



# Foundations of Modernity: Human Agency and the Imperial State (Routledge Studies in Modern History)

*Isa Blumi*

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Investigating how a number of modern empires transform over the long 19<sup>th</sup> century (1789-1914) as a consequence of their struggle for ascendancy in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, *Foundations of Modernity: Human Agency and the Imperial State* moves the study of the modern empire towards a comparative, trans-regional analysis of events along the Ottoman frontiers: Western Balkans, the Persian Gulf and Yemen. This inter-disciplinary approach of studying events at different ends of the Ottoman Empire challenges previous emphasis on Europe as the only source of change and highlights the progression of modern imperial states.

The book introduces an entirely new analytical approach to the study of modern state power and the social consequences to the interaction between long-ignored "historical agents" like pirates, smugglers, refugees, and the rural poor. In this respect, the roots of the most fundamental institutions and bureaucratic practices associated with the modern state prove to be the by-products of certain kinds of productive exchange long categorized in negative terms in post-colonial and mainstream scholarship. Such a challenge to conventional methods of historical and social scientific analysis is reinforced by the novel use of the work of Louis Althusser, Talal Asad, William Connolly and Frederick Cooper, whose challenges to scholarly conventions will prove helpful in changing how we understand the origins of our modern world and thus talk about Modernity. This book offers a methodological and historiographic intervention meant to challenge conventional studies of the modern era.

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