RUNNING THE CORRIDOR: NOMADIC SOCIETIES AND IMPERIAL RULE IN THE INTER-WAR SYRIAN DESERT

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RUNNING THE CORRIDOR: NOMADIC SOCIETIES AND IMPERIAL RULE IN THE INTER-WAR SYRIAN DESERT*

Divide and rule looms large in the study of the modern Middle East, and it is not difficult to see why. Between 1914 and 1923 its political map was transformed. The web of provinces and districts of Ottoman Greater Syria now lay divided between the mandatory regimes of Great Britain and France. Our histories of the region often reflect these arrangements, written in terms of 'a series of episodes', and centred on the units that became nation states.[1] But for all the insights this perspective can provide, it sits uneasily with at least two phenomena of growing interest to historians: the record of British imperial activity, on the one hand, and the fate of the region's nomadic societies, on the other.

Before oil became a byword for Western involvement in the region, it was communications that formed the essence of Britain's interest in the Middle East. Between the two world wars a profusion of new overland routes were opened between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf: a Cairo–Baghdad air mail, trans-desert motor services, a planned desert railway and a valuable oil pipeline. By the 1930s the Syrian Desert itself seemed on the verge of being transformed from a hostile 'natural barrier' into a communications highway. Enthusiasts foresaw 'a new great route to the East', a successor to the maritime revolutions of Vasco da Gama and Ferdinand de Lesseps. Commentators, statesmen and colonial officials alike began to talk of a 'desert corridor' of the British empire.[2]

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[1] As Peter Sluglett has observed: see his 'Formal and Informal Empire in the Middle East', in Robin W. Winks (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, v, *Historiography* (Oxford, 1998), 421–2.

[2] The Royal Central Asian Society (established in 1901) was captivated by Britain's new empire in the Middle East, and monitored these developments closely. 'The cutting of the Suez Canal', one member reported, 'seemed to administer the final *coup de grâce* to the Syrian Desert route', but with the advent of aviation and car

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To many contemporaries, it was British ingenuity and agency that made this desert corridor. Landing grounds, chains of petrol dumps and the tracks left by motor cars were read as symbols of imperial labour, etched onto a timeless desert landscape. For one correspondent to the London *Times*, the trans-desert air mail and car convoy were for ever 'things apart, foreign, outside the lives of the inhabitants . . . The tribesman of the Syrian Desert watches the motor-convoy pass; it is not of his world, merely a special sort of dust storm on the horizon'.[3] But imperial innovation was not the whole story, and while historians often acknowledge the importance of route-building to empire, few pause to consider its local implications. The British officers tasked with developing trans-desert routes were only the most recent arrivals in an area that had been connected and traversed for centuries. The networks they maintained across the corridor were layered on top of, even drawn by, pre-existing and dynamic patterns of mobility and exchange. Some desert officers appreciated this; most, blinded by that 'special sort of dust storm', did not.[4]

This article explores the relationship between indigenous, colonial and pre-colonial connections across the inter-war Syrian Desert. The aim is to establish how far talk of a 'desert corridor' acquired an administrative reality, to rethink boundary-making in the modern Middle East, and to consider the role of desert zones, like oceans, as meaningful political, social and cultural units in the imperial and global past. British desert officers 'ran the corridor' in both senses of the term. Responsible for maintaining new communications routes, they were plunged into a world already in motion.

At first glance, however, the inter-war Middle East seems an inauspicious setting for exploring these problems. The First World War, and the protracted diplomacy that followed, had created a patchwork of new political entities. Most historians accept the 'devastating' impact of these arbitrary post-war boundaries.

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convoys, 'unexpectedly the Syrian Desert route has once more snatched the palm of speed from its rivals': review of Christina Phelps Grant, *The Syrian Desert: Caravans, Travel and Exploration*, in *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xxiv (1937).

[3] 'Motor-Cars in the Orient: The Middle East on Wheels', *Times*, 9 Aug. 1929, 11: Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, Ralph Bagnold MSS, B6.

[4] 'To the map reader and the air passenger', one desert surveyor later reflected, 'Sinai seems no more than a bridge joining the continents; to some 10,000 Arabs it is their home': G. W. Murray, 'The Land of Sinai', *Geographical Jl*, cxix (1953), 140–2.

At a stroke, the argument runs, a functioning regional economy was cleft into a series of national ones. Nowhere have these lines in the sand been thought more destructive than among the Bedouin. Boundaries cut through tribal territories and split grazing areas. Customs regimes and passport controls disrupted seasonal migration and trade. And when two governments disagreed, 'the bedouin, caught in the middle, became pawns in international politics'.[5] The result, we are told, was a landscape incompatible with the practice of nomadic pastoralism.

This argument gained much currency at the time. It bracketed nomads as a 'vanishing race', doomed to disappear in a closing world.[6] Yet aspects of this narrative have proved remarkably impervious to revision. Historians can still write of the necessary conflict between 'straight lines on a map' and 'the ancient rhythms of nomadic life'.[7] Moreover, for all that we think we know about post-war boundary-making, we have surprisingly few concrete studies of its impact. Some scholars have reasoned that political borders 'might be expected' to encapsulate and sedentarize nomads, but in lieu of closer analysis the claim remains as much theory as fact.[8] In general, and unlike the sophisticated literature on Indian provinces and cities, there are few local studies of Britain's 'moment' in the Middle East, while the field of 'border studies' itself remains overwhelmingly concerned with early modern Europe, post-colonial Africa and the US–Mexico border.[9] Middle Eastern boundaries may well have

[5] Joseph M. Hiatt, 'State Formation and Encapsulation of Nomads: Local Change and Continuity among Recently Sedentarized Bedouin in Jordan', *Nomadic Peoples*, xv (1984), 5.

[6] St John Philby, for example, reported the 'stereotyping of boundaries' to be 'a revolutionary development . . . contrary to the Badawin sentiment of countless ages': H. St J. B. Philby, 'A Survey of Wahhabi Arabia', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xvi (1929), 471. Only 'civilized' agricultural societies were thought capable of comprehending and working with delimited frontiers: C. B. Fawcett, *Frontiers: A Study in Political Geography* (Oxford, 1918), 25; Eliahu Epstein, 'The Bedouin of Transjordan: Their Social and Economic Problems', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xxv (1938), 229.

[7] John C. Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert* (London, 1991), p. xi; David E. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919–1939* (Manchester, 1990), 92.

[8] Ghazi Falah, *The Role of the British Administration in the Sedentarization of the Bedouin Tribes in Northern Palestine, 1918–48* (Durham, 1983), 11.

[9] As Sluglett notes in his 'Formal and Informal Empire in the Middle East', 429. For border studies, see Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (Oxford, 1999), 49; A. I. Asiwaju, 'Borderlands in Africa: A Comparative Research Perspective with Particular Reference to Western Europe', in

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been drafted by aloof statesmen in distant capitals; their enforcement, however, fell to local officials whose work we are yet to explore.

This article begins by trying to assess how porous the region's borderlands remained, comparing theories about nomadic migration with the evidence that survives. The second part brings imperial movement and nomadic movement within the same framework of analysis, to see what effect, if any, each had on the other. Section III asks how far the Syrian Desert persisted as a discrete zone of activity, and whether we were right to be so dazzled by those new boundary lines on the map.

I

NOMADS, NATIONS AND EMPIRE

'For a nomad', the travel writer Bruce Chatwin once wrote, 'political frontiers are a form of insanity'.[10] And before we rush into revisionism, it is worth acknowledging that the inter-war years were indeed disruptive ones for the region's pastoral nomads. Nomadic concepts of territoriality had been more concerned with the use of resources and patterns of allegiance than with fixed, exclusive boundaries, and tribal autonomy was challenged as never before. Governments' resolve to monopolize desert authority had disrupted camel raiding, a means of redistributing wealth and of rebuilding herds that had been weakened by drought.[11] Prohibition of *khuwwa* also reduced tribes' income from passing travellers and caravans.[12] Across the Syrian Desert, fears of Saudi expansion and Ikhwan raiding parties prevented pastoralists from gaining access to the best grazing areas,

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Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju, *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (Edinburgh, 1996), 253.

[10] Bruce Chatwin, 'The Mechanics of Nomad Invasions', *History Today*, xxii (1972), 330.

[11] The classic study of the economics of raiding is Louise E. Sweet, 'Camel Raiding of North Arabian Bedouin: A Mechanism of Ecological Adaptation', *Amer. Anthropologist*, lxvii (1965).

[12] Widely translated as 'blackmail' or 'protection dues', *khuwwa* is perhaps better understood as a payment made to strong Bedouin groups by those 'wishing to opt out of the economy of raiding': Anthony B. Toth, 'Last Battles of the Bedouin and the Rise of Modern States in Northern Arabia, 1850–1950', in Dawn Chatty (ed.), *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century* (Leiden, 2006), 52–3.

damaging herd numbers further. While statistical evidence for the inter-war years is sparse, one detailed study of the Bedouin economy concludes that 'the overall picture is rather grim'.[13]

Nonetheless, there remain a number of issues that complicate the prevailing picture of dismemberment and dislocation. The first surrounds the problematic tendency to examine imperial activity in the region through the prism of 'state-building'. Thus, a 'central goal' of British imperialism in Iraq, for example, is held to have been to build 'a liberal, modern, sustainable state'; in Transjordan, meanwhile, officers allegedly worked to 'integrate [the Bedouin] within the fold of the nation-state'.[14] This cause may have resonated with some officials, but it did not hold true for all.[15] As we shall see, those most involved in tribal policy were often more concerned with managing movement across the region than with the making of citizens. So rather than hold them to a standard that they might not have recognized, we may gain more by exploring British relations with the steppe on their own terms.

