The Logistics and Politics of the British Campaigns in the Middle East, 1914–22

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

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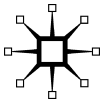

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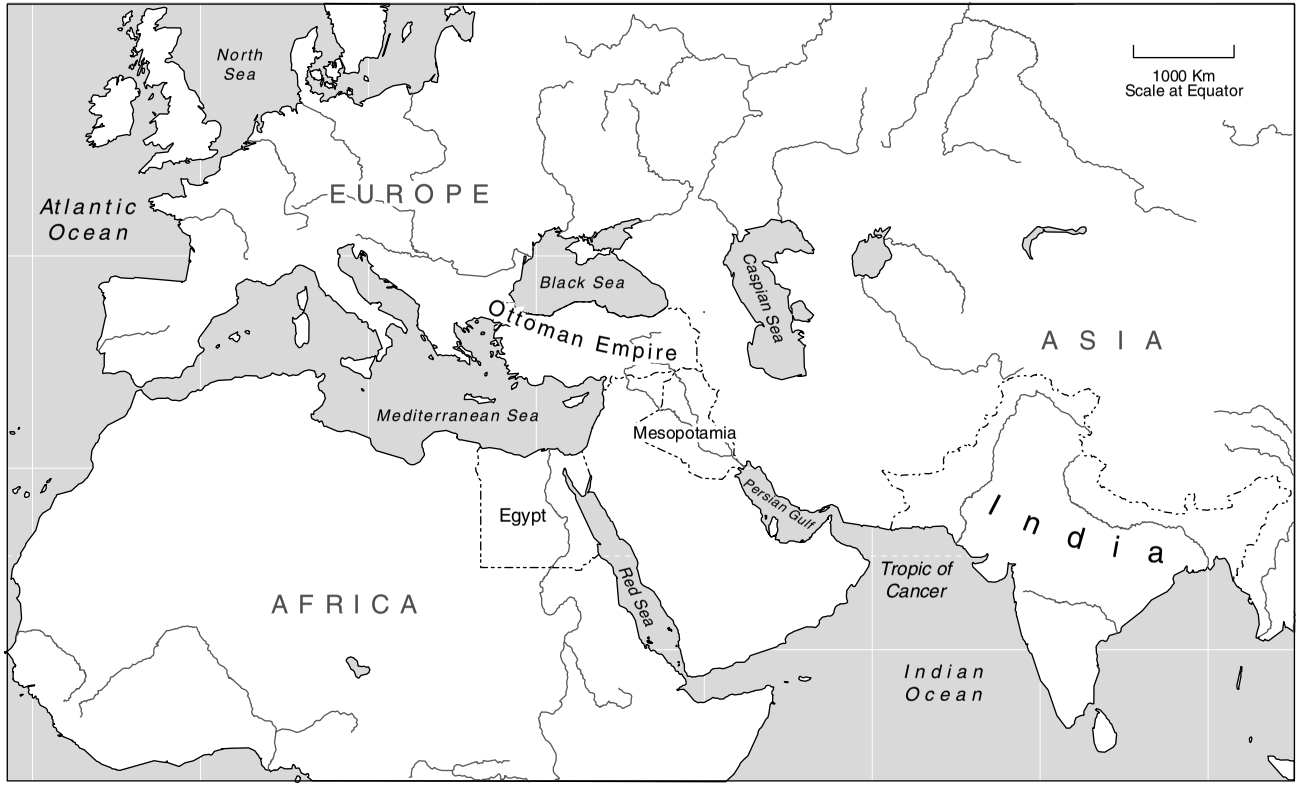
Contents



The Middle East and India in 1914

Source: LSE Design Unit.

Abbreviations

AHQ	Army Headquarters (India)
ALC	Arab Labour Corps
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BGGS	Brigadier-General General Staff
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CTC	Camel Transport Corps
CUL	Cambridge University Library
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
ELC	Egyptian Labour Corps
ESR	Egyptian State Railways
FSR	Field Service Regulations
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
IARO	Indian Army Reserve of Officers
IEF	Indian Expeditionary Force
IGC	Inspector-General of Communications
ILC	Indian Labour Corps
IOR	India Office Records (London)
IWM	Imperial War Museum (London)
IWT	Inland Water Transport
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (London)
MEF	Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force
NAA	Northern Arab Army
OETA	Occupied Enemy Territory Administration
PRO	Public Records Office (London)
QMG	Quartermaster-General
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
S&T	Supply and Transport Corps
TNA	The National Archive (London)

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Introduction

An authoritarian form of colonial governance

The First World War was a global conflict. During the course of the fighting, the small Indian Army detachments despatched to Egypt and Mesopotamia in November 1914 expanded into large-scale expeditionary forces that undertook the invasion and conquest of significant swathes of Ottoman territory. In 1917, the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces captured Jerusalem and Baghdad, and by November 1918 had ration strengths of 458,246 and 408,138 combatants and non-combatants respectively.[1] The forces made enormous demands on their principal supply bases in Egypt and India and on the resources of the territories that came under occupation in Palestine and Mesopotamia for the food, fodder and man- and animal power necessary to maintain the armies in hostile ecological and pre-industrial terrain. The two campaigns were synchronous, both being launched in the autumn of 1914 and peaking in 1917 with the capture of Jerusalem and Baghdad respectively. Nevertheless, the evolution of their logistical dynamics differed substantively between the two: the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) painstakingly constructed a supply network across the Sinai desert before undertaking offensive operations in southern Palestine, while the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force (MEF) initially undertook major operations in 1915 before its logistical system was ready. Yet in both instances, the expansion of the campaigns made large and historically significant demands on the host societies involved and created new patterns of colonial intervention and imperial control, and shared broader underlying trajectories in terms of enhanced mobilisation and extraction of local resources.

The impact of military requirements for the war effort in India and the Middle East contributed to the evolution of a more intrusive and authoritarian technique of imperial control after 1916. Logistical demands for man- and animal power and food and fodder required an expanded and deeper level of imperial and political control in the context of a war economy. This resulted in a new method of colonial governance that regulated British penetration of these local polities and sharpened the penetrative functions of their centralised administrative apparatus in order to organise the mobilisation and extraction of local resources. This more aggressive form of control had three major features. These were the extension of British control and penetration of social and economic patterns in Egypt and India, and the introduction of civil administration in the occupied territories in Palestine and Mesopotamia; the mobilisation of man- and animal power for military labour and transportation units; and the extraction of agricultural resources to provide food and fodder for the British and Indian forces operating east of Suez. The new extractive techniques departed radically from the pre-1914 political economy of empire, and constituted a form of wartime imperialism that culminated in a short-lived quasi-militarised attempt to hold together the occupied territories in the Middle East between 1919 and 1922.

This book examines the impact of the military campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia on the supply bases of Egypt and India and on the occupied territories themselves. The central question that it addresses is whether the greater levels of penetration of colonial society were an entirely new development, or rather built on pre-war patterns of empire and tools of governance. It argues that it is the first proposition, namely that the exigencies of meeting the vast logistical requirements occasioned by exposure to large-scale industrial warfare, that represented a decisive paradigm shift from the colonial experience that preceded the war. While this did build upon older networks of interaction linking India, Egypt and the broader Persian Gulf littoral, both the qualitative and quantitative dynamics of the wartime linkages profoundly distinguished this period from earlier ones. Logistics and politics interacted in a dynamic process of trial and error that ultimately led the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces to victory in 1917 and 1918 yet planted the seeds of considerable bitterness and mistrust among proto-nationalist opponents in both areas.

Thus, the book studies the effects of participation in the First World War through the prism of enhanced resource extraction, rather than through the more usual lenses of imperialism or nationalism. It conducts

a comparative analysis of the mobilisation of peasant economies for industrial warfare and distinguishes the second half of the war from the first in its impact on state-society relations and the perceived legitimacy of colonial governance in Egypt and India, Palestine and Mesopotamia. It builds on recent research into the interconnected political economies of British India and the Ottoman Empire during the long nineteenth century, and the uneven and selective impact of the processes of modernisation on these polities.[2] Additionally, it chronicles the intricate networks of supply, personnel and ideas that bound the extra-European campaigns to each other during the war in an acceleration and intensification of older networks of exchange, and draws out the distinctions as well as the similarities between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian campaigns.

Recent historiography has examined the Persian Gulf region within a broader maritime world that extended to India and East Africa. Complex patterns of settlement and exchange formed a web of interconnections that tied the trade and people of the region into overlapping communities since at least the fifteenth century. Thomas Metcalf has emphasised the trans-colonial interactions and extension of influence across an arc that stretched from east Africa through the Gulf to India.[3] Patricia Risso[4] and William Boonen[5] have documented the multifaceted encounters between India and the Gulf, and the Arabian and Persian littorals respectively, and described a cultural sphere of influence that shaped a distinctive, cosmopolitan identity throughout the Indian Ocean region. James Onley has examined the class of native agents that represented the Government of India in the Gulf and constituted a collaborative group of local intermediaries drawn mainly from influential merchant families.[6] Meanwhile, John Willis has focused on the construction of political-legal identities in the Aden Protectorate to demonstrate the power of the Raj as a normative model of colonial governance that was transplanted to south Arabia in the nineteenth century.[7]

By 1914, an array of ideational and institutional linkages therefore imparted a degree of cohesion and shared vision to the imperial periphery. These constituted a reservoir of ties that facilitated and regulated the diffusion of ideas about colonial governance between the various sites of empire. The career of Evelyn Baring is one of many examples of this trans-national network of ruling mentalities, as his formative career experiences in India profoundly shaped his vision of rule in Egypt as Agent-General from 1883 to 1907.[8] Such connections and common value-systems became significant during the First World War when officials from the civil services in Egypt and India

staffed the new governing apparatuses in Palestine and Mesopotamia respectively.

James Willcocks and William Willcocks provide another prominent example of the network of familial and bureaucratic ties that criss-crossed the imperial periphery before 1914. James Willcocks was a celebrated commander whose rapid military victories in the North-West frontier in 1908 became known as '"Willcocks" week-end wars.' Rapid promotion through the ranks of the Indian Army culminated in him being given command of the Indian Corps in France in 1914–15.[9] Meanwhile, his brother William was heavily involved in irrigation schemes in Mesopotamia before 1914. His vocal advocacy of Mesopotamia as 'a great grain-producing country with unlimited capabilities for extension' fired the currents of Biblical romanticism that acted as a powerful filter through which many British civil servants, diplomats and politicians viewed Mesopotamian policy throughout the First World War.[10]

Between 1914 and 1918, the conduct of major military campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia, and the use of Egypt and India as their principal supply bases, therefore built upon historical connections and partially integrated political economies. This imparted a degree of continuity both to the deployment of the Indian Army in its 'natural' hinterland in Asia and Africa and in the transfer of Anglo-Indian administrators and techniques of governance to the region. For these reasons, the impact of the first two years of campaigning on the supply bases of Egypt and India was minimal, as they were conducted along largely traditional lines of colonial campaigns and did not involve the state in the systematic mobilisation of national resources, even as the campaign in Mesopotamia expanded beyond its means and the Egyptian Expeditionary Force snaked its way across Sinai to the boundary with Ottoman Palestine. This changed in 1916, and the extra-European experience of the final two years of the war shifted profoundly in the sheer scale of logistical demands and the highly intrusive methods of colonial governance that were required to mobilise and extract the local resources required to sustain the campaigns.

Consequently, this book adds an extra-European dimension to the historiography of wartime mobilisation and the evolution of strategy as the war progressed. In the United Kingdom, wartime mobilisation evolved from an initial, short-lived strategy of 'business as usual' in 1914 to a 'nation at arms' in 1915–16, as Prime Minister Asquith's government introduced conscription, extended control over financial and industrial resources, and committed the New Armies to the western front, and culminated in a form of total warfare in 1917–18, when

strategy extended to economic and social mobilisation as well as that of men and materiel.[11] Nevertheless, this was not an even process. Both David French and Keith Grieves conclude that the expansion of the state's range of activities and its penetration of economic and social resources took place in a piecemeal fashion, and that the threshold of total warfare, which included a blurring of civil-military relations and the pervasive impact of war on society, was not fully reached until 1918.[12]

Transplanted into the extra-European context, the gradual adoption of more intensive methods of civil and military control demonstrates the scale of the normative shift in colonial strategy and organisation for war that occurred in 1916. This evolved from the essential continuation of nineteenth-century 'frontier style' campaigning that marked the early stages of the campaigns to the extension of state control and deeper penetration of society to tap civil resources and divert them to military usage in 1917–18. Thus, the study of wartime imperial control complements the existing and more 'traditional' literature on wartime strategy by examining the reasons for this profound shift and considering the impact on state-society relations in the extra-European theatres. It adds an extra-European dimension to 'revisionist' approaches to military history through its examination of the evolution of methods of state control in colonial and occupied territory. Studying the war through the prism of the enhanced extraction of resources also places the post-war backlash against the hardships caused by the war into context. This provides a critical dimension to the study of the interlinking crises that collectively formed the post-war 'crisis of empire' between 1918 and 1922.

Mobilisation and logistics in the extra-European campaigns

Linking the impact of mobilisation with the logistical demands of industrial warfare also contributes to the historiography of the Palestine and Mesopotamian campaigns themselves. Much recent historiography has focused on the role of intelligence in broadening the analytical debate over the dynamics that linked the strategic, operational and tactical decisions in the major extra-European theatres of war. The 2009 book edited by Ian Beckett, *1917: Beyond the Western Front*, contains important essays on Palestine and Mesopotamia by Matthew Hughes and Kaushik Roy respectively, and integrates the two campaigns into the broader macro-trends of that tumultuous year. Richard Popplewell's work on

British intelligence operations in India[13] and Mesopotamia[14] described how British officials constructed a trans-national, indeed global, intelligence network to overcome the threat posed by Indian revolutionaries after 1904. This had important ramifications during the first years of the First World War, when British officials over-extended the campaign in Mesopotamia (culminating in the fall of Kut in April 1916) in an attempt to impress on Indian public opinion the military might of British power.[15]

Yigal Sheffy[16] and Paula Mohs[17] focused on the role of intelligence in Palestine and in the Arab revolt respectively. Sheffy concluded that British commanders in Palestine in 1917–18 misread Ottoman priorities and consequently overestimated the true strength of their enemy in Palestine, as their Anglo-centric perceptions failed to identify that the major thrust of Ottoman military activity lay on the Russian front rather than in operations against the British in Palestine or Mesopotamia.[18] In contrast, Mohs paints a more positive picture of intelligence in the Arab revolt, which she describes as 'the first modern intelligence war', as the tight relationship between intelligence and the creation of policy in the Hedjaz produced one of the most strategically successful campaigns of the war.[19]

The role of intelligence gathering in collecting information to inform the decision-making process is crucial to the successful conduct of any military campaign. The recent historiography has added greatly to the literature on Palestine and Mesopotamia and situated the campaigns within their broader geopolitical context. The same parameters must guide examination of the logistical preparations that ensured that the fighting forces were properly supplied, transported and maintained in the largely hostile ecological terrain in the Middle East. This is inextricably linked with the mobilisation of resources and their allocation and distribution between civil and military consumers. Here, too, the symbiosis of logistics and mobilisation in the extra-European context means that the impact of military demands for resources cannot be considered in isolation from political, economic and societal developments in host societies. A multidisciplinary approach is followed, which synthesises comparative political science with imperial and military history to study the impact of the war on the region.

Two important recent contributions to the study of logistics in industrialised warfare are those of John Lynn[20] and Martin van Creveld.[21] Lynn focused on the rapid technological changes brought about by the industrial revolution, which transformed 'both the means of transport and the items consumed' in industrialised conflict. This, he concluded,

'redefined modern logistics' and with it the nature of warfare.[22] Meanwhile, van Creveld argued that logistics were revolutionised during the First World War as machine-produced goods replaced food and fodder as the major items of consumption. The resulting dependence on factory-produced goods imposed a great strain on transportation systems and effectively tied armies to their networks of supply and transport.[23] Meanwhile a third study, of British logistics on the western front during the First World War, holds important comparative points for the conduct of logistics in the extra-European campaigns. Ian Malcolm Brown described the role of civilian experts in collaborating with military planners to utilise their technological and logistical expertise and refine the logistical system in France and Flanders. Something similar occurred in Egypt, India, Palestine and Mesopotamia after 1916, as the War Office dispatched men with practical expertise in working on railways, waterways and organising port facilities to lay the foundations of the comprehensive and integrated network of communications and supply that belatedly developed in 1917–18.[24]

An added-value of this book is its focus on the relationship between logistics and the nature and extent of state control in the occupied territories in Palestine and Mesopotamia and their supply bases in Egypt and India. It describes how the imposition of the tools of 'modern' warfare on the hostile ecological and pre-industrial terrain of the Middle East greatly increased the strain on 'traditional' resources of man- and animal power and food and fodder. The lack of existing roads or railways in Palestine and Mesopotamia and the breakdown in logistics in Mesopotamia in 1915–16 demonstrated the overarching importance of supply and transportation in relation to strategy and tactics. Until 1917, however, the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces remained dependent on 'armies' of manual labourers, donkeys, horses and camels to feed and move them. The construction of a complex network of roads and railways and water pipelines in 1917–18 added greatly to demands on these resources, which were required to carry all construction materials into place before they could be constructed.

The experience of conducting industrial warfare in desert terrain, over long and vulnerable lines of supply, thus highlights the uneasy relationship between the logistical requirements of modern conflict and the traditional means of supplying and constructing them. This adds an important qualification to van Creveld's assertion of a logistical revolution, as the conduct of the campaigns in the Middle East remained highly reliant on 'traditional' items of food and fodder until very late in the war. Even the introduction of large quantities of

mechanised transport and networks of railways and roads in 1917–18 did not lessen reliance on these items, as vast amounts of manual- and animal power were required to construct and maintain them. Viewed in this context, the fact that the artillery bombardment before the third battle of Gaza in October 1917 represented the heaviest non-European bombardment of the entire war, with a gun concentration equivalent to that of 1 July 1916 on the Somme, testifies both to the complexity and eventual success in meeting the logistical demands in the Middle Eastern campaigns.[25] Consequently, the book addresses two central issues: how the evolution in logistics influenced the nature of the fighting, and, just as importantly, how this enhancement of state powers of mobilisation and extraction resulted in a far more authoritarian form of imperial control that did not long survive the very specific wartime conditions that engendered it, yet represented the first instance of a major Western military 'adventure' in the Middle East in a pattern that would be repeated during the century that followed.

The organisation of the book

This book is divided into two parts. Part I, consisting of Chapters 1, 2 and 3, examines the prelude to the more intrusive forms of imperial control and its gradual adoption during the First World War. It offers a critical narrative of the Palestine and Mesopotamia campaigns and sets the contextual parameters for the deeper examination in Part II of how logistics allowed for expanded state control and penetration into host societies. Chapter 1 describes the political economy of empire before 1914 and the role of the Indian Army in securing the imperial lines of communication and supply. This involved the dispatch of small Indian Expeditionary Forces to Egypt and Basra that formed the genesis of the lengthy campaigns that followed, and Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the expansion of these theatres between 1915 and 1918. This placed great strain on the logistical services as the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces extended over long lines of communication and supply, and made constant demands on Egypt and India for resources. Serious military reversals at Kut in April 1916 and Gaza in March and April 1917 led to a redoubling of the military effort in both regions, and the systematic organisation of logistics that involved the mobilisation and extraction of local resources both in the supply bases of Egypt and India and in the occupied territories of Palestine and Mesopotamia themselves. This required a new approach to imperial control that forms the basis of the second part of the

book, which adopts a revisionist lens to study the dynamic interplay between logistics and politics and its impact on mechanisms of state control and societal penetration.

The impact of this more aggressive and intrusive penetration of colonial society forms the focus of Part II of this book. This stemmed from the convergence of three interlinking factors in the second half of 1916. These were the shipping crisis in the United Kingdom, a related decision by the War Office to utilise local resources to the greatest extent possible to maintain the campaigns east of Suez, and the re-mobilisation of imperial assets following David Lloyd George's accession to power in December. The result was an intensification of the war effort in all theatres, and the overhaul of a deeper, more penetrative, administrative framework to regulate the mobilisation and extraction of resources in India and Egypt, as well as its construction in Palestine and Mesopotamia. Together, the measures framed a more authoritarian and intrusive form of imperial control that had three major constituent factors, which are explored in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 4 examines the intensification of colonial control in Egypt and India and the sharpening of its extractive demands on local economic and social resources. This had important implications for state–society relations as it involved a temporary overturning of the political economy of colonial control in both regions. The chapter also studies the introduction of centralised control in Palestine and Mesopotamia and the methods of governance that developed in the occupied territories as they came under British control in 1917–18. Chapters 5 and 6 move the focus to the mobilisation of man- and animal power and food and fodder as the major impact of wartime demands for logistical resources in the extra-European campaigns. Finally, Chapter 7 explores the post-war backlash that fused the legacy of wartime hardships with proto-nationalist discontent at British attempts to formalise and extend their enhanced wartime powers of control into the post-war era. This chapter relates the halting end to the more aggressive forms of control to the existing literature on the 'crisis of empire' and the historiography surrounding the post-war unrest in Egypt and India in 1919 and Mesopotamia in 1920.

A concluding chapter brings together the overarching themes explored in the book. These are the impact of large-scale industrial conflict on the Middle East and the role of logistics in shaping the character of imperial penetration of society to make possible the conduct of the campaigns. These highlight the uneasy symbiosis between the modern tools of warfare with the more traditional means of transporting and

supplying them; the myriad ways that exposure to conflict reconfigured structures of power within colonial societies and their relationship to the imperial metropolis; and the role of warfare in shaping techniques of imperial governance and strategies of local resistance. Underlying these themes is the central focus on the interaction of logistics with mobilisation of local resources and the new methods of control and extraction that developed to meet the massive logistical requirements of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces.

Part I

1
The Political Economy of Empire before 1914

This book is about the logistical challenges involved in the mobilisation and maintenance of large armies of combatants and non-combatants in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian campaigns during and immediately after the First World War. It examines the methods of state control that arose from participation in the lengthy and intensive fighting. This required all belligerents and sub-belligerents to extend state control over every facet of political, economic and social life and necessitated a more authoritarian form of imperial and political control in the Middle East and India as the war economy grew more complex. The sharpening of states' powers of penetration and tools of resource extraction necessitated moves towards the strategic mobilisation of national resources necessary to sustain the logistical requirements of industrial warfare. This process unfolded across all participants in an uneven manner, and was conditioned by the interplay of domestic political factors with the requirements of the military situation at a regional and international level. In the British case, it involved a gradual rejection of cherished tenets of pre-1914 forms of governance as the logistical requirements of waging large-scale industrialised warfare clashed with prevailing orthodoxies and necessitated a move towards a powerfully penetrative state apparatus.

Such moves were especially pronounced in Britain's extra-European campaigns, where they represented a decisive shift away from limited-liability colonial campaigning. Between 1914 and 1918, lingering intellectual and institutional mentalities of frontier warfare were superseded by the mass mobilisation of man- and animal power and local industrial and agricultural resources. Military reversals in both theatres in 1916–17 coincided with decisions taken in London to maximise the extraction of colonial resources to sustain the extra-European war effort. British

officials in Cairo and Delhi and in the newly occupied territories in Palestine and Mesopotamia belatedly laid the framework for the co-ordinated regulation and extraction of resources. These measures were vital components of a War Office plan to maintain the campaigns east of Suez at the minimal cost to scarce shipping and other resources in the United Kingdom.

Participation in, and exposure to, the intensive demands of industrial warfare caused a paradigm shift in the mobilisation and extraction of colonial resources. This occurred in 1916 and divided the colonial experience of the war into two distinct phases. Initial inertia in 1914–15 encompassed efforts to continue and intensify nineteenth-century practices of mobilisation and extraction by projecting them on to the incipient campaigns in the Sinai peninsula and Mesopotamia. Following the military reversals and administrative and political reordering in 1916 and early 1917, a highly centralised regulatory apparatus emerged to channel state directives downwards and social resources upwards. During this latter period, the metropolitan experience of socialising the military effort was exported to India and Egypt, as the demands of war imposed novel logistical and administrative requirements on colonial states and societies alike. Moreover, the different trajectories of the first phase of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian campaigns is explicated by the fact that the Mesopotamian campaign expanded rapidly in 1915 before being checked in 1916, whereas the Egyptian campaign only really took off early in 1917, with the benefit of the logistical lessons learned so painfully in the retreat to, and siege of, Kut in 1916. This demonstrates the manner in which logistics and politics became inextricably intertwined in determining the evolution of state control and power in the territories that came under British occupation in the Middle East, and in fundamentally reshaping the political economy of empire in the supply bases of Egypt and India.

The political economy of imperialism in 1914 therefore changed dramatically during the war. It involved profound reconfigurations of political organisation and the capacity and will of the colonial state to organise and direct the mobilisation and extraction of resources. Exposure to prolonged and intensive conflict also required the state apparatus to sharpen its powers of coercion while simultaneously constructing a veneer of consensual support for its intervention into the fabric of the host polities involved. This was particularly salient in the context of the complex logistical requirements that necessitated a broadening of the state apparatus and a widening of its tax base and economic productivity to divert local resources towards military

utilisation. These demands forced British policy-makers to reconsider the shibboleths of colonial rule and implement progressively harsher methods of state mobilisation in 1917–18. Part II of this book explores the measures in detail, but an initial examination of the political economy of empire before 1914 will make clear the scale of the shift that eventually occurred.

The logistics of colonial campaigning in Africa and south Asia

Colonial campaigning in the late-Victorian period involved the dispatch of fighting detachments to conduct field campaigns over long lines of supply and communication in difficult terrain. During the second half of the nineteenth century, a succession of frontier and colonial campaigns in south Asia and Africa instilled in the British and Indian armies an institutional legacy of practical field experience unrivalled in any contemporary army.[1] These involved intricate logistical machinery and the creation of long and vulnerable lines of communication, which occasionally broke down, but essentially remained commensurate with a light colonial touch in their host societies. This fighting record bequeathed a pool of talented and experienced officers skilled in commanding and conducting tactical small-scale engagements. However, their logistical and administrative preparations remained largely ad hoc throughout this period in spite of periodic attempts to institutionalise the lessons learned.[2] This emphasis on command over administrative and logistical factors came close to breaking down on a number of occasions prior to 1914, before finally buckling under the strain of managing and sustaining major military operations in 1915–16 as the demands of modern warfare necessitated a far greater level of resource mobilisation than hitherto required.

The majority of frontier and colonial campaigns fought before 1914 involved small field forces reliant on a combination of local and imported man- and animal power, as well as foodstuffs, to meet their logistical requirements. Particularly in Africa in the campaigns against the Abyssinians in 1868, the Ashanti in 1873–74 and the Zulu in 1879, the near-total absence of roads or railways meant that human and animal carriers constituted the only viable forms of transport available to Victorian commanders.[3] Officers became adept at channelling local reserves of manpower to military ends and worked with British colonial officials to raise the required men. In 1873, the Ashanti campaign relied on 6000 local labourers to build a road through 70 miles of bush and a

further 8500 carried supplies for the 4000 combatants in the striking column. The 1879 campaign against the Zulu recruited 15,000 local men to serve every facet of the logistical machine as bearers, cooks, water-carriers, porters, grass-cutters, sanitary men and animal handlers.[4] Meanwhile an insufficient number of locally available labour for the relief operations at Kumassi, in the Gold Coast, in 1900, necessitated the import of labour from Sierra Leone and, more distantly, from Zanzibar in transports around the Cape.[5]

Nevertheless, the performance of the administrative services in these colonial campaigns was conducted primarily on 'ad hoc' lines. This became evident to James Willcocks when he assumed command of the Kumassi relief operations in 1900 only to find upon arrival that '...no official or other account of the Ashanti war of 1874 ... was to be found in the archives of the Gold Coast ...[. I]t would have been of immense help to us, but all I could get was a couple of skimpy blue-books, which related to treaties, palavers, and everything except the fighting work of the expedition.'[6] A succession of cheap and easy military victories achieved with overwhelming technological superiority in firepower narrowed the intellectual spectrum of late-Victorian military commanders, as they grew accustomed to small-scale campaigning and lacked a general staff to accumulate and disseminate the administrative, strategic, tactical and logistical lessons learned.[7]

Evidence of these shortcomings lay in the repeated problems experienced by the supply and transport services of the Indian Army. The mobilisation of material and human resources for colonial warfare interfered with local labour and agricultural markets and eroded the thin margins of subsistence in these largely rural communities.[8] Recruitment of non-combatant labour was also complicated by competition for manpower for indentured service overseas, and by the strict observance of ethnological boundaries between followers and sepoys, alongside further stratification of sub-categories of followers in a rigidly hierarchical structure.[9] This shaped the mobilisation and deployment of followers before 1914 and acted as a constraint on the raising of substantial bodies of men for military service. The system's final breakdown during the opening two years of the First World War marked a decisive shift with the past. It made possible the mass expansion of the Indian Army that occurred in 1917–18 and enabled the 'Indianisation' of the campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia.[10]

Transportation arrangements were equally problematic in the late-Victorian era of colonial and frontier campaigning in India. The transport system broke down during the Afghan operations in 1881–82 and

later proved to be unprepared to meet the strain of a large campaign during the preparations for possible military action against Russia in 1885.[11] In 1895, the frontier expedition to Chitral 'once again called attention to the fact that our great weakness lay in the absence of any transport organisation.'[12] Subsequently, the Government of India passed legislation that empowered the registration and impressments of mules, camels and bullocks in the Punjab and their organisation into coherent units. However, these preparations remained incomplete in 1897 when the frontier rising at Tirah stretched the Indian Army's transport arrangements to breaking-point, and the subsequent reforms to the transportation services would later be negatively affected by the drive for economies following the Liberal political ascendancy in 1906.[13]

The scale of the tribal revolts that erupted in July 1897 and the intensity of the rising took nearly one year to suppress and required the deployment of more than 60,000 troops to do so.[14] The Tirah campaign exposed the tactical shortcomings of British and Indian infantry when they confronted an enemy armed with modern weaponry and smokeless ammunition. Furthermore, it revealed the severe administrative difficulties that the Indian Army encountered when required to place and maintain a force larger than two divisions in inhospitable mountainous terrain.[15] Above all, it demonstrated that it was ill-equipped for major military operations against a sophisticated enemy and lacked the institutional mechanisms for disseminating operational principles and logistical lessons gleaned from its various campaigns.[16] What was lacking was a framework for retaining the lessons learned of campaigns or for conceptualising and aligning the increasingly complex demands of mobilisation with the penetrative tools and extractive capabilities of the colonial state.

Military reform in India and the rise of the continental commitment in Britain

Nearly contemporaneous to the operations at Tirah was the outbreak of the South African War in October 1899. This conflict opened with a succession of military setbacks during 'Black Week' in December 1899 that shook the British army to its core. Culminating in the tactical nadir at Spion Kop in February 1900, the reverses revealed the British Army to be wholly unprepared for modern conflict and unable to properly underpin the waging of war with a coherent plan for strategic and industrial mobilisation. They demonstrated the unwelcome truth that the late-Victorian method of preparing for, and conducting, warfare on

'ad hoc' lines was no longer acceptable, and once the war ended in 1902 a root-and-branch reform of the military system began.[17] This led in 1904 to the formation of an Army Council as the supreme administrative body at the War Office, and two years later to the creation of a General Staff that would act as a repository of strategic doctrine.[18]

Military reform in India followed a different trajectory. A decade of change began in 1902 when General Horatio Kitchener was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. Kitchener believed that the greatest danger to Britain's position in India came from 'the menacing advance of Russia towards our frontier.'[19] His reforms aimed to reorganise the Indian Army into an organisation geared for large-scale warfare against a European power. This departed from post-1857 military policy which held that the army's primary objective was to support the civil authorities in remote districts during periods of internal unrest. Kitchener opposed this policy, which he claimed left the bulk of his forces scattered 'all higgledy-piggledy over the country, without any system or reason whatsoever.'[20]

Kitchener's reforms swept away the remaining vestiges of the old Presidency Armies and unified the commands into one central Indian Army. Also swept away was the system of dual control over military policy between the civilian and military authorities. Under this system, the Military Department in charge of administrative and logistical services was accountable to the Viceroy's Council rather than to the commander-in-chief, whose responsibilities were restricted to executive control over the various units and formations.[21] Kitchener claimed that this system promoted 'dual control and divided responsibility' and argued that unity of control over the administrative and operational branches was necessary in order to ensure the reliability of the logistical services in time of war.[22] Failing this, he warned that the division of responsibility 'constitutes a standing menace to efficiency and a consequent danger to the army.' In his support, he drew attention to the breakdown of dual control during the advance to Kabul and Kandahar in 1882 and Lord Roberts' subsequent condemnation of the system as 'cumbrous, dilatory and complicated.'[23]

The plans drew the powerful opposition of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon. He feared that the abolition of the Military Member would do away with a valuable source of independent military advice and knowledge of specialist Indian conditions, particularly when the commander-in-chief was drawn from the British Army (as Kitchener was). Curzon further claimed that the proposals would create a 'military despotism' and suspected Kitchener of attempting to secure 'an absolute dictatorship in

military matters.'[24] The autocratic tendencies of both men accentuated the deadlock as each was accustomed to total control and not prepared to permit the other to encroach upon his own area of responsibility.

Ultimately, the decision went Kitchener's way as the Hamilton Commission set up in Britain to investigate the proposals supported his plans and amalgamated the offices of commander-in-chief and military member. This was followed by the resignation of Curzon in August 1905, and it, in turn, led to the creation of an over-centralised army bureaucracy that became too reliant upon the 'whims and personality of one man.'[25] The workload of the commander-in-chief increased significantly and caused much delay and congestion at Army Headquarters (AHQ) as he and his divisional commanders became overburdened with minor administrative details.[26] However, the new system suffered from two major drawbacks. It led to an over-dependence upon the commander-in-chief, which became apparent as early as 1909 when 'there was very little work done at Simla because the Commander-in-Chief [Kitchener] was continually absent.'[27] It also linked the overall performance of the Indian Army to the personality and competence of Kitchener's successors as commander-in-chief.

These changes to the bureaucratic hierarchy coincided with important developments in London and Delhi with regard to any future European conflict. In the United Kingdom, the formation of a General Staff in 1906 facilitated (but did not initiate) the secret Anglo-French staff talks that began that year and resulted in an agreement that Britain would commit an expedition to France or Belgium in the event of a war with Germany. This 'continental commitment' went on to dominate the strategic debate in Britain after 1906.[28] Three years later, in 1909, the formation of an Imperial General Staff extended the staff system throughout the empire and Douglas Haig was appointed chief of staff of the Indian Army. As the author of the Field Service Regulations that defined a set of general tactical principles and provided the British Army with an operational doctrine of sorts, Haig extended their application to the Indian Army in order to bring its organisation, administration and training into line with the Imperial General Staff.[29]

However, this standardisation came at the expense of the principles of hill fighting and bush warfare learnt painfully on the North-West Frontier as the specialist manuals on frontier warfare commissioned after the Tirah debacle were cancelled in 1909.[30] The detrimental effects of this policy became fully apparent in German East Africa in October 1914 when Indian troops participating in the attack on Tanga confronted an enemy well-schooled in bush fighting and adopting

'fire tactics certainly never taught in India.'[31] Meanwhile, financial constraints and a policy of retrenchment in military expenditure after 1910 meant that the reform programme was never completed and the procurement of new weaponry and dissemination of knowledge lagged behind its European and Ottoman counterparts.[32] Furthermore, the linkage between logistics and politics remained as under-studied in Delhi, Cairo and London as was the terrain and conditions in the outlying posts of the Ottoman Empire that would bear the thrust of British-Indian offensive activities in 1914–15.

The political economy of empire before 1914

Wartime critics in London did not appreciate the powerful constraining factors that conditioned the conduct of imperial policy in Egypt and India before 1914, and thus failed to appreciate the magnitude of the changes in colonial governance that were initially required, and that subsequently occurred. The massive expansion of the power and extractive capacity of the colonial state in 1917–18 entailed a fundamental shift in the political economy of empire and the political relationships of both countries with the United Kingdom. These had rested on deeply entrenched beliefs in low taxation, limited government spending and recollection of the backlash to previous attempts to penetrate rural society in India in 1857 and Egypt in 1882.[33] These powerful narratives persisted into the early years of the war and informed a colonial mindset that portrayed the campaigns as a continuation of traditional colonial-style campaigning and hesitated to move towards strategic mobilisation until the logistical breakdown in Mesopotamia in 1916 revealed the urgency of the situation.

In Egypt, the political economy of the Anglo-Egyptian 'system' evolved over the three decades following the dispatch of British warships to Alexandria in 1882. It was based on the principles of free trade, low taxation and limited government, and on an increasingly fictitious 'temporary' occupation.[34] British bureaucrats and advisers arrived in Egypt with a mandate to modernise what Alfred Milner labelled the frightful misgovernment of Khedivial rule.[35] Although British politicians repeatedly protested that the occupation was merely temporary, after 1892 the Foreign Office accepted that withdrawal was unlikely and British influence began to spread more widely.[36] By 1914, the shadowy outline of British advisers, inspectors and sub-inspectors had permeated the upper reaches of the Egyptian government and Milner had coined the notion of a 'veiled protectorate.'[37]

The British advisers and civil servants enjoyed great influence and effectively became 'advisers in name, controllers in fact,' but they operated behind the façade of the Egyptian government and remained theoretically responsible to their Egyptian ministers.[38] British policies between 1882 and 1914 aimed to uphold British economic and strategic interests and secure sufficient political co-operation to avoid having to impose direct rule.[39] This necessitated a delicate equilibrium in British policy as the reforms taken to restore political and financial stability in Egypt paradoxically solidified Britain's position and resulted in a further influx of British officials who gradually supplanted the Egyptian bureaucracy.[40]

This thorough penetration of the upper echelons of bureaucracy was not matched at lower levels of Egyptian society. British influence in 1914 remained indirect in most respects and the official presence remained tiny, numbering between 300 and 400 civil servants and between 4000 and 5000 soldiers.[41] Their presence was largely limited to urban areas and did not extend to rural Egypt, where 68% of Egyptians remained in agricultural employment.[42] Incidents such as the 1906 Dinshawai massacre left bitter memories that lingered for decades, 'at least so long as there was a British presence in Egypt,' and constituted a potent memory that united both rural and urban communities in outrage that provided a constant fuel for nationalist flames.[43] Agricultural policies continued the Khedives' pre-1882 policy of integrating Egypt into the international economy through the development of cotton as an export-based cash crop.[44] This required investment in large-scale capital projects such as the Aswan dam, irrigation works and a dense railway network that resulted in Egypt having, by 1914, the highest ratio of length of track to inhabited area in the world.[45]

Most Egyptians consequently had little contact with British officialdom, whose decisions were transmitted downwards through existing channels of bureaucratic authority. This enabled the façade of Egyptian government to be maintained and ensured that the majority of Egyptians experienced British influence indirectly in 1914. During the First World War, this carefully constructed separation of powers broke down as the scale of wartime demands for resources caused the introduction of martial law and extension of centralised British control to cover every aspect of political, economic and social life in Egypt. The war economy that developed departed substantively from the pre-1914 political economy of empire in Egypt as the logistical requirements of maintaining and supplying the Egyptian Expeditionary Force led the British authorities in Egypt to adopt an interventionist policy that diverted civilian resources and commercial patterns to military use.

Similarly, in India wartime requirements radically altered the established tenets of colonial rule and replaced it with a political economy based on intense resource extraction driven by, and aiming at meeting, the logistical needs of the campaigns in the Middle East. The legacy of the Great Rebellion in 1857–58 was a conservative approach to governance and an emphasis on collaboration with carefully identified groups within Indian society. The Government of India was constrained by a limited tax base and cautious fiscal policy that inhibited its capacity for expansionary activity in any field.[46] One manifestation of this was in the military sphere, even as the Indian Army provided the military wherewithal for the projection of imperial power in small-scale detachments and garrisons throughout Asia and Africa.

A set of powerful political and financial constraints governed the parameters of military and industrial development in India before 1914. British policy actively discouraged the creation of an industrialised sector in India and conspicuously under-utilised India's abundant natural resources and manpower. This hindered the growth of a military-industrial complex and ensured that India lacked skilled labourers, technicians, supervisors and managers in addition to engineering and metallurgy factories and machine-building facilities.[47] Fear of training an indigenous pool of military and technological expertise among Indians inhibited the development of armament factories in India. Their output remained tiny as they remained dependent upon Britain for technical expertise and machinery, and the Ferozepore Arsenal (the largest in India) produced a mere 12 artillery pieces and 22,000 shells during its year of peak production in 1908–9.[48]

The financial shackles on Indian policy intensified during the period between the Liberals' landslide victory in the 1906 election in Britain and the outbreak of war in 1914. After 1906 the Liberal commitment to low government expenditure coincided with the signing of the Anglo-Russian convention in 1907 and the failure of the monsoon in 1907 and spring rains in 1908. The conjunction of these events led the Liberal government in London to seek a 'peace dividend' while pressure mounted in India to divert expenditure from military to social programmes.[49] With military spending amounting to nearly 40% of total government expenditure, it represented a prime target for economies to the new Secretary of State for India, John Morley, whose Liberal political beliefs meant he remained wary of the need for substantial military expenditures and preparations in peacetime.[50]

Momentum for retrenchment gathered pace after the arrival of a new viceroy in Delhi in 1910. A significant rise in nationalist activities and political extremism in India accelerated following the partition of Bengal in 1905 and culminated in an assassination attempt on the Viceroy, Charles Hardinge in 1912.[51] The deteriorating internal situation alarmed the British authorities, but their options for responding were limited by their dogged belief in the utility of low taxation as the key to successful Indian administration.[52] In addition, the prohibition of the trade in opium in 1911 further hit Government of India revenues, but Hardinge believed it would be politically insensitive to introduce fresh taxation in the year after the lavish expenditure on the Durbar in 1910. Faced with declining revenues, he stated in August 1911 that financial 'retrenchment and reduction are absolutely essential.'[53]

In March 1913, a commission headed by Field Marshal Lord Nicholson to enquire into military economies recommended that the military budget be capped at £19.5 million per annum. The majority of the allotted expenditure was taken up in policing the frontiers of India and mounting a naval blockade in the Persian Gulf to combat the smuggling of arms to frontier tribes. Consequently, the military savings came primarily from the non-combatant branches of the Army that offered 'the line of least resistance' to such cutbacks.[54] Excessive centralisation of decision-making and a 'system of microscopic financial control' compounded the problem and led the Adjutant-General of the Indian Army, Sir Fenton Aylmer, to refer darkly to 'the terrorism created by the Finance Officer.' Within this cult of economy, Aylmer concluded that 'trying to get anything through at Simla is like a man trying to struggle through quicksand or a bog. He becomes exhausted by opposition on all sides and sinks.'[55]

The Army in India Commission also determined that India would play only a minor role in any European conflict and that the Indian Army should concentrate on defending its own borders. Accordingly, it instructed the General Staff in India to curtail all expenditure on preparations for possible overseas expeditions, including reconnaissance visits to the vicinity of Basra by travellers and officials based in the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms.[56] This reinforced Delhi's earlier opposition to secret plans drawn up in 1911 by Douglas Haig, then Chief of Staff of the Indian Army, to dispatch an Indian expeditionary force to Europe in the event of war.[57] Thus, by 1914 the political and military factors holding back military and industrial development in India left the Indian Army in a parlous state and materially and mentally unequipped for modern warfare against a European enemy.[58]

Britain–Indian interest in the Persian Gulf before 1914

During the nineteenth century, the political economy of India increasingly became linked to strategic developments in the Middle East that revolved around the evolution of an Anglo-Indian 'sub-imperial system' over the proto-emirates in the Persian Gulf. This developed over the course of a 'century of commerce and diplomacy' that began with a General Treaty outlawing maritime piracy in 1820.[59] Between 1835 and 1916, the British Government of India entered into protective treaty relations with the ruling families of the small Arab sheikhdoms in the Gulf as agreements were signed with the Trucial States (1835), Bahrain (1861), Kuwait (1899 and 1914) and Qatar (1916).[60]

Civil and military planners in India considered the Gulf to be a vital flank on the sea route to India. In 1903, this perception prompted the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, to proclaim 'a sort of Monroe Doctrine for the Persian Gulf' and warn that Britain would regard the establishment by any other power of a naval base or fortified port as a 'grave menace' to its interests.[61] Ties between the Gulf and India extended deeper than formulations of imperial strategy as native agents represented the Government of India in the Gulf and constituted a collaborative group of local intermediaries drawn mainly from influential merchant families.[62] Traditional maritime trading routes linked western India with the ports of the Gulf and east Africa, and the presence of thousands of Baluchis who migrated to the Arabian Peninsula, particularly the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, added a human dimension to the projection of Indian influence on the Arabian peninsula.[63]

Further north, British interests in the three Ottoman vilayets (provinces) of Mesopotamia expanded steadily throughout the half-century prior to 1914. During this period, British and Indian companies benefited from the Ottoman administrative reforms and improvements to communications and transportation that gradually re-incorporated the region into the Ottoman Empire following the Mamluk Interregnum of 1704–1831.[64] These reforms created an environment in which business with the wider world could be facilitated. Trade between Mesopotamia and Britain accelerated after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, while commercial ties with India grew rapidly after 1900.[65]

In 1846, British shipping interests acquired the rights to navigation on the rivers of Mesopotamia, and the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company operated its first steamship on the Tigris in 1852.[66] By 1911, the company was transporting 51,000 tons of cargo annually on the waterways of Mesopotamia, and Britain had emerged

as Basra's principal trading partner.[67] Trade between Basra and Bombay also boomed, with rice, cotton and timber from India being exchanged for Arabian ponies, dates and pearls from the Gulf.[68] Cumulatively this trade meant that in 1914 British and British-Indian commercial interests controlled more than two-thirds of the imports and half of the exports that passed through Basra.[69]

British interests also acquired concessions in large-scale irrigation projects in Mesopotamia. Sir William Willcocks became involved in irrigation schemes in Mesopotamia and vocally advocated his vision of 'a great grain-producing country with unlimited capabilities for extension.'[70] Willcocks believed that 'Babylonia' could rise again to rival Egypt as it had done in ancient times and compared his work to that of the Biblical prophet Ezekiel.[71] As early as 1905, he graphically described how he surveyed the dry watercourses and canals in the Euphrates valley and 'longed to call them to life, to clothe them with flesh and blood; to make this land smile again with the fruits of the earth.' Statements such as these fired the imagination and enthusiasm of the cadre of decision-makers in Britain for whom religion was still an important element of their educational upbringing.[72]

Participation in irrigation and other agricultural schemes was an important means of increasing British informal influence in Mesopotamia, primarily at the expense of Germany, and it drew the strong approval of the Foreign Office.[73] This reflected the strategic and commercial value attached to Mesopotamia, which rose further after the discovery in 1908 of large oil reserves across the border in southern Persia. Officials suspected that substantial reserves also existed around Mosul, although no firm discoveries were made until 1927.[74] In 1914, the British Government acquired a majority shareholding in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and secured for the Admiralty a steady supply of oil for its ships. This reduced its dependence upon non-imperial sources in the United States, Russia, Mexico and Rumania, but introduced a powerful new dynamic into Mesopotamian policy-making considerations.[75]

These assertions of greater British influence were nevertheless undermined by a number of factors that hinted at supposed German forward moves in the Gulf. In 1902, the Ottoman government granted a railway concession for a line from Konya to the Gulf to the German Anatolia Company, and the Foreign Office anxiously followed its progress eastwards.[76] After 1910, the imminent prospect of the line's extension to the Gulf prompted discussions as to where it might terminate and a heightened awareness of the strategic importance of Mesopotamia and the

northern Gulf coastline.[77] Additional concern was raised by the increasing volume of German trade with the region, which fostered a general sense of unease that Britain's strategic and commercial predominance was being eroded. In 1912–13 the number of packages transported by the German Hamburg-Amerika Line from Europe to Basra exceeded the combined total of all its British rivals for the first time.[78] The acting Political Resident in the Gulf, John Lorimer, and the acting Consul-General in Fars, Stuart Knox, believed that German commercial policy was influenced by political motives aimed at challenging Britain's commercial supremacy, 'which it is considered essential in the interests of India to preserve.'[79] Official unease at German policy was subsequently made clear in 1914 when the Foreign Office refused a German request to lay a cable in the Gulf as part of a direct telegraphic link between Germany and China.[80]

These developments gradually integrated the Mesopotamian vilayets into regional and international trading networks. However, their physical remoteness from the centres of Ottoman administrative and political power meant that the political economy of Mesopotamia was characterised by the fragmented and uneven projection of state power.[81] Even in 1914 it took more than two weeks to travel the 2400 kilometres to Constantinople, and the Ottoman administrative apparatus barely existed outside the urban areas of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul.[82] This resulted in a de facto autonomy from state control outside of the major urban centres of Baghdad and Basra that complicated tribal strategies of accommodation and resistance to the central government, and influenced their differing reactions to the invading forces and imposition of central administrative control during the war.

