The Many Worlds of ´Abd Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization

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In February 1935, a Damascus-based French intelligence officer reported a plan by smugglers from Aleppo to transport 188 kilograms of hashish from Turkish Aintab to their Syrian hometown. From there, the suspects intended to take the drugs by car to Lebanon’s capital, Beirut. Once the contraband had arrived, an accomplice was to place a telephone call to the Palestinian port city of Haifa to ask a drug smuggler, ´Abd Yasin, to come to Lebanon and arrange for it to be shipped via Palestine to Egypt. The plan failed; Yasin, however, reappeared. In December 1938, he was suspected of having paid a ship’s captain in Tyre to smuggle 31 kilograms of hashish and 17 kilograms of opium to Palestine. In February 1940, he was leading a drug-smuggling ring operating between Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt. The Syrian police intercepted him on a night trip from Aleppo to Zahle, in the eastern Lebanese Bekaa Valley. When he and an accomplice tried to escape in their truck, the police opened fire. Yasin survived and was convicted of smuggling 254 kilograms of opium and hashish. In 1944, he was reportedly trafficking hashish from Zahle via the southern Lebanese border village of Rmeiche to Palestine and from there to Egypt.¹

Yasin’s life was adventurous, but not exceptional. In the post-Ottoman Levant, a wide range of people were involved in what officials called “smuggling” across and beyond the borders of the new states of French Mandatory Lebanon (1918/1920–

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¹ Chef d’escadron Gordie, Commandant de la Compagnie de la gendarmerie, to Chef, Sûreté générale [hereafter SG], #517R, Damascus, February 14, 1935, Box 6, Mandat Syrie-Liban, premier versement, Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Nantes, France [hereafter MAE-Nantes]; SG to Chef, Cabinet politique, #99/Stup, Beirut, April 13, 1939, Box 854, MAE-Nantes; “Khafiru al-jumruk yusadirun 254 kilu opium,” Sawt al-Ahrar, February 27, 1940, 2; Sûreté aux armées [hereafter SAA], Rapport mensuel a/s contrebande, 3, Bint Jbeil, October 10, 1944, Box 6, MAE-Nantes.
1943) and Syria (1920–1943) and British Mandatory Palestine (1918/1920–1948) and Transjordan (1918/1922–1946). In these new “national” economies, consumers’ demands were often met by suppliers who smuggled goods around customs points. Egypt was the region’s leading market for narcotics. Opium was produced mostly in Turkey, and Lebanon and Syria had begun to replace Greece as Egypt’s foremost source of hashish by the 1910s. Even so, smuggling across the mandates has remained a neglected subject of historical study.

More fundamentally, most historians of the Middle East have reflexively chosen the new, single polities of the post-Ottoman Levant as their framework of analysis. This focus has had empirical and interpretive consequences. Individuals who regularly cross borders fall through the cracks of new nation-state analytical frameworks or are summarily integrated into them; legal and illegal cross-border movements—of


3 In the 1920s, Egyptians were also among the world’s leading users of heroin. See fnn. 94–95. The production of hashish in Greece and the Bekaa and of opium in Ottoman Anatolia and Bulgaria increased in the nineteenth century. Although a 1906 Greek-Egyptian trade treaty obligated Greece to limit hashish cultivation and its export to Egypt, a 1913 British report noted that it was ineffective. See “Proposed Decree as to the Importation and Sale of Hashish: Explanatory Note for the [Egyptian] Council of Ministers,” Foreign Office [hereafter FO], 141/470/3, British Public Records Office, Kew, United Kingdom [hereafter PRO]. By the early 1920s, however, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon had eclipsed Greece as the largest source of hashish consumed in Egypt. See “Report on Hashish Traffic in Egypt,” February 1924, 1–2, ibid. Very little hashish was grown in Palestine; see Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs: Annual Reports by Governments for 1936—Palestine, 6, C.373.M.251.1937.XI, Société des nations, Geneva, Switzerland [hereafter SDN]. More particularly, for the Bekaa, see Hassane Makhlouf, Cannabis et pavot au Liban: Choix du développement et cultures de substitution (Paris, 2000), 20–23, citing I. Maalouf, L’histoire de Zahle (Zahle, 1911), who stated that hashish grown in Zahle had already been used in Egypt for some time. For Ottoman Anatolia and Republican Turkey, see Richard Davenport-Hines, The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics, 1500–2000 (London, 2001), 36; and for Yugoslavia, Helen Moorhead, “International Administration of Narcotic Drugs, 1928–1934,” Geneva Special Studies 6, no. 1 (1935): 2.

4 Some historians have mentioned smuggling en passant: James Galvin, Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire (Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 119, 132; Frank Peter, “Dismemberment of Empire and Reconstitution of Regional Space: The Emergence of ‘National’ Industries in Damascus between 1918 and 1946,” in Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett, eds., The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives (Leiden, 2004), 422.
people, goods, services, and ideas—and the larger regional networks thus (re-)created after 1918 rarely figure in analyses of the new mandate states.\(^5\)

The limitations of “methodological territorialism”—of choosing nation-states as a unit of analysis—are hardly news to historians.\(^6\) Critique of this approach underlies debates about globalization and transnationalism.\(^7\) Scholars now frame these as “dialectical process[es] of de- and re-territorialization,” or, in the words of Charles Maier, as the waxing and waning of territoriality: “the properties, including power, provided by the control of bordered political space, which . . . [from ca. 1860 to 1970] created the framework for national and often ethnic identity” around the globe.\(^8\) On a related note, Christopher Bayly and other scholars have argued that at least since the nineteenth century, regional and global historical processes have developed in constant interaction.\(^9\) Not unexpectedly, programmatic overviews of global history

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call for studies of interactions between “localization, regionalization, nationalization, and transnationalization.” Many transnational historians take a similar approach, analyzing cross-border (and often transcontinental) movements without “claim[ing] to embrace the whole world.” Some historians of particular regions and countries are following suit. Jürgen Kocka, for instance, maintains that 1989 caused a “double shift of spatial coordinates,” of region and nation-state, in Europe.

In building on these debates, we can use narcotics trafficking across and beyond Mandatory Lebanon—a phenomenon ranging from the trivially small to the spectacularly large—to examine interactions among people operating on four geographical scales: local areas inside the new country of Lebanon; Lebanon as an emerging nation-state; the larger Levantine region of which it formed a part (and its Egyptian and Turkish neighbors); and international spheres in which the League of Nations’ global anti-narcotics policy and Franco-Anglo-Egyptian anti-narcotics police cooperation in the Mediterranean came into play. In a circumscribed space, forces and actors operating on these scales tend to fuse into a distinct, multilayered “pattern of territorialization”; the coexistence of varying patterns within one country then creates “differential territorialization.” This process played out differently in two spaces in the Levant: territorial organization took one form in the border zone formed by Jabal ʿAmil (southern Lebanon), the Galilee (northern Palestine), and the Jawlan Heights (the southwesternmost part of Syria), along with the northwesternmost part of Jordan, and a different form in the port and city of Beirut and around the highway along the Mediterranean to the Naqura customs station on the Palestinian border. These distinctive patterns of territorialization helped to shape French Mandate rule.

The French, their international colonial stature weakened by World War I, maintained a minimal presence on their side of the mountainous ʿAmili-Galilean-Jawlan border zone. As a result, local trade and trust networks survived territorial division, and until the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the border zone remained an integrated unit. Regional consumer demands—for narcotics, but also for customs-free legal goods—were easily channeled through border-zone networks of trade, trust, and transport. And as the British and French authorities gradually improved local roads, transnational traffickers operating across the Levantine region became active in the border zone, too. Thus, this space—the different parts of which supposedly were nothing more than peripheries of the new nation-states of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and

10 Middell, “Der Spatial Turn und das Interesse an der Globalisierung,” 117. See also Saunier, “Learning by Doing,” 172.
13 Hence, here the term “territorialization” does not mean the rise or fall of territoriality as defined by Maier. On a different note, “international” will refer to state actors or the League of Nations, “transnational” to societal actors. My argument is inspired by Saunier, “Learning by Doing,” 173–174.
14 Because narcotics were rarely smuggled through Jordan, “the border zone” relates here to Jabal ʿAmil, the Galilee, and Jawlan. However, the northwesternmost area of Jordan was in fact part of the border zone, and Jordan was not cut off from other regional networks.
15 This does not mean that French officials were not present at all, but rather that their involvement was much less intense than on Lebanon’s coast and especially in Beirut. See Max Weiss, In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʿism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon (Cambridge, Mass., 2010).
Transjordan—was a local hub for a particular kind of economy: the gray and black markets of now-separate yet still regionally connected countries.

Beirut, the political and economic heart of Mandatory Lebanon, experienced a different pattern of territorialization. Despite mass immigration and poverty, it survived World War I as the Levantine coast’s leading city, and the French expanded and policed its port and the highways that connected it with neighboring countries. Territoriality “à la Maier” was denser here because much was at stake for the internationally present colonial power, France: naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean and security in the mandate; the protection of Beirut as the Levantine region’s trade center; and customs revenues, which were crucial to the mandate budget. Egypt’s demand for narcotics was felt here perhaps even more than in the border zone, but it was met in different ways. It is not simply that the trade was conducted by poor urbanites, sailors and chauffeurs, merchants with an illegal side business, and transnational professional traffickers. French improvements to the transportation infrastructure boosted the mobility especially of the latter and strengthened or even created region-wide networks of trust. Still, traffickers also had to deal with the strong presence of government officials. The result was endemic corruption that left only small segments of officialdom untouched. In Beirut and along highways such as the road to Naqura, therefore, a distinct pattern of territorialization arose out of a headlong clash between poor locals, the heavily present nation-state (Lebanese) and international-colonial (French) forces, and regionally active transnational smugglers—a clash that, when we look more closely, resembled an intense mutual penetration more than anything else.

French Mandate rule in the Middle East was shaped by the intersection of international, transnational, nation-state, and local actors and constraints. Egypt’s unrelenting demand for coordinated anti-narcotics policing in the Eastern Mediterranean, and similar calls by the League of Nations, to which the mandate powers were accountable, forced France to step up its drug-control measures in the 1930s. At the same time, because of their tiny budget and shaky legitimacy, the French, and with them nation-state forces including the French-led Lebanese Gendarmerie, sometimes secured the political support of local power brokers by purposely ignoring their cannabis fields and their trafficking activities. Clearly, even in a country as small as Lebanon, patterns of territorialization were influenced by spaces as immense as that reaching from Western Europe to the Mediterranean. Also, after 1918, pressures on colonial rule were both more extreme and more contradictory than before 1914—and the French could meet them only by vacillating between fundamentally incompatible actions.

On December 23, 1920, Britain and France signed an agreement that revised the rough map attached to the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, which had served as the

basis for the postwar division of the Levant. In June 1921, a joint border commission launched an operation that was virtually unprecedented in the Middle East. It demarcated the Palestinian-Syrian/Lebanese border “by erecting stone cairns, ‘boundary pillars,’ in the appropriate places.” Similar stones were positioned along other mandate borders. But the internal borders of the French and British mandates—separating Lebanon from Syria, and Transjordan from Palestine and Iraq—were all but invisible. Between the mandates, as well as between them and Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, borders did not create quick *faits accomplis*.

Along the Palestinian-Syrian/Lebanese border, the number of customs officials, gendarmes, policemen, and soldiers was kept to a minimum: the British and French ran their mandates on a budget that was barely adequate, exercising strict control over every expenditure. The hills and mountains in the border zone complicated policing; even more important, the zone’s economic and security value was too small to warrant large expenses. (The one serious exception occurred in 1936–1939, when Lebanese and Syrians crossed the zone to support the Palestinian Revolt.) Especially the British, but also the French, relied *inter alia* on some upgraded roads, the French on a few intelligence officers, and both on local power brokers in their efforts to ensure minimal territorial control.

Hence, northern Palestine (the Galilee, including towns such as Safed and the nearby port cities of Akka and Haifa), southern Lebanon (Jabal ‘Amil, including the towns of Marjayoun and Bint Jbeil and the nearby port of Tyre), the southwesternmost part of Syria (the Jawlan Heights, including the town of Quneitra), and the northwesternmost part of Transjordan continued to form a single socioeconomically

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17 In the Arab provinces of the late Ottoman Empire, the only real precedent to postwar border demarcations was the 1906 demarcation of the border between British-controlled Egypt and Palestine, which, however, barely affected daily life. See Nurit Kliot, “The Development of the Egyptian-Israeli Boundaries, 1906–1986,” in Gerald H. Blake and Richard N. Schofield, eds., *Boundaries and State Territory in the Middle East and North Africa* (The Cottons, 1987), 59. Until 1918, the eastern zones of the wilayat (province) of Damascus and of the sanjak (administrative district) of Jerusalem were unmarked. See Gideon Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine, 1840–1947* (London, 2004), 82.