A second problem lies in assuming the frailty of Bedouin society: that to change one aspect of nomadic life would spell the collapse of the whole. This idea, too, was common enough at the time. New borders, many officials believed, would make migration impossible, and new technologies, like the motor car, would 'steadily' deprive the Bedouin 'of his means of livelihood'.[16] But this surely overlooks Bedouin capacity to work with inter-war realities — even to turn them to their advantage. A feature common to borderlands everywhere, one global survey suggests, has been 'the efforts of people to use, manipulate, or avoid the resulting border restrictions'.[17] After all, Bedouin

[13] Anthony B. Toth, 'The Transformation of a Pastoral Economy: Bedouin and States in Northern Arabia, 1850–1950' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 2000), 302.

[14] Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (London, 2003), p. xii; Joseph A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York, 2001), 57.

[15] As Sluglett has shown, the temporary nature of the Iraq mandate and Britain's supposed duty to prepare its people for independence were 'considerations which seem only rarely to have had any profound influence on determining administrative policy': Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country, 1914–1932* (London, 2007), 272.

[16] Major C. S. Jarvis, *Arab Command: The Biography of Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Peake Pasha* (London, 1942), 132.

[17] Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands', *Jl World Hist.*, viii (1997), 214–15.

conceptions of *dira* (tribal territory) were concerned with the command of people and resources: it was seldom seen as immutable.[18] If anthropologists have spent the last thirty years working adaptability and change into their very definitions of nomadism, historians could do worse than revisit the past with this in mind.

Thirdly, we should not assume that the emergence of states between the wars was necessarily hostile to Bedouin interests, or treat nomads and states as diametrically opposed 'types'. Such an interpretation is a very recent one: there is a long tradition in the social sciences, not least in the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, of examining nomads as active agents in state formation.[19] Nomads may even have been peculiarly well placed to exploit the obscured sovereignty and complex dynamics of rule in a colonial context.

A final problem lies in exaggerating the speed and impact with which these boundaries took root in the first place. There is a sense in which their impression on us as historians (inured to images of Hadrian's Wall and Offa's Dyke) far exceeds that felt at the time. Syria's borders were not fixed definitively before 1930; that with Transjordan was only demarcated in 1932. The Sinai frontier dated from 1906, but the concrete pillars marking it out were spaced up to ten kilometres apart.[20] Over time the weather, passing traffic and local populations could render frontier cairns all but indistinguishable.[21]

All this means that once we shift our attention from the familiar, urban seats of power to the desert borderlands that state-centric approaches can obscure, evidence of evasion, overstretch and the permeability of borders is not hard to find. War, certainly, profoundly dislocated the Bedouin livestock trade. In 1913 Egypt imported some 33,000 camels from across Northern Arabia, a trade worth £12,000–£16,000 a year that all but

[18] 'Indeed', the anthropologist Ugo Fabietti observes, 'the members of a group are often the first to consider their territory as having been acquired to the detriment of other groups at some point in history': see his 'Control and Alienation of Territory among the Bedouin of Saudi Arabia', *Nomadic Peoples*, xx (1986), 34.

[19] As explored in contending special issues of the journal *Nomadic Peoples*: M. A. Mohamed Salih (ed.), *Perspectives on Pastoralists and the African States*, *Nomadic Peoples*, xxv–xxvii (1990), editor's intro.; Georg Klute (ed.), *Nomads and the State*, *Nomadic Peoples*, xxxviii (1996), editor's intro.

[20] Major C. S. Jarvis, *Yesterday and Today in Sinai* (1931; London, 1941), 66–7.

[21] P. A. Clayton, 'The Demarcation of the Western Frontier', 8 Dec. 1937: The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), FO 141/630/30.

ceased during the Sinai and Palestine campaigns of the First World War.[22] Lesser conflicts continued to disrupt Bedouin trade across the inter-war years. A gradual shift in herd composition towards sheep, with their shorter grazing range, also suggests the impact of customs barriers in curtailing Bedouin economic freedom.[23]

But it does not follow that transnational patterns of mobility were instantly or irrevocably circumscribed: legitimate Bedouin trade in livestock did persist across Northern Arabia. Freedom of grazing and nomadic migration was written into all major boundary agreements in the 1920s. These terms were assiduously observed by local frontier officials, even to the point of risking conflict with demands from the centre.[24] The Howeitat from Transjordan, for example, made increasing use of the livestock market at Beersheba, and still drove herds to the eastern periphery of the Nile Delta in search of buyers.[25] Officials of Egypt's Frontier Districts Administration recorded 'a considerable *va et vient*' across the Sinai peninsula each year, as herds grazed in Transjordan in spring and returned to market each summer.[26] Other important *musabilah* relationships — seasonal Bedouin journeys to buy staples and sell livestock — may have been altered

[22] T. C. Macaulay, 'Note on the Problem of the Sinai Frontier', 10 July 1920: TNA, FO 141/443; Toth, 'Last Battles of the Bedouin and the Rise of Modern States in Northern Arabia', 65. Some 85,000 camels may have been commandeered by the Ottoman army from southern Palestine alone in 1915–16: William Ormsby-Gore, 'Agriculture and Supplies in Palestine', n.d. [Jan. 1917]: TNA, FO 141/668/2.

[23] Dawn Chatty, *From Camel to Truck: The Bedouin in the Modern World* (New York, 1986).

[24] As we shall see below. On the Transjordan–Nejd frontier, Articles 4, 12 and 13 of the 1925 Hadda Agreement and Article 9 of the 1933 Treaty of Friendship and Bon Voisinage guaranteed freedom of grazing, *musabilah* and passage for trade. These agreements are reproduced in *Trans-Jordan Annual Report for 1934*, n.d. [1935]: TNA, CO 831/32/9.

[25] Joseph Ben-David and Gideon M. Kressel, 'The Bedouin Market: The Axis around which Beer-Sheva Developed in the British Mandatory Period', *Nomadic Peoples*, xxxix (1996).

[26] C. Warner, 'Note on Information Given Orally by Major Jarvis', 28 July 1932: TNA, FO 371/16016. This was corroborated by that rising star of geography Cyril Daryll Forde, then working on his landmark text *Habitat, Economy and Society: A Geographical Introduction to Ethnology* (London, 1934), who counted 'thousands . . . driven annually from Arabia, through Sinai, to the Egyptian markets' in the early 1930s: C. Daryll Forde, 'The Habitat and Economy of the Northern Arabian Badawin', *Geography*, xviii (1933), 216.

between the wars, but many remained in operation: Nejdi Shammar and Harb tended to come to Samawah and Zubair in Iraq, the Dhafir approached Samawah, Nasiriyah or Suq ash Shuyukh, while the Mutair, Ajman and Awazim traded at Zubair and in Kuwait.[27] A recently discovered report paints a picture of a million 'Anaza camels grazing over a 'vast triangle' in the early 1930s, straddling multiple states and trade routes (as well as the pipeline then under construction).[28] One French officer, mapping such 'transhumance' for 1934, found it spilling not only over national borders but also beyond the confines of his map sheet.[29]

If herd sizes tended to diminish between the wars, this was as much the role of drought and political unrest in disrupting grazing patterns as the supposed fatal impact of boundaries themselves.[30] Even then, large herds remained commercially viable in Iraq, for example, up to the outbreak of the Second World War.[31] By the calculation of one of the more pessimistic observers of nomadic prospects, Egypt imported an average 28,000 camels a year in the 1930s: down on pre-war figures, certainly, and out of step with population growth, but not as drastic a contraction as some would have had us believe.[32] This is to say nothing about the vast quantities of contraband that continued to pour across national boundaries, both in terms of resilient older trades, and as a response to the opportunities created by imbalances between newly national markets.[33] On reflection, it seems much more

[27] H. R. P. Dickson, *Kuwait and her Neighbours*, ed. Clifford Witting (London, 1956), 267.

[28] Gerald de Gaury, *Review of the 'Anizah Tribe*, ed. Bruce Ingham (Beirut, 2005), 9, 16–19. See also Gerald de Gaury to Political Resident, Bushire, 16 Aug. 1938: British Library, India Office Records, L/P&S/12/2082.

[29] Lieutenant de Sauvagnac, deputy inspector of Bedouin tribes, Damascus–Palmyra, 'Rapport de la transhumance', 25 Nov. 1934: Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, fonds Beyrouth, série Cabinet politique (hereafter CP) 991/35.

[30] By Glubb's calculation, a 'disastrous' drought in 1933–6 reduced Transjordan's camel herds by as much as two-thirds: J. B. Glubb, 'Monthly Report on the Administration of the Trans-Jordan Deserts [hereafter TJDR]: September 1937', 1 Oct. 1937: TNA, CO 831/41/11.

[31] Toth, 'Transformation of a Pastoral Economy', 131–4.

[32] Eliahu Epstein, 'Correspondence: The Economic Situation of the Trans-Jordan Tribes', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xxvi (1939), 179. Russell's higher estimate was for 30,000 camels passing through Qantara alone from the east 'in normal years': Sir Thomas Russell Pasha, *Egyptian Service, 1902–1946* (London, 1949), 275.