The situation in 1914

The constituent parts of the interconnected war economy thus existed in embryonic form in 1914. Patterns of trade and exchange between India, Africa and the Middle East dovetailed with the Indian Army's record of undertaking campaigns in these regions and provided the building-blocks for the new wartime imperialism when it began to evolve in 1916. Until that point, the nascent campaigns that took shape in Egypt and Basra struggled to make headway as the imbalance between force capabilities and logistical requirements became ever more pronounced. War broke out between Britain and Germany on 4 August 1914 in response to the German violation of Belgian neutrality and with it the 1839 Treaty of London safeguarding Belgian independence. This provided

a convenient pretext that enabled the Liberal government to secure the support of its divided party for the aid of Belgium and enter the war alongside their partners in the Triple Entente, France and Russia.[83] Nevertheless, this obscured the real reason for Britain's intervention in the continental war, namely that its political and military leadership considered any German domination of the Low Countries to threaten the balance of power within Europe and Britain's ability to maintain the maritime supremacy of her global empire.[84]

British and imperial forces conducted two largely separate campaigns in 1914. This important point has largely been overshadowed in military histories of the war, which have tended to focus on the vital role of the Indian Army corps in stabilising the Western Front at the first battle of Ypres in November 1914 and fighting alongside the British Expeditionary Force until February 1915.[85] At the same time, contingents of Indian Army troops sailed to various localities in south Asia and Africa to protect the imperial lines of communications and maintain global maritime superiority. This represented a continuation of the Indian Army's pre-war function as a strategic imperial reserve and became necessary in 1914 for two reasons. The most urgent was Britain's reliance on imported foodstuffs, which rested on making the sea lanes safe from the threat of disruption by enemy cruisers and submarines in order for merchant shipping to continue.[86] This was related to the second reason, which was to ensure the smooth passage of troops, munitions and supplies from the Dominions and India to the European theatre and to safeguard the line of communication through the Suez Canal following the declaration of war with the Ottoman Empire in November 1914. The continued control of the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms in safeguarding the strategic approaches to India meant that maintenance of British supremacy in the region became an important imperial objective.[87]

In the absence of any direct military threat to India during the formative months of the war, defence planners and strategists in London decided that imperial interests could best be defended by restoring the balance of power in western Europe. This would remove the threat to the imperial lines of communication posed by German control over the ports of the Low Countries, and Haig's 1911 plans for involving the Indian Army in a continental war were consequently resurrected at a meeting in Downing Street on 6 August.[88] This came after the Hardinge had offered the Army Council two Indian infantry divisions and one cavalry division in the event of war breaking out, and on 7 August the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, ordered them to proceed to

Egypt with 'the possibility of their employment in Europe being kept in view.'[89] Accordingly, the 3rd (Meerut) and 7th (Lahore) divisions were placed on a war footing and dispatched to Egypt in two large convoys in August and September 1914.

India also supplied the bulk of the troops and food supplies for the contingents intended to ensure the maritime security of the empire. This rested on two core pillars in 1914, namely control of Egypt and the Suez Canal and the neutralisation and elimination of the network of German coaling and wireless stations in east and west Africa and the Pacific. Such action would severely restrict ability of German cruisers to interfere with the flow of men and munitions, and developments in September 1914 underscored its importance as the German cruisers *Emden*, *Konigsberg* and *Karlsruhe* played havoc with merchant shipping in the Bay of Bengal, East Africa and the Caribbean respectively. The threat from the cruisers delayed the transportation of troops from Australia and New Zealand as naval escorts had to be organised for the troop convoys.[90]

The period of immediate danger lasted from August to December 1914, when the defeat of the German Asiatic Squadron at the battle of the Falkland Islands and the sinking of the enemy cruisers in the Indian Ocean provided a measure of safety for mercantile shipping and naval transportation. During this period, the Government of India assumed responsibility for raising and dispatching four Indian expeditionary forces, to France, East Africa, Egypt and India. This effort exhausted the limited reserves of officers, transport cadres and other non-combatant branches such as the medical facilities. Furthermore, the organisational and logistical capacity of the Army of India approached breaking-point, and in March 1915 Hardinge stated that his military resources had been denuded to the extent that 'India was left with practically no margin to meet unforeseen contingencies.' This led him to inform the Cabinet in London that India had done its duty to the empire and that consequently he felt that 'it is quite impossible ... to do more.'[91]

The origins of the campaigns in Egypt and Mesopotamia

During the three months that elapsed between Britain's entry into the European war on 4 August and the declaration of war with Constantinople on 5 November 1914, the hostile neutrality of the Ottoman Empire greatly complicated attempts to formulate imperial strategy. This was especially the case in the arc that ran from East Africa through Egypt and the Middle East to India as British officials remained

acutely conscious of the religious dimension to any conflict with the Sublime Porte. The Ottoman rulers' claim of caliphal authority enjoyed support among Muslims in India, as elsewhere, and in the late nineteenth century Sultan Abdulhamid II reasserted the Islamic basis of his rule as part of a broader attempt to renew and strengthen his sources of legitimacy in a modernising polity. This was significant, since any declaration of war with Constantinople would require the British to persuade their Muslim subjects in India and Egypt, whom they viewed with suspicion as 'potential if latent enemies,' to join, or at least acquiesce in, a Christian campaign against their co-religionists and spiritual leadership.[92] For this reason, British policy-makers felt it vital that Constantinople be seen to make the first aggressive move towards war, although their concerns for the loyalty of their Indian Muslim troops subsequently proved misplaced owing to the substantive ethnic and linguistic differences that prevented any serious degree of communication or collaboration with local Egyptians.[93]

A second complicating factor in the early creation of policy was the long-standing British commitment to upholding the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. This had formed a core component of British eastern policy since 1815 and was guided initially by the strategic imperative of keeping Russia away from Constantinople and the approaches to India and latterly by keeping Germany from obtaining a foothold in the Persian Gulf.[94] The signing of a treaty of alliance between the Ottoman Empire and the Germans on 2 August 1914 turned this long-standing support for the Porte on its head. Although the Porte did not enter the European war until late-October, relations with the entente soured rapidly after two German cruisers, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, were granted refuge in Constantinople from their British pursuers in the Mediterranean. Ottoman hostility towards Britain was further inflamed by an Admiralty decision to seize two battleships under construction in British shipyards for the Ottoman Navy.[95] The presence of a substantial and influential German military mission under the command of General Liman von Sanders, and the assumption of German control over the Ottoman Navy on 15 August, also contributed to the breakdown in Anglo–Ottoman relations.[96]

In August and September 1914, British concerns for prestige and anxiety to avoid appearing the aggressor against the Caliphate led the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, to reaffirm Britain's commitment to Ottoman territorial integrity. On 1 October, the Ottomans raised the stakes in the as-yet undeclared conflict by closing the Straits of the Dardanelles to British and imperial shipping. At a stroke, this

wiped out more than half of Russia's entire export trade and exhausted London's patience with Constantinople. The trigger for the declaration of war with the Porte was the launch of pre-emptive naval strikes by the Ottomans against the Russian Black Sea ports of Odessa and Sevastopol on 29 October. Britain severed diplomatic relations the next day, and, following the Russian declaration of war with the Ottomans on 2 November, declared war herself on the fifth.[97]

The focus of British eastern policy then shifted to resolving the anomalous political and military position of Egypt within the empire. While it remained a nominal part of the Ottoman Empire in November 1914, the country had been under 'temporary' British occupation since 1882 and hosted a small garrison alongside the British commercial and government advisers who permeated every branch of the Egyptian administration. The military 'man on the spot' was General John Maxwell, a veteran of more than thirty years' experience of Egypt, and for the remainder of 1914 he worked to bring some order to the chaos that initially resulted from the haphazard arrival of units from India, Australia and New Zealand and the departure of other units to England and France.[98]

Among the units that arrived in Egypt at this time were the 10th and 11th Indian Infantry Divisions. These formed the core of the expanded and renamed Force in Egypt whose mandate was to secure the Canal Zone. The divisions were hastily assembled in India as relations with Constantinople gradually deteriorated, and consisted of disparate infantry brigades lumped together with insufficient staff, artillery or divisional troops.[99] This notwithstanding, their arrival in Egypt was welcomed by the Oriental Secretary at the Residency, Ronald Storrs, as a valuable corrective to Egyptian nationalist opinion which alleged that the British 'rode' Indians like 'asses' and that they would never fight.[100] Maxwell, too, thought highly of the Indian troops, whom he declared were 'keen as mustard and are longing for the enemy to appear,' and certainly better than the batch of Territorial Army men who had arrived from England 'swarming with lice' and 'so badly vaccinated that they could hardly move …'[101]

Maxwell placed the two Indian divisions along the Canal in a line from Suez in the south to Port Said in the north. Their position benefited from excellent lateral communications in the form of a broad-gauge railway that ran along the length of the Canal, and from the Royal Navy's command of the sea approaches to Suez and Port Said. Behind the front line, he established secure lines of communication on the west bank of the Canal. These linked Alexandria (the destination

for supplies arriving from the United Kingdom and the west), Suez (the destination for supplies arriving from India and the east), and Cairo (the place of assembly for supplies purchased in Egypt.)[102] In addition, an advanced depot was established on the edge of the Nile Delta, at Zagazig, and barges distributed water to the Indian troops stationed on the east bank of the Canal. They drew their water from the civil supply system that had been installed for the town supplies at Suez, Ismailia and Port Said.[103] Meanwhile, the Indian troops patrolled and maintained the famous swept track that ran the entire east bank of the Canal and acted as a rudimentary warning system to reveal incriminating footprint evidence of any enemy activity in the Canal Zone.[104]

The construction of the defence works and accommodation for 100,000 men required large amounts of local labour. The men initially were drawn from the ranks of unskilled labourers in the larger Egyptian cities, and the plant and materials necessary for the engineering works also came predominantly from local sources.[105] The early logistical network was further augmented by the creation of a Camel Transport Corps in January 1915, which consisted of camels hired through the Ministry of Interior at the rate of 15 piastres per day to their owners. Its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Whittingham, combined military experience as a former sergeant in the Grenadier Guards with experience of camel management acquired in the Anti-Slavery Department in Sudan.[106] By 6 February 1915, its strength stood at 1310 camels and 864 men, organised into 24 sections and four divisions.[107] During the crucial early stages of construction of the Canal Zone defence works it transported rations and water to the military units spread along the Suez Canal and the various outposts on the east bank.[108]

Military preparations for the defence of the Canal were complemented by a series of political measures that aimed to resolve the anomalous status of Egyptian sovereignty. The acting Consul-General in Cairo in Kitchener's absence in London, Sir Milne Cheetham, opposed an initial suggestion from the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, to annex Egypt. Cheetham defended the co-operative tradition of the 'temporary' occupation and successfully argued that annexation would contradict the Government's declared aim of upholding the rights of small nations.[109] As an initial measure, in October 1914 the Residency adjourned and subsequently suspended the Legislative Assembly that had been established in 1911. On 2 November, it followed with a Proclamation issued by the British military authorities in Cairo. This stated that Britain would assume full responsibility for the defence of Egypt and no Egyptian would be asked to participate in the fighting. A system of rigorous press

censorship and counter-intelligence measures added another layer of protection that successfully blunted the declaration of an Islamic holy war on 14 November.[110]

The issue of Egypt's sovereignty was settled on 19 December 1914 when Britain declared Egypt a Protectorate and replaced the pro-Ottoman Khedive, Abbas Hilmi II, with his nephew, the pliant pro-British Hussein. London thus gained a valuable and loyal collaborator.[111] Sir Henry McMahon became the first High Commissioner, and martial law was introduced to bypass the system of Capitulations. Although the Foreign Office protested that martial law was intended to supplement rather than supersede the Civil Administration, the British Army effectively became the supreme legislative and executive authority in Egypt.[112] This became the first tangible sign of the new and more aggressive form of British intervention in Egyptian sovereignty.

These decisions transformed the Anglo-Egyptian political relationship and planted the seeds of bitterness and unrest that followed in 1918–19. The terms of the Protectorate were ambiguous and susceptible to misinterpretation by the British community, who welcomed the measure, and Egyptians, who regarded it as an emergency wartime measure pending the final settlement of Egypt's future status.[113] Percival Elgood, who served in the Ministries of War, Interior and Finance and as wartime General Staff Officer at Port Said during his long career in Egypt, admitted retrospectively in 1924 that the Protectorate 'inferred much and promised little.'[114] Furthermore, the Proclamation 'should never have been given' since 'no human intelligence in November 1914 could foretell the development of the War, or whether Egyptian assistance would not become necessary to the success of military operations.'[115]

Nevertheless, the decisions taken in these early months did ensure that the internal situation in Egypt did not deteriorate into the anti-British fervour feared by many officials in 1914. This formative period of the war lasted until 3 February 1915, when an Ottoman force of 20,000 men and a complement of field artillery managed to cross the Sinai peninsula undetected and attempted to blow up the Sweet Water Canal and block the Suez Canal. The attack failed, and the raiding force retreated to Palestine. This engagement marked the end of the immediate military threat to Egypt and the successful completion of the initial objectives of the campaign. The political and military decisions taken during 1914 proved sufficient to secure the strategically vital Suez Canal zone without draining resources and manpower from the main theatre of military operations in France and Flanders. However, the legacy of these early decisions formalised Britain's position in Egypt, reconfigured

existing and created new power relations, and provided the basis for the enhanced penetration and extraction of societal resources that accelerated in 1916 and redrew the dynamics of imperial penetration and state control in Egypt in 1917–18.

In Mesopotamia, the decision to dispatch Indian Expeditionary Force D to the Persian Gulf in October 1914 overlapped with preparations to send two other expeditionary forces, B and C, to East Africa. Although the reserves of the Indian Army were already stretched thin by the raising of the forces for France, Egypt and East Africa, the plans for a fourth force for Mesopotamia were sown as early as 11 August when the Ottoman Army began to mobilise in Baghdad and seize British-owned property there.[116] This alarmed the Military Secretary at the India Office, Sir Edmund Barrow, who feared it might damage British prestige in the region and sway the loyalty of the local tribal sheikhs upon whose collaboration rested British political, commercial and strategic supremacy in the Persian Gulf. Barrow suggested sending a force to the Shatt al-Arab, at the head of the Gulf, in order to repair local prestige and reassure any wavering allies of British support. Such a move, he argued, would demonstrate British military might in the region, protect the oil installations and pipeline at Abadan on the eastern (Persian) coast of the Gulf, and cover the landing of any reinforcements that might subsequently be required.[117] Crewe agreed, and on 2 October the Cabinet sanctioned the dispatch of one infantry brigade to the Persian Gulf under conditions of strict secrecy so as to avoid seeming the aggressor against the still-neutral Ottomans.[118]

Indian military officials accordingly diverted the 16th Infantry Brigade of the 6th (Quetta) Division from force B, bound for East Africa, to form the nucleus of Indian Expeditionary Force D. The 6th Division was held in low esteem by military officials in London and Cairo which was indicative of the fact that in raising its fourth overseas force the Army of India was having to scrape the bottom of its military barrel for units. The unit was considered inferior for European service but deemed adequate for colonial-style operations. This belief that the operation would amount to a traditional demonstration of gunboat diplomacy was widely held among the top military echelons in India and in Force D itself. It was within this context that its Principal Maritime Transport Officer, responsible for all the water transport arrangements (both sea and river) retrospectively admitted to the Mesopotamia Commission of Enquiry in 1916 that he imagined the campaign 'was going to be some sort of expedition on the beach in the Persian Gulf…I had no

conception, no idea whatsoever, that it was going to be up the Shatt al-Arab.'[119]

Such a mentality and generalised assumption that the force would undertake a frontier-style colonial operation meant that the 16th Brigade departed India on 16 October without its land transport of camel and mule cadres, which remained in Karachi, and without any river craft. The envisaged holding operation did not anticipate that the advance would proceed further than the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab, which was navigable by coastal steamer.[120] Force D arrived at the British-protected island of Bahrain on 23 October and remained offshore until 31 October when, with war with the Ottoman Empire imminent, it received orders to sail to the Shatt al-Arab and prepare for an attack on the Faw peninsula south-east of Basra. At 6am on the morning of 6 November, HMS Odin fired the first shots of the campaign as it bombarded the Ottoman fort on the peninsula and covered the initial landing of 600 men. On 9 November, the brigade proceeded to Abadan where it disembarked with some difficulty owing to a lack of suitable river craft and high winds that swamped a large quantity of stores. They beat off an Ottoman counter-attack on 11 November to confirm their foothold on the peninsula.[121]

At this stage, the 16th Brigade was joined by a second infantry brigade, the 18th, which was quickly dispatched from India and arrived at Abadan on 13 November along with a quantity of artillery and the camel transport, but not the mules. Once more, the disembarkation was complicated by a lack of lighters and tugs, which led to a dangerous over-reliance on a small number of locally procured craft for the daily maintenance of supplies and munitions for the force.[122] However, these initial difficulties entirely escaped the notice of the military authorities in Delhi and London, for on 16 November the Cabinet authorised the capture of the city of Basra as an immediate objective, provided that the Arab political situation and general military conditions were favourable.[123] This was accomplished on 21 November but only after an engagement at Sahil on the 17th that relieved the strain caused by a shortage of river transport by opening up the Karun river and making available to Force D the steamers and other river craft stationed in the Persian port of Mohammerah.[124]

The occupation of Basra completed the initial objective of Force D. Its capture secured an important strategic position at the head of the Persian Gulf, ensured the safety of the oil installations at Abadan and confirmed the loyalty of the local Arab notables and powerful tribal sheikhs in Basra, who passively acquiesced in the occupation, and of

the city's mercantile community, who welcomed it.[125] Nevertheless, its successful completion masked a number of problems in the political and military aspects of command and oversight over the campaign. These magnified as the scope of operations expanded beyond Basra, and stemmed from the division of responsibility for military preparation and the collection of intelligence in the Ottoman sphere between the War Office in London and the Government of India.[126] The resulting fragmentation of responsibility produced gaps in command that severely and negatively impacted the logistical preparations for the campaign.

This became clear in the flawed acquisition of knowledge about the rivers that were to provide the major routes of penetration into Mesopotamia. In a defensive memorandum on the 'inception, difficulties and results of the Mesopotamian Campaign' written in September 1916, the Government of India claimed that it had only once, in January 1914, been consulted by London on the question of defending the newly acquired oil interests in Persia and that the operations suffered from the 'absence of a definite policy and plan' once they commenced.[127] Leaving aside the issue of who planned what and when, in practical terms the operations in Mesopotamia were seriously compromised by the lack of information on the nature of the campaign being planned and the physical conditions of the terrain itself. This failing was particularly pronounced with regard to the river conditions in Mesopotamia that differed significantly from rivers in India by virtue of their shallow draught and strong seasonal fluctuations. Officials in India later admitted to an 'insufficiency of information, particularly with regard to the rivers,' which hampered the military operations and resulted from the broader inadequacy of pre-war intelligence. Consequently, 'the characteristics of the Tigris and Euphrates were little known previous to our advance up them' and there were no plans for 'establishment for the building and upkeep of a river fleet suitable or sufficient for the requirements of operations.'[128]

These deficiencies were sharpened by the continuous pressure from London and Delhi to extend the scope of operations around Basra. This flowed from the perceived need to maintain prestige as well as from the scent of a succession of easy victories at comparatively little cost to the attacking force. Officials in both the India Office in London and the Government of India in Delhi proceeded to sanction a series of limited advances that, they argued, were necessary to consolidate their hold on Basra and its hinterland.[129] Moreover, the lure of Baghdad and the prestige that its seizure would bestow tempted the Political Secretary at

the India Office, Sir Arthur Hirtzel, to set aside the practical obstacles and logistical and operational limitations of Force D and proclaim on 23 November that 'the eventual occupation of Baghdad is so desirable as to be practically essential.'[130] Barrow, the Military Secretary, and Sir Percy Cox, the chief political officer with Force D, also favoured a rapid advance to Baghdad although Barrow, at least, recognised that such an undertaking was not possible in November 1914.[131]

The issue of prestige raised its head once more on 27 November, six days after the occupation of Basra, when Barrow warned against 'a policy of passive inactivity' if 'we are to impress the Arab and Indian world with our ability to defeat all designs against us.'[132] He proposed an advance on the town of Qurna, some 50 miles to the north at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Its capture would 'secure a strong strategic point and a dominating position' and project control over the entire stretch of waterway from Basra to Qurna open to deep-draught ships, which could go no further.[133] In India, Duff agreed, and wrote to Hardinge that Qurna 'is so obviously the advanced post of Basra that the occupation of the latter involves the occupation of the former also.'[134] The military authorities in India agreed and sanctioned the extension of the advance to Qurna in spite of misgivings expressed by Crewe, who argued (correctly) that the limited resources in river transport and the difficulties of river navigation at that time of year precluded any further advance for the time being.[135] Logistical limitations did in fact contribute to the abandonment of a first attempt to occupy Qurna, on 4 December, when the advancing party was forced to withdraw to Basra owing to the absence of any transport animals to bring up supplies. It necessitated a second try that succeeded, albeit with some difficulty in the face of determined Ottoman resistance, and the town was captured on 9 December 1914.[136]

The capture of Qurna marked an important watershed in the embryonic campaign in Mesopotamia. Hitherto, all questions of military policy relating to Force D had been initiated and controlled by the India Office in London. From this point, however, the 'initiative and direction of events' progressively shifted towards the Government of India and the military authorities on the ground in Basra.[137] This was in part a result of the growing complexity and scale of military operations in Europe, which dominated the attention of the Cabinet during 1915 and ensured that only scant attention was paid to developments in Mesopotamia.[138] Even the military secretary at the India Office, Barrow, conceded in 1916 that after Qurna the India Office placed its trust in 'the men on the spot' in India and Basra as possessors of the

best information regarding the operational capabilities and plausible political and military objectives of Force D.[139]

Consequently, as 1915 dawned, the initial limited holding operation in the Persian Gulf had started to evolve into a large-scale military campaign that its planners had neither anticipated nor prepared for. The complexity of the organisational and logistical side of the campaign began to make itself felt from the very beginning. As early as December 1914, the limited existing capacity of the river fleet was overstretched by the advance to Qurna while the rudimentary port facilities at Basra became overwhelmed by the constant arrival of additional units and supplies from India.[140] On 8 December 1914, the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf made the first of many requests to India for light-draught vessels suitable to the shallow river conditions in Mesopotamia. This represented the first intimation that Force D, which had been hastily prepared and equipped as if for a frontier expedition, might require its own river transport at all.[141] Meanwhile, the euphoria of the early successes prompted the Government of India to sanction the dispatch of a third infantry brigade in January 1915 in order to reinforce the newly conquered territory. This inexorable 'mission creep' ultimately resulted in the arrival of a second infantry division that formed the backbone of the military advance up the Tigris towards Baghdad, as the Government of India sacrificed administrative details for victories on the cheap. This complacency led, in turn, to disaster in November 1915 and military humiliation in April 1916 as the logistical network collapsed under the strain imposed on it.

Preparations for a long war

By the end of 1914, any lingering hopes that the war might be 'over by Christmas' had been dashed by the stalemate on the Western Front and the Ottoman declaration of war in November. The contours of a long war began to emerge alongside recognition of the need to move towards a strategic mobilisation of resources in the major belligerents. From the outset of hostilities in August, the newly appointed Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, believed that the conflict would last for three years and began to mobilise men and materiel on this basis.[142] This set in motion a gradual yet steady progression from an initial policy of 'business as usual' in August 1914 to a strategy of 'total warfare' that eventually covered the incremental mobilisation of the nation's combined political, economic and social assets. This process occurred in the United Kingdom during the opening two years of the war. By contrast,

the experience of India and the British commands in the Middle East differed substantially, as the decisive turning-point in their civil and military contributions to the war effort only took place during the second half of 1916, as a war economy developed to meet the enormous logistical requirements posed by the campaigns and spearheaded the expansion of state control to regulate it.

During 1915, a political battle raged in London between proponents of a strategy of 'limited liability,' led by the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, and advocates of a more forceful move towards a 'nation at arms,' led by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George.[143] Kitchener's decision to raise and equip the 'New Army' and the political fallout from the shell scandal in May 1915 ultimately decided the issue in favour of himself and Lloyd George. The new coalition government that formed under Prime Minister Asquith in May 1915 proceeded to enact a series of measures until its demise in December 1916. These steadily extended the degree of state intervention in British economic and industrial policy, and the introduction of conscription in January 1916 applied this interventionist tool to labour mobilisation as well.[144] This process then accelerated after Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December 1916 as the centrepiece of a broader re-mobilisation of British resources that created a socialised state through the piecemeal extension of state direction of economic resources.[145]

Such early recognition of a long conflict involving the gradual extension of state control over, and penetration of, national resources, did not initially occur in Egypt or India. British civil and military planners in both Delhi and Cairo remained mindful of the contested legacy of previous moves to intervene more vigorously in society to extract resources, and the backlashes that resulted in India in 1857–58 and Egypt in 1882. Officials in both regions failed to anticipate or conceptualise both the scale of the campaigns and the logistical complexities that would be required to sustain them over lengthy lines of communications in hostile ecological conditions. The opening phase of the fighting in Sinai and Mesopotamia therefore represented a continuation of nineteenth-century frontier-style campaigning and the deployment of the Indian Army in its traditional role as an 'imperial fire-brigade.'[146] Instead, it took the operational setbacks and administrative failures at Kut in April 1916, and to a secondary extent at Gaza in March–April 1917, to fully expose the intellectual limitations and institutional failings of the Indian Army and the British military authorities in Delhi to conceptualise and adapt to the very different demands posed by large-scale, industrial warfare.

The next two chapters examine the wartime demands placed by the two campaigns on the host societies and supply bases in Egypt and India, and describe how logistical requirements shaped the pattern of imperial penetration and, with it, the eventual backlashes against greater British control that occurred in Egypt in 1919 and Mesopotamia in 1920. This reveals an empire capable of changing tack from its original continuation of the light-touch in 1914–15 to an interventionist and much more authoritarian stance in 1917–18 before gradually reverting to a political economy of indirect control in 1922. Throughout, the changing interaction between logistical and operational capabilities, on the one hand, and the dynamics of state control, on the other, fed off each other to determine the shifting balance that accounted for the change in approach before and after 1916. This places logistics at the heart of a new and expanded approach to 'war and society' by synthesising military, political and imperial history into a holistic analysis of the multifaceted factors that accounted for the patterns of warfare and state control in the Middle East and India during the war.

2
Expansion of the Campaigns, 1915–16

This and the following chapter examine the evolution of the campaigns in Egypt and Palestine and in Mesopotamia and assess their implications for the deeper issues of how logistics allowed for expanded political and imperial control, which are explored fully in Part II of this book. These initial chapters emphasise the importance of the decisions taken in 1916 in determining the framework of the changes to the power and penetrative reach of the colonial state and the conceptual underpinnings of the more authoritarian war economy that developed to regulate it. They also make the point that while the campaign in Mesopotamia expanded beyond breaking-point in 1915 and early 1916, the Egyptian campaign undertook a more cautious expansion during this period and took off in 1917, thereby benefiting from the reorganisations of 1916. Thus, the logistical mechanics of the two campaigns assumed divergent forms that explain their varying fortunes in 1915–16, although in each the deeper issue is the historically unprecedented demands they made on host societies for local resources.

The scale and scope of military operations in Egypt and Mesopotamia expanded rapidly in 1915–16. Egypt served as the primary base for the campaign undertaken by the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at the Dardanelles in 1915, before its return to Egypt and the subsequent decision to advance across the Sinai peninsula to the boundary with Ottoman Palestine. In Mesopotamia, simultaneous advances along the Euphrates and Tigris rivers during 1915 left Indian Expeditionary Force (IEF) D dangerously reliant on an overstretched and insufficient river transportation system for its logistical needs. The trajectory of the two campaigns was broadly synchronous although significant differences in the logistical and operational timelines saw the Mesopotamian campaign attempt too much too soon while the campaign in Egypt

was characterised by a more careful build-up of force. Yet in both Cairo and Delhi, the British civil and military authorities failed to grasp the requirements of modern, industrial warfare in which the amount of materiel consumed in battle far exceeded anything that had been experienced in frontier or colonial warfare prior to 1914, and the divergence between force capability and intent widened steadily.

As these peripheral campaigns grew more complex and made increasingly larger demands on their Egyptian and Indian bases for resources, a growing gap emerged between logistics and mobilisation. This was mirrored by a disconnect in the patterns of state control over resources between the imperial metropolis and periphery in these years. This developed as the progressively more intrusive forms of state collection and distribution of resources of manpower and material in the United Kingdom did not initially occur in Egypt or India. The eventual breakdown of the logistical services in Mesopotamia between December 1915 and April 1916, and evidence of their overstretch in southern Palestine in the spring of 1917, underscored the symbiosis between logistics and operational capabilities. The shock of the military setbacks coincided with decisions taken in London to maximise the use of local resources to prompt a decisive shift in the organisation and extraction of man- and animal power, and food and fodder, from Egypt and India and the territories under occupation in Palestine and Mesopotamia. Significant shifts in the locus of political power and the extent of the colonial state's penetration into societal patterns of economic activity were thus attributable to the demands of the logistical machine, which could no longer be ignored after 1916. These trends shaped a complete volte-face in the nature of the colonial contribution to the war effort in the second half of the war as compared to the first two years of fighting.

During the administrative reorganisations that followed, the civil and military authorities formed often-uneasy partnerships to oversee and regulate a deeper and more authoritarian mobilisation of local resources. In the process, the horizontal reach of the colonial state expanded rapidly to cover the regulation of the war effort and the sharpening of its penetrative tools. This enabled administrators to reach down into societal patterns of economic production and consumption in order to tap and mobilise the resources required to wage war on an industrial scale. This was the real revolution in logistics that occurred during the war, as the initial attempts to conduct the campaigns by amplifying nineteenth-century practices gave way to the systematic extension of state control over, and intrusion in, patterns of societal

resources in Egypt, India and the occupied territories in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

This, in turn, reflected the complications caused by campaigning in harsh ecological terrain and climatic conditions in the Middle East and the stresses that this placed on the logistical units to raise and sustain the military efforts. These difficulties magnified the daunting logistical tasks facing the forces as they grappled with the dearth of existing roads and railways and the length of the lines of communications that linked them to their major supply bases along the Suez Canal and in Basra. In light of the low margin of subsistence in the stark terrain of the Middle East, it is striking how the ecological dimension was so frequently overlooked in the conduct of the military operations in Sinai, Palestine and Mesopotamia, and this had serious ramifications on the conduct and outcome of military operations on a number of occasions.

The ecology of desert warfare

Ecological and climatic factors played a crucial role in determining the success or otherwise of the operational and strategic decisions of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces. This fact notwithstanding, they were regularly disregarded in the planning and execution of military operations throughout the war. This can partially be attributed to a lack of prior information and poor intelligence about the terrain over which the campaigns would be fought. Another reason is that the pace and nature of operations, such as the operations to relieve Kut in 1916, were dictated by urgent military requirements and could not be delayed for the onset of more optimal conditions. Although awareness of these factors improved with time, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force's decision to only begin the advance to Jerusalem in November 1917 and its two failed raids across the Jordan river in the spring of 1918 demonstrate that the problem persisted throughout the war.

In Mesopotamia, the near-total absence of existing roads and railways ensured that the military advance followed the lines of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, which provided the sole routes of penetration northward from Basra. The initial operations were severely complicated by the paucity of information on the hydrological and navigable conditions of Mesopotamian rivers. Contrary to British assumptions, the Euphrates proved too shallow to be of any use for military purposes while on the Tigris it was only belatedly realised, in the final report of the Mesopotamia Commission in 1917, that 'the method of navigation

and type of craft required are quite unique and unlike anything employed on the inland waterways of India.'[1]

The situation was compounded by the fact that both rivers experienced strong seasonal variations in depth and strength of current. Each spring, melting snows up-river caused widespread annual flooding while the intense heat of the long summer months resulted in the rivers falling to a depth of only four to five feet during autumn.[2] These added important, yet inadequately studied, constraints on strategic, tactical and operational movements throughout 1915 and early 1916. The scale of the problem was vividly captured by one contemporary British official stationed in Basra. Hubert Young described how the annual floods transformed the alluvial soil into 'a particularly glutinous kind of mud . . . in which cars and carts stick fast, and horses and camels slide in every direction.'[3]

A different yet analogous difficulty encountered the troops in Sinai. There, the EEF advanced away from the river, rather than along it, and this created logistical problems of a different kind. The soft, sandy soil of the Sinai desert proved impassable for wheeled transport unless fitted with special wooden blocks called pedrails. Water supplies posed another seemingly insurmountable problem as local supplies were virtually non-existent east of the post at Katia, only 28 miles from the Suez Canal, and completely inadequate for a large force of any kind.[4] Initially, this meant that several thousand camels of the newly created Camel Transport Corps (CTC) were required to transport, feed and equip the advanced parties working on the east bank of the Canal.[5] Later, in 1916, when the decision to advance across Sinai to El Arish was taken, General Murray realised that logistics were the keys to success in the desert campaign. By February 1917, a railway and water pipeline traversed the 88 miles from the Canal base of Qantara to El Arish near the boundary with Ottoman Palestine and the front lines opposite Gaza.

Issues of ecology and climate thus formed crucial external variables in both theatres of war. General Townshend's advance towards Baghdad in 1915 took place between September and November when the Tigris was at its lowest and most unsuited to the river craft that provided his only logistical line to the base at Basra. The subsequent efforts to relieve the besieged garrison at Kut occurred during the height of the spring floods in 1916, and were severely hampered by heavy rain and flooding. Edmund Candler, the official eye-witness to the campaign, described how after the failure of the first attempt to relieve Kut in January 1916, 'there was a freezing wind and the wounded lay in pools of rain and flooded marsh all night; some were drowned; others died of exposure.'

Similarly, the third and final relief attempt in April took place in conditions in which 'the water was clean across our front six inches deep, with another six inches of mud . . . the second line of trenches was knee-deep in water; behind it there was a network of dugouts and pits into which we foundered deeply.'[6]

Similar disregard for climatic and ecological conditions took place in Palestine in 1917 when Allenby delayed the start of his advance until 31 October. This rendered the advancing troops and supporting animals vulnerable to the freezing rain and windy conditions encountered in the Judean hills in November and December. Appalling weather conditions nearly derailed the advance as tracks and roads became impassable, and the labourers and camels of the logistical units suffered severely from exposure and lack of appropriate cover or winter clothing.[7] Both men and beasts suffered high casualties from frostbite and a contemporary British official, P.G. Elgood, later marvelled that the Egyptian labourers 'did not desert in a body to the enemy. They could hardly have been worse off in Turkish captivity.'[8] A desperate situation was only salvaged by the untiring work of units of the Egyptian Labour Corps (ELC) and Camel and Donkey Transport Corps' who quarried stone, constructed roads and manhandled supplies to the advancing troops.[9]

Campaigning in hostile terrain was not a feature unique to the Middle Eastern theatres during the First World War. The British offensives in Flanders in the autumn of 1917 provide a particularly vivid example of the ecological and climatic difficulties that confronted armies in other sectors. Nevertheless the fighting on the Western Front occurred within an industrialised context that facilitated the supplying and transportation of the military machines to their battlefronts, which is where the problems began to mount. By contrast, the difficulties of conducting an industrialised war in the ecological conditions of the Middle East magnified manifold the logistical complexity of supply and transportation arrangements. It was only once these issues were mastered, in late 1917 and more so in the autumn of 1918, that the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces were able to fully benefit from the operational fluidity and possibilities for speed and manoeuvre offered by the more open terrain.

The Mesopotamian campaign, February 1915–December 1916

The successful capture of Basra and Qurna late in 1914 encouraged the advocates of a forward military policy to believe that Baghdad could

be won with the thin military resources at their disposal. The military measures and strategic moves considered necessary for the consolidation of control in the Basra vilayet progressively expanded to include the towns of Amara and Kut on the Tigris and Nassariya on the Euphrates.[10] These were captured with relative ease between March and September 1915. Together they spread Force D, by now organised into an Army Corps under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel John Nixon, over five mutually unsupportive positions with a dangerously over-extended network of supplies and transport. In addition, broader international considerations played a role in the advance, as political opinion in Delhi and London became anxious to secure a military victory that would boost British prestige in the east and assuage the continuing failure to breakthrough at the Dardanelles.

These initial successes camouflaged the serious shortcomings in the logistical and administrative capabilities of Force D. The fundamental problem was that it had neither been intended nor equipped for the task of undertaking major military operations or advancing to Baghdad. Although the two infantry brigades were incorporated into a full division (the 6th) following the occupation of Basra, Force D remained chronically short of river and land transport consisting of pack mules and carts. The shortage of transport soon became apparent in February 1915 when widespread flooding around Qurna transformed the permeable clay soil into a quagmire which paralysed all forms of land transport. This increased still further the troops' dependence on their overstretched river craft for all their supply and transportation arrangements.[11]

As the scope of operations lengthened throughout 1915, the inability of the cadres of land transport to meet Force D's logistical requirements meant that the zone of operations was effectively tied to the rivers.[12] Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of the force to two infantry divisions placed a very great strain on the 'practically non-existent' port facilities in Basra.[13] In April 1916, George Lloyd MP found these to be 'very remarkably absent' during a visit to the city, and the worsening situation added to the growing divergence between the logistical capability of Force D and its troop levels.[14] This underscored the deeper underlying problem of the widening gap between increased logistical requirements and the lack of sufficient measures of state mobilisation during this formative period that were needed to meet and regulate the enhanced demands for resources.

Force D made the first of many requests to India for river craft in December 1914 after transport difficulties complicated the advance to

Qurna. Demands for river craft increased rapidly thereafter, but the particular characteristics of the Tigris meant that a very specific combination of shallow-draught vessels with a powerful towing capacity were needed to cope both with the spring floods and the low summer water level.[15] Problems arose when the military authorities in Delhi proved unable to locate any suitable craft on Indian rivers and replied that it would not be possible to construct them in India. This reflected the legacy of British India's distorted and narrow pre-1914 industrial development plans and the wartime dislocation of such movements of supplies to India, which left the civil and military authorities with a substantial gap in local skills-sets that significantly hampered the war effort in its early years.[16]

In response, orders were placed for the construction of the river craft in England. However, the bureaucratic inertia that gripped the Government of India and the India Office meant that their construction was heavily delayed. One major order placed on 3 August 1915 for 9 steamers, 8 tugs and 43 barges remained largely unfulfilled as late as June 1916, by which time only 1 steamer, the 8 tugs and 20 barges had been delivered in Mesopotamia.[17] During this period, river craft obtained in India were constantly being sent to Basra to be added to the flotilla. While these craft remained unsuitable to local navigation they nevertheless performed an important stopgap function pending the slow and piecemeal arrival of the powerful light-draught craft from the United Kingdom.[18]

In these circumstances, Force D became heavily reliant on craft procured locally. In July 1915 its new commander, General John Nixon, recognised as much when he telegraphed Army Headquarters in India that 'I have from the first recognised that…I should have to make the most of existing resources…and I have, therefore, made shift with the craft at my disposal.'[19] Large numbers of local craft (*bellums* and *mahelas*) accompanied the advance of General Charles Townshend's 6th Division towards Kut, and his motley collection of vessels became known as 'Townshend's Regatta.'[20] Even with this additional capacity, the existing river fleet failed to keep pace with rising troop levels and the long extensions to the lines of communication and supply occasioned by the twin advances up the Euphrates to Nassariya and the Tigris to Kut. This prompted a senior member of the staff in Basra, Major-General Kemball, to warn, also in July 1915, that 'if steps [are] not taken in good time to meet these requirements we are running great risks of a breakdown at possibly a serious moment.'[21] In Delhi, the commander-in-chief in India, Beauchamp Duff responded by warning

the commanders of Force D not to bother him with 'any more querulous and petulant demands for shipping.'[22]

General Nixon remained acutely aware of the insufficient craft at Townshend's disposal. Throughout the autumn of 1915 he referred repeatedly to it in his telegrams to Army Headquarters in India.[23] It was Duff's dismissive attitude to the problem that ensured that the political leadership in Delhi and London were not alerted to the urgency and scale of the gradual breakdown of the supply and transport services in Mesopotamia. This was compounded by lackadaisical attitudes at the India Office, where the military secretary, Barrow, was on holiday when Kemball's memorandum warning of a potential breakdown arrived. In 1916, he had to admit to the Mesopotamia Commission that the first he heard of it was when it was produced in evidence during his interview by the commissioners themselves.[24] His attribution of institutional ignorance was corroborated by his erstwhile secretary of state, Lord Crewe, who informed the commissioners that during his time at the India Office, which lasted until May 1915, he had 'no hint or warning that transport was deficient' in Basra.[25]

River transport shortages, therefore, constituted a consistent drain on the operational capabilities of the force even before the advance was halted at the battle of Ctesiphon on 22 November 1915. Insufficient supplies of fresh meat and vegetables reached the front and contributed to the high incidences of scurvy and other deficiency diseases that impaired the fighting efficiency of the troops.[26] Its effects were compounded by the reluctance of the Muslim contingents of the Indian Army troops to eat tinned meat and horse flesh in the absence of an authoritative clerical ruling declaring them permissible to consume.[27] This was one of numerous factors that contributed to an appallingly high wastage rate through disease, as figures compiled by the War Office during 1916 listed 207,000 casualties from sickness as compared to 23,300 casualties resulting from enemy action.[28]

The chronic lack of river craft was worsened by a similar shortage of land transportation. Motor transport was virtually non-existent in 1914–15 and limited to handful of motor cars and six motor ambulances.[29] India initially proved unable to supply motor transport of any kind. Meanwhile, difficulties in shipping vehicles and their spare parts from the Ford factory in the United States ensured that a motor transport depot, together with its complement of store sections and workshops, was not established in Basra until June 1916.[30] Before that point, Force D depended on traditional Indian Army usage of animal power for its land transport requirements. During the advance towards Kut

in September 1915, 6th Division relied on pack mules for its first and second line transport, together with the ponies, donkeys and mules of the Jaipur and Bharatpur Imperial Service Transport Corps.[31] The few available camels augmented the second line transport, but the local Mesopotamian breed proved unfamiliar to British officers and their Indian sepoys, and they stopped being used in 1916.[32] Meanwhile, bullocks dispatched from India early in the campaign to pull the heavy artillery required too much forage daily than was procurable locally. In February 1916, the crippling shortage of river craft led to severe problems in feeding the animals at the front. This led Nixon's replacement as commander-in-chief, General Percy Lake, to request the temporary postponement of any further dispatch of bullocks to the front lines.[33]

Insufficient river and land transport restricted the mobility of the advancing forces by limiting their sphere of operations to the vicinity of the Tigris. In particular, the inability to supply adequate quantities of food and forage to the men and animals of the cavalry units meant that they were unable to take advantage of the open spaces of the desert, or conduct operations that required self-sufficiency in food or water. These weaknesses prevented the cavalry from pursuing and destroying the retreating Ottoman units after the first battle of Kut in September 1915. The resulting six-week pause in the operations to bring up sufficient supplies to the advanced staging post of Aziziya gave the Ottoman forces time to reorganise and regroup with reinforcements from Baghdad and prepare strong defensive positions around Ctesiphon. Even allowing for this pause, some 2000 transport mules and a large quantity of carts that had been collected at Basra failed to arrive at Aziziya in time for the renewal of the advance on 11 November.[34] This was due to more than half of the available river craft being required to transport the bulky comestible items such as grain, fodder and firewood that were necessary to sustain the front-line troops on a daily basis.

Townshend consequently was prevented from building up a reserve either of troops or transport. Following the halt to the advance at Ctesiphon on 22 November, this absence of a reserve, and the additional strain placed on the existing transport units by the 3500 battle casualties, gave him no option but to retreat to Kut.[35] The division arrived there on 3 December, whereupon Townshend decided to halt as the town contained substantial reserves of stores and supplies. These had originally been stockpiled as a reserve for the advance, but insufficient river transport existed to transport them down-river to Basra. On the following day, 4 December, Townshend decided to turn Kut into an entrenched camp and informed Nixon in Basra that he had 1 month's

supply of rations for his British troops and 55 days' supplies for the Indian soldiers.[36] This later turned out to be a substantial underestimate of the true extent of the stocks available. It had serious consequences as it imparted a false sense of urgency in Basra and contributed to the hasty and disorganised relief operations put together without adequate planning or preparation.

