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The State in the Salt Marsh: The Conception, Construction, & Conquest of the Rann of Kutch

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Dear Reader,

We are excited to present the Eleventh Annual Acheson Issue, a special edition of YRIS dedicated to showcasing the best undergraduate international relations scholarship from Yale. This issue reflects our ongoing mission to recognize and celebrate exceptional work in the field of international relations, offering a platform for young scholars to contribute to important global discussions.

The Acheson Issue and Acheson Prize were established to honor the enduring legacy of Dean Acheson—a Yale alumnus and U.S. Secretary of State under President Harry Truman. Acheson's unwavering belief in active global engagement, his commitment to multilateralism, and his dedication to thoughtful, strategic scholarship were foundational to his approach to international relations. As we navigate the complexities of today's evolving global landscape, we draw inspiration from these core values, which continue to guide our philosophy as a publication.

We would also like to thank our incredible contributing authors who support our efforts at YRIS. Without their continued engagement, support, and trust in YRIS to review and publish their scholarship, we would not be the publication that we are today. Thank you for entrusting us with your scholarship and providing us the opportunity to report on the most critical global issues that you explore in your writings.

We would further like to thank our incredible Head Design Editor Estelle Balsirow and all the individuals who work behind the scenes at YRIS. With every piece we are able to publish, we are awed by the incredible writing, editing, research, and design talent that we have at our hands. We recognize the incredible privilege and support system we have as we deliver on our promise of sharing student scholarship through our online and print mediums.

Our 2024 Acheson Issue provides insightful takes on issues of international importance ranging from the ideas of national sovereignty after the wake of British imperialism to Somalia's self-governance through the lens of the telecom industry. In light of the ongoing changes to the world order, we hope that the work of our featured authors informs your understanding of how changes to the environment and economy can have immense implications for the international relations landscape.

Sincerely,
Beckett Elkins and Hailey Seo
Editors-in-Chief

DAEVAN MANGALMURTI

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Essays

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The State in the Salt Marsh: The Conception, Construction, & Conquest of the Rann of Kutch

Introduction

In 1965, India and Pakistan fought a four-day war over a patch of salty, barren territory populated by greater numbers of wild asses than men.

In the historiography of modern South Asia, that war has been left largely untouched. India and Pakistan have fought longer, blooding wars over relatively more hospitable bits of territory (as well as a glacier). Those wars—in Kashmir, in Bengal, in Punjab—have received the bulk of historians' attention (Gupta 1969; Grover and Arora 1998; Raghavan 2013).

Despite this historiographic neglect, the 1965 war in the Rann of Kutch was no mere skirmish. It was the penultimate event in a centuries-long dispute that demonstrates how the interaction of sovereignty with the natural world has been transformed as the world's dominant regimes have moved from kingdoms and empires to the modern nation-state (Scott 1998; Cederlöf 2013; Gardner 2021). That the long-running dispute over the Rann concerned a strip of land regarded by many visitors and administrators as an interminable waste, neither land nor sea, makes

its example deeply relevant to a world in which the boundaries between those two realms are increasingly blurry (Young 1839; Krishnamurthy Rao 1965; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

This thesis traces the history and evolution of the Rann of Kutch dispute over more than 200 years. The dispute traces its genealogy to early modern battles between Sindh and Kutch, the two political territories adjoining the Rann (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). Their animus was transformed by the bureaucratic apparatus of the British Raj into a decades-long exchange of maps and memoranda between Sindh and Kutch over where the jurisdictional divide between them lay. The dispute was finally concluded when India and Pakistan, after both diplomacy and war had failed them, accepted an international tribunal's verdict on the position of the border in 1968 (Khan 1998; Singh 1998).

"THE ANIMUS WAS TRANSFORMED BY THE BUREARATUC APPARATUS OF THE BRITISH RAJ INTO A DECADES-LONG EXCHANGE OF MAPS AND MEMORANDA..."

This paper was prompted by a conundrum: why would India and Pakistan go to war over a tract of desolate wasteland? Working through archival sources, legal arguments, and a diverse array of cartographic evidence, I offer an argument in two parts that forms the core of this paper.

First, I contend that the Rann of Kutch dispute endured because the modern nation-state demands the transformation of fuzzy pre-modern boundaries into hard borders satisfying the nation-state's requirement of a well-defined territory (Elden 2013). The final period of the dispute, which involved contestation between India and Pakistan, was driven by the need of both to completely constitute themselves as sovereign states. Second, I argue that border-making was frustrated in the Rann by its amphibious, barren condition. Border-making, which relied on evidence of state presence, could not be carried out in the Rann. The tract, with its sparse and transient population, lacked clear and uncontested evidence of state-imposed taxation, violence, or administrative jurisdictions (Frere 1870; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; Ibrahim 2004). India, Pakistan, and their predecessors attempted to escape this problem by imposing a cartographic and bureaucratically-defined reality on this complex ecological system, reifying it into categories that could be operated on by border-making practices. The attributes of the Rann that challenged attempts to extend sovereignty over its alien landscape presage the problems states will be forced to confront as they strive to preserve the tokens of sovereignty in an increasingly environmentally volatile world.

My arguments take as their starting point a landmark piece of international arbitration from the 1960s, the award of the Indo-Pakistan Western Boundary Case Tribunal. I intersect the arguments and claims made in that case with a diverse array of cartographic and qualitative evidence that makes the conceptual visualization of the Rann possible. In combining these disparate kinds of sources, I find that the dispute over the Rann, which was motivated by the most fundamental needs of the nation-state, proceeded inevitably from the environmental confusion that the Rann produces.

I arrive at this conclusion by bringing together legal claim-making, a strong proxy for the state's understanding of its own rules and authority, with cartographic depictions. The process of doing so required the analysis of an archive previously only considered for the tribunal I reference above, which traces the shifting representations of the Rann over two centuries through its cartographic and bureaucratic records. In the next section of this introduction, I lay out the specificities of this singular place to help shape an understanding of what, perhaps, the Rann of Kutch is, and why it has posed such a challenge to the modern state.

Setting

The Rann of Kutch encompasses two connected but differentiable ecological systems. The Little Rann of Kutch, a salt flat covering 2,000 square miles, is located entirely within the Indian state of Gujarat. The Great Rann of Kutch, a salt flat covering 7,500 square miles, transgresses the India-Pakistan border. The lion's share, 90%, is in Gujarat. The remaining 10% lies in the Pakistani state of Sindh (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; Raikar 2023). The Great Rann shares the Kachchh Rift Basin, a seismically active former seafloor, with the Kutch Peninsula, which bounds it on the south, and with the Little Rann, which bounds it on the southeast (Sorkhabi 2014; Thakkar and Kar 2017; Chauhan et al. 2021).

This paper is concerned exclusively with territorial disputes in the Great Rann. While disputes over the Little Rann were cited during the arbitration of the Rann of Kutch dispute, Pakistan and India never contested control of the Little Rann (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). Whenever I refer to "the Rann" in this account, I am referring to the Great Rann. The Rann is a flooded grassland biome covered mostly by sabkhas, alluvial salt, and mud flats(Glennie and Evans 1976; Olson et al. 2001). On account of its extreme salinity and seasonal inundation it is often described as a salt marsh. The salt flats are most expansive in the central and western Rann, often called the "white desert" in contemporary travel stories (Springer 2018; Patel 2021). The flat terrain is intermittently interrupted by bets or dhools, upraised "islands" where pasture and occasionally freshwater may be found (Burnes 1829; 1834; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). Four large bets cross the southern Rann from west to east: Pachham, Khadir,

Beyla, and Chorar. A chain of small bets runs north from Pachham to the part of Sindh called Pirol Valo Kun.

Every year, during the monsoon, the Rann is inundated by rainfall, inflow from rivers, and, in places, seawater (Glennie and Evans 1976; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968)3. The waters, which may be a foot or more deep, are shallower at the center of the Rann and deeper at the edges (Frere 1870). The largest river flowing into the Rann is the brackish Luni, which evaporates in the northeastern Rann after picking up salt and silt in the Thar Desert, which is also the Rann's northern border.

One genre of descriptions of the Rann focuses on its aridity and salinity, calling it a "barren waste, sandy desert, vast salt flats, salt desert, salt waste, salt impregnated alluvial tract." But the Rann, inundated for a large chunk of the year, is not a typical salt pan. A second genre calls the Rann a seabed, inland sea, lake, or gulf, emphasizing its aquatic qualities. Unlike any of these features, though, the Rann is arid for most of the year. A final genre characterizes the Rann as amphibious: "swamp, marsh, morass, salt marsh, salt water waste, mud and sand, marsh of alluvium." This category is closest to capturing the extreme duality of the Rann, but even then, the Rann lacks the clusters of low-lying vegetation typical of salt marshes (Tremenheere 1867; Frere 1870; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). It is, as the British adventurer Alexander Burnes said, "a tract without a counterpart in the globe."

Theory: Borders and Barriers

My argument for the close and intricate relationship between the state and its borders is founded on an expansive literature dealing with the emergence of the modern nation-state and its territory. In *The Art of Not Being Governed*, Scott writes that:

State power, in this conception [of the nation-state as the standard and nearly exclusive unit of sovereignty], is the state's monopoly of coercive force that must, in principle, be fully projected to the very edge of its territory, where it meets, again in principle, another sovereign power projecting its command to its own adjacent frontier. Gone, in principle, are the large areas of no sovereignty or mutually canceling weak sovereignties. (Scott 2009)

The period I study, from the 18th century into the late 20th, nearly traces the global transition from empires and kingdoms to nation-states. During this period, the overlapping legal and territorial landscapes associated with empire—characterized by a plurality of asymmetric relations between the sovereign and the governed—were replaced by relationships between the governed and the state that were defined in terms of an impersonal, not personal, sovereign state. That state was necessarily defined by its group (national) identity and its borders, which marked the limits of its territorial control. Elden describes the conception of

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territory that was born out of this transition into modernity as "a bounded space under the control of a group of people, usually a state" (Elden 2013).

The conception of sovereignty, specifically territorial sovereignty, articulated by Scott and Elden has manifested itself repeatedly in South Asia. During the colonial period, the East India Company and the British Raj both created the conditions for the rise of the modern nation-state, in their attempts to define the boundaries of their rule, and permitted the persistence of older forms of overlapping territorial and popular sovereignty (Cederlöf 2013; Chatterjee 2020). A close analogue to my work is Gardner's research on Ladakh, which traces the uneven march of a border across the Ladakh-Tibet frontier from the late 19th century through the 20th. Gardner argues in *The Frontier Complex* that:

The colonial state's use of geography became intimately tied to the particular demands of security and to the general process of making legible political territory. This increasingly close relationship between geography and the state reveals a major spatial reorientation of the modern period: a geopolitical vision that conceived of the world as a set of coterminous territories tied to, and dependent upon, geographical features. While the British Empire would ultimately fail to define its territorial borders in the northwestern Himalaya, it bequeathed to its successor nation-states a conception of political space that made borders objects of existential significance. (Gardner 2021)

Gardner's exhaustive analysis of border-making in Ladakh, and the tension between the ambiguities permitted under empire and the imperatives of postcolonial nation-states, maps closely to the process I describe in Kutch in this essay.
As in Ladakh, India and Pakistan found themselves the unhappy possessors of a territorially ambiguous situation in one of the least hospitable places in the world. From the British Raj into the post-independence period, all parties attempted to use the tools of geographic sciences to transfer the uncertain volatility of the Rann into forms of representation and data that could be understood and interpreted by the state. But even as British imperium and imperial science sought to make the Rann legible, the Rann frustrated their efforts through the simple fact of its environmental volatility. As was true in other shifting landscapes, like the delta of Bengal, it could not be easily categorized by the systems of territorial control to which the Raj or its successor states would be accustomed, and any attempt to reify the ecological system and place through maps, reports, or surveys was at odds with its shifting complexity (Bhattacharyya 2018; Dewan 2021).

This is not to say that the colonial project in the Rann was fully intentional. As Cederlöf notes, "There is a tendency at times to ascribe far more coherence of interest and institutions to a state in its daily practice than can be justified" (Cederlöf 2013). Rather,

the everyday attempts by agents of the Raj and of the precolonial kingdoms they succeeded to govern the Rann would be ultimately interpreted by India and Pakistan as attempts at imposing governance on an ungovernable place, largely by creating a vision of its reality that fit neatly on a map but did not necessarily fit neatly onto the ground. As Cederlöf outlines in 18th century Bengal, well into the 19th century, out of a combination of the permissiveness of empire and technological limitations to the assertion of control, a boundary in the Rann could be "a set of points… marking out territorial claims meant fortifying strategic strongholds such as heights or rivers bifurcations, or exercising authority by taxing

"DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD, THE EAST INDIA COMPANY AND THE BRITISH RAJ BOTH CREATED THE CONDITIONS FOR THE RISE OF THE MODERN NATION-STATE... "

market places" (Cederlöf 2013). My research demonstrates how, as they grew increasingly uneasy with their frictional frontier, the component parts of the Raj as well as the Raj's postcolonial successor states clung to such points and markers of authority in order to achieve broader control over an uncontrollable place. While the purposes for which borders were sought in the Rann were complex and multi-layered, they came over time, even during the Raj, to be regarded as essential to the functioning of the imperial components adjacent to the tract. Neither Sindh nor Kutch, nor Pakistan and India after them, could permanently tolerate a wide, liminal boundary between them. In pursuit of a border, "geographical science was employed to determine territory by attempting to rationalize and standardize boundary-making principles and practices… the resulting frontiers and borders were simultaneously physical spaces and spatial ideals that reflected a host of aspirations and anxieties of the state" (Gardner 2021).

The following thesis brings together a host of archival sources and materials to show that the process of border-making and the anxieties that accompanied it were an essential part of the historical transition into modernity. But these processes relied on ecological and geographical fantasies sustained only by the relative stability of the last three centuries. As we transition into

a new age of widespread climatic volatility, the underpinnings of the modern nation-state, especially its requirement for a clearly defined territory, will be called into question.

The Indo-Pakistan Western Boundary Case Tribunal, 1965-1968

In 1948, newly-independent Pakistan sent a diplomatic correspondence to newly-independent India complaining of hardship to Pakistani pastoralists as a consequence of uncertainty over the boundary between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch. In 1949, India responded with the assertion that there was no dispute and that the Rann fell firmly under Indian control. In 1954, shortly after it signed the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with the United States, Pakistan responded. Saying that "the boundary between Sind and Cutch from Sir Creek onwards has always been in dispute," Pakistan proposed that the boundary be demarcated, either by a conference, an arbitration, or India's acceptance of Pakistan's claim to the Rann north of the 24th parallel. India, in its 1955 reply, said that it would not accept a border anywhere besides the northern edge of the Rann (Krishnamurthy Rao 1965; Munshi 1998).

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After half a decade of further disagreement, the two disputants agreed to the Sheikh-Swaran Singh Agreement in January 1960. The Agreement provided a nebulous framework for the peaceful settlement of the border problem, saying that "detailed ground rules for the guidance of the Border Security forces along the Indo-West Pakistan frontier… will be put into force by both sides immediately" (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; Gupta 1969). Despite the Agreement, clashes intensified in the Rann after 1960, culminating in Pakistan's Operation Desert Hawk, a series of strikes on Indian military installations in the Rann, on 24 April, 1965. A ceasefire was declared on 28 April, but the conflict was not officially concluded until 30 June, 1965, when both parties agreed to submit the dispute for arbitration after the intervention of Harold Wilson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (Ahmad 1973).

The dispute was arbitrated by the Indo-Pakistan Western Boundary Case Tribunal, which operated from 1966–1968. The Tribunal was constituted by three judges: one nominated by India, one by Pakistan, and a chairman, after India and Pakistan could not agree on a candidate, nominated by the Secretary General of the United Nations. Prior to the start of hearings, delegations from India and Pakistan were permitted two months to visit each others' archives to collect evidence. Hearings before the Tribunal ran from 15 September, 1966 until 14 July, 1967. A draft award was proposed by the Tribunal in October 1967. The award was finalized on 19 February, 1968 (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

The Tribunal found itself fully in favor of neither India nor Pakistan. It awarded ninety percent of the Rann to India—all areas where the Raj had, affirmatively or by omission, accepted Kutch's claim. Ten percent, the areas where Pakistan had demonstrated sustained state activity originating from Sindh, was allotted to Pakistan. The verdict written by Gunnar Lagergren, Chairman, said:

A recognised and well-established boundary did not exist in the disputed region east of the Western Trijunction on the eve of Independence… Since the Rann until recently has been deemed incapable of permanent occupation, the requirement of possession cannot play the same important role in determining sovereign rights therein as it would have done otherwise. Therefore, special significance must be accorded to display of other State activities and to attitudes expressed or implied by one or several of the sovereign entities abutting upon the Rann in regard to the actual extension of their respective dominions. (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968)

In Lagergren's verdict, we see the problem at the root of the dispute exposed: without evidence of state presence, jurisdiction could not be determined in any conventional way. As I argue above and throughout the rest of this paper, the reason for this absence lies in the Rann's ecological complexity. To simplify it, India and Pakistan both conceived of and presented competing cartographic, bureaucratic, and ecological visions of the Rann from 1947–1968.