[33] 'Smuggling', the Royal Central Asian Society were told, may be Transjordan's 'main industry', for its frontiers 'could hardly have been better designed for the evasion

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likely that trans-desert motor and air services created a new passenger market, or competed with existing maritime routes, than that they displaced the camel trade, at least within the inter-war period.[34]

There was some continuity with the pre-war years, therefore. But to characterize nomads' trans-border movements as conforming to 'ancient rhythms' is to miss the point. Some Bedouin excelled at turning new political boundaries to their advantage: boundaries could be transformative without being destructive. Bedouin testimonies to this effect are hard to find; for the most part, their voices reach us through the colonial archive. Yet for all the problems of cognitive bias that its use implies, the effort to listen remains worthwhile.[35] Some shaykhs quickly perceived the disruptive potential of international boundaries and set about finding ways of working around them. Between 1920 and 1927, for example, the powerful shaykh Nuri al-Sha'lan negotiated to

(n. 33 cont.)
of guards': Marcus Mackenzie, 'Transjordan', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xxxiii (1946), 263. Indeed, desert contrabanding (in livestock, arms, specie and narcotics) warrants a study of its own. It increasingly preoccupied colonial authorities across Britain's desert corridor, from the Sinai peninsula to the hinterland of Kuwait, generating a rich paper trail. See, for example, D. J. Wallace [Frontier Districts Administration, Egypt], 'Anti-Contraband Work', in *Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau Annual Report for 1929*: TNA, FO 371/14764; H. R. P. Dickson, 'Note on the Contraband Problem of Iraq with her Neighbours, and in particular How It Affects Kuwait', 30 May 1933: Brit. Lib., India Office Records, R/25/2/532. For the sake of clarity this article refers to 'smuggling' throughout, though of course 'one person's smuggling can be another's legitimate trade — and may have been so for a very long time': Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1925* (New Haven, 2005).

[34] Toth, 'Transformation of a Pastoral Economy', 121. In many desert communities, the impact of mechanized transport was not felt until the 1960s: Chatty, *From Camel to Truck*.

[35] As David Omissi observes, even imperial perceptions did not develop 'entirely independent of reality': officers were, after all, earnestly keen to comprehend (and control) their charges: Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*, 108. Through careful reading of police reports, records of tribal disputes and arbitrations, intelligence summaries, contraband statistics and memoirs of service, historians have found it possible to begin to reconstruct a Bedouin perspective: Johann Büssow, 'Negotiating the Future of a Bedouin Polity in Mandatory Syria: Political Dynamics of the Sba'a-'Abada during the 1930s', *Nomadic Peoples*, xv, 1 (2011); Yoav Alon, 'Silent Voices within the Elites: The Social Biography of a Modern Shaykh', in Amy Singer, Christoph K. Neumann and Selçuk Akşin Somel (eds.), *Untold Histories of the Middle East: Recovering Voices from the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Abingdon, 2011); Robert Fletcher, 'The 'Amārāt, their Shaykh and the Colonial State: Patronage and Politics in a Partitioned Middle East', forthcoming in *Jl Econ. and Social Hist. of the Orient*.

enable the Ruwala 'to graze unhindered over all Northern Arabia', while others were 'cramped into artificial borders which the jealousy of their rulers forbade them to leave'.[36] From Riyadh, Ibn Saud perceived a vast 'bedouin world' which was his to control, while the political visions of the Hashemites, the Al-Sabah of Kuwait, Fahd Ibn Hadhdhal of the 'Amarat and Nuri al-Sha'lan could be equally expansive.[37] Other Bedouin, less pre-eminent but no less savvy, seized the chance to move across boundaries and switch political allegiance in pursuit of camels, arms and money.[38] The Dahamshah, for example, made the Iraq–Nejd frontier a tool in a bid for greater independence of Ibn Hadhdhal's authority, playing off the two governments against each other for the best part of a decade.[39] As smugglers, nomads embraced the changed commercial environment to form new patterns of exchange and supplement their income.[40] As pastoralists and raiders, too, they found that boundaries presented opportunities as well as inconvenience. One British intelligence officer described as endemic the Bedouin practice of shuttling across frontiers, declaring allegiance so as to evade taxation. And in 1929 his colleagues fumed at the 'impudence' with which 'raiders [into Iraq], having recrossed the

[36] Glubb to F. G. Peake, 'Intelligence Report', n.d. [1931]: TNA, CO 831/13/11. An agreement between the leading sections of the 'Anaza confederation in the 1925–6 grazing season further facilitated their migration: Cuthbert Dearlove to Air Staff Intelligence, 14 Jan. 1926: TNA, AIR 23/293.

[37] Glubb to Peake, 4 Apr. 1931: St Antony's College, Oxford, Middle East Centre Archive (hereafter MECA), John Bagot Glubb Collection (hereafter JBG), 7(208)/1; Dickson, *Kuwait and her Neighbours*, ed. Witting, 271.

[38] As one section of Iraqi Dhafir heading for Nejd explained to a British Special Service Officer in Iraq in 1927, 'we are going for what we can get': E. J. Howes to Air Staff Intelligence, 2 May 1927: TNA, AIR 23/305.

[39] De Gaury, *Review of the Anizah Tribe*, ed. Ingham, 24–5.

[40] This was especially valuable as livestock prices collapsed during the Great Depression. The British governor of the Sinai peninsula, for example, calculated that a ten-pound load of contraband hashish was 'all that [an Arab] need carry to make a handsome profit': C. S. Jarvis, 'The Drug Smugglers of Egypt', *Cornhill Mag.*, clvi (1937), 588, 604. In similar circumstances, smuggling by nomads mushroomed in Iran in response to new state monopolies on foreign trade, opium and tobacco: Stephanie Cronin, 'Resisting the New State: The Rural Poor, Land and Modernity in Iran, 1921–41', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa* (London, 2008), 161. It still goes on among Bedouin today. Suffering from a drop in tourism in the wake of the first Gulf War, some Zalabia in Jordan's Wadi Rumm resorted to running drugs to Saudi Arabia: Géraldine Chatelard, 'Desert Tourism as a Substitute for Pastoralism? Tuareg in Algeria and Bedouin in Jordan', in Chatty (ed.), *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa*, 727.

Nejd frontier, and relying upon their immunity from pursuit in virtue of Article 6 of the Bahra Agreement, halted in the open and, within easy reach of British aircraft, proceeded to the distribution of their loot'.[41] Viewed from the perspective of local desert officers, it was sometimes imperial power, not Bedouin mobility, that was frustrated by political boundaries.

II

AN INTERSTITIAL EMPIRE

Over the course of the inter-war years, two different forces were at work mitigating the new boundaries between Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq. First, Britain's imperial routes to the East, and its resolve to control the zones through which they passed, imposed a supra-nationalism from above. Secondly, indigenous patterns of mobility and exchange, notably the migration, raiding and trade of Bedouin communities, applied regionalist pressures from below. These two types of mobility are seldom examined in tandem. Their intersection, however, is what made the desert corridor a distinct historical space. We could demonstrate this process with reference to any number of flows: Bedouin raiding and dynastic conflict, the camel trade and smuggling, overland pilgrimage and the displacement of refugees, all drew discrete officialdoms in their wake. Space allows examination of just two such processes in detail.

The first suggests the pre-colonial origins of new trans-desert routes: the links, so to speak, of Britain's desert corridor. At a fundamental level, knowledge of former routes encouraged local officers to look beyond national boundaries and consider the corridor as an area in its own right. The physical remains of reservoirs and wells along the former Damascus–Baghdad caravan route influenced the projected course of the trans-desert railway, just as Baghdad's past as 'a great trading centre' fed hopes of its commercial viability.[42] Such awareness of the desert as an ancient hub obscured the fact that some new links (between west and east) ran perpendicular to older caravan flows (between

[41] Lord Monteagle (Foreign Office) to H. G. Jakins (Acting Consul, Jiddah), 27 Mar. 1929: TNA, AIR 23/51.

[42] Major [A. L.] Holt, 'Some Journeys in the Syrian Desert', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, x (1923), 181, 186.

north and south). What seems to have mattered more was the vague sense of the desert as 'an inland sea', washing the shores of neighbouring polities, and with implications for how 'nautical' Bedouin should be governed.[43]

Existing patterns of connection and exchange shaped imperial route-building in more concrete ways too. Take, for example, the most famous of the overland motor services: the Nairn Motor Company. Founded and staffed by ex-servicemen from across Britain's settler colonies, the company seemed to embody imperial activity and toil.[44] But it owed much to the initiative and advice of Hajji Muhammad Ibn Bassam, a shaykh of the Ruwala and an experienced merchant. In 1918 Britain's Arab Bureau learned that Ibn Bassam had been contracting for the Ottomans on a large scale, running caravans laden with cloth, sugar, coffee and petroleum from Kuwait, across the Syrian Desert, to Ottoman forces in Damascus and Medina.[45] By 1922 he was still running contraband between Damascus and Baghdad, this time gold, selling it in Iraq at substantial profit.[46] The nature of his cargo set a premium on quick passage through sparsely populated areas, and early in 1923 he began to experiment with using motor cars via Deir ez-Zor and Rutbah. By April, when the Nairns made their first reconnaissance of the route, Ibn Bassam was in a position to act as their host, supplying the Bedouin guides that made the trip possible.[47] Between May and August the company explored a number of alternative routes, but 'the wisdom of old Ibn Bassam in choosing the original route over which he led us was fully justified'. The company relied on it heavily thereafter.[48]

[43] Major J. B. Glubb, 'The Bedouins of Northern Iraq', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xxii (1935), 28–9.