As two Indian infantry divisions, the 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) rushed to Basra from France alongside a British division, the 13th (Western) that diverted from Gallipoli, the haphazard arrival of units and stores brutally exposed Basra's limitations as a port and a base. Before 1914, the rudimentary port facilities handled some 300,000 net tons of shipping per year by discharging ocean-going vessels in mid-stream into lighters that belonged to local firms. The cargoes were subsequently re-loaded onto river steamers and flats for onward conveyance up the Tigris towards Baghdad.[37] The port thus remained devoid of any modern facilities for berthing and unloading ships or allocating storage for supplies and the average discharge rate was two steamers every three weeks.[38]

During the winter of 1914–15, the immediate requirements of the fledgling military base in Basra were met by constructing supply, ordnance and engineering depots in the town and converting a number of large houses into hospitals. Communications were, however, complicated by the innumerable river creeks that intersected the river-front and made communications more difficult. Meanwhile, the incipient shortage of sufficient local labourers hampered the construction of new facilities and the speedy discharge of ocean steamers and loading of river craft.[39] As 1915 progressed, port development became increasingly constricted by the stringent financial constraints imposed on Nixon by the Government of India. Officials in Delhi, led by the powerful Finance Member, Sir William Meyer, consistently refused to sanction expenditure on the port or any other infrastructural works, such as the proposed railway line from Basra to Nassariya, unless and until it was decided to make the occupation of Mesopotamia permanent.[40]

A further, and related, complication was provided by the local British authorities' failure, in light of the considerable uncertainty surrounding the scope of the campaign and the end-status of Mesopotamia, to formulate a coherent plan to develop the port according to a strategic master layout of the various wharves, jetties, yards and transhipment sidings. Improvements in 1915 thus remained limited to the reclamation of selected areas on the river-front and the erection of jetties for discharging river-craft. These did not form part of any broader organisational

vision and lacked any 'conception of what modern transportation required.'[41] In addition, port development work remained subordinated to local and up-river tasks that were deemed to be 'more intimately connected with the immediate prosecution of the campaign.'[42] The port remained essentially a river anchorage where transports continued to unload stores on to river craft for manual handling to the depots on the river bank.

The arrival of the three additional infantry divisions and their auxiliary units between January and April 1916 overwhelmed the makeshift facilities at Basra and formed one of the major reasons for the breakdown in the military operations that culminated in the surrender of Kut on 29 April. The port became heavily congested as reinforcements of men and supplies arrived at a quicker rate than they could be discharged and sent upstream. Neither the base nor its surrounding facilities proved able to handle the increased traffic as the absence of wharves, lack of port lighters and tugs, and insufficiency of labour and available dry land on the river-front became critical to the backlog. All of these factors worked off each other to create a mutually reinforcing sense of confusion and chaos at the base that severely impacted the progress of the three relief operations.[43]

Logistical difficulties were compounded by Townshend's overly hasty and ill-judged estimation of the supplies available to him in Kut. In the dry words of the post-war *Official History* of the campaign, this forced General Fenton Aylmer to conduct the three relief operations with 'an improvised staff, makeshift organisation and inadequate transport.'[44] More to the point, the perceived need for haste meant that the operations were launched at the worst time of the year for climatic and ecological conditions. This became clear on 21 January 1916 when an attack on enemy positions at Hanna failed after heavy rain turned the battlefield into a muddy quagmire that paralysed all movement and communications.[45]

In Basra, a new commander-in-chief, General Sir Percy Lake, replaced Nixon, whose health had broken, on 19 January, and immediately advocated a resumption of the advance owing to 'the uncertainty as to date of arrival of reinforcements and of sufficient river craft for maintaining and supporting them at the front.'[46] In a reversal of their previous enthusiasm for offensive action, Duff in India and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London, Sir William Robertson, now opposed a premature offensive and urged Aylmer to await the arrival of further reinforcements and sufficient vessels to transport them to, and maintain them at, the front.[47] But by this point the strain on the port

facilities and the shortage of transport was so great that even this cautious proposal was deemed unsustainable in practice. Consequently, on 11 February Lake bluntly informed the military authorities in London and Delhi that the river craft at his disposal were 'barely sufficient to keep up the supply of Aylmer's force, and his reserve of supplies is run dangerously low if any of it is used for forwarding reinforcements.'[48]

Four days later, on 15 February, the situation reached breaking-point as Lake stated that the transport shortage was so acute that it was impossible to transport the 13th Division to the front lines. He acknowledged that 'the number of my river craft limits the number of men and animals that can be maintained at the front' and warned that any increase over that limit would require Aylmer to draw on his already-insufficient reserves of supplies at the front. In conclusion, Lake informed Duff that the further dispatch of men up-river would reduce by 40% the amount of supplies that could be pushed up if the full carrying-capacity of his river craft were utilised for supplies alone.[49] This created a situation in which Force D could either transport supplies or men but not both.

On 8 March, a second attempt to relieve Kut was again repulsed at the Dujaila Redoubt with severe casualties. After this new setback, Aylmer was replaced by Lieutenant-General George ('Blood Orange') Gorringe as commander of Tigris Corps.[50] On the 13th, Lake once more telegraphed Army Headquarters in India that the operations on the Tigris were paralysed owing to the incomplete and late supply of river craft.[51] Insufficient transport then forced the 13th Division to march to the front and participate in the third and final attempt to relieve Kut, between 5 and 9 April, without their complement of transport.[52] Severe flooding further hampered the operations by turning the battlefield into a 'veritable bog' and the Ottomans managed to stall and repel it.[53]

Following the failure of a renewed effort to move forward at Sannaiyat on 22 April, Gorringe felt compelled to inform India that his troops had reached the absolute limit of their offensive capabilities and could go no further without a pause in the operations. The men had been continuously engaged since 5 April and suffered 9700 casualties, one-quarter of their effective fighting-force, yet remained more than twelve miles from Kut.[54] By this point, the besieged garrison was close to starvation and suffering from a rising daily incidence of disease. Once a last-ditch effort to re-supply it by sailing a ship loaded with one month's worth of supplies up-river was turned back on 24 April, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, reluctantly sanctioned Duff to open the negotiations for the surrender of Townshend and his men, which occurred on the 29th. Kitchener was under no illusions of the magnitude of the

psychological damage that the surrender inflicted on British prestige in its extra-European colonies. Privately, he wrote to Duff shortly before the surrender to state that 'I sincerely hope that it is fully realised by you and all General Officers under your command that it would for ever be a disgrace to our country if Townshend should surrender.'[55]

Offensive operations halted temporarily in April 1916 as the force underwent a thorough overhaul of personnel and planning. General Stanley Maude succeeded Lake as commander-in-chief on 28 August and embarked on a thorough overhaul of the administrative and logistical machinery of the renamed Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. In addition, the War Office assumed administrative control of the campaign in July 1916, having earlier taken operational control in February. This brought the control of supply and transport arrangements under central authority for the first time.[56] In India, too, a War Office appointee, Sir Charles Monro, replaced the desk-bound Duff as commander-in-chief in India on 1 October. Monro had long experience of field command and gathered around him a group of talented administrative officers with recent military experience in Egypt and Gallipoli.[57] Both Monro and Maude (who went by the nickname of 'Systematic Joe') appreciated the new complexities of modern industrial warfare and the importance of exploiting and maximising local resources of men and materials. Together, they set about tackling the cult of over-centralisation and short-sightedness that had so permeated the Indian military system.[58] They were thus well-positioned to contribute to the unfolding debates among British officials in India and Mesopotamia over the widening and deepening of state control and its sharpening powers of resource mobilisation and extraction.

The most pressing task facing Lake in April 1916 was the urgent requirement to improve and expand the port facilities of the base at Basra. This was vital owing to the relative paucity of food, fodder and other resources available locally, which meant that every item necessary for the campaign had to be imported through Basra. Lake addressed this problem in the summer of 1916 when he appointed Sir George Buchanan as Director of Port Administration and River Conservancy. Buchanan was an experienced consulting engineer with many years of experience at the port of Rangoon. He initially arrived from India in December 1915 to offer advice on the situation at Basra.[59] However, Nixon had refused to work with him because he mistakenly believed Buchanan to be a civilian, and thus unsuited to a military position.[60]

Once belatedly installed in his post, Buchanan organised the reclamation of land for port use and the construction of a series of ocean

wharves at Magil, 5 miles to the north of Basra. The first opened in October 1916 and a second in March 1917, with three more opening in 1918. They were complemented by the construction of further wharves to accommodate river craft and serve the Engineer Field Park, the Inland Water Transport Construction Yard and other departmental sites.[61] Light railways were laid out behind the wharves to move the stores to depots, and harbour masters responsible to a new Director of Traffic appointed.[62] By mid-1917, the port and its subsidiary at Magil could berth 14 ocean ships at a time and clear them in three days. Later that year, a second subsidiary port was established at Nahr Umar, 21 miles upstream, to further relieve the congestion at Basra and ease the burden on shore accommodation there.

These measures led to a rise in tonnage of stores discharged at Basra, from 38,916 in July 1916 to 81,123 in December, and over 100,000 tons by August 1917.[63] Increased capacity to receive the stores was matched by an improved organisational and administrative apparatus that was able to receive, check, store and dispatch up-river the extra supplies. This was achieved by the reorganisation of a greatly expanded Base Supply Depot on reclaimed marshland. Forty Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) Supply Officers arrived from Britain, and the Depot was laid out on proper lines for the first time.[64]

The construction work and other improvements transformed Basra into a major military and seaport and represented one plank of the reorganisation of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force in 1916. The other, no less important, consisted of an overhaul of the transport services and their incorporation into a coherent body that was responsible for general transport policy. In April 1916, the appointment of Sir George MacMunn as Inspector-General of Communications (IGC) addressed the problem. MacMunn took full control of all the services behind the Field Army, including the Directorates of Railways and Works, and recast the lines of communications defences while providing for additional lines of communication units for administrative purposes.[65]

MacMunn also took full advantage of the War Office's dispatch of an expert in river transport to create an Inland Water Transport Directorate (IWT). The expert in question, Brigadier-General C.B. Grey, was a capable organiser with long experience of the river Niger. He put together a talented staff drawn from various professions and trades connected with river services, and by December 1917 was operating a fleet of 1266 vessels, adequately supported by dockyards at Basra and Nahr Umar and repair yards up-river.[66] The amount of tonnage carried up-river increased rapidly during the autumn of 1916, rising from 250 tons on

20 July to 680 tons on 9 October, and 1132 tons on 28 October.[67] These improvements were complemented by the formation of a Rivercraft Board in India to control and organise the construction of craft.[68] This contributed to a substantial increase in the carrying capacity of the fleet of river craft, and enabled Maude to establish a chain of advanced supply posts, depots and military hospitals along the Tigris, in preparation for the resumption of the military advance.

Motor and rail transport also developed as an adjunct to the river transport. This was a significant breakthrough as it freed the force from its over-dependence on the rivers. A motor transport Depot and Stores Branch and Workshops Section was constructed at Makina, two miles from Basra, in June 1916. Its units serviced the rapidly increasing motor transport force that Maude had demanded soon after he assumed command. The development of railways was more problematic. Before 1914 the only existing railway in Mesopotamia had been from Baghdad to Samarra. The Government of India refused to sanction the construction of a railway from Basra to Nassariya in November 1915 on grounds of expense.[69] As was the case with the river transport, the situation only changed with the appointment of a War Office-approved expert, Brigadier-General Lubbock, as Director of Railways in August 1916. Lubbock had experience of military railway transport organisations from his employment on the network in France, and had also worked on railways in India and South Africa.[70] He immediately arranged for the belated completion of the lines from Qurna to Amara and Basra to Nassariya, and the lines opened for traffic on 29 November and 29 December respectively.[71]

The railway network only expanded rapidly during 1917 as lines radiated outwards from Basra and Baghdad. However, the expansion occurred in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion, and contributed to the creation of three disconnected groups of railways of different gauges.[72] A second problem was the poor quality of the locomotives supplied by India. The metre-gauge engines used on two of the sections were of a type obsolete on Indian railways and hence were old and generally in poor condition. This was compounded by the failure to match the rapid expansion of the network with an adequate provision of locomotive shops and appliances. As the continual increase in the volume of traffic meant that it became impossible to withdraw engines for repairs, their condition steadily deteriorated.[73] Rail transport broke down in December 1917 on the Kut-Hinaidi and Makina-Amara lines, but it was only in February 1918 that the Mesopotamian Transport Commission alerted the Government of India to the

urgency of the problem and recommended the immediate despatch of 45 locomotives.[74]

The reorganisation of the port and transport services and the establishment of a framework to control local and imported labour were essential precursors to the resumed expansion of the sphere of military operations that occurred in December 1916. The arrival of the tools of industrial warfare created a new dependence on machine-produced goods as considerable quantities of heavy and light artillery, ammunition and motorised and rail transport arrived in Mesopotamia. This in turn demanded vast amounts of labour to service the requirements of industrialised warfare, and for local agricultural and industrial resources in order to free up scarce shipping space for items that could not be obtained locally. The result was an escalation in the level of extraction of local resources to service the requirements of modern conflict. The resumption of offensive operations in December 1916 and gradual extension of British control over the Baghdad vilayet marked a watershed in the campaign in Mesopotamia, as the linkage between logistics and politics necessitated the establishment of a functioning state apparatus and its downward penetration of societal patterns in order to mobilise and administer the exploitation of local resources.

Egypt and Sinai

The major expansion in operations in the Egyptian theatre occurred in 1917 and thus benefited from the administrative reorganisation in London and the beginnings of a more penetrative form of state control in Egypt. It built on decisions taken in 1915 and 1916 that contributed to a more cautious and painstaking advance than that undertaken in Mesopotamia. General Sir Archibald Murray underpinned the crossing of the Sinai Peninsula in 1915 with a railway and water pipeline that established a basic logistical framework for the advance. Although these failed to prevent the operational setbacks at Gaza in March and April 1917, and were subsequently augmented by a diversification of the means of supply and transportation, they represented a significant achievement that is frequently overlooked in histories of the Egyptian campaign, which focus on the victories achieved by General Sir Edmund Allenby at the expense of the somewhat-maligned Murray.

In 1915, Egypt served as the primary base for the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli. Its main supply base was located at Alexandria in order to utilise its fine port facilities and large pre-existing manufacturing and repair facilities, and an Ordnance Base also formed,

with stocks initially drawn from the pre-1914 Army of Occupation peacetime depots at Cairo and Alexandria.[75] Military demands on Egypt were not at first onerous, and consisted principally of constructing hospital accommodation for the casualties from Gallipoli, requisitioning buildings for military works, and implementing military regulations in order to control the vices of drink and prostitution.[76] In addition, an Egyptian Works Battalion and an Egyptian Labour Corps (ELC) were raised and dispatched to the advanced base at Mudros in May and July respectively.[77] There they performed good work under difficult conditions, although members of the Works Battalion mutinied in September in protest at their employment under fire and at being kept for longer than the three-month period of enlistment, and the battalion was withdrawn and returned to Egypt.[78]

In October 1915, German and Austrian forces invaded and quickly overran Serbia. The War Committee in London responded by sending four infantry divisions to the Greek port of Salonika in a futile attempt to aid Serbia and precipitate Greek intervention on the side of the Entente. This complicated Egypt's role as a base for operations in the eastern Mediterranean, for the War Office decided that the Salonika force should initially be supplied from Egypt. General Edward Altham, the Inspector-General of Communications, oversaw the enlargement and reorganisation of the existing supply base at Alexandria into the Levant Base, and placed it under direct War Office control. This allowed the War Office unfettered control over the allocation of supplies and stores to the forces in Salonika, Gallipoli and Egypt.[79] The authorities in Egypt also created a local Resources Board that entered into contracts for all supply services and made local purchases. This reduced the tensions in civil-military relations that had occurred earlier in 1915, when the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and the Force in Egypt competed on the open market for the same resources.[80]

Military demands for troops and supplies at Gallipoli meant that military policy in Egypt was confined to a passive defence of the Suez Canal by the 60,000 troops of the Force in Egypt.[81] This led to concerns among the military authorities in London that 'the canal seemed to be defending the troops, not the troops defending the canal,' and on 16 November 1915 Maxwell ordered that reserves of stores and material be built-up in order to defend the Canal in depth.[82] This involved the construction of three lines of defence each further away from the Canal and protected by a series of mutually supporting outposts that covered bridgeheads and vital posts on the east bank.[83] The works were carried out with local labourers enlisted into the ELC following its return

from Gallipoli, and they were supplied with water and rations by the CTC, which was significantly expanded in December 1915 for that purpose.[84]

The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force returned to Alexandria following its successful evacuation from Gallipoli early in 1916, and on 9 January General Archibald Murray replaced Monro as its commander-in-chief. However, the presence of two army commands in Egypt and a vague and ambiguous demarcation of responsibilities created a duality of command between Maxwell's Force in Egypt, which retained responsibility for internal affairs and security on Egypt's Western Frontier, and Murray's force, which assumed responsibility for the Canal defences. This division of command and control in such a strategically sensitive region concerned senior military figures in London, and once the Sanusi rebellion in the Western Desert was defeated, the War Office ordered Maxwell home in March 1916.[85] His departure deprived Egypt of a popular and respected commander with long experience of local civil and military conditions.[86] His successor, by contrast, had no experience of Egyptian conditions and allowed his general headquarters to become a closed society that isolated itself from Egyptian issues and problems.[87]

Murray now became sole military commander in Egypt and his newly amalgamated force was reconstituted as the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Nevertheless, the military condition of Egypt in the spring of 1916 was one of considerable chaos, as the arrival of eleven divisions from Gallipoli strained local lines of communications and logistical capabilities to the limit. Existing resources in Egypt became increasingly unable to supply the troops and animals with sufficient bread and hay, and a breakdown in civil and military food supplies was only averted by massive shipments of food and fodder from India.[88] Murray set about re-organising and re-equipping the depleted infantry divisions and between March and June 1916 sent ten to France and one to Mesopotamia. Four Territorial Divisions remained in Egypt as Murray began to reconsider the best method of ensuring the security of the Canal.

This took shape on 15 February 1916 when Murray informed his successor as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, William Robertson, that an advance across the Sinai Peninsula to the town of El Arish near the border with Ottoman Palestine represented the best method of defending Egypt. Murray argued that such a move would deny the Sinai Peninsula to the enemy by securing British control over El Arish. This was the only town capable of sustaining any raiding force with water, and its

capture would also place the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in a position to undertake rapid offensive action against any enemy concentration in southern Palestine.[89] Murray's plans for a methodical advance and painstaking logistical preparation reflected growing awareness of the contemporaneous breakdown in the logistical arrangements in Mesopotamia. In Sinai, by contrast, a single-track railway and water pipeline, both starting at the Suez Canal port of Qantara, constituted an 'umbilical cord' providing the advanced troops of Eastern Force with their food, water and military supplies.[90] The construction of the pipeline and railway was essential to any advance because the sandy desert terrain meant that mechanised transport could not be used as an adjunct to the railway, and the water found in many of the wells was known to be brackish and unfit for human consumption.[91]

The War Office approved the construction of a railway from Kantara to Katia on 9 March, with a possible extension to Bir el-Abd.[92] Katia was 28 miles to the east of the Canal and its strategic value lay in the many springs there and at Romani, five miles away. Together they formed the last available supplies of water before El Arish, 60 miles further east, and their capture would deny to the enemy the water supplies necessary to sustain any assault upon the Canal.[93] The railway reached Romani on 19 May and enabled the 52nd Division and 3800 men of the ELC to advance and hold the town and its wells. On 4 August the force defeated an Ottoman attack on the town, and the railway subsequently followed the advance across Sinai.

As the railway solved one logistical problem it created another, for the construction of the water pipeline always lagged behind the railway. The decision to construct it was only taken on 2 July 1916 upon completion of the elaborate water supply preparations for the (soon to be moribund) Suez Canal Defences Scheme.[94] Its construction was further delayed owing to blunders in the laying of the pipes and the need to wait until the first shipment of 4500 tons of 10- and 12-inch piping arrived from the United States on 24 September.[95] The pipeline's value as a complement to the railway became evident during the Romani operations in August 1916, when the need to run special water-trains on the single-track railway, coupled with the requirement to supply food and fodder for the men and beasts of the ELC and CTC, limited the number of troops and labourers that could be maintained at railhead. Thus, the construction of the water pipeline, which only caught up with the railway at El Arish on 5 February 1917, actually caused a temporary worsening of the water supply problem as additional working parties of labourers and troops were needed to manhandle the pipes

into position. On several occasions during this period, Murray considered reducing the number of troops in Sinai because the amount of water required to maintain them took up so many trains that the entire advance was hindered.[96]

Eastern Force captured El Arish on 21 December 1916 and the border town of Rafa on 9 January 1917.[97] The two engagements marked the end of the operations in Sinai and of a campaign that was recognised by contemporaries as an exceptional example of logistical planning.[98] Murray himself felt that the advance across Sinai was a more outstanding achievement than Kitchener's advance to Khartoum in 1898 because unlike Kitchener, he had no Nile to act as a back-up to his supplies and transport.[99] The presence of the railway and water pipeline enabled a substantial increase in the numbers of troops, non-combatants and animals that could be maintained at the front, and allowed the Egyptian Expeditionary Force to move up to the border of Ottoman Palestine and prepare for an advance into enemy territory. By March 1917 three infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions advanced to the front lines opposite Gaza, and labour camps established in southern Palestine to hold reserves of ELC men ready to be despatched when necessary.[100]

The logistical feat achieved in 1916 was notable for the extent to which military commanders utilised local technical resources and civilian expertise in the construction of the railway and water pipeline. This suggests that General Headquarters (GHQ) in Egypt recognised and acted upon the need to introduce civilian expertise into military matters in the same manner that recent research by Ian Malcolm Brown and Keith Grieves has demonstrated at GHQ in France.[101] In particular, the assistance rendered by the Egyptian State Railways (ESR) was the most important prop of the logistical network in Egypt and, in 1917–18, in Palestine. In 1914 the company was asked to act as general agents and storekeepers and to provide stores for all railways in the Mediterranean sphere of operations.[102] In December 1915, Sir George Macauley, the under-secretary of the company, was appointed Military Director of Railways for Egypt, and the ESR came under military control. Macauley was a former officer in the Royal Engineers and had participated in the construction of the Sudan Military Railway in 1898.[103] He was therefore well placed to oversee the construction of a desert railway.

Initial work consisted of building depots on the east bank of the Suez Canal and constructing branch lines that connected the military network running parallel to the Canal with the existing civilian network. However in June 1916, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London informed the High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Reginald Wingate, that

'all available resources in Egypt both as regards labour and material' should be placed at Murray's disposal.[104] From that point the demands placed on the ESR rose significantly, particularly in 1917–18 as the advance into Palestine led to a great extension of the military railway network and the dislocation of a large part of the civilian network as wagons, locomotive and track were diverted to military use.[105]

Work on the pipeline also utilised the large amount of knowledge available locally as a result of the long familiarity of irrigation engineers with Egyptian conditions. The Cairo Waterworks Company undertook the design, construction and erection on site of all mechanical filters alongside the Sweet Water Canal, in addition to designing the settling tanks and erecting the engineering facilities necessary for the installation of water-purification apparatus.[106] In 1916, the Suez Canal Company gave its full support and technical advice to the difficult yet vital work needed to transform the small Canal port of Qantara into the terminus of the military railway and pipeline, and a port capable of discharging ocean-going steamers.[107]

Construction of the pipeline also benefited from the technical expertise provided by Edmund Sandeman of the Institute of Civil Engineers in London. He was sent to Egypt by the War Office in October 1916 in response to a request by Murray for a technical expert to investigate the optimal methods of proceeding with the water supply and pipeline. His report emphasised the importance of protecting the steel pipes from erosion caused by salts present in the sand, improving the intake of water from the Sweet Water Canal and placing all installations for the purification of water under one authority.[108] These recommendations proved valuable advice and were carried out in January 1917, and solved the problem hitherto encountered of sand entering the pipes and choking the system.[109]

Sandeman was one of several experts sent by the War Office to Egypt and Mesopotamia in 1916 to investigate and make recommendations on various aspects of the supply and transportation networks. Other commissions of inquiry studied the state of the railways in Egypt and their potential in Mesopotamia, the conditions of river transport in Mesopotamia, and the workings of the Quartermaster-General's (QMG) department there. The most valuable outcome of these various investigations was the inauguration of the Inland Water Transport in Mesopotamia, and the commissions contributed to a greater understanding of the complexities of desert warfare, both in theatre and in the War Office in London.[110] Their value was not uniformly appreciated, however, as one prominent sceptic of their utility

was Lieutenant-General William Marshall, who succeeded Maude as General Officer Commanding (GOC) in Mesopotamia in November 1917. Writing in his memoirs, Marshall recalled how '[t]here were altogether too many conferences and commissions and, I may add, too many so-called "super-men" during the war.'[111]

By December 1916, the tapping of local industrial and manpower resources in Egypt enabled the military authorities to maintain a force of 200,000 combatants and non-combatants, 20,000 camels, 46,000 horses and 15,000 mules with a daily water requirement estimated at 1.2 million gallons on the border of Palestine.[112] This was a formidable logistical achievement made possible by the construction of the railway and 300 miles of water piping, and by the expansion of the ELC and CTC to 37,454 and 19,029 men respectively by 31 December.[113] The rapid expansion of these two units reflected the constantly growing need for labourers to construct and maintain the complex logistical network that linked the troops in Palestine with their supply bases in Egypt, and illustrated the military authorities' growing awareness of the inseparable link between thorough logistical preparations and strategic and military success.

The situation in December 1916

On 14 December 1916, Maude resumed the advance on Baghdad with an attack on enemy positions at Hai. Eight days later, advanced units of the EEF occupied El Arish without opposition, and reached the border with enemy territory in Palestine. These moves were the prelude to the significant military advances in 1917 and 1918 that resulted in the conquest and subsequent pacification of vast areas of enemy territory. The need to co-ordinate the extraction of local resources in order to feed and maintain the bloated armies of occupation led in turn to the introduction of British control in the occupied territories in Palestine and Mesopotamia and its extension and downward penetration in Egypt and India. This was synchronous to broader developments in imperial policy in London that emphasised the need to develop local resources in order to minimise the demands on scarce shipping resources. Thus, the decisions taken between the autumn and winter of 1916 marked the decisive shift towards the adoption of a much more 'total' form of warfare that came to embrace the mobilisation of the industrial, agricultural and social resources of the colonial societies involved in the campaigns.

These themes form the focus of the next chapter and the three chapters of Part II. They describe how the power and reach of state control

in the supply bases of Egypt and India expanded in response to the burgeoning demands of the war economy in 1917–18. Strategic mobilisation became reformulated in a manner similar to its evolution in the United Kingdom, with the distinction that whereas the latter was a case of 're-mobilisation' the former was more an instance of a belated recognition of the logistical complexities of modern warfare. Contemporaneously, in the areas that came under British occupation in Palestine and Mesopotamia, the logistical requirements of the campaigns became the principal drivers of a deeper and more intrusive method of colonial governance that developed to regulate and extract the vast quantities of local resources necessary to sustain the extra-European campaigns at minimal cost to scarce shipping capacity in the United Kingdom.

3
Intensification of Wartime Control, 1917–18

During 1917–18 the rapid expansion in scale of the military campaigns in Mesopotamia and Palestine necessitated (and made feasible) an expansion of state powers as part of a more aggressive and intrusive form of imperial control. The Mesopotamian and Egyptian Expeditionary Forces resumed offensive operations and captured Baghdad in March 1917 and Jerusalem in December 1917 respectively. These successes provided a rare and important boost to civil and political morale in the United Kingdom during a difficult year that witnessed continuing stalemate on the Western Front, a crisis of confidence in the French military and Russia's exit from the war. Nevertheless, the campaigns magnified greatly the demands on host societies and the supply bases in order to meet the logistical requirements of industrialised warfare.

These demands profoundly reshaped the contours of the colonial war effort, which became marked by the growth of a more direct form of control. An interventionist state with greatly expanded penetrative powers into society reconfigured the pattern of state-society relations, and the emphasis on proactive resource extraction during the second half of the war differed greatly from the initial ad hoc and reactive approaches to mobilisation. The result was an intrusive and more authoritarian form of colonial governance that contained and combined three major features. These were the extension of state powers and the deepening of its penetrative capacity into society; the mass mobilisation of man- and animal power for the logistical units, and the diversion of agricultural resources to military consumption. Taken together, these strands demonstrate how logistics and politics interacted to shape the contours of the interventionist state that emerged during 1917–18 to regulate the management of the colonial mobilisation and direct and divert civilian resources to military ends.

Part II contains three chapters that examine each of these dimensions of the new wartime imperialism in turn. Before that, this chapter sets the contextual scene by describing how and why the campaigns expanded in 1917 and persisted as large-scale initiatives throughout 1918, even as the central thrust of the war shifted decisively to the Western Front. It emphasises the importance of the decisions taken in London, Cairo and Delhi during the second half of 1916 as marking the watershed in the colonial contribution to the British Empire's war effort. It then goes on to explore how these decisions impacted the war economy in Egypt, India and the occupied territories in Palestine and Mesopotamia. The chapter ends by assessing the impact of war on colonial society caused by the interlinking of logistics and the politics of enhanced colonial control.

A watershed in the extra-European contribution to the war

A paradigm shift in the colonial contribution to the imperial war effort took place between August and December 1916. This was due to the interaction of three factors at metropolitan and peripheral levels. These were the escalating menace from enemy U-boats and the consequent inability of British shipping to meet in full the campaign requirements in the Middle East; the decision by the War Office to utilise local resources to the greatest extent possible; and the accession of David Lloyd George to power in December 1916. The outcome of the interaction of these factors was a new policy in London that aimed to make the extra-European campaigns as self-sufficient as possible. This was in order to reduce the demands on scarce shipping capacity and meet the vast logistical demands of maintaining the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces in hostile ecological terrain over long and underdeveloped lines of communications and supply.

The shipping problem worsened steadily throughout 1916 as cargoes and trade routes came under increasing threat from German and Austrian U-boats. Significantly, this threat was at its greatest in the Mediterranean where U-boats operating from bases in the northern Adriatic preyed at will on the sea lanes between Marseilles and Taranto, and Alexandria.[1] Shipping losses escalated in 1916 to a peak of 113 ships and 248,018 tons of cargo between October and December as inter-allied cooperation to face the threat remained slack.[2] This seriously interfered with the supply of the campaigns in the campaigns from Britain, and the situation became so grave in the summer of 1916 that drafts for Mesopotamia had to temporarily be diverted to the Cape

route.[3] By December, the problem had worsened to the extent that the General Staff in London acknowledged that in Egypt 'we are faced with a situation which amounts practically to a break-down in our shipping arrangements…we have, in fact, reached a stage where the available shipping is inadequate to meet requirements.'[4]

The growing inability of shipping to meet the logistical requirements of the campaigns in Egypt and Mesopotamia (in addition to supplying the campaigns in East Africa and Salonika) led the Quartermaster-General at the War Office, Sir John Cowans, to urge in the summer of 1916 that local resources be utilised as much as possible.[5] This call for enhanced levels of agricultural and resource extraction came at an opportune moment for the War Office, which assumed administrative control of the Mesopotamian campaign on 20 July. This brought the control of supply and transport arrangements under a central authority for the first time in the life of the campaign.[6] The War Office also decided that India would become the supply base for all imperial forces east of Suez and that Indian resources be utilised to meet the needs of Mesopotamia as far as possible.[7] Egypt, too, was urged to maximise the use of its own resources of fodder in order to reduce demands for shipment of this bulky commodity to Sinai, Palestine and Mesopotamia.[8]

The final factor in the decisive escalation of the colonial contribution to the war was Lloyd George's rise to power in December 1916. Although Asquith's premiership witnessed a steady growth of state intervention to direct the mobilisation and distribution of national resources in the United Kingdom, Lloyd George rose to power on a wave of political and military support for a still-more vigorous prosecution of the war.[9] His arrival in Downing Street was quickly followed by the creation of an institutional framework for integrating the empire into a more coherent and holistic strategy of industrial warfare. The development of the Imperial War Cabinet and the Imperial War Conference and the appointment of prominent imperialist political figures such as Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, Sir Mark Sykes and Leopold Amery to positions of influence in London added an imperial dimension to this re-mobilisation of national resources.[10]

These decisions in London both stimulated and influenced developments on the ground in the occupied territories in Mesopotamia and Palestine and their supply bases in India and Egypt. Cumulatively, they contributed to a fundamental reassessment of the methods of state control that would be necessary to successfully meet the complex demands of the vigorous war economy. They led to the construction of a centralised state apparatus to regulate the mobilisation of labour and the

penetration and extraction of agricultural resources. A more aggressive and intrusive method of control developed, based on the state's greater penetration of local political, economic and societal patterns to divert civilian resources to military ends. The impact of this escalation of the military effort in 1917–18 has largely been marginal to military and imperial historians working on the First World War. Yet it was precisely this heavier imperial footprint and invasive mobilisation of colonial resources that ensured that the second half of the war differed so greatly from the first half of the war in India and Egypt and on the ground in the Middle East.

Wartime demands on colonial collaborative partners overturned existing political economies of empire and re-wrought state-society relations. Gradually, the measures taken eroded the entire imperial structure by exposing the lack of legitimacy on which the enhanced extraction of local resources shakily rested. Participation in the imperial war effort had a significant and largely negative impact on the societies and individuals caught up in the process of colonial mobilisation, and it contributed to the creation of myriad socio-economic hardships in each region. Following the end of the war, these grievances came to the surface in the widespread unrest that shook the empire between 1918 and 1922. The unrest culminated in the scaling-back of the coercive methods of wartime direction and a return to the collaborative and cheaper methods of indirect imperial control.[11] Consequently, the study of the logistical impact of the enhanced resource extraction of 1917–18 and its interaction with the political and socio-economic fabric of the host societies adds a neglected yet necessary dimension to the study of the post-war imperial crisis. It highlights both the very different challenges involved in mobilising peasant and largely pre-industrial economies for participation in modern industrial warfare, and provides a comparative perspective from which to analyse the interaction of logistics and mobilisation in each of the combatant states.

The 'double aspect' of the campaign in Mesopotamia

In May 1917, the Arab Bureau in Cairo published a note entitled *The Pax Britannica in the Occupied Territories of Mesopotamia*. It referred to the 'double aspect' of the campaign undertaken by the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force as attention shifted towards maximising local resources in the occupied territories in order to reduce demands on shipping and scarce supplies in India and the United Kingdom.[12] During the twenty months that elapsed between the capture of Baghdad in

March 1917 and the end of the war, the military conquest of territory was swiftly followed by the construction of a comprehensive machinery of civil administration that regulated the mobilisation and extraction of local resources. In this period, the focus of the operations in Mesopotamia shifted from purely military-strategic imperatives towards the pacification of the fertile agricultural region of the Euphrates valley. This allowed the nascent British administration to tap the region's resources of grain and other foodstuffs in order to meet the logistical requirements of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force and alleviate the strain on shipping by reducing its reliance on imported supplies. In turn, the exploitation of local resources required large numbers of labourers to construct and maintain the extensive network of roads, railways, canals and flood-defence works that accompanied the extension of state control over these hitherto-neglected areas.

This second phase of the campaign in Mesopotamia began on 14 December 1916 when the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force captured a foothold across the Hai river. Heavy rains then delayed the advance until 19 January 1917 when Hai town was taken, along with plentiful supplies of sheep and vegetables. On 25 January, the assault on the Hai salient began. This was a well-conducted attack featuring the preliminary registration of artillery, a creeping barrage and an intensive preliminary bombardment of enemy positions, followed by an infantry attack in four waves assisted by bombing raids and enfilade machine-gun fire.[13] This revealed the troops to be in command of the most up-to-date artillery and infantry training manuals then being disseminated on the Western Front. Heavy casualties followed, but the force managed to capture the salient on 4 February 1917.

General Maude followed up this success by capturing Sannaiyat on 23 February. This unlocked the strategic position and enabled the force to cross the Tigris and enter Kut two days later, ten months after its humiliating surrender had marked the nadir of Britain's colonial war effort. Retreating Ottoman units came under concerted fire from the Royal Navy and Royal Flying Corps while armoured cars and cavalry continually harassed the withdrawing forces.[14] Maude additionally benefited from the late arrival of the rainy season that did not begin until late-February in 1917. Thus, the weather did not constitute the same block on mobility that so hampered the Kut relief operations the previous year.[15]

The advance halted temporarily on 27 February to enable a succession of temporary riverheads and intermediate supply dumps to be established behind the front. On 4 March, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London and the commander-in-chief in India sanctioned the

resumption of the advance and the final move to Baghdad. Particular emphasis was paid to securing the supplies of food and fodder in its vicinity. Consequently, the advance resumed on 5 March, and on 11 March the 35th Infantry Brigade marched into Baghdad in order to restore order and halt the looting that had started after the Ottomans' evacuation of the city the previous day.[16] This represented a dazzling political triumph and 'the first big success of the war.'[17] However, it did not bring military victory over the Ottoman Empire or the central powers any closer. Instead, Maude immediately turned his attention to consolidating control over the Baghdad vilayat so as to facilitate the extraction of its local agricultural resources. This was in line with a request from the War Office on 11 March, the day of Baghdad's capture, that Maude 'use all local resources possible in view of the urgent necessity for economy in shipping.'[18]

This directive led Maude to continue his offensive operations and seize control over the river approaches to Baghdad. He achieved this by occupying Baquba on the Diyala on 18 March, Falluja on the Euphrates on 19 March and the Ottoman railhead at Samarra on the Tigris on 23 April.[19] The occupation of Falluja was particularly significant as it secured control of the rich grain-producing districts of the mid-Euphrates region.[20] This area had long produced vital food supplies for Baghdad and the surrounding region, and Gertrude Bell believed that 'the fact that the Turks have lost this rich food-producing area is to them one of the most disastrous consequences of the fall of Baghdad.'[21]

During the autumn of 1917, further military advances extended the sphere of British control over the remainder of the Baghdad vilayet by securing control of the towns of Ramadi, Kifl and Tikrit. These moves were significant as they denied to the Ottomans the three lines of approach for a converging attack on Baghdad.[22] This juncture marked a logical point to halt military operations, and an Agricultural Development Scheme was started to extend the reach of the centralising bureaucratic framework to the mid-Euphrates region west of Baghdad and bring its rich agricultural districts into use.[23] Nevertheless, military operations then resumed during the winter of 1917 and early 1918 when the Russian exit from the war prompted politicians in London and Delhi to conjure fanciful fears of a Turco-German advance through the Caucasus and Persia towards India.[24] However unrealistic and far-fetched these fears seem in retrospective when logistical factors and the state of exhaustion in the German and Ottoman armies are taken into account, they nevertheless resulted in the dispatch of a military mission

of around 1000 elite British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand troops to Persia under the command of General Lionel Dunsterville.[25]

This complicated the lines of communication and led to a dangerous over-extension of the lines of supply as 'Dunsterforce' and its fleet of 750 armoured cars advanced more than 500 kilometres to Baku on the Caspian Sea by August 1918.[26] The burden of supplying this additional force threatened to overwhelm the logistical capabilities of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, as its new commander-in-chief, Lieutenant-General William Marshall, was forced to provide 'all possible transport . . . to fill the role allotted to us in Persia.'[27] In May 1918, the results of this local overstretch in pursuance of imperial designs became clear when Marshall had to order the abandonment of the recently captured town of Kirkuk. Marshall simply had too few transport units available to him in Mesopotamia to maintain a garrison at Kirkuk.[28] This reflected a general frustration among many British officers in Mesopotamia that operations at this time appeared to be limited to 'chasing Turkish rearguards to the end of our supply tether.'[29]

The interaction between military policy and political manoeuvring came to the surface again in October 1918 in the dash to occupy Mosul before the end of hostilities with the Ottoman Empire. This followed the War Cabinet's belated appreciation of its value as a potential source of oil supplies for the British Empire. Only on 30 July 1918 did the secretary of the War Cabinet, Sir Maurice Hankey, ascribe the control of Mesopotamian oil as a 'first-class British War Aim.' Hankey added that 'it would appear desirable before we come to discuss peace, we should obtain possession of all the oil-bearing regions in Mesopotamia and Southern Persia, wherever they may be.'[30] The Admiralty's desire for a source of oil supplies led to a hasty advance on Mosul by I Army Corps in October 1918 when the looming end to hostilities led the acting Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, Arnold Wilson, to urge 'every effort . . . to score as heavily as possible on the Tigris before the whistle blew.'[31] This added yet more strain on a logistical network already overstretched by the operations in Persia and Baku, and I Corps suffered from a shortage of supply and transport units.[32] Indeed, Mosul was not finally captured until 10 November, the day before the end of the war in Europe but eleven days after the armistice of Mudros had ended hostilities with the Ottoman Empire.

The capture of Mosul brought to an end the military campaign in Mesopotamia. The small-scale holding operation envisaged in October 1914 morphed into one of the most protracted military campaigns outside Europe, and combined gross initial mismanagement and military

humiliation with subsequent administrative flair and an early attempt at state-building. 'War imperialism' flourished both at a political level in London and on the local level in Mesopotamia as Anglo-Indian designs on the occupied territories led to the construction of a war-time apparatus that thinly disguised its post-war designs. This resulted in the creation of a centralised state apparatus that differed sharply from its Ottoman predecessor in its horizontal extension of state control and vertical penetration of society. The unevenness with which British-Indian control was projected onto Mesopotamian society, and the differing reactions it provoked, went on to influence the contours of the revolt in 1920, and the Iraqi polity that developed thereafter, as different groups adopted diverse strategies of survival and came to various accommodations with the military machine. The interlocking contours of logistical capabilities and state expansion become evident when assessing the conduct of military operations through the prism of enhanced resource extraction rather than through the lenses of military or imperial history.

The invasion and conquest of Palestine, March 1917–November 1918

In Egypt, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force began its advance into southern Palestine in March 1917. This marked the decisive juncture and the point at which the campaign turned from being a defensive operation to defend Egypt and the Suez Canal into an offensive thrust against enemy Ottoman territory. Sound logistical factors lay behind the decision to attack the Ottoman towns of Gaza and Beersheba in southern Palestine. Their seizure would secure the two principal sources of water supply in the region, deny their use to the enemy and secure for the EEF a healthier summer base than the malaria-ridden coastal plain. Moreover, their capture would also provide cover for the extension of the military railway line into Palestine.[33] This greatly increased the requirements made upon the supply bases in Egypt and the trajectory of the campaign in 1917–18 underlined the importance of logistics in shaping and enabling the more intrusive forms of colonial governance that developed in the latter half of the war.

As in Mesopotamia, broader geopolitical and international considerations interacted with these local factors in shaping military policy. In the early months of 1917, Lloyd George engaged in a prolonged and acrimonious civil–military struggle with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Robertson, concerning the direction of military operations and

the deployment of force on the Western Front or elsewhere. This battle raged throughout 1917 and rested on Lloyd George's determination to take a longer-term approach to the war and preserve British manpower without squandering it on a series of attritional battles on the Western Front.[34] An offensive in Palestine formed part of Lloyd George's personal desire to shift the focus of British effort away from the Western Front, and may also have been intended to strengthen Britain's global position in the event of any compromise peace with Germany.[35] It was also a part of the broader international strategy of exerting combined pressure on the central powers on all fronts, as agreed at the Anglo-French conference in Calais on 26 February 1917.[36] The War Cabinet believed that the conquest of Palestine would help restore British prestige in the east, particularly following the disaster and military humiliation suffered at Kut in April 1916. Furthermore, they hoped it would stimulate the Arab revolt in the Hejaz, draw Ottoman troops away from the Russians in Armenia and from Maude in Mesopotamia, and assist in the general expulsion of the enemy from the Middle East.[37]

The Egyptian Expeditionary Force attacked Gaza on 26 March 1917. The assault was initially successful as cavalry units quickly enveloped the town, but a combination of faulty staff work and poor communications led to their premature withdrawal as staff officers wrongly feared they would run out of water.[38] Two days later, Murray sent a misleadingly optimistic account of the battle to London that prompted the War Cabinet to request that he continue the advance.[39] This necessitated a second assault on Gaza on 17 April that featured the first use of poison gas in any Middle Eastern theatre of war.[40] This notwithstanding, the attack was beaten back by a forewarned and reinforced Ottoman garrison with heavy casualties and Murray was relieved of his command on 11 June and replaced by General Sir Edmund Allenby.

The two attacks on Gaza failed because the link between logistics, strategy, tactics and operations broke down in March and April 1917. The first attempt on Gaza was launched prematurely, before the railway and water pipeline reached the front lines.[41] At that point, Murray ought to have consolidated his lines of supply and transport with his bases in Egypt and established a reserve network of supplies behind the front at Gaza, as Allenby would do later in the summer. Instead, Murray and his field commanders became emboldened by the absence of serious Ottoman opposition encountered during the Sinai operations in 1916, thereby repeating the overconfidence that plagued Townshend and Nixon in Mesopotamia as they advanced towards Kut in late 1915. Murray underestimated the Ottoman forces opposing him

and succumbed to political pressure from the War Cabinet to take the offensive.[42] Consequently the Force did not take the opportunity to develop its system of water supplies or extend it to cover the entirety of the front lines, and both attacks suffered badly from a shortage of water.[43] Charles Dobell, commanding Eastern Force at Second Gaza, directly linked the lack of water to the failure of the attack as he blamed insufficient supplies for forcing him to advance on too narrow a front.[44]

Between April and June 1917, Murray belatedly took measures to integrate his logistical network into line into an emerging strategic vision. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force settled down opposite Gaza while the railway and water pipelines were extended to the front. On 7 May, Murray prepared a report on the railway situation for the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London. He claimed that the existing railway network was capable of supplying five divisions at railhead but that any substantive increase in the size of the force would require a corresponding expansion of capacity. Murray consequently recommended doubling the railway line from Qantara, and suggested that every effort be expended on developing the communications network over the summer months.[45] The War Office approved the doubling of the line on 21 July 1917 and it was finally completed and opened for traffic on 17 April 1918.[46]

In June 1917, Philip Chetwode and Guy Dawnay, respectively the General Officer Commanding Eastern Force and the Brigadier-General General Staff (BGGS), formulated a plan to envelop and capture the water supplies at Beersheba before turning back towards Gaza and rolling up the Ottoman defences.[47] Their plan aimed to restore fluidity to the battlefield and depended on thorough logistical preparations for its success. Throughout that summer and autumn, a complex system of lateral railways (both standard- and light-gauge) and water supplies was constructed behind the front lines, supporting a reserve system of supply dumps.[48] It was implemented at the third battle of Gaza between 31 October and 4 November 1917, when the four infantry divisions of XX Corps and the three cavalry divisions of the Desert Mounted Corps captured Beersheba with its water supplies largely intact. After rolling back the Ottoman lines, they linked up with XXI Corps that had broken into the lines at Gaza.[49] Although the operation was not without its problems, and while critics of the plan have argued that the transfer of the cavalry and transportation units to Beersheba meant that XXI Corps could not translate break-in to break-through, the operations do stand out as testament to the successful interaction

of logistics and strategy.[50] In addition, the fact that the bombardment of Gaza featured the heaviest non-European artillery bombardment of the entire war, with a gun concentration equivalent to 1 July 1916 on the Somme, is testimony to the logistical success of the painstaking preparations.[51]

XX Corps then encountered stiff Ottoman resistance in the Judean hills as it moved northward. It also faced burgeoning difficulties of supply and transport as the advancing troops left their railheads behind and moved into the waterless plain and to the cold and exposed hills. The onset of the winter rains further hampered the conduct of the operations and transformed the coastal plain into a quagmire. This caused the temporary grounding of all wheeled transport, and for a time the pursuit depended on 3 camel echelons and 2000 donkeys for its supplies.[52] The camels and men of the CTC and the ELC endured appalling hardships and heavy casualties from exposure to the rain and bitter cold in the hills. Only a combination of intensive repairs to the already-existing rail- and road network and the utilisation of every able form of transport – pack, wheel, rail and water – enabled the force to continue its advance and enter Jerusalem on 9 December 1917 to deliver Lloyd George's 'Christmas present to the nation.'[53]

After this success, major offensive operations halted until September 1918, aside from minor operations to consolidate and strengthen the line and two failed raids across the Jordan river towards Amman in March and May 1918 that intended to support Emir Faisal's Northern Arab Army (NAA). The succession of great German offensives that began on 21 March 1918 shifted the focus of the war back on to the Western Front as the British and French armies fought for survival, and denuded the EEF of the majority of its British battalions.[54] This created new logistical difficulties of a very different kind as the replacement battalions hurriedly drawn up in India needed to be transported to Egypt, equipped and trained. It was only in September 1918 that Allenby felt able to resume the advance.