18 Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine*, 138. The agreement was amended in March 1923 and fully implemented, with some territorial adjustments, in April 1924. France and Britain signed an agreement covering the Syrian-Transjordanian border on October 31, 1931.


20 French parliamentarians complained that France had to finance the Armée de Levant and the Intelligence Services, and they notoriously delayed the annual mandate budgets. See Mizrahi, *Genèse de l’État mandataire*, 110–111, 356, 361. Severe budgetary limitations also reduced security operations elsewhere. See Commandant de la 1ère division du Levant to HC, Lattakiyah, May 26, 1921, Box 854, MAE-Nantes (coastal surveillance); Lt.-Colonel Sarrou, Rapport sur l’organisation de la Gendarmerie syrienne, 1924, 48, 4H56, Service historique de l’Armée de terre, Vincennes, France [hereafter SHAT] (Gendarmerie).

21 For the light border surveillance on the Lebanese side, see “Sur la frontière libano-palestinienne,” *L’Orient*, January 15, 1925, 4, reporting three SG agents, one customs agent, and one Gendarmerie platoon for the entire sector facing Metullah; and Conseiller administratif du Liban Sud, report #341, Saida, November 25, 1937, Box 653, MAE-Nantes, stating that customs aside, there were routinely only thirty gendarmes guarding the border. For roads, see fn. 44. For the 1936–1939 revolt, see Services spéciaux [hereafter SS], report #1586/SSVII, November 29, 1937, Box 652, MAE-Nantes; Consulat général britannique, Beirut, to HC, #25(27/14), Beirut, June 23, 1938, ibid.; HC to MAE-Paris, #625, Beirut, June 16, 1939, Box 653, MAE-Nantes; for an overview, see Krämer, *A History of Palestine*, 264–295.
integrated border zone. It was inhabited by Sunni Bedouins who raised livestock; Sunni, Shi'i, Christian, and Druze peasants (and a few Zionist Jews) who grew subsistence crops and, especially in hilly Jabal 'Amil and the northern Galilee, tobacco cash crops; and merchants of all confessions who had products to trade. To them, crossing the border was an everyday occurrence. Even children knew the often difficult terrain around their villages and across the border well. Cross-border same-faith marriages continued, and people still took temporary refuge from their colonial authorities across the border, even with neighbors who did not belong to their confession. In the few Zionist settlements, many Jews could get by in Arabic, and some of their Arab neighbors knew some Yiddish or Hebrew. Economic ties were crucial: for example, the Suq Khamis (Friday Market) in Bint Jbeil was frequented by Palestinians, and the flourishing city of Haifa attracted Lebanese and Syrians. Nearby Damascus was a tangible commercial presence, especially in the eastern part of the border zone. Beirut was less important (except, perhaps, for the richer inhabitants of Jabal 'Amil), even though the Ottomans had created the new wilayat (province) of Beirut in 1888, bringing the area from Lattakiya down almost to Jaffa under a near-continuous administrative umbrella.

Around that same time, Beirut’s rising star had started to outshine its rivals Tripoli and Saida as well as 'Amili caravan routes. Its merchants introduced cash crops, including tobacco, to Jabal 'Amil and the Galilee, but “reinvested the money earned and established [especially silk] manufactures in Mount Lebanon . . . [I]n Jabal 'Amil, there was neither [capital] accumulation nor investment in the [handi]craft industry.” After 1918, Beirut’s ties to the border zone remained loose. In the words

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23 For knowledge of terrain, see, e.g., interview, Tannus Salim Sayyah (b. 1932, Alma Sha’ab), June 5, 2007, Alma Sha’ab, Lebanon, regarding how he made his way to Palestinian Bassa as a boy; interview, anonymous (b. 1926, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi), April 30, 2010, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, Israel, about the hikes she made as a girl across the border to the neighboring villages of Hunein and Ibl; interview, Mariam Mizal (b. ca. 1916, Aramsheh), April 27, 2010, Aramsheh, Israel, about journeys on foot via Naqura to Tyre. For marriages, see interview, Sayyah; interview, Mahmud Hussein Sabeq (b. 1907, Hurfesh), April 19, 2010, Hurfesh, Israel; interview, Hussein ‘Ali (b. ca. 1918, Aramsheh), April 26, 2010, Aramsheh, Israel. For refugee, see interview, anonymous (b. 1947, Hurfesh [member of a leading local family]), April 27, 2010, Hurfesh, Israel, about the regular arrival of Syrian Druze; conversation with Uri Hurvitz (b. 1926, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi), April 30, 2010, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, Israel, about how in the early 1930s, several members of the leading 'Amili As'ad family were granted refuge for several months by the kibbutz (I have not been able to confirm this information through an independent second source); Report, Conseiller administratif du Liban Sud, Saida, March 14, 1938, Box 855, MAE-Nantes, about how Sunnis, Druze, and Christians from Hurfesh, Mansourah, and Sassa took refuge in Rmeiche. For languages, see interview, anonymous (b. 1926, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi), April 30, 2010, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, Israel; interview, Shulamit Yaari (b. 1920, Metullah), April 7, 2010, Neve Efal, Israel. For economic ties in Bint Jbeil’s Suq Khamis, see interview, Yusef Ahmad Kheir al-Din (b. 1933, Hurfesh), April 18, 2010, Hurfesh, Israel. For employment in Haifa, in this case a maid from a Shiite village in a Jewish household in World War II, see interview, Rahmih Saniyah (b. ca. 1927, Aita Sha’ab), June 7, 2007, Aita Sha’ab, Lebanon.

24 For Damascus, see interview, Mahmud Mussa Hussein Nimir Hib (b. 1929, Tuba), April 28, 2010, Tuba, Israel. For Beirut, see interview, Yaari, recounting her envy when, at a Jewish high holy day, better-off girls in Metullah received “patent leather shoes embellished with buttons” from Beirut. For the wilayat of Beirut, see Jens Hanssen, Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital (Oxford, 2005), esp. chaps. 1 and 2.

25 Sabrina Mervin, Un réformisme chiite: Ulémas et lettrés du Gabal 'Amil, actuel Liban-Sud, de la fin
of an ‘Amili writer, the new mandate capital’s politicians were not concerned about “the continuous cries” coming from the south; while merchants dabbled in agriculture, their focus was the trade and financial services now dominated by French companies.26 Seen from Lebanon’s center, the border zone was a periphery—but not to its well-off inhabitants. “We lived in great comfort,” emphasized a son of the wealthy Marjayouni landowner and merchant Sa‘ad Hourani. He shared his father’s scornful response to a suggestion that he purchase land in Ra‘s Beirut, a neighborhood near the beach: “I am a king here!—and you want me to leave and buy cactuses and sand!”27

While merchants in Lebanon’s south survived the economic challenges following World War I, their focus on cross-border trade and failure to make serious capital investments in Lebanon backfired when Israel moved to close the border after 1948.28 But ‘Amili and Galilean peasants were hit much earlier than merchants by the sociopolitical changes in their area and its peripheralization. The 1858 Ottoman Land Code led to “the concentration of property in the hands of a few rich . . . rural notables . . . [and] bourgeois from Saida and Beirut.”29 By the turn of the century, a landless proletariat had emerged, and they were suffering under “true feudal tyrants.”30 After the war, the French economic focus on transit trade and finance in Lebanon disadvantaged agriculture and traditional manufacturing, which were further stunted by the Great Depression of the 1930s. Eager to secure political stability in the rural peripheries, the French made sure that the landowning and the bourgeois merchant elites could continue to exploit their peasants. Together, these factors exacerbated the already “marked social inequalities.”31 To make things worse, emigration, a vital demographic pressure valve, dropped to critical levels after 1914. In 1900, the annual emigration rate had been approximately 15,000, but that number declined precipitously during the war. It climbed to a minor peak of 6,000 in 1928 before falling back to 1,500 after 1930, where it leveled off. Foreign immigration restrictions in the 1920s, especially in the United States, and again in the 1930s, in response to the Great Depression, meant that Lebanon’s rural poor stayed home. In geographically central Mount Lebanon, people tried to escape misery by migrat-

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27 Interview, Fayek Hourani (b. 1938, Marjayoun), September 12, 2008, Beirut, Lebanon.
29 Mervin, Un réformisme chiite, 42. For Palestine, see Krämer, A History of Palestine, 81–87.
ing to Beirut; Palestine was the destination of choice for Jabal 'Amil, and also for southwestern Syria and Transjordan.32

32 Kohei Hashimoto, “Lebanese Population Movement, 1920–1939,” in Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds., The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration (London, 1992), 85; Couland, Le mouvement syndical au Liban, 132. For the trickle of southern Lebanese Shi'is into interwar Beirut, see May Davie, Beyrouth et ses faubourgs (1840–1940): Une intégration inachevée (Beirut, 1996), 86. Compared to southern Lebanon, which was neglected by the French and stunted by Beirut, Palestine was prosperous (and despite Zionist attempts to create a purely Jewish labor market, it relied on cheap Arab labor). For 'Amili laborers picked up by the British police, see Délegation générale de la France au Levant, Service politique, Bureau de Tyr, Bulletin d’information #28, July 22–28, 1944, 2, Box 2120,
Movements of goods and people across the borders of Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria were the subject of a 1926 Anglo-French good neighbor agreement. It allowed inhabitants of the border districts of Acre and Safed in Palestine, Tyre, Marjayoun, and Hasbaya in Lebanon, and Quneitra in Syria “to cross the frontier freely and without a passport and to transport, from one side to the other of the frontier, their animals and the natural increase thereof, their tools, their vehicles, their implements, seeds and products of soil or subsoil of their lands, without paying any customs duties or any dues for grazing or watering or any other tax on account of passing the frontier and entering the neighbouring territory.” At first glance, crossing the border indeed seemed routine. Even the decision to make laissez-passer mandatory and the order that the border be crossed only at customs points seem like a less than dramatic measure. In southern Lebanon, these travel documents could be obtained at minimal cost from French administrators. More crucially, people could—and most did—cross the border between the few customs posts without papers.

Examined up close, however, the laissez-passer influenced people’s lives in subtle yet decisive ways. Administrative glitches were common. And for ordinary ‘Amilis and Palestinian and Syrian inhabitants of the border zone, the border, though barely visible, actually reinforced socioeconomic inequalities. The lack of travel permits ultimately left them vulnerable to situations in which the state actually was present; more precisely, it signaled that a person did not have the social connections necessary to deal with occasional intrusions by the state. These could take the form of sporadic identity card controls and, more crucially, of changes to the letter of the 1926 good neighbor agreement and abuses of power. Undocumented peasants were also more likely to be arrested than were people of local importance, who habitually got away

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33 Agreement between Palestine and Syria and the Lebanon to Facilitate Good Neighbourly Relations in Connection with Frontier Questions (London, 1927), 4.
34 The issuance of laissez-passer was often interrupted in practice: “’Ala al-hudud,” al-Ahrar, March 26, 1931, 5. Interview, Karim Isbir Salamah (b. 1923, Marjayoun), September 9, 2008, Marjayoun, Lebanon; interview, Jamal Abu Murad (b. 1946, Marjayoun), relating the story of his father, Abu Murad, Sr., September 10, 2008, Marjayoun, Lebanon.
35 For identity card controls, see “Mufattishiyya al-darak al-‘amma tasdaru taqriran,” Beirut, September 16, 1936, 4; “Qadiyyat ittijaz al-hudud,” al-Ahrar, July 3, 1932, 4. For problems with enforcing the 1926 agreement, see “Mukhalafat ittifiq al-hudud,” al-Ahrar, March 23, 1931, 5, which complained about British refusal to fully implement the 1926 treaty. Britain and France often tried prohibiting the cross-border movement of livestock out of concerns for veterinary hygiene, adopted unilateral measures that undercut their agreement, and, during crises such as the late 1930s, when Britain erected a barbed-wire fence along parts of the border to hold off guerrillas and arms smugglers, complicated access to agricultural fields. See HC, Relations extérieures, to Monsieur le Délégué du HC auprès du gouvernement de la République libanaise, #7832, Beirut, September 15, 1933, Box 857, MAE-Nantes; “Tawqif ittijaz al-ru’a,” al-Ahrar, December 24, 1930, 4; Conseiller administratif du Liban Sud, to HC, #231, Saida, June 18, 1938, Box 652, MAE-Nantes; interview, Tohmeh Maghzal (b. 1928, Bir‘im), April 28, 2010, Jish, Israel. For abuses of power, see HC fiat, “Javazat al-hudud,” al-Ahrar, December 9, 1930, 2, which informed the public about a reassertion of the terms and places of valid laissez-passer according to the 1926 agreement and additional SG regulations. The penalties foreseen—a fine for the first two violations, a prison sentence thereafter—opened the door for abuse. For a complaint, see SS, Liban Sud, Bulletin d’information hebdomadaire #10, March 5–11, 1934, 8, Box 1875, MAE-Nantes. During World War II, the British Transjordan Frontier Force, which was helping to guard the Lebanese-Palestinian border, was notorious for its abuses. See SAA, report #125, Saida-Bint-Jbeil, January 4, 1945, Box 101, MAE-Nantes.
with serious offenses. This was the case for smuggling as well, including of narcotics.36