Pakistan's Conception of the Rann

In publicity documents, published works, and its arguments to the Tribunal, Pakistan articulated a vision of the Rann that emphasized the ways in which it met the conditions of being a marine space. This conception was premised on the geomorphological reality that the Rann was a former seabed disconnected from the Arabian Sea by tectonic uplift and seismic activity (Thakkar and Kar 2017). It was supported by an outdated claim that the major source of the Rann's seasonal inundation was monsoon winds blowing seawater across the length of the Rann. In Pakistani documents, the Rann was described as an "inland sea," in some cases with the caveat "now dead" (Embassy of the Islamic

Republic of Pakistan 1965; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; Ahmad 1973).

In addition to drawing on scientific knowledge about the Rann, Pakistan drew on the ways in which movement across the Rann resembled navigating marine spaces. These arguments drew on statements like that of the Acting Commissioner in Sindh, who said in 1856 that:

This district [Thar Parkar] is in fact… as much separated from Kutch by the Runn as if the sea there still covered its former bed. In fact it is even more completely separated from Kutch than if the Runn were still covered by the ocean, for in that case the communication by boat would assuredly… be more than it now is across the salt swamp of the Runn (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

Descriptions like these emphasized the idea of the Rann as a barrier, a concept that implied comparisons to seas and other water bodies are seen as barriers that must be traversed, rather than inhabited. The claim that the Rann was in many respects a sea—uninhabited, difficult to cross, often watery—and therefore a barrier supported the Pakistani contention that the Rann was a bounding area, a peripheral and perhaps liminal space, rather than a place in and of itself. This sense of the Rann as "belt of boundary" could be neatly aligned with legal conceptions of transboundary bodies of water, but had far fewer modern legal precedents for terrestrial areas (Gardner 2021).

Categorizing the Rann as a marine space rendered an alien landscape familiar, making it conform to the existent principles of the nearness of shores and the median line. Doing so achieved two objectives. It reduced the need for special categorization of the Rann, which could be understood as a marine feature and subsequently divided and demarcated using pre-existing frameworks. Without the need for greater and more specialized site-specific knowledge, further knowledge production was unnecessary (Bhattacharyya 2018). The complexity of the Rann as a temporarily inundated landscape could be replaced with the fiction of the Rann as a permanent body of water, cartographically and bureaucratically imposed on the landscape. Second, once the Rann was defined as a marine feature, it was subject to different standards for sovereignty. It could be demarcated using a simple and single line, and disputes over islands were washed away.

In its effort to place the Rann firmly in the legal category of the marine, Pakistan sought to effect a reclassification of space that suited its political objectives (Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1965). Classifying the Rann as a sea opened up the category of marine features to the possibility of including a space like the Rann, and it applied existing rules to a confusing place in a way that made its administration simpler and advantageous to Pakistan. Choosing one aspect of the often-confused British cate-

gorizing project, Pakistan solidified its terms and then redoubled its application to the Rann in order to construct a space over which it had an undeniable and persuasive claim.

Constructing a Peripheral Space

In its claims to the Rann between 1947–68, India emphasizes that the Rann should be understood as a complicated salt marsh within its territory. Defining the Rann as a wetland allowed India to push for a context-driven understanding of the space as one that was terrestrial but prone to frequent and violent change. India supported its argument with statements like a 2 November, 1906 Foreign Department letter saying, "It does not appear to be correct to show the Rann of Kutch as though it were all water. The symbol for a swamp might be used" (Krishnamurthy Rao 1965; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

Understanding that India saw the Rann as a marsh is essential to understanding India's perspective on border-making in and around the tract. If the Rann were categorized as aquatic or marine, it would be subjected to the rigid and pre-existing rules governing aquatic features. While a wetland is both soaked and fluid, unlike non-fluvial and non-soaked land, it is still ultimately more governable by the context-driven rules of terrestrial law than the standards of maritime law (Bhattacharyya 2018). India's contentions rendered the Rann as an anomalous but not totally alien place, a space integral to the whole of Kutch and therefore subject to the same exercise of sovereignty. The Rann could experience change or shifting within its cartographically outlined borders, but that change was constrained by lines on a map. Having been defined as a wetland, the Rann was tethered to a very specific piece of land in the Indian imagination, as an auxiliary but integral part of Kutch.

Before and after 1968, India was deeply concerned about what the liminality of this auxiliary, integral space meant for its functional coherence with the body of Kutch. Despite its physical and bureaucratic taming, the fear went, the Rann might still serve as a place of disorientating crossing, as an ungovernable periphery. Imagining the Rann as a landform and the border as being at the edges of the Rann, rather than anywhere within it, gave India room to remake the Rann as a militarized frontier, on the edges of society but central to its security, rather than letting it remain a place of marginality and liminality (Ibrahim 2004; 2017; 2018). To borrow from Benjamin D. Hopkins, the Rann was constructed in the Indian imagination as one of a number of "forgotten peripheries—the edges of empire" built, often intentionally, by colonial states and their successors (Hopkins 2020).

India's Conception of the Rann

This section chronicles the construction of the Rann as a peripheral space in the period before 1857, when The British Raj assumed paramountcy in South Asia. The Rann's peripherality

was premised, in part, on a geopolitical reality. It was not part of any state in a way that would be contemporarily recognizable. And it could not be an effective component of any state because no state could maintain an effective presence within it (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). But the Rann's peripherality was also the reflection of an effort to make it definable, a process that began with informal documents and accounts that reified conceptions of the Rann as a periphery to state entities. This process began with documents and observers that emphasized the ways in which the Rann was alien to familiar life and neglected by or outside of the state.

Before the weakening of Mughal power in the 1700s, Sindh was a part of the Thatta Subah, an administrative division of the Mughal Empire (Ansari 1992). Kutch was the core territory of Cutch State, a Mughal client. From the 1730s until at least 1741, Kutch maintained thanas (outposts) in Sindh at Rahim ki Bazar, Virawah, and possibly the nearby towns of Baliari and Badin. Sindh achieved de facto independence from Mughal rule in the 1730s. By the mid-1700s, the Kutch thanas appear to have been abandoned (Burnes 1829; 1834).

"BURNES' WRITING SUGGESTS THAT SAYRA AND SINDRI WERE SEEN AS PERIPHERAL TO KUTCH EVEN BEFORE THEY WERE FUNCTIONALLY A PART OF THE RANN. "

The armies of the Kalhora mians (princes) of Sindh crossed the Rann along different routes to raid Kutch in 1762, 1764, 1775, and 1776 (Burnes 1834). In 1762, the most devastating invasion, Sindh and Kutch met in the Battle of Jara, an inconclusive Sindh victory. Afterward, Sindh stationed a garrison at Lakhpat and built a bund across the Puran at Mora, a few miles north of the Rann. The building of the dam marked the beginning of the desertification of Sayra, which began to lose the waters that sustained its rice paddies. The Sindh garrison at Lakhpat was withdrawn in the 1770s, but Sindh again built a dam across the Puran in 1802. The dam this time was at Ali Bunder, near Mora (Burnes 1829; 1834).

In the early part of the 19th century, Kutch was riven by internal strife that weakened its ability to project power in and across the Rann. In 1809 and again in 1815, the East India Company concluded treaties with representatives of the Kutch darbar, or court (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). In 1819, a final treaty, the Treaty of Alliance, was signed by representatives of the Jadeja bhayad, Kutch's regnal council of noblemen. Article 5 of the Treaty of Alliance stated, "The Honourable Company engages to guarantee the power of his Highness the Rao Dessul, his heirs and successors, and the integrity of his dominions, from foreign or

domestic enemies" (Aitchison 1909).

Though not apparent at the time, it would emerge over the course of the 19th century that the boundaries of the dominion of Kutch were functionally unknown. They were further complicated a few months before the signing of the Treaty of Alliance when the Rann of Kutch earthquake occurred. The earthquake flooded Sayra, leaving behind only a lone tower peeking out of the lake covering Sindri's former location (Burnes 1834; Lewis 1873). A 16-mile-long natural dam on the Puran, Allah Bund, formed five miles north of Sindri, erasing evidence of the customs post at Kaeera Nullah from the landscape (Raikes 1855; Frere 1870; Athavale 2013). When Kutch attempted to establish a customs post on Allah Bund, it was forced to withdraw its officers in the face of opposition from Sindh.

Both the destruction of Sindri and the earthquake of 1819 would be cited in the ensuing decades as evidence of Kutch's lack of effective presence in the Rann. Alexander Burnes, who was stationed in Kutch in the 1820s, implied that in some respects state failure was a cause of the expansion of the Rann, and that the Rann and the state could not therefore coexist. Burnes wrote that Kutch had tolerated repeated dam construction on the Puran for so many decades that the flooding of Sayra "passed unheeded, for it had become a matter of indifference to Cutch whether the tract which had been a desert since the battle of Jharra [sic] continued so, or became an inland lake, as in either state it had ceased to yield those advantages to the people which they had once enjoyed" (Burnes 1834).

Burnes' writing suggests that Sayra and Sindri were seen as peripheral to Kutch even before they were functionally a part of the Rann. Having become part of the Rann after many years of desertification and the 1819 inundation, they were truly peripheral to the core territory of the state, and so did not merit attention or a state presence. While Burnes' narratives include mentions of Kutch attempting to assert its presence in the tract, it is essential to note that this presence was temporary and rebuffed; Kutch could not sustain a customs post, the fertility of the landscape, or its interests writ large. That was because the landscape, due to its inherent volatility as well as human action, was now part of the Rann. And the Rann could not be controlled because it was inherently hostile to the people and the presence of the state. Writers and Mapmakers

Several accounts similar to Burnes' were written during and shortly after the Company Raj. These include the memoirs of Marianne Postans (Young), who lived in Kutch in the 1830s as the wife of the Political Agent; Henry Bartle Frere, Chief Commissioner in Sindh in the 1850s and later Governor of Bombay; William Pottinger, who traveled to Sindh in the 1830s; and C.W. Tremenheere, an officer in the Royal Engineers. These accounts describe a remarkable place. Postans says, "nothing could, perhaps, be found more worthy the observation of the traveller"

(Young 1839) But it is remarkable in part because of its desolation and alienness. Frere says, "There is a total absence of any sign of animal or vegetable life which could break the uniformity of the surface. There are no trees, no tufts of grass; and the bones of a dead camel are visible for miles, whether seen in their actual form or size, or drawn up into the likeness of towers, rocks, and houses by mirage" (Frere 1870).

Mirages appear repeatedly in travel writing about the Rann (Burnes 1834; Young 1839; Frere 1870). Mentioning them served to emphasize the ways in which the Rann was distinct from the typical human existence. The fact that the only indicators of human presence to be found in the Rann were illusory emphasized its desolation and hostility to human life. And the presence of these illusions reinforced the unreality of the Rann; rather than being tangible, firm, and real, like the world of the state, it was cloudy and intangible—at the margins of the known world. Through these descriptions, the Rann was constituted as a place that could be seen but not inhabited, a space rather than a place in its own right. At best, in these narratives, it can only be an alien periphery, undergoing such frequent tumult and subject to such hostile conditions that it is not worth the effort or the time of the state to establish a presence in the first place.

There are occasional exceptions to this picture, but where they disrupt the idea that the Rann is totally hostile to human life, they entrench the idea that it is not inhabitable. Burnes writes that "the traffic across is considerable" on the direct military and trade route from Bhuj to Rahim ki Bazar, despite "an inhospitable tract of forty-eight miles without a drop of fresh water, on leaving Luna" (Burnes 1834). But this piece of evidence, as well as descriptions of river traffic in the decade after the 1819 earthquake, are always contrasted with the Rann's inhospitality otherwise (Burnes 1834; Holland 1855). Trade can only take place through it, not in it; there are not, as there are in the settled places of the world, points of state presence in the Rann. It is a tenuous bridge between two areas of state control, liminal and peripheral.

The extent to which the Rann was seen as a periphery is reaffirmed in the pre-survey maps, the earliest of which dates to 1788 (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; Dossal 2019). These maps were prepared by a range of creators with an equally varied range of familiarity with the Rann. Perhaps as a consequence, it is difficult to extract a sense of what the Rann is from the maps. It is a marsh in some, a desert in others, a sea in a third fraction. There is no standard depiction of the space (Pottinger 1814; Arrowsmith 1822; Walker and Walker 1833; Zimmerman 1851; Wynne 1872a; Risley et al. 1909; Indian Information Service 1965). In Fig. 1 (pg. 34), I show a section of Burnes' 1829 map of Kutch, which ambiguously depicts the Rann.

In Burnes' map, which influenced depictions of Kutch and its environs for decades, and which was used to represent landholdings in the Rann, the Rann is personally knowable through

"TRADE CAN ONLY TAKE PLACE THROUGH IT, NOT IN IT; THERE ARE NOT, AS THERE ARE IN THE SETTLED PLACES OF THE WORLD, POINTS OF STATE PRESENCE IN THE RANN."

Burnes' recollections of his travel (Burnes 1829; Lumsden 1855). But this information is of limited use to the state, which cannot use a map like Burnes' to govern. This is in spite of its detail and fairly careful measurement; without a standard of systematization, it does not serve the key function of cartography to the state, which is to simplify an unsimple space into a visual language that is codified and can be used to exert power and control.

The irregularity of the Rann was later communicated through the range of ribands, demarcating ribbons of color, used to separate the Rann from Sindh and Kutch on maps. The Tribunal's award notes that "In these maps Sind and Kutch are either represented in different colour washes or they are bounded off by coloured ribands. In between is the Rann, coloured either blue, white, or light brown, with the addition, sometimes, of swamp or marsh symbols" (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; Indian Information Service 1965; High Commission of India 1965). I show an example of one kind of boundary marker in Fig. 2. (pg. 34) .

The confusion over how to depict the Rann, and the ways in which it was occasionally merged with the Thar and at other points rendered as a sea, contributed to the sense of its peripherality (Wynne 1872a; 1872b; Risley et al. 1909). The lack of clarity reinforced the sense that the Rann was beyond the ken of the state. No standard border could be drawn around or through it because it was not a knowable place. On the basis of hearsay, assumption, or first-hand knowledge, it might be assigned to one mainland, the other, or left uncategorized. The ambiguousness of its depiction contributed to the peripheralization of the Rann: it was not knowable through maps, could not be known, and therefore existed firmly at the margins of the state until it could, by means of state presence, state-generated knowledge, and growing state capacity, be brought in from the hazy margins of early cartographic efforts.

Searching for a Legible Rann

As Scott uses it, legibility describes a state's efforts to order society in such a way that it is knowable, controllable, and extractable by the state (Scott 1998; Lee and Zhang 2017). Compared to the complexity and specificity of local and particular knowledge, legibility is an abstraction that simplifies knowledge in order to make it manipulable. A range of projects undertaken by states can contribute to making a place and its people legible; surveys, censuses, and standardized units are archetypal examples (Hopkins 2020).

The British Raj replaced the East India Company as the para mount power in the Rann after 1857. Over the course of its rule, it engaged in a series of occasional efforts to make the Rann more controllable by the organs of the state. As I outline in this section, that program involved first making the Rann knowable. Through decades of surveys, maps, and administration reports, the Raj, Sindh, and Kutch worked to simplify the com-

plexity of the Rann until it could be both a target of state presence and a component of states.

The urge to do this was driven by a fact of modernity: the rise of the modern nation-state erased the possibility of a geopolitical no man's land or space of ambiguous borders. A space was required to be a place, and a place was required to belong to a party. Every border needed to be coterminous, rather than a borderland. The Rann, which had occupied a peripheral position during the era of pre-modern states, therefore needed to be made fully a part of one or both of the adjoining mainlands. This need grew more pronounced with the end of the Raj. An empire could accommodate the fuzziness of a borderland, but the postcolonial state could not. In response to these pressures, both Kutch and Sindh sought to create and co-opt standardized knowledge about the Rann into their claims to and about the space. Pakistan and India, in turn, sought to draw stronger claims out of these legible-making processes. In this analysis, I consider two mechanisms of legibility: surveying efforts and documentary evidence, and illustrate how legibility was used to support assertions of the Rann's integrality to state spaces and of their presence within it.

Surveying

Four surveys took place in and around the Rann between 1857–1947. The first, lasting from 1855–1870, was a Survey of India survey of Sindh. From 1866–1870, the survey, under the leadership of Donald MacDonald, concerned itself with Thar

"A CLAIM ON TERRITORY IS MOST OFTEN PREMISED ON A STATE'S SUCCESS."

Parkar, Mohamed Khan's Tanda, and Shahbunder Districts. The survey maps from Mohamed Khan's Tanda included a "Runn Sub-Circuit" outside of any village dehs, or revenue collection areas (Gastrell 1867; 1868; 1870; High Commission of India 1965). The reasons for this decision are unclear. In 1968, India claimed that the survey, a revenue survey, was meant to survey the political and topographical landscape of a region, meaning that the omission of most of the Rann was evidence that it was really a part of Kutch. The parts of the Rann so included were included because of instructions to the surveying party to survey adjacent areas to the areas they were tasked with surveying. Pakistan, on the other hand, argued that revenue surveys were meant to capture only the revenue-producing parts of a place, and so the Rann, a barren waste, would not have been included (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

"THE ABILITY OF ANY STATE TO MAINTAIN A PRESENCE AND BUILD CAPACITY IN THE RANN WAS HIGHLY CONTINGENT ON THE TEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS OF THE SPACE, SUGGESTING THAT NO POWER COULD TRULY CLAIM TO CONTROL IT..."