On the 18th, a joint infantry-cavalry offensive routed the enemy at the Battle of Megiddo. Large numbers of aircraft and mechanised transport cut off and routed the retreating Ottoman armies in what became a text-book model of a mobile, deep battle.[55] The destruction of the Seventh and Eighth paved the way for the advance to, and capture of, Damascus on 30 September and Aleppo on 6 October. There the advance halted, for the cavalry and mechanised transport had far outstripped their supply lines, and the campaign formally ended with the armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918.

The development of a logistical network in Palestine in 1918

During 1918, the invasion and gradual occupation of Palestine introduced a more complex dimension to the logistical network linking the supply bases in Egypt to the front lines in Palestine. It was now required to sustain both an army of occupation and the civil population in a region decimated by famine and the economic and human dislocation of conflict. Greater diversity in sources of supply was urgently necessary to supplement the existing water pipeline and railway from Egypt. Three major principles shaped the formation of the logistical network in Palestine in 1918. The first was the adaptation and incorporation of the Ottoman transportation network into the British lines of communication. Second, there was large-scale transfer of agricultural resources from Egypt to feed the civil population of Palestine and the use of local resources wherever possible. Finally, the formation and progressive simplification of an intricate network of reserve bases for stores, ammunition and salvage works drew on captured local stocks where it could do so. These principles also guided logistical developments on the Western Front. Their application in Egypt and Palestine enabled the military authorities to construct and maintain an efficient network of supplies that bridged the long and vulnerable line of communication from Egypt and culminated in the decisive break-out from Megiddo in September 1918.[56]

Incorporating the Ottoman road- and rail networks presented the most immediate and intractable challenge. Ottoman rail gauges were narrower than British gauges, and units from the Royal Engineers spent the winter of 1917 converting them to the standard gauge and linking them to the railway from Qantara, which finally reached Jerusalem on 9 June 1918.[57] The intermediate station at Ludd developed into an advanced railhead connecting the north-south military railway with the lateral east-west lines that linked Jerusalem to the coastal town of Jaffa. This opened up the possibility for sea-borne supply from Egypt to augment reliance on the railway.[58] Integrating the road network proved more problematic as heavy rains in late-November 1917 severely hampered the work and nearly halted the entire advance towards Jerusalem. Thousands of Egyptian labourers worked constantly on road construction and maintenance duties, and their efforts paid off as they managed to keep the vital Beersheba–Hebron–Jerusalem road open to military traffic at all times.[59]

British officials who moved into the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) established in Palestine made initial attempts to

mobilise local agrarian and urban resources. However the situation was complicated by the 'deplorable state' of Palestine and the wider Levant region in 1917 after three years of economic dislocation, poor harvests and Ottoman requisitioning of food and animals.[60] Ronald Storrs, the newly appointed Military Governor of Jerusalem, recalled in his post-war memoirs that while the capture of the city delivered 'glamour and glory such as the Great War seldom gave,' it also presented the military authorities with an immediate crisis owing to 'the scarcity of food amounting almost to famine.' The situation was exacerbated by 'the billeting of two Divisions in the City (though of course outside the walls)' and by the hoarding of meagre stocks of food by the fellahin of surrounding villages who kept any supplies for their own subsistence. An immediate crisis was only averted by the arrival of regular lorry-loads of wheat from Egypt.[61] This was vital because the 'granary of Palestine' that officials in the War Office optimistically believed to exist on the east bank of the Jordan remained in enemy control and out of reach to the civilian population on the west bank in Palestine.[62]

Both the civil and military authorities in Palestine therefore remained dependent on imported supplies from Egypt, and also India, until the end of the war. In this context, the railway from Qantara acted as the umbilical cord that fed Palestine, with the average daily tonnage of supplies despatched by rail peaking at 2317 tonnes in August 1918.[63] The expansion of demands on the Egyptian railways and agriculture remained at a high level throughout the final year of the war even as prices of foodstuffs and other commodities in Egypt rose and localised shortages of food developed in rural and urban areas alike.[64] This required the British civil and military authorities in Egypt to intervene far more intrusively in Egyptian agricultural and labour markets to mobilise foodstuffs and other vital commodities for the logistical effort.

The military authorities fared better in utilising the urban resources available to them in Palestine. The capture of Jaffa with its sophisticated irrigation schemes installed by pre-war Jewish colonists was an important gain that greatly improved and diversified the system of water supplies.[65] Units of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force also made full use of captured Ottoman facilities in the towns that came under occupation, notably Jerusalem. There, the ordnance services requisitioned plant and premises, particularly armouries, blacksmiths and instrument shops. This made it possible to establish forward mobile workshops that were able to repair equipment and vehicles worn out at the front without having to send them back to Qantara.[66]

The third notable feature of the logistical network in Palestine in 1918 was its progressive simplification as the campaign developed. A system of advanced depots moved up behind the advancing troops in 1917 and clustered around the rail junction at Ludd. The depot at Ludd later closed in September 1918 when improvements to the railway network enabled supplies to be railed directly from Qantara to the railheads at the front.[67] This coincided with the Royal Navy gaining complete control of the eastern Mediterranean, and after the final advance from Megiddo to Aleppo began, the successive occupation of the ports of Haifa, Beirut, Alexandretta and Mersina added a new dimension to the lines of supply. Supply boats operated directly from Port Said, with gangs of ELC men working to load and unload the stores. The new sea-borne network played a vital role in freeing the advanced cavalry units from their railheads and enabling them to outstrip rail-borne supplies.[68]

All told, the logistical achievement of supplying, transporting and sustaining a force that grew to number 458,246 combatants and non-combatants and 159,000 animals over a line of communications that stretched 220 kilometres from Qantara to Gaza was one of the most formidable achievements of the Great War. In 1932, the *Lessons of the Great War Committee* recommended that the administrative lessons learnt during the campaign form the basis for a volume dealing with *War Administration in the Middle East*.[69] This did not occur, and Murray's reputation fell into comparative disrepute, particularly when his record of failure at the first and second battles of Gaza was contrasted with Allenby's successes at Third Gaza and Megiddo. Nevertheless, this logistical feat did impose a progressively heavier burden on the human and economic resources of Egypt to provide the man- and animal power and food and fodder that were required to meet the demands of large-scale warfare in a non-industrial setting.

Consequently, the extension of the lines of communication and supply across Sinai and into Palestine in 1917–18 were accompanied by measures that sought to legitimise and extend Britain's position in Egypt in order to regulate the deeper penetration of societal patterns and resources. This policy had important political repercussions that became fully apparent after the end of hostilities, when the broad range of socio-economic groupings that had participated in the war effort began to seek a return on their co-operation. The failure of British officials in Cairo and London to recognise and adequately respond to these grievances paved the way for the post-war backlash against this more aggressive form of imperial control that gripped Egypt in March and April 1919.

The Egyptian and Mesopotamian campaigns followed different logistical trajectories in terms of their inception, initial expansion (in the Mesopotamian case) and consolidation (in Egypt), reorganisation in 1916 and subsequent advances. Yet the common feature to both was the emphasis placed from mid-1916 onwards on the importance of maximising the production and extraction of local resources. This required a heavier imperial footprint to regulate the mobilisation of manpower, animals and the penetration of commercial and agricultural trends. Here, the interaction between logistics and the politics of imperial control became most evident as the requirements of the war economy spearheaded a new (and ultimately temporary) form of wartime imperialism in Egypt, India and the occupied territories in Palestine and Mesopotamia. The following three chapters examine this in detail and explore how it reformulated existing notions of colonial governance and reconfigured the socio-political and economic fabric of the host societies involved.

The impact of war on colonial society

By the end of the fighting, the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces had expanded to total approximately 458,246 and 408,138 combatants and non-combatants respectively.[70] During the course of the war, the expeditionary forces captured more than 120,000 square miles of enemy territory while the capture of Baghdad and Jerusalem in 1917 provided rare bright moments to an increasingly war-weary nation accustomed to lengthy casualty lists and the capture of isolated fields and woods. Yet it is axiomatic that the First World War was won (and lost) on the Western Front with the successive offensives in the 'Hundred Days' from July to November 1918. These battles themselves followed the Germans' own attempts to strike a hammer blow between March and May. Even in the Middle Eastern sphere of the war, the Ottomans' defeat was brought about not by the capture of Baghdad, Jerusalem or Damascus but by the break-out of the Army of the East from Salonika in September 1918. This directly threatened Constantinople in a manner that neither Allenby's advance to Aleppo nor Marshall's advance to Mosul could do.

Instead, the real significance and enduring legacy of the maintenance of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian Expeditionary Forces lay in the dynamic and complex symbiosis between logistics and politics in the supply bases of India and Egypt and in the arrangements set up in the occupied territories of Mesopotamia and Palestine. Politicians and soldiers gradually constructed sophisticated logistical networks that

required the mobilisation of substantial quantities of local resources and manpower. The impact of these logistical demands and the great expansion of the powers and reach of the bureaucratic apparatus to regulate their extraction formed the core of the more intrusive form of 'war imperialism' that developed after December 1916. The result was an aggravation of relations between the externally imposed colonial state and indigenous societies, as the new political economy of empire contrasted sharply with pre-1914 experience in Egypt and India, and the relative autonomy from state interference that had characterised the late-Ottoman period in Mesopotamia.

This new and more aggressive form of imperial intervention therefore had three major features that will be examined in full in Part II. They were the intensification of British administrative control and its expansion both horizontally across the range of state functions and vertically into society; the mass mobilisation of manpower for the military labour units that provided the backbone of the logistical machine; and the penetration and diversion of agricultural resources to feed the civil and military populations and reduce demands on shipping. Studying in depth the individual aspects of this new form of control and the ways they interacted with each other is necessary in contextualising the nature of the extra-European contribution to the British and imperial war effort. It also adds to the historiography of the evolution of wartime strategy and to the role of conflict in shaping and regulating the level and manner of colonial penetration into society.[71] This is especially relevant and significant for the Middle Eastern state system that emerged after the First World War only to experience systemic inter- and intra-state conflict over the course of the century that followed.

Part II

4
Deepening the Colonial State

During the course of the First World War a new form of colonial governance developed in response to the need to mobilise and extract local resources for the military effort. This involved a deeper penetration of local societies and a re-working of state-society relations in each region. It occurred as the civil and military authorities embedded themselves within existing local social organisation and interfered with indigenous structures and hierarchies of power. The nature and dynamics of this extension of the arms of imposed state structures were far from monolithic, and reflected the uneven exposure of each case study to centralised control – both British and Ottoman – before 1914. Taken together, they offer a comparative analysis of how the colonial authorities managed and regulated the mobilisation of different peasant economies for participation in large-scale, industrialised, warfare.

In Egypt and India, this process represented an intensification of existing British control that enabled the colonial state to deepen its penetration of political, economic and social assets. By contrast, in Palestine and Mesopotamia the conquest of enemy territory required the wholesale creation of a new civil administrative structure to fill the vacuum left by the retreating Ottomans. These wartime measures just sufficed to meet the logistical requirements for man- and animal power, food and fodder in a period of considerable economic dislocation and hardship in war-afflicted territories. Following the end of hostilities in November 1918, British attempts to formalise and extend their enhanced techniques of control into the post-war period provoked intense opposition from societies exhausted by inflationary pressures, local scarcities and heavier demands for taxation and produce.

Within the context of the political economy of empire before 1914, the enormous logistical demands during the First World War – and

particularly from mid-1916 on – presaged a fundamental shift in attitudes and policy in London, Cairo and Delhi. The expansion of state capacities and extractive mechanisms to manage this transition highlight the role of modern conflict in shaping political, economic, social and institutional development in the extra-European world.[1] On the one hand, the measures taken in 1917–18 revealed the inherent flexibility of colonial administrators to adapt to the new form of control now required. However, on the flipside, the introduction of a large-scale extractive dimension to colonial governance carried profound implications for patterns of colonial governance, and called into question the very legitimacy of the colonial state while laying the seeds for the protracted imperial unrest that occurred between 1918 and 1922.

A new form of imperialism

During 1916, the expansion of the military campaigns in Egypt and Mesopotamia and the decision to utilise local resources to the greatest possible extent transformed the character of Egypt's and India's contributions to the imperial war effort. The logistical requirements of supplying and transporting the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces tilted the balance between civil and military resources decisively towards the latter. A pervasive expansion of centralised state powers allowed British officials and their local collaborators to reach deeper into society to organise the collection and extraction of local agricultural goods and manpower. This extension of state control marked a temporary reversal of the dominant views on the political economy of empire, based on indirect collaboration and light taxation, and enabled the authorities to divert civilian patterns of economic and social activity to military use.

The escalation of the colonial contribution to the war effort after mid-1916 turned the Great War into a World War. A network of links developed between Egypt, Palestine, India and Mesopotamia as agricultural resources and labourers moved between theatres, and civil servants from India and Egypt occupied prominent roles in the new bureaucracies constructed in Mesopotamia and Palestine. In part, this merely expanded long-standing intra-regional linkages that had long drawn together the maritime communities of the Gulf with the broader Indian Ocean setting.[2] What was distinctive about this aggressive new variant of imperial control was that it worked through collaborative groups to transmit its power down to the level of society. Ultimately it contributed to the post-war 'crisis of empire' as the visibility of direct British

control escalated sharply, and became a focal point for the attribution of unrest at the many hardships that afflicted these polities during and immediately after the war.

Numerous studies have examined the rise and impact of 'war imperialism' on the 'official mind' in London. Robert Holland argued that Lloyd George's accession to power in December 1916 marked a watershed in the empire's involvement in the war. This occurred as the formation of the Imperial War Cabinet and the placing of prominent imperialists such as Curzon, Milner, Sykes and Amery in positions of influence brought the imperial dimension to the centre of the decision-making process.[3] John Fisher also emphasised the significance of their 'advanced imperial thinking' on Middle Eastern policy-making in 1917 and 1918. He defined 'war imperialism' as 'the pursuit of territories, the possession of which was for any number of reasons inherently desirable ... 'as British politicians sought a 'peace with victory' that would guarantee permanent strategic and imperial security in the east.[4] Brock Millman has innovatively followed a new angle, arguing that after the battle of the Somme in 1916 an influential coterie of political and military leaders clustered around Lloyd George and Henry Wilson in the belief that outright victory on the Western front was no longer possible. Instead, they sought to redirect the focus of Britain's grand strategy to the eastern front in order to secure bargaining chips for a negotiated settlement and jumping-off points for a future 'fight to the finish' with Germany in 1919, 1920 or 1921.[5]

Although the intensification of the extra-European mobilisation complemented the evolution of strategic mobilisation in the United Kingdom, it did not develop seamlessly. 'War imperialism' had an uneven impact on the formulation of policy during and immediately after the war as three interlinking factors limited the influence of the 'advanced imperial thinking.' In the first instance, responsibility for Middle Eastern policy-making was divided among a number of bodies: the Government of India in Delhi, Foreign and War Offices in London, and the British Residency and Arab Bureau in Cairo. Divisions between the British sub-imperial centres of Cairo and Delhi were particularly sharp and antagonistic.[6] This led to a 'plurality of decision-making' between the three centres of gravity as each followed its own agenda and resulted in 'flagrantly clashing lines of policy' in 1917–18.[7]

Second, between 1917 and 1920 Middle East policy was formulated through a series of interdepartmental committees, none of which proved particularly effective in framing a consistent approach.[8] In 1918 the Minister of Blockade, Robert Cecil, dismissed them as existing 'mainly

to enable George Curzon and Mark Sykes to explain to each other how very little they know about the subject.'[9] This reflected the low priority accorded events in the Middle East by a government and military elite understandably focused on events at home and on the Western Front. Events in the east only began to take centre stage during 1918, when the exit of Russia and Romania prompted unrealistic fears of a Turco–German advance on India, and access to oil belatedly became a significant factor in British war aims in Mesopotamia and Persia.[10]

The third obstacle to the creation of a coherent policy towards the Middle East was the comparative ignorance of most British policy-makers of the region and their consequent over-reliance on self-confessed 'experts.'[11] This occurred both in London, where Curzon, Sykes and, after the end of the war, T.E. Lawrence, exerted great influence over decision-making and among the 'men on the spot' in Mesopotamia. There, Percy Cox and Arnold Wilson took advantage of London's preoccupations elsewhere to construct an administrative framework in their own image in 1918–19.[12] Sykes and Lawrence both nourished strong grievances against the Anglo-Indian approach to Mesopotamia that tied into a broader political conflict between the Foreign and India Offices over the orientation of Britain's Arabian policies.[13] This contributed to a prolonged drift and debate over the future of Mesopotamia and the post-war status of Egypt, and the stimulation of powerful currents of proto-nationalist discontent in both regions.[14]

Any study of the impact of 'war imperialism' needs to shift its focus from the 'official mind' in London to study how its implementation affected developments in the host societies themselves. This ties in to the broader theme of 'war and society' and incorporates the interaction between military and imperial history and the local and the global. It demonstrates how periods of intense warfare imposed unprecedented strains on the imperial centre and periphery, and between the civil and military authorities at both levels. It also places the post-war backlash that occurred in India and Egypt in 1919 and in Mesopotamia in 1920 in its proper context as a response to wartime hardships and British efforts to legitimate their wartime powers and extend them into the post-war era.

The formalisation of colonial authority in Egypt and its extension into Palestine

The impact of British involvement in the war profoundly altered the nature of the Anglo-Egyptian 'system' and the existing patterns of

political, economic and social control. Egypt's role as the operational base for the Egyptian Expeditionary Force led the military authorities to demand that it supply vast quantities of manpower, supplies and transportation for the campaigns in the western desert, Sinai and Palestine. Beginning in 1916, British officials intervened much more aggressively in the workings of the Egyptian governmental machine to divert every facet of agricultural and economic life towards the war effort. On a quantitative level, this intensified a longer-term pattern of greater British intervention in Egyptian economic affairs that had started in the 1890s, but qualitatively it represented a major shift from pre-war modes of intervention. The nature of Egypt's wartime involvement shifted from the pre-1914 emphasis on large-scale capital projects designed to boost commercial agriculture, such as the Aswan Dam, to penetrating rural labour and agricultural markets to divert commercial output to military use.[15]

In November 1914, the declaration of war with the Ottoman Empire presented the Foreign Office with the urgent task of resolving the issue of Egyptian sovereignty. The Porte retained nominal suzerainty over Egypt after the British occupied the country in 1882 and the Caliph in Constantinople remained the spiritual leader of Egypt's Sunni Muslims. This became relevant in 1914 when the British political authorities needed to secure at least the quiescence, if not the active support, of Egyptians for military operations on behalf of a Christian power against their co-religionists in the Ottoman Empire. In London the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, proposed annexation, but Cheetham defended the co-operative nature of the 'temporary' occupation.[16] The acting resident successfully argued that annexation would contradict Britain's declared aim of upholding the rights of small nations and repudiate the basic pillar of British policy, as expressed in 24 separate declarations and pledges since 1882.[17]

The delicate political and religious dimensions meant that the Residency initially followed a cautious policy towards the Egyptians, whom they regarded 'as potential if latent enemies whose neutrality and quiescence it was advisable to purchase at a price.'[18] This took the form of a proclamation issued by the British military authorities in Cairo on 2 November 1914. It stated that Britain would assume full responsibility for the defence of Egypt and that 'no Egyptian would be asked to participate in the fighting.'[19] Rigorous press censorship and counter-intelligence measures added another layer of protection to British legitimacy, and successfully blunted the impact of the Caliph's declaration of an Islamic holy war on 14 November.[20]

The thorny issue of Egyptian sovereignty was settled on 19 December when Britain declared a protectorate and replaced the pro-Ottoman Khedive, Abbas Hilmi II, with his nephew, the pliant pro-British Hussein.[21] Sir Henry McMahon was appointed the first High Commissioner and martial law introduced to bypass the system of Capitulations. Although the Foreign Office protested that martial law was intended to supplement rather than supersede the Civil Administration, the British Army effectively became the supreme legislative and executive authority in Egypt.[22] This became the first tangible sign of the new and more penetrative form of British intervention in Egyptian sovereignty.

These decisions transformed the political relationship between Britain and Egypt and planted the seeds of bitterness and unrest that followed in 1919. The terms of the protectorate were ambiguous and susceptible to misinterpretation by the British community, who welcomed it, and by Egyptians, who regarded it is an emergency wartime measure pending the final settlement of Egypt's future status.[23] Its vague provisions were capable of misinterpretation by both Egyptians and British officials and it failed to anticipate the extent of the demands for non-combatants and resources that would be made on Egypt during the course of the war.[24]

Martial law did not at first have a serious impact on daily life in Egypt. Sir John Maxwell, the military commander of the Force in Egypt in 1914–15, was a popular figure with long experience of Egypt. He ensured that his 'courteous and tactful yet strong administration' ruled in close accord with the civil administration.[25] Problems began to develop as the strain of wartime demands for civil and military officials eroded the general quality of British officialdom that particularly affected the civilian branches of administration.[26] The first High Commissioner, Henry McMahon, lacked prior experience of Egypt, spoke neither Arabic nor French (the *lingua franca* of bureaucracy), and was variously described by his former and new colleagues in India and Egypt as 'rather a stupid man, of second-rate ability' and 'lazy.'[27] McMahon made little effort to liaise between the civil and military authorities as logistical requirements increased in scope and complexity. Instead, he embarked on 'frequent and bitter disputes' with the new commander-in-chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in 1916, Archibald Murray, and the Governor-General in Sudan, Reginald Wingate, and turned a great deal of power over to his Financial Adviser, Edward Cecil, who was widely disliked by the Sultan and his ministers.[28]

Cecil despised Wingate, who succeeded McMahon as High Commissioner on 1 January 1917. Wingate in turn sought to curb Cecil's

accumulation of power within the Ministry of Finance. Their feud was a constant source of friction within the British administration and negatively impacted relations with their Egyptian counterparts. During 1917, Cecil was on leave in England when his temporary replacement, Ronald Lindsay, peremptorily informed Wingate in August that 'in the course of the past six months I have become convinced that your views and mine on the principles of finance and on the manner of carrying them out are entirely irreconcilable.'[29] A sense of growing estrangement contemporaneously developed between the British and Egyptian camps in Egypt as the inexorable logistical demands for local resources led to 'the extension of the protectorate functions to embrace practically direct control by England in all branches of the administration.'[30]

Internal factionalism and declining quality in the general level of British administration formed part of a broader conflict between civil and military authorities that also occurred in India and Mesopotamia. These debates centred on the proper role of the military within the imperial framework and carried echoes of the Kitchener-Curzon debates in India in 1903–4. During the course of the war, the balance of relative power swung towards the military authorities as operations expanded to embrace the penetration and mobilisation of all political, economic and human resources. This process climaxed in the 'crisis of empire' when large parts of the empire were held together by military force between 1919 and 1922 and constituted a radical departure from pre-1914 techniques of imperial governance.[31]

Between the reorganisation of the forces in Egypt in the spring of 1916 and November 1918, the extension and deepening of British penetration of Egyptian society superseded the system of indirect rule that had left intact the indigenous administrative framework. The application of martial law eroded and gradually replaced the authority of the local municipalities, police and courts. For the first time, British influence was transmitted directly downwards and not filtered through layers of native officialdom.[32] This was a profound shift in policy and had significant repercussions in 1919 when British officials attempted to formalise and extend these temporary wartime solutions into the post-war period as well.

From mid-1917 onwards, the future status of Egypt began to be discussed with increasing frequency in Cairo and London. The central issue was whether or not the protectorate should be maintained as an alternative to outright annexation. It was sparked by the illness, and subsequent death, of Britain's faithful collaborative Sultan, Hussein, in October 1917, and by Wingate's desire to legitimise the additional

powers of control that Britain had come to exercise in Egypt.[33] Wingate expressed tentative support for a proposal drawn up by Allenby's chief political officer, Gilbert Clayton. This argued that, particularly in the absence of a decisive military victory and the survival of the Ottoman Empire, annexation was necessary to establish Britain's position on a 'firm and lasting basis' in the east.[34]

The case for annexation made by officials on the ground in Cairo encountered powerful opponents in the imperial metropolis who remained mindful of the delicate impact of policy on the empire's Muslim inhabitants, particularly in India.. The Foreign Secretary, Balfour, strongly opposed annexation, and in 1918 the Egyptian Administrative Committee, set up under Lord Milner to consider the case, reached a similar conclusion.[35] Lord Hardinge, by now the permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office, lent his weighty opinion to the Anglo-Indian view that annexation would be unfavourably received by Muslims throughout the empire. The former viceroy of India suggested instead that if Britain could replace the Ottomans as the sponsors of Islamic power, Egypt might develop as 'a centre from which British influence should radiate through the Muslim world.'[36]

This consensus against annexation was followed by an attempt to design a new form of governance within the framework of the protectorate. At this point the flaws inherent in the protectorate began to appear. Its hasty imposition in December 1914 was intended merely as a wartime measure, and accepted by Egyptian politicians on that basis only. As the jockeying for influence in the royal court of the new sultan, Fu'ad, intensified, many Egyptian politicians began to anticipate substantive revision of Egypt's status once the war was over. Instead, the Brunyate commission, established in 1917 to inquire into the removal of the Capitulations, proposed replacing them with a bicameral legislature that would, for the first time, bring the foreign communities of Egypt into the legislative process.[37]

The choice of William Brunyate, adviser to the Ministry of Interior and acting Financial Adviser following Lindsay's resignation, was especially unfortunate. Brunyate was widely loathed by many Egyptians for his singular lack of compassion for local sensibilities. Educated opinion described him as the 'plague of Egypt' who 'had done more than any other Englishman to foster the hatred of the British official amongst Egyptians.'[38] His report was bitterly opposed both by the Prime Minister, Husayn Rushdi, and the Sultan, who argued that 'surely the interests of 14,000,000 Egyptians should be considered to predominate over those 150,000 foreigners.'[39] Neither man was reassured by Wingate's response

that the report was based on the 'necessity of safeguarding the interests of the various Foreign nationalities in the country.'[40]

Brunyate's report thus alienated the Egyptian political establishment as well as the major collaborative props upon which the edifice of British rule rested. In particular, it aroused the hostility of native civil servants and lawyers who feared that the anglicisation of their professions would restrict their avenues of advancement. The erosion of support from these vital professions became significant in the context of the growing nationalist challenge from Sa'ad Zaghloul's new *Wafd* organisation, which targeted these groups between November 1918 and March 1919. This paved the way for the temporary paralysis of state functions in March 1919 when native civil servants and lawyers struck in protest at the arrest and deportation of the *Wafd* leadership.[41]

The takeover of territory in Palestine in late-1917 and 1918 further complicated the situation as the conditions of famine and economic hardship necessitated the diversion of already-scarce resources and personnel away from Egypt just as tensions began to rise. The Ottomans' wartime mobilisation of Palestinian manpower and agricultural resources left the incoming British with a legacy of harsh and increasingly repressive policies that interacted with the impact of the allied blockade of its seaports and the economic dislocation caused by the disruption to inter- and intra-tribal trade routes. As a result, much of the territory that the British took over was afflicted by famine and disease, made worse by forced population transfers and severe problems of personal indebtedness and financial ruin that affected urban and rural residents alike. British officials faced the urgent need to restore order and re-create a semblance of state authority and established an Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) as the framework through which control would be projected downwards. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, yet the problem facing the Anglo-Egyptian 'system' was that it assumed responsibility for an impoverished and war-ravaged region that required emergency transfers of foodstuffs and manpower (both administrative personnel and Egyptian peasant labour) as localised scarcities of these commodities began to appear and spread more widely in Egypt itself.[42]

Consequently, the impact of participation in the First World War caused a paradigm shift in the nature of the political relationship between Britain and Egypt.

The pre-war system of indirect administration through collaborative local officials and groups was replaced by a new political economy of authoritarian control. This was based on the intensive extraction of

local resources for the war effort, while the extension of operations into Palestine greatly magnified the demands placed on Egypt for man- and animal power, railway resources, foodstuffs and fodder. The 1918 report of the Brunyate commission marked the culmination of the steady expansion of British power throughout every sector and level of the Egyptian polity. Its political consequences will be examined in full in Chapter 7, but it is sufficient here to note that after Rushdi's resignation as Prime Minister in December 1918 in protest at the report and Wingate's refusal to allow an Egyptian delegation to proceed to the Paris peace conference, Egypt remained without a government until March 1919. British advisers effectively governed Egypt during this tense period of accelerating Egyptian unrest and proto-nationalist opposition to the continuation of wartime powers and British reluctance to consider the reformulation of the Anglo-Egyptian political relationship.

State intervention and centralised control of resources in India

Broadly similar meta-processes of intensified state control and horizontal and vertical expansion of its range of powers and penetrative scope occurred in India in response to wartime demands for combatants and non-combatants, food and fodder. As the principal supply base for the campaign in Mesopotamia, the great expansion of that campaign after 1916 altered the parameters of the Anglo-Indian system of governance. The discredited old system presided over the catastrophic mismanagement of the initial stages of the campaign in 1915 and early 1916. As in Egypt, greater state intervention in, and direction of, economic and social resources evolved in response to the need to regulate and manage the mobilisation and extraction of these commodities for the military. In 1917–18, the Government of India embarked on a 'temporary revolution in economic attitudes.'[43] This occurred as the state moved decisively away from the laissez-faire economic policies and military retrenchment that had dominated before 1916, and towards an unprecedented, albeit short-lived, exercise of centralised control and massive capital and military expenditure programmes.[44]

The scale of the institutional and intellectual change in Indian governing structures after 1916 is fully comprehended when placed in the context of what it superseded. Following the outbreak of war in August 1914, and lasting until the disastrous maladministration of the Mesopotamian campaign became publicly and politically apparent in the middle of 1916, the Government of India pursued a 'business as

usual' policy that increasingly diverged from the path of incremental strategic mobilisation in the United Kingdom. Notably this did not presage any radical departure from the political and fiscal tenets perceived to be the cornerstone of successful Indian governance. The military budget adopted in March 1915 for the year 1915–16 remained on an essentially peacetime basis, while Sir Robert Carlyle, the member of the Viceroy's Council in charge of the Revenue and Agriculture Department, admitted retrospectively that 'the war was not treated as a thing beside which everything else becomes of no importance.'[45] The conduct of the military operations involving Indian Army troops in Egypt, East Africa and Mesopotamia was not discussed in the Viceroy's Council before 1916, and political and military leaders in Delhi remained largely unaware of the progressive breakdown in the administrative services in Mesopotamia.[46]

Throughout this formative period, the powerful focus on continuing laissez-faire policies, as well as the bureaucratic inertia for which the Government of India was infamous, ensured that steps were not taken to extend state control over the transportation networks or agricultural resources within India. Similarly, no steps were taken to amalgamate the six branches of the army responsible for various dimensions of recruitment into one central organisation until October 1916.[47] Recruiting, as with so much else within the Government of India, remained wedded to peacetime lines even as the pillars that supported the Indian Army began to crumble under the impact of fighting prolonged military campaigns on multiple fronts against foes equipped with modern weaponry.

In July 1916, London's decision to develop India as the principal supply base for the campaigns east of Suez coincided with the beginning of the Mesopotamia Commission of Enquiry. These two events heralded a decisive shift in the mindset of the civil and military echelons in the Indian bureaucracy and an end to the lingering belief that colonial-style frontier campaigning would suffice. Moreover, soldier-administrators with practical experience drawn from the first two years of fighting an industrialised war in the European and Mediterranean theatres arrived to assist in the strategic mobilisation of Indian resources. Men such as the new commander-in-chief of the Indian Army, Charles Monro, and Edward Altham, who became Inspector-General of Communication, directed radical changes in the Government of India's attitude to the war and the measures necessary to conduct it. They belatedly began to extend the powers of the state both at central and provincial levels, and intervene in

society to penetrate and mobilise local resources of manpower and commodities.[48]

This new centralising initiative took off in March and April 1917 when the central state began to exert its powers of organisation and penetration with the creation of the Indian Munitions Board and the Central Recruiting Board respectively. These bodies established central control over the two pillars of India's logistical effort, agricultural resources and manpower. The Indian Munitions Board centralised the purchasing departments of the Government of India into an organisation whose mandate was 'the control and development of Indian resources, with particular reference to war requirements.'[49] It identified and extended state control over strategic industries that provided material for the war effort, such as railway track, ordnance factories, textiles, timber and jute manufacturing. The Board also attempted to overcome the constricting limitations of India's pre-war industrial organisation that had left it dependent on the United Kingdom for machinery and skilled workmen.[50] By August 1918, the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, felt able to write that 'under pressure from war demands India's economic resources have developed in marked degree.'[51] This process of centralising state control over resources culminated in October 1918 with the appointment of a Foodstuffs Commissioner to oversee the purchase and distribution of food supplies, although the war ended before this appointment could make itself felt.[52]

The Central Recruiting Board was established to centralise state control over the processes of recruitment to the various combatant and non-combatant branches of the army. It contained both civilian and military members who co-operated in an effort to safeguard vital agricultural districts and strategic industries from being denuded of local labour.[53] This was especially important in the Punjab that, until 1917, provided the majority of recruits for military service and agricultural produce for the war effort. Consequently, the Central Recruiting Board took measures to widen and deepen the field of recruitment and extend the geographical spread of recruits. This was necessary both to lessen the burden of providing manpower on the two 'martial' provinces of the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province and in order to tap the hitherto-largely neglected reserves of manpower in the 'non-martial' provinces of southern India.[54]

This decision to broaden the sphere of recruitment to include groups that hitherto had lain outside the 'martial races' represented a radical departure from pre-war policy. It required officials to temporarily set aside ethno-racial stereotypes for the duration of the war, although the

persistence and strength of such mentalities endured in private remarks and comments. In one such example of the pervasive racism that dominated colonial discourse and mentality, the official eye-witness to the campaign, Edmund Candler described a group of Santals from Bengal as 'like happy, black gollywogs ... the expression on their faces is singularly happy and innocent, and endorses everything Rousseau said about primitive content. Evolution has spared them, they have even escaped the unkindness of war.'[55] Nevertheless, these measures proved a success as the overall number of recruits jumped from 93,000 in 1915 and 104,000 in 1916 to 194,000 in 1917 and 327,000 in 1918. Simultaneously, the proportion of recruits who came from the Punjab fell from 49% in 1915 to 38% in 1918.[56] This move towards shifting the impact of military requirements for manpower more equitably across India allowed the Indian Army to double in size between January 1917 and November 1918 and meet the King-Emperor and Lloyd George's call for India to 're-double' her war effort in March 1918.[57]

These measures extended the horizontal and vertical powers of the state and its penetrative scope into society and amounted to a head-on assault on the powerful pre-war orthodoxy of laissez-faire economic policy in India. A similar 'revolution' in official attitude took place in the methods by which the Government of India financed these policies. Prior to 1914, the political value and utility attached to keeping taxation and public expenditure low ensured that the Government of India operated on a very constricted revenue base. It also acted as a powerful brake on the expansion of Indian fiscal policy after 1914.[58] With the decisions taken from mid-1916 onwards to develop and maximise India's role in maintaining the campaigns in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, this fiscal policy underwent an equally sharp change to finance the massive increase in military and related capital expenditure.[59]

In 1917–18 this 'temporary revolution' in economic and financial policy identified by Dewey accelerated as the costs of financing the expansion of the Indian Army, enormous military expenditure on capital works such as the improvements to the dockyard facilities at the ports of embarkation in Karachi and Bombay, and the taking over of £100 million worth of British Government War Debt led to a spike in levels of direct and indirect taxation and public borrowing.[60] Particularly significant was the shift in the structure of taxation towards the imposition of import duties on cotton and other goods. This marked the first occasion that London's need for Indian collaboration trumped the vested interests of British trading firms.[61]

Participation in the First World War prompted a real, albeit temporary, shift in political and economic governance in India. This occurred as military requirements for manpower and raw materials led officials to confront the behemoths of dominant orthodoxies regarding the size and role of the state and its financial basis. The consequent extension of state control over a broad range of strategic industries and its downward intervention of labour and agricultural markets illustrated the impact of one of the pillars of this new and more aggressive form of 'war imperialism.' As in Egypt, the state's guiding role acted as an overseer, allowing the civil and military authorities in Delhi to mobilise and extract the vast amounts of logistical supplies that constituted the primary contribution of the colonial and occupied territories to the imperial war effort.

State-building and bureaucratic consolidation in Mesopotamia

The establishment of a bureaucratic apparatus to oversee the extraction of local resources in Mesopotamia differed from the Egyptian and Indian cases in several important ways. The most obvious was that Mesopotamia was not under British control in 1914. In the south, the city of Basra had long been linked by trade to India, and a measure of Indian influence also extended to the holy shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf through the Oudh Bequest. The three vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul were geographically remote from the centres of Ottoman administrative power and its projection was largely limited to major urban areas.[62] Such authority as did exist was characterised by 'feebleness, corruption and inefficiency.'[63] Ottoman administration melted away during the British advance to Baghdad in 1917 after having briefly regained the loyalty of many tribal groups following their victory at Kut in April 1916.[64] The result was an administrative vacuum that required the construction of an entirely new civil administration in the areas that came under British occupation.[65] British officials identified new collaborative groups with whom they established ties, including the mercantile and Jewish communities in Basra and (after March 1917) Baghdad, and bought the loyalty of the major tribal sheikhs with regular subsidies of gold.[66]

The second difference was that the civil administration that developed in the occupied territories of Mesopotamia was imported from India. This reflected the Government of India's early responsibility for the campaign, and the majority of the civil administrators were drawn

from the Indian Civil Service. These men applied their long experience of Indian administration to Mesopotamia and constructed a civil administration modelled on the lines of an Indian province. As Toby Dodge has convincingly demonstrated, this was based on fundamental misinterpretation of a binary division of local society between town and tribe.[67] The resultant tribal codes failed to take into account the wide diversity in tribal structures and their varying relationships to centralised authority or power before 1914.

This imposition of an imported civil administration based on a misconception of local conditions reflected the third difference, namely the absence of an existing central state in Mesopotamia. While Baghdad had long exerted a gravitational pull over the vilayets of Mosul and Basra and a degree of regional consciousness had developed before 1914, the construction of a single administrative structure after 1914 represented an entirely new approach to state-building in the region. The imposition of a centralised state framework masked the very different conditions that pertained in Mosul, which had looked west to Syria and the Levant before 1914, and Basra, which had looked south and east to the Gulf and India.[68] This formed part of a much wider disruption of trading patterns and reformulation of political loyalties as new state boundaries and identities took root throughout the Middle East after 1918.

Consequently, the construction of a civil administration in Mesopotamia between 1914 and 1918 amounted to an exercise in state-building. It differed profoundly from the extension of the penetrative power and extractive capacity of existing state structures in Egypt and India. Furthermore, the lengthy process of bureaucratic consolidation differentiated Mesopotamia from the much shorter experience of military administration in the OETA in Palestine that only began in November 1917 and did not extend to cover the whole of Palestine until the very end of the war.[69] The process of creating a functioning administration in Mesopotamia also sharpened latent tensions between the civil and military authorities. These centred over the proper demarcation of authority and extent of civil control that was necessary to oversee and regulate the military's demand for resources. This intra-British feuding again differed from the situation in Palestine, where the introduction of British military administration was designed to ward off French claims on the political administration of the region.[70]

It is important to note at the outset that the impact of the war on the three vilayets of Mesopotamia varied greatly and reflected the widely differing experiences of each region. Partially this was because each

came under British control at a different time. At one extreme, the occupation of Basra was completed by June 1915, while Mosul remained in Ottoman hands throughout the war and was only occupied after the end of hostilities in November 1918. Furthermore, large regions of central and northern Mesopotamia suffered from economic deprivation and disruption to trading patterns as they were caught between the two armies. This was in stark contrast to the more settled situation around Basra, which quickly resumed trading with its partners in India and the Gulf after 1914.[71]

Following Force D's occupation of Basra in November 1914, neither London nor Delhi had any clear idea about the political status of the territories that gradually came under occupation.[72] Administrative control was needed to replace the retreating Ottoman authorities, and the chief political officer with the force, Percy Cox, established a civil administration in Basra on 27 November.[73] Significant local assistance was received at this early juncture from two local sources. The first was the commercial community of Basra who had long ties with British India and accepted the new administrative arrangements.[74] The second was Sheikh Mubarak of Kuwait and Sheikh Khaz'al of Muhammara, who used their influence among the tribes of southern Mesopotamia to gain their tacit acceptance of the occupation.[75]

Discussions in London and Delhi initially focused on whether or not the territory would be administered by the Government of India. On 5 December 1914, the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, telegraphed his support for Cox's interim arrangements, and two days later informed the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, that the Government of India 'strongly recommend [the] permanent occupation of Basra' while also 'establishing at once a civil administration on a permanent rather than a temporary basis.'[76] For Hardinge, this was a question of strategic imperial interest that outweighed any international political difficulties as it would seal 'our supremacy in the Persian Gulf and this happy chance of consolidating our position there may never occur again.'[77]

In London, the Liberal government headed by Prime Minister Herbert Asquith ruled that the annexation of Basra would be 'contrary to principle that occupation of conquered territories by allies is provisional pending final settlement at close of war.' Crewe sanctioned Cox's proposals for the temporary administration of Basra and assigned administrative responsibility to the Government of India. He nevertheless recommended that Cox retain the 'existing structure of government and local agency' as much as possible and emphasised that 'no attempt should be made at present to transform vilayat into an Indian district.'[78]

This represented an early shot across the bows of a select group of influential political and military figures grouped around Arthur Hirtzel at the India Office and Arnold Wilson in Mesopotamia, who advocated 'Indianisation' as a process of settlement with the aim of developing the region into a vast 'canal colony' for the Punjab.[79]

However the British Government did not make any formal proclamation regarding their political intentions in Mesopotamia until after the occupation of Baghdad in March 1917. Early attempts to formulate a position foundered after the military reverses at Ctesiphon and Kut in 1916.[80] Significant influence devolved onto the 'men on the spot' in Basra to restore order and construct a fledgling bureaucratic framework as the attention of policy-makers in London focused on the European war. These men were drawn from the political, civil and judicial services in India and from the Indian Army, and had little knowledge, either individually or collectively, of local political, social or economic conditions in Mesopotamia.[81] To overcome this absence of empirical knowledge of local society, they drew on their professional experiences in India to guide their approach to governing in the occupied territories of Mesopotamia.[82]

The 'Indianisation' of the new administration became most apparent in the construction of a judicial framework in Mesopotamia. The disappearance of the 'fabric and personnel' of the Ottoman system meant that it was not possible to retain 'indigenous laws and institutions' as mandated in Crewe's directive in December 1914.[83] The task of formulating a judicial system for the occupied territory fell to the Senior Judicial Officer in Basra, Lieutenant-Colonel S.G. Knox of the Indian Political Department, and the First Revenue Officer, Henry Dobbs.[84] Dobbs had previously worked in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan where he had been heavily influenced by the model of 'humane imperialism' formulated in the 1870s by Sir Robert Sandeman. These experiences coloured his approach to Mesopotamia and guided his broad approach to tribal policies and issues of land tenure.[85]

Dobbs introduced the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulations in February 1916. These laid down separate judicial codes for urban and tribal regions and were lifted virtually unchanged from the colonial code used on the North-west Frontier. Dodge has noted how the new codes were based on a deeply flawed misinterpretation of a Mesopotamian society fundamentally divided between the 'corrupt' town and the 'noble' tribes who were untainted by oriental despotism or the trappings of modernism. This perception led to British officials misidentifying the tribal sheikhs as the collaborative 'linchpin of rural

society' through which they could rule and transmit their authority downwards to societal levels.[86]

Britain's tribal policies therefore aimed to reverse the Ottomans' practice of encouraging tribal fragmentation. The occupied territories were divided into political divisions each under a political officer who drew up tribal lists and identified leading and competent sheikhs around whom tribal authority could be reconstituted.[87] Tribal loyalty and submission were buttressed by generous subsidies of gold and, beginning in 1917, the threat of swift air-borne retaliatory action against recalcitrant tribes.[88] The case of Captain Harold Dickson provides one such example of the tactics adopted by British political officers in Mesopotamia to reconstruct imagined notions of tribal authority and control.