Officials’ differential treatment of ordinary and better-connected smugglers was not the only way in which trafficking reflected general conditions within the border zone. Conditions there facilitated the movement of contraband. Peasants’ poverty and their knowledge of the terrain made them cheap and resourceful carriers. In addition, strong socioeconomic ties were built on reliable networks of trust, and state presence was weak. And while the expansion of roads was beneficial for moving troops, others could take advantage of it, too. Hence, because of economic decline and decreasing emigration abroad, some border-zone peasants depended not only on tobacco cash crops, but also on smuggling to make ends meet. It was a profitable business because the prices of goods multiplied once they were transported across borders (not least because of the high French customs duties).37

Thus, paradoxically, the very existence of a border was the silver lining in the dark cloud hanging over the marginalized Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian border zone. The zone linked the cannabis and opium poppy fields of Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey with Egypt, and the now-diverging economies of new neighboring countries created demands that were often met by smuggler-suppliers from across the border. In sum, three national peripheries combined to form a local hub not just for legal trade, but for regionally connected gray and black markets as well.

But people did not profit equally. Rather than buying and reselling drugs, peasants served as carriers between Lebanese pick-up and Palestinian drop-off points. On the Rmeiche-Hurfesh route, for example, young locals familiar with the territory moved drugs across the border for a fee. They alternated between two different routes, communicating by sound signals to evade patrols.38 Both occasional and more

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36 Cf., e.g., “Al-tahrib baina Lubnan va Filastin,” Sawt al-Ahrar, April 25, 1941, 2, with Note, Douanes to Cabinet politique, Beirut, October 20, 1933, Box 857, MAE-Nantes.

37 French dependence on customs receipts helped to keep import tariffs higher than in the neighboring states: 11 percent (1918–1924), 15 percent (May 1924), 25 percent (May 1925). See La Syrie et le Liban: Sous l’occupation et le Mandat français, 1919–1927 (Paris, 1928), 203–210. The link between budgetary stability, customs revenues, smuggling, and border control was often addressed: ibid., 207; Inspecteur général des douanes to Secrétaire générale, Beirut, April 24, 1935, Box 859, MAE-Nantes.

38 Interview, anonymous (b. 1947, Hurfesh), April 27, 2010, Hurfesh, Israel. Cf. interview, Saniiyah; “Yukhfun al-mawwad al-muharraba fi butun al-himar,” Beirut, June 12, 1937, 4. Endemic narcotics trafficking through Rmeiche is documented especially for World War II. See, e.g., Rapport mensuel a/s contrebande, SAA, 3, Bint Jbeil, October 10, 1944, Box 6, MAE-Nantes; SAA, Brigade du Liban du Sud, Poste de Binte Jbeil, “Rapport mensuel sur la contrebande,” 2, February 28, 1945, Box 101, MAE-Nantes. On a methodological note, most people I interviewed in the border zone have little compunction about attesting to this aspect of trafficking. Where they differ—and where the present affects the past most plainly—is in what happened just before and after. Interviewees with a stake in today’s local politics tend to maintain that outside merchants formed those links in the smuggling chain; “ordinary” people, who may want to settle accounts through the interview, talk about local merchants more often. (I mention names provided by interviewees only if they are corroborated by an archival source.) Thus, interview, anonymous (b. 1947, Hurfesh [member of a leading local family]), April 27, 2010, Hurfesh, Israel, maintains that a clan from Gaza drove cars all the way to Palestinian border villages, from where they transported drugs via the Sinai to Egypt. (Mandate sources do report a considerable role played by Gazans in smuggling from Palestine to Egypt. See Report, Commandant’s Office, Suez Canal Police, Port Said, April 12, 1924, FO141-470-3, PRO; Inspecteur générale des douanes to Direction, HC affaires politiques, Beirut, April 22, 1941, Box 855, MEA-Nantes.) On the other hand, interview, ‘Ali ‘Abd
professional smugglers tapped into preexisting local socioeconomic ties built upon networks of trust that were crucial for trafficking. Such chains were typical not only for narcotics smuggling, but also for illegal immigration and arms trafficking.\textsuperscript{39} 

At the same time, motorized long-distance smugglers were increasingly active across the border zone. Typically, in 1945, Haifa-based ‘Abud Yasin was described as “shuttling between Palestine and Zahle via Ain-Ebel.”\textsuperscript{40} Professional cab and truck drivers increasingly moonlighted as smugglers, and soldiers—whose army vehicles were rarely monitored—often worked as long-range intermediaries, especially during World War II.\textsuperscript{41} These developments were facilitated by the high volume of cars being imported into Lebanon, and by the slow but steady expansion of roads in the border zone. By the 1920s, there was already routine motorized access to Naqura and Marjayoun, the western and eastern ends of Lebanon’s southern border, respectively; entering the border zone by car was possible but difficult.\textsuperscript{42} Across the border in Palestine, the north-south Metullah-Safed road, originating in Marjayoun, 

\textsuperscript{39} For arms smuggling via Rmeiche, see Conseiller administratif du Liban Sud, Saidia, March 14, 1938, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. See also Ezra Yakhin, Shirat Ha-Shulamit: Sipurah shel meragelet tsionit (Jerusalem, 2000), for Shulamit Cohen-Kishik, a key Jewish illegal ‘aliyah organizer in Beirut and her local contacts. See also interview, Abraham Hileli (b. 1929, Aleppo), April 7, 2010, Haifa, Israel, who in 1942 was smuggled by bus with other Jews from Beirut to the border, then walked with a Lebanese guide through the night and crossed the border near Kibbutz Kfar Giladi. That kibbutz was also a principal way station for illegal Jewish immigrants because of its excellent relationship with South Lebanese Shi‘is; interview, Uri Hurvitz (b. 1926, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi), April 29, 2010, Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, Israel.

\textsuperscript{40} Rapport mensuel a/s contrebande, SAA, 3, Bint Jbeil, October 10, 1944, Box 6, MAE-Nantes; emphasis added. In another case, Palestinian smuggler Rizk Zemmo and his partners bought 700 kilograms of hashish in Zahle and transported it by car across the border to Palestine. See SAA, Brigade de la Bekaa, to SAA, Directeur général, #545/Z, Zahle, April 6, 1945, Box 101, MAE-Nantes.

\textsuperscript{41} Rapport mensuel a/s contrebande, SAA, 3, Bint Jbeil, October 10, 1944, Box 6, MAE-Nantes; emphasis added. In another case, Palestinian smuggler Rizk Zemmo and his partners bought 700 kilograms of hashish in Zahle and transported it by car across the border to Palestine. See SAA, Brigade de la Bekaa, to SAA, Directeur général, #545/Z, Zahle, April 6, 1945, Box 101, MAE-Nantes.

\textsuperscript{42} For hashish smuggling into Tiberias by a Damascene taxi driver, see Ministre Publique v. Ahmad Badaoui Harbé, Yussef bin Muhammad Skik, Hussein Ali el Imadi, and Fathi ben Ahmad el Habbal, Judgment #3, January 5, 1931, in Mandate Legal Documents Collection, Markaz al-watha, Damascus, Syria, vol. 100, 3. For a “veritable association” between customs officials and professional drivers smuggling narcotics and regular goods via Bint Jbeil to the border, see SAA, Rapport mensuel a/s contrebande, Bint Jbeil, October 10, 1944, Box 6, MAE-Nantes. For World War II, see, e.g., SAA, Travaux de stupéfiants par les britanniques, Zahle, September 25, 1944, Box 33, MAE-Nantes, for a soldier transporting from the Bekaa Valley to Haifa; SAA, Rapport mensuel, Tyre, February 7, 1945, Box 33, MAE-Nantes, for the Tyre-Haifa highway; Minutes of Court-Martial at Ras-el-Tin [Egypt], June 6, 1945, ADM156/262, PRO, for an Egyptian sailor smuggling hashish on the Haifa-Kantara train.

\textsuperscript{43} The easily drivable access roads were those that ran from Beirut to Tyre to Naqura, and from there on to Haifa and Egypt; from Beirut to Jezzine to Marjayoun, and from there on to Metullah, Safed, and Haifa; and from Baalbek to Zahle, Hasbaya, and Marjayoun. SR, Poste du Sud Liban, “Etude sommaire de la region du Djebel Amel,” 3, Marjayoun, June 20, 1930, Box 2200, MAE-Nantes, states that the Tyre-Bazuriyyah-Jouayya, Tyre-Hasbaya-Shabik, and Naqura-Alma Sha‘ab roads in western South Lebanon, although in “very bad condition,” were drivable. SS, Liban Sud, Marjayoun, “Documentation générale, dossier politique,” 19–21, August 1931, Box 2201, MAE-Nantes, shows that in eastern South Lebanon, roads were usable, though equally bad. On another note, there were approximately 1,000 cars in Lebanon by 1921, 3,700 in 1926, and 8,000 in 1931. See “Multiplication des automobiles,” Asie française, January 1932, 35. In 1931, there was one car for every seventy-five people in Lebanon, a ratio six times that for Egypt, for instance. See “Les automobiles au Liban,” Asie française,
and the east-west Safed-Akka road linked the border zone to Haifa and Egypt; many of the north-south “mountain tracks” to the Safed-Akka road were also drivable. In the Galilee, roads were later expanded and paved in part to offset the weak presence of the state, including security forces. This process peaked in 1937 with the construction of an east-west road between the Safed-Akka road and the border, an early reaction to the 1936–1939 Palestinian Revolt, which was also supported by Syrians and Lebanese.

Rebels operating in the border zone sabotaged roads to slow down British security forces. But their arms suppliers drove on those roads, too—and then and later, they were also used to smuggle narcotics, people, and legal goods. Such movement was further facilitated when in World War II the British built two east-west roads off the border’s southern and northern sides. Two decades earlier, a visitor to Palestine had contrasted prewar travel with the present “uninterrupted, dense motorized traffic in all cities and on all highways” and praised the “effortless journey in a day from Jerusalem to Metullah.” Routinization, the disappearance of “adventures,” characterized traffic after the war. It helped shape trafficking, too—even in the border zone.

By the later nineteenth century, Beirut had become the Levant’s principal trade hub. Emboldened by their success in lobbying for the new Ottoman province of Beirut (1888), merchants there helped convince Istanbul to build a modern road to Damascus (1863), to expand the port so that it could support steamships (1888), and to accept a French-financed railway from Beirut to Damascus (1895). Economic growth, refugee crises, and rural-urban migration caused the population to swell from around 10,000 in the 1840s to 150,000 in 1915. Around 1850, the mercantile elite began to abandon the cramped old city for adjoining areas such as Zuqaq al-Blat. Five decades later, a British guidebook admired the “broad streets and splendid houses”: Beirut was being transformed by privately owned streetcar lines and


43 Her Majesty’s Government, Palestine and Jordan: General Defence Scheme, 1930, 3, Colonial Office [hereafter CO], 323/1113/17, PRO; interview, Georges Akl (b. 1923, Jish), April 28, 2010, Jish, Israel.

44 This road ran from the coast via Tarshiha, Hurfesh, and Sasa to Safed. See HC to Ministre des Affaires étrangères, Beirut, June 28, 1938, Box 653, MAE-Nantes; “Summary of the Recommendations Contained in Sir Charles Tegart’s Report on the Organisation of the Palestine Police,” 1–2, CO733/383/1, PRO. For the French army’s steady construction of roads, see SR, Marjayoun, Dossier politique #2, “Le secteur sud: Situation politique et militaire actuelles,” Djedeidé, June 2, 1928, Box 2200, MAE-Nantes.