[44] For press cuttings relating to the 'Nairn way', see MECA, Nairn Transport Company Collection.

[45] 'Traffic between Damascus and Koweit', *Arab Bull.*, lxxxvi (21 Apr. 1918), 129.

[46] In the 1920s Ibn Saud was also believed to have been getting a great deal of his Syrian news from Ibn Bassam, and that 'a good deal of Turkish ammunition . . . arrived in Nejd from the same source': *Arab Bureau: Notes on the Middle East*, iv (24 May 1920), 119–20.

[47] D. McCallum, 'The Discovery and Development of the New Land Route to the East', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xii (1925), 44–54; John M. Munro, *The Nairn Way: Desert Bus to Baghdad* (Delmar, NY, 1980), 36–7.

[48] McCallum, 'Discovery and Development of the New Land Route to the East', 50. For a share of the company's profits, Ibn Bassam also undertook to protect its earliest convoys, providing each one with a *rafiq* (guide) familiar with the route.

In Egypt imperial car patrols also depended on a web of pre-colonial caravan routes. Wartime experience had proved these to be 'almost invariably' the best route between water supplies, grazing grounds and important locations. Each one worked as a navigational aid, but the whole formed 'a network of lines which can be made to serve as a substitute for the conspicuous features and identifiable landmarks' in which new officers found the environment so deficient. Following these afforded drivers 'a great sense of confidence in travelling across unknown tracts of country'.[49] Even in the arid 'wastes' of empire, it seems, movement was not dictated by strategy alone.

If the links in Britain's desert corridor owed much to local usage, then so too did its nodes: the new geography of police outposts, forts and patrols that sustained imperial communications. In 1930 Air Vice-Marshal Playfair explained how desert outposts should be sited to square the demands of supply and 'tactical distance' with the movements of Bedouin themselves. To collect information quickly, posts should be 'on grazing grounds frequented by Bedouin, also near the main caravan routes, where a friendly atmosphere can be formed between the occupants of the posts and the Bedouin in the area'. Anything too far from a water supply 'would be avoided by the Beduin' and hence 'useless' as an intelligence centre.[50]

Thus, the posts at Azraq and Bair in Transjordan were 'admirably placed from an intelligence point of view', commanding the major trading, raiding, car and camel routes. The old Ottoman fort at Mudawara, meanwhile, was 'admirably situated for obtaining information from tribes moving from the West to the South East'.[51] Each of these posts also picked up rumours from across the border, from Kaf and Syria (Azraq), Jauf (Bair) and the Hejaz (Mudawara).[52] At times, such attention to the channels of

[49] Claude H. Williams, *Report on the Military Geography of the North-West Desert of Egypt*, n.d. [1919]: TNA, WO 33/2831. See, further, C. H. Williams, *Desert Memories: A Record of Incidents and Impressions Gathered during Three Years Patrol Duty in the North-West Desert of Egypt* ([London], 1920), 15: Imperial War Museum, London, Department of Documents, C. H. Williams MSS, 1447.

[50] Patrick Playfair, 'A Report on the Siting of Desert Intelligence Posts in Transjordan', 20 June 1930: TNA, CO 831/10/1, enclosed in Chancellor to Passfield, 26 June 1930.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] J. B. Glubb, 'Note on Policy for the Control of the Trans-Jordan Deserts', 19 Nov. 1930: TNA, CO 831/10/2, enclosed in Chancellor to Passfield, 20 Dec. 1930.

grazing, raiding and trade even trumped those of more familiar imperial assets. When the Iraq Petroleum Company wanted Desert Patrol headquarters relocated to one of their pumping stations, their request was turned down flat: the station was stuck in the middle of a lava field, 'where no Arab ever has any call to go'.[53]

Location, however, was not all. Many an outpost was designed with indigenous flows in mind, receiving, interpreting and retransmitting information. The desert forts of Transjordan's Desert Patrol were not only built to withstand siege and improve the rifleman's field of fire: 'There was also the *Majlis*, or Council Chamber, where passing Bedouins drank the bitter coffee . . . offered to them in exchange for gossip . . . Anything that happened within a radius of 100 miles . . . was certain to be reported sooner or later'.[54] In encouraging this, John Glubb, the commander of Transjordan's Desert Patrol, was adapting established principles. In 1924 he had set up traditional white guest tents outside Iraq's Abu Ghar fort (itself a former bazaar) to welcome passing travellers and build a map of tribal locations.[55] Later, he specified that the Desert Patrol use the distinctive tents of the Aqail: long-range merchants, exempt from the raiding economy, their tents had a covered, shady space for sharing news over coffee.[56] Other Special Service Officers improvised something similar, hosting desert hunting expeditions as 'one of the best means of obtaining . . . information'. Time was of the essence in running the desert corridor, and news sent by wireless from among the tribes could arrive two to four days faster than by courier.[57]

[53] Azraq, instead, was 'the only place from which to feel the pulse of, and control, the whole district and its tribes': J. B. Glubb, 'TJDR, March 1934', 4 Apr. 1934: TNA, CO 831/29/1.

[54] James D. Lunt, *The Arab Legion, 1923–1957* (London, 1999), 52. Glubb's desert fort blueprints survive in Glubb, 'Note on Policy for the Control of the Trans-Jordan Deserts'.

[55] Sir John Bagot Glubb, *War in the Desert: An RAF Frontier Campaign* (London, 1960), 144; J. B. Glubb, 'Final Report on Defensive Operations against the Akhwan, Winter 1925–6', 18 May 1926: TNA, AIR 23/302.

[56] J. B. Glubb, 'Note on Tentage for the Desert Patrol', n.d. [1930]: MECA, JBG, 7(208)/1. See also Daryll Forde, 'Habitat and Economy of the Northern Arabian Badawin', 216.

[57] 'The Role of Special Service Officers in the Air Intelligence Organization', *Roy. Air Force Quart.*, ii, 1 (Jan. 1931), 55–7; E. L. Ellington, memorandum, 2 June 1928: TNA, FO 371/12994.

Bedouin use of the landscape, as much as its topography and terrain, shaped the infrastructure of British steppe control.

Recent scholarship has stressed the centrality of information-gathering to the conduct of imperial rule.[58] As the disposition of desert forts and outposts suggests, it was key to how the corridor was run too. But exploring the relationship between empire and information can also uncover lost patterns in the past, and restore otherwise marginalized groups that specialized in its provision.[59] For the desert officers of Britain's inter-war empire, the Bedouin were one such community. Sidelined in many a national narrative, their importance to this imperial undertaking was out of all proportion to their numbers.

European travellers often dismissed the desert as a 'waste', but it was an information-rich environment, and the Bedouin a pronounced knowledge community. The complex factional rivalries of the steppe set a premium on information. To succeed, Bedouin raiding parties had to obtain accurate information about their targets, while masking their own intentions.[60]

What was true in war was equally true in peace. Bedouin pastoralism depended on weighing all manner of political, economic and environmental information. Grazing conditions and water sources, networks of *khuwwa*, protection and patronage, and the likely market conditions at the end of a season, all had to be considered in advance of moving the herd. Responding to changes in these conditions, too, required 'a complex and far-flung network of social relationships'. As such, the customs of desert hospitality were not simply a means of relieving

[58] The landmark work is C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996). For the Middle East, see Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914* (Berkeley, 2008). For a review of recent trends in this literature, see Tony Ballantyne, 'Colonial Knowledge', in Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford, 2008).

[59] As Christopher Bayly's studies of India have shown, there were some whose trades generated peculiar information, and some polities that were 'constituted to an unusual degree through their networks of espionage and information collection': C. A. Bayly, 'Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India', *Mod. Asian Studies*, xxvii (1993), 5.

[60] Glubb, 'Bedouins of Northern Iraq', 20. In 1929 Glubb gained first-hand experience of the use of *nadisa* (spies), *sabr* (reconnaissance parties) and *nidhir* (pickets) during defensive tribal operations on the Iraq–Nejd frontier: J. B. Glubb, 'Control and Employment of Nomad Tribes in Desert Warfare', n.d. [1929]: MECA, JBG, 1(203)/3.

boredom: they encouraged travellers to share their news.[61] All this gives the lie to that well-worn stereotype of the rootless, aimless, 'wandering' nomad. In truth, pastoral nomads tend to have a very *fixed* sense of place, their livelihood depending on exploiting to the full the scanty resources and opportunities of a given area or territory.[62] Other regional powers had recognized this before: Muhammad Ali and the Ottoman empire, we now know, coveted nomads' networks and skills.[63] In Bedouin eyes, wrote Gertrude Bell, the open steppe was 'set thicker with human associations than any city'.[64]

It was this understanding that Britain's desert officers sought to tap. The routine work of desert administration depended on Bedouin co-operation. In general, officers relied on the networks of news and gossip around the Bedouin *mudif* (guest tent) to gather intelligence and relay information between the government and the tribes. This proved 'of inestimable value' during the Ikhwan Revolt of the late 1920s, though hardly cheap (with fifty or sixty guests a night, the hospitality bill soon ran up).[65]

Crucially, the Bedouin's trans-border skills were in particular demand, not least because they could go where desert officers, formally at least, could not. It was Bedouin informants who kept British officials in Egypt updated on the fortunes of Italian rule in

[61] Emanuel Marx, 'The Political Economy of Middle Eastern and North African Pastoral Nomads', in Chatty (ed.), *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa*, 91; Daryll Forde, 'Habitat and Economy of the Northern Arabian Badawin', 218.