Dickson was posted to the southern district of Suq-ash-Shuyukh as assistant political officer in 1916. This district was home to many of the marsh Arabs whose physical and geographical isolation meant that the projection of centralised Ottoman authority was almost non-existent before 1914. Dickson, who was born in Beirut and spoke fluent Arabic, was regarded as one of the better political officers in the nascent bureaucracy. Upon assuming his position, he found the tribes in a state of chaos and anarchy that he attributed to Ottoman attempts to 'break the power of individual Sheikhs, by multiplying the number of Sheikhs everywhere to a bewildering extent.' In a report on his work sent to the Foreign Office in London, Dickson described how he had 'managed during 1916–17 more or less to get the power into the hands of one Sheikh, in the case of each of the 22 Suq tribes' and reported that this had been a success since 'every tribe [now] has its leading Sheikh who comes to see me, and discuss his tribal questions.'[89] Later, in 1918, Dickson claimed that 'the "subsidy" idea is chiefly responsible for the remarkable state of law and order which now exists throughout the whole Muntafik confederation.'[90]

The wholesale import of colonial judicial policies from India also occurred in the urban districts of Mesopotamia. In August 1915, Knox introduced the Iraq Occupied Territories Code, lifted almost verbatim from existing Indian law. Its introduction in Mesopotamia led one early historian of Iraq to conclude that 'in its provisions and in the manner of its application [it] seems to have made little distinction between India and Iraq.'[91] While Cox claimed in 1917 that the code was provisional and revocable once the war was over, it is hard not to disagree with Philip Ireland's observation that its implementation reflected 'the underlying desire to pave the way for the painless absorption of lower Mesopotamia to India.'[92] Such suspicions were heightened by the predominance of

Indian and Anglo-Indian administrators and clerks in other administrative departments as police and customs. Indeed, when St John Philby investigated the finances of the occupied territories in December 1915, he discovered that 'the whole system of government had been organised, often regardless of local conditions, on I.C.S. lines.'[93]

These initial moves towards creating a civil administration modelled on Indian lines contained two principal flaws. The first was that the urban–rural divide that underlay the implementation of the judicial codes did not in fact exist. In February 1918, Gertrude Bell, the Oriental Secretary in the civil administration in Baghdad and compiler of the lengthy tribal lists and histories issued to political officers, belatedly noted how 'It's curious to find how many of the Baghdad notables ... are tribesmen, often only settled in the town for the last generation or two ... the tribal links are unbroken.'[94]

The second misconception was the belief that the tribes could be viewed as a monolithic entity for policy-making purposes. The numerous tribal groupings and confederations in Mesopotamia exhibited wide variations in tribal structure and relationship to central government before 1914. This reflected the unevenness with which Ottoman control had been projected in the three vilayets. Thus, the tribes along the Tigris were characterised by large homogenous groups with long exposure to centralised power by virtue of the geographical position alongside the trading artery of Ottoman Mesopotamia.[95] Their condition contrasted sharply with that of the tribes that inhabited the middle- and lower-Euphrates regions, whose loose tribal organisation and fragmentation into sub-tribal units differed greatly from the powerful tribal confederations elsewhere.[96] These tribes also held long records of rebellion against central government, borne out of a fiercely protective attitude towards their agricultural land from a state whose neglect they blamed for the silting up of canals and blighting of agricultural productivity.[97] Again, Bell only belatedly acknowledged the error of treating the tribes as a single entity at the peak of the rising in 1920, when she admitted that 'I suppose we have underestimated the fact that this country is really an inchoate mass of tribes which can't as yet be reduced to any system.'[98]

British civil administration was consequently based on flawed perceptions of local conditions and existing structures and hierarchies of power relations from the beginning. This became magnified in 1917–18 as the civil administration moved beyond the relative familiarity of Basra and its immediate hinterland and expanded northward to regions with little experience of central state penetration by the Ottomans or

interaction with British or Indian officials before 1914. These problems became most apparent in 1918 and 1919, when the pressure of mobilising agricultural resources led to the extension of civil control and intensification of extractive measures from the volatile and fiercely autonomous mid-Euphrates region.

The struggle for control over Mesopotamian policy, March–July 1917

During the second half of 1916 and the early part of 1917, two developments in London set influential policy-makers against the 'Indianisation' of Mesopotamia and led to attempts to wrest influence away from the Government of India. The first was the revelation of institutional incompetence and shortcomings exposed by the Mesopotamia Commission of Enquiry. Its findings shook London's confidence in the Government of India to the core. Edwin Montagu, who replaced Austen Chamberlain as Secretary of State for India following the report's publication in July 1917, pre-emptively declared the Government of India to be 'too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view.'[99] Meanwhile the second factor in London's reassessment was the rise to a position of influence of Sir Mark Sykes, who became political secretary to the newly created Imperial War Cabinet. Sykes became a vocal opponent of the Government of India's approach to Mesopotamia following a visit to Mesopotamia and India in August 1915. In June 1916, he drafted a note for the Committee of Imperial Defence that argued that 'the social and political system of India ... based on a colour line and on dominion ... is utterly alien to Arabs and Arabian questions.' Consequently he felt strongly that 'the Government of India is incapable of handling the Arab question.'[100]

The capture of Baghdad in March 1917 and subsequent occupation of the Baghdad vilayet necessitated an urgent re-examination of the political status of the captured territory. On 12 March, the War Cabinet in London authorised Maude to issue a proclamation to the inhabitants of Baghdad. In language strikingly similar to that deployed by the United States-led coalition that invaded and occupied Iraq in March 2003, Maude assured Baghdadis that 'our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators.'[101] The occupation of Baghdad was swiftly followed by measures in London to formally define a Mesopotamia policy, and by measures in Baghdad to tap the fertile agricultural districts around Baghdad for their local resources and manpower reserves.[102]

At the imperial level, this formed an extension of the integrated mobilisation of economic, social and political resources that defined imperial grand strategy during the second half of the war. At a local level, the intensification of local production was vital to combating the economic dislocation to inter- and intra-regional patterns of trade and the rising threat of famine in Mesopotamia. Taken together, the result was a series of decisions that extended and deepened the penetrative reach and extractive capacity of the bureaucratic state as it evolved to meet the requirements of the expanded military operations for logistical support.

In London, the Mesopotamian Administrative Committee was formed on 16 March 1917 as an interdepartmental sub-committee of the War Cabinet. It represented the first attempt by an executive body to define British interests in Mesopotamia. At its first meeting on 19 March, it decided that Basra would remain under permanent British occupation while the Baghdad vilayet would become an Arab state with a local ruler. Revealingly, it acknowledged that this arrangement would be a façade that would in reality be a 'British Protectorate in all but name.' The committee also moved to stem the process of 'Indianisation' by stating that it 'strictly discountenanced' the employment of Indians in any branch of the administration.[103] Any such move would have caused the immediate collapse of the civil and military administration in Mesopotamia owing to its dependence on Indian clerks to staff its lower rungs and Indian labourers to construct and maintain the logistical networks that maintained the MEF.[104]

Strong objections from Delhi and Baghdad caused London to half-heartedly clarify the policy on 10 May. Chamberlain informed the viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, and Cox that the Cabinet did not contemplate the immediate establishment of the Arab administration as detailed in March. Instead, he reassured Delhi that administrative questions such as the construction of a judicial system, the institution of councils and the regulation of Indian immigration would be reserved for a Commission that would visit Mesopotamia at an unspecified future date. In the meantime, he repeated London's position that 'only such minimum of administrative efficiency should be aimed at as it is necessary to preserve order and meet needs of occupying force.'[105]

On the ground itself, the occupation of Baghdad was immediately followed by decisions to maximise the extraction of locally available resources. Both the Controller of Native Labour and the Department of Local Resources moved up from Basra in March and greatly expanded their scope of operations.[106] They formed the backbone of the extractive

institutions that now began to regulate the full mobilisation of local resources of manpower and agricultural produce. As was the case in Egypt, a significant extension and deepening of civil control was required to meet the challenges posed by the 'dual and often discordant forces of military exigencies and the demands of the civil population.'[107]

An essential part of the civil administration's approach to local governance was its tried and tested colonial strategy of identifying local collaborative groups who could extend a degree of legitimacy to the newcomers and strengthen incipient ties to society.[108] In April 1918, Cox identified the Arab notables of Baghdad and Basra, the large landowners, and the predominantly Jewish mercantile community in Baghdad as the three most important groups in Mesopotamia.[109] The latter, in particular, represented 'a potential asset of great political value,' and Gertrude Bell regarded the leading Jewish notable, Sasun Effendi, as 'out and away the best man we've got.'[110] These efforts to draw in collaborative local elites did sometimes backfire, as in the case of the decision to recall the controversial Basrawi notable Sayyid Talib from exile in India in 1920. Wilson hoped that Talib, who had been exiled by the British in 1915, would take 'a leading part in politics along the lines desired by us,'[111] but soon found himself compelled to deport him once again following seditious comments at a dinner-party in April 1920.[112]

In the spring of 1917, the extension of civil administration to the broader hinterland around Basra and Baghdad opened up a dispute between Maude and Cox that mirrored the disagreements in Egypt and elsewhere regarding the proper demarcation of civil-military responsibilities. Maude initially opposed the development of a civil administration and wished to concentrate all energies on the conduct of the war. In July 1917, he protested to the military authorities in Delhi and London against 'civil interests which may conflict with military interests' and warned that 'it seems to me that if we attempt ... development of country ... we shall be attempting too much and we shall fail.'[113] Cox disagreed, and labelled Maude 'purely a soldier and without any previous experience of the East' and consequently 'unsympathetic and somewhat intolerant in regard to political problems.'[114] Eventually a compromise was reached, with Cox being named Civil Commissioner and Maude retaining the ultimate seat of authority.[115] However, Atiyyah has noted, 'in practice, the new instructions did little to deflect Cox from his policy of building up the civil administration,' and that this accelerated after Maude's premature death in November 1917.[116]

Pacification and state-building in Mesopotamia, July 1917–November 1918

The extension of administrative control throughout the vilayet of Baghdad additionally involved the 'submission by political means' of local tribes. This was achieved through the dispatch of political and assistant political officers to local towns and regional centres.[117] A shortage of available political officers meant that the extra numbers required were obtained from Indian Army units already in Mesopotamia. One political officer, Stephen Longrigg, a future Revenue Secretary during the mandate era, described the 'honesty and inexperienced zeal' of the new recruits. They were assisted by military columns that added a potent and coercive spine to their efforts to win the loyalty of tribes by consensual means.[118] In the majority of cases, direct administrative control was established through the political officer, although the holy Shiite shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf were administered indirectly through collaborative local sheikhs. Once control was established, the civil authorities worked in an often uneasy partnership with officers from the departments of local resources and labour to co-ordinate the extraction of local resources of manpower and foodstuffs.[119] By December 1917, the dispatch of troops to various garrison posts in the fertile Euphrates valley completed the process of pacification in the Baghdad vilayet.[120]

The progress of the civil administration during 1917 illustrates how policies devised at the 'official' level in London diverged from those actually implemented by the 'men on the spot' in Mesopotamia. Cox, and his assistant, Arnold Wilson, wrested the initiative from London, whose focus throughout the troubled year of 1917 remained on the conduct of the war in France and Flanders.[121] Together they blunted the impact of the 29 March 1917 decision to restrict the 'Indianisation' of the occupied territories. Indian labourers and clerks continued to construct the roads and railways and dominate the lower rungs of the civil administration to the extent that Wilson admitted that without them 'the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia could never have taken shape or been maintained.'[122] The numbers of local Arabs in responsible administrative positions remained tiny and even in 1920 only accounted for 20 out of 534 officers drawing over Rs.600 per month.[123] Indian dominance of the nascent bureaucratic apparatus was a potent cause of local resentment in Mesopotamia, and fuelled fears among proto-nationalist elites that a new imperial administration was taking shape.

During 1918, moreover, the divergence of policies and views became more visible as officials in London reacted to the shifting international environment caused by President Wilson's enunciation of the principle of national self-determination.[124] This reflected broader developments in the wartime coalition brought about by the entry of the United States in April 1917 and the departure of Russia in November. These two events ushered in a paradigm shift in the international relations of the conflict and required officials in London to review their attitudes towards the occupied territory in Mesopotamia and elsewhere. In December 1917, the publication of the Sykes-Picot agreement and other secret wartime correspondence by the new Soviet regime provoked widespread anger in the Middle East and contributed to Lloyd George's 'war aims' speech to the Trades Union Congress on 5 January 1918.[125] This promised the 'recognition of their separate national conditions' to the constituent communities of the Ottoman Empire and was designed to pre-empt President Wilson's declaration of his Fourteen Points three days later.[126] These pronouncements effectively invalidated the annexationist vision of March 1917 and led Cox to acknowledge the emergence of the concept of national self-determination as the principle 'for which America in particular and the other Allies in general are considered to be fighting.'[127]

Senior officials at the India Office accordingly began to formulate a new policy that would secure effective post-war control of Mesopotamia within the parameters of the changed international environment. They were assisted by Cox, who was recalled to London for consultations, and the reassessment was led by the outgoing Political Secretary, Sir Arthur Hirtzel. Together with his successor, Sir John Shuckburgh, Hirtzel acknowledged that 'the great change that has taken place in the general political situation' required 'an early reconsideration and readjustment of the policy to be pursued in the occupied territory.'[128] The Political Department now argued that any claim to post-war control should be based 'on other grounds than mere might of conquest.' It recommended that British policy aim at 'placing British interests and influence in the country ... on so secure a basis as to guarantee their maintenance under any administrative system that may ultimately be introduced.'[129] This would involve entrenching British commercial interests in Mesopotamia behind the 'Arab façade' in Baghdad, and in April 1918 the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet and the Foreign Secretary, Balfour, formally adopted this re-orientation of British policy.[130]

Difficulties arose in ensuring that the change in official policy in London was implemented in Mesopotamia. The institutional weakness of the interdepartmental committee mode of governance and its

inability to control the activities of its agents on the ground severely limited the impact of the shift in international political opinion in 1918 and 1919.[131] These failings enabled Arnold Wilson, who became acting civil commissioner in April 1918 when Cox returned to London and subsequently assumed temporary charge of the Legation in Teheran, to fill the 'vacuum' of control in Mesopotamia. The problem lay in Wilson's refusal to accept the change in policy. He expressed dismay at Lloyd George's 'war aims' speech and President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which he believed introduced 'disturbing elements into the situation.' Accordingly he disregarded them as being 'inconsistent with the traditional aims of British policy in the Middle East.'[132] As such the problem was as much one of a 'clash of Wilsons' as a clash of policies. Arnold Wilson received influential support from the new commander-in-chief, General William Marshall, who dismissed the Fourteen Points in his post-war memoirs as 'twaddle about self-determination and the rights of small nations [which] were the parrot-cries of the moment.'[133]

Wilson and Marshall established a close working relationship and oversaw a further rapid expansion of the civil machinery during 1918. Marshall's initial orders upon assuming command of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force on 22 November 1917 emphasised the value of maximising the development of local resources so as to reduce demands on scarce British shipping capacity.[134] In order to meet the enormous logistical demands of supplying the civilian and military populations, new departments of Irrigation and Agriculture were created, and existing departments of Local Resources, Labour and Works were expanded into directorates. Crucially, the extension of the penetrative capacity of the bureaucratic state, coupled with the dispatch of political officers throughout the occupied territories, also enabled the British to introduce an efficient and systematic method of revenue collection.[135] This had important implications for state-society relations in a fractured polity in which the extractive capacity of the state had traditionally been weak and subject to resistance by local groups protective of their autonomy and resources. Demands for taxation alienated many tribal units and other socio-economic groupings threatened with famine and other wartime hardships in 1918, and contributed to the multiple grievances that exploded in the tribal rebellion of 1920.[136]

Consequently, the creation and expansion of an externally imposed bureaucracy modelled on Anglo-Indian lines and staffed primarily by Indians bore little resemblance to policy pronouncements in London in 1917 or, particularly, 1918. The process of administrative consolidation did make possible the extension of state power throughout the

occupied territories. It allowed the civil and military authorities to penetrate and divert local reserves of manpower and agricultural produce to the war effort. However, the twin drawbacks of divided responsibility in London and the comparatively low priority accorded events in Mesopotamia allowed events on the ground to acquire a momentum of their own. As a result, the guiding influence behind the growth of civil administration came to rest on Cox and, increasingly, Wilson. Cut off by political training and sheer distance from the momentous shifts in international opinion in 1918, they continued to expand and entrench the political powers and penetrative reach of the emerging colonial state in Mesopotamia.[137] This attempt to impose direct control contrasted sharply with the rhetoric of self-determination and national development emanating from Washington DC and London in 1918 and played a significant role in the post-war backlash against attempts to formalise and extend these powers.

The intensification of visible British control

The deepening of state control and penetration of local political, economic and social resources was a vital component of the more intrusive form of imperial control that developed between 1916 and 1918. The interaction of logistical requirements with political control required the British to seek out new collaborative elements and intensify demands on existing allies for resources and co-operation. It caused a fundamental shift in economic policies in Egypt and India as pre-war laissez-faire approaches gave way to centralised state control of the production and distribution of goods and services. Administrative structures and relationships of power were also reconstituted as the balance between civil and military demands for resources moved towards the latter. This made possible the far greater levels of resource mobilisation and extraction that occurred in 1917–18 and demonstrated the intrinsic symbiosis between mobilisation and logistics in the extra-European theatres of war in the Middle East and India.

Downward penetration into society in Egypt, Mesopotamia and India involved the British colonial state in an aggressive and highly visible extension of powers to exercise vigorous direction over local policy-making. In Egypt and India, it evoked memories of previous British attempts to intensify the extraction of resources from society. The extension of operations into Palestine in late 1917 greatly enhanced the demands on Egypt and required the Egyptian Expeditionary Force to make emergency arrangements to reconstitute governing structures in

order to alleviate the conditions of famine and hardship that pertained there. This strained Egyptian resources to near-breaking point in 1918, while Indian resources were similarly overstretched by the logistical demands of the ongoing campaign in Mesopotamia, and by November 1918 the capability of both supply bases was near exhaustion. The post-war backlash against the more aggressive demands of wartime control arguably exceeded the reaction in India in 1857 and Egypt in 1882. Conversely, these episodes of post-war unrest also exposed the limits of the more authoritarian forms of imperial control and revealed its inability to survive absent the very distinctive conditions in which it developed. After 1918, socio-economic groups and interests hitherto-largely autonomous from the state reacted to the imposition of centralised demands for revenue, and provided the core of the loose agglomeration of disaffected communities that rose in rebellion in Egypt and India in 1919 and Mesopotamia in 1920.

5
Mobilisation of Labour for Logistical Units

Meeting the logistical requirements of large-scale industrial warfare in Sinai, Palestine and Mesopotamia required the mass mobilisation of peasant labour. An uneasy symbiosis developed between the tools of 'modern' industrial conflict and the 'traditional' reserves of man- and animal-power that serviced them. This was particularly pronounced in the campaigns undertaken by the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces, where the absence of existing roads and railways and alternative means of supply or transportation magnified the demands on local manpower resources. In a fluid situation in which all items of consumption initially needed to be transported into the battle-zone, the resulting measures taken to raise local labour units constituted one of the greatest logistical achievements of the First World War. The units successfully maintained the forces and made possible the lengthy campaigns and ultimate victories of 1917–18.

Nevertheless, the mobilisation of labour for the campaigns greatly impacted the social and economic patterns of their host societies. Although the mobilisation of local manpower for logistical units had long been an indispensable component of colonial campaigning in India and Africa, the scale of the demands made on manpower during the First World War was entirely different. The constant and inexorably expanding need for men required the British civil and military authorities to forge an uneasy co-operation in order to extend and deepen state control over agricultural and labour markets. The mobilisation of thousands of labourers interfered with patterns of economic and commercial activity, and contributed to the creation of significant grievances and localised hardships at the increasingly heavy-handed methods of enlistment that developed. Thus, while the enlistment of local labourers represented one of the major extra-European contributions to the

wider British imperial war effort and visibly symbolised the deepening of state penetration into colonial society, it also provoked a powerful backlash against the visible extension of British control over, and interference with, local affairs.

The evolution of labour mobilisation during the war

Labour was not enlisted evenly throughout the war or in its different theatres of combat. In common with the origins of many of the wartime initiatives in Britain and the empire, it began on a voluntary and largely 'ad hoc' basis designed to meet requirements as and when they arose. Only gradually did it assume a comprehensive and systematic form after 1916. The British Army had no units specifically designed to undertake labour duties on the outbreak of war in August 1914. The Field Service Regulations (FSR) merely covered the provision of civilian labourers, supported by fatigue parties drawn from the troops themselves.[1]

Set against this were the extensive practical experiences gleaned from more than a half-century of colonial campaigning in India and Africa.[2] The institutional memories of these campaigns produced an officer corps well versed in the requirements of creating and maintaining a line of communications and supply. This proved valuable early in the war as their pragmatism and professional training enabled officers to adopt a series of piecemeal measures that created the foundations of the labour corps that ultimately and almost literally carried the armies to victory in 1918.[3]

Initial demands for labour in the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France were met by the formation of five labour companies within the Army Service Corps in December 1914. They were assisted by an array of other labour units, such as Railway Companies, Pioneer Battalions, Infantry Labour Battalions, and companies of conscientious objectors. Kitchener's decision to raise the New Armies made this early approach unrealistic, and state intervention in the British economy and labour market became steadily more intrusive in 1915. This was necessary to distribute labour more effectively between the military and vital engineering, mining, shipbuilding and farming sectors, and culminated in the introduction of conscription in January 1916.[4]

Lloyd George's accession to the premiership in December 1916 was contemporaneous to the re-mobilisation of human and economic resources in the United Kingdom and its empire.[5] This coincided with, and took full advantage of, a qualitative shift in cognitive thinking about the immense logistical requirements of modern industrialised warfare.

This shift in strategic planning included the creation of an organised Labour Corps in the BEF in France and Flanders in January 1917. The Labour Corps gathered together the hitherto disparate labour units, and by November 1918 it employed 325,000 British, 98,000 Chinese, 20,000 Indians, 10, 000 Africans, 300,000 prisoners of war, and contingents from Egypt, Fiji and the West Indies.[6]

There was also a colonial dimension to this general escalation of state control to cover the mobilisation of human and economic resources. It contrasted sharply with the light impact of military requirements on civil resources in the first two years of the war. In 1914, the small Indian expeditionary forces that arrived in Egypt and Mesopotamia were not accompanied by auxiliary labour units. Both of these military operations were intended as small-scale holding operations, and in the general state of chaos that prevailed at Army Headquarters in Delhi in 1914 the speedy dispatch of military units around the Empire took precedence over the provision of auxiliaries.[7]

In Egypt, the modest demands for manpower to maintain the troops strung along the line of the Suez Canal in 1915 were met by collecting unskilled labourers from the larger cities and the periodic dispatch of recruiting agents to the villages of Upper Egypt.[8] The shortage of labour was more serious in Mesopotamia. Force 'D' sailed from India without its transport, and each unit was left to make its own arrangements for the recruitment of followers. As early as March 1915, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, noted that the force was desperately short of pioneers and other auxiliary labour units.[9]

Initial labour requirements of Force 'D' were met by enlisting a corps of 3000 locally available labourers, and each branch of the military department subsequently recruited its own gangs of labourers from Basra and Bushire.[10] However, the amount of local labour in Basra quickly became insufficient to maintain a rapidly growing force operating over a longer and more complex line of communications and supply. Attempts to enlist labour from India in 1915 produced poor results as many men refused to enlist for service in Mesopotamia on account of the widespread rumours of hardships that were already circulating.[11] The shortage of labour in southern Mesopotamia quickly became so acute that both British and Indian troops were employed for months on end on military fatigues in and around Basra, and on constructing flood defences after the spring floods in 1915. This impaired the military efficiency of the units involved, but the Deputy Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, Major-General Cowper, told the Mesopotamia Commission that 'it could not possibly be avoided.'[12] Similarly,

Major-General Gorringe's column that occupied Nasariya in July 1915 had no labourers attached to it, and officers and men took their share in hauling their own rations and ammunition in the summer heat.[13]

The origins of labour mobilisation in Egypt and India: the 1915 Dardanelles campaign

Throughout the spring and summer of 1915, the operations at the Dardanelles occupied the attention of British generals and civilian planners, and overshadowed developments in the campaigns in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The failure of the Royal Navy to force their passage through the Straits in February and March led to plans for a full-scale assault on the Peninsula being hastily drawn up. The absence of suitable deep-water ports and constructional works in the eastern Aegean meant that Alexandria became the main base for the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. An advanced base was set up at the port of Mudros, on the Aegean island of Lemnos, and a fleet of up to 120 transport ships plied between them to maintain a force of 75,000 troops in rations, ammunition and reinforcements of troops and pack animals.[14]

The Gallipoli campaign posed stiff logistical challenges from the outset. The advanced base at Mudros initially proved little more than a natural harbour. Piers and jetties had to be constructed to enable it to receive the transport ships from Egypt, and a network of light railways was laid down to connect them to the myriad supply dumps.[15] Once the troops landed on the Peninsula on 25 April they failed to secure adequate supplies of water, so this too had to be arranged from Mudros.[16] As the landings became bogged down and the campaign expanded in scope, the logistical network encompassed the supply of five separate beach-heads with personnel, ammunition, foodstuffs and water stocks.[17]

By July 1915, the commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, General Sir Ian Hamilton, professed to be 'in despair' at the logistical situation. The lack of labour and insufficient lighters to unload transports meant that 'ships arrive carrying things urgently required, and then, before they can be unloaded, sail away again ... with all the stuff on board.' Hamilton noted that 'there are ships containing engineering plant which have been five times out here and five times have gone away again without anyone being able to unload them owing to want of lighters.'[18] He confessed to Sir John Cowans, Quartermaster-General at the War Office in London, that 'I worry just as much over things behind me as I do over the enemy in front of me.'[19] The situation

was only partly alleviated by the dispatch of General Edward Altham, a talented administrative officer, to Hamilton as Inspector-General of Communications later in July.[20]

These arrangements required large amounts of manual labour. As early as 14 March, four days before the failure of the naval operation against the Straits that made the landing of the infantry force necessary, the commander-in-chief of the Force in Egypt recommended to the War Office that a force of at least 400 labourers be recruited in Egypt for work at the front.[21] The War Office authorised the proposal on the following day, as the lack of sufficient local labour made their dispatch all the more urgent.[22] The British military authorities in Egypt responded by raising, at extremely short notice, an Egyptian Works Battalion consisting of 650 men. The labourers were drawn from the Military Works Department of the Egyptian Army and the Railway Battalion. They were officered by seven British officers seconded from the Royal Engineers, and commanded by the Director of Works in Sudan, Captain M.R. Kennedy. The battalion sailed to Lemnos early in May, together with stocks of tools, and worked on constructing piers, jetties and a light-railway network.[23]

The Egyptian Works Battalion performed valuable work in trying conditions during the summer of 1915 and was often exposed to shell-fire. However an 'unfortunate incident' in September left nine Egyptian labourers dead and a further seven injured after British officers opened fire on them to quell a disturbance. The unrest arose after some of the labourers claimed that they had only agreed to serve for three months, and that they were not to be employed under fire. Their British officers disputed both claims, and the heavy-handed actions of one officer who flogged several of the men merely heightened the tensions still further and provoked the unrest. The authorities in Egypt deplored the 'deplorable lack of tact and self-control' of the officer involved and conceded that 'the general conduct of the men under the difficult conditions in which they found themselves was not altogether bad.'[24]

Hamilton had little option but to recall the battalion to Egypt. He did this with some regret, for 'the abused and troublesome Works Battalion also did magnificent work as long as it was here, and I wish very much I had another.'[25] The British authorities in Cairo worried that the incident might awaken memories of the Dinshawai murders of 1906 and once again enflame local opinion against them. In the event, this was averted through a policy of rigorous censorship that succeeded in keeping the incident quiet.[26]

In July 1915, the Egyptian labour force at the Dardanelles was augmented by a labour corps numbering 1152 labourers and ten British officers. These men were unskilled labourers who had been recruited in the Upper Egyptian villages of Sehag, Tanta and Beni Suef. Their British officers were predominantly 'private gentlemen specially qualified by their occupation in Egypt to understand and handle Egyptian labourers.' The Corps commander, Major Hicks Paul, exemplified this class of officer as he had long experience of administering agricultural estates in Egypt and had also served as an Inspector of a Section of the newly raised CTC early in 1915.[27] He thus combined experience in dealing with Egyptians both at work in the field and in a quasi-military capacity.

This early phase of labour recruitment benefited from the substantial assistance of the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior, although it suffered a temporary setback when close to 200 men deserted after being bribed by labour agents when their train halted in Alexandria station.[28] Overall, the men did vital work on Mudros and this was acknowledged by Kitchener himself. The fledgling ELC remained at Mudros until the evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula was completed in January 1916 and it returned to Egypt.[29]

The scale of operations at Gallipoli expanded again in August with the opening of a new beach-head at Suvla Bay. This added to the already onerous task of maintaining the lines of communications and supply, and extra labour was urgently required. On 31 August, Altham reported to the War Office that he required, as soon as possible, additional labourers to work behind the front lines.[30] On the same day, Lieutenant-General William Birdwood, commander of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, suggested to Hamilton that 'we should get some Indian Labour Corps, if possible.'[31] Birdwood served as Secretary to the Army Department of the Government of India until November 1914 and enjoyed a close professional relationship both with the Viceroy and Sir Beauchamp Duff. Lord Hardinge in fact rated Birdwood as 'quite the best all round officer in the Indian Army.'[32] For his part, Duff admitted in November 1914 that he 'would sooner lose a brigade than Birdwood just now.'[33]

Birdwood's proposal was taken up by the War Office. In September 1915 they requested that India raise two Labour Corps on a quasi-military formation for service at Gallipoli.[34] The 1st and 2nd Indian Labour Corps (ILC) were raised in Rawalpindi, in the Punjab, in October and November, and embarked for Gallipoli on 11 and 23 December respectively. However, the evacuation of the peninsula meant that the two

Corps never reached the Dardanelles. Instead, the 1st ILC remained at Suez while the 2nd ILC diverted to Mesopotamia on 3 January 1916.[35]

Military operations at Gallipoli thus witnessed the formation and embryonic growth of both the ELC and the ILC. The failure of the attempt to break through the straits to capture Constantinople constituted one more point on the steep learning curve that confronted the British and imperial armies in the first year of the war, and was seen by many at the time as a strategic and tactical nadir. Yet the more important and less heralded legacy of the campaign was the nucleus of the two labour units that were created during 1915. Over the duration of the war, the labour corps' expanded into mass organisations that carried the armies in Palestine and Mesopotamia to fame and victory and enabled the dreams of the 'war imperialists' in London to become a temporary reality.

The expansion of the Egyptian Labour Corps in 1916

The decision to utilise Egyptian manpower for the military campaigns in Sinai and Palestine tapped into a long history of state and military mobilisation of peasant labour in Egypt. This had been standard practice during the Ottoman period (1517–1882). During the long reign of Muhammad Ali (1805–48), the corvee system of labour conscription was introduced in 1823. Under this system, large amounts of forced labour were raised for the construction of large-scale irrigation projects, and 300,000 labourers worked on the building of a canal linking Alexandria to the Nile.[36] State demands for forced labour were largely abolished during the post-1882 British occupation, with the corvee officially ending in 1892.[37] By 1914, only the Nile Bank Lists, by which able-bodied men were called on annually to participate in essential flood-defence works, remained in force.[38]

Wartime demands for peasant labour consequently built upon a precedent of state mobilisation of labour and a hierarchical bureaucratic structure that projected state power downward to provincial and rural society in order to oversee its organisation. This existing bureaucratic apparatus and institutional memory became valuable in 1918 when shortfalls in voluntary enlistment led rural officials to turn to the Nile Bank Lists to furnish additional recruits.[39] Nevertheless, the impact of British demands for peasant labourers differed qualitatively from their Ottoman precedents, as improvements to irrigation ensured that agriculture had become a year-round activity by 1914. No longer did an agricultural 'off- season' exist in which the men could temporarily offer

their services as under the corvee. Furthermore, demands for military labour peaked in the spring of 1917 and 1918 owing to the need to conduct military operations before the summer heat set in. This clashed directly with the agricultural cycle as it coincided with the wheat harvest in each year.[40]

The overwhelming majority of Egyptian labourers served in the ELC and the CTC. It is estimated that upward of half a million men served in the units between 1915 and 1919, though Egyptian historians dispute this and claim that the real figure is more than one million. The ELC and the CTC formed the backbone of the logistical system, without which the advance into Palestine would not have been possible. Prior to the construction of the railway across Sinai and the introduction of substantial quantities of mechanised transport in 1917, all items of consumption had to be carried into place by man- and animal power. This included all water requirements, which were transported across Sinai by camel until the pipeline became operational in February 1917.[41]

The fledgling ELC returned to Egypt following the evacuation of the Gallipoli beach-heads in January 1916. It then embarked on a period of rapid expansion as manual labourers were mobilised to construct the railway and water pipeline across Sinai. By the end of April 1916, its strength had risen to 41 officers and 9000 men and a formal recruiting structure replaced the hitherto 'ad hoc' system that had over-relied on the collaboration of specialists such as Hicks and other members of the British commercial community.[42] Enlistment initially represented a financially-attractive proposition to many peasants affected by high agricultural unemployment and low wage-rates in 1915–16. This contrasted sharply with the situation in 1917–18 when the opportunity cost of enlistment rose as agricultural wages readjusted to reflect the growing scarcity of agricultural labour.[43]

Military demands for labour continued to grow as the logistical network expanded and the lines of communications lengthened into Palestine. 3800 labourers constructed trench systems and strengthened fortifications in Romani in July 1916, ahead of the anticipated Ottoman counter-attack that came on 4 August. This figure represented the maximum number who could be supplied with water, much to the chagrin of Murray who had ordered the dispatch of 5000 and demanded a report as to why the remaining 1200 had been held back.[44] Nevertheless, Murray was satisfied with their work and remarked that 'I believe it would have been perfectly impossible for Territorial troops in this area to have accomplished one-twentieth of the work these Egyptians have done.'[45]

As the ELC grew in size, the arrangements for mobilising labourers became more intrusive as they penetrated more visibly into agricultural labour markets in rural Egypt. The precise strength of the corps has been disputed as Egyptian historians have rejected the official figures provided by the Foreign Office. These show that the numbers of Egyptians deployed in the ELC with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force rose steadily, from 8935 on 31 March 1916 to 37,454 on 31 December 1916, 49,656 on 30 June 1917, 60,041 on 31 December 1917 and 72,162 on 30 June 1918. In addition to these figures, during 1916 10,463 labourers were sent to France, 8200 to Mesopotamia and 600 to Salonika.[46] These figures correspond roughly to Allenby's own figure of 100,002 Egyptian labourers in November 1918, which is inclusive of all ELC men serving overseas and a further 6406 skilled men in the corps.[47]

Controversy surrounds the overall number of men who served in the corps over the duration of its existence. This is because all ELC men enlisted on three-month contracts for service in Egypt and Palestine, and six-month contracts for service overseas. Consequently, almost one-third of the entire force needed to be replaced each month.[48] A high turnover of men and fluctuating rates of re-enlistment (depending, among other things, on the agricultural cycle), makes it very difficult to calculate the exact number of men who served, and a precise figure may never be known.

Even at the time, British officials in Egypt were anxious to keep the numbers a secret for fear of causing a nationalist backlash if the scale of Egypt's contribution to the war effort became widely known.[49] In this vacuum of information, rumours abounded in Egypt that hundreds of Egyptian labourers in France had been killed when the Germans broke through Fifth Army's lines in Saint-Quentin on 21 March.[50] Later, in September, Sir Milne Cheetham, acting High Commissioner in Wingate's absence, felt it necessary to 'contradict exaggerated rumours to the effect that several hundred thousand labourers had been sent across the Canal.'[51] Both Cheetham and the Foreign Office realised the sensitivity of Egyptian opinion at this point and the widespread perception that Britain was violating the spirit, if not the letter, of the November 1914 proclamation that had stated that Egyptians would be asked to participate in the fighting.

The intensification of enlistment in 1917–18

Demand for labour to serve in the logistical units surged in 1917–18. This reflected the extension of the scope of the military operations into

Palestine and the difficulty of mobilising substantive quantities of local resources of man- and animal power from the inhabitants in the war-afflicted territory that came under occupation. Moreover, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force maintained no more than a foothold in Palestine until the break-out from Gaza in November 1917, and this meant that the majority of labour needed to be recruited from Egypt when the offensive resumed, while during 1918 administrative efforts focused on alleviating the economic dislocation and hardships inherited from the breakdown of Ottoman control. The advance into Palestine and the paucity of local resources available to the advancing army thus added greatly to the strain on Egyptian resources of all kinds, but particularly on the reserves of man- and animal power that were necessary to repair shattered road networks and construct and maintain the lengthening lines of communications and supply that linked the battlefront with supply bases in Egypt itself.

Labour mobilisation in Egypt in 1917–18 followed the broader pattern of more comprehensive and intrusive methods of mobilisation as the war effort in Britain and the colonial peripheries intensified. Until 1917, the terms of the 1914 proclamation acted as a powerful constraint on British policy in Egypt. In May 1917, Wingate, admitted that while Egypt's contribution to the war had been smaller than other belligerent countries, it was 'by no means negligible … within the limits of His Majesty's Government's assurance … and by the requirements of the local political situation.'[52] The issue of Egypt's participation in the war effort became a political issue at this time, when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, William Robertson, telegraphed Murray to remind him that '… It is essential that all parts of the Empire should share the strain as far as local conditions permit.' These final three words were a tacit admission that the November 1914 proclamation prohibited a more dynamic mobilisation of Egyptian resources, but Robertson then overrode this by adding that 'As regards Egypt, I am not satisfied that this is the case.'[53] This telegram set in motion a discussion of the general use of manpower and the scale of Egypt's potential contribution to the war.

The debate that followed pitted the civil authorities in Egypt against their military counterparts, as the latter advocated winning the war as a priority while the former argued that this should not be done at the expense of jeopardising the basis of future British rule. On 22 May, Murray warned Wingate that 'There can be no doubt that Egypt is not feeling the strain of the war,'[54] to which Wingate responded by reaffirming the principles of the proclamation and stating that the need to maintain healthy political conditions in Egypt represented 'a strong

argument against conscription and the mobilisation, in a European sense, of the country's resources.'[55]

These discussions between the civil and military authorities in Egypt matched those taking place between the Foreign Office and the War Office in London, as well as between the different arms of British authority in India and Mesopotamia as well. On 18 June 1917, Sir Ronald Graham, under-secretary at the Foreign Office and until recently the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior in Cairo, informed the Army Council that the Foreign Secretary, Balfour, considered any modification to the proclamation a grave mistake that would not justify the negative impact it would have on public opinion in Egypt.[56] The War Office held a very different view. On 2 July, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Derby, informed Graham that the proclamation was 'the chief stumbling block to the fuller development of the resources for the purposes of the war.'[57]

Allenby's arrival in Egypt with a mandate from the Prime Minister to demand 'such reinforcements and supplies as he found necessary' to take Jerusalem by Christmas settled the issue.[58] The breakthrough at Gaza and Beersheba in November 1917 and the extension of operations into Palestine placed enormous new demands on Egyptian resources to sustain the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and construct the network of railways and roads that connected the front-line troops in Palestine with their supply bases along the Canal. After May 1917, the steadily greater measures of recruitment to the labour units interfered with urban and rural labour markets, disrupted the agricultural cycle and upset the delicate balance between competing civilian and military demands for scarce resources. In this manner, the war contributed to the rapid politicisation of all levels and sectors of society in Egypt.[59]

Enlistment was nominally voluntary and overall responsibility for raising the men rested with British District Recruiting Officers who divided rural Egypt into District Recruiting Areas in 1916. Direct British supervision of the recruitment system ended at this level, as a class of intermediate collaborative groups oversaw the enlistment process at local level. This system followed existing methods of state penetration of Egyptian society as Egyptian agents in each sub-district worked with village headmen (*omdehs*) to recruit the labour. The agents conducted a systematic canvas of each village and received a bounty of five piastres for each recruit who successfully passed a physical examination.[60]

It was in the villages of rural Egypt, far from the official gaze and regulation, that the abuses and compulsion that engendered so much local resentment occurred. British officials in Cairo ascribed practices

such as the acceptance by agents of payment for exemption from men willing and able to pay while effectively conscripting others unable to do so to the 'natural venality' of their Egyptian subordinates.[61] This simplistic appraisal underplayed the reality that the bounty system encouraged agents to collect as many labourers as possible while the urgent demand for labour created an environment of 'don't ask, don't tell' regarding their methods of enlistment. Ominously for the British, the village headmen successfully managed to deflect the subsequent rural backlash against these abuses by shifting the blame to 'tyrannical' British demands for men. As a result, one contemporaneous British official in Cairo acknowledged that 'while we were winning the war, we were losing the fellahin,' long considered the bedrock of British rule in Egypt, as in India.[62]

Rural grievances multiplied as recruitment intensified and became more aggressive in late-1917 and 1918. In August 1917, a Man-Power Committee comprising civil and military officials in Egypt issued a report on the manpower situation. This concluded that the introduction of compulsory enlistment 'would have the most unfortunate results both politically and on the actual volume of service that it would be possible to obtain from the country.'[63] The Committee also acknowledged that the 1914 proclamation was a 'serious impediment to giving assistance to the Army in recruiting and other matters' and suggested that the Egyptian government should take the initiative in setting it aside. Their report also recommended that Egyptian ministers and other influential notables begin a campaign to swing public opinion in favour of a more dynamic recruitment drive.[64]

Wingate endorsed the report on 20 August, in spite of misgivings expressed by the military representatives on the Man-Power Committee who doubted whether the proposed measures would suffice in raising the target of 100,000 men.[65] The report was not well received in London, where Ronald Graham warned Wingate that the prevailing impression was that 'Egypt is profiting from the War without endeavouring to make any adequate return.' Graham advised his close friend and former colleague that 'the bad impression likely to be caused by your answer might be mitigated' if 'you could report that a vigorous recruiting campaign had already begun, and had met with a certain measure of success.'[66]

In response to this warning, Wingate enacted a series of measures that utilised the centralised and vertical framework of the Egyptian state bureaucracy to organise and regulate the enhanced recruitment of labourers. The Council of Ministers approved the measures on 24

August. They aimed to boost enlistment through improving the terms of service and offering incentives to enlist, such as exemption from military service for one year and from the *ghaffir* (local) tax during their period of engagement. A further measure directed the provincial governors (mudirs) and village headmen to undertake a propaganda campaign in favour of enlistment, and on 26 August the Prime Minister, Hussein Rushdi, directed them to use their influence and moral authority with their constituents in this regard.[67]

One of the most important recommended incentives was an increase in the daily rate of pay by three of four piastres. Wingate referred this to the acting Financial Adviser, Sir Ronald Lindsay, for consideration.[68] However, the civil and military authorities in Egypt refused to sanction this increase in pay as they feared it might have a 'very disturbing influence on the general labour market' and 'upset the whole economic condition of the country by creating competition between the Army and Civil employers of labour.'[69] General Jellicoe, Director of Labour with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and one of the military members of the Man-Power Committee, argued that this competition would likely cause 'a general rise in the cost of labour.' This, he feared, would drive up the cost of agricultural production and the price of 'casual and contract labour, of which we employ large amounts.' Jellicoe added pragmatically that an increase in pay would enable labourers to save more and therefore make them reluctant to re-enlist until all such savings had been spent.[70]

The civil and military authorities in Egypt thereby combined to defeat the measure described by Wingate as the most important of the committee's proposals.[71] On 20 October 1917, Rushdi presented a decree to the Council of Ministers that formally modified the existing 1902 decree covering military recruitment. Educated and nationalist opinion in Egypt did not receive the decree with any enthusiasm. Wingate tasked Lindsay with assessing the decree's reception in the apparent belief that it had been warmly received. However, Lindsay's resulting note on 'Optional Volunteering' bluntly stated that the decree had been 'most unfavourably received and largely commented upon by the Egyptians, who consider it as a first step to obligatory service.'[72]

Much talk centred upon its timing as it came just 11 days after the death of the Sultan, Hussein, and Lindsay recorded how public opinion contrasted Hussein as being 'a patriotic Egyptian and a true Moslem who sincerely looked after the welfare of his people' with his successor, Fu'ad, who was 'not a Moslem and cares more for pleasing the English than for the welfare of his people.' The note also warned that nationalist

leaders would use the decree to incite Egyptian public opinion against the British and attempt to impede voluntary enlistment 'by convincing the working classes that service in the Labour Corps is surrounded by great dangers.'[73]

These new recruitment measures temporarily increased the total number of labourers employed in all logistical units from 74,587 on 30 June 1917 to 94,900 on 31 December. This was achieved through the application of the more aggressive methods of enlistment, which exposed the inherent contradictions in the euphemistically-titled system of 'compulsory volunteering' that had developed away from prying official eyes.[74] In February 1917 one British officer, Edward Venables, visited an unnamed village in rural Egypt and witnessed a canvas of its population. He later described how the local officials accepted payment for exemption from those able to pay while virtually conscripting the rest of the men. Venables' account of the volunteers' departure, '… escorted by native police, who were hard pressed to restrain the crowd of women and other relatives … wailing and waving mournful arms as the train of open trucks moved northward …' does not give an impression of men enlisting voluntarily.[75]

Finding adequate numbers of British officers and non-commissioned officers for the labour units initially proved a significant difficulty that inhibited their efficiency until it was overcome in 1917. In 1914, Egypt was thoroughly scoured for Arabic-speaking officers for the military and intelligence units.[76] This did not prevent serious staff shortages throughout 1915, when a mere eight officers were available to organise the embarkation of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to the Dardanelles in 1915.[77] When the ELC returned to Egypt in January 1916 its original officers took over the senior positions in the corps, and its rapid expansion left it requiring many more British officers than were available.[78]

The initial solution was to give commissions to private citizens 'qualified by their occupation in Egypt to understand and handle Egyptian labourers.' Primarily this meant the British commercial community and other longstanding residents of Egypt with knowledge of Arabic and patterns of Egyptian life, which the military authorities hoped would compensate for their lack of military experience.[79] In April 1916, the Financial Advisor set up a committee to assess the suitability for military service of all male British residents of Egypt. This produced 466 men who were given non-commissioned status in the ELC and CTC[80] Not all of these new recruits proved a success, as evidenced by Edward Venables' description of one of them at Deir el

Belah in September 1917: while he had 'a charming manner and a wide education,'

> What unkind fate put him in charge of a company of unruly Egyptians I do not know ... as far as military matters go, he scarcely knows a corporal from a general or a rifle-bullet from a six-inch shell.[81]

The problem was finally resolved in October 1916, when authorisation was obtained to select suitable non-commissioned officers from among the ranks of military units serving in Egypt and attest them for commissioned rank. The men had to pass an Arabic course before receiving a temporary commission, and 401 men received commissions in this way.[82]

Among the men commissioned was Venables, an Arabic speaker who was posted to the ELC in February 1917 and placed in charge of work parties laying a light-railway line behind the front line at Gaza. In the spring of 1918 the unit worked on developing the lateral road communications between Jaffa and Jerusalem to military standard. During the autumn operations of 1918, he took command of 39th Company ELC that was attached to the Engineers of the 10th Infantry Division. There, the company was involved in laying railway tracks to enable supplies to be brought up to the front lines.[83]

These experiences reflected the nature of the work performed by the ELC. Egyptian labourers proved integral to the construction of the water pipeline across Sinai as they unloaded the pipes as they arrived at Qantara, cut a path through the desert and the undulating hills of southern Palestine, and hauled the pipes into position.[84] Work on the railway involved similar duties of preparing the ground and loading and unloading the material under the supervision of the Royal Engineers.[85] This demonstrated the manner in which the imposition of the tools of industrialised warfare on to a pre-industrial setting actually added to demands on local manpower to construct and maintain the logistical machine. This is an important comparative distinction to research on the evolution of industrialised conflict in already-industrialised settings, in which the railways and factories already existed and whose output reduced, rather than increased, the burden on 'traditional' sources of manpower for their transportation to the front.

