

2014

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

h-diplo.org/roundtables

Volume XVI, No. 4 (2014)

22 September 2014

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable and Web Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

Introduction by Martin Thomas

Mary Dewhurst Lewis. *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938.*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780520279155 (hardcover, \$49.95, £34.95).

URL: <http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XVI-4> or
<http://h-diplo.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XVI-4.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Martin Thomas, University of Exeter	2
Review by J. P. Daughton, Stanford University.....	10
Review by Eric T. Jennings, University of Toronto.....	14
Review by Matthew G. Stanard, Berry College.....	17
Author's Response by Mary Dewhurst Lewis, Harvard University	22

© 2014 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Introduction by Martin Thomas, University of Exeter

Books that don't just come up with original findings but that change the way we think about our subjects merit celebration. This roundtable might be read as such. Deservedly so: all three reviewers concur that *Divided Rule* represents much more than an account of the mechanics by which French imperial sovereignty took shape in the Protectorate of Tunisia. For in analyzing those mechanics, Mary Dewhurst Lewis reveals that any imperial territory, any colonial doctrine, even empire itself, faced both outward and inward. Imperial administrative practices were, in other words, as much contingent on the international system in which they operated as on the internal colonial terrain whose social, cultural, and political topographies they sought to change. More than that, the two aspects – external and internal – were co-dependent, even mutually constitutive.

The implications of this insight are profound. It becomes impossible, or at least implausible, to write a diplomatic history charting the construction or disintegration of any particular colonial territory without considering how that territory's interior political system, its legal regimens and cultural codes in particular, rebounded in the wider international politics of the region concerned. It would be equally ill-advised to map the interplay between imperial authority and colonial populations without tracing the contours of the wider international environment in which any imperial project was pursued. Doing justice to each of these perspectives, as Lewis has done, the sub-disciplinary boundaries between diplomatic and imperial history, between legal and social history, collapse. And this, surely, is all to the good.

A few basics before we get into the detail of our reviewers' commentaries. *Divided Rule* examines the juridical clashes between French imperial authority and the surviving Tunisian 'beylical' administration (broadly translatable as an Ottoman principality) from the Protectorate's immediate pre-history at the height of the 1880s African 'scramble' to the eve of World War II. As her book's title implies, Lewis rejects the conventional depiction of the gradual entrenchment of imperial control. Why? Because the more she dissects the administrative practices, laws, regulations and legal forms that supposedly underpinned French authority, the more the notion of a manipulative colonial power 'dividing' and thereby 'ruling' becomes risible. If anything, the opposite tended to apply, the governed exploiting the potentialities of overlapping juridical systems to get results. As this comment implies, this is a story that must be told from the bottom up. The Protectorate's inhabitants (the designation 'Tunisian' would come later, and was itself a matter of dispute) take center-stage thanks to Lewis's painstaking analysis of civil trials, citizenship petitions, property claims, and burial disputes. The cumulative effect of such legal material is to reveal a vibrant, highly contested political space far removed from the stock image of a sham dual administration behind which lurked authoritarian colonial power. In its juridical implications and growing administrative complexity, Protectorate Tunisia had more of the ring of Frankenstein's monster. Although never wholly disavowed by its French Foreign Ministry creators, the Protectorate and, more especially, the unwieldy politico-legal system of 'co-sovereignty' that came to define it, defied centralized control. Lewis demonstrates that, time and again, the political authority and administrative reach of French officials was

limited by overlapping foreign jurisdictions, competing legislative codes, and oft-times conflicting legal judgments.

Lewis's analytical horizon is capacious. That being said, for convenience, and at the risk of reducing their – and her – observations too far, our reviewers appear to discern four principal objects in Lewis's line of sight. First are the diplomatic conventions and intra-imperial concessions that produced the Tunisian 'Protectorate' formula. Second are the competing European and North African legal jurisdictions that made the Protectorate Tunisia's legal boundaries so porous. A third connects the legal with the political. Its starting point lies in the begrudging French willingness to work with a Tunisian emirate whose material power it was determined to shrink. Its endpoint was the 'co-sovereignty' principle, one whose implications were substantially unforeseen. An oxymoronic legal device meant to sustain the fiction of amicable power-sharing, for Lewis 'co-sovereignty' encapsulated the contradictions of an increasingly unworkable indirect rule. This brings us to the fourth element – obstacle is perhaps the better word – in the story of France's troubled implantation in Tunisia; namely, the people who lived, worked, or migrated there. For if anything exposed the fallacy of a vertically-ordered Protectorate in which European outsiders supposedly acculturated anarchic locals to 'rational' imperial governance it was Tunisia's inhabitants, of whatever ethnicity, faith, or communal attachment. It was they who turned the co-existence of beylical, Islamic, French, extraterritorial, and other legal codes to their best advantage in matters of legal entitlement, commercial transaction, or individual redress. Put simply, *Divided Rule* offers the clearest evidence yet presented that the old rigidities of 'colonizer' and 'colonized' make little sense. Just as the frontiers of empires were subject to endless diplomatic wrangling, so colonialism as a social condition was a process of negotiation and re-negotiation between authority and subject, government and people.

Each of our reviewers is impressed with Lewis's adroitness in explaining how problems of duplicated authority dogged generation after generation of French administrators in Tunisia. The Protectorate's day-to-day operations made for overlapping administrative roles with seemingly endless capacity for jurisdictional turf wars. At the most basic level, there was a duality between French and beylical juridical regimes, the notional hierarchy between them consistently undermined and blurred in practice. Argument therefore persisted over the scope of their respective political prerogatives and cultural claims. And no resolution was possible without first identifying who was or was not 'Tunisian', itself a category invented by the French in their efforts to codify ethnicity, rank, and rights. This was something that the Protectorate's inhabitants knew only too well. Eric Jennings puts it crisply in his review: "a wide range of Tunisian actors not merely took advantage of fragmented and divided forms of rule, but actually undertook the fragmenting themselves, thereby conditioning forms of governance." This is not quite to suggest that Tunisia's people reshaped the Protectorate to serve their purposes. After all, few non-European inhabitants wanted the French, who only quit Tunisia in 1956, to remain. But it is to indicate, as Lewis has done, that the Protectorate's terms, its actions, and their outcomes were produced by the combination of high policy decision-making and the bargains struck, not just with indigenous elites, but with multiple local actors of different cultural background and social status.

Taking this observation as his starting point, J.P. Daughton proposes that the Protectorate was hamstrung before it formally began by the diplomatic accords and legal concessions made to regional imperial rivals, to Tunisia's royal rulers, and to the territory's heterogeneous communities. European settlers especially - among which French-born families were initially outnumbered by their Italian and British counterparts - posed major problems. The diplomatic bargains struck to secure the acquiescence of rival imperial powers conceded important principles, among them extraterritoriality, plus legal and tax exemptions for favored European clients. So far, so familiar one might say. Any student of Imperial China's treaty ports or, as Matthew Stanard points out, of King Leopold's Congo Free State, will recognize such horse-trading as symptomatic of the globalized imperialism of the late nineteenth century. But what perhaps sets Tunisia apart is the speed and dexterity with which non-Europeans - local Muslims and Jews, even non-residents, such as visiting Algerians or Libyans, also mined the Protectorate's multi-layered legal rulings to advance their interests. Here Lewis ploughs a discreet furrow in scholarship on the French-ruled Maghreb whose outlines were first drawn by Julia Clancy-Smith in the context of early colonial Algeria.¹

It is in this context that Daughton and Jennings in particular dwell on the book's conceptual sophistication. As I mentioned in my opening comments, *Divided Rule* is likely to be appreciated by readers of H-Diplo because it offers new ways to align diplomatic history with social, legal, and imperial history. It is a truism to note that diplomatic decisions impact, not just on international relations, but within the realms of domestic politics, social policies, legal regimes, and family affairs. Much harder is to trace the precise connections between treaty settlements, boundary delimitations, and legal conventions on the one hand, and the shifting identity politics of communities and individuals on the other. This is where Lewis excels. Hers is a uniquely valuable perspective on how the Protectorate was made and why it came to be unworkable. As Jennings makes plain, France's rule in Tunisia was, by the interwar period, fracturing, because in trying to accommodate multiple political, legal, and cultural traditions, French claims of superior administrative competence were undone.