There is no record of a dispute at the time between Sindh and Kutch over the surveying boundaries. But it seems clear that the survey was not viewed as the final word in the boundary question because in 1875, the *mukhtiarkar*, or revenue-collector, of Diplo Taluka responded to a query from the Political Superintendent of Thar Parkar about the location of the border between Thar Parkar and Kutch with a message that:

In the midst of Kutch Bhuj and Taluka Diplo, District Tharparkar, from the Rann, from Rahimki [Bazar] coming in the north of Allah Bund, Mian ji Sari, the distance of which from Rahimki will be 24 miles, is the settled boundary, and from Vingar and Balyari, Gaind ji Chhan, where Dharamsala is built, the distance of which, from Balyari will be 24 miles, from where towards the north, at a distance of half a mile, the boundary of Diplo, and towards the south, boundary of Kutch Bhuj territory. On these boundaries, there is no boundary mark. (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968)

On the basis of the mukhtiarkar's report, the Political Superintendent informed the Commissioner in Sindh that there was no demarcated boundary between Sindh and Kutch, but that customary points indicated the border. He recommended that the boundary be demarcated with the assistance of the Political Agent in Kutch, who asked the Dewan of Kutch whether the border had ever been demarcated and what Kutch's border claim was.

The Rao of Kutch died that year, and the Government of Bombay passed an 1876 Resolution postponing border demarcation. The question of where the border fell spurred the Dewan to ask three *vahivatdars*, or leaseholders, to "collect evidence relating to the boundaries of Kutch in the direction of Sind[h] and Thar Parkar" (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). This new interest in the Rann would be encouraged by the 1879–1886 Survey of Kutch, led by Major A. Pullan. This survey mapped the whole of the Rann. When questioned as to why after Sindh raised objections, Pullan wrote "I surveyed the Runn because it is intimately connected with the country of Cutch and it was an absolute geographical necessity that it should be surveyed. I have carefully abstained from laying down or even suggesting any boundary between Cutch and Sind" (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

Before asking Pullan to answer to it, the Government of Bombay had already resolved that the dispute over the location of the border be suppressed. It sent a Resolution titled "Boundary

Disputes: Claim of Cutch Darbar to the Sind side of the Runn," and took no further action. But the border remained undefined (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

Pullan's attitude that it was "an absolute geographical necessity" to have the Rann surveyed and mapped speaks to the unacceptability of the informational lacuna embodied by the Rann. Though it was a hinterland, it was essential that the Rann be understood in order to fix its position relative to its settled state neighbors. Without a knowledge of the geographic and ecological characteristics of the Rann, there was no way to begin the process of reifying the Rann into a simplified form that suited Kutch's claims to the Rann.

In this respect, Pullan's notes from the survey are contradictory. He claimed to the Government of Bombay that he did not recognize Kutch's claim to the whole Rann. But in a letter to the Surveyor-General dated 9 August, 1880, he wrote that "the survey when completed will be of the greatest use to the Durbar who are very desirous to obtain a reliable map of the Country." In his 1880–1881 Survey Report, Pullan adds that "The part of Cutch surveyed during the past field Season comprised firstly a portion of the Great 'Rann' and the widespreading grass land known as 'Bani" (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

Pullan's writing makes explicit the way in which Kutch saw accurate information about its erstwhile hinterland as a necessary ingredient in the process of transforming the Rann from a periphery into an essential component of the state. It also suggests that Kutch saw patronizing information creation by an organ of the paramount power as a way of creating usable knowledge about a place that would be seen as Kutch knowledge about a place that was a part of Kutch. Using standardized information, Kutch began to seek to freeze the Rann as a static entity in maps and to use evidence from surveys to substantiate its claims to the Rann. Compared to Kutch, Sindh did less during the colonial period to make the Rann legible to it; it was largely content to assume that it had a legitimate claim to the northern half of the Rann. Where there were efforts to render the Rann legible, these were at its edges, in places where human activity was semi-permanent, and therefore more within the traditional realm of the state and knowable through information already possessed by Sindh. For Sindh, the Rann did not demand the level of legibility that Kutch sought to create and enforce.

The third major surveying effort in the Rann was that of Erskine in 1904–1905, which sought to resolve territorial disputes between Kutch, Wav, Suigam, and Sindh. This led to a complaint in 1907–1908 from the Commissioner in Sindh of encroachments by Kutch on Sindh territory. The Government of Bombay, writing to the Kutch darbar, said:

If the Darbar had reason to think this boundary was inaccurate — the Government was perfectly willing to consider any representation it might have to make and that, in that case, the

Darbar should state precisely and with an accurate map the boundary which it claimed, specifying the grounds on which its claim was based (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).The conditions of this letter emphasize the importance of legibility—in this case represented by an accurate, survey-derived map—to control.

Both the darbar and the Collector of Karachi District submitted maps with boundary claims on them to the Government of Bombay. The Kutch map showed a diagonal border running from the top of Sir Creek, a tidal creek west of Kori Creek, to the junction of the Rann with the Jati and Badin *talukas*, both in Karachi District. Sindh claimed a vertical boundary running due north from the top of Kori Creek to the junction point. The compromise promulgated by the Government of Bombay was for the boundary between the two jurisdictions to run from the top of Sir Creek until it met Sindh's proposed border, then north to the junction point (High Commission of India 1965). In Fig. 3 (pg. 35), I show the relevant map.

In a letter from 20 September, 1913, the Secretary to the Government, Bombay wrote to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, that the compromise had been suggested to and approved by both parties to the dispute. In the Resolution of 23 February, 1914, the Bombay Government mandated that the letter of 20 September, 1913, be circulated to the Commissioner in Sindh, Political Agent in Kutch, and the Rao of Kutch (Krishnamurthy Rao 1965; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

The last of the surveying efforts was that of Gordon Osmaston in 1937–38, which was prompted by the creation of Sindh as a Governor's Province in 1935. The creation of Sindh created a demand for demarcated borders from the bureaucracy, and these could not be found along its southern edge. This last effort was unsuccessful in settling the jurisdictional conflicts between Sindh, Kutch, Wav, and Suigam that had necessitated Erskine's earlier survey (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

The surveying efforts in the Rann began as efforts to render the region legible, and they culminated in two efforts to make border-drawing within it feasible. While these are different kinds of legibility, they both reflect the importance placed on having abstract knowledge about a place in order to make it governable (Dossal 2019). The problem faced by these surveys was that while they allowed Sindh and Kutch to make their respective attempts at reifying the landscape and imposing their respective categorical ecological visions on it, they captured only a slice of reality. Given the volatility of the Rann, they did not even fully succeed at rendering it permanently abstracted; the Rann could change from season to season, and surveys were unable to capture this dynamism. As a consequence, surveying efforts, while useful, were frustrated in their efforts to unite visions of the Rann with knowledge about it by the complexity of the ecological system in question.

Documentary Legibility

Kutch (later India) was the main party attempting to establish the legibility of the Rann through non-survey means, which it did through three channels: pre-survey maps, local knowledge, and administration reports. The 1844 map of Kutch witnessed by J.G. Lumsden, Political Agent, enabled this process. The map depicted feudal land ownership among the royalty and nobility of Kutch using 35 colors of washes and ribands (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). On this map, the area formerly called Sayra is occupied by a lake with the note, "this colour lake of his Highness the Rao." Describing this map in 1968, India added:

> The northern limit of the Rao's possessions in the Sayra District is approximately the northern edge of the Rann. Besides the mainland of Kutch, the Banni (spelt Bunnee) and the three large bets of Pachham, Khurir and Beyla as well as a group of four more bets are shown as belonging to the Kutch Bhayad. The group of four bets is situated to the north of Pachham. The first is called Koosree, the second Gainda, the third Horonto. The fourth has no name but has the notice: "attached to mainland before earthquake of 1819." This notice and the place on the map where the bet is situated permits the hypothesis that it is Dhara Banni… The Rann was so well protected that feudal ownership over bets on its extreme northern edge made some sense and was worthwhile recording and depicting (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

This map indicates legibility by means of property rights and ownership; with specific demarcations of land titles and demesnes, it was possible to make the claim that Kutch both knew the Rann well and could lay meaningful claim to it. By pointing to the evidence of royal and noble titles, Kutch could argue that the Rann was an integral component of its territory about which it knew governance-supporting knowledge.

Later in the 19th century, Kutch sought to demonstrate its knowledge of the Rann and its ability to make the space legible by drawing on the testimony of the Bhuj vahivatdar, who wrote in 1885 that the Rann had historically been in the possession of Kutch. The vahivatdar wrote, "At present the entire Rann is in our vahivat and there is ample evidence for this… from the village Dhrobana in Pachham up to the limit of the Rann in the north… guide stones have been fixed… at the Kutch Darbar's expense" (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

While they are an untraditional means of indicating legibility, the ability to fix guide stones in the Rann indicated that the darbar had the information and the capability to order an unsettled landscape. Through guidestones, Kutch could make the Rann legible to travelers, and therefore somewhat closer to being a productive part of the state. The capability described by the vahivatdar meets the key legibility-related need for the state to be able to order the world in a way that is conducive to its needs. Without the guidestones, the navigators of the Rann would still have been capable of crossing. But the guide stones

indicated the supremacy of the state over the landscape and the people participating in it—a feat achieved through a knowledge of the land itself in terms that could be reported and repeated in other media.

Finally, from 1855–1945, Kutch sent annual Administration Reports detailing the condition of the State to the Government of Bombay. Fifty of these reports touched on the Rann. Of these, 47 describe the area of Kutch as "6,500 square miles exclusive of the Rann," "7,616 square miles exclusive of the Rann," or some other variation (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). The Rann is described as spanning 9,000 square miles and belonging either directly to the State or to the Rao. Rather than rendering the Rann governable to Kutch, these reports sought to make the idea of a Kutch in which both the Kutch Peninsula and the Rann were included legible to the Raj. The Administration Reports abstracted these two distinct geomorphological regions into a single entity that could be communicated to the empire's bureaucracy. In doing so, they created the appearance of the Rann's essentiality to Kutch, and asserted that Kutch found the Rann legible, even when and where it did not.

The way Kutch presented the Rann in its Administration Reports shows how Kutch sidestepped the challenges posed by Kutch's ecological understanding of the Rann. Kutch recognized the ecological ambiguity of the Rann and the hazards of applying typical border-making principles to it. By placing the border it claimed at the edge of the Rann, and denoting the Rann as a core component of Kutch, Kutch placed literal solid land underneath its claims and bureaucratically began to integrate the Rann into its dominion.

The representations Kutch made to the Government of Bombay of its relationship with the Rann were largely accepted. From 1871–1924, the Government of Bombay in turn prepared its own Administration Reports on the agencies and territories within its ambit. Of the 31 of these reports touching on the Rann, 30 describe the area of Kutch as "exclusive," "besides," or "independent" of the Rann. These reports show the way in which legibility was communicated successfully by Kutch, to the Government of Bombay, which ignored Sindh claims in favor of Kutch, which seemed to have made the Rann legible and therefore controllable (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; "Report on the Administration of the Bombay Presidency" 1915).

In the following chapter of this thesis, I expand on the ways in which legibility, or the perception of legibility, enabled attempts at control. I further discuss how those attempts at control were inconclusive as a result of the inherent reductiveness of simplifying attempts to make the Rann legible. As I note in my introduction, attempts to assert control over the Rann failed to overcome the fundamental mismatch between reality's ambiguities and the state's imagination (Scott 1998; Cederlöf 2013; Dossal 2019; Gardner 2021).

Controlling the Rann

A claim on territory is most often premised on a state's successful occupation of that territory. What is de facto true becomes the de jure reality over time. Once a territory is claimed effectively, borders can be drawn around it. The challenge faced by India, Pakistan, and their predecessors in the Rann was the difficulty of demonstrating occupation within the Rann. For most of history, there was little reason to station military forces within the Rann, a hard-to-cross wasteland. Because of its salinity, the Rann lacked a population through which evidence of occupation could be demonstrated using consistent tax payments, among other things.

In response to the challenges created by the Rann's environmental condition, Sindh, Kutch, India, and Pakistan sought avenues through which they could substantiate their claims of control over the Rann. In the colonial era, these avenues took the form of citing and investing in indicators of state capacity: fiscal instruments such as indirect taxes and customs taxes. Where evidence of the state did not previously exist, parties to the Rann of Kutch dispute worked to produce it. And in the decades leading up to and immediately after independence, India and Pakistan introduced law enforcement and armed occupation as a third indicator of state presence (and, eventually, of state capacity). In all cases, the object of state capacity-building exercises and substantiation was to support the boundary claims made by the states adjoining the Rann. Rather than being understood as evidence of true state capacity, they should be understood as attempts to underwrite territorial claims that both sides knew would not be decided on the basis of functional capacity or the fiscal and infrastructural integration of the Rann with a mainland, but on the basis of textual evidence that matched the location of boots on the ground.

Fiscal Capacity

The essential indicator of a state's fiscal capacity and presence is its ability to raise taxes. Kutch and Sindh provided their respective evidence of this capacity by indicating the range of tax levies and customs duties they imposed within the Rann and at its edges. In the case of taxes, the types of taxes relied upon were indirect taxes that demonstrated the state's purported ability to extract revenue but lacked the complexity of direct taxation or the systematic frameworks for payment. These were the best evidence of state presence on offer in the Rann, which lacked the population or wealth needed to drive the construction of complex tax systems.

In the 1876 report from the Bhuj vahivatdar to the Dewan of Kutch, the vahivatdar wrote, "In the Rann, sale of cattle from Sind and other places takes place. On that sale the Darbari Officer collects levy on sale of animals and also 'Ukaru Dan' on the same animal is payable" (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). He also says that on the bet of Sindhdi, fewer than 15 miles from Rahim ki Bazar, Kutch levied a duty called ukrau until the 1819 earthquake, after which the customs post had to be moved to Luna, on Banni. On the islet, the jamadar, or officer,

who was from Luna, had the right to levy chowki and tansri duties on the goods that passed through.

Kutch pointed to these statements from the vahivatdar as evidence of its historical and persistent presence in the Rann, but they also expose the challenges of asserting state presence in this dynamic space. Sindhdi is not mentioned in any other accounts of the Rann, and it is possible that it was erased or reformed by the 1819 earthquake that shook the Rann. The ability of any state to maintain a presence and build capacity in the Rann was highly contingent on the temporary environmental conditions of the space, suggesting that no power could truly claim to control it because they could not sustain a permanent presence within it in the face of natural changes. Without evidence of a permanent presence and the limits of state power—which customs posts helpfully evince—coterminous boundaries were extremely challenging to draw.

In order to assert state presence, Kutch in particular turned to levying taxes on pastoralists. Pastoralists are often a challenge for the state, but in this case, Kutch worked to demonstrate its ability to impose taxes on graziers in order to substantiate its claims of state presence. In 1926, the *thanedar*, a kind of police officer, of Khavda, a town in Pachham, was permitted to levy a *panchari* grazing tax on graziers from Thar Parkar who grazed their cattle in Chhad Bet (Krishnamurthy Rao 1965; Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). Chhad Bet, which is included in the 1876 note of the Bhuj vahivatdar as part of a bet called Dhera (likely another name for Dhara Banni), is close to Thar Parkar and the Sindh mainland. Sindh considered Chhad Bet a part of its territory, although Kutch acknowledged no dispute (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

The graziers' headmen petitioned the Commissioner in Sindh for a stoppage of the tax, which they accused of exacerbating their poverty and violating their customary rights to the Rann. When they investigated the matter, British officials in Sindh found that the border in the Rann had never been demarcated, and that panchari had not been levied before 1926. The graziers were told that they did not need to pay panchari, and the dispute lay dormant for about a decade. Kutch began to assert itself more in 1938, around the time of Osmaston's surveying efforts in the northeastern Rann, and the question of whether Nagar Parkar graziers were obligated to pay panchari became a recurring issue. Throughout the 1940s, officers including a *tajvijdar*, or revenue officers, were sent to Chhad Bet. In 1945, 13 officers and peons from Khavda traveled to Chhad Bet to ensure compliance with panchari, but were confronted and confined for a day by more than 200 armed men from Nagar Parkar. This confrontation indicates that while Kutch worked to project authority and control in the northern Rann, it was not always successful; it did not have a monopoly on coercion in the area and indeed had limited power projection capabilities.

By 1947, Kutch had licensed the rights to graze cattle and collect panchari in Chhad Bet and the nearby areas of Dhara Banni and Pirol Vala Kun to Node Sadi Rau, a Kutchi, and his sons. When Rau's license expired, the thanedar in Khavda re-leased the territory to Sama Ibrahim Suleman and Sama Jusal Kesar, two other Kutchis from Pachham, for at least 1955–1957, after which the leases were discontinued due to increased military presence in the Rann (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

It is more likely than not that Kutch only began to impose panchari in Chhad Bet in 1926 because it realized that Sindh was not effectively exercising its authority in the area and because it recognized that in order for it to make a claim to the whole Rann, it needed to particularly make its presence in the region where human activity took place. But the environmental condition of the Rann was such that there was a significant cost for Kutch to project its presence into the Rann, and it could not do so often. Border-making could not proceed on the basis of these tenuous and disputed assertions of sovereignty, and Kutch would ultimately fail to transform these measures on the ground into a compelling conceptual vision of how the Rann fell entirely within its dominion.