The adoption of 'compulsory volunteering' and its backlash in 1918

In the early months of 1918, the temporary boost to enlistment began to fall away and the first signs appeared of the slump in recruiting that

would lead to eventual crisis in May. Weekly enlistment returns plunged from 4000 in March to 1800 in April as the start of the wheat harvest and higher wage rates in the agricultural sector increased the opportunity cost of enlistment for many peasants.[86] News of the great German offensive on the Western Front on 21 March also filtered through to Egypt and it seemed for a time that the war might be lost. This contributed to a general reluctance to enlist, as did stories of sickness and hardship from returning ELC and CTC veterans and an outbreak of cholera among labour units in Palestine in January 1918.[87]

The accumulation of these factors led to the collapse of the voluntary system of enlistment, however nebulous it was on the ground. On 1 May, Allenby informed Wingate that 'recruiting … has now become so unsatisfactory and shows every inclination to remain so that it is of the utmost importance to reconsider the question of compulsion.'[88] With Wingate and both the Sultan and the Egyptian Prime Minister all opposed to a formal method of conscription, the High Commission instead adopted a scheme of 'administrative pressure.' This involved requisitioning labour from rural villages by more aggressively tapping the hierarchical structure of bureaucratic structures in Egypt.[89] Within the High Commission itself, officials referred to this process as 'compulsory volunteering,' without seeming to register the absurdity of the terminology.[90]

On 8 May, Wingate told Allenby he believed that 'a corvee system of such a kind … could be introduced without causing great discontent among the native population.'[91] Once again, events proved him wrong as rural opposition to the measures escalated. 'Various regrettable incidents' occurred, almost daily, in late-May, June and July as peasants attacked village officials and policemen who attempted to round up the 'volunteers.' Once again, the British authorities blamed the disturbances on the omdehs, whom they suspected of using corrupt measures to collect the men. In particular, officials believed the new measures 'brought to a head long standing differences between village factions.'[92] One political officer reported how 'Junior Officials, Omdehs and Sheikhs used it as a weapon against their personal enemies, as well as for the purposes of extortion.'[93] In this manner, the system of 'compulsory volunteering' became a haven of 'favouritism and baksheesh' that was 'allowed to drift into a means of oppression of the poor and helpless.'[94]

British officials were well aware that the adoption of this scheme of 'administrative pressure' went against the Man-Power Commission's warning against any system of compulsion in August 1917. In September 1918, Sir Milne Cheetham, deputising for Wingate during his leave in

London, admitted that 'the expedient is not in agreement with the general sentiment and character of our administration in Egypt.'[95] He also claimed that Wingate had been 'entirely averse to conscription' and had adopted this scheme because he thought it offered the only chance of successfully obtaining the men. It thus proved a compromise between the military's call for conscription and the combined opposition to such a move by the British civilian and Egyptian officials.[96] However, the presentation of the scheme as an alternative to compulsion merely ensured that its introduction was all the more resented by opponents who quickly realised that it amounted to compulsion in all but name.

For his part, Rushdi attempted to pre-empt and minimise any political opposition to the reforms by instructing his provincial governors to 'intensify your effort for the encouragement of Recruits by explaining to people that the voluntary system is much better for them as it means better pay, shorter periods of service, more leaves, etc.'[97] When the incidents of evasion and violent opposition to the new system began to occur on a daily basis, Wingate adopted a fatalistic view as he noted that 'we must be prepared for similar occurrences as long as it is necessary to apply a certain amount of pressure.'[98] Nevertheless, British officials did attempt to improve the system of recruitment to correct the more blatant abuses of privilege and power. On 26 May, the residency decided to utilise the existing Nile Bank lists, prepared for the annual call-up of labour for essential flood protection works, as the basis of enlistment. This, officials believed, would relieve local village officials of the responsibility for collecting the men and allay suspicions that personal animosity or favour lay behind their choice of recruits.[99] From this point on, the system of recruitment remained basically unchanged until the end of the war although abuses continued to occur in the vacuum of administrative oversight and supervisory regulation.

Instead, it was British officials in London, particularly in the Foreign Office, who remained unaware of the political damage being wrought to their position in rural Egypt in particular. On 28 March 1919, the novelist E.M. Forster wrote a letter to the Manchester Guardian in which he claimed that the military authorities in Egypt had gradually adopted a system of compulsion. Forster had lived in Alexandria for three years during the war, and he now alleged that many of the labourers had been subjected to brutal treatment and 'disgraceful' medical conditions that promoted rather than checked the spread of typhus and led regular units to 'dread being camped in their vicinity.'[100] Officials at the Foreign Office reacted with shock and disbelief and forwarded the letter to the Army Council to demand in immediate enquiry while

noting that the presence of the Egyptian labourers 'behind the lines of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force undoubtedly won the Palestine campaign.'[101] Somewhat predictably, the Army Council reported that they could not find any truth in any of the allegations and claimed that the numbers of men re-enlisting proved that service in the labour corps was popular.[102]

The archival record does contain numerous accounts at a number of levels that support Forster's basic contention that the labourers were ill-treated. One British soldier serving in Egypt witnessed the whipping and lashing of labourers and recorded in his diary that 'the treatment of these Egyptians is a scandal.'[103] In the House of Commons, Captain Wedgwood Benn raised the issue of lashing during an emergency debate on the unrest in Egypt in May 1919. Benn served in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force during the war and argued that as the ELC was not a fighting unit the use of the lash should not have been permitted.[104] In Egypt itself, an internal report on 'Complaints of Men Returned from the Labour Corps' ascribed much of the blame for the abuses to the venality of Egyptian officials in the units. It recorded how the 'great majority of men say that they are badly treated, more especially by their non-English officials' who, it alleged, demanded bribes before distributing food and water or providing medical care.[105]

In the final analysis, the formation of the ELC and related units such as the CTC and their progressive expansion into complex large-scale organisations employing 100,000 men by November 1918 enabled GHQ to maintain a line of communications and supply stretching from the Suez Canal to Jerusalem, and support the final operations to Damascus and Aleppo, more than 700 miles from the rear bases. This was a formidable logistical achievement by the military authorities in Egypt. It involved a series of compromises between the civil and military branches of the British administration and often-uneasy co-operation with the Egyptian ministerial branch as each group held different aims and objectives. Without their collaboration, Murray could not have crossed the Sinai in 1916 and Allenby could not have advanced to fame and glory in Jerusalem in 1917 and gained such a resounding a success at Megiddo in 1918.

Nevertheless, the demand for labour to serve in the logistical units was so great that it involved the penetration and distortion of rural labour markets, made possible by a significantly enhanced expansion of the state's extractive capacity. Although this built-upon Ottoman-era practices it interfered with agricultural patterns in a fundamentally different manner as improvements to irrigation meant that by 1916

agriculture had become a year-round activity. This meant that the agricultural 'off-season' in which labourers had formerly served under the corvee no longer existed. Consequently, the opportunity cost to the peasant labourer was increased, and this grew larger in 1917–18 when recruitment to the labour units bid up agricultural wage rates. The resulting system of 'administrative pressure' caused hardship on a number of levels, but the local Egyptian officials charged with implementing it managed to project much of the blame and focus of local discontent on to the British. This proved significant in April 1919, when rural Egypt joined the nationalist-led backlash against the British and shed their parochial outlook as they specifically identified and attacked British targets and symbols of control such as railway and telegraph lines.[106]

The mobilisation of labour in Mesopotamia and India: similarities and differences

Even more so than in Egypt, where groups of West Indian labourers worked alongside the men of the ELC, the recruitment of labourers in Mesopotamia was multi-cultural and multilingual. Edward Candler, the official 'eye-witness' to the Mesopotamia Campaign, described in 1916 'a confusion of tongues' that would have defeated even the builders of the Biblical Tower of Babel. 'Coolies and artisans came in from China and Egypt, and from the East and West Indies, the aboriginal Santals and Paharias from Bengal, Moplahs, Thyas and Nayars from the West Coast, Nepalese quarrymen, Indians of all races and creeds, as well as the Arabs and Chaldeans of the country.'[107]

Mobilisation of labour for military duties in Mesopotamia began in earnest in 1916. Initially, this took place in India, and during the war a total of 293,152 Indian non-combatants served in Mesopotamia.[108] This figure included clerks, porters, syces and followers as well as military labourers, and in November 1918 a total of 31,158 Indians were employed in the various labour units. They worked alongside a further 26,000 Indian labourers in the Railway Directorate and 10,500 in Inland Water Transport.[109] The Indians were complemented by local Arab, Persian and Kurdish labourers who were recruited by the Labour Directorate in Baghdad. Their strength peaked at 61,718 in April 1918 before falling to 45,750 in July as men were diverted to agricultural work instead.[110]

The process of downward mobilisation and extraction of manpower in India contained three broad similarities to the Egyptian experience. It, too, built upon a long tradition of labour mobilisation, both for military

campaigning and for commercial concerns. This enabled British officials to utilise existing structures and networks of labour agents that existed in Assam and elsewhere in India for the collection and despatch of labourers for the tea plantations and indentured service.[111] It also provided British officialdom with prior knowledge of the hill tribes and other non-caste Hindu groups who could be tapped for military labour and sent overseas. This was necessary to prevent any repeat of the hasty and ill-judged attempt in 1915 to recruit Hindu labourers for service overseas.[112]

A second similarity was that labour recruitment clashed with the agricultural cycle. In India, as in Egypt, pre-1914 'rhythms of recruiting' largely kept time with the agricultural calendar.[113] During the First World War, and particularly in 1917–18, however, British civil and military officials in Delhi became anxious to relieve the strain on the Punjab caused by extensive demands on its manpower and agricultural resources. Similar to Egypt, the delicate balance between civil and military demands for resources exposed the difficulties in mobilising peasant economies for participation in large-scale, industrialised warfare.[114] This led the Government of India to broaden the recruitment pool by extending enlistment to social classes and groups hitherto not considered martial races and intensifying their campaign to mobilise indigenous manpower supplies.[115]

The third similar feature was the spectre of forced labour systems that hung over military recruiters in both India and Egypt. The escalation of military demands for labour in India in 1917 coincided with the nationalist outcry, led by Mohandas Gandhi, against the indentured labour system and its suspension, also in 1917.[116] British civil officials in Delhi shared the concerns of their counterparts in Cairo lest demands for military labour be interpreted as the re-imposition of forced labour systems. Indeed, in March 1919, the Viceroy warned the civil commission in Baghdad that Indian public opinion 'would not tolerate any form of indentured labour in Mesopotamia in peace time.'[117] This was a response to the civil commission's attempts to retain their Indian labourers after the expiration of their contracts and the end of the war. It illustrated the acute political sensitivity of labour issues, which Gandhi made the subject of his first major political campaign in India following his return in 1915.

In Mesopotamia, the invasion and conquest of enemy territory required the British to construct a state apparatus to fill the administrative vacuum created by the retreating Ottoman authorities. This was necessary for the organisation and extraction of local manpower to

begin. It also depended on the establishment of political links with the diverse tribal and sub-tribal groupings that constituted the majority of the rural population in Mesopotamia. The earlier projection of British control over substantive territory in Mesopotamia (relative to Palestine) ensured that occupied areas could be tapped for its resources in a way that was not possible in the Egyptian campaign. In Mesopotamia, it meant that demands for labour and agricultural produce from tribal and sub-tribal units became enmeshed within a broader reconstitution of power relations and structures of hierarchical control. Two major differences thus distinguished the recruitment of labour in Mesopotamia from its counterparts in Egypt and India. The first was the lack of an existing bureaucratic structure through which British officials could work. Meanwhile, for the tribes themselves, the extension and projection of centralised state control and demands for resources constituted a major departure from their de facto autonomy under Ottoman governance, which had largely been restricted to the major cities and had not extended to many tribal regions.[118]

The campaign in Mesopotamia: a labour-intensive affair

Military labour requirements surged in Mesopotamia during 1916 as troops and supplies rushed to Basra to participate in the three operations to relieve Kut. Crippling labour shortages at every stage of the line of communications contributed greatly to the eventual failure of these operations as the absence of any labour organisation became sorely felt.[119] The absence of wharves at the makeshift harbour in Basra required labourers to physically unload the contents of ocean-going steamers into lighters and subsequently transfer them on to river steamers for the journey up-river. This double-handling of goods exacerbated both the strain on inadequate supplies of labour and the congestion and chaos in the port.[120]

A second urgent requirement for manpower in the initial stages of the operations in 1915 and early 1916 was for the construction of the network of supply bases that linked Basra with the various up-river staging posts and front lines. This stretched existing supplies of local and the few imported labourers beyond their capacity as they were required to load and unload stores in Basra and could not be spared for duties up-river. In 1916, Lieutenant-General Gorringe, commanding Tigris Corps in the operations to relieve Kut, noted that the absence of skilled and pioneer labour greatly hampered the military's preparations for the second and third attempts to relieve the town.[121]

The third urgent task requiring labour was for flood protection works in and around Basra. Up to ninety per cent of the region around Basra was annually affected by the spring floods. Unusually severe flooding in 1915 left the entire area from Basra to Shu'aiba under three feet of water, flooded the newly-constructed port at Magil, and forced both British and Ottoman troops out of their positions at Qurna.[122] Belatedly, in August 1915 the military authorities acknowledged the vital importance of protecting the ground space required for camp-sites, store depots, hospital accommodation and transport from renewed flooding in the spring of 1916. They achieved this through constructing a series of protective embankments known as bunds along the river-front and the innumerable creeks.[123]

The most extensive bund stretched twelve miles from Shu'aiba to Basra and was six feet high and ten feet wide. It took eight months to construct from August 1915 to April 1916 and was completed only days before the spring floods began in earnest. Throughout its construction, the work was delayed and hampered by the shortages of local and imported labourers, and by difficulties in enlisting local additional men.[124] The faltering progress of the Shu'aiba bund encapsulated in miniature the wider problems that inhibited the recruitment of sufficient labour in Mesopotamia in the first half of the war.[125]

Throughout this formative period there were two major obstacles to the large-scale recruitment of local labour. Prior to 1914, British influence in the Ottoman vilayats in Mesopotamia was confined to the urban hinterlands of Baghdad and Basra, with very little interaction with the tribal populations in rural regions.[126] Relations between the tribal groupings in the Basra vilayat and the newly-appointed political officers consequently had to be built virtually from scratch in 1915.[127] This took priority in 1915, and meant that the nascent civil administration in Basra initially confined their requests for labour to the sheikhs of the southern Tigris tribes. By virtue of their position along the artery of Ottoman trade, these groups were more accustomed to a greater measure of centralised state demands for resource extraction than their tribal counterparts in the more isolated southern marshes along the Euphrates.[128]

Meanwhile, internal competition between the numerous civil and military departments within Basra for the finite pool of existing labour provided an additional obstacle to the recruitment of local labour in 1915. This arose from the failure to centralise all demands for labour and establish an organisation to handle the enlistment of local manpower.[129] Such bureaucratic confusion hampered recruiting efforts and

caused local wage rates to rise as local labour contractors played departments off against each other.[130]

Both obstacles came together late in 1915 in the rush to complete the Shu'aiba bund before the spring floods recommenced in April 1916. Local political officers tried without success to induce local sheikhs to provide the labour, and attempts by local contractors to undertake the work also failed.[131] This owed much to bad timing as the need for men in the early autumn coincided with the date-picking season, which represented the peak of the regional agricultural cycle. However, the use of day labourers also proved unproductive, and the irrigation officers responsible for its construction ascribed this to the easy availability of work in Basra, which local labourers preferred as an alternative to heavy manual work in the desert.[132]

The shortfall in manpower became so acute in November 1915 that the Irrigation Department recommended that labour be imported from India to complete the bund in time. Once again, the resulting difficulties in obtaining suitable labour in sufficient numbers laid bare the haphazard and flawed systems of enlistment that undermined early efforts to enlist labour. An attempt in February 1916 to raise 4000 labourers in India failed, as the majority refused to embark for Mesopotamia and dispersed through fear of crossing the sea and entering the war zone.[133] This hasty effort revealed a basic ignorance of religious scruples and of the groups and social classes of men who would be prepared to enlist for labour overseas. It also betrayed the reality that rumours of the hardships inflicted on Indian troops in the retreat from Ctesiphon and siege of Kut were circulating in India. Sir John Hewett, former governor of the United Provinces and a member of the Viceroy's Council, admitted to the Mesopotamia Commission that in spite of British efforts to suppress news of the reverses from filtering through, the Indians 'know what is going on in Mesopotamia, and they are not going near there if they can help it.'[134]

Between December 1915 and April 1916, the rapid increase in Force D to five infantry divisions threatened to overwhelm the non-combatant services, including labour. The diversion to Basra of the two ILC units, raised in the Punjab and intended for the Dardanelles, provided a partial and temporary solution.[135] In an indication of the general state of chaos prevalent in Basra at that time, the labourers remained within Basra working on the flood protection defences, road construction and camp layout duties. The first Indian labour unit to arrive at Basra, the 2nd ILC, thus worked in the port for six months after its arrival in January 1916, and only moved up the line in July, some three months after the fall of Kut.[136]

Two further labour corps and one porter corps reached Mesopotamia from India in June and July as the bureaucratic apparatus in India gradually extended to oversee the mobilisation and extraction of Indian resources for the war. This process was far from unproblematic, however, as long delays remained between the calls for labour and the actual dispatch of the corps. Partially, this was attributable to the bad reputation attached to service in Mesopotamia, but it also reflected military officials' unwillingness to interfere with the recruitment of combatant personnel in the Punjab, from where the 1st and 2nd ILC had been raised.[137] Labour accordingly had to be raised elsewhere, and after an attempt to raise men in the Central Provinces proved unsuccessful, they were obtained from the tribes of the Santal Parganas and Chota Nagpur.[138]

During the summer of 1916, military labour requirements in Mesopotamia escalated further in preparation for the resumption of offensive operations in the autumn. In response, two decisive developments occurred in Mesopotamia and India that transformed their manpower contribution to the war both qualitatively and quantitatively. By mid-1916, the newly-formed Port, IWT and Railway Directorates in Basra all required large amounts of labour. So, too, did the Works Department and the Royal Engineers, which undertook the enormous tasks of road construction, land reclamation in Basra and water supply work.[139] Two labour units were raised locally from Arab and Persian workers, but in August 1916 the local labour situation became so acute that a Controller of Native Labour was appointed to centralise all demands for labour and control its distribution to the various services and depots in Basra. Thus, on 20 September, Captain F.D. Frost became the first Controller of Native Labour, and his organisation steadily evolved into a Directorate of Labour in 1917 that ultimately assumed responsibility for all local and imported labour in March 1918.[140]

A similar consolidation of recruitment structures occurred in India following Monro's arrival as commander-in-chief of the Indian Army in October 1916. Monro had commanded First Army on the western front and seen at first hand the complex logistical requirements of industrialised warfare. Once in India, he surrounded himself with talented administrators such as Major-General Edward Altham, author of a 1914 volume *The Principles of War* that recognised that the advent of the tools and means of industrialised conflict had shifted the parameters of modern warfare and contained 'important strategical [sic] and even tactical consequences.'[141] Altham's appointment as Quartermaster-General was part of a wide-ranging reform of the Indian military structure that tackled the problems of over-centralisation and

short-sightedness by strengthening the powers and responsibilities of its separate branches.[142]

The significance of these changes to the system of recruitment lay in the consolidation of the six separate recruiting structures into one organisation under the new Adjutant-General, Sir Havelock Hudson. Hitherto, responsibility for raising non-combatant personnel had been divided between the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, the Director-General of Military Works, the Director of Medical Services, the Director-General of Ordnance and the Railway Board.[143] This paved the way for the establishment of a joint civil-military Central Recruiting Board in March 1917. The new organisation co-ordinated all recruiting for both combatant and non-combatant branches and worked towards minimising the impact of military demands for labour on essential industrial and economic services in India. A network of Provincial Recruiting Boards performed similar functions at local levels.[144] The creation and subsequent performance of these boards exemplified the remarkable expansion of India's contribution to the war after the traumatic experiences of 1916.

Closer civil-military co-operation in India paid an immediate dividend with the formation of the first Jail Labour and Porter Corps in October 1916. The employment of gangs of prisoners on heavy manual work was not an entirely new precedent. Sir George Younghusband recalled how in the Sudan campaign in 1885 the work of unloading ships at Suakin had been done by gangs of 'lifetimers who had been tried and condemned for participating too heartily in the Alexandria massacres' of 1882.[145] Following the successful trial of jail labour in Mesopotamia early in 1916, the Home Department of the Government of India sanctioned their use and placed them under the responsibility of the Inspector-General of Prisons in the Central Provinces, Colonel Lane.[146]

Prisoners for the jail labour units were subsequently raised from jailhouses across India, with valuable assistance being received from jails in the Punjab and Bombay.[147] Incentives to the prisoners to enlist included the remission of unexpired portions of their sentence upon completion of their contract, and if their sentence expired during their period of service they were transferred to 'free' companies attached to the units.[148] Although initially viewed with suspicion by the military authorities in Mesopotamia, the units were kept well away from the front lines and any potential disruptive impact on native and free Indian labourers elsewhere. Their primary duties involved heavy fatigues such as loading and unloading ocean-going vessels and river craft, stacking

stores, and road making.[149] Lane judged the use of convicts a success, and noted laconically that prisoners 'have, as a rule, more initiative and energy than free men or they would not be in jail.' He was also guided by a moralising belief that, 'just as in the Boy Scout movement, a boy's energies are trained into right channels, so we should attempt to train the energies of convicts into a right channel.'[150]

In total, India raised four Jail Labour Corps and three Porter Corps of 16,000 men, and the Director of Labour in Mesopotamia commented that 'the jail gate has been one of the best recruiting grounds' for labourers.[151] In a parallel to the early officering arrangements for the Egyptian Labour Corps, their officers were drawn from the British commercial community with a particular focus on men whose occupations involved contact with labourers in a civilian context. In this manner, the officer commanding 5th United Provinces Jail Porter Corps had eight years experience of tea planting in Assam, while the officer commanding 11th Bombay Jail Labour Corps brought 16 years experience of handling large amounts of labourers in Malabar. Other officers came from tea plantations in the Federated Malay States while many had some military experience dating back to the South African War. Lane commented favourably on 'the combination of military discipline with the commercial aim of the planter in getting the most out of his men with the least expenditure.'[152]

The utilisation of commercial planters from Assam and elsewhere demonstrated how the civil and military authorities in India belatedly tapped existing commercial and administrative structures for gathering manpower for the plantations, railways and indentured service.[153] This long precedent of labour extraction in certain parts of India also bequeathed a legacy of recruitment among selected classes and groups. In 1917–18, British officials turned their attention towards these communities as they sought to broaden the base of recruitment and reduce the strain on the Punjab by spreading demands for labour more equitably across India. Their new recruitment drive targeted the regions of Assam and Manipur that contained hill tribes such as Kukis and Chins with long histories of supplying 'coolie gangs' and labourers for the tea plantations.[154] Yet it was only in February 1917 that the Government of India systematically began the extraction of this rich source of labourers.[155]

Officers for these local labour units came from a variety of sources both in India and Mesopotamia. Many came from commissions offered to men in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers (IARO) and from Territorial and New Army units serving in Mesopotamia. As in Egypt,

men were preferred who held experience of handling labourers before the war.[156] One such officer, James Young, brought 35 years of working with Indian labourers to his command of 3rd Arab Labour Corps. His experiences had instilled in him a firm belief in discipline and corporal punishment as a means of maintaining order.[157]

These developments in India and Mesopotamia in the autumn of 1916 set up a formal system of labour control and distribution that regulated the substantial rise in labour for the military campaign. The number of Indian labourers in military labour units in Mesopotamia increased steadily to 31,158 in November 1918, alongside the Indians in other departments and directorates such as IWT, Railways and Works. During the war, a total of 588,717 Indian combatants and non-combatants went to Mesopotamia, of which almost half – 293,152 – were non-combatants.[158]

The arrival of large numbers of labourers from India transformed the logistical networks of the MEF as they released other labour units for vital work at the numerous staging-posts and supply dumps up-river. 2nd ILC finally moved up from Basra in July 1916 and proceeded to develop Sheikh Sa'ad into a sophisticated advanced base.[159] Once away from the major towns, however, problems sometimes developed as unscrupulous officers diverted the labourers to other activities. In this way, the 6th ILC constructing the Tigris Corps camp at Falayah was threatened with disciplinary action when officials in Baghdad discovered that the men had been diverted to laying out a polo field for their British officers.[160] Overall, though, the labourers played a crucial role in Maude's successful advance to Baghdad by constructing and maintaining a growing network of railways and roads that connected the administrative services and field depots with the troops in front and the base behind.[161] Maude himself paid deserved tribute to their work by acknowledging that they 'removed obstacles which had hitherto hindered development.'[162]

The pacification of Mesopotamia and diversion of military labour to civil use

Demand for labour surged once more after the capture of Baghdad in March 1917 and subsequent occupation of the surrounding vilayet. Yet this time the labour was increasingly required for the civil pacification of the occupied territories, thereby blurring the distinction between essential military works and 'state-building' projects. This reflected the increasingly 'double aspect' of the 'Pax Britannica' that was unfolding in

Mesopotamia.[163] As the departments of Local Resources and Irrigation expanded into Directorates, they made growing demands on labour to facilitate the extraction and collection of agricultural resources. Simultaneously, the Directorate of Works became the major employer of local labour, and the role of the Controller of Native Labour evolved into overseeing their recruitment and distribution between these three super-departments.[164]

The first labour units reached Baghdad three days after its fall and were organised under an Assistant Director of Works who used them to construct a network of roads linking the various Departmental sites to each other.[165] In May 1917, the recruitment of local labour intensified with the setting up of two recruiting offices in Baghdad and the organisation of a structure of Area Labour Commandants in the occupied territories. Civil and political officers organised local labour corps in towns as they came under occupation. They were complemented by units raised in southern towns such as Qurna and Amara, which had been occupied in 1915 but now were being tapped more aggressively for their manpower.[166] This system oversaw a great expansion in the number of local labourers employed with the Department of Native Labour. Their numbers rose from 4000 in October 1916 to 39,328 in October 1917 before peaking at 61,718 in April 1918.[167]

This enhanced recruitment of local labour clashed with agricultural patterns and markets in the occupied territories and created pools of resentment at the often-forced enlistment of the men. Wages remained fixed at their 1917 levels even as the prices of commodities rose continuously in 1917–18, and in December 1917 a memorandum from Sir Percy Cox's office admitted that the creation of Arab Labour Corps' had been 'detrimental to agricultural interests.' The memorandum went on to describe how in certain districts such as Aziziya, 'whole tracts which could be turned into crop bearing areas are lying deserted' as 'the demand for railway and roads, as well as for coolie work in the camps, prevent the extension of cultivation and is a strain on that which exists.'[168] During 1918, the number of local labourers employed in the Arab Labour Corps (ALC) declined steadily as the civil and military authorities paid greater attention to agricultural requirements, and the prospect of a good harvest prompted the release of 13,000 men for cultivation purposes.[169]

During the twenty months between March 1917 and November 1918, the focus of activity in Mesopotamia shifted from military works to the implementation of large-scale 'state-building' projects in agriculture and irrigation. Initially, these comprised the construction of bridges,

railways and roads designed to facilitate and safeguard the lines of communications. These had a demonstrably military purpose and employed large amounts of the Indian porter and jail labourers on brick-making and heavy earthwork.[170] These works notwithstanding, the deployment of military labourers shifted decisively in September 1917 when the War Office approved an Agricultural Development Scheme to develop the fertile regions of the Euphrates valley. The project formed a crucial part of the pacification of the volatile Euphrates region, and illustrated the interlinking of demands for labour and agricultural resources that accompanied the extension of political control in Mesopotamia. Although designed with the aim of reducing the strain on scarce shipping capacity by boosting the production of local resources, it greatly increased the strain on existing pools of labour as the Directorates of Irrigation, Agriculture and Works all required large numbers of manpower.[171]

Measures to mobilise and extract labour in the Euphrates region, in particular, provoked powerful feelings of resentment from tribes that had fiercely resisted Ottoman state demands for resources before 1914.[172] British political officers and military authorities failed to consult with local sheikhs or emphasise the communal benefits of the agricultural and irrigation projects. Instead, they demanded labour 'whether the people themselves wanted the new works or not.'[173] One political officer serving in Samawa concluded in 1919 that demands for labour had been a great cause of tribal dissatisfaction that contributed to the widespread attribution of 'all the misery and hardship caused by the war' to the British administration.[174]

The extension of military operations to Persia and the Trans-Caspian region in early 1918 eroded the distinction between military and political objectives still further. The Dunsterville mission had no bearing on the broader military campaigns against the Ottoman Empire, but aimed instead to forestall the spread of Bolshevik influence throughout central Asia. Much of the region was in a state of famine following three years of fighting between the Ottoman and Russian armies, and labour was urgently needed on famine-relief operations and road and rail construction towards Khaniqin. One stopgap measure was the enlistment of local Persian labourers and refugees and eight local labour corps formed in 1918. This was only achieved after military officials persuaded the American Relief Committee to cease providing aid to the destitute in order to drive them on to the labour market 'instead of loafing around for relief…'[175]

The final stages of the Mesopotamia campaign therefore witnessed the paradoxical peaking of demands for labour only after the culmination of large-scale military operations. Additional labour from India became necessary to replace the 13,000 local cultivators who reverted to agricultural work in July 1918. The military authorities in Baghdad accordingly recommended that further labour units be requested from India and four arrived in September and October.[176] Even these did not prove sufficient to meet the voracious labour requirements of irrigation and agriculture, railways and roads, port development and famine-relief works. With the imminent ending of military operations, the authorities in Baghdad began to consider how to safeguard their sources of cheap manpower and extend it into the post-war period.

On 1 November 1918, the War Office instructed Marshall to organise the thousands of prisoners of war captured during the final advance on Mosul into labour units.[177] On the same day, the Director of Labour in Baghdad informed GHQ that 'for some time after the War, Mesopotamia will have to depend on India for labour.'[178] Two weeks later, on 14 November, he cautioned that 'I do not consider that the present force of labour can be reduced, and will probably require to be increased.'[179] This set in motion a dialogue between civil and military officials in Baghdad and the Government of India over the legal status of the 'declaration of war contracts' signed by the majority of the men. This legal foot-dragging stimulated nationalist fears in India that efforts to retain Indian labourers in Mesopotamia amounted to the introduction of new forms of indentured labour.[180] It also required some sleight of hand on the part of the officer commanding 11th (Bombay) Indian Labour Corps who led his unit in Peace Day celebrations in July 1919 while explaining to the men that 'this was Peace between the ALLIES and GERMANY only and that we are still at war.'[181]

Hence, the conclusion of this labour-intensive campaign on 31 October 1918 placed the new British administration in Mesopotamia in a difficult position. Their reliance on the thousands of local and imported labourers for the infrastructural schemes that were vital to projecting their centralised control over Mesopotamia lay in jeopardy. However, the continuation of enlistment and attempts to extend wartime demands for labour into the post-war period fuelled local discontent both in Mesopotamia itself and among circles of educated and nationalist Indians. Unease in Mesopotamia centred on the occupying forces' attempted transition to permanent control, while Indians focused on their exclusion from the spoils of the peace settlement and

perceived British attempts to construct a system of labour emigration that would replace the old system of indentured labour.

The twin faces of war

The mobilisation of labourers for wartime service in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian campaigns represented the most visible and intrusive example of the more aggressive form of imperial control that developed in 1917–18. It required the state to penetrate more deeply into society and adopt progressively harsher methods of recruitment to meet the inexorable rise in labour demands. This, in turn, interfered with agricultural and other commercial patterns and became a potent source of rural grievance in each region. Although the dynamics of recruitment differed from case to case, the underlying trends towards greater authoritarianism in patterns of enlistment raised the opportunity cost of service and made it more unpopular as the war went on. These grievances, and the attendant economic hardships that resulted from the forced displacement of large amounts of agricultural labourers from their land, will be examined in full in chapter seven.

Yet the campaigns undertaken by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force also demonstrate the paradox inherent in the introduction of industrialised warfare to the region. This was the awkward synthesis between tradition and modernity in the largely hostile and pre-industrial desert terrain of the Middle East. The logistical requirements necessary to supply and transport the military forces over long lines of communications added greatly to the demands on local resources of manpower for their initial construction. Once in position, labourers were required to maintain the facilities and service the vast quantities of war materiel that could now be moved up to the front, stockpiled and expended in military operations. Hence, the imposition of the tools of industrialised conflict did not lessen the demands on comparatively 'primitive' resources of man-and animal power but instead remained dependent on them for the duration of the war.

The mass raising of armies of labourers to service the logistical requirements of the two campaigns also represented a quantitative shift from pre-1914 state demands for labour. It involved the significant projection of state power downward into society in order to oversee the extraction of the labourers. In turn, the removal of large numbers of young adult males in rural regions of Egypt, Mesopotamia and India had an important secondary impact on the communities left behind,

particularly in the Punjab, as patterns of agriculture and employment became distorted. Moreover, the scale of demands for manpower contributed to the build-up of powerful grievances among rural communities who gradually identified conditions of wartime hardship with the extension of British control. As such, the mobilisation of labour for military purposes during the First World War succeeded in meeting the demands posed by the labour-intensive campaigns in the deserts of the Middle East, but also formed an integral part of the 'crisis of Empire' that occurred between 1919 and 1922.

6
Extraction of Agricultural Resources

The logistical requirements of industrial warfare required combatant states to out-produce as well as out-fight their enemy. In Britain, the penetrative reach of the wartime state expanded as grand strategy came to encompass the mobilisation of the nation's economic, commercial and human resources for the war effort. This also had an extra-European dimension as India and Egypt became the principal supply bases for the campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia respectively. Colonial authorities in Delhi and Cairo gradually implemented progressively greater measures that extended the powers of the central state and sharpened its extractive penetration of local agricultural production and consumption. This was an uneven process that largely occurred in 1917–18 when the focus of British officials in London and the extra-European theatres shifted to exploiting local resources as fully as possible.[1] Britain virtually ceased to be a source of supply of food and fodder to the two campaigns as shipping scarcities, coupled with the United States' entry in April 1917 and subsequent rises in the price of North American foodstuffs, led London to concentrate on developing alternative sources of supply.[2]

The attempts by the civil and military authorities in India, Egypt and in the territory that came under their control in Mesopotamia and Palestine to organise the extraction of local resources followed very different methods and met with varying degrees of success. This reflected the diversity in agricultural patterns in each region and exposed the underlying difficulties in mobilising peasant economies for exposure to large-scale conflict. It required colonial administrators in India to overcome their deep misgivings that lingered from nineteenth-century interventions in rural society, and the backlashes that followed, most notably in 1857.[3] British officials in Egypt also confronted institutional

memories of the 1882 reaction to foreign intervention in domestic affairs.[4] In Mesopotamia it necessitated the construction and extension of an extractive framework over rural groups and tribes with long histories of resisting Ottoman control and demands for taxation, while large swathes of Palestine were either in a state of famine or remained out of British control until the final months of the war, and so could not be tapped for agricultural produce.[5]

In the campaigns in the Middle East, the worsening crisis in shipping throughout 1916 prompted British officials to shed the deeply entrenched laissez-faire attitudes that had guided their approach to wartime mobilisation in 1914–15. The resulting decision to rely on local resources of food and fodder constituted the decisive turning-point in the scale and nature of the colonial contribution to the war effort. The imposition of intrusive extractive demands by the central state apparatus departed radically from the pre-1914 political economy of light taxation and demands on society. An intricate and cross-cutting network of regional dependencies subsequently bound the campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia with their bases in Egypt and India, and with each other, in a reflection of pre-war patterns of interaction but on a vastly greater scale.

The First World War was therefore a war of 'bread and potatoes' just as much as one of 'steel and gold.'[6] During its final stages in the summer and autumn of 1918, the escalation in the levels of resource extraction needed to maintain the armies in the field caused severe dislocation to the delicate patterns of agricultural production and distribution in each theatre. The war ended not a moment too soon, with Indian resources in a state of near-breakdown in November 1918. Indeed, Delhi informed the military authorities in Salonika that it was no longer in a position to supply that campaign with foodstuffs in October 1918.[7] This decision would have placed the continuation of the campaign in severe jeopardy if the war had continued into 1919.

Regional and global interactions before 1914

Over the course of the half-century before 1914, the opening of the Suez Canal and the introduction of railways and steamships created a multilateral, global trading network based on the principle of comparative advantage. This superseded the hitherto predominantly bilateral trading links between regions that was largely under the control of the European chartered companies. It resulted in Britain becoming an exporter of manufactured goods and heavily reliant on imported

foodstuffs.[8] Intricate trading networks also linked the ports of the western coast of India with those in the Persian Gulf and Aden and along the coastline of east Africa in a trans-regional maritime community of trading flows.[9] Booms and dhows made lengthy round-voyages with their cargoes of silks and cotton textiles from India, dates and cooking oils from Basra and the Gulf ports, rice and salt from Aden bound for Mombasa and Somaliland.[10]

Within this global system, India became a supplier of primary commodities and foodstuffs to the newly industrialising countries of Europe and Japan and a market for their exports of mass-produced consumer and capital goods.[11] Inward injections of mainly British capital financed investment and railways and integrated these rural hinterlands more closely into the global economy.[12] One important secondary legacy of this form of agricultural development was that certain regions in India came to specialise in the production of certain types of foodstuff. Rice became concentrated in Burma and southern India while wheat production dominated in and around Lucknow, Lahore and Delhi.[13] This regional specialisation placed a heavy responsibility upon the railway 'famine' lines that transported foodstuffs from food-producing districts to food-deficit areas.[14] Consequently, a delicate balance arose between railway capacity and the distribution of agricultural produce.

Egypt also developed along the lines of comparative advantage as the production and export of long-staple cotton after 1870 dominated the economic landscape. As in India, substantial capital investment in irrigation and railways tied the country into the European economic system. Beginning before the 1882 occupation, Egypt became a major exporter of cotton to the United Kingdom and a substantial importer of British finished goods. Improvements to irrigation and specialisation in cotton production for export resulted in an overwhelming reliance on monoculture as cotton exports reached 93% of all Egyptian exports by 1912.[15] However, this caused a shortfall in grain and meat production in Egypt. Wheat was imported from Russia and India and cattle from Sudan to meet internal domestic consumption. By 1913, approximately one-third of wheat supplies, or 260,000 tons, were imported.[16] During that year, India also acted as a safety net for the Ottoman vilayet of Basra by exporting substantial quantities of rice and wheat following the failure of local harvests.[17]

During the First World War, the extensive railway networks in India and Egypt provided the civil and military authorities in Delhi and Cairo with the 'tools of empire' that made possible their penetration of rural resources to meet the logistical requirements of Mesopotamia and

Palestine.[18] This differed sharply from the utilisation of extra-European resources in the early years of the war, when the flow of raw materials was largely towards the United Kingdom. Over the winter of 1914–15, the British Government purchased the Indian wheat surplus to meet the shortfalls in supply caused by the closure of the Dardanelles to supplies from Russia. The President of the Board of Agriculture, Lord Selborne, ascribed great significance to these shipments as he claimed that 'it was only the purchases of Indian wheat that averted a crisis in 1915.'[19] Indian supplies of jute also played a vital role in substituting for Russian supplies of flax in order to meet the military requirements for sandbags and canvas production throughout the war.[20] Later in the war, in 1918, the Egyptian Cotton Commission purchased the entire cotton crop for that year in order to meet the rapidly increased demand for raw materials from munitions and clothing factories in the United Kingdom.[21]

The mobilisation and extraction of agricultural resources in Egypt

The use of Egypt as the supply base for the campaigns at Gallipoli, Salonika and, particularly after 1916, Sinai and Palestine, led to a vast increase in military demands on civilian resources for the provision of foodstuffs and fodder. These bulky commodities became vital to the sustenance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in southern Palestine, as the United Kingdom virtually ceased to be a source of supply for the campaign. This occurred as the War Office urged Egypt to maintain the force as far as possible in order to ease the strain on scarce shipping resources elsewhere. British officials in Egypt extended state control over the production and distribution of agricultural goods and intruded into patterns of consumption and distribution to divert them to military use. On the one hand, this represented an intensification of the trend towards greater penetration of rural affairs that had begun under Cromer and accelerated under Gorst and Kitchener.[22] On the other, it constituted a significant departure in the scope and scale of the demands for resources and the level of direct intervention of the civil–military state in agricultural affairs.[23]

Military demands for Egyptian resources were not at first onerous. In 1915, the main supply base for the Dardanelles was constructed at Alexandria and stocks drawn from the pre-1914 Army of Occupation peacetime depots at Cairo and Alexandria.[24] In October, Egypt's role as a base for operations in the eastern Mediterranean expanded as it

assumed responsibility for supplying the four infantry divisions dispatched to Salonika. The supply base at Alexandria was reorganised into the Levant Base under direct War Office control, and the Egyptian Government established a local Resources Board that entered into contracts for all supply services and local purchasing. This eased some of the tensions in civil-military relations that occurred earlier in 1915 when the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and the Force in Egypt competed on the open market for the same resources.[25]

Murray's decision to advance across Sinai and begin offensive operations in Palestine led to a drastic and permanent increase in military demands on the civilian population of Egypt.[26] His two failures to break through at Gaza in March and April 1917 underscored the need to develop a complex logistical network of advanced bases and light railway lines to maintain a force of three infantry divisions (soon to increase to seven infantry and three cavalry divisions) in southern Palestine. Allenby's subsequent breakthrough in November 1917 and extension of operations into Palestine placed substantive new demands on Egyptian resources to sustain the force in the famine-afflicted regions of southern Palestine. British policies in the latter stages of the war therefore interfered with urban and rural labour markets, the agricultural cycle and the delicate balance between civil and military requirements for foodstuffs and other essential goods.

Food policy in Egypt evolved to meet these shifting requirements. The outbreak of the war in Europe required the Residency in Cairo to take measures to stimulate the production of foodstuffs and reverse the pre-war emphasis on the production of cotton production. This had restricted cereal production and created a dependence on imported food, which by 1914 produced shortfalls in grain and meat production and a reliance on imports to meet domestic consumption. Approximately one-third of Egyptian wheat requirements were imported from Russia and India in 1913, while cattle came from Sudan.[27] In August 1914, the diversion of shipping to military use meant Egypt would either have to decrease food consumption or increase the production of foodstuffs. Reducing consumption was not considered a viable proposition since it would require a system of rationing and a literate population.[28]

Accordingly, the Egyptian Government passed a decree on 20 September 1914 forbidding the cultivation of cotton in Upper Egypt and restricting it to one-quarter of total holdings elsewhere.[29] This restriction was subsequently relaxed to one-third of holdings following protests from large landowners. Its results were mixed as the proportion of cultivated land under cotton fell from 44% in 1914 to 28% in

1915, before rising to 40% in 1916 when many large landowners came to regard the fine levied on excess cotton production as a minor tax on profits as world prices soared to record levels.[30] Consequently, the restriction had to be re-imposed with tighter regulation in 1917.

These restrictions on cotton cultivation represented an early attempt to interfere with commercial agricultural patterns. However, the measure failed to significantly increase grain production and achieve self-sufficiency in foodstuffs. Farmers switching production to the growth of cereals were hampered by the absence of nitrate fertiliser as this was required by the military. This led to a disappointing wheat harvest in 1915, and many peasants switched to growing animal fodder instead.[31] The situation was further exacerbated by the Egyptian Government's failure to restrict the export of foodstuffs in 1914. This resulted in an explosion of exports in 1915 that aggravated the shortage of wheat and led to its partial substitution by maize, hitherto a peasant food, in 1916.

In spite of the various measures taken to stimulate cereal production in 1914, Egypt remained dependent on shipments of wheat, flour and atta from India throughout the war. In March 1916, the return of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force from Gallipoli overwhelmed existing reserves of food and fodder and caused a food crisis that was only averted by massive emergency shipments of bread and hay from India. Fodder, too, was initially imported from India in 1915–16. In response to the growing crisis in shipping throughout 1916 and early 1917, the War Office decided that this should be substituted by locally produced resources. Egyptian fodder subsequently met the requirements of the forces in Palestine and, to a degree, in Mesopotamia in 1917–18.[32] Purchasing on the open market failed to procure sufficient quantities of fodder, so gradually this was supplemented by means of requisitioning and forced purchasing from rural producers.[33]

The extraction of foodstuffs followed a similar pattern as initial purchases on the open market were incrementally followed by the imposition of a formal requisitioning apparatus. This penetrated agricultural patterns and directed the distribution of local resources between the competing civil and military requirements. The Resources Board formed in 1915 to provide supplies for the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force evolved into the Supplies Commission in 1916 before being replaced by a Controller of Supplies late in 1917. However this only lasted until March 1918 when a Supplies Control Board was established.[34]

The Supplies Control Board represented a comprehensive attempt to channel all agricultural activity towards the prosecution of the

war. It fixed maximum prices for cereals, meat and other commodities; and was responsible for maintaining supplies in the larger cities and for collecting Army supplies direct from the cultivators. In practice, this amounted to requisitioning in all but name, as local officials regularly seized crops as 'contributions' and all farmers were forced to sell their produce to the government at prices fixed below market rates.[35] Throughout 1918, peasants began to refuse to sell to the Supplies Control Board at these artificially low prices and reacted to the growing incidence of food shortages by hoarding grain for their own consumption.[36]

These agricultural policies notably failed to make Egypt self-sufficient in foodstuffs. Cairo and Alexandria suffered from severe shortages of food in 1917–18 as the civil and military authorities competed for these scarce commodities. Hunger spread to rural regions as well, as wheat consumption fell sharply from an average of 95.9 kilograms per capita in 1913 to 61.7 kilograms per capita in 1918 while consumption of other foodstuffs fell by between 3 and 10 % depending on the crop.[37] Rapid price inflation exacerbated the resulting hardships, and writing retrospectively in 1924 P.G. Elgood acknowledged that 'of all forms of control ... few were guilty of more profound or more costly mistakes than those which dealt with food.'[38]

The impact of enhanced resource extraction, 1917–18

Egypt's role in the war shifted irrevocably in the spring of 1916 when the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force returned from the Dardanelles, followed rapidly by the decision to begin the military advance across Sinai. This led to a sudden and permanent increase in the level of military requirements on the civilian population of Egypt for food, fodder, animal transport and labour.[39] Subsequent military demands for these commodities destabilised the delicate agricultural equilibrium within Egypt and brought much of the country close to famine conditions in 1918. Military intrusion into all aspects of agricultural production and distribution distorted existing patterns of consumption and marked a period of regression in Egyptian agricultural policy. This shifted from the system of export-based cash cropping that had developed before 1914 and partially survived into 1915–16 towards a food-producing one in which the military attempted to claim all surpluses for their own consumption. This deprived agriculturalists of the opportunity to benefit from the resulting rise in the market rates for foodstuffs and cotton.

The intensification of state intrusion into agricultural patterns and extraction of local resources had three major dislocating effects on rural Egypt during the war. As described above, the first was the collection of foodstuffs and other agricultural commodities at prices below prevailing market rates. At once this denied rural landowners, peasants and sharecroppers the chance to share in the higher prices for their goods. This contributed to local grievances and conditions of hardship in both rural and urban Egypt by 1917.