The irony is obvious: justified as a system of dispassionate imperial oversight, Protectorate rule had become confused, even schizoid. What, in other words, was France 'protecting'? Threatened European minorities from an overreaching Muslim monarchical autocracy? Not if the accelerating inward migration of Italian, Maltese, and, belatedly, French settlers was any guide. Conversely then, perhaps more in need of protection were Tunisia's Muslims, increasingly at the mercy of unbridled white privilege? Such claims were certainly integral to the ethos of Tunisia's cadre of specialist rural administrators, the *Contrôleurs Civils*.² But

¹ Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters* (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904) (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1997).

² Elisabeth Mouilleau, *Fonctionnaires de la République et Artisans de l'Empire. Le cas des Contrôleurs Civils en Tunisie (1881-1956)* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2000).

the supposed danger of an Algeria-style land grab by incoming settlers was hardly plausible in light of the *ab initio* recognition that Tunisia was not to be Europeanized or 'assimilated' to France. Perhaps the answer lies in the wider claims of French republican imperialism to protect ethnic and religious minorities against potential persecution. Hardly: it is difficult to make a convincing case that minority rights shaped the Protectorate's underlying rationale rather than just its rhetoric. What, moreover, of the rights of the majority? As each of our reviewers recognize, a notable strength of Lewis's work is to explain how the Protectorate's cultural and religious affronts to Muslims were mobilized to serve the nationalist politics of Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba's Neo-Destour.

Another irony here: Neo-Destour was a self-consciously modernist movement ill at ease with the Islamic traditionalism of the Old Destour notables from which it broke. Yet these 'Neo' upstarts, many of them attired in western dress and drawn to secular socialism, exploited Muslim sensibilities about French infringements of customary rights and cultural norms to garner wider public support. Again, as Lewis shows, the overlapping jurisdictional politics of the Protectorate was critical. For in the endless disputes over which authority held sway in the internal affairs of Tunisian residents lay the political and cultural space in which to contest French authority. So it was that by the 1930s Neo-Destour presented the one internally-generated existential threat to a continued French presence.³

Stanard, in his review, sees these and other clashes that Lewis unearths as a perfect indicator of the collision between high political arguments over legal jurisdiction and the rights of communities to adhere to customary norms. At the core of this collision between imperial politics and indigenous cultures lies a uniquely colonial dilemma. Most international systems posit some connection between sovereignty and legal jurisdiction. But within empires such linkages tend to be murky. Matters of ethnic identity, and the hierarchies of race and culture contingent upon them, clouded the distinctions between sovereign control and recognized legal authority. What vestigial 'rights' accrued to those who were subjects of Tunisia's Bey? What were the rights of Tunisian residents who were citizens of other countries, Italy or Britain for instance? How could a local Muslim seek citizenship, and thereby declare loyalty to a secular French Republic, without becoming an apostate? With greater importance attached by France, as by other colonial powers, to these questions of social identity, the notion that imperial sovereignty was delimited by the geo-political space governed by a recognized administrative authority explains very little. Lewis dwells on these problems because she discerns – correctly I think – that they lie at the very core of what colonialism meant as a lived condition. She demonstrates that the meaning of sovereignty – later, 'co-sovereignty' in Tunisia's case, was amorphous rather than irrefutably clear. If the rights of colonial subjects and citizens under law could be differentiated by ethnic origin, religious attachment, linguistic proficiency, or educational attainment, their shared habitation of Tunisia might signify less than their cultural

³ Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers, and Protest in the European Empires, 1918-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 129-40.

particularisms within it. And these, too, might be reimagined or redefined depending on the legal authority for which a particular identity was most relevant.

Raising the matter of Protectorate Tunisia's identity politics brings us to the reviewers' few, and entirely constructive, criticisms of *Divided Rule*. Both Daughton and Jennings indicate that the fluidity of cultural attachments that Lewis traces in the archival record invites alternate interpretations. One is that French officials never quite came to grips with the complex cultural meanings of identity in this corner of the Maghreb (or perhaps elsewhere). More simply put, French administrative codes and *in situ* officials struggled to work out what the implications of being a Muslim, a Jew, or an Italian settler, as well as a 'Tunisian' actually were. The other is that these layered identities were not simply instrumentalized in fulfilment of particular claims, but were liable to change, not least because the weight of French and other foreign influences increased over time. If indeed the imprint of French rule gradually deepened culturally as well as politically, then it is tempting to speculate, as Jennings does, about the singularity or otherwise of the Tunisian case. Aren't there parallels to be found elsewhere in the French Empire? He points to near-contemporary precedents - the similarly complex apparatus of direct colonial and indirect Protectorate arrangements in French Indochina. And he is surely right to hear echoes of Tunisian practices - and French mistakes - in later hybrid administrative arrangements, notably in the French Mandate territories of the Middle East and Africa established after World War I. Finally, he casts a glance forward, speculating on the extent to which Tunisia's unusual experience of multiple violent administrative transitions between 1939 and 1945 (first French, then Vichy French, later Nazi/Fascist Italian, finally and Allied/Free French) brought some of Tunisia's social cleavages and contested identities into more fatal confrontation. Clearly, these are not so much criticisms as a mild lament. Its refrain is that the truly global extent of Lewis's 'divided rule' model as well as its longer-term consequences are begging to be tested more closely. Indeed, all of the points above could be read as a plea for Lewis to revisit her work in future, perhaps expanding its geographical and chronological scope still further.

Mention of the interwar Mandates, currently the subject of some of the most exciting and innovative work at the intersection of imperial, global, and international history, points to another strand of research with which *Divided Rule* intersects.⁴ There are at least two parts to this, as Daughton notes. One is that the League's presumptive global oversight and numerous monitoring agencies offered alternate means and new outlets for those eager to challenge imperial authority or petition against it.⁵ The other is that the League of Nations,

⁴ Hugely influential were two articles by Susan Pedersen: "The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32 (2006), 560-82, and "Getting out of Iraq - in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood," *American Historical Review*, 115: 4 (2010), 975-1000. Also critical are Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), especially chapter 2, and Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁵ Susan Pedersen, "Samoa at Geneva: Petitions and Peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40: 2 (2012), 231-61.

the ‘Wilsonian moment’ that heralded it, and the disastrous emergence of hostile bloc politics that sealed its destruction, were all facets of an interwar international system fundamentally altered by the impact and legacies of World War I.⁶ It is tempting to add a third, picking up on another point made by Jennings in his review. For Tunisia, after all, was a quasi-autonomous territory with which France maintained diplomatic relations. As such, it was part of what might be termed the Quai d’Orsay’s Empire: those territories, mainly protectorates, condominiums, treaty ports and, subsequently, mandates and trust territories, administered from the Foreign Ministry.