45 For sabotage, see Conseiller administratif du Liban Sud, report #233, Sidon, June 21, 1938, Box 652, MAE-Nantes. For arms runners’ use of roads, see SS, Kuneitra, report #443/K/VII, Kuneitra, December 14, 1938, ibid. One road built in World War II led from Naqura via Sasa and Malkiyah to Khalsa, the other from Naqura via Aita Shā’ab, Rmeiche, and Aitharun to Marjayoun.

46 Hugo Herrmann, Eine werdende Welt: Reiseindrücke aus Palästina (Prague, 1925), 72, 15.

47 Hanssen, Fin de Siècle Beyrout; Dahir, Tarikh Lubnan al-ijtimā‘ī, 100; Davie, Beyrouth et ses faubourgs, 12–13, 45–46, 63, 141. Around the turn of the century, Ashrafiyeh, Mousaytbeh, and Ra’s Beirut became the main centers of Beirut extra muros; ibid., 62.
Ottoman projects, including lighting, a modern water supply, and public spaces such as the Place des Canons and the Lighthouse and Pine Forest promenades.48

Hence, in 1918, Beirut was already the Levantine coast’s largest and busiest city. Determined to keep things that way, the French widened streets to accommodate motorized traffic and extended avenues and streetcar lines to the mushrooming suburbs.49 Beirut changed from the bottom up, too: the drop in emigration, the push of rural poverty, and the pull of the city’s reputation as Lebanon’s workhouse accelerated its growth. The 1932 count of 161,382 Beirutsis underestimated the population. By a decade after the war, the number of inhabitants in the city’s “residential areas had almost double[d].” Tens of thousands of World War I refugees, including Armenians, and rural poor were crowded into Beirut’s outskirts in the “first slums.”50 Although the city’s population had rebounded after a terrible World War I famine, its social texture had not. The contraction of elite-run communal social services was exacerbated by the rapidly increasing rural-urban migration and the hemorrhaging...

48 Jade Tabet, with Marlène Ghorayeb, Eric Huybrechts, and Eric Verdeil, eds., Beyrouth: Portrait de ville (Paris, 2001), 8, quoting a Macmillan guidebook from 1901. For Ottoman projects, see ibid., 9–10.
49 For urban policy, see ibid., 13–19. In 1925, there were 2,500 cars in Beirut alone. “La commerce des automobiles dans le Levant,” Asie française, March–April 1925, 126.
50 Quotations from Davie, Beyrouth et ses faubourgs, 85. For the 1932 census, see Helmut Ruppert, Beyrouth: Une ville d’orient marquée par l’occident (1969; repr., Beirut, 1999), 33.
of traditional manufacture, which took a turn for the worse during the Great Depression.51

The results showed not only in the slums. Lower- and lower-middle-class inhabitants of neighborhoods such as Basta, Musaitbeh, and Ra’s Beirut fell on harder times, too. Some found at least temporary employment in the transport and service sectors and in import-substitution factories, but many were not so fortunate. The 1930s in particular witnessed bitter poverty, as “real wages in cities fell by half” and “unemployment reached an estimated 30 percent.”52 This situation provoked labor protests and helped lead to the rise of trade unions. But it also encouraged prostitution and petty crime such as pickpocketing. These illegalities clustered where money and people were on the move: at Beirut’s largest square, the Place des Canons (also known as the Place des Martyres), which was crowded with shoppers, moviegoers, café visitors, hotel guests, sailors from the adjacent port, and travelers using the many long-distance cabs and buses that arrived or departed from here.53

That the Place des Canons was so busy, and such a draw for petty criminals and prostitutes, was due partly to French investment in transport infrastructure. The French doubled the size of Beirut’s port by 1934, and in 1938 they modernized it by adding deep-water docks. They also strengthened the city’s local links to the regional highway infrastructure and invested in railroads and highways. A northbound highway led to Tripoli, Lattakiyah, and Aleppo, then on to Aintab in Turkey; an eastbound highway connected Beirut to Damascus and Baghdad; and a southbound highway followed the Mediterranean coast to Naqura and from there to Haifa.54 Lebanon and Syria had 9,700 kilometers of drivable roads by 1939, up from 1,300 kilometers in 1919; the railway, although expanded from 870 kilometers to 1,520 kilometers in the same timespan, thus “was supplanted by motor vehicles and lorries.”55 Entre-

53 After 1921, this square was also known as the Place des Martyres because the Ottomans executed a number of Arabs there during World War I. For petty crime, see Khalid al-Lahham, Beirut fi al-zakira al-sha’biyya, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1997), 1: 147. The number of registered prostitutes in Beirut increased from 294 in 1930 to 349 in 1932. See J. Jousselin, Enquetes sur la jeunesse delinquante et la prostitution au Liban en 1932 (Beirut, 1933), 27. The French issued various decrees regarding prostitution. See République libanaise [hereafter RL], Arrêté 2346 portant réglementation de la prostitution, July 21, 1922; RL, Loi portant réglementation de la prostitution, February 6, 1931; RL, Décret législatif 49/L portant modification de l’article 17 de la Loi de 6 Février 1931 réglementant la prostitution, October 28, 1932. For labor protests and trade unions, see Hanna, Al-haraka al-‘ummaliyya, 309–507, and Thompson, Colonial Citizens, 155–170.
54 For ports, see Couland, Le mouvement syndical au Liban, 129; Jacques de Monicault, Le port de Beyrouth et l’économie des pays du levant sous le Mandat français (Paris, 1936). Such reforms did not keep Haifa from becoming a strong commercial rival, however. See Samir Kassir, Histoire de Beyrouth (Paris, 2003), 325. For local Beiruti links, see Tabet, Beyrouth, 18–19, for the 1931 Danger Brothers and the 1943 Ecochard urban plans. For highways, see Gates, The Merchant Republic of Lebanon, 31.
preneurs took note. From the early 1920s, they extended transport services throughout the region, also connecting to road networks in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine.\footnote{56 In 1925, the Nairn Transport Company began operating from Beirut to Baghdad, making the Damascus-Baghdad leg (542 miles) in twenty-five hours. A Beirut-Tripoli-Aleppo bus company was founded in 1926, followed by a Beirut-Damascus-Baghdad company the next year. In 1928, road transport times between Aleppo and Beirut shrank with the opening of a new Aleppo-Lattakiyah motorway, extending the new Lattakiyah-Tripoli road (1923) to Beirut. See Rennie Mac Innes, Notes for Travellers by Road and Rail in Palestine and Syria (London, 1925), 53; “Une nouvelle ligne trans-désertique entre Beyrouth et Baghdad,” Asie française, June 1933, 208; “La commerce des automobiles dans le Levant,” Asie française, March–April 1925, 125; Kassir, Histoire de Beyrouth, 328; “La route Lattaquie´-Alep,” Asie française, February 1927, 70. Also, a Lebanese car-selling company was active as far away as Tehran. See ads for “Kettaneh-distributor—Dodge Brothers, cars, trucks, & buses,” Ittila\=/overglottalstoprev at, March 27, 1930, 2. In Palestine, small buses had connected Haifa to other main cities, Beirut, and Damascus since the early 1920s, and taxis offered service to Beirut. Since 1935, the Egged Bus Company had operated a Haifa-Tiberias-Mafraq-Baghdad line. See Daphna Sharfman, “Ha-anashim, ha-mekomot ve ha-eiruim she asu historia,” in Daphna Sharfman, Eli Nachmiyas, and Johnny Mansour, eds., Teh\=/overglottalstoprev al mirpeset ha kasino: Du-kium be-Haifa be-ikufat ha-mandat ha-briti 1920–1948 (Haifa, 2006), 181–182. Although highway and road infrastructure was significantly extended during the interwar period, contemporaries opined that “in Palestine, the Administration is unduly hampering legitimate road construction and maintenance in its effort to safeguard the interests of the Railways (which are state-owned).” See Husni Sawwaf, “Transportation and Communication,” in Sa\=/ib B. Himadeh, ed., Economic Organization of Palestine (Beirut, 1938), 306; for road extension projects, see ibid., 304–315. The Jaffa-Jerusalem railroad had been opened in 1892, and the Haifa-Semakh-Damascus line, a supply route for the Damascus-Medina Hijaz Railway, in 1905. In 1917, the British constructed a railway from the northern Suez Canal to Gaza for military reasons, soon extending it to Jaffa. Haifa was linked to the Palestine railroad network in 1918. See Zvi Stahl, Toldot ha-tahbura ha-tsiburit be-Eretz Israel be-rei kartisei nest ah (n.p., 1995), 24. Indeed, after 1918, railway tickets became considerably cheaper, and travel times shorter. In 1925, the trip from Haifa to Qantara (Egypt) took ten hours by rail. Ibid., 33. Private car travel from Beirut to Haifa took a minimum of two hours, cabs and buses four to five hours. See interview, Shmuel Rabino (b. 1924,}
The French expanded the transport networks for several reasons. Transit trade and related commercial services were central to Mandatory Lebanon’s political economy, a fact also reflected in mercantile competition between the French and the British from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Territorial end points of national transport and trade networks, including Naqura and Port Beirut customs, were central to a mandate budget that relied heavily on customs revenues. Finally, Beirut was the French navy’s main port in the Eastern Mediterranean, and highways and railways facilitated troop movements. Hence state territoriality was denser in Beirut and on the highways than in the border zone. A police regulation requiring hotels to inform the police about any new foreign guest within twenty-four hours was implemented with special vigor in the capital. The French navy jealously controlled one part of Beirut’s port. The other part was policed by three civil security forces: the police, the Sûreté générale (SG), and the customs police, who at times were joined by the Gendarmerie; all four were French-led arms of the emerging Lebanese nation-state (and all would be retained after independence). The Gendarmerie was a well-armed force that used a considerable portion of its personnel to patrol Lebanon’s highways and rural roads. During the Palestinian Revolt, these patrols were intensified to help Britain keep non-Palestinians out of Palestine. Finally, at the Naqura customs station, the customs police, the Gendarmerie, the SG, and the political Services spéciaux were all present.

57 “Syria [is] a transit region . . . The car has enabled it to be reestablished.” See Conférence faite par le Général Weygand sur la Syrie (Cour de Cassation, 1924), 1, 4H120, SHAT. For Franco-British competition, see SR, Rapport d’ensemble sur les possibilités et l’utilité qu’il y aurait de créer un service français de transports réguliers entre Damas Bagdad et Teheran, Beirut, January 15, 1924, 4H120 (Dossier 4), SHAT; Rapport au sujet de la Société orientale de transporte “Nairn,” 2, 4, June 26, 1931, Box 588, MAE-Paris; HC, Note [à propos des] routes de Beyrouth et de Caïffa à Bagdad via Routba, 3, Beirut, May 21, 1935, ibid.

58 Key to the mandate’s budget was the HC’s control of the Common Interests revenues. Launched as “budget général des États” in 1921, and abolished in 1948, this funding source bankrolled shared Lebanese-Syrian administrative services. Customs receipts represented 30–40 percent of the state’s revenues and approximately 90 percent of the Common Interests. See Jean-David Mizrahi, “La France et sa politique de mandat en Syrie et au Liban (1920–1939),” in Nadine Meouchy, ed., France, Syrie, et Liban, 1918–1946: Les ambiguïtés et les dynamiques de la relation mandataire (Damas, 2002), 44.

59 For regional roads and military security, see “Syrie: Les routes,” May 1924, 4H120 (Dossier 4), SHAT. In Beirut, the French widened streets to facilitate access by security forces; caserns were located at the ends of most avenues radiating from the center. See Davie, Beyrouth et ses faubourgs, 152.