The second dislocating factor was the recruitment of manpower and animals for the logistical units of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Chapter 5 examined the impact of enlistment in the ELC. Alongside this unit, the CTC formed the second pillar of the logistical machine that underpinned the military advance across Sinai and into Palestine. Prior to the construction of the railway across Sinai in 1916 and the introduction or substantial amounts of mechanised transport in 1917, all items of consumption needed to be carried into place by man- and animal power. This included all the water requirements of the force, which was transported by camel until the water pipeline was completed in February 1917.

A small CTC initially formed in January 1915 when the British military authorities began to hire camels for service in the Canal Zone. Its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Whittingham, combined military experience as a former sergeant in the Grenadier Guards with experience of camel management acquired in the Anti-Slavery Department in Sudan.[40] By 6 February 1915, its strength stood at 1310 camels and 864 men, organised into 24 sections and 4 divisions.[41] During the crucial early stages of construction of the Canal Zone defence works, the CTC transported rations and water to the military units spread along the Suez Canal and the various outposts on the East Bank.[42] In the aftermath of the unsuccessful Ottoman attack on the Canal on 3 February 1915, the CTC reduced in size to 500 camels as the immediate military threat to Egypt receded.[43] Nevertheless, this formative period provided valuable experience in the need to protect camels against mange, colic and cold, from which 17 camels died.[44]

This experience was put to good use in December 1915, when the War Office authorised the Force in Egypt to expand the CTC to 20,000 camels.[45] Maxwell's decision to defend the Canal in depth involved the construction of a defensive line 11,000 yards to the east, and the sandy soil of the Sinai desert rendered wheeled transport unsuitable. Camels were thus required to convey rations, water and ammunition to the outlying troops and labour parties.[46] Military demands on the CTC then

rose sharply after the February 1916 decision to advance across Sinai, particularly since the water pipeline always lagged behind the railway. Throughout 1916, the CTC remained essential to supplying the water requirements of the troops and labourers stationed in Sinai, as water was railed from the Sweet Water Canal to the railhead and then loaded on to special fantasses (camel tanks) for distribution to the advanced parties.[47]

The CTC peaked in size in June 1917 when it comprised 33,594 camels and 19,886 Egyptian personnel. Thereafter, its ration strength declined, to 29,000 camels in March 1918 and 25,700 in September, as the change of terrain in Palestine allowed greater use of mechanised transport.[48] Approximately 170,000 camel drivers and 72,500 camels served in the corps between December 1915 and February 1919.[49] At times, particularly during the winter advance to Jerusalem through the Judean Hills in 1917 and the two Trans-Jordan raids in March and April 1918, the men and camels endured appalling casualties from exposure and frostbite. Writing retrospectively in 1924, Elgood recalled how conditions became so bad that 'fellahin drafted into it gave themselves up as lost men' who could 'hardly have been worse off in Turkish captivity.'[50]

The raising of the CTC imposed a number of negative secondary effects on rural Egyptian society, in addition to the hardships imposed on the drivers and camels. Camels were initially purchased on the open market in 1915. However, the war deprived Egypt of 30,000 camels imported annually from Arabia, and open purchasing pushed up market prices as beasts became scarce.[51] In December 1915, the Ministry of Interior began to purchase camels on a large-scale. The Heavy Delta camel proved the most suited to the work required, out of the eight classes of camel tested.[52] This was significant, for it meant that the impact of the CTC fell disproportionately upon the *fellahin* (peasants) of the Delta region.

The majority of these peasants relied on camels to haul their produce to local markets and railway connections with national markets. The effective requisitioning, through 'indirect pressure,' of their camels caused considerable hardship and unrest in the countryside, as an estimated 20,000 were gathered in this way in 1916 and 35,000 in 1917.[53] This, in turn, placed enormous demands on agricultural Egypt to supply the fodder to feed the camels as well as the 46,000 horses, 15,000 mules and several thousand donkeys in service with the EEF by 1917.[54] As with the supply of camels, the open market could not provide the required quantities, which were obtained instead by means of requisitioning and forced purchasing at below market prices.[55]

The third measure that destabilised rural Egypt was the action taken between May 1917 and November 1918 to utilise the Egyptian railway network for military purposes. These measures pared the civilian network to its subsistence minimum and severely impacted agricultural patterns in Egypt. Before 1914, the virtual absence of wheeled traffic and limited network of inland waterways meant that the Egyptian State Railway (ESR) network was used extensively for moving cash crops (such as cotton) to the ports for export and for collecting sugar, cereal, forage and other foodstuffs from agricultural districts and distributing them to the various centres of consumption around the country.[56]

The utilisation of Egyptian railway resources first became an issue in July 1916 when the Foreign Office ordered the civilian authorities in Egypt to render all possible assistance to the construction of the desert railway across Sinai.[57] The diversion of civil railway resources to military use accelerated after May 1917, when Murray identified railways – along with manpower – as the two areas where Egypt could intensify its general contribution to the war effort.[58] This led to the transfer of a dangerously high proportion of Egyptian rolling stock to feed the voracious demands of the military railway network as it extended further into Palestine.

By October 1917, 5400 wagons were in permanent military use. Only 3600 remained for distributing food and goods to the civil population,[59] and Wingate warned the military authorities that the system was nearing its subsistence minimum.[60] The Director of the ESR, Sir George Macauley, replied that the country could still be fed, but that a considerable dislocation of traffic in goods would occur in 1918 and continue into the eventual post-war period.[61] The Foreign Office advised Wingate that military requirements justified 'such sacrifices as would be entailed upon the Egyptian commercial population,' seemingly unaware that their policies were creating food shortages in the cities and conditions of real hardship in rural regions.[62]

Egyptian railway resources were thoroughly tapped by the close of 1917, leading the military authorities to turn to Sudan to provide the rolling stock that was now required for the burgeoning network in southern Palestine. The British civil authorities in Khartoum protested that their removal would interfere with the export of cattle and dura to Egypt. Wingate sympathised with their position, but informed the Governor-General, Sir Lee Stack, that 'military necessities in Palestine are of the first order of importance and outweigh considerations of maintenance of food supply.'[63]

The strain on Egyptian railways for track and rolling stock continued to grow relentlessly throughout 1918 as the logistical network in southern Palestine and the double-tracking of the desert line to Qantara continued to lengthen.[64] In the eyes of many rural Egyptians, the railways came to symbolise the hardships inflicted on them by the war and the extension of the long arm of the state to gather their men, animals, food and fodder. The effects of this highly visible extension of centralised authority became evident in March 1919, when the railway network emerged as one of the principal targets of the rural violence as peasants sought to evade state demands for their meagre stocks of food and fodder.[65]

By November 1918, the logistical demands of sustaining the military campaign in Sinai and Palestine involved the mobilisation of every facet of the agricultural system in Egypt. Pre-war agricultural patterns were penetrated and distorted in order to meet military demands for food, fodder, man- and animal power and rolling stock. The impact of wartime agricultural policies fell variously on large landowners, who resented the restrictions on cotton cultivation that prevented them from sharing in record prices after 1916, and on small peasants, who suffered from the requisitioning of their animals and fodder. John Darwin correctly described the Egyptian countryside in 1919 as resembling 'an economic and social battleground where competing groups struggled to gain most and lose least from the changes of the preceding decade.'[66]

Rural mobilisation left an overwhelmingly negative legacy of considerable hardship that hardened into resentment against the British presence as rural Egyptians came into contact with direct British control for the first time. In 1919, many rural communities identified the sources of grievance and roots of hardship with the British presence.[67] Their politicisation mirrored that of many other strata within Egyptian society as a result of the war. Significantly, their exposure to the hardships occasioned by involvement in the conflict, even one step removed from the fighting, ensured that they were no longer immune to the 'drawing room' nationalism of the urban and educated intelligentsia.[68] Officials in London were not entirely oblivious to this development as one official in the Foreign Office admitted that '[t]here is no doubt that we squeezed the country very hard.'[69] However, Wingate defended these policies and stated that the British authorities had been preoccupied with doing 'all in their power to help in winning the war.'[70]

Famine in Palestine

The extension of the military campaign into Palestine added a new dimension to the logistical difficulties facing the civil and military authorities in Egypt. The Ottoman vilayets of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine were afflicted by severe famine between 1914 and 1916. This was partially brought about by successive poor harvests and a plague of locusts in 1915. But the impact of these factors was magnified by repressive Ottoman measures that restricted the flow of food supplies to the region for fear that they would fall into enemy hands. The extractive impact of Ottoman requisitioning of labour, draft animals, cattle and agricultural appliances for military imposed further strains on the civilian inhabitants of the territory that came under British control in 1917.[71] This broad axis of human insecurity was exacerbated by the internal displacement of more than 15,000 non-Ottoman Jews, whose loyalty was suspect, from Palestine in 1914–15, and the subsequent expulsion of all 50,000 civilian inhabitants of the town of Jaffa in the spring of 1917, for fear that they might assist the British in any advance.[72]

In July 1917, William Yale, an American employee of the Standard Oil Company who lived in Jerusalem between May 1915 and March 1917, reported that 'three years of war have reduced Palestine to a deplorable condition, the villages depleted by military drafts, devastated by cholera, typhus and recurrent fever.'[73] Yale added that the situation in Lebanon was even worse. This first-hand account was corroborated by others. Sir Mark Sykes observed in June 1916 that 'the people of Lebanon are now being systematically exterminated by starvation.'[74] Meanwhile Sir Ronald Storrs, appointed Military Governor of Jerusalem following the city's capture in December 1917, recalled in his memoirs how 'throughout those early days in Jerusalem my chief, my nightmare anxiety, was the scarcity of food amounting almost to famine.'[75] This, he attributed to the fact that 'the city has been on starvation rations for three years, and is now cut off' from its pre-war supplies of grain from Odessa, and, 'since the Turks left – from the vital grain districts of Salt and Kerak beyond the Jordan.' He added that the bleak situation was exacerbated by the 'heavy rain and intense cold' that required two infantry divisions to be billeted in the city, 'though of course outside the walls.'[76]

As the Egyptian Expeditionary Force advanced into Palestine in late-1917 and 1918 it did make limited use of what stores could be captured from the retreating Ottoman forces. One such discovery at Jenin, shortly after the victory at Megiddo in September 1918 included

120 cases of German champagne that were immediately issued to the grateful Australian troops.[77] The capture of Jaffa in November 1917 also proved significant as it secured control over the sophisticated irrigation works and agricultural gardens developed by Jewish colonists.[78] However, the need to provide relief to the destitute local population greatly complicated efforts to organise and extract local resources in the areas conquered in Palestine. This led officials in Cairo to inform the War Office in October 1918 that local conditions made it impossible to exploit the 'granary of Palestine' that they optimistically believed to lie to the east of the River Jordan.[79]

Famine relief and other emergency measures to address the problems of human dislocation thus dominated the nascent British administration as it emerged in Palestine in 1917–18, and it took precedence over all other activities. As a result, the newly established authorities in Palestine remained almost entirely dependent for supplies that were railed up from Qantara. The average daily tonnage transported on the railway peaked at 2317 tons in August as the regular shipment of lorry-loads of wheat and other foodstuffs to the civilian and military communities in Palestine became life-sustaining.[80] The supply situation eased somewhat following the break-out from Megiddo in September 1918 when the capture of the ports of Haifa, Beirut, Tripoli and Alexandretta opened them up to sea-borne supplies from Port Said. These played an important role in helping to free the advancing cavalry divisions from the progress of the railhead and enabling them to outstrip their supply lines during the final pursuit of Ottoman forces to Aleppo.[81]

Mesopotamia 1914–16: the first phase

The major differential factor in the mobilisation of agricultural resources in Mesopotamia was that all supplies of food and fodder initially had to be imported by sea, primarily from India. This caused immense strain and a near-breakdown in supply in 1916 as the rapid expansion of military operations overwhelmed the limited port facilities and river transportation in Basra. The organisation and extraction of agricultural resources then rose significantly following the advance to Baghdad in March 1917 and the subsequent extension of control over the fertile agricultural lands of the Euphrates valley. This coincided with the publication of the Mesopotamia Trade Report early in 1917 that drew attention to the agricultural potential of the region. In September 1917, the difficulties of meeting both civil and military requirements for foodstuffs, and the constant shortage of shipping from India, led to the

creation of the Agricultural Development Scheme. This represented the capstone of an ambitious project to make the occupied territories self-sufficient in wheat, barley and straw, and necessitated the pacification of the fiercely autonomous tribal units of the mid-Euphrates area.

These latter developments marked a profound shift from Ottoman agricultural policies and penetration of rural society before 1914. The Indian Expeditionary Force that occupied Basra in November 1914 had initially faced similar difficulties to those confronting the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in southern Palestine in 1917. In both regions, this revolved around the imposition of thousands of men and animals on regions afflicted by the impact of the war and the dislocation to established trading patterns and spheres of economic activity. Mesopotamia in 1914 was far from being the 'granary of the world' that some of the more wistful supporters of the campaign in London believed it to be.[82] Although the first of the large-scale irrigation projects supervised by Sir William Willcocks had become operational in 1913, in reality the impact of several years of official neglect following the Young Turks revolution in 1908 meant that agriculture and irrigation was in a parlous state by 1914. Canals silted up, rivers changed course and the condition of cultivable land steadily deteriorated.[83] Furthermore, a poor grain harvest in 1913, and the wider political and economic crisis afflicting the Ottoman Empire following its losses in the Balkan wars and North Africa, added to the gravity of the situation and required the import of substantial amounts of wheat, flour and rice from India.[84]

The position worsened considerably in 1914–15 as the Anglo-Indian invasion and gradual occupation of the entire vilayet of Basra cut it off from the grain-producing areas further north on the Euphrates. These regions remained under Ottoman control until 1917, and additional disruptions to river-borne trade came from military requisitioning of local craft and use of the rivers as the primary lines of communication.[85] The British imposed a blockade of the Euphrates water channels in March 1915 that completed the dislocation of the intricate network of commercial and trading links that had bound the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad within the Ottoman polity.[86]

Nevertheless, many politicians and soldiers in London and Delhi believed that Mesopotamia would offer dazzling agricultural riches once the detritus of the moribund Ottoman administration was swept away. In large part, these inflated expectations were attributable to the enormously influential Willcocks, who described the region in 1909 as 'a great grain-producing country with unlimited capabilities for expansion.' Later, he advocated the implementation of large-scale irrigation

projects that would allow 'Babylonia' to once again rival Egypt as the granary of the world, as it had in ancient times.[87] These proposals won the ear of the new Viceroy, Hardinge, who predicted in 1911 that once Willcocks's irrigation plans were completed, Mesopotamia would become 'one of the granaries of Europe.'[88]

Sentiments such as these constituted a form of Biblical romanticism that tapped into powerful currents of paternalist visions of 'Arabia' in a Britain in which church-going and biblical study still exerted formative influences on elite classes.[89] Throughout the war, and particularly in its early stages, such sentiments emanated from the highest levels of British policy-making following the occupation of Basra.[90] There was also speculation in Anglo-Indian circles, initiated by Arnold Wilson, that Mesopotamia might be annexed to India and developed along the lines of a Punjabi canal colony. This would provide a 'lebensraum' for the overpopulated Punjab and offer India a 'quid pro quo' for its participation in the war.[91] Here, Wilson remained mindful of the rural unrest that had plagued the Punjab since 1906 and the importance of a conciliatory gesture that would assuage Muslim unease in India at pre-war events in Libya, Algeria and the Balkans and further excited by the Caliph's call for jihad in November 1914.[92]

The idea was taken up in March 1915 by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, political secretary at the India Office in London. Hirtzel suggested that the 'reclamation and development of the long-neglected land and resources' of Mesopotamia would provide the 'moral justification' for annexation and facilitate the arrival of Indians from the Punjab.[93] Kitchener endorsed the proposal, and it was greeted with cheers when raised in the House of Commons by another man with long military service in India, the Conservative MP Charles Edward Yate.[94] However, it caused a split within the India Office with a powerful faction opposed to it, and it raised considerable alarm in the Foreign Office, which remained steadfast in its opposition to annexation of any kind.[95]

Early attempts to formulate and implement an irrigation and agricultural policy in Mesopotamia foundered against the parsimonious bedrock of the Government of India. In a telegram to the Government of India in June 1915, General Nixon stated his opinion that the occupied territory around Basra had 'immense possibilities' and added that irrigation works would form 'the keystone of its future prosperity.'[96] Accordingly, he requested that India send out an engineer with a considerable staff to consult on the creation of an Irrigation and River Conservancy Department in Mesopotamia. Army Headquarters replied that they were unable to sanction any such appointment owing to

the crippling depletion of skilled European manpower in India at that time.[97]

In a similar fashion, the Quartermaster-General in India, General Bunbury, refused to support a proposal to establish market gardens in Mesopotamia to assist in the provision of vegetables and fresh fruit rations to the troops. This would reduce the many casualties from deficiency diseases such as beri-beri and scurvy, but Bunbury claimed that the powerful Financial Secretary, Sir William Meyer, 'would require more than my simple statement to make him provide the necessary funds for these military gardens.'[98] The troops thus remained dependent on the unreliable shipment of vegetables from India, supplemented by occasional local purchases, and suffered heavily as a result.[99]

Between November 1915 and April 1916, the urgency of the Kut relief operations monopolised attention and resources in Mesopotamia and rendered moot these deliberations in London. Any works that did not directly contribute to this end were temporarily ignored, however justifiable and desirable they might have seemed.[100] The development and utilisation of local resources fell into this category. Only when the front stabilised and the War Office assumed operational and administrative responsibility in 1916 was the procurement of local resources taken up. This occurred in May, when General Lake decided to consolidate his forces at the junction between the Tigris and the Hai waterway, and obtain as large a quantity of local supplies as possible from this grain-producing region.[101]

The decision to begin utilising local resources built on early contacts between the civil administration and the local tribal groupings. These took root following the occupation of the town of Amara and its agricultural hinterland in July 1915, and were deepened by the offer of substantial financial inducements to local tribes. Counter-inducements from pro-Ottoman notables and the vagaries of the changing military situation, which 'kept all the sheikhs of the Muntafik *(sic)* on tenterhooks, and prevented them from throwing in their lot with the invaders' complicated this strategy throughout 1915 and 1916.[102] This notwithstanding, the military authorities succeeded in procuring large amounts of food and forage from the summer harvest in Amara in 1916, and the town subsequently became a significant purchasing centre of cattle, sheep, grain and *bhusa* (hay straw).[103] However, increased local purchasing at this stage did little more than meet shortfalls in the river-borne supply from Basra and did not relieve the force of its near-total reliance on overseas supplies.[104]

The escalation of resource mobilisation, July 1916–November 1918

On 18 July 1916, the War Office in London decreed that the Government of India utilise Indian resources to the fullest extent possible to meet the needs of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. It also stipulated that the commander-in-chief should become responsible to the Army Council in matters of supply.[105] This brought the organisation of the campaign into line with the War Establishments and Field Service Regulations (Part II) that governed the British forces elsewhere. General Maude's arrival in August 1916 as successor to the elderly and overly 'Indian' Lake further improved the situation.[106] Maude worked closely with the Quartermaster-General in London, Sir John Cowans, and intensified the measures that Lake had initiated to overhaul the logistical machinery of the force.[107]

This new climate at GHQ fostered, for the first time, an integrated appraisal of logistical factors that included the development of railways and roads and the organisation of labour. In 1915, the absence of sufficient quantities of manual labourers hampered attempts to extract local foodstuffs around Basra.[108] From mid-1916 onwards, the railway lines were pushed forward from Basra to Nassariya and from Amara to Qurna, a Controller of Native Labour was appointed, and an expert dispatched from India to report on, and oversee the establishment of, grass farms and dairies in Basra, Amara and Nassariya.[109] Most crucially for the purpose of the collection of agricultural resources, a Department of Local Resources was established in February 1917. Its mandate was to systematically organise the resources of the newly occupied territory to meet military requirements for produce and, after November 1917, for feeding the civil population as well.[110]

The intensification of local resources thus complemented the military conquest of the vilayet of Baghdad. On 3 March 1917, Maude informed Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London, that he expected that the capture of Baghdad would enable him to 'exploit the neighbourhood considerably for purposes of supply, especially food and fodder,' which were bulky and used up considerable transit space.[111] The War Office replied on 11 March to urge Maude to 'use all local resources possible in view of the urgent necessity for economy in shipping.'[112] This led Maude to continue the advance to Falluja and occupy the town on 19 March. With this, the fertile grain-producing regions in the middle-Euphrates area that fed Baghdad and its hinterland fell into British hands. Gertrude Bell reckoned this a

significant achievement and described the Ottomans' loss of 'this rich food-producing area' as 'one of the most disastrous consequences of the fall of Baghdad.'[113]

As British control extended throughout the Baghdad vilayet in 1917, the quantities of supplies demanded and extracted from local agriculturalists increased sharply. The controller of the Department of Local Resources accompanied the military advance and promptly established a headquarters in Baghdad.[114] Supply and Transport officers fanned out to the surrounding towns and villages to assess their potential agricultural wealth and capabilities. They were assisted by significant doses of coercive power in the form of punitive raids against tribes that resisted assessment.[115] One such raid in June resulted in the capture of 14,000 sheep, 240 camels and large quantities of grain that were diverted to military consumption.[116] By 18 May 1917, Maude reported that local purchasing in the Baghdad vilayet enabled him to reduce the daily river tonnage required by the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force by 130 tons per day.[117]

Following Cox's qualified victory in the struggle between the civil and military branches of the nascent administration in the summer of 1917, he was appointed civil commissioner on 20 August, and the penetration of society for resource extraction really took off. Ghassan Atiyyah has convincingly argued that after this point the civil administration, led by Cox and Arnold Wilson, became the primary agents framing British policy in Mesopotamia.[118] Together, they began to implement measures that steadily expanded the territorial reach and penetrative capacity of the civil administration, and greatly intensified their intrusive demands on societal resources for the war effort.

This occurred as the policies of tribal pacification and the extension of civil control proceeded hand in hand with the mobilisation and extraction of local resources. Indeed, the former made the latter possible. In July 1917, the Department of Local Resources expanded into a Directorate, and divided the areas under occupation into six administrative regions with a Local Purchase Officer stationed in each.[119] In the Shiite holy shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala, the civil authorities appointed a native agent and political officer to administer on behalf of the civil authorities.[120] This layer of indirect control brought the fertile Euphrates valley into cultivation, and allowed it to be tapped for its large stocks of agricultural resources.

Further military operations took place in September 1917 to seize control of the head-works of the various canals leading off from the Tigris, Euphrates and Diyala rivers.[121] Their capture allowed large-scale

irrigation projects to be started, while the construction of railway lines from Baghdad to Musaiyib and Falluja extended the extractive capacity of the fledgling civil administration. Military labour units diverted from purely military tasks to the construction of irrigation works and canals, and the dispatch of garrisons to posts throughout the mid-Euphrates in December 1917 completed the process of pacification in the area.[122]

The sharpening of the extractive capacities and penetrative reach of the occupying force inevitably brought it into confrontation with the hitherto-relatively autonomous and fragmented tribal groupings of the mid-Euphrates. British authorities faced the problem of legitimating their presence in a region in which the legacy of Ottoman mismanagement and neglect engendered a deep distrust of centralised authority, and a highly protective attitude towards locally produced resources.[123] In addition, the region was suffering from the economic impact of three years of warfare and the concomitant dislocation of intra- and inter-tribal trading routes, as well as poor harvests in 1916 and 1917.[124] Because of this, the extension of British control and the introduction of a land tax and demands for a share of agricultural produce caused conditions of real resentment and hardship in rural communities in late-1917 and throughout 1918.[125]

Such feelings were by no means confined to rural and tribal areas. In Baghdad itself, the civilian population experienced severe food shortages and a surge in prices following its capture. A potential famine in mid-1917 was only averted by the emergency shipment of large quantities of grain from India, but this merely provided temporary succour to a war-ravished city.[126] The food situation again became critical in November 1917, and this time the British reacted by diverting stocks of grain from the tribal agricultural districts along the Tigris and Euphrates. This merely shifted the food shortages from Baghdad to smaller towns such as Hilla, Musaiyib and Najaf, which hitherto had depended on the tribal produce for their own supplies. The measure proved intensely provocative and unpopular, and immediately established a powerful tribal grievance against the British authorities.[127] Discontent proved strongest in the holy shrine city of Najaf where local civilians seized stocks of grain destined for the British in November 1917, and set in motion a cycle of violence that culminated in the assassination of its political officer in March 1918.[128]

The civilian population of Baghdad and the surrounding towns and villages remained reliant on imported grain from India throughout 1918 and into the immediate post-war period. During this time, the requisitioning of grain and other stocks of food and fodder escalated

as the civil administration refined and improved its methods of assessment and collection. These developments generated significant unrest among an agrarian population already angered by the heavy demands for military labourers.[129] Thus, in 1918, the penetration and diversion of agricultural patterns intensified quantitatively and shifted qualitatively as a series of 'state-building' projects started to anticipate a post-conflict entrenchment of control in the occupied territories of Mesopotamia.

'State-building' projects: cereals, cotton and railways, 1918–21

British demands on Mesopotamia for agricultural resources peaked in 1918 as the civil and military authorities consolidated their hold on the occupied territories. Synchronous conditions in Europe and India meant that it became a matter of urgency to maximise the use of local resources to alleviate the strain on shipping and minimise the import of foodstuffs from India as it itself became threatened by large-scale famine. The intensification of British penetration of agricultural patterns shifted up a gear in September 1917, when the War Office approved an Agricultural Development Scheme. This aimed to meet military requirements for cereals and reduce the civilian population's dependence on imported foodstuffs, thereby making the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force as independent of overseas supplies as possible.[130] It received the enthusiastic support of Maude's successor as commander-in-chief, General William Marshall, who noted in April 1918 that 'in view of the world shortage of food it is of great importance to produce as much food as possible in this country.'[131]

The Agricultural Development Scheme brought nearly 300,000 acres into cultivation, resulted in an additional 125,000 tonnes of produce in the spring crop of 1918 and saved approximately £2,000,000 in imports from India.[132] While initial forecasts proved overly optimistic, the scheme did make the forward military units self-sufficient in grain and had the much-needed political effect of reducing demands on India. Significantly, it also led to the deepening and entrenchment of British control over rural areas as directorates of irrigation and agriculture formed to complement and enhance the work of the political and local purchase officers. Their creation illustrated the manner in which the direction of British policy underwent a subtle yet important shift during 1918. It also meant that the experience of occupation differed sharply from the Ottoman era, when centralised control had largely been confined to the urbanised areas of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul.

At this juncture, the local need for maximising resources merged with the broader imperative of reformulating the reasons for continued British retention of Mesopotamia after the end of hostilities. The shift in international opinion following President Wilson's declaration of the Fourteen Points and Lloyd George's war aims speech in January 1918 meant that right of conquest alone would no longer suffice to ensure post-war control of Mesopotamia.[133] Officials in the India Office began to argue that British policy should aim to entrench itself in Mesopotamia 'in such a way that we shall have become as far as possible both indispensable to, and acceptable by, the native community.'[134] Cox agreed, and stated that the consolidation of British commercial influence in Mesopotamia offered the best means of attaining the new objective.[135]

The shadowy outlines of this new policy became evident in the twin attempts to promote the cultivation of cotton and the discussions over the route of a railway from Basra to Baghdad. The genesis of the plan to turn Mesopotamia into a second Egypt ('a large cotton estate') originated in the summer of 1917 when the Board of Trade began to attach strategic importance to developing the production of cotton within the British imperial sphere.[136] It aimed to reduce what it considered a dangerous over-reliance on the United States for cotton as that country alone provided the empire with more than 80% of its cotton supplies.[137] In July 1917, it formed the Empire Cotton Growing Association to investigate the best means of doing so, and immediately recommended that 'cotton growing should be developed as rapidly as possible in all suitable parts of the Empire.'[138] This coincided fortuitously with the publication of another report that the Board had commissioned to enquire into the economic and trade potential of Mesopotamia. This report, released in June 1917, concluded that 'our greatest hopes for the future of Mesopotamia are founded upon its possibilities as a cotton producing country.' It suggested than an expert be sent from India to establish an experimental farm and begin testing varieties of Egyptian, American and Indian seed.[139]

Captain Roger Thomas was duly seconded from the Agricultural Department in Madras, and arrived in Mesopotamia in November 1917. He selected a site in Karradah, a suburb of Baghdad, for his experimental farm, and after an unseemly dispute between agriculturalists in Egypt and India over the relative merits of their cotton seed, commenced his field trials with twelve varieties of seed.[140] These initially produced 'enormous,' 'fabulous' and 'astonishing' yields of more than 2000 pounds per acre as compared to average yields of seed cotton of 1200 pounds per acre in Egypt, 600 pounds per acre in the United States

and 300 pounds per acre in India.[141] Though Thomas was anxious not 'to generalise from these results in regard to cropping possibilities of the country as a whole,' he nevertheless believed that 'the figures obtained do certainly indicate that the climatic conditions are well-suited to the cultivation of superior quality cotton.'[142] News of his results prompted much excited chatter in London and India that Mesopotamia could become the 'greatest cotton producing tract in the world,' and revived hopes that it might develop into an enormous canal colony along the lines of those in the Punjab.[143]

This proved a pipedream. Thomas' yields from just one farm did not prove representative when cultivation was expanded and extended. As a 'hot weather' crop that required abundant water during the summer season, cotton was singularly unsuited to the climatic and irrigable patterns of Mesopotamia.[144] Furthermore, its cultivation was unpopular among local sharecroppers since it did not feed them, unlike the winter crops of wheat and barley.[145] As a result, and in spite of initial private capital investment and the support of both the Empire Cotton Growing Association and the commercially minded British Cotton Growing Association, cotton-growing in Mesopotamia never approached anything like the scale originally intended in 1917.[146]

The second 'legacy' project was the construction of a direct through railway linking Basra and Baghdad. This marked the logical extension of the civil administration's railway policy in 1918. It aimed to facilitate the extraction of local resources from the agricultural districts surrounding Baghdad, but was also designed with the consolidation of post-war British control in mind. It was first suggested in January 1918 by the head of a War Office mission sent to Mesopotamia to investigate the efficiency of the local railway system. Significantly, General Freeland's remit included the development of a 'future peace railway ... so far as it could, during continuance of hostilities be made compatible with military requirements.'[147] On 21 January, Freeland recommended that a through railway be constructed, and that it should follow the line of the Euphrates, rather than the Tigris. Such a route

> would tap the main areas now under cultivation for supply of local produce; would be powerful factor in establishing and maintaining of British influence in Baghdad vilayet and in enlisting cooperation of Arab tribes in Karbala-Najaf-Hillah area; and is route which local civil authorities consider most favourable for post-war development.[148]

Cox agreed that this route was 'very well adapted to meet post-war requirements.'[149] Problems arose when the railway authorities in India protested that 'India was being bled white by the demands of Mesopotamia,' and argued that the Indian railway network was strained to near-breaking point and that any large additional demands for rolling stock and track would gravely impact 'India's capacity to meet her overseas liabilities and internal requirements.'[150] This would have jeopardised the maintenance of food and other logistical supplies to the military campaigns in Egypt and Salonika in addition to Mesopotamia. Monro, therefore, requested that Freeland 'reconsider with a view to economy and personnel.'[151]

The War Office agreed on 25 February as it was in line with General Jan Smuts' recommendation that the offensive thrust of British policy in the Middle East in 1918 focus on Palestine rather than Mesopotamia.[152] Another, more practical, factor holding back the full development of large-scale capital projects in Mesopotamia was the paucity of banking and credit facilities in the occupied territories, and the consequent scarcity of capital to finance the project.[153] Nevertheless, the issue was revived in June 1918 by Marshall, who informed the War Office that much of the necessary rolling stock was already in Mesopotamia, and that the construction of the line 'would have a direct influence on the economical *[sic]* development of this country.'[154] This time the War Office sanctioned the proposal, and authorised the construction of a line from Nasariya to Hilla to link the existing lines from Basra to Nassariya and from Hilla to Baghdad.[155]

By mid-October 1918, the impending armistice with the Ottoman Empire rendered the line's completion even more compelling and urgent to the war imperialists in London and Baghdad. Both Marshall and Cox urged London that 'in the development of this country it is one of the most important factors' to secure Britain's effective long-term position.[156] Once again, Monro protested at this diversion of railway resources at a time when personnel and materiel were both required to meet 'the heavy strain of the present shortage of harvest and of military needs' in India. He correctly identified the reasons behind the rush to complete the railway as 'not based on the actual military situation but on the post bellum development of Mesopotamia.'[157] The issue was finally settled in January 1919 when the British Government declared that the line would be the 'backbone of all future construction in Mesopotamia' and the cornerstone of the post-war railway policy.[158] The line eventually opened in the spring of 1921.[159]

Broader political and military developments thus impinged significantly on British policy in Mesopotamia in 1918. The initial concern

to maximise the exploitation of local resources for wartime purposes became overtaken by a tide of hysteria and cynicism. This occurred as imperial-minded policy-makers in London and Baghdad sought to redefine their motives to fit the changed international conditions.[160] It resulted in the formulation of a post-war policy even before hostilities ended, as evidenced by the dramatic last-minute dash to capture Mosul in November 1918. However, these policies also added greatly to the strain on India for personnel and material that sorely needed to cope with the worsening agricultural situation there, and ensured that the campaign remained a major drain on Indian resources into the post-war period.

In Mesopotamia itself, the mobilisation and extraction of agricultural resources in 1917 and 1918 required the new bureaucratic apparatus to expand its penetrative reach into society and extend it over tribes and regions hitherto largely unexposed to state demands for revenue. This had important implications for the legitimacy of the British presence in the occupied territories, and for the relationship of the rural inhabitants to the central state authority. Furthermore, the creation of the Agricultural Development Scheme carried undertones of the rationale behind the Canal Colonies in the Punjab, as in both regions 'irrigation and colonisation proceeded hand in hand.'[161] At the level of officialdom, this represented a more sophisticated attempt to secure lasting Anglo-Indian influence in the region than the fanciful statements of the romantic imperialists in 1914 and 1915. At a local level, however, this downward mobilisation and intrusive disruption to agricultural and labour markets led to sustained conflict with the tribal groupings in the mid-Euphrates region as they began to suspect the true extent of British ambitions in Mesopotamia. This pervading sense of unease and suspicion contributed to the substantial local socio-economic grievances that hardened throughout 1919 as British methods of revenue assessment and collection became more efficient and visible.

Resource extraction in India: constraints and potential

India was the pivot around which revolved the intricate network of supplies of agricultural and railway goods to the extra-European campaigns east of Suez. It supplied the campaign in Salonika in addition to Mesopotamia, and made continuous shipments of foodstuffs to Egypt to supplement local resources and prevent a breakdown in food policy there. Nevertheless, a number of factors limited the amount of resources that the Government of India initially proved willing or able to mobilise

for the wider war effort. The most important was its extremely limited financial base that reflected decades of official policy stressing the political importance of low taxation.[162] Moreover, the lessons taken from the 1857 rebellion, that extractive rural policies and capricious demands for taxation had alienated powerful landlords, compounded the issue as successive generations of legislators scaled back rural taxation and retreated into cautious and conservative fiscal programmes.[163]

After 1906, the Liberal electoral landslide coincided with the upsurge in Indian nationalist activity following Curzon's ill-advised partition of Bengal. These two events underscored the political imperative of avoiding fresh taxation on India and set the seal on the Government of India's parsimonious attitude towards colonial governance.[164] These financial and institutional constraints on policy formulation came together in 1914 when officials in both the Government of India and the India Office in London failed to foresee the complexity and scope of the military commitments that they were about to undertake. Instead, they remained mired in the mindset of colonial-era campaigning and 'adhered to the routine and the amount of supplies which might have been necessary for a frontier campaign.'[165]

During the autumn of 1914, the mobilisation and dispatch of Indian Expeditionary Forces to France, Egypt, East Africa and Mesopotamia stretched existing reserves of officers, other ranks, animal transport and other auxiliary units to their limit.[166] India's primary contribution to the war effort during this early phase of the war was in providing food and fodder for the Indian forces stationed overseas, as well as the civilian authorities in Egypt and East Africa. The Government of India also aided the British Government's efforts early in 1915 to forestall a wheat crisis on the domestic market by purchasing the Indian surplus at prices below the market rate and by prohibiting the private export of wheat from India. Such a move had the beneficial political side-effects of driving down wheat prices and combating the rumours of shortages and panic prices that swept India that winter.[167]

No broader overall strategy of mobilising Indian resources for the war effort emerged until 1916. This was a direct consequence of the pre-war political economy and British reluctance to undertake what Dewey has termed 'the military necessity of mobilisation.'[168] The onset of war exposed the narrow limitations of pre-war industrialisation in India and the political and structural factors that needed to be addressed before the Government of India could begin to expand India's industrial capacity.[169] These included a shortage of skilled Indian labourers and supervisors, as these positions had been monopolised by Europeans

and largely closed to Indians before 1914. In addition, political constraints had held back the creation of a substantial iron and steel industry in India, which resulted in virtually all plant, equipment and stores needing to be imported before the war.[170]

These limitations were compounded by the overly bureaucratic and centralised system of governance and the cult of financial economies and laissez-faire policies that continued to exert their powerful grip over the Government of India throughout 1915. Sir William Clark, who served in the Viceroy's Council as the Member for the potentially powerful commerce and industry department, retrospectively admitted to the Mesopotamia Commission that 'we knew very little about the nature of the actual military operations, and so were hardly in a position to make suggestions.'[171] In Mesopotamia itself, the chaotic and ultimately unsuccessful attempts to procure river craft for the campaign in 1915 demonstrated the failings of Indian mobilisation to reconstitute its civilian departments on a war footing before 1916.

The cumulative impact of these political and structural constraints on British-Indian policy made the shift in strategy that occurred in 1916 all the more profound. In London, the 're-mobilisation' of imperial resources accelerated existing progress towards a coherent and holistic mobilisation of economic and manpower resources for the war.[172] By contrast, this more aggressive form of colonial penetration represented a paradigm shift in Indian governance and attitudes towards state intervention into society. This occurred in the latter two years of the war, as the development of India's industrial and agricultural capacity became objects of imperial policy to enable India to assume the role of supply base east of Suez.[173] Monro replaced Duff in October 1916 with a mandate to maximise the extraction of Indian resources of men, munitions and raw materials. He worked with the new Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, to oversee the creation of an administrative framework that would enable the state to penetrate society and tap local resources for the military effort.[174]

The formation of the Indian Munitions Board on 1 April 1917 was the critical development in the expansion and projection of centralised state control over Indian resources. The Board's mandate was to 'control and develop Indian industries with special references to the needs created by the War' and 'to apply the manufacturing resources of India to war purposes, with the special object of reducing demands on shipping.'[175] In early 1918 its president, Sir Thomas Holland, also became chairman of a newly created Industrial Commission and drew up a comprehensive strategy for Indian industrial development, although the war ended

before it could be implemented.[176] The organisation nevertheless oversaw the redoubling of the Indian war effort called for by Lloyd George following the Germans' March 1918 offensive on the Western Front. It further extended the controlling power of the state over such war-related activities as shipping, coal and the production of foodstuffs.[177]

This new administrative machinery presided over a vast increase in the scale and scope of India's contribution to the war effort. It spread the burden of meeting logistical and military requirements more evenly throughout India, although its impact continued to be felt most strongly in the Punjab. This remained the chief recruiting ground for the Indian Army but now was also tapped heavily for exports of grain, both for overseas and to relieve deficit provinces elsewhere in India.[178] In this regard, the measures taken to mobilise and extract local resources in the Punjab to meet the twin demands of manpower and agricultural resources resembled those made on Egypt in the same period of 1917–18. Together, they illustrated the difficulties in mobilising peasant economies for participation in large-scale industrialised warfare, and finding a workable balance between civil and military demands for local resources.

By the close of the war in November 1918, a total of 3,691,836 tons of supplies had been shipped overseas from India. Moreover, the number of soldiers India was responsible for maintaining had risen from the 75,000 of the British garrison in India in 1914 to over one million, as Army Headquarters assumed responsibility for feeding and clothing its Indian soldiers for the first time.[179] India additionally supplied all railway material for Mesopotamia and East Africa, and substantial amounts of track for Egypt and Palestine. The country made regular shipments of grain to meet shortfalls in the civilian food supplies in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Salonika, and during the year to April 1918, it provided 700,000 tons of grain to the military authorities in Salonika and Egypt alone.[180] These figures illustrate the pivotal importance of India to the maintenance of all the extra-European campaigns undertaken by British and imperial forces during the war.

These measures to centralise and co-ordinate the extraction of resources ensured that the Indian contribution to the imperial war effort expanded steadily in 1917–18 and peaked shortly before the armistice.[181] This differed sharply from the British reserves of manpower and material, which peaked late in 1917 and declined steadily thereafter. Between early 1917 and November 1918, the Indian Army doubled in size and the British military authorities began to 'Indianise' the campaigns in Salonika and Palestine, which in 1918 replaced Mesopotamia

as the principal drain on Indian resources.[182] The problem was that this 'redoubling' of the military effort in 1918 resulted in India raising an army beyond the capacity of its logistical base to sustain. The need to feed, clothe and transport the new mass army strained Indian food resources and transportation to its capacity and caused a near-breakdown, which only the termination of hostilities averted.

This system came close to collapse in late-1918, when a sudden increase in civilian demands on the Indian railway network and supplies of foodstuffs for famine relief operations contributed to a near-breakdown in India's logistical effort. As in Egypt, the link between agriculture and railways needed to be finely balanced to meet pre-war policies that had encouraged the concentration and specialisation of particular crops in different areas.[183] Integral to this process and vital to its equilibrium was the development of an extensive railway network that consisted of 'famine lines' that transferred foodstuffs from food-producing regions to food-deficit areas. However, military demands for railway track and rolling stock pared the civilian network to its subsistence minimum by late-1917, when four-fifths of the available rolling stock was in military use.[184]

Diversion of rolling stock to military usage severely dislocated domestic markets and intensified the general rise in prices, which brought an already-impoverished population even closer to the margins of subsistence.[185] This was similar to the Egyptian experience, but in India the impact of railway shortages and the resulting congestion was magnified by their vital role in famine relief works. As early as April 1917, the general shortage in shipping meant that rolling stock was diverted from transporting wheat and grain to carry coal from Bengal to the ports of Bombay and Karachi. This prompted Chelmsford to warn the War Office about the heavy strain being placed on the railways to simultaneously meet civil and military needs.[186] Instead, military demands for rolling stock and track remained high for the remainder of the year, as Allenby extended his rail network into Palestine, and Maude and subsequently Marshall developed their own network around Baghdad. Demands rose steadily in 1918 as the new military units and their logistical supplies needed to be transported to the base ports for disembarkation, and the Indian railway authorities issued regular warnings of an imminent breakdown in the entire network.[187]

The delicate balance between civil and military demands for rolling stock and foodstuffs finally broke down in the late-summer and autumn of 1918, when the partial failure of the Arabian Sea monsoon led to poor harvests in central and northern India.[188] The resulting shortages

of grain, atta and flour caused prices to rise to famine levels in parts of India, and prompted food riots in Madras.[189] Scarce rolling stock needed to be diverted back to civil usage to dispatch wheat from the Punjab and rice from Burma to deficit provinces. This was urgently necessary to avert localised famine and lower prices to politically acceptable levels.[190] However, it forced the Government of India to finally take measures to reconcile the competing military and civil claims on the railways as the situation became critical.

On 2 October 1918, Chelmsford informed the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu that 'stocks of all food-grains will barely suffice to meet internal demands apart from Mesopotamia.'[191] Nine days later, the Government of India took the decision to end further purchasing of wheat for export overseas other than Mesopotamia, and it appointed a Foodstuffs Commissioner to oversee the re-distribution of wheat and rice from food-producing to deficit regions.[192] In London, the War Office reacted by instructing British authorities in Cairo and Salonika to investigate the possibility of substituting locally produced resources in the occupied regions of the Levant for Indian stocks.[193] A complete breakdown in the intricate network of Indian supplies seemed imminent, and was only averted by the end of the fighting in November 1918. The armistice thus came not a moment too soon for India, which was by this time facing the devastating impact of the influenza epidemic, magnified by the constant moving-about the country of large numbers of men, and which eventually killed more than five million Indians.

A near-breakdown averted by the end of hostilities

On 18 September 1918, Maurice Hankey, the influential secretary of the War Cabinet in London, warned that Britain was in danger of 'raising an army beyond the capacity of our man-power to maintain.'[194] The same could be said of the armies raised in India and Egypt and deployed in Palestine and Mesopotamia as well as in Salonika and East Africa. During 1918, the vast increase in scope and complexity of the Indian war effort strained Indian resources towards their limit and rendered them vulnerable to any external shock to the system. The partial failure of the Arabia Sea monsoon and the poor harvests of that autumn, in addition to the worsening influenza crisis, provided two such exogenous shocks late in 1918. They caused a breakdown in the equilibrium between civilian and military demands for resources and the infrastructural capacity to transport them within India, and provided a foretaste

of similar demands that would be placed on India during the Second World War.

Similar conditions of growing competition for scarce commodities, and localised food shortages, also occurred in Egypt and Palestine at this time. Once again, the proximate cause was the implantation of vast numbers of combatants and non-combatants who needed to be supplied and transported with local resources, which disrupted and diverted civilian patterns of consumption and distribution. In these regions, too, a near-breakdown occurred in the autumn of 1918 as food shortages spread from urban areas to rural regions, and peasants attempted to safeguard their sources of food from military requisitioning by hoarding stocks of grain.

Military demands for agricultural resources and labour in India and Egypt, the two bases for the campaigns in Mesopotamia and Palestine, therefore illustrate the principal difficulties in mobilising peasant economies for participation in large-scale warfare. They required the British authorities in Delhi and Cairo to fundamentally shift their notions of the political economy of empire, and sharpened state-society relations as the extractive arm of the state became far more intrusive and visible at local levels. Consequently, the move towards industrial mobilisation in the periphery was defined by massively enhanced levels of resource extraction and penetration of subsistence and commercial agricultural patterns. These trends created much hardship and resentment among numerous and disparate socio-economic groupings, and played a role in the backlash that occurred in 1919 in both countries.

By contrast, in Palestine and Mesopotamia the major impact of the war lay initially in its dislocation of tribal economic and commercial patterns and trading routes as the region divided into zones of British and Ottoman control. This contributed to famine in Palestine and conditions of real hunger in Mesopotamia, and meant that both regions were in considerable economic difficulties when they came under British occupation in 1917–18. Within this context, the extension of British control in order to regulate the mobilisation and extraction of local resources necessarily involved a measure of confrontation with local inhabitants unused to the projection of centralised control and demands for revenue, even without taking their straightened circumstances into account.

In the final analysis, it was India's role as provider of agricultural raw materials and supplier of foodstuffs to a clientele of consumers in the Mediterranean and the Middle East that enabled these campaigns to be sustained for the duration of the war. The policy of utilising local

resources, as envisaged by Cowans in 1916, successfully met the vast logistical requirements posed by the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces and their auxiliary and transport units. They also averted a full shipping crisis and allowed both forces to undertake major offensive military operations that resulted in the capture of significant swathes of Ottoman territory. By November 1918, the inexorable demands of modern warfare interacted with the external shocks to the system to place this network of supplies under extreme duress, and throw its continuation into 1919 into doubt. This is, of course a matter of conjecture, but it must be set against London's plans to further 'Indianise' the extra-European campaigns had the war continued into 1919, regardless of the logistical difficulties that this was placing on its supplier of last resort.