[62] As the anthropologist Hugh Brody has put it, viewed globally and over the *longue durée*, it is agricultural societies that have been most on the move — a fact no student of the British world could deny: Hugh Brody, *The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers and the Shaping of the World* (New York, 2001), 7.

[63] Reuven Aharoni, *The Pasha's Bedouin: Tribes and State in the Egypt of Mehemet Ali, 1805–1848* (London, 2007); Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees* (Seattle, 2009); Thomas J. Barfield, 'Tribe and State Relations: The Inner Asian Perspective', in Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (London, 1991), 153. In India, too, it is interesting that so-called 'tribals' had been an equally rich source of environmental, political and military information: Bayly, 'Knowing the Country', 16–17. This reflects a broader trend in the new scholarship of tribes and states to stress how the two have productively coexisted, particularly in the Middle East: Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, 'Introduction: Tribes and the Complexities of State Formation in the Middle East', in Khoury and Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, 16–19; Marx, 'Political Economy of Middle Eastern and North African Pastoral Nomads', 90.

[64] Gertrude Lowthian Bell, *The Desert and the Sown* (London, 1907), 60.

[65] Glubb, 'Control and Employment of Nomad Tribes in Desert Warfare'.

Libya, just as conferences between tribesmen from Transjordan and Iraq allowed Special Service Officers to eavesdrop on their 'desert talk', from Saudi intentions in Northern Arabia to the attitude of the imam of Yemen.[66] Disruption to desert entrepôts like Zubair, meanwhile, instantly 'restricted the transmission of intelligence news', and could leave British officialdom blind.[67]

In return, and like many border communities, the Bedouin were well placed to exercise leverage over the state, profiting from the arrangement in a number of ways.[68] At a basic level, evidence of tribal co-operation dampened British enthusiasm for settling the tribes on the land: there was a guarded acknowledgement of the advantages of mobility. This certainly seems to have been the calculation made by some frontier officials in Egypt who, in their thirst for information on events in Libya, were inclined 'to keep [Egypt's] deserts as full of Arabs as [they] will support'. As intelligence providers, a 'protective fleet' and a potential source of 'virile' recruits, they reasoned, Egypt acquired 'greater value from its tribesmen than any it can get by their settling'.[69] Other Bedouin profited in more personal ways, whether by government subsidies, land grants, tax breaks or offers of exemption from conscription.[70] Generally, officers

[66] A. W. Green to E. A. T. Bayly, 27 Dec. 1926: TNA, FO 141/465/6; R. M. Doster to Air Staff Intelligence, 10 Aug. 1927: TNA, AIR 23/295.

[67] R. Jope-Slade to Air Staff Intelligence, 23 Feb. 1929: TNA, AIR 23/48. See also G. C. Kitching to Kinahan Cornwallis, 7 July 1925: TNA, AIR 23/19. In the 1930s the Italians in Libya went to extreme lengths to disrupt trans-border flows, erecting a barbed-wire fence along the length of the Egyptian border. This damaged Bedouin mobility and British intelligence in equal measure: Foreign Office (Egyptian Department) to Cairo Residency, 19 Mar. 1931: TNA, FO 141/691/16.

[68] For a theoretical overview of tribal 'choices' and 'strategies' in the face of an active government, see Richard Tapper, 'Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East', in Khoury and Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, 66–7. See also Paul Nugent, 'Arbitrary Lines and the People's Minds: A Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa', in Nugent and Asiwaju, *African Boundaries*, 49.

[69] W. E. Jennings-Bramley to Egyptian Ministry of War, n.d. [Sept. 1926], and W. E. Jennings-Bramley to Residency, note on Burg el-Arab, 24 Aug. 1926: both in TNA, FO 141/514/5.

[70] Some of these aspects have been drawn out before, though often with reference to a single, national polity. For Bedouin attempts to guarantee their exemption from conscription by mobilizing memories of their 'loyalty' to Britain, see Bedouin petition to Lord Allenby, 2 Sept. 1922: TNA, FO 141/514/5. For a case study of tenurial policy, see Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, appendix 2, 'Tenurial and Taxation Arrangements in 'Amara Liwa under the Mandate'. Official subsidies and recognition were a real boost in some cases (tribal political hierarchy did not inherently confer authority over law and order), but redounded to the disadvantage of others.

(cont. on p. 202)

found that imposing 'foreign laws' on the Bedouin produced only 'non-cooperation', and so were at pains to work within the provisions of Bedouin customary law as far as possible. As versions of so-called Desert Law were encoded in Egypt's desert provinces, Transjordan's 'Desert Area' and Iraq's Southern Desert, sensitive frontier zones adjacent to imperial communications routes were effectively removed from the jurisdiction of national elites.[71] This both bucked the trend of the inter-war years, and outweighed reservations over the more 'mediaeval' customary provisions.[72] In that sense, the very structures of British desert administration can be seen as the result of a temporary, conditional alignment of British and Bedouin resources, information and interests.

Viewed together, the Bedouin's 'pulsatory nomadism', moving as grazing and water allowed from the desert fringe in summer to the desert proper in winter, imparted a seasonal rhythm to Britain's conduct in the steppe.[73] In high summer, when tribes had returned to the riverain zone, an officer might spend 'considerable sums on Desert agents' and yet obtain 'little information'.[74] That changed with the autumn rains. For the next five or six months desert grazing and raiding augured an increased secondment of personnel and the refusal of grants of leave; the forward movement of police, armed forces and supplies; the deployment of wireless equipment and the issuance of new codes; increased paperwork for Residency clerks; more hearings for tribal courts. In time, the very names that Britons had first inscribed on the landscape gave way to local usage, a sign both of officers' initial disorientation and of the role of Bedouin

(n. 70 cont.)
The Dahamshah, for example, incensed at the favour bestowed on Fahd Ibn Hadhdhal, felt snubbed by the government of Iraq: de Gaury, *Review of the 'Anizah Tribe*, ed. Ingham, 24–5.

[71] Major J. B. Glubb, 'Relations between Arab Civilization and Foreign Culture in the Past and To-day', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xxiv (1937); Russell, *Egyptian Service*, 68–71; Austin Kennett, *Bedouin Justice: Law and Customs among the Egyptian Bedouin* (Cambridge, 1925), 139.

[72] 'Although the rules of evidence are of the simplest and the evidence often of the flimsiest', the commander of Transjordan's Arab Legion noted in 1929, 'yet shoals of complainants apply for their cases to be heard by... the new Bedwin Control Board': F. G. Peake, 'Memorandum on Causes Underlying Racial Troubles in Palestine', 11 Sept. 1929: TNA, FO 371/13754.

[73] For an overview of the concept, see A. S. Goudie and J. C. Wilkinson, *The Warm Desert Environment* (Cambridge, 1977), 67–72.

[74] H. A. Haines, 'Report of a Tour in Southern Desert by SSO Nasiriyah, 3/8/29–12/8/29', 18 Aug. 1929: TNA, AIR 23/306.

collaboration in making a 'vacant', arid space a peopled, knowable place.[75]

Understanding Britain's desert corridor means being open to these patterns and flows, and treating the area on both sides of a border as a single unit of analysis. It is not enough to revisit narratives of state-building in Egypt or Transjordan or Iraq. The workings of British desert administration were felt in the territory of each country, but the thing itself was the clear product of none: this was empire in the interstices. Officers relied on trans-border arrangements that were informal, ad hoc and ambiguous. Their power flowed in the spaces between nations; it is obscured by a state-centred approach.

The attempts to curb smuggling across the Sinai frontier offer a good example of this process at work. At first, the British units responsible for frontier control struggled to keep pace. While their jurisdictions were bounded by national frontiers, smugglers benefited from tribal networks and organizations that pre-dated international boundaries. The response was to increase police powers, invest in communications technology and mechanized desert patrols, and, most of all, to develop 'private arrangements' between different officialdoms on either side of the frontier. Before long, officers were using their new powers and personnel to act as if boundaries did not exist, arresting smugglers, exchanging information and intercepting Bedouin parties without reference to the national governments they nominally served.

Some measures had formal sanction, but below the radar, far from the sight of high commissioners and Whitehall, much depended on the personal networks built between frontier officials. By means of 'a purely private arrangement' between the governors of Sinai and Gaza and the inspector of police in Jerusalem, Egyptian patrols could chase raiders and smugglers as far as the Wadi Araba.[76] Officials of Egypt's Frontier Districts Administration in the west, and of Transjordan's Arab Legion in the east, came to act, in the words of one officer, as 'next-door neighbours . . . [seeing] more of each other than do many of the suburban residents of outer London', and bridging multiple administrative systems in the process. They developed a 'special and

[75] Roderic Hill, *The Baghdad Air Mail* (London, 1929), 89–90; Williams, *Report on the Military Geography of the North-West Desert of Egypt*; Major A. Prain, 'Trans-Jordan Air Survey: Progress Report for April, 1934', 2 May 1934: TNA, CO 831/28/9.