Sindh took much less care to issue licenses or tax local pastoralists around the Rann, though it did earn revenue off of fishing licenses issued for dhandhs and lakes west of the Puran. There is evidence from both 1926 and 1954 that Sindh earned thousands of rupees through licensing fishing rights, a practice which Kutch could or would not contest. But the main evidence of fiscal capacity on Sindh's part comes through customs. In 1968, Pakistan demonstrated that officers of the Central British Customs Organisation patrolled the Rann on 53 occasions between 1945–1946. Pakistan pointed to this practice as evidence of British presence and effective control of the Rann, which in turn meant that Sindh, as a direct component of the British Raj, was the party to whom control of the Rann ought to be assigned. But Sindh itself did not exercise a right to taxation on salt or grazing, and the extent to which it can be said to have projected a state presence in the Rann on the basis of fiscal capacity is also extremely dubious (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

Coercion and Occupation

A second and essential dimension of state capacity is the state's coercive capacity. In the case of the pre-independence Rann, this can be analyzed through the ability of each state to maintain law and order in the Rann and the extent to which each state actually did so. Both Kutch and Sindh acted as though they held police authority in the Rann, though Sindh often did so to a greater extent. Sindh claimed patrolling, arresting, and inquiry rights for offenses in at least the northern half of the Rann, and it additionally reserved the privilege to try cases in Sindh's courts. In 1892 and 1923, Sindh police assisted Kutch police in com-

bating dacoity even on the Kutch mainland. The extent to which this was a function of Sindh's jurisdiction rather than that of the Imperial Police, which belonged originally to the Central Service, is uncertain (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968).

In several cases during the immediate decade preceding independence, "offences allegedly committed by persons assumed to be citizens or residents of Kutch, purportedly committed outside the boundary of Sind as conceived by India, were registered at Sind police stations and investigated by Sind police." Some offenses of this nature were also tried in Sindh courts. These collected incidents took place in 1939, 1940, and four times in 1945 (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968). India rejected these citations of Pakistani jurisdictional authority in the Rann as evidence specifically of British authority over British subjects, rather than as evidence of any territorial authority in the region. It also pointed to Kutch investigations of offenses committed in the Rann as evidence of Kutch's police jurisdiction in the tract.

In the post-independence era, both India and Pakistan sought ways to translate their claims about the Rann into tangible evidence of occupation. This was enabled by the advance of modern technology, which transformed the nature of state presence in the Rann. The state was no longer totally subject to the environmental condition of a complex, hostile ecological space. Instead, it could sustain a presence in the Rann, albeit at cost and only, at first, on the bets, for a much longer period. This was most clearly demonstrated in the 1950s, when military patrols from both India and Pakistan traversed the Rann north of the 24th parallel, especially around Karim Shahi Bet (Lagergren, Entezam, and Bebler 1968; Gupta 1969).

On 19 February, 1956, India realized that Pakistan had established its presence sufficiently to occupy Chhad Bet when an Indian patrol near the bet was fired on by Pakistani troops. In response, India sent back its forces on 25 February, 1956 to occupy Chhad Bet themselves. They found the site deserted and established a border outpost there that was visited biweekly by deployments of the Rajkot Rangers. Pakistan's protests were dismissed by India (Krishnamurthy Rao 1965; Gupta 1969; Ahmad 1973). Neither state could keep its forces in the Rann forever. Even with cartographic reification in play for decades, the volatile, seasonally-inundated salt flats could not be physically reified in the 1950s and 1960s. But India's decade-long occupation of Chhad Bet demonstrates how the nature of state presence in the Rann began to change in the modern era. No longer were the states competing for control of the Rann mostly dependent on conceptual redefinition of the space. With improved military technology and more sophisticated logistical networks, it was possible to make the redefinition of space and control of space a physical, tangible project supported by boots on the ground.

The military patrols and occupations of the 1950s and 1960s marked the penultimate stage in the evolution of the Rann

from peripheral boundary space into a state-claimed and state-defined frontier. In the final stage of that evolution—the stage we are currently in—India and Pakistan have used technology and the concept of the nation-state to physically alter the Rann into a militarized frontier. In this new ecosystem, the state must always be vigilant against forms of transgression—border-crossing, unmonitored movement, environmental volatility—that could harken back to the Rann's history as a place outside the state (Ibrahim 2017; Hopkins 2020; Gardner 2021). While volatility continues to threaten the stability of state control, there is no longer any risk that the Rann could exist beyond the state. The arms of the state, and its borders now stretch too far for such a possibility. Through the cooperation of technologies of knowledge—mapping, documentation, and surveying—and tools of occupation, the Rann's ecological complexity and amphibious ambiguity have been subdued. In spite of this, the Rann as a place of imagined transgression continues to survive. And, importantly, many more places around the world are being driven by environmental change to become like the Rann—outside the ordinary realm of the state's governmentality, if not totally out of its reach (Bhattacharyya 2018; Hopkins 2020; Gardner 2021).

Conclusion

One of the few Indian films to prominently feature the Rann is the 2000 Bollywood movie Refugee, which marked the debut of both Abhishek Bachchan and Kareena Kapoor. Refugee dramatizes the saga of crossing the Rann in the decades after independence. The picture it paints of a radically transgressive landscape that must be patrolled by state actors to prevent offenses against the authority of the state, namely terrorism, accurately depicts the Rann in the state's imagination and begins to capture how its harshness enabled its frustration of state-making objectives. The movie ends with a state victorious over terrorism, and by implication, over the transgressive environment of the Rann that has stalled the state's progress towards asserting its authority (Dutta and Mahadev 2000).

As in the film, in the last three centuries, the Rann of Kutch has been radically transformed, physically and conceptually, by an unprecedented level of attention from state actors. Until the 19th century, the Rann existed only at the margins of the state; it was a space apart from state control and beyond the incentives for state control. Over the course of the 19th century, the Rann was constructed as a peripheral space through the production of written and cartographic knowledge that described the Rann—and, in doing so, sought to make it both knowable and categorizable. This effort was advanced by the efforts of surveyors and bureaucrats, who worked to place the Rann into defined categories that would facilitate the tract's governance and control through

a legibility-making process. Their efforts were made necessary by the driving need of modern states to constitute themselves as discrete territorial entities with sharply defined borders, rather than fuzzy boundaries (Scott 1998; Cederlöf 2013; Gardner 2021).

From the late 19th century onwards, the states adjacent to the Rann began translating their reconstructions of the Rann from an elusive but increasingly knowable periphery into an integral component of the state by working along axes of state capacity: fiscal capacity, public services, and coercive capacity. In some sense, this effort has succeeded. The Rann's ecological complexity has been trampled by the imperatives of the modern state, which has militarized much of the tract and laid concrete over salt pans.

Today, the Rann is traversed by wire and sentry posts (Ibrahim 2021). But the long-term viability of the modern state's foundations—absolute control over a discrete and defined territory—are in serious doubt. The states of the future will struggle to reconceptualize and reshape ecological systems and landscapes to the extent that has been achieved in the post-colonial Rann by India and Pakistan, who have succeeded in part because of relative environmental stability in the rest of their territories. The frustrations faced by those states in claiming the Rann will pale in comparison to the problems posed by new forms of environmentally dynamic and ambiguous spaces that continuously challenge the governmentalities of yesteryear (Bhattacharyya 2018; Dewan 2021).

In the last three decades, global weather patterns have grown increasingly erratic. Extreme weather events have grown more common, with South Asia bearing a particularly heavy burden of storms, floods, and droughts (Guhathakurta, Sreejith, and Menon 2011; Roxy et al. 2017). In the decades to come, persistent sea level rise will threaten coastlines around the world, including the densely-populated shores of the subcontinent, which are already maladapted to the environmental conditions in which they exist (Bhattacharyya 2018; Pasricha 2021; Dewan 2021).

A world of increasingly volatile environmental conditions will be one that increasingly resembles the Rann. This is not necessarily a function of inhospitality, but of the weak link between the governmental approaches to territory that have characterized the modern nation-state and the kinds of territories—soaked, amphibious, or barren—that states will begin to grapple with governing (Bhattacharyya 2018; Gardner 2021). The Rann has been, in some ways, successfully "tamed." It has been integrated into the state's imagination and its territory, even if it continues to persist as a wasteland of imagined transgressions. But as work on the amphibious regions of Bengal and Northeast India has shown, such state successes are almost invariably temporary (Saikia 2019; Dewan 2021).

The greater the volatility that manifests, the greater the need for the state to create, or recreate, new conceptions of terri-

toriality and governmentality in order to justify its continued existence. This will be doubly true in the populous coastlines of the world, where cities like Karachi, Mumbai, and Dhaka will wrestle with questions of their continued existence. The Rann contains lessons for states on the frustrations of complex ecological systems and the technologies and imaginations needed to conquer them. But its most important lesson may be that its conception, construction, and conquest will not be repeated.

Fig. 1: *A New Map of Cutch*, based on the travels of Alexander Burnes, with modifications by J.G. Lumsden. Published in "Observations, By Mr. J.G. Lumsden, Political Agent, on a Map Prepared by Him, Showing the Possessions of His Highness the Rao, and the Dependent Chiefs, &c. in Kutch," in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, 15 (Bombay 1855).

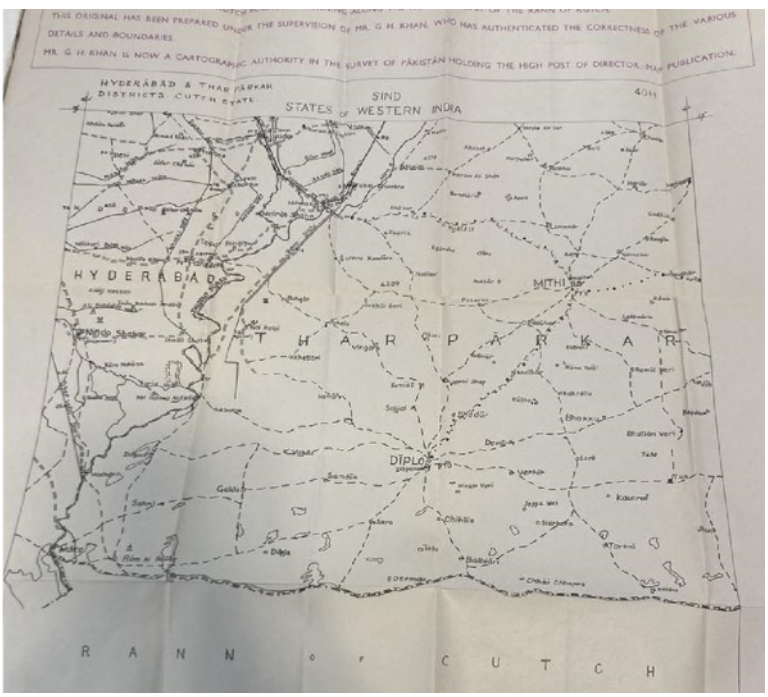

Fig. 2: *Sind [and] States of Western India* map prepared under the direction of G.H. Khan, cartographer under the Raj and later for Pakistan, showing the boundary between Sindh and the Rann. Reproduced in *Facts about Kutch-Sind boundary (in maps)*, published by the Indian Information Service in 1965.

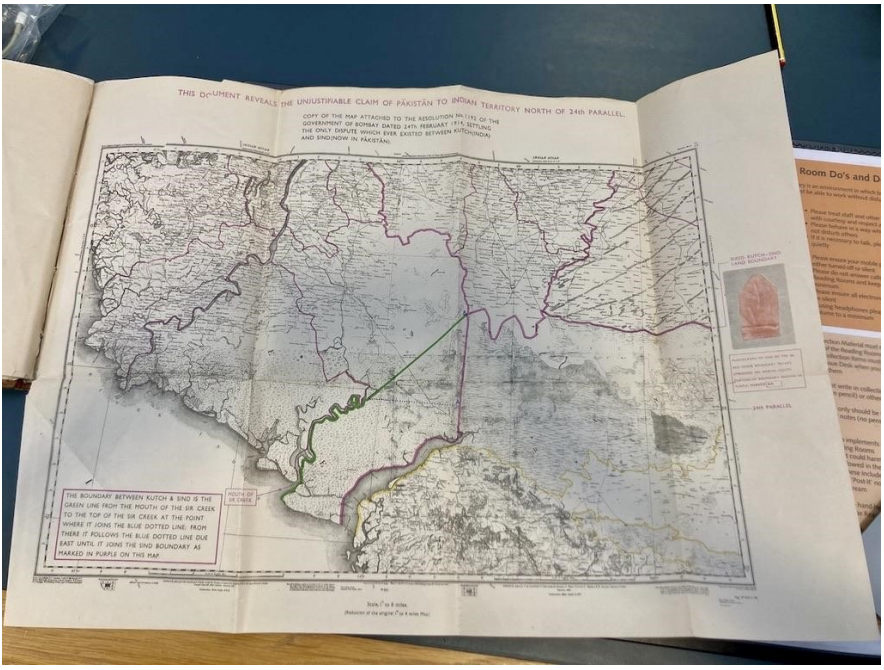

Fig. 3: "Copy of the Map Attached to the Resolution No. 1192 of the Government of Bombay Dated 24th February 1914, Settling the Only Dispute Which Ever Existed Between Kutch (India) and Sind (Now in Pakistan)," published in the Indian Information Service Publication *Facts About Kutch-Sind Boundary (in maps)* (New Delhi 1965).

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Trapped Empire

British Strategy at the End of the Palestine Mandate

Introduction

"Historians have traditionally attacked the British for either failing the Jews, failing the Arabs, or failing the Empire."[1]

British policy at the end of the Palestine mandate has been criticized by historians of every imaginable variety, testifying to the immense difficulty the British authorities in Palestine faced. Caught in a quagmire of their own partial design at a crucial moment for the Empire, British decision makers had to balance the dangers of Arab and Jewish insurgency, Soviet encroachment, American hegemony, and their own regional standing – all of which could not be satisfied simultaneously.

This essay will discuss British strategy in the final years of the Palestine mandate, focusing on (1) the evolution of partition as a solution to the territory's sectarian conflict, and (2) British responses to the changing interna-

1 Ravndal, "Exit Britain." 416.

tional environment in which a solution was to be applied. Situated within a novel international order and strategic environment, British decision-making in this period was profoundly shaped by two factors: considerations of Britain's role and standing in the Middle East in the postwar world, and Britain's relationship with the two great powers of the nascent Cold War. Late British Palestine policy was therefore both consistent and strategy-driven, taking into account the acute financial and strategic limitations on the exercise of British power in the Middle East. Ultimately, however, Britain's abdication of responsibility in Palestine – resulting in the establishment of Israel – proved unforgivable to its Arab partners, and exposed its weakness at a critical moment. This was to have far-reaching implications for Britain's future in the Middle East, and for the strategic alignment of its former colonies and clients in the later stages of the Cold War.

I: British Strategy in Prewar Palestine

British rule in Palestine was shaped by considerations of international strategy from its earliest days. The defining document of the mandate's creation is the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government pledged its support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," undertaking to use its "best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.[2] Historians have pointed out how this move to capture Zionist support in 1917 was part of a "broader strategy to win the First World War" by currying American support for Britain and undermining Jewish support for Germany. The framing of British rule in Palestine as an endeavor in nation-building was also in line with Wilsonian ideals of self-determination, the zeitgeist of the Entente Powers which rejected outright imperialism of the type that had defined the British Empire before the war.[3] This pledge became a formal international legal agreement when it was incorporated into the text of the British mandate in Palestine at the San Remo Conference three years later.[4]

"BRITISH RULE IN PALESTINE WAS SHAPED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY . . . "

Support for the Zionist project was also in line with progressive theories of imperialism, popular among Labour Party leaders of the 1920s. Ramsay MacDonald, for example, saw Zionism as a civilizing force on the Arab population of Palestine, and supported it as a way to

2 "Text of the Balfour Declaration."
3 Hollis, "Palestine and the Palestinians in British Political Elite Discourse." 7-8.
4 Brenner, *Zionism: A Brief History. 140-41.*

promote independent "constructive imperialism" within the Empire.[5] This support, however, rapidly provoked animosity and resistance from the same Arab population. To some, including anti-imperialist historians, this was part of a deliberate plan to foster animosity between Jews and Arabs. Such a "divide-and-conquer" strategy, which had been employed in other British colonies, had the potential to perpetuate British mandatory rule.[6]

Britain was indeed unquestionably successful at stoking seemingly irreconcilable animosity between Jews and Arabs in Palestine between the wars. On the Jewish side, noncommittal immigration policy bolstered strife between mainstream Zionists who continued to work with the British and more radical Revisionists who believed more drastic measures were necessary.[7] On the Arab side, British support for notable figures advocating the incorporation of Palestine into a greater Syrian state undermined the formation of a Palestinian nationalist movement.[8] After large-scale Arab riots in 1929, the British were much more hesitant to support the Zionist cause, and thus refused to allow Jewish-financed mass immigration of German Jews to Palestine after the Nazis came to power.[9] Even so, Arab resentment continued to grow, fueled by frustration that Palestine was not slated for increased sovereignty after similar developments in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Transjordan in the 1920s and 30s. The Zionists, too, interpreted these developments as an indication that they were next in line for independence after their neighbors, in line with the text of the mandate.[10] British administrators thus set themselves up for failure all around when neither promise materialized.

