stabilized by the "disparate rationalities and mechanisms of power whose heterogeneity reinforces the overall effectiveness and perseverance of this regime"[62]. More specifically, by understanding institutional changes in Israel's rule over the occupied territories exclusively as a reflection of "the interactions, excesses, and contradictions within and among the controlling practices and apparatuses,"[63] all politics of resistance are automatically treated as epiphenomenal.

A certain blind spot for the politics of resistance remains widespread even among more positivist authors, culminating in Lustick's claim that "Morocco . . . has had surprisingly little difficulty proceeding towards the incorporation of [Western Sahara]."[64] Indeed, the Sahrawi nationalists of POLISARIO might no longer be able to launch armed raids into the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott or far into Morocco itself. Nonetheless, Sahrawi resistance and diasporic Sahrawi state formation clearly *did* have an impact on Morocco's rule over Western Sahara: in contrast to a policy of widespread neglect after the Moroccan expansion into the Tarfaya Strip in 1958,[65] the challenge of Sahrawi nationalism pushed Morocco into massive investments in occupied Western Sahara, both in terms of military infrastructure, economic development,[66] and propaganda campaigns in order to persuade domestic and international audiences of the rightfulness of its irredentist claim.[67]

To bring the politics of resistance back into the study of state expansions, this book therefore complements its analysis of expansionist statecraft with a focus on countermobilization, whether in the form of counterviolence, counterinstitutions, counteridentities, or counternarratives (see chapter 5). This focus on resistance should not be misunderstood as a form of symbolic identification with the weaker side: any comparative analysis of expansionism that is blind to organized resistance runs the risk of missing a crucial element of institutional change, including institutional

decay and slow-moving breakdown. Israel's partial state contraction from the occupied territories, for instance, would have been unthinkable without systematic Palestinian resistance throughout two intifadas, culminating in the establishment of a protostate, the Palestinian Authority.

Third, the research literature tends to understand each territorial expansion as a sui generis phenomenon. While much can be learned from a detailed historiographic reading of the individual cases, the segmentation of Syrian, Moroccan, and Israeli irredentism into single-case country studies forfeits the analytical potential of theorizing their commonalities and differences from a comparative perspective. In the Syrian-Lebanese case, for instance, the Syrian occupation is frequently traced back to a special relationship between the two nations, ranging from metaphors of kinship and courtship[68] to accusations of a Syrian "war waged against the Lebanese polity."[69] In the conflict over Western Sahara, sui generis approaches tend to read the Moroccan-Sahrawi confrontation through the colonial-era lens of *bilad al-makhzen* (broadly translated as "lands of the government") and *bilad al-siba* ("lands of dissidence"),[70] thereby adopting a Moroccan royalist reading of restored sovereignty over Western Sahara that was specifically rejected by the International Court of Justice in 1975.[71]

Structured comparisons are even less frequent in the Israeli case, still plagued by the "politics of uniqueness," a phenomenon defined by Barnett as the idea that Israel is "unlike any other state," thereby making the state "comparable to none."[72] When it comes to third-wave irredentism, much of the research literature treats Israeli expansionism and Israeli demographic engineering in the occupied territories unlike any other state expansion from the same period.[73] This deep-seated exceptionalism stands out most clearly in comparative case studies that explore the parallels and differences between the Zionist project and European settler colonialism: any case selection that compares Israel's policies to states in another region (Europe) and in another period (the eighteenth and nineteenth century) systematically isolates Israel from the region of the Middle East and from the era of postcolonial state formation.[74]

By contrast, in studying Israel as a Middle Eastern society, this book builds on a comparative research agenda that ranges from earlier works by Migdal (who compared state-society relations in Israel and Egypt)[75] and Barnett (who studied militarization in Israel and Egypt)[76] to more recent comparative research on security sectors,[77] minorities, and diasporas[78] as well as the question of a shared Middle Eastern cultural identity.[79] In the context of Israeli expansionism, prominent examples of such a regionalist

approach can be found in an edited volume by Haklai and Loizides, which explores Israel's settlement project in comparison with other examples of demographic engineering in the Middle East, including the cases of northern Cyprus, Western Sahara, and northern Iraq.[80] Another regionalist approach to Israeli expansionism has been developed by Barak, who compares Maronite demographic decline in "Greater Lebanon" (established in 1920) with the reality of a shrinking Jewish majority in "Greater Israel" (Israel and the occupied territories since 1967).[81] As Barak points out, the structured comparison emphasizes the *differences* between the two cases: "Greater Lebanon" was built on relatively weak state institutions but enjoys high levels of legitimacy (even in areas "captured" in 1920); by contrast, "Greater Israel" stands out for much stronger state institutions but also decidedly lower levels of legitimacy, particularly among the Palestinian population (which came under Israeli military control in 1967).

This regionalist approach does not deny that some elements of Israeli nation building will require a case selection that moves *outside* of the Middle East. For instance, for the study of existential fear and geographic isolation, the comparison with Afrikaner or French Canadian nationalism (developed by Abulof)[82] points to a number of distinctive parallels. Nonetheless, a regionalist reading of Israeli state formation (and Israeli state expansion, for that matter) will assume that states that were established in a similar period and in a similar region naturally share a large number of commonalities—without, of course, forcing Israel and its Arab neighbors on a Procrustean bed of implausible homogeneity.