The question here is one of official minds, of a discreet political culture born of the training regimens and attitudinal formation peculiar to France’s professional diplomats. For, as Peter Jackson has persuasively argued, the diplomats of the French Third Republic prized legal training and logical consistency in their dealings with client states, foreign dignitaries, and local problems.⁷ Moreover, the Foreign Ministry emerged from World War I with its belief in a binding regulatory framework of international law elevated to something approaching a distinct worldview.⁸ One wonders what, if anything, were the consequences for the hard-pressed administrators in Tunis. Perhaps for them the Quai d’Orsay was little more than a remote abstraction when dealing with the type of case with which Stanard begins his review. Even so, without suggesting that Lewis should have marked out those parts of her book dealing with the years after 1918 in starker colors, it is perhaps worth dwelling on whether the Tunisian Protectorate after the Great War was entirely comparable with what existed before.

It is, though, the mark of a really good book that it invites those who read it to ask for more. At one level, *Divided Rule* offers profound insights into the way France did – or did not – govern Tunisia from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. Using her singular skill as a legal historian to best effect, Lewis reaches the lived reality of negotiated rule between French officials, European settlers, and Tunisians of different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds in the spaces opened up by the Protectorate’s multiple forms of legal regulation and social control. It transpires that most of these regulatory frameworks, the nuts and bolts of administrative edict and fiscal exaction, were open to manipulation by the very populations they were originally designed to regulate. The presumed verticality of colonial rule, if not quite overthrown, is thereby shown to be altogether more complex. At another level, then, *Divided Rule* challenges us to think differently about empire building, its

⁶ Erez Manela, “Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919,” *American Historical Review*, 111:5 (2006), 1327-51; Robert Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009).

⁷ Peter Jackson, “Tradition and Adaptation: the French Foreign Ministry in the era of the First World War,” *French History*, 24:2 (2010), 164-96.

⁸ Peter Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the Politics of National Security in the Era of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

effects on local and transnational identities, and the particularities of colonial governance.⁹ As all of our reviewers agree, this has profound implications for our understanding of imperialism as a facet of a global international system and of the forms of colonial control that resulted. Mary Lewis's great accomplishment is to have produced a work that challenges us to think differently about how empires are constructed, about how they interact, and about how their peoples shaped the forms of governance that emerged within them.

Participants:

Mary Dewhurst Lewis is Professor of History and an affiliate of the law school at Harvard University. Her first book, *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918-1940*, was a co-winner of the James Willard Hurst Prize in Sociological History, awarded by the Law and Society Association. She is currently working on a new project on the "First French Decolonization," which explores the draw-down of the French Empire in the Atlantic following the revolution.

Martin Thomas is Professor of Imperial History and Director of the Centre for the Study of War, State, and Society at the University of Exeter. His most recent book is *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and their Roads from Empire* published with Oxford University Press in 2014.

J. P. Daughton is Associate Professor of History at Stanford University. He is the author of *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford, 2006), and co-editor, with Owen White, of *In God's Empire: French Missionaries and the Modern World* (Oxford, 2012). He is currently working on a book on violence, suffering, and humanitarianism in the French empire.

Eric T. Jennings is a Professor of History at the University of Toronto (PhD Berkeley 1998). He recently published *La France libre fut africaine* with Perrin (Paris, 2014)), on Equatorial Africa and Cameroon as the sites of the first French resistance. His previous works include *Imperial Heights: Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (University of California Press, 2011), *Curing the Colonizers* (Duke University Press, 2006) and *Vichy in the Tropics* (Stanford University Press, 2001). He is currently working on the wartime escape of thousands of European refugees to Martinique, and the myriad encounters that resulted, most notably convergences around surrealism and negritude.

Matthew G. Stanard teaches in the Department of History at Berry College. He has written a number of works on European overseas empire and Belgian colonialism including *Selling*

⁹ There are echoes here of the fascinating work of Deanna Heath, a useful introduction to which is her "Bureaucracy, Power and Violence: A Reconsideration of the Role of Agency in Shaping Colonial Rule in India," in Peter Crooks and Timothy Parsons (eds.), *Empires and Bureaucracy from Late Antiquity to the Modern World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), chapter 15.

the Congo (Nebraska, 2011) and “European Crises and the Wider World” for the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Europe 1914-1945*. One of his current projects is an essay on controls placed on movements of people and information in the Belgian Congo 1945-60.

Review by J. P. Daughton, Stanford University

One of the many revelations that can come from perusing files in the French colonial archives of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is the anxiety caused by European settlers in the empire. It makes sense that administrators would have been concerned by indigenous political figures and anticolonial propaganda. But official reports also commonly complained about troublesome missionaries meddling in local politics or out-of-control planters who kidnapped or mistreated laborers. In 1929, Georges Hardy, a leading colonial expert of his generation, identified settlers and even administrators as potential threats to achieving long-term stability across the empire. Of particular danger were Europeans' less savory habits, like slovenliness, crude language, and violent outbursts, that undermined French claims of superiority over indigenous populations.¹ With the potential to expand economies in often-struggling colonies, settlers were obviously an essential part of imperial expansion. But, ironically, for many officials worried about stability, Europeans were also one of the most unpredictable of liabilities.

Arguably nowhere in the world of French imperial influence were European settlers more problematic than in the Protectorate of Tunisia. And Mary Lewis's excellent monograph, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938*, demonstrates convincingly the myriad ways European settlers caused headaches at all levels of French officialdom. Unlike in formal colonies where the administration often actively encouraged foreign missionaries and settlers simply to leave, in the Protectorate of Tunisia, the French had no choice but to deal with the tens of thousands of mainly British and Italian subjects who lived and worked in a land ostensibly ruled by the Husaynid dynasty of Beys. Lewis's book tells the story of how, from the outset, a poor conception of the Protectorate – one that left the Bey's sovereignty intact and essentially 'divided' French power – presented the French with constant challenges. Subsequent efforts to reimagine their own sovereignty in the Protectorate, coupled with attempts to regulate the identities of the cosmopolitan population, did little to remedy the French predicament. In the end, the fragmented nature of power in Tunisia presented ample opportunities for nationalists to capitalize on the French inability to build a stable protectorate.

Divided Rule describes a Tunisian protectorate that seems to have been doomed to failure even before its inception. Afraid of appearing too brazen in the eyes of their imperial neighbors, French officials originally imagined a protectorate in Tunisia that would leave the Bey's sovereignty largely intact. But, as a result, the influence the French hoped to exercise was constantly hampered by agreements the Bey had made with Great Britain and Italy before the establishment of the Protectorate. These agreements afforded special privileges, including protection from being tried in the native judicial system and exemption from the burdensome head tax, to a host of European subjects who were settled or working in Tunisia. More importantly, they also allowed the British and Italians to exert extraterritorial sovereignty in Tunisia, thus greatly limiting France's ability to make

¹ Georges Hardy, *Nos grands problèmes coloniaux* (Paris: Albert Colin, 1929), 123-24.

policies and laws in its own protectorate. Far from enjoying unfettered imperial power, then, the French were continuously dogged by questions of international law and European diplomacy.