An examination of British strategy during this period must note Palestine's outsized importance in the Empire. To quote Colonial Secretary William Ormsby-Gore in 1937: "Palestine was unlike any other country with which the British empire had to deal… The task of the mandatory Power in Palestine was unique. The country was unique: the difficulties were unique."[11] Appropriately, Palestine came to occupy an outsize presence in the British imperial consciousness. Of all British possessions, Palestine re-

5 Kelemen, *The British Left and Zionism*. 15-16. This represented a wider embrace of Labor Zionism among European social democrats, who saw it as a force for positive change in the colonized world. See Kelemen, 25.

6 Lumer, *Zionism; Its Role in World Politics. 13; Nosenko, "The Palestinian Struggle in the 1920s1930s." 43.*

7 Penkower, *Palestine in Turmoil. 86-89.*

8 Sinanoglou, *Partitioning Palestine. 40-41.*

9 See Penkower, chapters 1-4.

10 Brenner, *Zionism: A Brief History. 145-46.*

11 League of Nations, "Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission." 55. One unique aspect was that Palestine was initially inhabited by a native Arab population and settled by nationalist Jews who were neither native nor British. The Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) was therefore neither part of the imperial community nor entirely outside it. See Sinanoglou, 19

ceived the second-most attention from the British press and parliament in the 1930s and 40s, due to its religious value and to the impact of British policy in Jewish and Muslim circles in Britain, its Empire, and the United States.[12] Palestine was also strategically important, since the Middle East became a vital source of oil for the British Empire over the course of the mandate.[13]

Important as the territory was, British policy in Palestine was constrained by influence from international institutions. The "unusually high levels of international scrutiny and lobbying" surrounding Palestine were a product of its religious significance and mandate status, which subjected British administration of the mandate to criticism from members of the League of Nations.[14] Failures of administration that would have otherwise found a small local audience were amplified in Geneva and onwards in the world press, making such mistakes an international embarrassment for the Empire.[15] The League's Mandates Commission also provided a platform from which to influence British rule. Though it was responsible for the administration of sixteen different mandates, Palestine alone was responsible for 43% of the more than 3,000 petitions addressed to the Commission.[16]

II: Towards British-Led Partition

"The obligations imposed upon His Majesty's Government by the terms of the Mandate were irreconcilable."[17]

Partition motivation

During the interwar period, the situation in Palestine progressively deteriorated, with major waves of violence erupting in 1929 and 1936-39, mirroring the mounting international challenges Britain faced. As a result, British strategists began to contemplate a radical idea: partitioning the territory. Numerous external factors catalyzed the formation of this idea:

Zionist influence on British politics, experience with partition elsewhere in the Empire, British interests in the Middle East, and the increasingly difficult task of satisfying the dual requirement of the mandate – providing for a Jewish national home and respecting the rights of Palestine's non-Jewish inhabitants. The rise of fascism in Europe also played a role, motivating governments seeking either to aid Jewish refugees or to rid themselves of their

12 Kelemen, 5.
13 Nachmani, *Great Power Discord in Palestine. 30.*
14 Sinanoglou, 18, 34.
15 Sinanoglou, 34-35.
16 Pedersen, *The Guardians. 87.*
17 Colonial Office, 6.

"FROM THEIR INCEPTION, PLANS OF TERRITORIAL SEPARATION WERE DESIGNED TO ENSURE THE MAINTENANCE OF BRITISH ACCESS TO MATERIAL RESOURCES ... AND SOLIDIFY BRITAIN'S POSITION AS A PROTECTOR OF THE HOLY SITES OF THREE OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR RELIGIONS."

Jewish populations to support Jewish emigration to Palestine against Arab wishes.[18]

Considerations of partition were also marked by growing American influence on British policy in the Middle East, which accelerated during the Second World War. Britain sought American support for the administration and defense of the Middle East, leaving it open to influence through American electoral politics on top of its own domestic considerations. This was successfully leveraged by Zionists to elicit commitments of support from Churchill during the war, for example.[19] This dynamic would only become more difficult for Britain after the war, when American leaders recognized the potential of a "willing Zionist client" to act as a more effective agent of American priorities in the Middle East than a "reluctant Britain."[20] Finally, changes in British Palestine policy were motivated by a shift in Soviet attitudes towards Zionism during the war. Soviet authorities had repeatedly denounced Zionism as "an instrument of imperialism in the struggle against the movements of national liberation" and "a glaring example

"ABDICATION IN PALESTINE WOULD BE REGARDED IN THE MIDDLE EAST AS SYMPTOMATIC OF OUR ABDICATION AS A GREAT POWER."

of the deception practiced on the working-classes of an oppressed nation by the combined efforts of Entente imperialism and the bourgeoisie."[21] Prioritizing the war effort against Germany above all else, however, the Soviets came to view friendly contact with the Yishuv as beneficial. Such contact could be used to muster support among American Jews for opening a second front against Germany, and then to preserve Soviet influence in the postwar Middle East.[22] By the end of World War II, then, Britain faced a deteriorating situation in Palestine and an international environment increasingly amenable to the idea of partition.

18 Sinanoglou, 18, 35. This final category included Nazi Germany itself, which encouraged Jewish emigration to Palestine in the early 1930s and signed an agreement regulating it with the Jewish Agency in 1933, *inter alia. See Black, Edwin. The Transfer Agreement: The Dramatic Story of the Pact Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1999.*

19 Kelemen, 22-23; Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948. 11.*

20 Nachmani, 273.

21 Frankel, *The Soviet Regime and Anti-Zionism. 26; Resolution of the Second Congress of the Comintern, 1920. In: Degras, The Communist International, 1919-1943. I, 144.*

22 Frankel, 10-11.

Despite these push and pull factors, British planners viewed partition as an option to be avoided if possible. Partition along religious lines had been attempted in Bengal (1905-11) and Ireland (1920), at great cost and with mixed results. Not only was a partition plan thus likely to be costly and bloody, but the prevailing British belief was that it was prohibited by the text of the mandate.[23] As the idea gradually spread, however, planners defined a number of strategic priorities that a partition plan would have to satisfy. Penny Sinanoglou writes:

From their inception, plans of territorial separation were designed to ensure the maintenance of British access to material resources, carve out some sort of space for Britain's Zionist allies, placate regional Arab states, and solidify Britain's position as a protector of the holy sites of three of the world's major religions.[24]

The impact of partition on British-Arab relations was of particular concern. During the war, inchoate Arab nationalism and encroaching Soviet influence made Britain shift its Middle East policy from country-specific to regional.[25] This required a Palestine policy that was more conciliatory towards Arab interests, but efforts to maintain good relations with the Arabs were frustrated by their unwillingness to cooperate with alleged supporters of Zionism. The British thus tried repeatedly to establish Arab political institutions equivalent to the Jewish Agency, but the Arab population refused to cooperate at every turn, up until the end of the mandate.[26]

The evolution of partition plans

Partition was first formally proposed by the Peel Report of 1937, commissioned in response to the ongoing Great Arab Revolt. In hindsight, British authorities identified this as the moment in which it became clear that "the obligations imposed upon His Majesty's Government by the terms of the Mandate were irreconcilable," and that "it was impossible both to concede the Arab claim to self-government and to secure the establishment of the Jewish national home."[27] The Peel plan called for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with a British exclave stretching from Jerusalem to Jaffa, thereby retaining control of key strategic points. In advocating for the "difficult and drastic operation of partition," the report rejected the idea of cantonization, which was competing for influence

23 Louis, "The Dissolution of the British Empire." 336. Partition in Bengal was reversed after six years following opposition, but was far more successful in Ireland. For an elaboration on the history of these partitions, see Sinanoglou, 23-32.

24 Sinanoglou, 172.

25 Nachmani 28-29.

26 Colonial Office, 5-6.

27 Colonial Office, 6.

within the British government at the time.[28] While the Peel recommendations never became official policy, their influence was in the longer term: the partition lines became the core idea for resolving the "Palestine question" through the eventual UN partition plan and beyond to the Oslo Accords of the 1990s.[29]

The publication of the Peel Report renewed the Arab revolt, frightening the British authorities. With the prospect of war with Germany and Italy looming, British authorities particularly feared any Arab opposition that threatened their control of the Middle East.[30]

Intending to walk back the partition recommendation, the British appointed the Woodhead Commission in 1938 to conduct a "technical study" of the Peel plan.[31] The members of the commission were under strict instructions to prioritize British strategic interests in their report – limiting its military and financial burden, and retaining control of holy sites, key border zones, and natural resources. The three plans the commission produced were thus distilled products of British strategy, envisioning an Arab state and a much smaller Jewish state, along with British enclaves in Jerusalem, Nazareth, and potentially the Negev. Thus, even as the Woodhead Commission declared that "the problem cannot be solved by an exchange of land and population", the British failed to propose a better alternative.[32]

As Arab violence persisted and the situation in Europe deteriorated, the British government published a white paper in May 1939 which explicitly announced that "it is not part of [British] policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State," calling for the establishment of an "independent Palestine State" within a decade in which "Arabs and Jews share authority in government."[33] Even this document, however, demarcated geographic zones in which different land transfer rules applied, thereby maintaining a commitment to a territorial solution – albeit of a different kind. On the verge of a world war and embroiled in a three-year-long Arab revolt, the White Paper was a product of British pragmatism and commitment to shelving the Palestine question. Within months of its publication, Britain was at war with Germany, and Palestine found itself out of the limelight for once. With the Arabs largely satisfied and the Jews largely preoccupied with events in Europe, the White

28 Ovendale, *Britain, the United States, and the End of the Palestine Mandate, 1942-1948. 5; El-Eini, Mandated Landscape. 316-19. Partition caused deep disagreements within the British government. See JTA, "Britain Seen Firm on Partition."*

29 Brenner, 149.

30 Kelemen, 34-35.

31 Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949. 49.*

32 El-Eini, 332-40; Morris, 49. "Palestine Partition (Woodhead) Commission Report." §178. In fact, the report *itself rejected all three of the plans that it put forward.*

33 Secretary of State for the Colonies, "Palestine Statement of Policy."

Paper was a successful temporary fix.

The 1939 restrictions on Jewish immigration, the core provision of the White Paper, were set to expire in May 1944, requiring British attention during the war. In August 1943, Churchill appointed a Cabinet committee to propose long-term plans for Palestine, all of which ended up being partition plans of one kind or another. Even the report's dissenting opinion agreed that partition represented "the best and possibly the only final solution of the Palestine problem."[34] The committee advocated for a return to a "natural" political order, reversing the "arbitrary dismemberment of the Levant" in the 1910s by incorporating much of Palestine into a Levantine Arab state.[35] The plan's nod to a pan-Arab political consciousness was an attempt to placate Arab partners crucial to Britain's warfighting efforts, who had explicitly been promised independence in 1939 and now had to contend with partition once again. The plan won over Churchill, and the rest of the Cabinet followed suit in October 1944.[36]

British planners later determined that the key suggestion of the Cabinet report – Levantine unification – was impossible. This, along with the assassination of the British minister of state Lord Moyne by Lehi operatives in November, halted all partition planning. For a brief moment, it seemed that partition would be taken off the table for good, as British opinion on Zionism soured, the new Arab League began to exert influence, and even Zionist leaders shifted their lobbying efforts towards federation.[37] Experience with enclaves in Danzig in the interwar period also made British planners more reluctant to implement them in Palestine, which ruled out most conceivable partition plans.[38]

"... BRITAIN REMAINED WITHOUT A WORKABLE PLAN AND WITH FEW OPTIONS ..."

As a result, the next plan under consideration by British authorities – the Hall-Harris plan of September 1945 – called for federation rather than partition. Sharing an author, the plan was similar to the Harris-Andrews plan

34 War Cabinet, Committee on Palestine, Report of the Committee, December 20, 1943. In: Sinanoglou, 160.

35 Ibid.; El-Eini, 346. A Levantine state appealed to a Britain made hegemonic in the Middle East by the surrender of France and the German defeat in North Africa.

36 Sinanoglou, 162.

37 Sinanoglou, 163. British attitudes towards Zionism were complex, especially among soldiers in Palestine. Jews were simultaneously seen as both sympathetic victims of Nazi aggression and murderous terrorists. See Kadish, 10-11.

38 El-Eini, 355. Jewish settlement patterns made it incredibly difficult to partition Palestine into two contiguous territories without major transfers.

of 1936 (which the Peel Report had effectively buried). In this plan, Britain would retain strategic control of Palestine, but limit its territorial control to Jerusalem. Britain would thus be responsible for foreign relations, defense, customs, and communications in the entire territory, while Jews and Arabs would administrate their respective cantons independently.[39] The Hall-Harris plan was a pure reflection of Britain's interests at the end of the Second World War, and thus embodied continued hopes that a solution in Palestine could produce maximum benefits for a minimal cost. As this chapter has shown, this was simply the latest iteration of British attempts to produce a solution that would satisfy conflicting Zionist, Arab, and American interests, balanced according to Britain's own evolving strategic priorities. As we have seen, however, none of these plans could produce a broad enough coalition of interests to actually be implemented.

III: The Cold Reality of the Cold War

"Abdication in Palestine would be regarded in the Middle East as symptomatic of our abdication as a Great Power."[40]

Britain emerged from World War II with four million troops under its flag, commanding the world's second-largest navy, and ruling over a loyal Empire-Commonwealth spanning the globe.[41] Beneath this façade of strength, however, Britain was in dire financial straits –the Lend-Lease program had terminated in August 1945, and the mammoth $3.75 billion American loan that followed was only expected to keep it afloat for two years.[42] In the postwar world, Britain was unmistakably a second-rate power inferior to the United States and the Soviet Union, both of which were showing keen interest in the Middle East and Palestine. Facing these new regional competitors, all Britain had to show for a quarter-century of mandatory rule was spiraling violence, a series of failed solutions, and rapidly-deteriorating security.

Despite its massive financial challenges, Britain still conceived of itself as a victorious great power, requiring expensive military commitments around the world. According to British historian David Reynolds, "national retreat from global status after military victory was entirely counter-intuitive for both British bureaucrats and politicians."[43] British strategy in the years immediately following the war was thus based on a delicate balancing act between domestic reconstruction and the preservation

39 Sinanoglou, 165; El-Eini, 356.
40 Beeley minute, July 10, 1945. In: Cohen, 16.
41 Deighton, "Britain and the Cold War." 112.
42 Sinanoglou, 164; Cohen, 1.
43 Reynolds, "Great Britain." 78-79.

of British status and independence vis-à-vis both great powers, and the main tool in service of the latter end was the Empire. Even as decolonization took off in the British and other empires, the Communist threat kept Britain from completely retreating from its former colonies as it attempted to continue to exert influence in the newlyformed Commonwealth.[44]

British foreign policy in the early Cold War was defined by Churchill's idea of the "Three Circles", with Britain at the nexus of the United States, Europe, and the Empire-Commonwealth.[45] Up in arms about the Communist threat and heavily reliant on American financial, material, and military support during the war, Britain was naturally drawn to its ally across the Atlantic over its former ally across the Continent.[46] By 1947, then, the contours of a bipolar world order had been drawn. The United States would assume responsibility for the defense of Western Europe against the Soviet threat, with Britain and France both relegated to supporting roles.[47] British leaders thus understood that American support was essential to the success of their foreign policy, but sought to retain the Empire-Commonwealth as a British sphere of influence.