60 The hotel regulation had existed de facto since the early 1920s, and became law with Lebanese Arrêté 81/CR, par. 6 (August 21, 1931); for lists, see boxes 1777 and 58, MAE-Nantes. For the port concession, see Compagnie du port, des quais, et des entrepôts de Beyrouth, “Convention de réadaptation des Actes concessionnels de la compagnie,” December 15, 1925, Box 180, Mandat Syrie-Liban, second versement, MAE-Nantes. For all security agencies’ responsibilities in the French Mandate, see Pierre Amory, Le régime administratif au Liban avant et depuis l’institution du mandat international de la France sur ce territoire (Lyon, 1934), 180–217; Raymond O’Zoux, Les états du Levant sous mandat français (Paris, 1931), 212, states that in the late 1920s, the Gendarmerie libanaise counted 50 French officers, 617 mounted gendarmes, and 705 regular gendarmes. For 1936–1939, see Gendarmerie libanaise, Inspection 279/C.G., Beirut, June 5, 1938, Box 653, MAE-Nantes (troop reinforcements); Gendarmerie libanaise, Inspection 267/C.G., Beirut, May 25, 1938, ibid. (improved highway controls). For Naqura, see the entirety of Box 2178, MAE-Nantes (SS); Gendarmerie libanaise, Inspection 267/C.G., Beirut, May 25, 1938, Box 653, MAE-Nantes (Gendarmerie); and the entirety of Box 20, MAE-Nantes (SG).
Yet trafficking persisted. For one thing, the expanding transport networks made it easier: illegal trade fed off, and fed into, France’s official policy regarding transit trade. On freshly paved highways, recently introduced cars cut travel time from days to hours, which was vital for smugglers dodging the police. Zahle, for instance—whose position as the Bekaa Valley’s trading center had been strengthened with the 1895 opening of the Beirut-Damascus railroad, and where drug smugglers lived alongside large landowners who grew most of the cannabis for Lebanon’s hashish—was now a two-hour drive from Beirut. Improved transportation also eliminated the need for intermediaries between opium producers in southeastern Turkey and professional smugglers in Lebanon’s capital. Aleppines, the only strong go-betweens left, often visited Beirut or resided there, working with accomplices in their native city to smuggle drugs to their new home. Farther south, Lebanese and Palestinian smugglers sometimes traveled to Egypt by car or train to collect separately shipped cargoes and sell them directly to Egyptian buyers. Collaborating groups fielded permanent “liaison officers” who commuted between Egypt and Lebanon by car, train, or ship to help settle payments and organize transports.

Professional smugglers profited from the expanding transport infrastructure in cities, too. In Beirut they hid large narcotics cargoes in warehouses and homes in sprawling new suburbs such as Furn al-Shubak as well as older, more central neighborhoods such as middle- to upper-class Zuqaq al-Blat or lower- to middle-class Basta, waiting for an opportunity to move the contraband southward. But they did not operate alone. Café owners and tobacco concessionaires mediated between pro-

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61 This was officially recognized. See Projet d’extension du port de Beyrouth: Mémoire justificatif des dispositions techniques du projet, 3, n.d. (ca. 1935), Box 586, MAE-Paris.


63 “Iktishaf hadith tahrib fi Beirut,” Sawt al-Ahrar, February 6, 1936, 4; “Petites nouvelles,” L’Orient, December 17, 1926, 2; Cordier, Commandant de Compagnie de la gendarmerie, to Chef, SG, Damascus, February 14, 1935, Box 6, MAE-Nantes; “Shurtat Falastin tusadiru siyyara lubnaniyya,” Sawt al-Ahrar, February 3, 1940, 2.

64 “No. 889. Seizure at Alexandria in May and July 1937,” in Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs—Summary of Illicit Transactions and Seizures Reported to the Secretariat of the League of Nations [hereafter ACT/S] between October 1 and December 31, 1937, 28–29, C.57.M.22.1938.XI, SDN. For a general note about drug-smuggling trajectories in Palestine, see SDN, Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs—Palestine, 5. For Haifa as a transport hub, see “No. 899. Hashish-Smuggling into Egypt via the Palestine Railways, April and May 1932,” in ACT/S between April 1 and June 30, 1933, 24, C.498.M.251.1933.XI, SDN.


professionals trafficking *en gros* and occasional smugglers, many of them poor Beirutis hit by the economic downturn.\(^{67}\) The Place des Canons was the center for this trade.\(^{68}\) Some buyers here were consumers; others resold the drugs, either then and there or in the adjacent port.

The poverty and petty crime that were part of Beirut’s Place des Canons also helped shape life at the waterfront. On November 3, 1934, port day laborer Mustafa el-Turk was caught smuggling 1.9 kilograms of opium onto the *Felix Roussel* for a sailor who had recruited him the night before at the Place des Canons and promised him two Syrian pounds (SP) for successful delivery. El-Turk went through with the transaction, in which the merchandise cost 750 times the value of his service, most likely because he was afraid, wished to keep his reputation, or was unable to contact a Beirut customer because he was excluded from local selling networks.\(^{69}\) Be that as it may, he was in a weak trade position that mirrored his poverty and marginality.

In 1934, a Beirut worker with a family of five had a minimum of SP420 in average monthly expenses—210 times el-Turk’s fee. Considering the fact that the sentence for smuggling was three months in prison, SP2 does not seem like much.\(^{70}\) Like some poor in the border zone, however, Beirut laborers were fortunate in their misfortune. Living at a regional trade chokepoint offered them opportunities without which they would have been even worse off.\(^{71}\) And although the pittance they earned was insufficient to feed their families, it suggests that courier service was not overly risky.

This was true for sailors as well, who perfectly embodied the regional nature of Eastern Mediterranean drug smuggling.\(^{72}\) Certain ship crews were notorious smuggling...
In Port Beirut, they often moved narcotics from one ship to another without ever coming on land. At sea, some operated on their own; others guarded large cargoes for professional drug-smuggling groups. Their task was not too difficult. In ports, transit smuggling was exceedingly hard to prevent; at sea, ships were effectively monitored only in times of crisis such as the Palestinian Revolt, when the search for arms caused collateral damage to narcotics trafficking. They, as well as professional and occasional poor smugglers, profited from the fact that in Port Beirut, as in other transport hubs around the world, “the state [was] somewhat blinded by the frenzy of activity.” In fact, as on highways, so in Port Beirut smugglers prof-

73 For an example, the Champollion, see Informations to Commissaire spécial du port, Beirut, March 13, 1937, Box 6, MAE-Nantes. For individual sailors in Port Beirut, see, e.g., “Dabt al-hashish,” al-Bairaq, March 22, 1929, 2; Note to Directeur, SG, Beirut, March 12, 1936, Box 6, MAE-Nantes; Note to Directeur, SG, Beirut, November 10, 1937, ibid.


75 Britain guarded Palestine’s coast closely, urging France to do so, too: Officier de liaison britannique to Chef du Cabinet militaire du HC, Beirut, August 3, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes; Directeur, SG, to Chef du Bureau diplomatique du HC, Beirut, April 12, 1938, ibid.

76 Eric Tagliacozzo, Secret Trade, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915 (New Haven, Conn., 2005), 5, his example being Singapore. A 1933 French report on
ited from France’s investment in transit infrastructure. The French made considerable efforts to secure this infrastructure—but they could not keep up with the amount of trade and trafficking it helped to create.

Denser, faster transportation networks had other consequences. In the border zone, professional smugglers relied on local trust networks (even as they increasingly bypassed them by way of the expanding roads); beyond the zone, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian professionals were united through the use of a loosely shared space. It was a more imagined space than that, for example, of a Rmeiachi who knew the path to neighboring Hurfesh like the back of his hand: it was created by cars and trains, which turned terrain that was tough going on foot into a fast-moving landscape when traveled on wheels. But precisely for this reason, shared geography was more than an image: the faster the trip, the easier the visit, and routine and trustworthy relationships could be established across longer distances. As a result, many Alpine smugglers operated out of Beirut, and 'Abud Yasin, while based in Haifa, was as often as not in Beirut or on the road to Aleppo. Meeting places and residences reflected this mobility. Cafés and hotels were often used because they were not fully public spaces and thus offered a modicum of privacy—a Gazan smuggler’s Cairo hotel was described as his “pied-à-terre,” for example—but unlike private apartments, they could be easily abandoned.

But trust networks alone could not ensure smooth smuggling operations. Especially in Beirut, on the highways, and at customs posts, state officials were too strongly present to always be circumvented. Certainly, subterfuge was common. On the Beirut-Naqrha-Haifa highway, professional smugglers tried to outsmart Gendarmerie patrols by using fake identity cards, hiding cars beside the road, driving off-road at points, deliberately turning off their lights at night, or using secondary roads; in Naqrha, smugglers hid narcotics in often ingenious ways. But more direct means were necessary, too: bribery was often integral to large-scale smuggling. The extent of corruption and independent smuggling operations by officials hints at the

77 Less than half a century earlier, such constant traveling would have been exceptional. See Beshara Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900 (Berkeley, Calif., 1995), 68–78.

78 Suez Canal Police to Ministry of the Interior, Cairo, letter H/46, “hashish smuggling,” Port Said, April 12, 1924, FO141/470/3, PRO. See also Chef d’escadron Gordie, Commandant de la Compagnie de la gendarmerie, to Chef, SG, #517R, Damas, February 14, 1935, Box 6, MAE-Nantes; His Britannic Majesty’s Supreme Court, Alexandria, Rex v. Victor Foley, 13, July 10, 1930, FO847/102, PRO.

financial straits of small- and mid-level state officials. More importantly, it shows that there was no clear boundary separating officials from smugglers, or state from society. Cases such as that of some French officers who used their army vehicles to transport hashish from Zahle to Beirut in the pay of smugglers, or of a Beirut police inspector who was caught smuggling 3 kilograms of opium in the port, were common in the 1920s and 1930s.\textsuperscript{80} They became routine during World War II: a Naqora policeman who helped a narcotics smuggler move hashish to Haifa is only one example of the innumerable Lebanese, Palestinian, French, and British officials who cashed in on the soaring traffic in drugs and other goods.\textsuperscript{81}

The involvement of higher officials sometimes caused a scandal. In the fall of 1944, for example, two Lebanese policemen were caught using their vehicles to smuggle hashish into Palestine, some of which belonged to Secretary of Parliament Khalil Taki ed Dine and the commander of Lebanon’s Sécurité interne, Colonel Fawzi Trabulsi.\textsuperscript{82} This does not mean that the French and Lebanese authorities were completely paralyzed, but it does indicate that many Lebanese did not think that hashish and opium merited total criminalization. As Raymond Edde, the son of Lebanon’s president, Emile Edde, explained to the SG director, “we do not understand . . . why the Mandate prohibits the cultivation of hashish, a source of income for our ‘villagers.’”\textsuperscript{83} Edde was being disingenuous: as will soon become clear, it was people of his rank who enjoyed the windfall from cannabis cultivation.

\textbf{Historians agree that in Europe and the colonies, the interwar years were at once the peak of French colonialism and the beginning of the end.}\textsuperscript{84} Worldwide, French
colonial rule was suffering from systematic “indecisions.”

85 (This is a point that is often missed by historians of the Middle East.)

86 In Lebanon and Syria, French administrators admired the indirect British colonial government at the same time that they idolized Hubert Lyautey’s *de facto* direct rule in French Morocco.

87 Symptomatically, at the peak of the Syrian Revolt (1925–1927), the new High Commissioner, Auguste Henri Ponsot, openly admitted, “I am going to Syria without a definite program.”

88 Then and later, critics deplored the “uncertainty of conception, goals, and methods” and the “astonishing waltz of High Commissioners” in and out of Beirut.

89 In Syrian eyes, the last straw was the 1938 about-face of the socialist-dominated French Parliament: fearful of a resurgent National Socialist Germany, it refused to ratify the independence treaty that its own cabinet had concluded with the Syrian National Bloc two years earlier. A result of both French (in)decisions and transformations in the colonies and the world at large, such twists and turns reflected the unusually complex nature of colonialism following World War I, when at one and the same time, “everything . . . [and] nothing changed.”

The French Mandate authorities’ approach to narcotics reflects this complexity.

142, shows that interwar France had to adapt colonial rule to “dramatic changes” that would peak after 1945.

85 Thobie et al., *Histoire de la France coloniale*, 138. Certainly, the postwar period saw a general turn to associationism, and the education of colonial administrators and their work became more professional. See Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*; Véronique Dimier, *Le gouvernement des colonies: Regards croisés franco-britanniques* (Brussels, 2004). Also, the fact that more than one ministry (Colonies, Foreign Affairs, Interior) governed different territories was not a particularly French condition. For various reasons, however, the postwar French colonial administration was never able to get its bearings. Among the problems were the lack of coordination even inside ministries; the “multiple layers of colonial bureaucracy”; the lowly rank of the Ministry of Colonies in the ministerial hierarchy; unsolved debates about the “nature, purpose, and value of colonial possessions”; and the scant interest of Foreign Affairs and the army in the colonies—i.e., their fixation on Germany, Europe, and the Mediterranean for the hexagon’s (rather than imperial) defense. See Thomas, *The French Empire between the Wars*, 34, 3; see also Thobie et al., *Histoire de la France coloniale*, 167; Christopher M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Climax of French Imperial Expansion, 1914–1924* (Stanford, Calif., 1981), 238–239.