[76] C. S. Jarvis to Owen Tweedy, 25 June 1924: TNA, FO 141/813/20.

quite unofficial system of extradition', and used camel patrols, armed cars and aeroplanes to co-operate on arrests and share information.[77]

A similar system evolved to adjudicate tribal raiding disputes. Local officers were anxious to pre-empt tribal conflict along sensitive communications routes, but soon discovered that using diplomatic channels meant much confusion and delay. So, once again, they improvised. Private arrangements, direct wireless communication and the granting of 'more elastic powers' to local police facilitated co-operation in trans-border affairs.[78] That, after all, had been the lesson of one protracted, frustrated attempt to arbitrate claims between Nejdi and Transjordanian tribes:

> If more weight were given to the tribal and less to the international aspect of the case, if dynastic antipathies were not allowed to give what is really a social and economic problem an interstate character . . . If for the foreign judicial or arbitrarial authority was substituted the existing suitable 'ad hoc' machinery of tribal procedure, there would . . . be a chance of dealing with the matter in an appropriate way.[79]

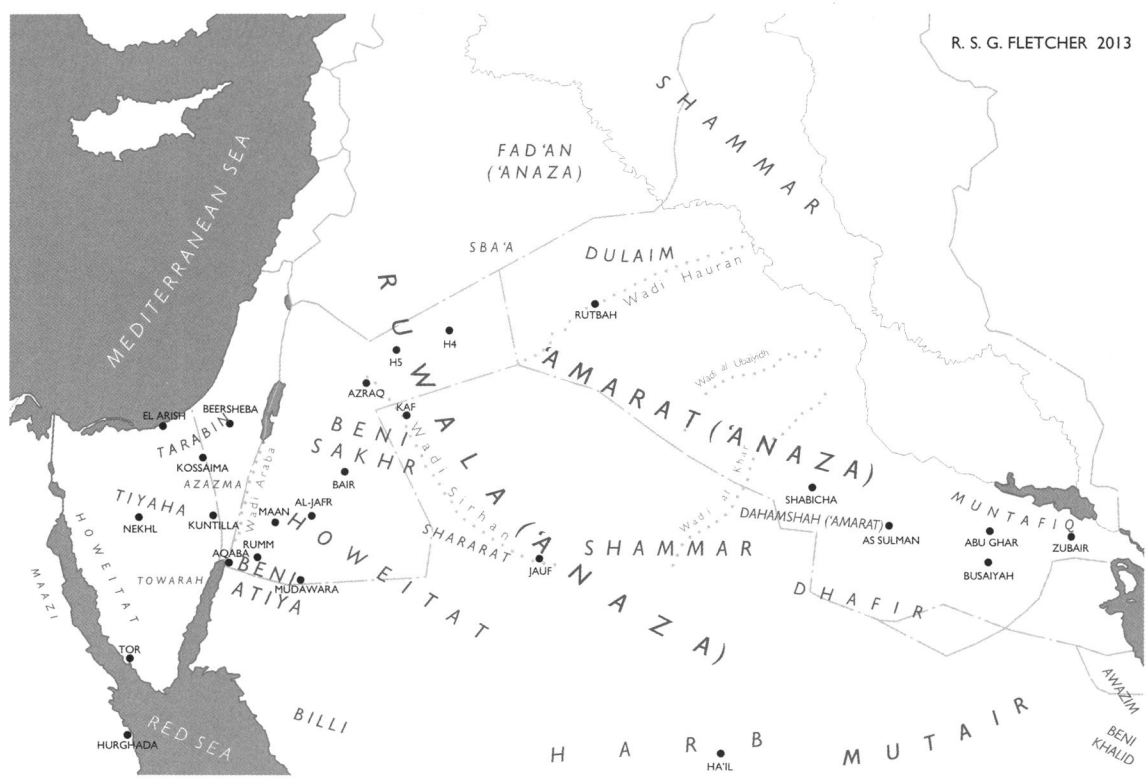
To focus too much on formal summits between states is to lose sight of how the corridor was run, by its officials and its subjects alike.

Once we are alive to these ad hoc connections, the arid 'gaps' between the familiar seats of power — Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman and Baghdad — can be reimagined as a unit in their own right, a British nexus of information, communications and control, shadowing patterns of Bedouin migration, raiding and trade (see Map). Through exclusive networks that spanned national frontiers, desert officers sought to set the terms of regional mobility. Ironically, at a time of rising anti-colonial nationalism, it

[77] Jarvis, *Arab Command*, 5, 113.

[78] John Chancellor to Leo Amery, 31 May 1929: TNA, CO 831/5/1; Air Vice-Marshal Dowding, 'Report on the Raiding Situation on the Transjordan–Nejd Frontier', n.d. [Jan. 1930], enclosed in Chancellor to Passfield, 25 Jan. 1930: TNA, CO 831/7/8; J. B. Glubb, 'Meeting with the Palestine Police', 13 Mar. 1933: MECA, JBG, 7(208)/3.

[79] M. S. MacDonnell, 'Note on the Hedjaz–Nejd and Transjordan Frontier Question, and Suggestions for Settlement of Claims', 17 Jan. 1931: TNA, CO 831/12/1. The MacDonnell arbitration, in John Glubb's eyes, cost the Transjordan government £P2,000 but 'failed to produce any result': Glubb to Sir Alec Kirkbride, 19 Aug. 1931: TNA, CO 831/11/5. The Colonial Office thought Glubb's assessment 'not quite accurate', but MacDonnell himself was pessimistic about its achievements: M. S. MacDonnell, report of the Trans-Jordan–Nejd Arbitration Mission of 1930, 17 Jan. 1931: TNA, CO 831/12/1.



THE DESERT CORRIDOR, *c.*1930. WINTER GRAZING GROUNDS AND DESERT OUTPOSTS

could be said that British influence was deepening on the frontiers of many of these states, even as it was retreating from the centre. For British personnel anxious to keep a grip over sensitive frontiers and communications routes, the emerging infrastructure of desert control was of peculiarly imperial advantage: watching, policing and moving through zones on either side of the national boundary. As they developed closer relationships with Bedouin tribes, engaging them as agents, informants and police, British officers came to rely on their movements for all manner of sensitive information: the politics and personalities of Ibn Saud's regime, the prospects of rebellion in Palestine and the Hejaz, troop numbers and movements, environmental forecasts of the grazing situation, economic intelligence on herd conditions. In the fluid circumstances of the First World War, British forces had run agents through Sinai, Palestine and Greater Syria. Their post-war successors did not simply continue to bridge those boundaries: much of their influence and power flowed from doing so.

Were the boundaries between British and French territories necessary fault-lines in this informal system? British officers certainly felt that trans-border arrangements ran smoothest when their men worked both sides. Post-war mistrust was hard to shake, and Anglo-French co-operation inconstant. But this makes the surviving evidence of connection all the more striking, as agreements, practices and ideas spilled across imperial frameworks.[80] If only mutual suspicion could be overcome, wrote Syria's head of the Service de Renseignements, then it might be possible to reach a common agreement over tribal subsidies, raiding and *khuwwa* across all mandatory territory.[81] New technologies of desert control, moreover, respected boundaries even less. By the mid 1930s Saudi frontier officials also had recourse to a growing network of armed cars, desert forts, car tracks and wireless telegraphy. By 1934 John Glubb felt he could communicate better across the Saudi frontier than with parts of British

[80] Relations were particularly fraught on Transjordan's northern frontier, but even here co-operation was possible. Thieves carrying tools from the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline, for example, were tracked to the Syrian frontier and intercepted with the help of the French adviser in Salkhad — 'a gratifying piece of frontier cooperation': J. B. Glubb, 'TJDR, December 1933', 4 Jan. 1934: TNA, CO 831/23/15.

[81] Captain Mortier to Head of the Service de Renseignements, Levant, 4 Mar. 1926: Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, CP 988/11.

Palestine.[82] Some areas, the British had learned, were 'so closely connected in trade and grazing' that political borders were simply inconvenient. Desert administration was an 'art' that governments across the Syrian Desert had all had to learn.[83]

III

DIVIDE AND RULE REVISITED

For the European diplomats who had split the Ottoman empire into partisan spheres of influence, the process was imbued with its own noble qualities. Boundary-making was the key to lasting peace, a chance to acknowledge rising political stars. It was over fixed borders that all 'civilized' states managed their interactions. 'The less rigidly each party is confined to its future territory', wrote one colonial surveyor, 'the greater will be the prospect of future occasions of quarrel'.[84] For the distant consul, army chief or metropolitan clerk, trans-border nomadism was a messy inconvenience, filled with potential for instability.[85]

But the officers tasked with enforcing these boundaries took a much more expansive view of things. Take, for example, Sinai's eastern border. A 'separating administrative line' between Egypt and Ottoman Palestine had existed since 1906. But when the time came to make this more concrete at Versailles in 1919, the British delegation, led by Arthur Balfour, faced a revolt from the junior officers of Egypt's Frontier Districts Administration. The frontier, they complained, was 'quite arbitrary'. It bisected Tarabin, Tiyaha and Ahaywat territories, vastly complicating their police work. It ran across the trade routes of the Azazma, and left Beersheba, an important node in the Egyptian camel market, under a different jurisdiction. Instead, they wanted their authority to stretch from the Canal, over the Negev, to the Wadi Araba and the Dead Sea. The advantages to tribal control and imperial

[82] J. B. Glubb, 'TJDR, February 1934', 28 Feb. 1934, and 'TJDR, July 1934', 3 Aug. 1934: both in TNA, CO 831/29/1.