The Importance of Palestine

In the Middle East, where Soviet influence was less of an immediate threat than in Europe, Britain was more reluctant to defer to the Americans. In November 1945, the State Department declared that the United States had "no intention" of becoming a "mere passive spectator" in the region, but the British were jealous of their regional hegemony.[48] Some, like the commander of the Transjordanian Legion John Glubb, even believed that Britain was entitled to a "Monroe Doctrine in the Arab countries."[49] These lofty ambitions were checked by

Britain's financial state, however, which had drastically reduced its ability to deploy force in the region. To maintain regional primacy without damaging the valuable Anglo-American relationship, Britain therefore needed to maintain good relations with Arab populations – and this required distance from the Zionists.[50] At the same time, Britain's weakened state also meant that it could not afford to be perceived as weak in Palestine. As Harold Beeley, future secretary of the Anglo-American Committee on Pal-

44 Deighton, 114-17; Ravndal, 419.
45 Davis, "WSC's 'Three Majestic Circles.'"
46 See a JIC report from September 1946: "Communism is the most important external political menace confronting the British Commonwealth and Western democracies and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future." In: Deighton, 120.
47 Deighton, 121.
48 Nachmani, 28, 38.
49 Nachmani, 32.
50 Ravndal, 430.

estine explained in July 1945:

Abdication in Palestine would be regarded in the Middle East as symptomatic of our abdication as a Great Power, and might set in motion a process which would result in the crumbling away of our influence throughout this region.51

The situation in Palestine was not only a test of British power in the Middle East, but also a constraint on it. Palestine was considered one of three major overseas burdens on the British treasury, which had reached a critical state by the end of 1946.[52]

In numbers, British military expenditures in Palestine from the end of World War II to the end of the mandate topped £100 million, representing approximately 0.3% of GDP over the same period.[53] Though the British military was responsible for the administration and security of one quarter of the world's population, the violence and unrest in Palestine had reached such proportions that by the end of 1946, one out of ten British troops was stationed in the territory, whose population numbered fewer than two million.[54] In the final years of the mandate, these troops were mainly tasked with fighting Jewish insurgent groups – the IZL and Lehi, and briefly the Haganah, the armed wing of the Jewish Agency.[55] Statements of British leaders from this period leave no doubt as to the magnitude of the frustration they were experiencing. In July 1945, Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley admitted:

The Palestine Mandate [...] has proved a continual drain on resources of material and manpower. I realise, however, that the effects both upon our strategic position in the Middle East might be serious, but these matters are more for the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff.56

The same month, Churchill in his final weeks as Prime Minister remarked in exasperation:

I am not aware of the slightest advantage which has ever accrued to Great Britain from this painful and thankless task. Somebody else should have their turn now.[57]

In spite of this frustration, Palestine in the 1940s remained a rare bastion of British imperial power in the Middle East, and the prospect of retreat raised serious alarm in certain official circles. By early 1947, the British economy was reeling from war debts, lost export markets, and a harsh winter, but the Cabinet was unwilling to give up on Palestine – one of only two Middle Eastern territories still under

51 Beeley minute, July 10, 1945. In: Cohen, 16.

52 Cohen. 30-31.

53 Colonial Office, 10; Chantrill, "Gross Domestic Product for United Kingdom 1946-1960."

54 Nachmani, 19; United Nations Conciliation Committee for Palestine (UNCCP), "Palestine Population Estimates for 1946."

55 Kadish, *The British Army in Palestine and the 1948 War. 1.*

56 Cohen, 15-16.

57 Cohen, 15. Of course, Churchill was well aware of the strategic benefits of British rule in Palestine, as we shall now see.

direct British rule.[58] At the center of the eastern Mediterranean, Palestine had unique importance to British imperial interests, providing control of strategic land and sea routes and access to vast oil resources beyond.[59]

The weakening of British control in the region only increased this strategic importance. In September 1945, Egypt demanded to revise the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, and Britain promised to do so on the basis of full equality. The unrest in Palestine directly undermined Britain's bargaining position, as it had forced a diversion of nearly all the combat troops stationed in Egypt to Palestine. The Foreign Office found this situation concerning as well, and noted that the formation of a Jewish state on the lines of communication between Egypt and Arab states to the east would be a disaster for British interests.[60]

" . . . AN INTENSE TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDONESIA AND CHINA DID NOT PREVENT CHINA FROM LAUNCHING ITS 'GRAY ZONE WARFARE' TACTICS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA . . . "

Confronted with the specter of evacuating its strategically vital bases in Egypt, the British military immediately turned to Palestine as the closest and most viable alternative. In its view, Palestine was the only place "between Malta and Aden" that could accommodate the Middle East Reserve and British air bases, critical to power projection in the region.[61] To this end, the Chiefs of Staff warned Attlee against the grave strategic implications of any solution which would forfeit the right to station British troops in Palestine. Lord Tedder, chief of the Air Staff, went even further and insisted that even a solution which addressed British interests in Palestine would be unacceptable if it alienated the Arabs.[62] For the British military, the Middle East was an area of "prime importance to the British Empire", and surrendering the mandate would result in the loss of Britain's "predominant position" in the region, causing "incalculable" damage to its reputation.[63] With all avenues of action challenging or blocked entirely, it becomes apparent why Palestine has come to be regarded as "perhaps the most intractable problem facing the British government" in the early postwar years.[64]

58 Ravndal, 418-20.
59 Deighton, 120.
60 Cohen, 34; Ovendale, 178-83.
61 Cohen. 34-37.
62 Ovendale, 185.
63 Cohen, 16.
64 Ravndal, 418.

External pressure points

For all this talk of strategic importance, by 1947 there was no denying that British control of Palestine was weakening with every passing day. To quote the commander of British forces in Palestine in 1946: "The Palestine government is completely in control of those areas which are primarily Arab, [and] the [Jewish] Agency in areas where the Jews predominate."[65] A major factor in this deterioration of sovereignty was illegal immigration, which was the source of 70,000 of the 120,000 Jews who arrived in the territory between the end of World War II and the end of the mandate. Illegal immigration particularly scared the British because it was the main source of recruitment for Jewish underground organizations. The arrival of every immigrant ship therefore raised the probability of the worst possible outcome for the British – having to fight both Jews and Arabs – and their interception became the paramount task of British forces in Palestine and the Mediterranean.[66]

This was hardly a task for the British military alone, however, as the immigration was largely originating from territories under US and Soviet occupation in central and eastern Europe. Under instructions from Soviet authorities eager to disrupt British rule in the Middle East, the Polish and Rumanian puppet governments permitted Jews to emigrate to Palestine, a fact of which British authorities were aware as early as January 1945. The British managed to leverage negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference in summer 1946 to slow emigration from the Soviet Union and the countries under its influence, but the Americans proved more difficult.[67] Much of the financial and material support for illegal immigration and underground resistance in Palestine originated in the US, but American authorities maintained that they could do nothing to stop it.[68]

Facing issues like illegal immigration, any British course of action was likely to provoke violence from Jews, Arabs, or both – in addition to international condemnation from the United States if it was anti-Zionist. Britain thus found itself in a nearly impossible position in which inac-

65 In: Nachmani, 19.

66 Nachmani, 16. Many of the illegal immigrants were imprisoned in Palestine and Cyprus, but some were sent back to Europe. Intercepting migrant ships and imprisoning their passengers, most of whom were Holocaust survivors, generated extreme international and domestic pressure on the British government.

67 Kochavi, 168, 210, 228; Nachmani, 78. See more on Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union below.

68 Ovendale, 202-03.

tion meant the loss of control in a strategically important territory, but any action would anger one of its two principal partners in the early Cold War – the United States and the Arab nations. The situation was made worse by divided opinions on the Palestine question within the British government itself. The Chiefs of Staff and Foreign Office were more concerned with Soviet expansion into the Middle East and beyond into Africa and southern Europe, and generally maintained pro-Arab attitudes. Several Cabinet members, in contrast, were more concerned by American reactions, and were therefore inclined towards pro-Zionist policies.[69] British leaders had deemed that American cooperation on the Palestine issue was necessary for the preservation of the mandate as early as 1945, further complicating this debate.[70]

American interests in Palestine went beyond support for Zionism – the US viewed Palestine as a weak underbelly for British policy in the Middle East, recognizing that support for pro-Zionist policies would make it difficult for the British to ensure their position of primacy in the Arab world. Indeed, as time went on, Britain found it increasingly difficult to apply a coherent policy to the entire region, since Palestine required an entirely different form of treatment from the rest of the region.[71] The United States thus found itself in the opportune position in which its support for Zionism won it support from Jewish interests, but also had the indirect effect of increasing American influence in the Arab world at British expense.

"IN RECENT YEARS, CHINA HAS BEEN USING ITS ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AS A UNILATERAL POLITICAL-ECONOMIC WEAPON TO ACHIEVE CHINA'S INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES."

Understanding this dynamic, British leaders sought to engage the Americans in producing a solution for Palestine and kill two birds with one stone. American involvement would not only make them assume some of the responsibility for the events in Palestine, but also hinder

69 Ravndal, 420, 423.
70 Nachmani, 270.
71 Nachmani, 31, 40.

Soviet encroachment into the region.[72] Britain was desperate to achieve the first goal, and used mutual concerns about Soviet expansionism to form the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AAC) in January 1946. With split attitudes on partition, the committee recommended placing Palestine under UN trusteeship, which would allow the British to retain control of the territory and provide an opportunity to rewrite the seemingly impossible terms of the mandate. The British Cabinet took up the AAC's recommendations, and in July produced a joint Anglo-American agreement on Palestine policy, which became known as the Morrison-Grady plan.[73]

This plan recommended splitting Palestine into three provinces – Jewish, Arab, and British, removing restrictions on Jewish purchases of Arab land, and immediately issuing 100,000 Jewish immigration certificates, which was a personal priority of President Truman.[74] The plan was categorically rejected by the Arabs, and the US eventually removed its support after a few months.[75] Initially considered a major British success, the AAC was ultimately a failure. The committee failed to secure American support for continued British rule in Palestine, buy Britain more time to stem the tide of its waning influence in the region, or move the United States towards support for the principles of the 1939 White Paper which had previously preserved the peace in Palestine. This failure meant that Britain remained without a workable plan and with few options to resolve the situation on its own.

At this juncture, the position of the Palestine question in the Anglo-American relationship in the late 1940s should be clarified. Britain was frustrated at what it perceived to be American hypocrisy in advocating for the mass resettlement of Jewish refugees in Palestine while refusing to allow them to immigrate to the United States. In 1945, the British ambassador to the United States Lord Halifax went so far as to write about Jewish immigrants: "The average citizen does not want them in the United States, and salves his conscience by advocating their admission into Palestine."[76] At this point, however, Britain was seriously dependent on American financial and strategic support in Europe. With their hands thus tied, British leaders had to acquiesce to American priorities – themselves a reflection of U.S. electoral politics – at the expense of their own strategic interests. Truman personally played a central role in this dynamic, successfully pushing

72 Grigoryev and Fedchenko, "Palestinian Problem
73 Sinanoglou, 165-66.
74 Colonial Office, 8-9. in the United Nations (1945-1947)." 63-64.
75 Sinanoglou, 168.
76 Cohen, 15.

the British to shift towards a more Zionist-friendly line without assuming responsibility for the repercussions – whether in the expenditure of blood and treasure in Palestine, or by allowing Jewish immigration to the United States.[77]

Despite these disagreements, British and American leaders could unite behind a shared suspicion of the Soviet Union, which stood to benefit from the weakening of Britain's grip on the Middle East. One major tool at the Soviets' disposal for sustaining the unrest in Palestine was enabling Jewish emigration at a time when the British were seriously concerned with curbing it. In 1944-45, the Soviets allowed hundreds of thousands of Jews to return to Poland and Rumania, whence they had fled earlier in the war. In the throes of anti-Semitism, neither was an attractive destination for Jews, and Stalin anticipated that many of them would attempt to continue onwards to Palestine.[78] Stalin thus hoped to accomplish two strategic purposes. First, any Jewish migration to Palestine was likely to generate pressure on Britain to allow it, since the Americans were particularly sensitive to this issue. Second, this migration had the potential to favorably influence the course of a future Jewish state, since many Polish Jews had leftist sympathies.[79] This episode was a major anomaly in Soviet policy regarding displaced groups during and after the war. Despite official denial of any mass emigration taking place, the departure of so many Jews from Soviet territory could have only taken place following an explicit directive from Moscow.[80]

"LASTLY, THERE IS SCANT EVIDENCE THE UNITED NATIONS IS CAPABLE OF RESOLVING POLITICAL DISPUTES INVOLVING A GREAT POWER . . . "

Motivated by different concerns, the United States also used Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in Europe as a lever of pressure on Britain. Despite incessant American pressure, the British refused to budge from the tight quotas of the 1939 White Paper. After the war, the United States occupied significant parts of Germany and Austria, and encouraged Jewish DPs there to move toward Mediterranean ports where they could continue to Palestine with the support of Zionist organizations. These seized the opportu-

77 Ovendale, 178-79.

78 Khanin, *Bogdim Ba-Moledet. 39-41.*

79 Kaganovitch, 76-79. More than others, Polish Jews who survived the war in the USSR felt indebted to the Soviets when they learned that by escaping, they had evaded near-certain death at the hands of the Nazis in their home country.

80 Kaganovitch, 59. Kochavi, 167, 227.

nity to help DPs from other occupation zones move to the American zones, where they could be transported to a port for emigration. For the Zionists, this was a win-win situation, since those that could not be transported would constitute a financial burden on the Americans, incentivizing them to up the pressure on Britain to allow more immigration. Motivated by memories of the Great Arab Revolt, the British held fast to their quotas, significantly exacerbating the Jewish DP problem in Europe. Jews had made up no more than 1% of the 10.5 million DPs in Europe immediately after the war, but by 1947 they represented 20%.[81]

IV: A Strategic Retreat?

By 1947, then, the British government was facing significant pressure from the Americans, the Soviets, the Arab countries, Zionist organization, and its own generals to produce a workable solution for Palestine, but none appeared. The territory remained a powder keg, and any major policy shift was likely to provoke tremendous upheaval. British officials were particularly frustrated by Jewish illegal immigration and by the obstinance of Arab leaders. The latter factor was exacerbated by the sense of Muslim betrayal following Britain's near-expulsion from Egypt in 1946 and catastrophic partition of India the following year.[82]

In late 1946, President Truman unilaterally declared his support for partition, and the British conducted a series of unsuccessful negotiations with Zionist leaders. Reaching new levels of frustration, British leaders began to consider letting the newly-formed United Nations solve the Palestine question in their stead.[83] Turning to the UN would draw the Soviets into the mix and likely strip Britain of its strategic assets in Palestine and was therefore seen as a last resort short of unilateral withdrawal, but Britain was running out of time. The deteriorating situation raised the probability that the Soviets would refer it to the Security Council themselves, which was likely to undermine British interests even further.[84] With the British government unable to advocate for partition because of Arab sentiment, under American pressure to pursue policies friendly to the Zionists, and split along ideological lines, the appeal of a UN-sponsored partition spread rapidly, even among those who were previously strongly opposed to any form of partition.[85]

81 Nachmani, 9, 14-16.
82 Ovendale, 187-89.
83 Ovendale, 167.

84 Ravndal, 421.
85 Ovendale, 168-70, 193-96.

After numerous failures to reach a compromise within the British government, Foreign Secretary Bevin gave a speech to the House of Commons in February 1947 stating that "the only course now open to us is to submit the problem to the judgement of the United Nations."[86] The speech captures the sense of paralyzed frustration gripping British authorities at the time:

If the conflict has to be resolved by an arbitrary decision, that is not a decision to which His Majesty's Government are empowered, as Mandatory, to take. His Majesty's Government have of themselves no power under the terms of the mandate, to award the country either to the Arabs or to the Jews, or even to partition between them.[87]

Following Bevin's speech, the British Cabinet decided to refer the issue to the United Nations, after a last-ditch negotiation effort at the London Conference for Palestine.[88] The decision to surrender responsibility in Palestine was thus a deliberate strategy choice, and not merely a cost-cutting measure as some have suggested. Several weeks later, the British representative to the UN requested a special session of the General Assembly to discuss the issue. The session convened in April 1947 and formed the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to produce a workable plan.[89] The choice of a non-binding body was not accidental. Convening a special UNGA session was seen as the best option, since the Security Council was seen as too prone to Soviet influence and issued binding decisions.[90]

UNSCOP's starting point for examining the Palestine question was five volumes of British documents and data and officials' private analysis of past partition plans, which gave it a very British view of things. As an international body, however, it had much less of an interest in protecting British interests than all previous British plans, and therefore cut Britain out of the plan entirely. The UNSCOP plan was therefore essentially the first plan to not call for some form of British presence or control over strategic resources. Instead, the UN considered the Jewish state "the force to implement the partition plan," and rejected the unification of the Arab state with Transjordan, which was a central British priority.[91]

By this point, British public opinion on Palestine had reached an all-time low, significantly undermining British leaders' ability to advocate for their strategic interests. As the UNSCOP report was being written, Britain

86 Sinanoglou, 168.
87 Colonial Office, 9.
88 Ravndal, 417.
89 Ovendale, 199-201.
90 Grigoryev and Fedchenko, 65-66; Ravndal, 421.
91 Ovendale, 168-71, 174.

plunged into another balance-of-payments crisis, and the Jewish underground organization IZL kidnapped, murdered, and booby-trapped the bodies of two British soldiers. Days later, British forces turned the immigrant ship Exodus away from Haifa towards Marseilles, from where it would be turned back to Germany, producing a publicity nightmare for the British government. It was at this moment that the two UNSCOP plans were published, both agreeing on the immediate termination of the mandate, granting of independence, and preservation of economic unity, but diverging on the appropriate political solution. Seven members called for a transitional period of British rule under UN trusteeship before partitioning Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state, while three supported the establishment of a federative state, and one abstained.[92]

Critical to the success of the partition plan was Soviet diplomatic support, which was a truly seismic shift in Soviet policy. Following decades of open hostility towards the Zionist project, this support formed part of Soviet grand strategy in the early Cold War, and has been widely analyzed in the academic literature. Particularly informative for understanding this strategy is the Declaration of the Founding of the Cominform, published by the Communist parties of the Soviet Union and its satellite states on November 10, 1947. Seeing light only 19 days before the UN vote on the Palestine partition plan, this document provides a snapshot of Soviet grandstrategic thinking at the precise moment in which the partition debate entered a critical phase.