86 Studies of French Syria and Lebanon have explored crucial aspects of colonial rule: read in isolation, however, they miss the full complexity of French administration. Weisz, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, examines French “sectarianization” from above (interacting with bottom-up demands) and emphasizes the role of legal institutions under a French umbrella. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 279–280, argues that Armenians entered a “colonial contract,” “an exchange of the active or passive support for colonialism . . . for a series of social and communal privileges.” The “colonial civic order” postulated by Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, took form through “constant negotiations” between the colonial state and citizens, including even a “colonial welfare state.” Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin, Tex., 2005), tells a much bloodier story. Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, 18, begs to differ, too: “Direct control heightened the ability of French capital to compete in the area . . . [through an] économie de traité.” In turn, Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, argues that the French Mandate, like other postwar colonial states in the Middle East, was run on a very low budget and therefore depended on preventive intelligence-gathering for survival. Examining SR officers, Mizrahi, *Genèse de l’État mandataire*, 84, concurs—but unlike Thomas’s, “his” administration is “omnipotent.”


Here the reason was a clash of contrasting pressures that were inscribed in three different—international, transnational, and local—territorial logics. Indeed, the patterns of territorialization interacted with forces that transcended the Middle East.

International pressure was applied by British-ruled Egypt. State officials there became seriously concerned about narcotics after World War I: drug use had been common before 1914, but at that time it was basically limited to hashish. A new phase was ushered in with the arrival of huge quantities of heroin after 1918. Even by global standards, Egypt had become a heavy drug-consuming country. Heroin imports declined by 1930, but that drop was offset by a “marked increase” in the supply of Turkish and Levantine opium and hashish. These had remained prevalent even during heroin’s heyday, but were now less tolerated than before 1914. Anglo-Egyptian authorities began to fight narcotics in the mid-1920s, waging the battle far beyond the Middle East. They lobbied for stricter anti-narcotics measures at the Geneva-based League of Nations (Société des Nations [SDN]), stiffened drug-related penalties in Egypt, imprisoned thousands, and urged European capitulatory countries to collaborate in their anti-drug war in Egypt. In February 1927, an Interior Ministry representative and the heads of the Palestinian police, the French Mandate SG, the Alexandria and Cairo city police, and the Egyptian Frontiers Administration and Coast Guard convened in Cairo and decided to tighten anti-narcotics intelligence coordination. Two years later, the newly established Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau (CNIB) went to work with European and Turkish police forces.

For pre-1914 (British) Egyptian hashish policy—whose success in repressing cannabis cultivation contrasted with a failure to prevent hashish from entering the country and an indifference to consumption (e.g., in cafés), and which was much more lenient than after 1918 (when smokers receded to secret dens)—see Liat Kozma, “Isur sahar be-hashish be-Mitzraim, 1868–1925” (talk given to the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Association of Israel, Jerusalem). Police commissioner Thomas Russell Pasha, *Egyptian Service, 1902–1946* (London, 1949), lamented that by the early 1920s, “out of a total population of fourteen million, possibly half a million were [now] slaves to the drug habit” of heroin.

“Report on Hashish Traffic in Egypt,” February 1924, FO141/470/3, PRO. For capitulations, see Russell, *Egyptian Service*, 147, 228–229; Acting Judicial Advisor, note #87/236, Cairo, June 26, 1927, FO141/470/3, PRO. In 1926, the Egyptian police lauded an “unofficial entente” between the city police in Cairo and the capitulary powers consuls (who often served as judges); Cairo City Police, Baker to Ministry of Interior, Greaves, #C.R.95.A46, Cairo, January 28, 1926, FO141/508/3, PRO. In 1925, sentences were increased from a maximum of three months to five years in prison and to a maximum E£1,000 penalty (about US$80,000 in 2010 figures). In 1929, the number of imprisoned traffickers doubled to 1,624, and the number of addicts grew by 1,100 to 4,677. Together with roughly 600 additional convictions, this amounted to around 30 percent of Egypt’s 24,000 prisoners. CNIB, *Annual Report, 1929*, 44.

Following the 1927 meeting, a regional list of smugglers was disseminated, and telegraphic communication codes were arranged for the interception of suspicious ships. See Ministry of Interior, minutes of meeting #1689/123, Cairo, February 27, 1927, FO141/470/3, PRO. In 1923, Russell had attended an international police conference in New York; see Russell, *Egyptian Service*, 285. And in 1929, “a catalogue of all important smugglers of hashish [was] compiled [by the CNIB] and copies [were] distributed to all [Egyptian] Preventive Services . . . as well as Palestine and Syria.” See CNIB, *Annual Report, 1929*, 18. For the CNIB, see Russell, *Egyptian Service*, 226–230; CNIB, *Annual Report, 1929*, viii. For international cooperation, see ibid., ix, 5, 14. In the fall of 1931, a visit to Turkey by Thomas Russell Pasha, the head of Egypt’s police, together with an intervention by the United States, contributed to the closure of the three largest heroin factories in Istanbul. See Russell, *Egyptian Service*, 240. European police forces, too, participated in specific anti-drug operations in the Levant. See HC to Ambassadeur de la France (a) Berlin, Beirut, December 27, 1932, Box 854, MAE-Nantes; “No. 1207. Seizure in Jerusalem on August 1, 1938,” in *ACT/S between January 1 and March 31, 1938*, 26–27, C.385.M.230.1938.XI, SDN.
As a result, and because Turkey and European countries closed cocaine, heroin, and morphine factories and toughened capitulatory laws in Egypt, the import of these so-called white drugs plummeted by the early 1930s.95 Around that time, the CNIB also moved to strengthen its ties with the French Mandate police forces. In 1934, years of “repeated complaints by the Egyptian government [and] . . . strong reactions by the Société des Nations” finally bore fruit. The French authorities hardened their stance on narcotics with a decree that energized prosecution and ordered the creation of an SG anti-drug squad with a regional mandate.96 Anglo-Egyptian-French anti-narcotics cooperation peaked around 1937 and 1938, as France attempted to eradicate hashish and as anti-trafficking campaigns were implemented that included systematic information exchanges, extraditions, coordinated actions, and even Egyptian undercover operations on French Mandate territory.97 Never un-

95 Heroin, first synthesized in 1874, began to be manufactured by the German firm Bayer and soon by other companies, including British Macfarlan in 1898 (morphine was first extracted from opium in early-nineteenth-century Europe; cocaine became popular in the late nineteenth century). Before 1914, European firms exported heroin and morphine principally to the Far East. See Tom Carnwath and Ian Smith, Heroin Century (London, 2002), 9. Britain and Central Europe remained home to the world’s main heroin manufacturers until the late 1920s. From then until 1931, three large producers worked in Istanbul. In 1930, Turkey exported two tonnes of morphine and four tonnes of heroin; almost all white drugs consumed in Egypt were Turkish-produced. See CNIB, Annual Report, 1931, ix, x, 148. Turkish police were closing down Istanbul white drug factories into the 1930s. See “No. 83. Discovery of a Clandestine Morpahine Factory at Pera, Istanbul, on June 22, 1933,” in ACT/S between July 1 and September 30, 1933, 4, C.598.M.278.1933.XI, SDN; “No. 706. Discovery of the Clandestine Manufacture of Heroin at Yechilkey, near Istanbul, June 15–16, 1937,” in ACT/S between July 1 and September 30, 1937, 4, C.527.M.366.1937.XI, SDN. From 1931 until 1938, one large firm was based in Sofia, but in the early 1930s, Seoul-based Japanese firms emerged as the new leading producers; in the mid-1930s, white drugs produced there and in Japanese-occupied China and destined for the U.S. began to be rerouted from the Pacific to the Suez Canal, and from there to the American East Coast. See Russell, Egyptian Service, 236–253; CNIB, Annual Report, 1936 ( Cairo, 1937), xii.

96 Quotation from SG, report #5679, Beirut, July 5, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. Arrêté 193/LR, August 28, 1934, regulated narcotics production, possession, trade, importation, and exportation, replacing Arrêté 3312, October 8, 1925, reaffirmed by instructions 4387 and 2352 of June 1, 1929, and March 12, 1930, respectively. See also cover letter of Directeur, SG, to HC de Martel, Rapport de l’année 1934 a/s des stupefiants, Beirut, February 1, 1935, ibid., noting that in 1934, the police arrested 536 smugglers and confiscated 9,011 kilograms of hashish, 812 kilograms of opium, and 1.35 kilograms of cocaine, and referring to Arrêté 193/LR, August 28, 1934, regulating narcotics production, possession, trade, importation, and exportation.

97 French Mandate authorities called the coordination “close and efficient.” See Trafic de l’opium et autres drogues nuisibles: Rapports annuels des gouvernements pour 1936—Syrie, 1, C.519.M.360.1937.XI, SDN. For meetings in the late 1930s, see, e.g., Directeur, SG, to Chef, Cabinet politique, Beirut, May 6, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. Regional police coordination profited from the telegraph and the 1933 linkage of the French Levantine with Palestinian and Egyptian telephone networks. See “La ligne téléphonique Beyrouth-Jérusalem,” Asie française, June 1933, 208; “Une ligne téléphonique Paris-Beyrouth,” Asie française, September—October 1933, 288–289; for a case related to drug-smuggling, see “Tahrib al-mawwad al-mukhaddara baina Beirut wa Marsilia,” Sawt al-Ahrar, June 29, 1938, 4. For CNIB arrest requests, see “No. 1112. Seizure of Hashish at Cairo at September 17, 1933,” in ACT/S between July 1 and Sept 30, 1934, 6, C.465.M.200.1933.XI, SDN. For the SG informing the CNIB about departures of Levant-based couriers to Egypt, see “No. 686. Seizure in Egypt on the ‘Oanallah,’ September 1932,” in ACT/S between October 1 and December 31, 1932, 20, C.124.M.52.1932.XI, SDN. For similar information for the Palestine police, see “Shurti sabiqan yashtaghilu fi tahrib al-hashish,” Sawt Al-Ahrar, July 3, 1942, 2. The French also had mutual extradition agreements with Cyprus, Palestine, and Egypt. See “Al-ittifaq ‘ala tabadul mujrimin,” al-Ahrar, December 3, 1930, 4, for Cyprus and Palestine; for a case, see “L’arrestation de Selim Ali Younes,” L’Orient, September 18, 1926, 2. For the SG helping the CNIB hunt smugglers condemned in Egypt in absentia, see “Tawqif mharribi hashish,” Sawt al-Ahrar, November 15, 1933, 4. For the CNIB soliciting lists of Egyptians condemned for drug-related crimes in Lebanon, see Gouverneur des Colonies Schoeffler to HC, Beirut, November 23, 1939, Box 855, MAE-
ambiguous, cooperation declined by the late 1930s. World War II caused a reshuffling of priorities and strengthened regional transport and economic integration through the Middle East Supply Center, which also allowed trafficking to climb to new levels.98

Interestingly, the tactics employed by the police in coordinating anti-narcotics efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean resembled those used to deal with another concern of colonial rulers in the mandates, Egypt, and beyond: anticolonial communists and nationalists who disregarded new borders.99 It was no coincidence that the SG bore sole responsibility for both the communist and the narcotics portfolios. Almost from the moment in the mid-1920s when police coordination was institutionalized throughout the region to buttress individual countries’ political security, it was geared to socioeconomic concerns, too.100 But it reflected another new trend as well: the willingness to tackle transnational problems internationally. Prewar precedents notwithstanding, it was only after 1918 that “the drug problem” was urgently framed “as a social evil” and that the newly founded League of Nations was given some say in the matter.101

Regarding narcotics, tougher Egyptian laws and pressure on other states preceded action through and by the SDN.102 Still, it was a globally active player in its

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98 Box 101, MAE-Nantes, is filled with reports about World War II smuggling across the Lebanese-Palestinian border. Cf. “Egyptian Government’s Concern Regarding Production of Hashish in Syria” (1941), FO371/28099, PRO; T. Russell/Cairo City Police, Cairo, to Sir Malcolm Delevingne, London, February 5, 1942, FO371/31048, PRO.