[83] Glubb, 'Bedouins of Northern Iraq', 30; [J. B. Glubb], 'The Iraq–Nejd Frontier', *Jl Roy. Central Asian Soc.*, xvii (1930), 88–9, 92.

[84] Ernest Dowson to Residency, 22 Apr. 1920: TNA, FO 141/525/1.

[85] For instance, Sir Gilbert Clayton to Colonial Office, 5 Nov. 1925: TNA, AIR 5/397; GHQ Cairo to GHQ Baghdad, 28 Feb. 1922: TNA, AIR 23/800. More definite boundaries for the new mandates were 'desirable, for diplomatic reasons, if not for practical purposes of administration': *Military Report on Transjordan*, n.d.: TNA, AIR 23/797.

communications were obvious and, significantly, went hand in hand. 'Such a line', urged Sinai's governor, 'would give to Egypt all the Arab tribes up to the Wadi Araba' and would control 'all the passes . . . into Sinai . . . [It] is a good geographical and tribal line'.[86]

Wiring from Versailles, Balfour refused to press the point, fearing it would alienate Jewish support for a British mandate in Palestine.[87] Yet the anti-smuggling campaign on the Sinai frontier shows how the officers charged with effecting new boundaries improvised ways of working across them, as if they had got their way all along. This clash of outlooks resounded along the length and breadth of the corridor. Harold Dickson in Kuwait, for example, was never reconciled to the 1922 boundary line, which disrupted tribal links with Iraq and Nejd.[88] John Glubb never forgave the Foreign Office for granting Nejd the Wadi Sirhan, part of the grazing grounds of the Transjordan tribes. He locked horns with London over the issue thereafter, and urged its reoccupation should Ibn Saud's power ever falter.[89] In every case, officers vented their frustration at how boundaries hamstrung their work. Before long, most were prepared 'to turn the Nelson eye to technical infringements'.[90] Unite and rule, informally at least, was the order of the day.

This changed how officers felt about nationality and territoriality; it might change how we historians think about them too. Notionally, mandatory officials were all signed up to harmonize 'dissonant elements' and build 'common nationality' in each would-be nation state. Reports to the League of Nations burst with lip-service to these ideals, 'making' the Bedouin into

[86] A. C. Parker to G. G. Hunter, 27 Feb. 1919: TNA, FO 141/664/8. It was also 'the only satisfactory line of defence' for the Suez Canal: Allenby to Balfour, 16 Apr. 1919: TNA, FO 141/664/8. On the establishment of Egypt's Frontier Districts Administration in 1917, General Allenby had intended that, 'owing to the similarity of conditions' in Sinai and the 'trans-frontier district' beyond, there should be 'ample room for that reciprocity of action and similarity of method which the circumstances demand': Allenby to Sir Reginald Wingate, 9 Aug. 1917: TNA, FO 141/783.

[87] Balfour to Allenby, 26 Mar. 1919, 15 Apr. 1919: TNA, FO 141/664/8.

[88] Dickson, *Kuwait and her Neighbours*, ed. Witting, 272–80. Dickson thought the articles permitting the free movement of nomadic tribes to be the essential provisions of the Treaty of Muhammerah and Uqair Protocol, and did his best to see them honoured. See also Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers*, 143–58.

[89] Glubb to Kirkbride, 19 Aug. 1931: TNA, CO 831/11/5; G. W. Rendel (Foreign Office) to K. W. Blaxter (Colonial Office), 4 Dec. 1931: TNA, CO 831/11/6; J. B. Glubb, 'A Note on the Wadi Sirhan Question', n.d. [1934]: MECA, JBG, 209/9.

[90] Godfrey Lias, *Glubb's Legion* (London, 1956), 102.

'productive' members of territorially bounded communities.[91] But many frontier officers, unhappy with post-war boundaries, saw no reason to prioritize the control of land over control of sets of people. The scene was set to rehearse an old dispute between the 'geographical' and 'tribal' basis of society.

In 1932, with unrest across the border with Saudi Arabia, frontier officials in Transjordan were asked to investigate the applicability of nationality to nomadic tribes. The first report, by the commanding officer of Transjordan's Arab Legion, accepted that 'nationality in its European sense' applied to individuals, but saw 'no reason' why it could not also apply to whole tribes, according to the country in which they did most of their grazing. Thus, for Transjordan's southern frontier, the Beni Sakhr were clearly a Transjordanian tribe, but the Beni Atiya, complicit in the recent unrest, were not.[92] So far, so conventional. Yet a second report took the unusual step of submitting a dissenting note, so forcefully argued as to overshadow the commanding officer's recommendations. Tribal nationality, it insisted, could not readily be fixed. It was 'a false and dangerous criterion' that discounted broader ties of custom and tradition, and the demands of seasonal migration. Moreover, it was 'almost impossible to turn back a nomadic tribe in the course of its migration without the use of force and the shedding of blood', and this the British position in the desert could not survive. 'The whole idea of nationality for Bedouin tribes', the report urged, 'should be completely discarded'. Far better 'to mete out exactly the same treatment to all Bedwin disturbers of the peace . . . regardless of "Nationality" ', and to foster co-operation between governments so that, wherever a tribe went, comparable legal arrangements would shadow them.[93] This view led some officers into unorthodox praise of their Ottoman forebears. They, at least, had brought 'all the tribes comprising one confederation under one administrative rule'.[94]

[91] For example, HMSO, *Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of 'Iraq, October 1920 to March 1922* (London, 1922).

[92] F. G. Peake, 'Suggestions for Determining the Nationality of Bedwin Tribes', enclosed in High Commissioner, Palestine, to Philip Cunliffe-Lister, 10 Sept. 1932: TNA, CO 831/17/9.

[93] Glubb to Peake, 20 Mar. 1932, enclosed in High Commissioner to Cunliffe-Lister, 10 Sept. 1932: TNA, CO 831/17/9.

[94] Dickson, *Kuwait and her Neighbours*, ed. Witting, 205.

None of this stopped British officers from going back on their principles, evicting the Beni Atiya from Transjordan when the interests of stability demanded. But this single act (which some came to regret) stands in contrast with how many desert officers had come to treat the steppe.[95] 'Government', John Glubb declared, 'is a central force intended principally to compel people to conform to certain rules . . . It is therefore principally concerned not with land, but with persons'. Because territorial boundaries were unsuitable to nomads, government had to move, connect and adapt, following the Bedouin 'wherever they go'.[96] Britain could no more prevent their migration than it could shoot down refugees, or Canute turn back the tide.[97] Tolerating trans-border grazing defused tension and alleviated the difficulties of rule. To do otherwise risked resistance or tribal flight, neither outcome being in the imperial interest.[98]

Bedouin movement underpinned the mechanics of Britain's presence in the steppe: its intelligence, its pathways, its generous (if anomalous) legal provisions. Even those who favoured a more familiar concept of nationality acknowledged nomads' value 'as potential sources of information' on trans-border events.[99] All this made 'the only solution of the nationality question . . . to be to bar the use of that word'.[100] As studies of other borderlands have shown, colonial officialdom played its own part in the frustration of official boundaries. And because the Bedouin were not

[95] Even then, the eviction only succeeded because 'from the grazing point of view the southerly move was a perfectly normal one. Had it been attempted . . . when the tribe is naturally moving northwards, it would possibly have failed': J. B. Glubb, 'TJDR, November 1932', 7 Dec. 1932: TNA, CO 831/23/13; J. B. Glubb, 'Memorandum on the Beni Atiya Situation', 12 Oct. 1932: TNA, CO 831/17/11; J. B. Glubb, 'TJDR, March 1933', 31 Mar. 1933: TNA, CO 831/23/13.

[96] J. B. Glubb, 'Annual Report on the Administration of the Southern Desert': TNA, CO 730/168/8.

[97] J. B. Glubb to Kirkbride, 'Activities of Beni Atiya', n.d. [1931]: TNA, CO 831/13/2. Charles Terrier of the Contrôle Bédouin also discerned a nomad 'patriotism' of custom and kinship that rendered territorial boundaries irrelevant: Charles Terrier, 'Essai de législation bédouin', n.d. [Oct. 1924]: Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, CP 986, dossier Bédouin.

[98] D. J. Wallace to Residency, 14 Mar. 1921: TNA, FO 141/525/1.

[99] Jope-Slade to Air Staff Intelligence, 'Situation Report: Southern Desert', 27 Jan. 1928: TNA, AIR 23/34.

[100] J. B. Glubb, 'TJDR, February 1933', 28 Feb. 1933: TNA, CO 831/23/13.

citizens but subjects, such flexibility 'posed no great philosophical problems'.[101]

Common as it is to decry imperial instincts 'to demarcate "tribes" by their geographical distribution', therefore, the truth was more complex.[102] Few desert officers saw in the Bedouin a threat to national modernity that had to be territorialized. If anything, there was something profoundly unmodern in their outlook. It was national elites and urban merchants, not the mandatory regimes, who sought tariffs and barriers to defend small, protected markets.[103] It was national rulers who disliked nomads moving freely between different markets for the loss of revenue that resulted.[104] Similarly, it was Egyptian politicians who opposed improving desert links with Palestine, for fear of competition with State Railway revenues.[105] Colonial frontier officials, in contrast, remained wary of impediments to movement that might aggravate the Bedouin. As Ibn Saud's deputy foreign minister once stressed, when it came to the question of tribal nationality, it was his Saudi colleagues, not the British, who seemed to embrace 'European ideas'.[106]

IV

CONCLUSION

This article began with a familiar portrait of the Middle East, dismembered by colonial fiat, carved up by lines drawn boldly in the sand. But it did so with reservations: about the need to examine imperial objectives closely, to acknowledge nomadic

[101] Nugent and Asiwaju, *African Boundaries*, 5, 9 (intro.). See also Baud and van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands', 230.