The declaration divides the world into "two diametrically opposed political lines":

On one side, the USSR and the other democratic countries directed at undermining imperialism and consolidating democracy, and on the other side, the policy of the United States and Britain directed at strengthening imperialism and stifling democracy. [...] The anti-imperialist democratic camp should close its ranks, draw up an agreed program of actions and work out its own tactics against the main forces of the imperialist camp, against American imperialism and its British and French allies.[93]

The rhetoric of this document leaves no room for doubt as to the fixation of the Soviet Union on undermining British and American influence in the late 1940s. This worldview was entirely black and white, good and evil, and explains both the convergence of British and American geostrategic interests and the dramatic pendulum swings in Soviet policy towards the Zionist project in this period. In this new zero-sum world, Zionism came to be seen as

92 UN Special Committee on Palestine, "Report to the General Assembly."
93 Organ of the Cominform, "Declaration of the Founding of the Cominform." 122-24.

"an issue of truly central importance" for Soviet authorities.[94] To this end, the Soviets initially supported the establishment of a single, majority-Arab state in Palestine. Soviet sympathies naturally lay with the Arab population of Palestine, as the Jews were seen as colonizers "vigorously backed by British imperialism."[95] As the violence in Palestine escalated, Stalin came to see a Jewish state in Palestine as a potential "source of trouble" for Britain.[96] In the Soviet worldview, the Yishuv was at that moment playing a progressive and anti-imperialist role in undermining British rule, even as the Zionist movement itself was regarded as subversive and bourgeois. The Soviets' desire to supplant British hegemony in the Middle East with their own influence was paramount, even at the cost of losing standing in the Arab world.[97] To that end, on October 13, 1947, the Soviet delegation announced its intention to support the UNSCOP majority plan, citing Britain's failures in Palestine, Western failures to protect Jews during the Holocaust, and rising Jewish-Arab tensions. This essentially guaranteed the plan's passage in the UNGA.[98] Indeed, Palestine's disruptive nature was a blessing to Soviet designs on the Middle East. As British policy in Palestine and other arenas came to rely more heavily on American support, the Attlee government came under increased criticism from the left wing of Attlee's own Labour Party to reduce this dependence.[99] Sustaining chaos in Palestine therefore not only directly undermined British power there, but also fueled Anglo-American discord, from which the Communist bloc stood to gain. The Soviets therefore did not only support the partition plan, but also enabled permitted the export of arms and aircraft from Czechoslovakia to Israel during the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War. These shipments had a major impact on the success of Israeli forces in the war.[100]

During this entire period, however, the Soviets were careful to not explicitly endorse Zionism as an ideology. "Zionism" was never brought up in a favorable context in Soviet media or speeches at the UN; only "Jews" and "the Jewish people".[101] This had the effect of separating Zionism as a global movement and ideology from the

94 Frankel, 9-10.

95 Grigoryev and Fedchenko, 71; Nosenko, 40.

96 Kaganovitch, "Stalin's Great Power Politics, the Return of Jewish Refugees to Poland, and Continued Migration to Palestine, 1944–1946." 76.

97 Frankel, 14; Hersh, 20; Ovendale, 186.

98 n.a., "Text of the Russian Statement on Palestine." Hamilton, "Russia Endorses Palestine Division; U.N. Approval Seen." In an anecdote that captures the spirit of the moment, the article about Russian support appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*, to the right of an article describing how the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem was the third diplomatic mission in three weeks to be attacked by Arab militants for supporting partition.

99 Ovendale, 176.

100 See Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947-53. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1974. Chapters 3-4.*

101 Even these indirect allusions to Jewish nationalism were dangerous to intra-Soviet stability, which was predicated on the replacement of nationalism with centralized socialism.

de facto existence of the Jewish settlement in Palestine. One was considered highly subversive to the Soviet regime; the other a useful tool to weaken the British grip on the Middle East. Indeed, once the British had left Palestine and the existence of the State of Israel was a fait accompli, the Soviets again shifted their focus towards the suppression of domestic Zionism, and Soviet support in arms and immigration ended by 1949.[102]

Following the publication of the UNSCOP plans, the British anticipated that the majority partition plan would spark an Arab revolt, and the minority federation plan a Jewish revolt. In response, the Cabinet determined that it was not willing to commit the military resources that restoring order in either scenario would require. This was not only a financial decision – both plans ran a significant risk of alienating Arab public opinion at a moment when British strategy required it desperately.[103] By the end of 1947, then, Britain had no realistic options short of withdrawal, since no solutions other than the UNSCOP plans were in sight. This was both a validation of British concerns in referring the issue to the United Nations in the first place, and a resounding signal of the decline in British imperial power.

Without a viable course of action, Britain chose to abstain in the vote on the partition plan in November 1947, and subsequently announced that it would surrender the mandate the following May. Even as the situation rapidly devolved into open warfare, Britain refused to cooperate with UN authorities. British authorities thus hindered the arrival of the partition implementation committee in Palestine and refused to establish UN trusteeship. The Arab response to this decision is contested by historians. In one view, the decision to withdraw rather than implement partition was well received, thereby accomplishing Britain's chief strategic aim.[104] In another, the haste of the British departure was viewed in the Arab world as abetting the Zionist cause.[105]

V: Aftermath and Conclusion

Amid the chaos that gripped Palestine after the partition vote and despite the decision to withdraw, British decision makers refused to write Palestine off. With Palestinian Arab institutions still largely absent, Britain successfully negotiated an agreement between Transjordanian and Jewish Agency officials allowing the former to admin-

102 Frankel, 12-15. See also Khanin, 197-98.
103 Ravndal, 425; Hollis, 12.
104 Ravndal, 426-29.
105 Hollis, 12.

ister the territory of the hypothetical Arab state, a British goal which had been explicitly rejected by UNSCOP.[106] This was part of a broader British plan to use its Arab proxies to continue to exercise influence in the Middle East after partition. Central to this plan were the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, and Iraq, all of which were commanded by British officers and controlled by governments with some degree of British influence. After the British withdrew their forces from Palestine in May 1948, they urged these governments to invade the infant Israel in the hope of defeating it militarily to preserve their influence in the territory.[107] These plans were largely unsuccessful, however, as Israel prevailed in the war and conquered much of the territory designated for the Arab state.[108]

Within Palestine, the British withdrawal was a tactical success and a strategic failure. In the immediate view, British forces emerged "relatively unscathed" once the decision to surrender the mandate had been made – thereby avoiding a large and costly military engagement.[109] In a broader view, British weakness had been exposed for all to see, and all it had to show for 30 years of control was "the dismal wreck of Arab Palestine," to quote a senior official in the Foreign Office's Eastern Department.[110] Indeed, Britain's "infamous scuttle" from Palestine was to adversely affect its reputation both in the Arab world and in the United States, which was to emerge as the unmistakable hegemon during the Korean War only two years later.[111] Internally, too, the trauma of Palestine in the last days of the mandate reached such an extent that it became a metaphor of administrative failure throughout the Empire. Thus in 1947, Lord Wavell, the penultimate Viceroy of India, warned King George that the situation in India could deteriorate into a "large-scale Palestine."112 When the British faced a Communist insurgency in Malaya the following year, they worried about it becoming "a second Palestine."[113]

Unfortunately for Britain, the partition of Palestine was to be only the first in a series of critical blows to its standing in the Middle East which it tried so hard to preserve. In the 1950s, British influence was to become a target of Nasserism and pan-Arabism, leading to the 1956 Suez crisis and the eventual alignment of much of the Arab

106 Ravndal, 428-29.

107 Lumer, 13; Grigoryev and Fedchenko, 76.

108 Israel's battlefield success was in small part due to Soviet support, such that it had the intended effect – weakening British power in the Middle East.

109 Louis, 336. This naturally draws a parallel to India, where the British withdrawal had similar reverberations.

110 Sir Michael Wright, 30 March 1949. In: Louis, 336.

111 Deighton, 127-29.

112 Wavell to King George VI, 24 Feb. 1947, In:

Louis, 332.

113 Louis, 337.

world with the Soviet Union. While the Middle East would occupy a central role in world politics over the subsequent decades, Britain would largely play a minor role in these events. Although the partition of Palestine was not the cause of this broader decline, it exposed Britain as flippant, self-interested, and weak to Arab leaders, who found comfort in the anti-colonial rhetoric of the Soviet Union and its allies.[114]

While Britain persistently tried to tie its policy in Palestine to its broader evolving strategic goals, then, it was ultimately unsuccessful. British policymakers were initially correct that support for Zionism would help them win the mandate for Palestine, but this rapidly provoked resistance from the local population. The Pandora's box of Jewish immigration could conceivably have been closed once more in the early years of the mandate, but the rise of fascism in Europe made the mandate an easy target for international pressure on Britain. With rising sectarian tensions, British strategists began to contemplate the partition of Palestine, but no consensus could be reached. When war broke out in Europe, Britain got a brief reprieve in Palestine, with the Arabs placated by stricter policies and the Jews preoccupied with the ongoing Holocaust.

The Second World War demoted Britain's standing on the world stage, and left it financially and militarily weak. The emerging Cold War made competition for global influence a zerosum game between the United States and the Soviet Union, both of which showed interest in exerting influence in Palestine and the region. Britain threw in its lot behind the United States for the defense of Europe, which exposed it to the exercise of American leverage on issues like Palestine policy. Anxious to preserve its regional hegemony necessary for its global standing, British leaders attempted to have the United States assume some of the responsibility for administering Palestine. When this failed, they felt they had no choice but to turn the problem to the United Nations, or risk alienating their Arab partners.

When UNSCOP recommended partition as a solution for Palestine, both great powers saw it as advancing their own interests, producing a rare moment of Soviet-American consensus in the late 1940s. Britain still saw its future as a bridge between the Arab world and the United States, and distanced itself from the decision as much as it could. Even unilateral withdrawal and non-cooperation with the partition implementation mechanisms were not enough to salvage Britain's reputation, however. British plans to regain indirect control of Palestine were foiled

114 See Behbehani, *The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism, 1917 1966.*

first by Israel's successes on the battlefield, and later by the broader split between Britain and its Arab partners. By the middle of the 20th century, then, Britain had very little to show for its 30 years in Palestine. Both Arabs and Zionists had pinned their hopes on British control of the Middle East, but constant course changes in an effort to maximize evolving strategic goals left both feeling betrayed.

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Reexamining Bureaucracy in the Context of Somalia's Telecom Success

Introduction

Since the overthrow of former President Siad Barre (1991),Somalia has neither had a state nor a bureaucracy.[1]

After three decades marked by failed peace conferences, externally sponsored state-building attempts, and widespread violence, the image of Somalia as the epitome of state collapse and lawlessness has been virtually cemented.[2] Responding to this, arguably reductionist, narrative, recent literature has posed that Somalia is doing better, not in spite, but because of its lack of bureaucracy, often highlighting the country's flourishing telecom industry as an example.[3] There are many reasons to study Somalia's telecom industry – one of the most competitive in Africa, providing millions across the world with cheap and clear calls. Beyond complicating the conventional image of a country in chronic decline, Soma-

1 Ken Menkhaus, 'Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping', *International Security* [online journal], 31/3 (2006/2007), page 74, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137508, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

2 Raj M. Desai**, '**Somalia's path to stability**',** *Brookings* **[**website**], (**2 Oct. 2019 **),** https://www.brookings.edu/articles/somalias-path-to-stability/**,** accessed 24 Oct. 2024**.**

3 Yumi Kim, 'Stateless in Somalia, and Loving it, *Mises Institute* [website], (21 Feb. 2006), https://mises.org/library/stateless-somalia-and-loving-it, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

lia's telecom industry challenges Weberian assumptions about private and public bureaucracies – distinguished by their efficiency, rationality, and durability – and their relationships with each other and the state. Contrary to what is suggested by those who seek to weaponize Somalia's telecom industry to argue that free markets, minimal state intervention, and even anarchy yield economic development, however, this is not a story about everything Somalia lacks, but about everything it has.[4]

An examination of the ways companies have navigated the need for capital, tribunals, and security in Mogadishu (void of bureaucracy) and the unrecognized state of Somaliland (whose state and bureaucracy date back to 1991), provides a case study with which to understand what the telecom sector needs to thrive. What emerges is a recognition that the story of Somalia's telecom industry really is a story of Somalia's constant migration and the juxtaposition between its volatile political institutions and its enduring social structures. The success of Somalia's telecom industry demonstrates how unique features of Somalia's history have enabled its population to trade using trust and tradition, as well as to leverage informal (i.e., nongovernmental) systems to produce complex private bureaucracies. But as demonstrated in the comparison of companies' trajectories in Mogadishu and Somaliland, there are challenges to sustaining private bureaucracies without the stability and authority of a state. The telecom industry presents a way to explore the potential and the limitations of informal systems and reexamine what may be considered efficient and durable in a Somali context, and in the end, offers new angles from which to approach the country's prospects for stability.

"... THIS IS NOT A STORY ABOUT EVERYTHING SOMALIA LACKS, BUT ABOUT EVERYTHING IT HAS."

Weber's belief in the "availability of continuous revenues" as a prerequisite for bureaucratically structured enterprises seems a "given," as does the fact that telecom companies require capital to operate.[5] The issue of insufficient funds confronts businesses across the world, yet the challenge facing Somalian businesses is not merely a lack of capital, but a lack of (conventional) financial infrastructure. According to Weber, rulers do not "dispense or replace the bureaucratic apparatus once it exists"[6] because

4 *Ibid.*

5 Max Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization*, ed., tr. Alexander Morell Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Mansfield: Martino Publishing, 2023), page 968.

6 *Ibid*. 988.

of its "technical superiority over any other form of organization."[7] In the case that it is "interrupted by force,"[8] chaos ensues, as the "fate of the masses depends upon the continuous and correct functioning of the ever more bureaucratic organizations of private capitalism."[9] Somalia's Central Bank, banking system, and (at least formally) its national currency, crashed with the government in 1991, and have not been restored.[10] Yet, a glance at Somalia's imports and exports or gross domestic product (which frequently outcompete other African states) suggests that the market has prevailed.[11] Absent a financial infrastructure and the role of public bureaucracies in managing domestic and international trade, how have companies compensated?

Some authors attribute the sector's success to the lack of taxes and the fact that "business is essentially pure capitalism."[12] As summarized in an Economist article: "The trick is the lack of regulation."[13] Disregarding the fact that companies in Mogadishu and Somaliland do pay taxes (to armed groups and its government, respectively), this literature's failure to consider the more fundamental questions of how businesses can store, move, and exchange money leaves much to be desired.[14] A second category of responses focuses on the deficiencies of the postcolonial bureaucracy. In an assessment of Somalia's development, Peter Leeson concludes that Somalis are "better off under anarchy than they were under government," and that the growth of economic sectors can be ascribed to the absence of a predatory state.[15] From a Weberian perspective, the inefficiency of the former bureaucracy might explain why Somalia's society never came to rely on bureaucratic structures, and why their collapse has had limited repercussions. As explained by Leeson, poor economic management, deteriorating economic conditions, and decaying public institutions had led to the emergence of parallel markets already in the 80s.[16] Following the normalization of trade smug-

7 *Ibid*. 973.
8 *Ibid*. 988.
9 *Ibid*.
10 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 668, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.
11 Robert L. Feldman, 'Amidst the chaos a small force for stability: Somalia's business community', ***Small Wars & Insurgencies*** [online journal], 23/2 (2012), page 300, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2012.642201, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.
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13 'Somalia calling', *Economist*, 'Business', 20 Dec. 2005, para. 1, **https://www.economist.com/business/2005/12/20/somalia-calling**, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.
14 *Reaping the Whirlwind: Hormuud Entrepreneurs and the Resurgence of Al-Shabaab* (Nairobi: International Policy Group, 2019), page 25.
15 *Ibid*. 12.
16 Peter T. Leeson, 'Better off stateless: Somalia before and after government collapse', *Journal of Com-*

gling and black marketeering, "the alienated urban private sector was forced to join the informal markets," according to Jamil A. Mubarak.[17] It is easy to critique the Somalian bureaucracy that emerged following independence and this might suffice to explain why there was not a noticeable negative change in conditions following the collapse. What is more intriguing is the positive change since – the fact that Somalia, since 1991, has moved from the 29th to the 8th African country in terms of main lines per 1000 of population.[18] Good or bad, the mere absence of a bureaucracy cannot explain the emergence of Somalia's telecom sector. For that, we must look beyond the formal systems.

Dating back to precolonial times, when nomadic pastoralism represented most Somalis' way of life, the most important currency in Somalia has been trust. Like the four million Somalis that live as pastoral nomads today, many generations of Somalis have had to develop extensive networks, allegiances, and means of communication to manage the lifestyle of constant movement.[19] Drawing on the work of Göran Hydén, Gregory Collins argues that "Somalia's economy of affection was born of a geographically interdependent livestock economy predicated on long-distance trade and interconnectedness." As a result, a uniquely segmented, hierarchical, and institutionalized clan system formed, providing Somalis with a "clan-embedded basis for protecting private property, enforcing contracts and resolving disputes that is national – if not international – in scope."[20] Michael Van Notten reinforces the last point, contending that Somalis long have "dealt with foreign governments and their agencies on a clan-by-clan basis."[21] Somalia's clan system is widely recognized for its role in the organization of Somali society, but it is almost exclusively understood as an impediment to stability. The telecom sector suggests that there might be more to the story and that trust, when institutionalized, might prove both efficient and durable.