99 For tighter passport and visa controls between Syria/Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt, and improved Egyptian, Palestinian, Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi police information exchange, both mainly to track communists, see “Les passeports entre l’Egypte, le Liban, la Syrie et la Palestine,” L’Orient, January 21, 1926, 1; Secretariat of the Council of Ministers to the HC for Iraq, #3316, Baghdad, August 28, 1927, CO732/28/13, PRO; HC for Iraq to Secretary of the Council of Ministers, memorandum #10.70J, Baghdad, September 2, 1927, ibid. Thomas, Empires of Intelligence, 73, argues that this “internationalist [communist] dimension ... preoccupied French and British security services”—indeed, too much so. Also, the French colonial lobby had inflated threat perceptions, identifying an arc of “Bolshevist propaganda” extending from “the Pacific” across Asia to “the Mediterranean.” See Henri Froidevaux, “L’agitation soviétique en Asie,” Asie française, June 1925, 186. Colonial courts echoed this sentiment. In Beirut, at the 1932 trial of communists Artin Madoyan and Khalid Bikdash, the attorney general pleaded for hard sentences—the only way, he argued, to prevent the spread of communist uprisings from French Indochina to the Levant. See Niqula Hawi, Tariqati ila al-hizb (Beirut, 1984), 288.


101 Bertil A. Renborg, International Drug Control: A Study of International Administration by and through the League of Nations (Washington, D.C., 1947), 15. The later nineteenth century witnessed a series of international sanitary conferences. Similarly, states were invited to limit drug trade and production by the 1909 Shanghai and 1911 and 1912 Hague conferences. However, these were “fatal conservative and weak.” See L. E. S. Eisenlohr, International Narcotics Control (London, 1934), 22.

102 For example, the police coordination mandated by the 1936 Convention for the Suppression of Illicit Traffic in Dangerous Drugs had existed, between Egypt and numerous countries, for a decade. Despite the importance of the 1925 Geneva International Opium Convention, the 1920s were, in the words of an SDN drug control service chief of section, the period “before the Geneva Convention had time to produce results in regulating international trade.” See Renborg, International Drug Control, 142.
own right. Numerous stipulations of the League’s 1936 Convention for the Suppression of the Illicit Traffic in Dangerous Drugs signaled “new developments of national law which had to be modified to implement the convention.” Also, Egypt lobbied other governments, not only through bilateral contacts but through the SDN. It publicly praised French anti-narcotics cooperation at the League, and the elation of the Quay d’Orsay—to which the mandate authorities were administratively subordinated and by which they were represented at the SDN—shows how eager Paris was to appear reputable in Geneva. In fact, the care that France took to collaborate with the SDN, especially in the 1930s, when anti-narcotics control improved, shows how “opinion-sensitive governments” after World War I managed to avoid being criticized “by adjusting course.” The French admitted that the League’s “strong reactions” helped to push Paris into hardening its stance on narcotics in 1934; and the dismissal of the SDN in the late 1930s by Lebanese critics of this policy demonstrates that the Lebanese understood that the organization had leaned on Paris. Regarding French Lebanon and Syria, the SDN had extra leverage because these countries were League mandates, and their authorities, in however limited a way and through the Quay d’Orsay, were accountable to Geneva. France’s cooperation in the Egyptian-led war on narcotics thus was not just a case of playing ball with its ally, the British Empire, in a matter of vital importance to London’s key possession in the Eastern Mediterranean; neither was it simply a byproduct of political security coordination. It was also a response to a new climate conducive to certain limitations on colonial rule, not unlike French and British African mandate policies, which, while they fit national interests, were “more restrained and more internationally-oriented” than elsewhere in their empires.

But there was more than one side to French narcotics policy. On May 7, 1940, Khaled Abdul Kader, a former member of Parliament from Akkar in northern Lebanon, sent a letter to the district’s French administrative counselor. Earlier that spring, Lattakiyah customs authorities had ordered him to pay SP235,900 for having organized, twice in 1939, the smuggling of a total of 1,680 kilograms of opium and hashish via Cyprus to Palestine. Kader swore that the witnesses against him had been bribed. He concluded: “You know my feelings of fidelity and loyalty, and those of...”

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104 For Egyptian lobbying, see SG, report #5679, 1, Beirut, July 5, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. For SDN anti-narcotics efforts, including Egypt’s role, e.g., in insisting on the inclusion of hashish in anti-narcotics legislation, see Renborg, International Drug Control, 216–217. The British head of Egypt’s police, Thomas Russell Pasha, energetically represented Egypt at the annual SDN Opium Commission meetings: Russell, Egyptian Service, 285; CNIB, Annual Report, 1936, xvi. For French reactions, see Ministre des Affaires étrangères to HC, Paris, December 19, 1934, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. See also reference to the CNIB’s 1937 annual report in SG, report #5679, 1, Beirut, July 5, 1939, ibid.; and, generally, French diplomatic correspondence regarding French narcotics policy in MAE-Paris, Série SDN, Sous-série I M [questions sociales (stupéfiants, réfugiés, esclavage)].


106 SG, report #5679, 1, 4, Beirut, July 5, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes.

107 Callahan, A Sacred Trust, 3.
my relatives and friends in Akkar. If you believe that I am worthy of your interest, I beg you to do something.” The counselor complied. Without delay, he informed the High Commissioner’s Direction des affaires politiques (AP) that while he could not “vouch for Khaled Bey Abdul Kader’s innocence, I have to point out that during these last years, [he] has been extremely correct with us, and that it would be appropriate to examine his claim with a certain magnanimity.”108 A year later, with the sentence still pending, the counselor forwarded a second letter by Kader to the AP; advising “great lenience,” he reported on the outcome of an inquiry that the AP had instructed him to make with customs. Its director, Roux, had indicated that “penalties of [Kader’s] kind are normally treated in a transaction between Customs and the delinquent.”109 He later specified that the “going rate” was a third of the penalty and, testing the AP’s position on the counselor’s advice, inquired whether “political considerations weigh in favor of [further] reducing the [rate].”110 Having created the possibility of a deal by instructing the counselor to contact Roux, the AP could now afford to take a step back. It adroitly removed itself from the process. “There are no political objections to a transaction between you and the delinquent; however, there is no reason why the HC would act in a particular way in favor of Mr. Khaled Bey Abdul-Kader, who is a notorious smuggler.”111 Meanwhile, Kader continued to play a subtle game. While recognizing French rule and “beg[ging]” for help, he highlighted his political role in a way that carried a hint of a threat (“you know my feelings of fidelity and loyalty, and those of my relatives and friends in Akkar”), and craftily played different French authorities against each other. “Right now, I ask for nothing but the continuation of the normal [court] procedure. But should it transpire that the case cannot be solved by [recourse to] law, the higher authorities are completely free to examine my file and decide for themselves what Justice is.”112

The outcome of Kader’s case is undocumented. But the normalcy of “administrative transactions,” the absence of a prison sentence, the French short-circuiting of court procedure, and the dealings between Kader and the French as well as among various French offices highlight the political limits to an all-out attack on narcotics. The French administration was not of one mind in this regard. Responsible for regional anti-narcotics cooperation, the SG—a dedicated but small unit—took a hard line. In contrast, many Lebanese policemen and gendarmes and key French political

108 Khaled Abdul Kader to Conseiller administratif du Liban Nord, Beirut, May 7, 1940, Box 855, MAE-Nantes; Conseiller administratif du Liban Nord to Bureau politique, Tripoli, May 11, 1940, ibid. Kader and his arch-enemy, Moustafa Mokaddem, were among the biggest growers of cannabis in northern Lebanon. See SG to HC Gabriel Puaux, report #5564, Beirut, July 1, 1939, 3, ibid. For Akkari landlords’ dominance into the 1970s, see Michael Gilsenan, Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society (London, 1996).

109 Khaled Abdul Kader to Conseiller administratif du Liban Nord, Tripoli, March 25, 1941, Box 855, MAE-Nantes; Du Paty de Clam, Conseiller administratif du Liban Nord to Général Arlabosse, Délegué du HC auprès du gouvernement libanais, #728, Tripoli, March 29, 1941, ibid. Although Kader missed a court deadline in May 1940, the French Customs Administration in Beirut allowed him to appeal to the Cour de Cassation in Damascus. See Inspecteur général des douanes to Secrétaire général, Direction des affaires politiques, 2, Beirut, April 22, 1941, ibid.

110 Inspecteur général des douanes to Secrétaire général, Direction des affaires politiques, Beirut, April 22, 1941, Box 855, MAE-Nantes.

111 Direction des affaires politiques toInspecteur général des douanes, Beirut, April 24, 1941, Box 855, MAE-Nantes.

112 Khaled Abdul Kader to Conseiller administratif du Liban Nord, Tripoli, March 25, 1941, Box 855, MAE-Nantes.
administrators and security officers responded halfheartedly at best. The former were scared of powerful politicians or were smugglers themselves; the latter protected political allies to stabilize French rule. They did so in particular with the power brokers who dominated Lebanon’s rural peripheries of Akkar (to the north), the Bekaa Valley (to the east), and Jabal ‘Amil (to the south). Men such as Kader stood on the sidelines of the mandate’s leading economic sectors (international trade, finance, and the import-substitution industry, all centered in Beirut) and made use of narco money to maintain their local authority. And precisely because the mandatory budget was limited, the French frequently tolerated the use of profits made in the regional drug trade to buy off some of the Lebanese elite, attenuating their weakness to co-opt key players in economically marginalized areas. This brings to mind political-economic analyses of the tacit use of corruption in late colonial Africa; it also suggests that the cases of bribed officials were not isolated incidents, but in fact were part of a wider—perhaps even systemic—order of corruption.\footnote{Jean-François Bayart, \textit{The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly} (London, 1993), 71; William Reno, \textit{Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone} (Cambridge, 1995). Conklin, \textit{A Mission to Civilize}, 205, argues that in post–World War I West Africa, associationist French policies relied on previously criticized old elites who frequently “enriched themselves” and engaged in a “flagrant abuse of power.” Bayart, \textit{The State in Africa}, 71–77, shows continuations between the late colonial and the postcolonial state of affairs; a similar argument can be made for post-independence Lebanon.}

The power of certain politicians in the Lebanese government—advised and controlled, but not totally monitored, by the French—formed another, less personal, more institutional limit to French anti-narcotics efforts. The scandal that erupted in June 1939 after the SG discovered that Minister of Agriculture Ibrahim Haidar was growing cannabis for hashish on his own land is illustrative. Not incidentally, Haidar was a notable from the predominantly Shi‘i northern Bekaa, which, along with the valley’s south, was one of the country’s principal agricultural centers—and since the nineteenth century had been Lebanon’s primary source of hashish.\footnote{For the public outcry, see “L’odeur du hachiche empeste le Liban mais le gouvernement n’en a jamais su rien,” \textit{Le Jour}, July 12, 1939; “A Laboué, rien de nouveau,” \textit{Le Jour}, July 13, 1939. For a rebuttal, see “La vérité sur le ‘scandale de hachic¸e,’” \textit{L’Orient}, July 11, 1939. For hashish production in the Bekaa in the late nineteenth century, see fn. 3. Regarding agriculture in the Bekaa, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, \textit{The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History} (Oxford, 2000), 56–57, note that while especially “lowland cereal dry farming” systems “have always been the norm,” there was more than one type of cultivation, including “highland terrace agriculture, . . . swamp drainage or sprinkler irrigation . . . horticulture or arboriculture,” and animal husbandry.}

Haidar’s case was not exceptional. In 1937 and 1938, the SG had aggressively eradicated even small cannabis fields. But the following year, many Bekaa peasants again sowed cannabis. They had “received formal assurances” that there would be no negative repercussions “from highest-ranking Lebanese personalities,” whose own resumption of cannabis cultivation constituted a “most extreme example” to the peasants.\footnote{Directeur, SG, to HC Cabinet politique, report #250, 10, Beirut, July 29, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. See ibid., 8–9, for a long list of hashish producers, including several members of Parliament, a minister of finance, a former minister of agriculture, and local notables and priests.} Predictably, Egypt reiterated its demand for the French to take strong action.\footnote{Ministre de France en Égypte to HC Puaux, #84, Cairo, July 20, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes.} The SG argued that the resurgence of hashish was due to the “complicity of the Lebanese government,” which also explained the “inactivity of the Lebanese Gendarmerie” that had kept the SG in the dark.\footnote{SG, report #5679, 3, Beirut, July 5, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. Cf. Directeur, SG, to HC Puaux,
darmes were evident also when local resistance initially stalled their eradication campaign, which was further restricted by personnel shortages later that summer. As for Haidar, a district court inconvenienced the owner of Lebanon’s second-largest cannabis field—whose 52,000 square meters would have produced 104 tons of hashish—with a SP200 fine, the value of 220 grams. It is unclear whether Haidar paid.