The bulk of *Divided Rule* deals with the frustrated efforts of the French to establish norms in judicial matters. While the French convinced the British and Italians to close their consular courts in Tunisia and allow their subjects to be tried by French judges, the consolidation of European tribunals did not prove as effective as had been hoped. Unified French courts only brought to the fore the long-standing problem of determining who was 'European' and who were 'natives' in a region of the world known for its overlapping and shifting identities. Starting with the assumption that modern empires function on defined racial hierarchies, Lewis does an extraordinary job drawing out the complexities of rule in a world inhabited by French settlers demanding full annexation, British subjects from Malta, Sicilian migrants, Tunisian-born Grana (Jews assumed to be of European origin), Libyans claiming to be Italian, and Algerian Jews claiming to be French, to name but a few. Making matters worse, these identities were themselves in constant flux, as men and women manipulated the competing sovereignties in the Protectorate essentially to game the system.

More than using divisions for merely personal gains, Tunisian nationalists increasingly pushed on divisions of sovereignty in building their case against protectorate rule. One effort to rectify confusion over identity – a 1923 law that naturalized certain native Tunisian Muslims as French subjects – allowed the Destour Party to mobilize opposition by arguing that naturalization was an act of apostasy. The more radical 'Neo-Destour' faction took opposition a step further by protesting the burial of naturalized Frenchmen and women in Muslim cemeteries. The cause gained traction, and demonstrations over burials, as well as French repression and counter-claims of religious fanaticism, turned public opinion against the Protectorate. The opposition to burials played a crucial role in galvanizing the career of Neo-Destour founder Habib Bourguiba as an independence leader.

Divided Empire is a rich, well researched, and brilliantly conceived book. It brings together many strands of colonial history that are not often to be found between the covers of a single volume. Lewis engages deeply with questions of law, identity, social history, and diplomacy. And her methodologies range from analysis of local politics to high diplomatic history, and from analysis of legal theory to an 'anthropological' analysis of death and apostasy. She offers a painstaking account of French decision making, drawing on archived memos and notes to recreate the mentalities and strategies behind each twist in French policy. What emerges is a detailed portrait of what a diplomatic, legal, and political quagmire the Protectorate was from the outset. If ever there were reason to believe that indirect rule in the Age of Empire was easier than annexation, this study offers a sobering corrective.

In addition to the fine account of French debates over sovereignty and nationality, Lewis's signal contribution in this study is to add to a growing body of literature that explores the ways international relations between European states shaped political and legal practices within empires. Politicians and officials steadfastly insisted that colonial politics were

domestic issues not open to international debate. But they were still clearly concerned about relations with their neighbors, be they allies or adversaries. Colonial law, far from being founded on firm judicial theory, served the needs of both local and international rule. In Tunisia, The French were never ignorant of the potential ramifications that their local laws had for other possessions (in this case, Algeria) and other empires.

This is a tightly structured, compact book that covers a tremendous amount of terrain with admirable economy. As such it is very satisfying, but also leaves the reader potentially wanting to know more about some of the myriad subjects discussed. This is almost always a good sign for a book – and *Divided Rule* is no exception. But, for the sake of this roundtable, it might be worth raising two points that loom for this reader. They both sit at the edges of the study – the one, on the ground; the other, in the ether of broader diplomatic concerns.

First, *Divided Rule* offers a panoply of actors inhabiting different identities for various purposes. But identity remains a largely instrumental concept through much of the book. Individuals chose particular identities before the administration if they wanted to avoid conscription, or in a court of law if they wanted a divorce. While the messiness of identity is central to understanding Tunisian society at this time, the book's contribution to social history might have been even richer had it engaged more with how the various European settlers, Tunisians, Algerians, and Jews defined themselves. Was identity, as it was experienced (and not simply *used* in legal cases), so amphibious in Tunisia as to be incomprehensible to French administrators? Should we understand French failure as the incapacity to handle the bureaucratic and political complexities involved in a protectorate, or as a more profound cultural misunderstanding of how identity was constructed in Tunisia? If it is the latter, then it is important to weigh whether France would have been any more effective in distinguishing between 'Europeans' and 'natives' had it annexed Tunisia outright. Even without concern for what the British or Italians thought, the French would likely have failed to define identities to their liking, even if they had secured unfettered sovereignty.

At the other end of the spectrum, the discussion of diplomatic concerns with competing empires raises the issue of the broader context of the interwar years. The League of Nations plays only a small role in this book, despite the fact that it was engaged in numerous debates about identity, sovereignty, and law not only in various mandates (such as with Germans in former German colonies), but also in regions of Eastern Europe where new national borders did not perfectly correspond to the ethnicities of populations. These questions were made all the more pressing by the rise of Fascism and Nazism, two more phenomena that *Divided Rule* does not engage with extensively. While neither the League nor nationalist movements in Europe may have impacted French policies directly, they no doubt deeply shaded policy makers' view of identity and law, especially by the 1930s. This book might have broadened its arguments even further by engaging with Hannah Arendt's discussion of the problem of statelessness and the 'right to have rights' in the interwar

period.² How, if at all, did the changing political landscape of Europe – from fascism to internationalism – influence colonial policies and imperial attitudes? Can experiences in Europe’s empires in this period inform the history of human rights discourse?

Neither of these points – on the cultural meaning of identity or on the context of fascism, internationalism, and rights – takes away from Lewis’s penetrating study. They exist at the peripheries of an argument that is already insightful and thought provoking in many ways. Rather they speak to the book’s ultimate success in pushing colonial historians to think well beyond the boundaries of a single protectorate or a single empire. *Divided Rule* represents that unique book that will appeal to both experts in the history of Tunisia as well as scholars of empire more generally. Its complexity, nuance, and readability will make it a standard on the syllabi of courses on law, empire, and diplomacy for years to come.

² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1966).

Review by Eric T. Jennings, University of Toronto

Divided Rule is an intelligently crafted and important study of matters of sovereignty in Tunisia spanning the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. The book is based upon an impressive quantity and range of archival research, and makes an original contribution to international history, the history of French expansion, and the Maghreb. Especially rich is the chapter on burials and graves, which focuses in part on the question of where Tunisians who were naturalized French could be buried. Its engagement with everything from rumor to law and religion renders it especially evocative.

Lewis already left a historiographical mark with her first book on immigration experiences and control in Marseille and Lyon.¹ If I were to hazard a guess, I would say that the bridge from that first book to this one involved an investigation into the shape and forms of individual appeals to consuls and other high authorities first in a metropolitan, then in a protectorate setting.

In *Divided Rule*, Lewis proves especially adept at bringing to life quotidian conflicts and tensions. She shows how a wide range of Tunisian actors not merely took advantage of fragmented and divided forms of rule, but actually undertook the fragmenting themselves, thereby conditioning forms of governance. They did so through a variety of grievances, appeals, and lawsuits, involving everything from divorce to burial and military service. In this sense, *Divided Rule* features a fertile layer of social material above a solid core of legal, institutional, constitutional, and international history.