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parative Economics [online journal], 35/4 (2007), page 2029, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2007.10.001, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

17 Jamil A. Mubarak, 'The 'hidden hand' behind the resilience of the stateless economy of Somalia', *World Development* [online journal], 25/12 (1997), page 2028, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(97)00104-6, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

18 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 633, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

19 Robert Snow and Tahlil Abdi Afrah, *Improving access to health care services for pastoral nomads in Somalia* (2021), https://www.gu.se/en/research/improving-access-to-health-care-services-for-pastoral-nomads-in-somalia, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

20 Gregory Allen Collins, 'Commected: Developing Somalia's telecoms industry in the wake of state collapse', *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* [online journal], (2009), page 6, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/connected-developing-somalias-telecoms-industry/docview/304839440/se-2, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

21 Yumi Kim, 'Stateless in Somalia, and Loving it, *Mises Institute* [website], (21 Feb. 2006), https://mises.org/library/stateless-somalia-and-loving-it, accessed 24 Oct. 2023. ; Michael van Notten, *The Law of the Somalis: A Stable Foundation for Economic Development in the Horn of Africa*, ed., Spencer Heath MacCallum (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2005), 15.

"AS OTHER COUNTRIES AND BUREAUCRACIES HAVE GAINED COMPLEXITY, SO HAVE THE INFORMAL SYSTEMS THROUGH WHICH SOMALIS ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD."

As other countries and their bureaucracies have gained complexity, so have the informal systems through which Somalis engage with the world. When Somali laborers began working in the Gulf region in the 1970s, communities adopted the informal system of Hawala, enabling laborers to send home money with the help of remittance organizations. Since the collapse, the Hawala system has become more pervasive, assuming responsibilities previously fulfilled by the bureaucracy and transferring over 2 billion dollars in and out of the country annually.[22] Drawing on Cockayne and Shetret, Stremlau and Osman argue that the entire Somali Remittance Organizations (SRO) business model runs on trust, which "provides security for moving large values over long distances through cooperation with people that an SRO agent may never meet."[23] Coyne's elaboration on how customers verify their identity by answering questions about their clan lineage illustrates the system's distinguishing incorporation of relationships.[24] That people continue to trade with old Somali shillings, refusing to "accept denominations larger than those that existed in 1991,"[25] despite the lack of formal guarantees, is further evidence of the role of trust in promoting a stable business environment.[26]

A Weberian analysis of the trust-based system undergirding Somalia's telecom industry is inconclusive. According to Weber, bureaucracy enables the specialization of "administrative functions according to purely objective considerations."[27] That SROs, as characterized by Stremlau and Osman, "replace the formal system's expensive bureaucratic safeguards, designed for an open market populated by economic strangers, with a closed network constructed out of the social capital and safeguards provided by family and clan membership,"[28] may be understood to undermine Weber's bureaucratic logic by privileging tradition over calculability.[29] But Weber also holds that

22 Sonia Plaza, 'Anti-Money Laundering Regulations: Can Somalia survive without remittances?', *World Bank Blogs* [website], (11 Feb. 2014), https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/anti-money-laundering-regulations-can-somalia-survive-without-remittances, accessed 24 Oct. 2024.

23 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 5, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

24 Christopher J. Coyne, 'Reconstructing Weak and Failed States: Foreign Intervention and the Nirvana Fallacy, *Foreign Policy Analysis* [online journal], 2/4 (2006), http://www.jstor.org/stable/24907256, accessed 24 Oct. 2024.

25 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 668, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

26 *Ibid*.

27 Max Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization*, ed., tr. Alexander Morell Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Mansfield: Martino Publishing, 2023), page 975.

28 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 5, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

29 Max Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization*, ed., tr. Alexander Morell Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Mansfield: Martino Publishing, 2023), page 975.

bureaucratic organization rests on "increasing precision, steadiness, and, above all, speed of operations,"[30] and "general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned."[31] Today, the Hawala system operates according to written rules, in an institutionalized and efficient manner. As noted by Mohamed Houssein, "[l]iterally every town is served. No banking service in Somalia in the past has ever achieved this scale of funds transfer and covered such a wide area."[32] If two of bureaucracy's constituent components are efficiency and durability, there is something to be said about Somalia's old and new means of moving capital.

Referred to by some as "the world's most ambitious experiment in mobile banking,"[33] the telecom sector's establishment of M-money illustrates how enterprises can leverage traditional systems to meet the demands of modern society. Broadly defined as "the provision of financial services through a mobile device,"[34] mobile banking was developed in the 2000s on "the same trust-based social networks that have supported the Hawala system."[35] Currently used by 70% of Somalia's population, its popularity is indicative of the population's desires – and difficulties; in the words of Brian Hesse, "where the country works best also reflects some of what is most wrong."[36] By reducing the need to carry cash, M-money protects people from

"IF TWO OF BUREAUCRACY'S CONSTITUENT COMPONENTS ARE EFFICIENCY AND DURABILITY, THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID ABOUT SOMALIA'S OLD AND NEW MEANS OF MOVING CAPITAL."

30 *Ibid.* 974.

31 *Ibid.* 958.

32 Mohamed Djirdeh Houssein, 'Somalia: The Experience of Hawala Receiving Countries', in *Regulatory Frameworks for Hawala and Other Remittance Systems* (USA: International Monetary Fund, 2005).

33 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 2, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

34 Osman Sayid, Enchabi Abdelghani, and Abdul Aziz, 'Investigating Mobile Money Acceptance in Somalia', *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences* [online journal], 6/2 (2012), page 271, http://www.jespk.net/publications/90.pdf, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

35 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 5, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

36 Brian J. Hesse, 'Where Somalia works', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* [online journal], 28/3 (2010), page 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2010.499234, accessed 24 Oct. 2023. ; 'Somalia Economic Update: Rapid Growth in Mobile Money', *World Bank* [website], (13 Sep. 2018), https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/13/somalia-economic-update-rapid-growth-in-mobile-money, accessed 24 Oct. 2024.

the risk of being robbed. As explained by a shopkeeper, "Nowadays, I am able to send up to $3000 from my phone to people in other regions without the person next to me knowing. It is good for our safety since we live in very violent times and can lose all our money to militias."[37] At the same time, studies have found that users hesitate to use mobile banking for saving: "I don't have trust in Zaad [a mobile money service] when it comes to saving money in my account…[W]ho will you sue if something happens to your money? We believe there is nobody."[38] Stremlau and Osman confirm this hesitation, noting that the combination of the electronic system and the weak traditions of documenting commerce has "created a gap that some have attempted to exploit,"[39] and "raised a number of social and legal questions, particularly in regard to handling disputes."[40] Rather than an isolated problem, this reflects a broader dilemma of how to handle disagreements without bureaucracy.

"...THE COMBINATION OF THE ELECTRONIC SYSTEM AND THE WEAK TRADITIONS OF DOCUMENTING COMMERCE HAS 'CREATED A GAP THAT SOME HAVE ATTEMPTED TO EXPLOIT'..."

Second to the availability of capital, the capacity to settle disputes and enforce rights seems essential to business management. That the society that has emerged in Somalia post-collapse is not "the anarchy and disorder that Hobbes…would predict," but rather one governed by "alternative forms of localized order and authority,"[41] suggests the existence of an alternative justice system, but to what extent has it fulfilled the role of bureaucracy? Dating back to pre-colonial times, Somali customary law, known as Xeer, has played an essential role in society.[42] The colonial state and the Somali nation-state tried to replace it with marginal success, and following the collapse, most people

37 Brian J. Hesse, 'Where Somalia works', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* [online journal], 28/3 (2010), page 45, https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2010.499234, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

38 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 6, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

39 *Ibid*. 7.

40 *Ibid*. 2.

41 Gregory Allen Collins, 'Commected: Developing Somalia's telecoms industry in the wake of state collapse', *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* [online journal], (2009), page 12, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/connected-developing-somalias-telecoms-industry/docview/304839440/se-2, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

42 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 666, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

have returned to Xeer, which is interpreted and enforced by local clan networks.[43] Among other things, Xeer outlaws "homicide, assault, torture, battery, rape, accidental wounding, kidnapping, abduction, robbery, burglary, theft, arson, extortion, fraud, and property damage."[44] According to Stremlau and Osman, it plays an important role in promoting intergroup security, accountability, and reciprocity, as well as in regulating interactions, preventing disputes from escalating into violence, and encouraging investments by demonstrating that "reputable and accessible dispute remedies are available."[4546] With or without bureaucracy, many Somalis appear to behave according to a set of rules, capable of supporting both communities and companies. From a Weberian perspective, the fact that each Somali court operates independently, leaving the possibility of contradictory interpretations and lengthy tribunal processes – especially when carried out nationally – precludes the bureaucratic idea of "a 'rational' interpretation of law on the basis of strictly formal concepts."[47] In this way, Xeer might illustrate the limitations of nonbureaucratic systems that function on a micro level, but prevent society from achieving complexity on a macro level. Even so, the fact that Xeer law remains in use in Somaliland suggests that there is some perceived benefit to a hybrid approach involving both bureaucratic and traditional legal systems.

"...MANY SOMALIS APPEAR TO BEHAVE ACCORDING TO A SET OF RULES, CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING BOTH COMMUNITIES AND COMPANIES."

Unlike Mogadishu,

43 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 666, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

44 'The Xeer Traditional Legal System of Somalia', *UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage* [website], (2023), https://ich.unesco.org/en/individual-case-study-00988&id=00032, accessed 24 Oct. 2024. / Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 666, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

45 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 5, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

46 *Ibid*. 4.

47 Max Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization*, ed., tr. Alexander Morell Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Mansfield: Martino Publishing, 2023), page 976. ; Michael van Notten, *The Law of the Somalis: A Stable Foundation for Economic Development in the Horn of Africa*, ed., Spencer Heath MacCallum (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2005), page 36. / Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 667, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

Somaliland has a formal judicial system and an internal revenue system to support it; of its annual budget, forty percent is dedicated to security.[48] The state's decision to continue to draw on informal justice systems and involve elders and faith leaders in dispute settlements thus appears to be a conscious one.[49] According to Sarah Phillips, negligible foreign intervention during Somaliland's formative period allowed for the emergence of "locally legitimate solutions,"[50] that "offer a counterpoint to models offered in the mainstream state building and development literature"[51] and see order as "the result of neo-Weberian institutional incentives."[52] In fact, the lack of rational-legal institutions, "appears to have created a logic of action upon which order has rested,"[53] Phillips argues. Somaliland's use of Xeer law in settlements related to M-banking reinforces Stremlau and Osman's point that the grounding effect of traditional social structures goes hand-in-hand with innovation in the telecom sector.[54] Additionally, their explanation of how companies opt for traditional settlements because "institutions such as the police and courts"[55] are "seen as corrupt"[56] and not always "considered cost-effective,"[57] reinforces the point that informal systems can be considered both efficient and objective. Somaliland's use of Xeer offers a fascinating account of how informal systems may be understood as complements rather than competitors to bureaucratic structures. But as a comparison of the telecom companies based in Somaliland and in Mogadishu reveals, there are limits to what informal systems can do.

Like public bureaucracies, an examination of Somalia's telecom sector suggests that informal systems are good at coordinating interactions, such as communication, trade, and, to some extent, disputes – when the people involved trust in and operate within the systems. As is the case in every country, with or without bureaucracy, however, there are people in Somalia who operate outside of the system, and this is when the limits of informal systems

48 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford, and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia after state collapse: Chaos or improvement?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* [online journal], 67/3-4 (2008), page 665, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2008.04.008, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

49 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 7, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

50 Sarah G. Phillips, 'When less was more: external assistance and the political settlement in Somaliland', *International Affairs* [online journal], 92/3 (2016), page 644, https://www-jstor-org.yale.idm.oclc.org/stable/24757628?seq=17, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

51 *Ibid*. 640.

52 *Ibid*.

53 *Ibid*.

54 Nicole Stremlau and Ridwan Osman, 'Courts, Clans and Companies: Mobile Money and Dispute Resolution in Somaliland', *International Journal of Security & Development* [online journal], 4/1 (2015), page 13, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gh, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

55 *Ibid*.

56 *Ibid*.

57 *Ibid*. 17.

"UNLIKE MOGADISHU, SOMALILAND HASHAS A FORMAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND AN INTERNAL REVENUE SYSTEM TO SUPPORT IT; OF ITS ANNUAL BUDGET, FORTY PERCENT IS DEDICATED TO SECURITY."

– as well as public bureaucracies – become apparent. Rules prescribe what people are allowed and not allowed to do in both Mogadishu and Somalia, but when people break against these rules, it is not up to the rules themselves, but to their source – most often the state – to enforce them. This might be possible in Somaliland, but in most of the country, it is not – as illustrated by Hormuud Telecom's experience in Mogadishu.

Once considered Mogadishu's proudest enterprise, Hormuud Telecom's status as a financier and a victim of the militant organization Al-Shabaab is symptomatic of a society in which bureaucratic logic is sacrificed for security.[58] According to Weber, the first principle of efficient economies is that enterprises reinvest all profit and focus solely on continued expansion. Such a narrow focus is only possible in a stable and calculable environment. According to Collins, order and authority in Mogadishu have been predicated on the "symbiotic client-patron relationship between Mogadishu's warlords and businessmen,"[59] and the many criminal groups' "sustaining of…instability as a means of profiting from it."[60] The city has a police force, but without a state, it is unclear who the force serves; as articulated by Alice Hills, "policing in Somalia is a reflection of the agenda of those in power, which has virtually no constitutionally based stability or norms for order."[61] From imposing a ban on mobile banking to storming Hormuud's headquarters and occasionally demanding the shutdown of data services, Al-Shabaab undermines the very bureaucratic logic that once might have been identified in Hormuud's operations.

In 2010, Hormuud opened its own university, dedicated to training the next generation of Somali engineers, in an expression of how private bureaucracies accumulate not just capital, but also knowledge, information, and infrastructure.[62] Al-Shabaab's capture of the company in the decade since demonstrates how such development almost inevitably catches the interest of others – and the difficulty of preventing such hijacking without the (potential) authority of a state. According to Mr. Abdullahi, a manager in the telecom sector, warlords' need for mobile services

58 *Reaping the Whirlwind: Hormuud Entrepreneurs and the Resurgence of Al-Shabaab* (Nairobi: International Policy Group, 2019), page 44.

59 Gregory Allen Collins, 'Commected: Developing Somalia's telecoms industry in the wake of state collapse', *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* [online journal], (2009), page 13, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/connected-developing-somalias-telecoms-industry/docview/304839440/se-2, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

60 *Ibid*. 12.

61 Alice Hills, 'What Is Policeness? On Being Police in Somalia', *British Journal of Criminology* [online journal], 54/5 (2014), page, https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/what-policeness-being-police-somalia, accessed 24 Oct. 2024.

62 'Our history', *Hormuud University* [website], (2022), https://hu.edu.so/vision-mission/our-history/, accessed 24 Oct. 2024.

has enabled an equilibrium. Yet, his reiteration that companies "badly need a government"[63] and are "very interested in paying taxes,"[64] speaks to the limitations of charismatic rule. Somalia's informal systems might have sufficed to enforce rules locally but faced with an international organization like Al-Shabaab, they fall short – not primarily because of Somalia's lack of bureaucracy, but because of Somalia's lack of a state.

When one begins to understand how the success of Somalia's telecom industry fits into a larger history – characterized by a continuity that in ways contradicts the country's popular perception – the story becomes even more extraordinary. Indeed, what I have done is merely scratching the surface; while this paper has examined the supply of telecom, the question of demand constitutes an equally important part and underscores the role of Somalia's diaspora.[65] As articulated by Collins, what makes Somalis' demand for mobile services intriguing is that "both of the explanations for it – transnational migration and the importance of being connected – reveal a cultural and historical continuity in the ways Somalis have dealt with the unpredictable environments they have faced."[66] Anyone looking to extract a formula will be disappointed by the finding that the success of Somalia's telecom industry is contingent on a set of complex conditions, and that it takes more than state collapse for a sector to flourish. But within a Somali context, this insight holds potential. Rather than understanding existing social structures as incompatible with the pursuit of stability, actors should consider "possibilities for state (re)building in Somalia that leverage the strengths of Somali society and the ethno-national logic of connections so evident in telecoms case."[67] By understanding the story of the telecom sector as a grander story of a people's resourcefulness and the proven ability of traditions, the question of national integration may be asked with an appreciation for everything Somalia is and the importance of working with, rather than against everything it has.

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63 Joseph Winter, 'Telecoms thriving in lawless Somalia', ***BBC News***, 19 Nov. 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4020259.stm, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

64 *Ibid*.

65 Gregory Allen Collins, 'Commected: Developing Somalia's telecoms industry in the wake of state collapse', *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* [online journal], (2009), page 24, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/connected-developing-somalias-telecoms-industry/docview/304839440/se-2, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

66 Gregory Allen Collins, 'Connected: Exploring the Extraordinary Demand for Telecoms Services in Post-collapse Somalia', *Mobilities* [online journal], 4/2 (2009), page 204, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450100902905139, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

67 Gregory Allen Collins, 'Commected: Developing Somalia's telecoms industry in the wake of state collapse', *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* [online journal], (2009), page 7, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/connected-developing-somalias-telecoms-industry/docview/304839440/se-2, accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

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