If Kader’s case illustrates how the French dealt with an influential individual who was involved in the narcotics business, the Haidar affair points to their recurrent acquiescence with the way in which some politicians abused their positions in the new nation-state-wide government. These two dimensions were not clearly distinct, but reflected the weight of intertwined, informal and institutionalized, sources of power. Haidar the Bekaa notable, who routinely “mediated vendettas between [local] Shi‘i families,” enlisted hundreds of the valley’s inhabitants to send protest telegrams to the High Commissioner; Haidar the minister delayed an internal report on hashish by the government’s agricultural engineer in the Bekaa, subsequently demoted him, fired other state employees, and recruited several ministers who were eager to “save the government’s prestige” with the public and the High Commissioner.

As director of agriculture in 1924, Haidar had “succeeded in obtaining from the government very important benefits for his family” since the early years of the mandate. His family exemplified the integration of some rural elite Shi‘i families into the new Lebanese state, facilitated in their case by Ibrahim Haidar’s study at the French École nationale supérieure d’agronomie in Grignon. Haidar’s new ministerial source of power strengthened his family’s position. A 1931 governmental irrigation project in the northern Bekaa likely was not a disinterested venture. Primarily for geological reasons, “irrigation [was] . . . expensive and inefficient” in the

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#5564, 1, Beirut, July 1, 1939, ibid. French Gendarmerie inspector Colonel Boivin rejected the SG’s accusations about the Gendarmerie’s complicity, but remained silent about the claim that none had reported on important notables. See Colonel Boivin, Chef de la mission de réorganisation et inspecteur de la Gendarmerie libanaise, to HC Puaux, #40 C.I.G., Beirut, July 10, 1939, ibid.; SG Directeur Colombani to HC Puaux, #250, Beirut, July 28, 1939, ibid.

118 HC Puaux to Délégué du HC auprès de la République libanaise, #5140, Beirut, July 13, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes; Message téléphoné d’Estève, Inspecteur adjoint Bekaa to Colonel inspecteur de la Gendarmerie, #382/2, Zahle, July 27, 1939, ibid. For the Gendarmerie’s limited personnel, see Conseiller administratif de la Bekaa to Délégué du HC auprès de la République libanaise, #215 C.A.B., Zahle, August 17, 1939, ibid.; report attached to Inspecteurs auxiliaires Perrachon et Gay-Para to Directeur, SAA, Beirut, September 18, 1939, ibid.

119 Tribunal de la première instance de la Bekaa, Ministère Public v Ibrahim Bey Haidar, Moustafa Bey Haidar, Hussein Bey Kassem Haidar, #18/18/850, Zahle, January 17, 1940, ibid. For Haidar’s plot, see Cultures de chanvre indien dans les états du Levant sous Mandat français, 2, annex to SG Directeur Colombani to HC Puaux, #250, Beirut, July 28, 1939, ibid. SG, report #5679, 3, Beirut, July 5, 1939, ibid., states that 1 kilogram of hashish cost SP900 in Beirut, SP8000 in Cairo; it gives a ratio of 2 kilograms per square meter for hashish.

120 Quotations from Note sur la famille Haidar (1924), dossier #924, Box 855, MAE-Nantes; and SG, report #5417, Beirut, July 4, 1939, ibid. Cf. Conseiller administratif de la Bekaa to Délégué du HC auprès de la République libanaise, Zahle, June 28, 1939, ibid.; Délégué du HC auprès de la République libanaise to HC and Cabinet politique, bordereau d’envoi #2299, Beirut, July 7, 1939, ibid. At least seventeen telegrams were sent; see, e.g., that by the inhabitants of the village of Nahleh, telegram #3585, Baalbeck, July 9, 1939, ibid. There is a sectarian dimension to the (Shi‘i) Haidar’s case: many telegrams underlined that the Shi‘i community’s loyalty (to Lebanon and France) needed to be recompensed by French support of a Shi‘i minister.

121 Note sur la famille Haidar (1924), Dossier #924, Box 855, MAE-Nantes.
Bekaa; thus “only lucrative cash crops [made] it worthwhile.” Access to the government not only protected hashish production, but fueled it through the abuse of public money for private business involving one of interwar Lebanon’s primary agricultural products.

Hashish was a crucial resource for a family whose world had first collapsed, then risen from the ashes after the 1918 separation of the Bekaa from Syria and annexation to Lebanon. The Haidars reacted to this French move by putting their eggs in different baskets. While some militated against the new colonial power for the independence of Greater Syria, including Lebanon, many recognized that their valley’s reorientation offered new opportunities, too. One was to “ruin the influence” of the Hamadehs, the preeminent northern Bekaa family whose vassals the Haidars had been. Although French-mandated Lebanon certainly was not the Haidars’ dream, the family understood that the only game in town now was played in Beirut, and that the rewards for participating were great, especially for newcomers without major independent resources. Ibrahim Haidar, from a valley that the Beiruti and Mount Lebanese elites knew little about, and that they did not control, cashed in right from the start. He managed to convince the government that his family was the only one that “could, by its exclusive influence, retain the Bekaa Shi’is,” thereby securing for his relatives “the most important and lucrative jobs.” The Haidars did not eliminate their rivals, but eventually drew even with them, in part by translating their access to governmental resources into narco money. When the 1939 scandal broke, Ibrahim Haidar’s and Mustafa Rostom Haidar’s combined cannabis plots were almost twice the size of Sabri Hamadeh’s. Six years later, at the tail end of the (now free) French presence in Lebanon, Ibrahim Haidar’s position was as secure as ever, enabling him to successfully lobby the British-led World War II Middle East Supply Center for agricultural machinery.

Thus patterns of territorialization differ even within small countries, and the local, nation-state, transnational, and international forces and actors that create them help shape political rule. The Syrian-Lebanese-Palestinian-Transjordanian border zone—weakly policed by mandate colonial officials and their respective (nation-state) subordinates; suffused by strong local trade and trust networks; often poor and peripheral to new national economies; yet increasingly linked to their central regions by roads, and thus penetrated also by transnational traffickers active across the region—became a local hub that connected new national gray and black markets. Beirut, its port, and highways such as the one to Naqura and onward to Haifa—more strongly policed; central to new national economies and dominated by strong traders’ networks; rich but at the same time, and sometimes even in the same

123 For both quotations, see Note sur la famille Haidar. For Ibrahim Haidar’s 52,000-square-meter plot, Mustafa Rostom Haidar’s 26,000 square meters, and Sabri Hamadeh’s 40,000 square meters, see SG Directeur Colombani to HC Puaux, Cultures de chanvre indien dans les états du Levant sous Mandat français, 4, 7, annex to report #250, Beirut, July 28, 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. For World War II, see Middle East Supply Center, Agricultural Advisory Board, minutes of the 23rd meeting held on February 19–21, 1945, Beirut, 11, FO922/269, PRO.
places, poor; the darling of French infrastructure builders; and thus extremely attractive also for traffickers—constituted a space of intense mutual penetration between state (colonial-international and nation-state) and societal (local and transnational) actors, and of high-intensity legal as well as illegal trade.

State energy—territoriality à la Maier—was not a mirage. But it clustered in some places and dissipated in others. Perhaps most crucially, it bent and was bent by forces such as the wealth created by regional trafficking and vast local areas of poverty. As for French Mandate rule, it too was shaped by forces beyond the Middle East: the Egyptian CNIB’s reach across the entire Mediterranean and into Western Europe, and the League of Nations’ intercontinental anti-narcotics policy. Responsiveness to international pressures was constrained by local considerations, including the fact that after a crippling world war, colonial France had to be ever more accommodating of local power brokers in order to maintain its global position. Regarding narcotics, the end result was less a policy and more a complex, even contradictory, muddling-through—a situation characteristic of the treacherous colonial state of affairs as a whole after 1918.

IN MARCH 1939, THE BRITISH CONSULATE in Beirut asked the French High Commissioner to arrest five Palestinians who were allegedly shipping arms from Lebanon via the coast in Gaza to rebels in hilly central Palestine. In an assessment of the request, the SG noted that one suspect, 'Abud Yasin, was a known narcotics smuggler; that “three of [his] family members [had] recently been executed by Palestinian terrorists who accused them of being lukewarm towards the Arab cause [and that Yasin] was likewise condemned to death”; but that his involvement in weapons trafficking had not yet been proven.124 Did the violence frighten Yasin? Probably. Did this fear make him run arms for the very people who reportedly had executed his kin? Possibly. We will never know for sure; the paper trail fades away on an inconclusive note.

Still, Yasin’s tale can be used to bring into focus an underlying feature of the larger story told here: actors operating on various geographical scales are not stacked atop each other. They always interplay, sometimes forming durable networks. This also explains why local patterns of territorialization created by linked actors and forces are as structured by political and economic orders as are global movements of goods and people.125 The border zone’s pattern of territorialization differed from that of Beirut and its highway corridors because the power and behavior of the various actors operating there differed. A specific pattern was written into its space and configured it. At the same time, space helped to shape a pattern. The border zone’s hills and mountains often stood in the way of the state’s eyes, and its ears were frequently deafened by the din of big cities such as Beirut.

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124 Consulat général britannique, Beirut, to HC, note #21/1/25, Beirut, March 9, 1939, Box 854, MAE-Nantes; SG to Chef, Cabinet politique, No. 99/Stup, 2, Beirut, April 13, 1939, ibid.
To reformulate in terms of time rather than space: the transnational did not succeed, or emerge from, already established national frameworks. This well-argued point is thrown into relief by the case of the post–World War I Levant, where certain local, nation-state, transnational, and international processes unfolded simultaneously. \(^{126}\) It was in the wake of 1918 that Lebanon was politically configured as a new nation-state, yet one made up of distinct local areas. It was in 1918 and the following three decades, too, that sweeping changes—in transport and communications, also due to colonial economic policies—tied this new country into the Levant more firmly than before. It was again from 1918 onward that a number of countries, especially colonial powers, stepped up cooperation to address transnational phenomena such as trafficking. And may we not venture that the postwar Levant was a variation on a general norm rather than an exception? After all, even in 1914, nation-states were still relatively new, barely existed or had become a model but not yet a sociopolitical reality, were incessantly reshaped by immigrants, or constituted robust but porous polities.\(^{127}\)

To historians of the modern Middle East, certainly, the story of Yasin and company shows the limits of thinking along nation-state lines alone. The question is not whether the states that (re-)formed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries across the Middle East and North Africa had no roots whatsoever: many did.\(^{128}\) The point is that particularly in the countries that rose from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, social networks—some of them very local, others quite far-flung—that now became transnational helped to shape the development of the Levantine region and its new polities.\(^{129}\)

This is underscored by another matter: globally, the interwar years witnessed an increase in the number of differing territorial processes that interacted, and sometimes collided, with greater intensity than before. The gigantic migration flows criss-crossing the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans demonstrate that such processes were not weak before 1914. It was their number, and thus friction between them, that increased after World War I. International cooperation intensified, in part bilaterally (for example, between colonial powers), but also through the new League of Nations. Nation-state and local territorial processes were hardened as well, especially but not only in new Eastern European or Levantine countries. Some transnational movements, including transatlantic labor migration, decreased yet did not cease, and they were counterbalanced to some extent by increased regional flows; others blos-

127 Italy and Germany were two relatively new nation-states; in many colonial territories, the nation-state barely existed even as an idea; for the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires, India, and China, the nation-state was a model but not (yet) the dominant sociopolitical reality. Immigration societies included the United States, Argentina, and Australia. France and Britain were robust nation-states that were also, however, imperial centers and in that sense inherently connected to the outside world.
129 Indeed, a recent conference identified “movement of capital, labor, goods, and services across the newly created frontiers” as key fields of future research: Rashid Khalidi, “Concluding Remarks,” in Mêouchy and Sluglett, British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives, 699–700.
somed—for example, “south-south” cultural and political ties. In fact, the increase in differing, contrasting, even clashing territorial processes may have been felt most acutely in colonies. It certainly posed particularly grave problems for colonial powers such as France, which was caught between serious local, nation-state, transnational, and international demands and constraints. And perhaps—to end on a speculative note—post-1945 de-colonization, a process of European territorial contraction or at least of restructuring European presence in the Third World, can be read as a way out of this tension-ridden buildup of contrasting territorial logics.

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