Among the study's many compelling stories, I will cite the example of Messaouda Bessis, who complained in 1896 that her husband had committed bigamy. The case hinged on her husband's standing as a Maltese and hence a British subject, but also on her identity as a Tunisian Jew. As Lewis shows, Bessis selected the registers and chords she deemed most likely to serve her cause. Others brandished claims to Algerianness since that conferred a preferential French status in Tunisia, enabling them to elude the military recruitment lottery. In other cases, Algerians tried to 'pass' for Tunisians (of course one has to allow for the fact that many did not just navigate and manipulate multiple identities -- they also likely experienced, celebrated, and embraced them). In yet another instance, in 1913 French authorities battled attempts by a group of eighteen Tunisian Jews to acquire Maltese status. Frequently, external pressures, like Libyan involvement in Tunisia, also conditioned local identity politics. Cumulatively, Lewis suggests, all of this tugging and repositioning began to fray and ultimately unstitch the fragile, dual, and unwieldy system of rule in Tunisia.

This is also a regional history, highlighting important connections with Malta, Libya, Algeria and Morocco, most notably. Yet Tunisia also represented the anti-Algeria, to paraphrase Lewis (11). The initial French conquest of Tunisia in 1881 soon veered to 'mission creep' surprising both the local sovereign (the Bey) and the international community. And like so

¹ Mary Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

many conquests, Tunisia proved harder to digest than to swallow: conquered in three weeks, its international status remained in flux for three years. The triangulations of influence and power with regional stakeholders like Italy and Britain play a central role in Lewis' analysis.

Divided Rule also analyzes important shifts in French approaches. Lewis delineates the establishment of a dual system of justice. However, French interests soon found themselves split, with France at once keen on sapping beylical influence and bolstering it. Gradually, the French came to embrace a form of rule termed 'co-sovereignty' -- a new reflection of this same balancing act. By 1914, Tunisian nationality had emerged if not by consensus then at least via negotiation, since it had become expedient for both the Bey and the French Foreign Ministry.

A response in this forum would not be complete without some criticism or at least debate. I will articulate a handful of questions that are not intended not detract from the excellence and originality of Lewis' contribution, merely to suggest a set of alternate directions, readings, and possibilities.

Lewis persuasively demonstrates how personal cases, issues, and imperatives shaped the Protectorate in Tunisia. Self-interest also conditioned French responses. Consider French approaches to Islam, for instance (71). While laudable in terms of agency, such an emphasis on personal interest on the part of both subjects and rulers does beg the question of whether Tunisia could be administered at all, or whether it proved too unwieldy a patchwork of compromises and exceptions. And as I have already suggested above, one wonders whether individuals systematically and consciously "manipulat[ed] the fissures in France's power" (136) so much as they may have been playing out, reflecting, and navigating complex, overlapping identities, frameworks and regional influences themselves. Here it might have been interesting to learn more about language: what tongues were spoken in Tunisian Jewish or Italian households at the turn of the century, for instance? Or in the homes of members of the *Ligue des Français Musulmans*? Or in schools? Surely language could both enable 'passing' and bolster identity.

While Lewis does provide useful examinations of Tunisia's cultural mosaic (32) she might have engaged more with existing scholarship in this particular field. I was surprised to see Patrick Cabanel and Jacques Alexandropoulos's wide-ranging edited volume on the topic missing from the bibliography.² On the Maltese, who play an important role in several of this story's subplots, Lewis might have cited Andrea Smith's book on the Maltese in neighboring Algeria.³

² Patrick Cabanel and Jacques Alexandropoulos, *La Tunisie Mosaïque : Diasporas, cosmopolitanisme, archéologies de l'identité* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2000).

³ Andrea L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

I wondered also about potential parallels with other protectorates and mandates. Did the simultaneously decentralized and hypercentralized Indochinese model impact Tunisia? Did Tunisia serve as a template for the French in Morocco? Were lessons learned? Did it shape French mandates in Syria, Lebanon, Togo and Cameroon? Clearly, the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in charge of these regions, rather than the Ministry of the Colonies, must have had an impact. But what was it, beyond sending researchers like us to Nantes instead of Aix-en-Provence?

On a similar score, Algeria is frequently presented as *the* settler colony, France's sole equivalent of Canada or Australia. Much like the thousands of Maltese and Spaniards naturalized French in Algeria, is there a narrative concerning Tunisia's Italians and Maltese being folded into a kind of *creuset de latinité* in Tunisia, one cast in the shadow of ancient Rome?⁴

Finally, although it would be unfair to suggest a different chronology, Lewis' epilogue glosses over critical events of the Second World War and the era of independence. On the former, Admiral Jean-Pierre Esteva's hard-line Vichy position, his currying the favor of Tunisian Catholics, and German attempts to bolster nationalism in Tunisia bear mentioning.⁵ Tunisia was the only French overseas territory occupied by the Nazis (outside of Corsica). We know from the work of Stefan Petke that German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's forces recruited both auxiliaries and soldiers in Tunisia.⁶ Other studies have shown how Tunisia's Jews were persecuted. How did this influence the religious and identity politics Lewis charts for the previous decades? Lewis' statement that "the Nazi occupation in mainland France and the Japanese occupation of Vietnam had helped to deligitimize military domination as a strategy of rule" (168) fails to account for France's heavy military involvement in Indochina in 1945, in Madagascar in 1947, and increasingly in Algeria as of Sétif. Finally, the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* famously used Tunisia as both a logistical base and as de facto headquarters. Were questions of overlapping and multiple nationalities reconfigured under these circumstances? None of these questions is intended to detract from the remarkable work Lewis has achieved. Textured and nuanced, *Divided Rule* will be of interest to a wide range of historians.

⁴ See Patricia Lorcin, "Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria's Latin Past" *French Historical Studies*, 25:2 (Spring 2002): 295-329.

⁵ See Serge La Barbera "L'Église d'Afrique face au nouveau régime" in Jacques Cantier and Eric Jennings, *L'Empire colonial sous Vichy* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004), 287-304.

⁶ Stefan Petke, "The Deutsch-Arabischen Lehrabteilung in North Africa" international conference on the Desert War, Centre Jacques Berque, Rabat, October 25-26, 2013.

In 1906, the civil controller in Kef in French Tunisia set out to determine the ‘true’ origins of members of the Ben Younes family. Were they Tunisian? Because the Ben Younes family tree was complex—it split along branches descended from Massaoud ben Younes, Ben Daoud ben Younes, and Embarek ben Younes—work on the case lasted months, from April to November 1906. The final document diagramming the family tree “stretched more than a meter wide” (94). Why expend such efforts on this otherwise ordinary family in one corner of France’s empire? The question is particularly pertinent because France did not rule Tunisia as a colony but indirectly as a protectorate, and therefore the French ought to have been able to rely on the Bey’s government to handle such everyday questions.

As Mary Dewhurst Lewis shows in her important new book, the origins of the Ben Younes family—and those of many others—were a critical issue to French rule in Tunisia. Until the family’s nationality could be determined, the legal status of its members remained unclear because the Protectorate’s legal system (or systems) varied according to the nationality of those who came before it. Because rights depended on nationality, other states maintained an interest in the fate of their nationals living in Tunisia. France was sensitive to this issue from the beginning because the number of French in the Protectorate in 1881 (around 700) was dwarfed by the number of other Europeans, which included, among others, more than 11,000 Italians and some 7,000 British. As France tried to assert control over ‘its’ subjects and reduce rivals’ meddling, the question of the nationality of Tunisia’s inhabitants became a burning one. In short, France became the predominant power in Tunisia following its 1881 takeover but never was fully in charge. As the title of Lewis’s book suggests, French imperialism in Tunisia was less a case of divide and rule and more one of divided rule as France was forced to share power with its European rivals, the Bey’s regime, and Tunisians themselves.