[102] Martin Thomas, 'Bedouin Tribes and the Imperial Intelligence Services in Syria, Iraq and Transjordan in the 1920s', *Jl Contemporary Hist.*, xxxviii (2003), 543.

[103] Frank Peter has explored the tension between emerging 'national' industries in Damascus and 'French efforts to undo the harm caused by the partition of the [Ottoman] empire': Frank Peter, 'Dismemberment of Empire and Reconstitution of Regional Space: The Emergence of "National" Industries in Damascus between 1918 and 1946', in Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett (eds.), *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspective / Les Mandats français et anglais dans une perspective comparative* (Leiden, 2004).

[104] H. R. P. Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert*, 3rd edn, ed. Robert Wilson and Zahra Freeth (London, 1983), 12.

[105] Major C. S. Jarvis, 'Roads in Egypt: A Strategical Necessity. The Camel's Empire Challenged', *Times*, 26 June 1939.

[106] Record of the sixteenth meeting of the Saudi–Transjordanian Treaty of Bon Voisinage, 4 May 1933: TNA, FO 371/16864.

agency and the limits of colonial power, and to look again at how boundary formation actually played out on the ground. In a sense, an imbalance has developed in the literature that needs to be redressed. If anthropologists have worked to overturn tired, determinist portraits of nomadic societies, we need to extend the same treatment to the concept of 'the state'. In his book *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott suggested that the state 'has always seemed to be the enemy of people who move around, to put it crudely'.[107] The complex relationship between nomads and British rule here suggests something even more ambiguous. There are problems in implying, as have real authorities on the Bedouin, that tribal policy exhibits 'hardly any difference' between 'Ottoman overlords', 'European colonial rulers' and the modern 'development experts' that have followed.[108]

By the early 1930s a distinctive blend of British interests and Bedouin mobility had lent the desert corridor a dynamic of its own. Its peoples and practices, rhythms and timetables, straddled the region's nation states. Subzones of pasturage, raiding, pilgrimage and trade had, of course, long existed across the Syrian Desert, but this was not a story of straightforward continuity. Imperial and regional currents of mobility intersected, leaving neither unchanged.

To rediscover the Syrian Desert as an arena in its own right, historians may have to take their cue from an altogether different element: the sea. As practitioners of the 'new thalassology' have found, it is sometimes necessary to invert scholarly conventions, so that neglected political peripheries can be reread as regional cores.[109] Seas and oceans are now widely perceived as loci of global history: might thinking in terms of deserts and arid zones be an equally meaningful way of approaching the imperial and global past?

Britain's desert officers certainly thought so. Their reports were packed with allusions linking the desert and the sea. Yet imperial vocabularies of desert 'pirates', 'ports' and 'fleets' can reveal more about the rhetorical justifications of rule than the realities of

[107] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1998), 1.

[108] Marx, 'Political Economy of Middle Eastern and North African Pastoral Nomads', 88.

[109] Kären Wigen, 'Introduction: Oceans of History', *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, cxi (2006), 720.

desert life. Maritime rhetoric, it would seem, underwrote British authority on even the most arid frontiers of empire.[110] There are other reasons, too, to pause before treating deserts as oceanic 'spaces', as virtual seas. Their histories diverge in a number of ways: the more habitable nature of the steppe, the presence and absence of nomads, the differing social and economic conditions that shape patterns of movement. Not all seas are Mediterraneans, not all deserts Saharas; we lose sight of the specificity and contingency of connections by eliding both into a vague vocabulary of 'mobility' and 'space'. In likening the Syrian Desert to a vast sea-lane, Glubb grossly exaggerated its freedom of movement. In more reflective moods, he knew full well that conditions of grazing and rainfall could render nomads 'almost as immobile as the city of Baghdad'.[111]

And yet, for all this, certain methods and concepts of oceanic history can be put to use in recovering other arenas and configurations in the past. At heart, the 'new thalassology' emphasizes 'integration over homogeneity': the best work treats oceans not as normative, but as constituted by particular, shifting, conditional patterns of connection.[112] Physical geography ('natural facts')[113] played a role in determining these, but arenas of interaction were built by human connections, and so can be found on land as well as at sea. As Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell acknowledge, the Mediterranean displays a 'unique concentration of factors that are not themselves peculiar to the region'. A density and variety of human connections across 'spaces of danger and

[110] English is replete with such metaphors, of course, but many officers looked to them for practical guidelines on maintaining British control of the steppe. 'Extreme mobility, initiative and enterprise' were seen to define both British maritime power and Bedouin desert supremacy. Both pasts, conflated, held 'valuable lessons' for the present. J. B. Glubb, 'Note on the Desert as a Field of Manoeuvre in History and Today', 3 Aug. 1941: MECA, JBG, 214/5. Examples of such thinking are legion, but for a sustained deliberation by an officer featured in this article, see *ibid.*

[111] J. B. Glubb, 'Self Defence by Iraq Tribes', 15 Jan. 1929: TNA, CO 730/140/8. The publication of James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, 2009) has provided a fresh stimulus for thinking about these problems once more: Jean Michaud, 'Editorial: Zomia and Beyond', *Jl Global Hist.*, v (2010), 207, 214.

[112] Wigen, 'Introduction: Oceans of History', 720.

[113] For a plea for centrality of these, see Richard Drayton, 'Maritime Networks and the Making of Knowledge', in David Cannadine (ed.), *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c.1760–c.1840* (Basingstoke, 2007).

variable communications', these should be the basis for undertaking 'a new historiography of large areas'.[114]

With these caveats in mind, historians can work with other large units, including deserts, to recover lost regions and to throw new light on old problems.[115] It may be particularly rewarding to do so when regions, like a 'desert corridor' of the British empire, have had an articulated, cognitive basis in the past.[116] Talk of our desert as a pirate-infested 'inland sea' may well have served imperial purposes. But it does suggest that officers both perceived and acted on circulations and connections that we would do well not to ignore.

'Bedouins', John Glubb complained, 'are nobody's children'; a narrowly national approach to their administration was doomed to fail.[117] The ideal jurisdiction, he went on, would not be territorial at all, but 'half nomadic', with 'the right to follow the Bedouin wherever they go, settling their disputes and controlling them, and, if necessary, camping in their midst'.[118] Within national boundaries, each desert administration did this in practice, either transgressing provincial lines or establishing new 'Desert Areas'. But, like the Bedouin they sought to govern, their jurisdiction could not simply stop at the border. Bedouin mobility produced cultural and customary similarities across great distances: the foundation of a comparable Desert Law. And it invited and required the British to reach out across those borders, along lines of grazing, raiding, smuggling and trade, so that the corridor took on administrative dimensions too. This strengthened the

[114] Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, 'The Mediterranean and "the New Thalassology"', *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, cxi (2006), 735.

[115] *Ibid.*, 722. For examples of how this might be done, alive to the similarities and interplay of desertic and maritime networks, see J. J. L. Gommans, 'The Silent Frontier of South Asia, *c.*AD 1100–1800', *Jl World Hist.*, ix (1998); J. J. L. Gommans, 'Burma at the Frontier of South, East and Southeast Asia: A Geographic Perspective', in J. J. L. Gommans and Jacques Leider (eds.), *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, c.1000–1800* (Leiden, 2002); Brent D. Shaw, 'A Peculiar Island: Maghrib and Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Hist. Rev.*, xviii (2003).

[116] Wigen, 'Introduction: Oceans of History', 719–20; Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 5, 30. For the role of culture in the social construction and negotiation of national borders, see Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*.

[117] Glubb, 'Memorandum on Iraq–Nejd Frontier Relations', n.d. [Nov.–Dec. 1925]: TNA, AIR 23/299; Glubb to Kitching, 5 June 1926: MECA, JBG, 1(203)/2.

[118] Glubb, 'Annual Report on the Administration of the Southern Desert'. See also Glubb to Cornwallis, 27 Dec. 1927: TNA, AIR 23/33.

process by which desert frontiers became sites of competition between local and metropolitan Britons, indigenous nationalists, royal courts and Bedouin tribes: not so much 'marginal' to national politics as hubs of rivalry in themselves.

To understand the full complexity of British activity in the Middle East, therefore, we need to imagine a new zone of activity, one residing not in the longitudinal axes of metropole and periphery, but in a shifting web of regional connections through its arid frontiers. As a zone of administrative practice, hopes for a united 'nomadic' administration never came to pass.[119] But some boundaries were disregarded, and others circumvented, by Bedouin agents, personal arrangements, police collaboration and trans-border communications. Officers defended the practice of working informally with one another, and shuddered at a future without such 'complete understanding'.[120] Britain's desert corridor was more than the backwoods of a number of nation states. It was an active zone in its own right, of which many more stories wait to be told.

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[119] Though some officers spent several months of the year in the saddle, camping 'wherever [the tribes] happened to wander': Dickson, *Arab of the Desert*, ed. Wilson and Freeth, 1. See also 'Role of Special Service Officers in the Air Intelligence Organization', 55–6.

[120] For one example among many, see George Lloyd to Austen Chamberlain, 23 Mar. 1928: TNA, FO 371/13147.