The ‘plot’ of *Divided Rule* can be briefly summarized. The 1881 Bardo Treaty established a new protectorate over Tunisia (replacing the Ottoman one) so that France could (presumably) preserve the Bey’s authority while extending its influence to the east of Algeria. France’s rivals in north Africa at the time, Italy and Britain, latched on to the treaty’s guarantee that the French government would respect existing conventions between the Bey and European powers, preserving those powers’ special treatment and extraterritorial sovereignty. Subsequent French efforts to end Italian, British, and other extraterritoriality were drawn out and incomplete, allowing rivals to act as ‘states within a state’ in Tunisia. This problem came to the fore when Tunisians ‘forum shopped’ among consular, French, and beylical courts or tried on different nationalities, for example claiming to be Algerian to secure rights due to Frenchmen and women that were denied ordinary Tunisians. This was a particularly thorny issue because Tunisia’s diversity and overlapping jurisdictions required long, complex efforts to determine the nationality of Tunisians, which drew the French more deeply into protectorate affairs. Eventually French authorities tried to shoehorn everyone into either of two nationalities, French or Tunisian, thus creating a ‘Tunisian’ nationality that had not existed before. (Muslims had been

understood not as members of a nation but as subjects of the local Muslim ruler, in this case the Bey.) After World War I the French tried to extend their authority by developing what they called ‘co-sovereignty,’ which they understood to mean that France ruled Tunisia in part rather than merely protecting the Bey’s authority. Of course the concept of cosovereignty implied a Tunisian sovereignty, and Tunisians exploited this to demand power. Bringing the narrative into the interwar era, Lewis continues her examination of questions of sovereignty by exploring “the political lives of dead bodies” (163).¹ She shows the importance of ideas of autonomy, religion, place, and space in the many protests over burials of naturalized French Muslims in the 1930s, which spurred Tunisian nationalism and contributed to the rise to power of Habib Bourguiba, independent Tunisia’s first President.

As this brief outline suggests, Lewis depicts a scenario where international rivalries most affected events early on in the French protectorate whereas Tunisians led the way in creating change from the interwar period down to the 1950s. To tell this story she combines aspects of diplomatic history and *Alltagsgeschichte*, cultural history and legal history. A major focus is the Protectorate’s legal systems and reactions to them, meaning Lewis relies to a great extent on legal archives. Indeed, the primary source base of the book, with research in archives in London, Rome, Tunis, and several sites in France, is as impressive as Lewis’s command of the secondary literature.

One of the book’s central contentions is that histories of imperialism need to adopt an expanded approach toward understanding imperial rule. As Lewis stated in an article in the *Journal of Modern History* upon which *Divided Rule* is based in part, “I am calling for a new way of thinking about what Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler have termed the ‘tensions of empire.’ Cooper and Stoler, along with other ‘new imperial historians,’ fruitfully pushed past the nationalist paradigms that had dominated histories of empire and suggested instead that scholars place metropole and colony in a single analytic field. Very few scholars, however, have broadened this scope of inquiry beyond the presumed closed circuit of metropole and colony.”² Lewis’s point is that we ought to enlarge our view beyond the metropole-colony analytic field to explore inter-imperial and even intra-colonial dynamics.

Such a call to examine “the profound interdependence of European colonial powers” (129) is a welcome one, even if this insight is not as entirely novel as it might first appear. Take the example of Leopold II, the Congo, and Belgium, a case with which this reviewer is more familiar. The nature of Leopoldian and Belgian imperialism in both its international and

¹ Drawing, as Lewis notes, on Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999).

² Mary Dewhurst Lewis, “Geographies of Power: The Tunisian Civic Order, Jurisdictional Politics, and Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1881-1935,” *Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 4 (Dec. 2008): 798. Work for *Divided Rule* also appeared in Mary Dewhurst Lewis, “Necropolises and Nationality: Land Rights, Burial Rites and the Development of Tunisian National Consciousness in the 1930s,” *Past & Present* no. 205 (Nov. 2009): 105-141.

local aspects was profoundly shaped by involvement of other empires. Leopold II's machinations and the acceptance of his stewardship over the Congo River basin in 1885 depended precisely on imperial rivalry among Britain, France, and Germany. The conquest and creation of what became *l'État indépendant du Congo* (EIC) in 1885 (its borders were not finalized until years later) were shaped by European and local competition, for example when rivals resisted Leopold's attempt to take the Bahr el Ghazal to secure a Nile outlet for the EIC. Local issues became international affairs that were shaped in turn by inter-imperial rivalries, for instance when British outrage against Belgium during the 1895 Stokes Affair, when a Belgian official condemned and hanged Briton Charles Stokes for illegal trading, were tempered by fears that British criticism might undermine the Belgians and increase French influence in Africa.³ Outsiders such as Anglo-French journalist and activist E. D. Morel brought Leopoldian rule into question, and Morel's humanitarian campaign against the EIC succeeded in part by calling attention to Britain's and other powers' legal *obligation* to become involved. Morel argued that the EIC was not Leopold's colony, rather it was created by the international community (i.e., European states and the U.S.). Leopold II, in this view, was a kind of manager, not owner, of the Congo. It is oft repeated that Leopold II 'owned' the Congo and that it was his personal colony, but British MPs who debated what to do in the Congo around the turn of the century were dubious that this was the case.

Results of this interimperial dynamic included the Casement Report, written by British diplomat Roger Casement and detailing abuses in the Congo, international pressure on the EIC, Leopold II's own commission of inquiry into conditions on the ground in the colony, the turnover of the Congo to Belgium, and reforms that followed under the new colonial administration. (This is not to say no Belgians protested Leopoldian rule nor pushed for changes, and of course Congolese had their own reactions.) Belgian rule was on such shaky ground that Britain did not even recognize 'the Belgian Congo' as an entity until 1913, five years after the Belgian takeover. Belgian attitudes were forever marked by fears that the great powers believed Belgium's colonial rule to be illegitimate, as was evidenced in the negotiations of and reactions to the 1919 Convention of St. Germain-en-Laye, which Belgians viewed as a great success because it asserted their dominion in the Congo. Post-war German irredentism and (real) potential backroom deals among the powers catalyzed the nationalization of Belgium's colonial administration, colonial enterprises, and missionary work. Such inter-imperial dynamics cast long shadows: in 1960, as the Congo moved toward independence, President Charles de Gaulle's government reminded Belgians of France's right of first refusal if Belgian rule failed, something negotiated with Leopold II's agents in the 1880s. In sum, the history of empire in the Congo is not a history of one metropole and its colony or even a single imperial analytic field but indeed an inter-imperial history.

All that said, an inter-imperial history of the Congo in the colonial era has yet to be written, and it is in this sense that Lewis breaks new ground in leading the way toward a new kind

³ Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 73.

of history. Lewis has cast off presumptions about French rule in Tunisia, dug into the archives, and arrived at novel conclusions, for example that local events and even personal family affairs did not just incidentally precipitate international questions—as was arguably the case in the Stokes Affair—but *necessarily* entailed an inter-imperial dynamic. Ordinary Tunisians took advantage of a system that recognized different nationalities with varying rights and ‘forum shopped’ to seek the best outcome. “Residents of Tunisia exploited the ambiguity of the protectorate arrangement, attempting to invoke whatever jurisdiction served their immediate interests” (46). Switching legal forums or national identities was not a mass phenomenon, but when it happened it challenged French authority and threatened social unrest because of the resentment unequal treatment could provoke, especially since this involved sensitive issues like taxation, conscription, and justice. As Lewis demonstrates, such domestic issues would not have been so problematic in the absence of competition between France and its rivals at the international level.

International competition also led France to change policies in the Protectorate, for example its development of co-sovereignty. As Lewis writes, “renewed Great Power interest in the Mediterranean [after World War I] did more than shake up international relations, it forced the French to change their *domestic* policies in Tunisia. . . . It was Italian and British challenges to French authority in the protectorate as much as Tunisian ones that led the Quai-d’Orsay to invent the concept of cosovereignty” (99, 100). Domestic policies in neighboring areas like British Malta and Libya affected Tunisia. Italy’s conferral of citizenship to Libyans meant that Tunisians, especially those near the border, might claim to be Libyan (i.e., Italian) to secure rights otherwise unavailable to them as beylical subjects. Ironically enough, administrators in the Protectorate also had to grapple with policies in other French colonies, especially (but not only) Algeria because “in crossing the border into Tunisia, a Muslim Algerian not only left France for a foreign territory but also left behind the many discriminatory indigenous codes applying exclusively to Muslims in Algeria for, in Tunisia, Algerians’ status as ‘French subjects’ entitled them to consular protection” (69). In some cases a vicious cycle developed where an international issue spurred local policy changes which in turn had their own international ramifications, as when “Italy’s claims on Libya forced French authorities to change domestic policy in neighboring Tunisia, which in turn posed new challenges for France’s diplomatic relations with both Italy and Great Britain” (100). In short, the Bardo Treaty, which we have understood as having established French rule over Tunisia, in reality created a contested terrain fought over by France, its rivals, and locals.

This tying of the local to the international and inter-imperial extends to a point Lewis makes about the Scramble for Africa, namely that Tunisia’s history reveals how “the ‘scramble’ among European powers for empire never really ended” (129). This insight is not entirely new. Wm. Roger Louis demonstrated in 1966 how the 1919 Peace of Paris negotiations represented another iteration of the scramble for empire, to take one example.⁴ Nevertheless, the significance of *Divided Rule* is that it shows how the ‘scramble’

⁴ Wm. Roger Louis, “Great Britain and the African Peace Settlement of 1919,” *American Historical Review* 71, no. 3 (1966): 875–92

continued not only at international conferences, in bilateral negotiations, and so forth, but on the ground and in unexpected ways, as rivals jockeyed for influence, prestige, and power in areas like Tunisia where one power seemed to have everything well in hand. In Tunisia it was ambiguity in the legal system and indeterminate nationalities that created room for ongoing competition. “A legal regime originally designed to protect (or control) the various subjects of European states from alleged discrimination under Islamic law had evolved into a means of continuing the imperial game with France even after it had been recognized as preponderant” (60).

Divided Rule also lays bare the contradictions of the French protectorate as well as the multiple divisions that existed on all sides of this particular colonial situation. Lewis reveals the irony of how France’s attempt to avoid a deep entanglement in Tunisia led to intense involvement in its domestic affairs, seen in the example of the mapping of family trees. French policies designed to govern lightly actually undermined the very Tunisian sovereignty they had pledged to protect. Another irony is seen in how Muslims by the 1930s had to protect their burial lands from their so-called protectors, the French. (Of course, the basis of the Protectorate was in many ways ironic from the get-go.) Lewis also shows how French policies fostered rather than thwarted Tunisian movements in favor of self-rule, for instance in the case of their approaches toward burials of naturalized French Muslims. “Over the five years that transpired between the first eruption of the naturalization crisis and the siege of April 1938, the political lives of dead bodies helped give shape to Muslim Tunisians’ understanding of themselves and their land as belonging to a sovereign nation” (163). The book gives a clear idea of the many divisions in play in the Protectorate: between the Destour and Neo-Destour parties, and between them and the League of Muslim Frenchmen; amid shifting coalitions in Paris (and the vacillating policies that resulted); among different minded Resident generals; between pro-annexation settlers and those French who opposed such a move.

Divided Rule kept my undivided attention. The book is elegantly concise. The reader is in expert hands as Lewis sets out important arguments and then backs them up with a clear chronological discussion including numerous tales to illustrate her larger points. The many anecdotes and vignettes are one of the book’s great features: the affair of the false Maltese, burial protests, the 1882 Meschino affair, forged documents, and so forth. The book is well written and well edited, and Lewis expertly confines much of her commentary to the extensive endnotes, which should serve as a starting point for any scholar of modern Tunisia or French colonial history. She is presently researching inter-colonial migration, an area that cries out for more work and which surely will benefit from the broader approach Lewis follows with such success in *Divided Rule*. But we can also hope that perhaps, along the way, Lewis will try her hand at a historiography of modern French imperialism.

Author's Response by Mary Dewhurst Lewis, Harvard University

When I first started working on *Divided Rule*, people sometimes asked me “Why Tunisia? Why not Algeria?” After the Arab Spring, few asked that question any longer, but I hope the book’s importance does not lie only in Tunisia’s contemporary topicality. As the three thoughtful contributors to this roundtable, J.P. Daughton, Eric Jennings, and Matthew Stanard all note in one way or another, the book is not just about Tunisia. Instead, it uses Tunisia as a way of thinking about alternative modes of apprehending change in colonial governance, understanding the nature of imperial ‘sovereignty,’ and reflecting on the sources of colonial nationalism. I argue that Tunisia began as a kind of ‘anti-Algeria,’ by which I mean that the French leadership in Tunisia set out to avoid the problems that France had already experienced in the neighboring annexed territories. Establishing the Protectorate some fifty years after the invasion of Algeria, French leaders thought that a new kind of empire could be had: one less tumultuous, easier to administer, and above all, cheaper. By ruling ‘indirectly’ through the Husaynid dynasty of beys, who would remain nominally sovereign, French officials hoped to craft colonial rule on the cheap. As Premier Jules Ferry put it in 1884, maintaining beylical sovereignty “frees us from installing a French administration in this country, which is to say it frees us from imposing significant burdens on the French budget. It allows us to supervise from above, to govern from above, to avoid taking on, in spite of ourselves, responsibility for all the details of administration.” (63) Of course, ruling at a distance never meant ruling benevolently, but French leaders were hoping to get what they wanted from Tunisia while leaving a light footprint. The book tells the story of how this ‘indirect’ method of rule was gradually replaced by a much more invasive form of colonial governance, closer to the direct rule of Algeria, and it locates the source of that gradual change in the nexus between domestic affairs and international relations – understood both as cross-border relations with Algeria or Libya and diplomatic relations between France and other colonial states, especially Italy and Great Britain, both of which maintained interests in Tunisia long after the French established themselves as the preponderant European power there. Ultimately, this gradual process helped foster one of the most precocious and successful nationalist movements in all the French Overseas Empire. So the book’s ambition is not just topical, it is methodological. It suggests that if we change our optic to combine social and diplomatic history – integrating micro and macro history, if you will – we might see sources of change that hitherto remained obscure.

I am gratified to see three very different scholars all praise the argument and approach of *Divided Rule*, and I am also grateful for their questions and criticisms. One of the dilemmas in a project such as this is that just as the French experienced ‘mission creep’ in their style of rule in Tunisia, so too did this project grow from an initial interest in conflicts around nationality law to something much larger. As it grew, I found myself having to master whole new fields of inquiry, from European diplomatic history to Italy’s role in Libya and beyond. Inevitably, I probably missed a few wonderful resources that would have been helpful here and there. I do cite the work of Andrea Smith on the Maltese, but in article

rather than book form.¹ No doubt the other bibliographic suggestions would have enriched the book further.

The other questions take up themes left, according to the reviewers, underexplored. Of course, as Eric Jennings acknowledges, to address some of these questions would have made this a different book with a different chronology. I tried to be broad in range and meticulous in my research while still writing a book that Matthew Stanard calls “elegantly concise.” So with that caveat in mind, let me try to tackle at least some of the excellent questions raised. They cluster around two main themes: (1) Identities and their meanings; and (2) Additional dimensions of international relations that I leave relatively uncharted – the League of Nations, Tunisia as a site of occupation and battle during the Second World War and the Algerian conflict, and comparisons to other colonial states (e.g. Congo, Indochina and Morocco).

Jennings and Daughton are right that I rarely venture into the cultural content of the many overlapping national and religious ‘identities’ I discuss. This is not because I am not interested in it or because it did not matter to the people concerned, but because it did not change the outcome. Whether a Jewish man who claimed to be Tunisian in an inheritance dispute with his sisters (who themselves claim to be Algerian) really ‘felt’ Tunisian, or what that feeling meant for him does not change the fact that people who were intimately related chose different national identities in court, presumably for fairly strategic purposes (the sisters, in claiming to be Algerian, were laying claim to ‘French’ civil status and thus equal inheritance, of which they would be deprived under Mosaic law, the law applying to Tunisian Jews in inheritance cases) (see 83-84). For my purposes, what is interesting about such affairs is that the split sovereignty of the Protectorate – the ‘divided rule’ of the book’s title – ended up dividing families as well. In turn, those quotidian familial divisions also had an impact on colonial rule, because such constant jockeying for legal position proved problematic for a French state that needed to be able to assert at least some modicum of control, and because the ability of persons whom French authorities regarded as colonial subjects to lay claim to a ‘French’ legal status made it all the harder to maintain another important dividing line: between rulers and ruled. To be sure, it would be interesting to know what languages were used under what circumstances [beyond the references I already make to this, such as the fact that Messaouda Bessis wrote in French but signed in Hebrew (46)]. Yet it is equally interesting that people with shared languages and customs were legally fractured, or had the potential to be.

As to the many and varied questions clustering around Tunisia’s international status or points of comparison for it, I think Matthew Stanard puts it nicely when he says that “the significance of *Divided Rule* is that it shows how the ‘scramble’ [for Africa] continued not only at international conferences, in bilateral negotiations, and so forth, but on the ground and in unexpected ways, as rivals jockeyed for influence, prestige, and power in areas like Tunisia where one power seemed to have everything well in hand.” I am not suggesting

¹ Andrea L. Smith, “The Maltese in Tunisia before the Protectorate, 1850s–1870s: Towards a Revised Image,” *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 10, 1–2 (2000): 183–202.

that this was nowhere else possible, or that others have failed to study colonialism's connections to international relations. Nonetheless, some of the older studies by scholars such as John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson (with Alice Denny) or William Roger Louis,² for instance, do not combine diplomatic and social history and reproduce some of the assumptions about European sovereignty and power that *Divided Rule* tries to dismantle. In suggesting that a different set of methodologies yields new insights on the nature of colonial sovereignty, I do not contend that it will yield the same insights everywhere. Similar methods deployed in Morocco, for instance, would surely paint a somewhat different picture. Tunisia was a model, indeed *the* model for Morocco, but Morocco ended up having its own unique problems with divided rule, some of which stemmed from French divide *and* rule tactics used there, in an effort to split the Berber and Arab populations of the sultanate. The mandates, too, surely were a form of protectorate, and as such drew partly on the Tunisian model, but what is perhaps more surprising and interesting is the extent to which the *mandates* ended up serving as a model for nationalist mobilization in Tunisia late in the game, as nationalist leaders drew on the example of the mandates to question why French rule in some territories was understood as 'temporary,' while it was at the same time regarded as 'definitive' in Tunisia. (see 160-61) Despite this, the League of Nations, which Daughton asks about and which had authority over the mandates but not the protectorates, was conspicuously absent from any documentation I found on Tunisia.

Divided Rule ends in 1938 because 1938 was, in my view, the point of no return. By this, I do not mean that independence in the form it took, or independence at all, was immediately on the horizon. But I do mean that the nationalists had mobilized sufficiently to make the everyday exploitation of divisions in sovereignty no longer the *modus operandi* of challenging French rule. From the mid-1930s on, and especially after the massacre of 9 April 1938, Tunisians by and large no longer tried to outmaneuver 'divided rule' by shifting between sovereignties; instead, they insisted that Tunisians were themselves sovereign and argued for greater autonomy from France. My discussion of the Second World War and the Liberation is thus, as Jennings acknowledges, an epilogue to a story that properly ends in the 1930s. In suggesting that rule by violence became delegitimized by the atrocities of the Second World War, I of course did not mean to suggest that it was not still used after 1945 – in Indochina, Kenya, Malaya, Algeria, and (on a smaller scale) Tunisia, among other places. What I meant was that it became much harder to justify empire in the same pre-war ways, and that novel forms of rule came to be imagined and imaginable, a fact underscored in the new work by Frederick Cooper.³ Indeed, the perceived illegitimacy of older forms of empire contributed to the eruption of rebellions in these colonies in the first place. Although I do not treat the period of the Algerian War in more than a few sentences in the epilogue, I suspect that the longstanding back-and-forth across the

² John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, with Alice Denny. *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*. London: Macmillan, 1961; Wm. Roger Louis, "Great Britain and the African Peace Settlement of 1919," *American Historical Review* 71, no. 3 (1966): 875–92.

³ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Tunisian-Algerian border that I describe throughout in the book must surely have facilitated the establishment of the *Front de Libération Nationale's* de facto headquarters in Tunisia, while at the same time posing problems of international relations both for the nascent independent Republic of Tunisia and for the French as they prosecuted their counterinsurgency war in Algeria. Without eschewing the importance of the Algerian War to Tunisia, I must also insist that the point of my epilogue was rather the opposite. Before the Algerian War erupted, Tunisia was one of the most pressing concerns within the French Council of Ministers. We have forgotten this because the enormity of the Algerian War has eclipsed the Tunisian question. But if we look at the vicissitudes of colonial rule in Tunisia during the late 1940s and early 1950s, one cannot help but be struck by the “failed reform efforts, missteps or mistakes, escalating violence, and ... growing frustration with French acts of repression – some of which, such as torture, prefigured the counterinsurgency tactics that the French army would use in Algeria some years later” (170). All this in a place once conceptualized as an ‘anti-Algeria’! We cannot understand how colonial rule in Tunisia arrived at this critical point without appreciating where it started, not to mention how and why it changed over time. That is what *Divided Rule* aims to explain, and I’m thrilled that all three readers agree it succeeds.