This chapter and the two that preceded it in this part of the book have outlined the major dimensions of the new and more aggressive form of imperial control that developed between 1916 and 1918. They have detailed how decisions taken in London and in the British civil and military commands in Cairo, Delhi, Palestine and Mesopotamia impacted events on the ground in the Middle East and in India. Greater intrusion into socio-economic patterns of daily life and more enhanced political control of the macro-economic and commercial conditions resulted in the highly visible extension of British control and its deep downward penetration into the fabric of society. This led to the re-working of local power relationships and hierarchies of control and contributed to the creation of significant hardships caused by the war and its economic dislocation. These will be examined in Part III, which focuses on the post-war backlash as initial British attempts to formalise their wartime patterns of control came up against, and ultimately foundered on, the loose coalescent of temporary and shifting coalitions of disaffected groupings.

Part III

7
Post-War Backlash and Imperial Readjustment, 1919–22

The end of military operations in November 1918 averted an imminent breakdown in the intricate network of logistical linkages between the civil and military authorities in India, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Palestine. At this point, the longer-term impact of their participation in four years of large-scale warfare and the attendant economic dislocation interacted with the more immediate hardships that faced a multitude of socio-economic groupings in each region. The situation was compounded by the raging influenza pandemic that preyed on weakened populations already suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

During the last two years of the war, the logistical contribution of India and Egypt, and the extraction of resources from occupied regions, played a crucial role in sustaining the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces and making their triumphs of 1917–18 possible. The magnitude of demands for logistical resources and the scale of the expansion of state control and its penetration of labour and agricultural markets in order to divert civilian resources to military consumption meant that the First World War was indeed the global affair that recent historiography has claimed it to be.[1] It also demonstrates the particular challenges and obstacles that needed to be overcome in mobilising traditional, rural economies for exposure to modern conflict.

Nevertheless, the impact of the wartime mobilisation of local resources contributed greatly to the creation of real hardships that affected every level of the societies involved. In rural regions of India, Egypt and Mesopotamia, the collection of manpower, camels and donkeys, and food and fodder disrupted agricultural patterns and diverted scarce resources to military consumption. The resulting food shortages, coupled with the evasive tactics of rural producers to hoard and protect their meagre stocks of food, adversely affected urban inhabitants as

well, and had a particularly debilitating impact on these societies where the margin of subsistence was often thin.[2] In addition, the increased visibility of British interference in the fabric of local political, economic and social affairs fuelled pockets of discontent among a variety of disparate socio-economic groupings and communities, who increasingly came to identify their difficulties with the British and 'all the misery and hardship caused by the war.'[3]

These elements of discontent coalesced in Egypt and India in 1919 and in Mesopotamia in 1920 in local backlashes that combined the legacies of wartime hardships with nationalist unease at British officials' efforts to regularise and extend their enhanced wartime powers into the post-war era. This symbiosis between urban nationalist elites and the masses of urban and rural poor also awakened painful institutional memories of previous reactions against external elites in India in 1857 and in Egypt in 1882. In this context, the speed and ferocity with which the civil unrest took root and spread reflected the magnitude of the reaction to British policies, and shook the foundations of the British presence in these countries to its core.

Initially, the British civil and military authorities reacted to the unrest with an ill-judged combination of 'firm, strong government, the idol of the Club smoking room,' in addition to military measures to quell the troubles with force.[4] While these policies successfully curbed the violence, they also prolonged the emergency wartime powers, such as martial law. Furthermore, the military effort that the pacification of large-scale rebellion in Egypt, India and Mesopotamia involved, as well as the shifting political and economic realities of the new post-war world, imposed new constraints on Britain's capacity for maintaining order by force in an empire that reached its maximum territorial extent in 1919.[5]

Throughout this period, the growing regional awareness of the ideals of national self-determination propagated by President Wilson and the various promises made by the British in their wartime agreements added another dimension to imperial policy-making as the Paris peace conferences approached in the spring of 1919. These principles increasingly jarred against the discourse of British officialdom as the civil and military authorities in Cairo, Delhi and Baghdad sought means to deflect the new international pressures that now posed a threat to the basic legitimacy of their positions of control. All of these factors provided important contextual boundaries to the unrest that gripped the Middle East and the Punjab in the immediate aftermath of the war, and ultimately resulted in the scaling-back of

imperial pretensions and the reversion to more traditional informal methods of control.

The legacies of wartime hardship

Three primary cross-cutting sources of hardship emerged from exposure to, and participation in, the imperial war effort. The first was the incidence of severe food shortages in 1917 and 1918 as military demands for, and consumption of, foodstuffs and fodder diverted commercial and subsistence cropping to military use. In November 1918, the food situation deteriorated considerably as the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force occupied Mosul and its surrounding hinterland while the Egyptian Expeditionary Force advanced through northern Palestine to Aleppo and Damascus. Both areas were in a state of famine as a result of the wartime blockade and disruption of its trading and supply routes to Aleppo and Baghdad.[6] The strain of meeting this additional emergency added further to the requirements on India and Egypt for food at a time when the partial failure of the south-west monsoon created urgent domestic food shortages in both countries.[7] This resulted in the highly dissatisfactory and potentially explosive political situation in which exports of Indian grain to Mesopotamia continued while famine conditions spread in the Deccan.[8] A similar difficulty confronted the British authorities in Egypt in the same period. The combination of military demands for foodstuffs, shortfalls in imported supplies and dislocation to trading routes, and a reversion from cereal to cotton production led to severe food shortages in Cairo and Alexandria.[9] Viewed in this context, the invasion and conquest of the remainder of Palestine and much of Syria in the autumn of 1918 imposed a heavy additional burden on Egyptian resources to avert famine in the stricken territories that came under British control. By the closing months of the war, the food shortages in Egyptian cities spread to the countryside and widespread hunger took hold.[10]

Wartime shortages of food and other staples, such as coal and cotton seed in Egypt, directly contributed to the second major hardship of rising prices for daily commodities. This arose as the shortfalls in supply interacted with the high demand for goods resulting from the implantation of large-scale military forces in the Middle East.[11] This disequilibrium to local axes of supply and demand was magnified by the dislocation to economic and trading routes in the Middle East owing to the war. It stimulated rapid inflationary pressures throughout the region. Prices accelerated sharply in 1917 after rising steadily in 1915–16

and impacted urban and rural inhabitants alike. This increase occurred as the military competed with the civil authorities for the same goods and the shortage in shipping capacity severely restricted flows of imported goods.[12]

Inflation hit every social and economic grouping hard. Urban workers and those on fixed-incomes, such as civil servants, were driven to the point of subsistence in 1918 as the double effects of food shortages and high inflation eroded their real incomes.[13] In India, the sharp increase in the price of coarse food-grains, by 31% in 1917–18, had a near-catastrophic impact on poorer peasants and landless labourers, whose fragile margin of income over subsistence largely disappeared.[14] The deep distress that followed triggered rioting and looting of grain stores in Madras and other cities in India, and the slow reaction by British officials in Delhi, as in Cairo, in adopting measures to alleviate the hardships fuelled further resentment.

The third source of wartime hardship and discontent was the enlistment of thousands of agricultural labourers for the labour units in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The great expansion of labour requirements in 1918 required the civil and military authorities to place greater emphasis on obtaining the required numbers than on the methods deployed in enlisting them.[15] In Egypt, this resulted in the system of enlistment drifting into 'a means of oppression of the poor and helpless' that contributed to the alienation of the peasantry who had long been viewed as the keystone of the British occupation, and immune from the nationalist sentiments of educated urban intellectuals.[16]

Labour recruitment in 1918 also denied the men the opportunity to share in the higher wages obtaining in agricultural occupations and denuded many rural regions of their sources of manpower.[17] The discontent that this provoked was not fully understood at the time, but in 1922, and speaking with the benefit of hindsight, Aylmer Haldane, commander of the British army that quelled the rebellion in Mesopotamia in 1920, acknowledged that demands for manpower differed substantially from pre-1914 Ottoman demands for labour. This was because the British authorities made little or no effort to liaise with local sheikhs and explain the benefit of the construction works (primarily canals and other irrigation projects) to the local communities. Instead, Haldane recalled that 'the method followed by our administration was to demand labour, whether the people themselves wanted the new works or not.'[18]

The impact of four years of warfare and its associated economic dislocation and disruption to patterns of trade and consumption thus had a wide impact on socio-economic groups throughout the Middle

East and India. The British military machine was far from being 'the wonderful customer' that caused 'a wave of prosperity' as imagined by officials in the Foreign Office perplexed at the outbreak of unrest in Egypt and India in April 1919.[19] In stark contrast, John Darwin's assessment of rural conditions in Egypt in 1919 as an economic and social battleground better describes the traumatic impact of the war on local society.[20] Atiyyah has identified similar conditions in Mesopotamia, where British demands for tribal labour and the forced removal of food supplies at a time of widespread hunger caused widespread outrage.[21] Meanwhile in India, the influenza pandemic killed more than five million Indians in 1918 and added further to existing hardships caused by the price rises and food shortages.[22]

Extension of wartime powers into the post-war era

The radicalisation of these disparate social and economic groupings constituted one key legacy of the wartime mobilisation and extraction of local resources. Equally significant was a second cause of provocation, namely the efforts by British officials in Delhi, Cairo and Baghdad to regularise and extend their enhanced wartime powers of penetration and control into the post-war era. This clashed with the growing awareness in the region of the terms of the various wartime agreements and pledges, culminating in the Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918. The simultaneous moves by British officials to manipulate and evade their terms fostered local suspicion at British motivations and ultimate objectives.

These developments led to a confrontation between the British officials and the array of native collaborative elements with whom they had worked, and whose assistance had been vital in transmitting state directives down to rural level and channelling local resources upwards. Many of the collaborative props upon which the edifice of empire rested became alienated as they began to seek a return on their wartime co-operation. During 1919, and continuing into 1920, many of these groups began to withhold their support from the British administrations. This deprived colonial officials of vital assistance and awareness of local temper. Significantly, it also provided nationalist elements with a network and platform that enabled them to spread their message beyond the narrow boundaries of the educated urban intelligentsia, and tap into the many disparate urban and rural socio-economic grievances and hardships arising from the war.

The response of local British officials to the Anglo-French Declaration provided a clear early indication of their failure to comprehend the

political shift in the international climate that rendered the 'old imperialist model obsolete.'[23] The declaration of 7 November was formulated by the British and French governments, and stated that their wartime objective in the Middle East had been 'the complete and definite emancipation' of the peoples oppressed by the Ottomans. It also promised to encourage and assist 'the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia' that would derive their authority 'from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations.'[24]

British officials in Cairo, Delhi and Baghdad reacted to the news of the declaration with attempts to minimise its impact on local administrative policy. Wingate informed the Sultan that 'Egypt was in an entirely different position' from that of Syria, while in Mesopotamia Arnold Wilson regarded the declaration as 'a disastrous error' forced upon the allies by his Presidential namesake.[25] Echoing Wingate, Wilson sought to deflect the impact of the declaration by arguing that it should not extend to Mesopotamia, which needed to 'be treated independently of Arab problems elsewhere.'[26] In addition, officials at the Foreign Office in London noted that it should not apply to Palestine as its status had already been settled in the Sykes-Picot agreement, and Sir Percy Cox in Teheran drew on his long experience of imperial diplomacy to conclude that 'it must not be taken too literally and that its purpose was rather to create a favourable public atmosphere around [the] Arab problem generally…' Policy in Palestine thus remained focused on building-up the administrative apparatus of the OETA until it was replaced by a civil administration headed by a High Commissioner in 1920, three years before the formal beginning of the British mandated-period.[27]

The 1919 Egyptian revolt

These two strands – wartime hardship and unrest at the attempted extension of temporary powers – came together in Egypt in the four months that elapsed from the end of the war in November 1918 to the outbreak of the *Wafdist* revolt in March 1919. Proto-nationalist opinion in Egypt began to realign itself in anticipation of the Paris peace conferences at which they fully intended to discuss the post-war settlement of Egypt's status. News of the Anglo-French Declaration stimulated educated and nationalist elites in Egypt to demand that they be allowed to place their case for self-government before the international community, as did the news that a delegation from the Hedjaz, led by Emir Faisal bin Hussein, would travel to Paris.[28]

Nationalist hopes of inclusion in the post-war settlement in recognition of their wartime assistance were quickly dashed by two developments in British policy in Egypt. The first was the recommendations of the Brunyate Commission set up in 1917 to study the possibility of abolishing the system of Capitulations in Egypt. The choice of the Judicial Adviser to the Egyptian Government, Sir William Brunyate, to head the commission was most unfortunate as his intemperate personality had, in the words of the High Commission, 'alienated British and Egyptians alike with a brusque and sarcastic manner.'[29] His commission proposed to replace Kitchener's 1911 legislative machinery with a bicameral legislature that would, for the first time, bring Egypt's foreign communities into the official decision-making process. This was unacceptable to Egyptian nationalist opinion and alienated native civil servants and lawyers, hitherto two of the most important collaborative pillars whose continued co-operation was vital to the daily administration of Egypt.[30] The report enraged educated Egyptian opinion and was bitterly opposed both by the Prime Minister, Hussein Rushdi, and by the Sultan. Neither man was reassured by Wingate's justification that the report was based on the 'necessity of safeguarding the interests of the various Foreign nationalities in the country.'[31]

Also in November, the Foreign Office refused two requests: one from the Prime Minister and a second led by the nationalist politician Sa'ad Zaghlul, to travel to London and place their case for Egyptian autonomy before ministers in advance of the peace conferences. The Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, ruled that 'no useful purpose would be served by allowing Nationalist leaders to come to London and advance immoderate demands which cannot be entertained.' He further dismissed the legitimacy of Zaghlul's delegation as it could not claim to be representative of the Egyptian people, and added that as peace had not yet been declared the protectorate remained in force.[32]

This obdurate response dismayed Egyptian politicians who felt that their loyal participation in the war effort entitled them to participate in the negotiations on the future of the Ottoman Empire.[33] Rushdi resigned as Prime Minister on 5 December 1918 in protest at London's 'interpretation of the meaning of the protectorate with which he could not agree.' Meanwhile, Zaghlul's delegation (*Wafd*) drew up a constitution proclaiming their intention to seek the 'absolute independence of Egypt' through 'peaceful and lawful means.'[34] Egypt remained without a Prime Minister in the three crucial months leading up to the outbreak of the revolt, and the British lost a valuable political ally and

a crucial means of measuring the temperature of Egyptian political developments.

The *Wafd* represented a new brand of Egyptian nationalism that differed profoundly from its pre-war predecessors and took the British completely by surprise. The defining legacy of Egypt's participation in the war effort and exposure to the broad range of wartime hardships was its transformation of Egyptian nationalism from a movement of the educated urban elite into one that could, at times, command the active or passive support of a broad cross-section of socio-economic groups.[35] This new nationalism shed the pan-Islamic and pro-Ottoman beliefs of its pre-1914 predecessors and articulated a positivist doctrine rooted in the framework of a liberal political philosophy.[36] Furthermore, its articulation of future plans and a political vision enabled it to survive the initial rejection of its demands and broaden its appeal beyond the narrow base of the educated urban elites.

This emerged from another new development, which was the recognition that economic strength played a vital role in political advancement. Once again, this provided a decisive break from the earlier pre-1914 proto-nationalist movements. Landowners, financiers, administrators, lawyers, civil servants and other urban professionals dominated the *Wafd's* membership. Cumulatively, they provided the nucleus of a landed and commercial bourgeoisie with an economic stake in political independence, and recruited from the very same collaborative groups that had supported the British administration.[37] This new business class wished to build on the beginnings of import-substitution that developed as a result of the dislocation of global markets during the war, and take advantage of the significant shift in Egypt's external financial position, which had left it with a substantial trade surplus as a result of the war.[38]

This effort to construct a viable political and economic alternative distinguished the *Wafd* from the older Turco-Albanian aristocracy, of which Rushdi was a prominent member.[39] The British civil and military authorities did not foresee this development. British advisers ran Egyptian affairs in the period between Rushdi's resignation in December 1918 and the outbreak of the revolt on 9 March 1919. They failed to identify the extent to which the *Wafd* managed to mobilise the active or passive support of a wide range of groups. During this time, the Residency relied on the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior to follow developments in native opinion, but Haines made little effort to do so or to gather intelligence.[40] Furthermore, the Intelligence Branch of the General Staff was largely reduced after the end of the war as

officers took leave and demobilised.[41] Consequently, the Residency received 'totally insufficient and misleading information as to the true nature and character of the Nationalist political movement.'[42] This led Sir Milne Cheetham, acting as High Commissioner during Wingate's absence in London, to assure the Foreign Office on 24 February 1919 that Zaghlul was widely distrusted and that the agitation that he had been orchestrating was dying out.[43]

As a result, when the *Wafdist* agitation came to a head in March 1919, the British authorities' reaction was conditioned by their experience of pre-1914 outbreaks of nationalist activity. Then, the arrest and deportation of nationalist leaders had sufficed to quell any putative uprisings.[44] Institutional memories of this precedent caused Cheetham to recommend that Zaghlul and two of his colleagues be arrested on 6 March and be deported to Malta, in a move approved by experienced Anglo-Egyptian officials such as Wingate and Sir Ronald Graham, now at the Foreign Office in London.[45] In the different conditions of 1919, however, this decision represented a serious miscalculation that severely underestimated the extent of Zaghlul's active or passive popular support.[46] Instead of leading to the 'temporary reaction in our favour' anticipated by Wingate, it was met by student demonstrations in Cairo and Alexandria on 9 March that were followed by a wave of strikes involving transport workers, judges and lawyers. The El Azhar mosque in Cairo opened its doors to Coptic preachers in a display of inter-communal solidarity that anticipated similar co-operation between Sunni and Shiite mosques in Mesopotamia in the 1920 rebellion there. By 15 March, the unrest spread to rural regions and caused a temporary breakdown in British control in many provinces as communications and transport networks were targeted and paralysed.[47]

In desperation, the Foreign Office dismissed Wingate and appointed Allenby as Special High Commissioner, with a mandate to restore law and order. He set about achieving this objective through a combination of military pacification in the provinces and judicious concessions to nationalist opinion. These included the release of Zaghlul and his associates and permission for them to travel to London and on to Paris.[48] By 29 April, Allenby reported that the situation was 'much improved.'[49]

Consequently, it was the *Wafd's* ability to broaden its appeal beyond the educated urban elite that marked the real break with the past and shook the foundations of British policy in Egypt to its core. The politicisation of Egyptian society enabled the *Wafd* to tap into and mobilise popular support. This was a reaction to the more visible and penetrative nature of British interference in Egyptian affairs during the war.

The wartime political economy served to heighten public awareness of the effects of British decisions on their lives. It provided disaffected elements and local elites with an external scapegoat on which they could blame their hardships.[50] Egyptian civil servants and lawyers both joined the strikes as they feared that the recommendations of the Brunyate Commission would result in the anglicisation of their professions and further marginalise their influence and prospects for advancement.[51] Their participation in the strike created the power vacuum that temporarily paralysed the working of the state after the eruption of the first strike wave on 9 March.[52]

In rural Egypt, disaffected civil servants and lawyers played an important role in transmitting *Wafdist* ideals to provincial towns and rural regions. Labour social clubs and organisations such as the reconstituted Manual Trade Workers Union spread the activist message beyond the realms of the educated elite.[53] A broad range of socio-economic groups mobilised in an uneasy and informal alliance around the leadership in Cairo, who struggled to control and channel the inarticulate fervour of the urban and rural masses that they provoked.[54] The most significant aspect of the rural violence was that many peasants specifically identified their hardships and grievances with the more visible British presence. Their participation was primarily motivated by dissatisfaction with the wartime hardships imposed by the military demands for their resources, labour and animals, as well as a desire to protect scarce supplies from further degradation.[55] They thus targeted symbols of British control and authority such as railway lines and telegraph poles, in what Goldberg convincingly argues was a strategy to safeguard their meagre food supplies and prevent the transfer of scarce agricultural commodities to the cities at a time of widespread and real hunger in rural areas.[56]

The patrician leadership of the *Wafd* therefore succeeded in temporarily fusing the nationalism of ideals espoused by the educated urban elite with the social and economic effects of Egyptian involvement in the war effort. This meant that, in the words of one contemporary British official in the High Commission, 'For the first time these two naturally antagonistic classes are united in having grievances.'[57] This intersection of two very different strands of reaction produced a loose coalition that rejected the British vision of Egypt's status. Although the *Wafdists* were no revolutionaries, and far from being any form of a social movement in 1919, they did tap the widespread anger and discontent and channel it into a form of countrywide protest against the continuation of British policies.

Once again, this important development was missed by senior British officials in Cairo and London, which added to their failure to foresee the violence by misdiagnosing its roots as it spread. At the Foreign Office, the under-secretary Sir Ronald Graham drew on his many years' experience as Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior in Cairo to attribute the rural violence to the 'general wave of unrest, dissatisfaction and vague political unrest which is passing all over the world.'[58] Similarly, General Bulfin, Allenby's successor as commander of British forces in Egypt, claimed to identify 'Bolshevist tendencies amongst the extremists here.'[59] This language was strikingly similar to the placing of blame for the revolt in Mesopotamia in 1920 on external provocation from Bolshevists in Persia and Arab nationalists in Syria, rather than rooted in socio-economic grievances and political discontent with the course of British wartime and immediate post-war policy.

The 1920 revolt in Mesopotamia

Similar dynamics framed the path from the end of the war to the outbreak of violent revolt in Mesopotamia in July 1920. As in Egypt, the period leading up to the awarding of the League of Nations mandate for Mesopotamia to the United Kingdom in May 1920 witnessed a steady divergence of policy and the rhetoric of national self-determination. This occurred as Arnold Wilson's administration filled the vacuum created by London's inability to formulate a coherent policy for the occupied territories, and extended and sharpened its extractive capabilities. Demands for manpower and agricultural resources continued into 1920 and methods of assessment and collection improved steadily as the territorial reach of the administrative framework expanded.[60]

Throughout 1919, British officials in Mesopotamia wilfully misrepresented local opinion and failed to identify the build-up of powerful local grievances that covered a broad spectrum of urban and tribal communities. Parallels to the growth of resistant sentiments in Egypt existed in the similar attribution of hardship and wartime grievances with the visible growth of British control over, and penetration of, societal patterns. The major difference was that this was an entirely new development in Mesopotamia, rather than a temporary intensification of an existing power relation, and it contrasted sharply with the relative autonomy that the region had experienced under Ottoman maladministration. As a result, Atiyyah has described the eighteen months that elapsed between November 1918 and May 1920 as having 'a profound

influence on the development of political consciousness among the people as a whole.'[61]

In Mesopotamia, the publication of the Anglo-French declaration on 7 November 1918 came only weeks after the disclosure of the terms of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, the text of which had hitherto been suppressed by the civil authorities in Baghdad.[62] The two declarations prompted much discussion among local political leaders and notables, as did the news of the Hedjazi delegation under Faisal that was heading to Paris for the peace conferences.[63] However, the acting civil commissioner, Arnold Wilson, regarded the Anglo-French Declaration as a 'disastrous error' forced on the allies by President Wilson, and confidently declared that 'the country as a whole neither expects nor desires any such sweeping schemes of independence.'[64]

Wilson was not alone in minimising the significance of the Anglo-French Declaration. The Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, reassured him on 28 November 1918 that it was intended primarily to apply to Syria while Cox stated that 'it must not be taken too seriously.'[65] Meanwhile, in Baghdad, the influential Oriental Secretary to the administration, Gertrude Bell, believed in December 1918 that nobody in Mesopotamia wanted self-rule and instead 'they want us and no one else …'[66] Senior British officials therefore attempted to evade the terms of the declaration from the outset and sought to 'manipulate it in order to ensure that the pledge of indigenous administration would not be inconsistent with effective British control.'[67]

On 26 November, the new Political Secretary at the India Office, Sir John Shuckburgh, stated that the declaration 'clearly does not preclude close British control' provided the people elect for it. Consequently, he suggested that 'the first step is to procure a local pronouncement in our favour.'[68] Two days later, Montagu instructed Arnold Wilson to obtain a 'genuine expression of local opinion' on the subject of the creation of 'a single Arab state under British tutelage.' Montagu added that such an 'authoritative statement' would enable the British Government to present it 'before the world as [an] unbiased pronouncement by population of Mesopotamia.'[69]

This resulted in Wilson authorising and overseeing a severely flawed survey of 'local opinion.' He instructed his political officers to obtain the views of 'leading notables and sheikhs' but omitted from his instructions the clause 'genuine expression of local opinion.'[70] There followed a highly selective series of interviews with sheikhs and notables who owed their positions largely to British patronage. Their overwhelmingly positive responses ensured that only favourable opinions were

channelled to the civil commission in Baghdad. Wilson himself travelled to Hillah, Najaf and Karbala in December 1918 to meet with local notables and recorded that 'they wished for maintenance of present system of administration, but hoped it would be improved and elaborated by addition of more British officials.' The sanitised nature of this exercise became clear as Wilson then wrote that the notables' verdict, which he recorded as 'unanimous and delivered with an emphasis which it is difficult to convey in writing,' had in fact been 'thought out beforehand as the result of conversations with [the] Political Officer.'[71]

The manipulation of local opinion had two major consequences. First, it enabled Wilson to misrepresent the results as a 'plebiscite' that exaggerated the degree of support for continued British control.[72] This, in turn, enabled the government in London to claim that the results fell in line with the policy of promoting 'indigenous governments' as laid down in the Anglo-French declaration. It also gave the civil commission in Baghdad the space to continue its entrenchment and extension of powers and expand its range of functions. This involved the creation of five Secretariats and the gradual takeover of hitherto-military departments such as Agriculture, Irrigation and Public Works.[73]

The formation of the Revenue Secretariat, in particular, entailed the visible deepening of British control in agricultural regions. It enabled the administration to become considerably more efficient in its assessment of crops and collection of revenue, as the administration considered that agrarian taxation could be a valuable tool of political control in the occupied territories.[74] It also became the lightning rod of local resentment against this extension of powers. Its controller, E.B. Howell, was notably hostile to the transfer of authority to local institutions, and proved unable to 'envisage anything which is not on English lines.'[75] He played a similar role to Brunyate in Egypt, and did much to alienate local opinion and increase their suspicions as to the true nature of British policy in Mesopotamia. Such feelings were further stimulated by the introduction of the Indian rupee as the universal currency in Mesopotamia, and by the continued dominance of Indians among the lower rungs of the civil administration, to the exclusion of local Arabs. These developments ensured that throughout 1919 the occupied territories in Mesopotamia remained firmly under a centralising British-Indian administration, with very limited local participation.[76]

The second consequence of Arnold Wilson's misrepresentation of local opinion was that his administration failed to identify or appreciate the degree of local opposition to their policy of formalising and deepening their wartime powers of control. Wilson dismissed the

views of Baghdadis who did speak out as unrepresentative opposition from men 'whose views are theoretical and who are far less in touch than we are with the country as a whole and never take its interests into consideration.'[77] He shared the paternalistic belief common to many colonial administrators that the tribal groups were supposedly untouched by Ottoman corruption and nationalist theorising, and represented what Toby Dodge has labelled 'the true bulwark against the dangers of a new Iraqi despotism.'[78] However, it was Wilson, rather than the elements of resistance he decried, who was out of touch with local opinion, and his administration that lacked the political legitimacy to underpin its extractive demands upon the society over which it governed in 1919 and 1920.

Thus, the highly flawed set of assumptions and analyses of local conditions prevented the administration from acknowledging that the creation of a new proto-nationalist grouping in Baghdad might act as a conduit for the many political, social and economic grievances that permeated Mesopotamian society. One manifestation of these grievances appeared in February 1919, when a new political grouping formed in protest at the authorities' refusal to allow a delegation from Mesopotamia to proceed to Paris for the peace conferences. It called itself the Iraq Guards for Independence (*Haras al-Istiqlal al-'Iraqiyin*) and included more socially diverse members than the existing *al-Ahd* nationalist group. Another important difference between the two was that the Guards chose to reject the *Ahd's* call for continuing ties with the British during the struggle for independence.[79]

In addition to being more socially inclusive than the *Ahd*, the new group also benefited from greater organisation and the more propitious contextual circumstances in which it operated. It contained a number of young educated nationalists who actively disseminated pro-independence propaganda, and worked to align Sunni and Shiite communities into a genuinely national, non-sectarian movement against the British. This was a significant new development that enabled the Guards to extend their activities beyond Baghdad to the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala and the strongly Shiite districts of the pan-Euphrates region that had suffered some of greatest rural hardships in the war.[80]

Although the Guards suffered from the lack of any central cohesion or political programme, they nevertheless performed much the same role as the *Wafd* did in Egypt. This was to act as the focal point around which socially and economically diverse groups of discontented individuals and communities, Sunni and Shiite and town and tribal, could

rally in a fragmented and uneasy coalition. Inasmuch as there was any common purpose that united these groups it was that they had suffered from the wartime dislocation and continuing demands for resources and manpower. Beyond this universalising sentiment, particularist local factors played the decisive role in conditioning whether and how these communities reacted to the formalisation and attempted legitimisation of the British presence in the occupied territories.[81]

Four prominent disaffected elements in Mesopotamian society have been identified by Atiyyah as coming together in June 1920 to precipitate the largely uncoordinated set of three tribal risings that occurred between July and September. These were the tribal communities, the Shiite religious hierarchy, urban notables and intellectuals, and the expatriate community consisting predominantly of Mesopotamian officers from Faisal's Arab army in Syria.[82] Each of these groups nursed specific grievances arising out of the war and the conduct of the British occupation of Mesopotamia. Underpinning them all was the fundamental lack of legitimacy to buttress the pillars of British control and provide a veneer of cover for their more aggressive and extensive penetration of regional society.

Tribal anger revolved around the novel introduction of a degree of centralised control. For many of the more isolated tribal groupings this differed sharply from their experiences of Ottoman administration, during which they had enjoyed relative autonomy from intrusive state demands. The extension of centralised control and the impact of wartime demands for their manpower and agricultural commodities provoked powerful feelings of resentment and an urge to protect scarce resources at a time of localised shortages and the transfer of rural foodstuffs to urban areas. Although the British authorities acknowledged that 'the inevitable drain on labour necessitated by war conditions cannot be other than detrimental to agricultural interests,' recruitment to the labour units continued into 1919.[83] The labourers continued to work on quasi-military construction of strategic railways and roads and this caused further resentment, as Aylmer Haldane admitted that 'little of the work undertaken has been directly profitable for the people of the country.'[84]

Local hardships proved significant in shaping the contours of the geographic and social map of the rebellion. The refinement and sharpening of the administrative capacity for extending control over the tribes and extracting revenue represented a new and visible form of intrusion into many regions whose physical isolation had ensured de facto independence from Ottoman demands. The most noteworthy feature of the

tribal risings was that the worst of the violence occurred in regions such as the mid-Euphrates, where central demands for taxation and revenue were new and threatened to reconfigure existing power relations and patterns of economic distribution. This stood in contrast to the larger and more homogenous tribal confederations along the Tigris, which were more accustomed by virtue of their geographic location to a degree of central authority.[85]

British officials failed to spot this incremental build-up of tribal discontent. Their institutional ignorance of local temper was best exemplified by the political officer of the Diwaniya division, Major C.K. Daly, who wrote in his annual report for 1919 that 'the close of the year is marked by the absence of any disturbing element and a more satisfactory tribal situation than has ever before existed within living memory.'[86] However, Daly was himself a focus of particular tribal hatred who exemplified the 'heavy-handed approach of the occupying forces,' and Gertrude Bell compared the fact that the July 1920 revolt began at Rumaytha, in his division, to ice breaking at its thinnest point.[87]

The other three groups also nursed particular and powerful grievances that fuelled their recourse to violence in the summer of 1920. Shiite communities had long been excluded from positions of power and influence in local affairs by the Sunni Ottomans, and the British continued this policy of marginalisation.[88] British preference for working through the existing Sunni notables was to an extent attributable to the traditions of political quietism, which complicated communications with the Shiite religious hierarchy in the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf. Officials also viewed the universalist pan-Islamic rhetoric of the *mujtahids* with distrust and suspected them of posing a direct challenge to their political influence and state-building project in Iraq.[89] This stream of thought culminated in Bell's pronouncement in October 1920 that the Sunni communities should assume the positions of authority in the new state of Iraq, in spite of their numerical inferiority, in order to forestall what she labelled 'a *mujtahid*-run, theocratic state, which is the very devil.'[90]

Feelings of mutual distrust increased further in December 1918 when a leading *mujtahid* based in Karbala, Mirza Mohammed Taqi al-Shirazi, published a *fatwa* warning Muslims not to participate in choosing a non-Muslim to rule Mesopotamia.[91] This rare intervention into political life extended religious authority to the calls for self-determination in Mesopotamia, a demand that was given added force by the signing of the Anglo-Persian Treaty in August 1919 that created a strongly anglophile regime in Teheran. Both of these events contributed to the

politicisation of the Shiite opposition to the continued British control of Mesopotamia and made them more responsive to the Baghdadi nationalists' attempts to reach out to them in 1920, whereupon the Shiite holy centre of Kadhimayn became an important pivot in this nascent coalition.[92]

In Baghdad itself, the majority of the urban population continued to suffer from the lingering and interconnected effects of food shortages, high inflation and interruption to established patterns of trade. As in Egypt, they ascribed many of these problems to an occupying power that was alien both in social and religious terms.[93] Educated urban elites also noted with growing resentment the divergence between the lofty declarations of allied policy and the evidence that the civil commission was embedding itself in the political, economic and social fabric of the occupied territories.[94] In January 1919, Bell attempted to lower the hopes of the educated elites by dismissing these 'gusts of hot air emitted from home in the shape of international declarations.'[95] Nevertheless, such statements did mask a considerable ideational appeal, and in the aftermath of the revolt, in October 1920, Bell retrospectively admitted that 'we had promised self-governing institutions and not only made no step toward them but were busily setting up something entirely different.'[96]

A further source of unease among groups of urban notables in Baghdad and Basra was the High Commission's failure to make an unambiguous declaration of British policy. This was due to London's preoccupation with the Paris conference and continued interdepartmental squabbling over the future of Mesopotamia. Similar to Egypt, British policy at this crucial time was formulated by a deputy, in this case Wilson, and this may also have contributed to a drift in policy. Local suspicions of British designs over the occupied territories became significant in 1920 as many hitherto collaborative elements of society, including the Jewish communities of Baghdad and Basra and many Baghdadi notables, toned down their support for the administration. Increasingly, they sought to hedge their bets to avoid offending any potential Arab administration that might come to power in Mesopotamia.[97]

Finally, external developments also determined the creation of local grievances and sowed doubts over British aims in the region. This chiefly affected the many army officers from Mesopotamia who had served in Faisal's Northern Arab Army during the Arab revolt. Many remained in Syria into 1919 and became cynical and disillusioned with external pledges of support during the steady breakdown in relations between the French and Faisal's fledgling administration.[98] These

officers were further embittered by Arnold Wilson's reluctance to allow them to return to Mesopotamia, and their experiences drove many to transfer their support from the moderately nationalist *Ahd* to that of the Independence Guards.[99] Additional sources of grievance included broader developments such as the unrest in Egypt, Bolshevik propaganda that reached Mesopotamia through Persia, the early successes of the Kemalist movement in Turkey, and anger at the outcome of the Anglo-Persian treaty. All of these issues sharpened the lack of trust between local proto-nationalist groups and the British administration in Baghdad.

In the spring of 1920, the gradual build-up of tension and discontented elements in Mesopotamia culminated with two formative events that together sparked the start of the uprising at Rumaytha on 2 July. On 26 April, the Judicial Secretary, Edgar Bonham Carter, drew up a preliminary report on a constitution for the occupied territories. Once more, parallels with Egypt may be drawn in the backlash that this attempted regularisation and legitimisation of wartime powers provoked. Bonham Carter's proposals included the creation of a Council of State in which effective authority remained firmly in British hands. Stephen Longrigg, then a junior political officer in Mesopotamia but writing after the conclusion of a long administrative career in Iraq, described the plans as 'well in advance of Wilson's own original views' and completely unacceptable to local national-minded groups.[100]

This was followed on 5 May by the announcement that Britain had accepted the League of Nations mandate for Mesopotamia at the San Remo conference that had taken place in April. Opposition groups and politicians interpreted the constitutional proposals and the mandate as evidence of a British plan to incorporate the country into the British Empire.[101] The two developments formed the focal point for the confluence of the educated urban nationalists' discontent at the extension of wartime powers and the broad range of socio-economic grievances arising out of the war and the continuing hardships. They provided the pivotal focus for the assembly of a very loose coalition that nevertheless lacked strategic direction, internal cohesion and a political vision.[102] A series of peaceful demonstrations took place in Baghdad during May and June was marked by symbolic and hitherto-unprecedented cross-sectarian co-operation between Sunnis and Shiites.[103] These coincided with the holy month of Ramadan, and the use of mosques, both Sunni and Shiite, as meeting-places and rallying-points, which greatly complicated British efforts to infiltrate and break up the agitation.[104]

Unrest spread to tribal regions on 2 July 1920 when the British garrison at Rumaytha was attacked and besieged in response to the arrest of a local Sheikh who had refused to pay any taxation to the occupation authorities. The early successes of the first rising encouraged other tribal groups to participate and three waves of unrest ultimately occurred. These involved tribes on mid-Euphrates region, the Baquba region on the Diyala river north of Baghdad, and the Faluja region west of Baghdad, and collectively they became known as the *al-thawra al-iraqiyya al-kubra* (the Great Iraqi Revolution). The risings lacked central organisation and collective objectives, but were more a series of localised reactions to specific socio-economic grievances, and they were severely compromised when the tribes on the Tigris and the powerful Muntafik confederation did not participate.

Strategies of survival and a sense of their own self-preservation also prompted the urban Sunni notable class to remain loyal to the British administration. Overwhelmingly, they chose to safeguard their existing privileges and social order as alarm grew at this expression of Shiite and tribal power. As a result, the uprising fizzled out of as a revolt of the mid-Euphrates tribes and a product of that region's specific combination of socio-economic hardships and Shiite religious opposition.[105] The distinction between the predominantly Shiite uprising and the comparative loyalty of Sunni communities had powerful political consequences. It confirmed British officials' prejudices, and ensured that they worked through the Sunni elements of Mesopotamia as they constructed the new state of Iraq and transferred responsibilities to local actors, while continuing the Ottoman policy of marginalisation of its Shiite populace.

Nevertheless, the rising took the British civil and military authorities completely by surprise. On 14 June, weeks before the rising began, Bell predicted that 'I personally don't think there will be an outbreak either here [Baghdad] or in the provinces …'[106] The military authorities were caught equally unawares. The new commander-in-chief, Aylmer Haldane, was felt by his civilian colleagues to be ignorant of local conditions, and was on summer leave in the Persian hills along with the rest of his general headquarters when the rising began. According to Bell, he initially 'refused to realise the importance of the rising' at Rumaytha.[107] The commander of 17th (Indian) Division, Major-General G.A. Leslie, described on 15 July how 'I found the Chief playing bridge. He said definitely that he would not risk a single man of his reserve to save Rumaithah [*sic*] and that it was the garrison's own fault for getting besieged.'[108] Leslie himself focused the majority of his efforts in the

run-up to the revolt towards engineering a merger between the Baghdad Racing Club and the Basra Racing Club, and reported triumphantly on 15 June that 'at last I have succeeded in getting a real move on with the new race course at Hinaidi.'[109] His efforts in equine administration paid off with the holding of the first Euphrates Gold Cup that took place in Hillah, in the mid-Euphrates, on 17 October 1920, as parts of the country remained in revolt.[110]

Eighteen Indian Army battalions rushed to Mesopotamia to join the 98,738 troops and 16,476 labourers still in the occupied territories, and succeeded in quelling the worst of the rising by mid-October.[111] It came at the cost of 312 dead and 1228 wounded soldiers for the British and Indian armies in addition to the expenditure of an average of £591,700 per week between 1 July and 1 October 1920.[112] London could ill-afford this level of expenditure of financial and military resources at a time of economic difficulties at home and political unrest throughout the empire. Consequently, policy-makers in London began to formulate a plan for realigning their techniques of control over Mesopotamia and bringing it into line with older and more 'informal' methods of British control.

The end of 'war imperialism' and the 'crisis of empire'

The trajectory of the revolts in Egypt in 1919 and Mesopotamia in 1920 followed similar paths. They involved a temporary coalescence of disaffected groups as political opponents of British efforts to regularise and extend their wartime powers interacted with the deep resentment at ongoing hardships that impacted on many disparate levels of society. Both events constituted the culmination of local backlashes against the more intrusive and aggressive form of wartime imperial control that had been necessary to mobilise and extract local resources for the logistical services. It involved the active and passive participation by a number of co-operative groups in the imperial war effort, and the loss of these collaborative pillars in the post-war climate of disillusionment gravely weakened the foundations of British control in both countries. However, it was another localised reaction to the more penetrative form of imperial control, in India, which determined the broader Imperial reaction to the unrest, and ultimately shaped the contours of a new and cheaper policy of imperial control that was more consistent with established pre-war patterns of indirect influence. This again sought to identify and work though cooperative local agents to secure British influence while ensuring that the major functions of

state, such as defence and the conduct of foreign relations, remained under British control.

In order to properly understand the nature of the British reaction to the revolts in Egypt and India and the unrest in India, it is necessary to situate it within the wider 'crisis of empire' that occurred between 1919 and 1922.[113] This was synchronous with economic troubles in the United Kingdom, military conflict leading to civil war and secession in Ireland, political and violent unrest in India, Persia and East Africa, and a short yet sharp war in Afghanistan in 1919. All of these developments placed a heavy strain on the Indian Army, which actually peaked in size during the 1919 Afghan war, and contrasted sharply with the rapid demobilisation of the British army in the same period.[114] This important distinction caused British officials in London and Delhi to assume that the Indian Army would once again assume its pre-1914 posture as an 'imperial fire-brigade' that would stand 'centre-stage in policing the peace.'[115] This became a matter of imperial and strategic necessity in an empire that reached its maximum extent in 1919, and was held together by military force more that at any comparable period in its existence, with consequent implications for its lack of political legitimacy and acceptance by host societies.

By the summer of 1920, the Indian Army maintained a total of 180,000 men in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, the Black Sea region and various other imperial garrisons. This was in addition to the eighteen battalions sent to Mesopotamia that summer to quell the tribal rising there.[116] In these changed global circumstances, the assumption that the Indian Army would revert to its former role proved incompatible with shifts in the political relationship between India and the empire, and with the new constraints that this imposed on the exercise of political and military power. In 1917, the Montagu-Chelmsford report introduced the principle of limited Indian control over the central Legislative Assembly, and the reforms were enacted by the Government of India in 1919 when the new constitution took effect. Under the changed system it became possible for Indian members of the assembly to exercise a measure of control over military affairs by voting to levy or withhold the taxation necessary to finance military expenditure.[117]

However, the limited reforms failed to placate a growing, cross-sectarian nationalist opinion in India or to forestall an upsurge in political agitation. Nationalist opposition to the reforms coincided with outrage at the introduction of the Rowlatt Act, and with Indian Muslim anxiety about the future of the Caliph in Constantinople, as well as the brutal over-reaction of the British authorities in the Punjab

to the *satyagraha* movement. The cumulative convergence of these factors altered the political landscape of India as the Indian National Congress emerged as a credible and dynamic mass movement that embraced urban and rural workers alike. Leading British officials in Delhi shared the reluctance of their counterparts in Baghdad and Cairo in acknowledging and accommodating this unwelcome competitor for loyalty and power, but in August 1919 Montagu warned the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, that 'you must govern India in all aspects as a country on its way to self-government and not as a dependency.'[118]

The new political conditions prevailing in India after 1919 thus constrained the British in their ability to wield the Indian Army as a tool of imperial control. British members of the Viceroy's Council now had to take care to avoid antagonising and alienating 'moderate' politicians and driving them into the 'extremist' camp. Coupled with the skilful manipulation of these new configurations of power relations by nationalist politicians, it proved an effective method of reducing military expenditure and limiting the deployment of Indian troops overseas.[119] The loss of this imperial reserve constituted an immediate and negative impact on the empire's military and strategic capabilities. Indian Army units withdrew from Egypt in 1922 and Palestine in 1923 and progressively handed over duties in Mesopotamia to the Royal Air Force and local levies before withdrawing completely in 1928.[120] Without the ready availability of the Indian Army it became impossible to sustain the expanding gap between heavier imperial commitments and reduced military capability, and Stockwell has identified this as the heart of the post-war 'crisis of empire.'[121]

These new limitations on the use of the Indian Army proved to be the glue that bound together the various nationalist and proto-nationalist backlashes to the continuation of more aggressive forms of imperial control in the Middle East. Belated recognition that the imperial paradigm had shifted led ultimately to the realignment of the techniques of collaboration and a return to more traditional tools of colonial governance between 1920 and 1922. Nationalist politicians in Egypt withheld all cooperation from the Milner Commission despatched by the British government in December 1919 to enquire into the roots of the unrest and determine the future status of Egypt. An upsurge in violence and political agitation greeted the mission's arrival in Egypt, and in February 1921 it concluded that the protectorate was no longer viable.[122] In addition, a serious mutiny broke out among 3000 British soldiers at their demobilisation camp in Qantara in April 1919. It underscored the simmering resentment at the slow pace of demobilisation,

and demonstrated the practical necessity of reducing troop levels in Egypt as rapidly as possible.[123] All of these developments enabled Allenby to persuade the British government to issue a unilateral declaration of Egyptian 'independence' on 22 February 1922 whereby Britain retained control of vital strategic and imperial objectives such as the Canal Zone.[124]

In Mesopotamia, the political outcry in Britain at the financial and military cost of suppressing the revolt ensured that imperial policy after 1920 was guided by the overarching motivations of financial stringency. Sir Percy Cox returned to Baghdad as High Commissioner in October 1920 to replace the discredited Wilson. He immediately created a Council of Ministers who assumed executive control from the political officers, who now became advisers in a theoretical separation of powers but nevertheless ensured the continuation of British influence, albeit indirectly.[125] A hastily convened conference in Cairo in March 1921 saw the selection of Faisal bin Hussein as king of the new Iraqi state, and on 10 October 1922 the British government formally replaced the League of Nations mandate with a treaty of alliance with Iraq.[126]

At the imperial level, the Colonial and War Offices in London adopted a plan by the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Hugh Trenchard, that formulated a scheme for air defence in the Middle East supported by local levies. This would allow significant cuts in the levels of military expenditure deemed necessary to maintain imperial and strategic objectives in the region. The scheme was derided by the outgoing (and soon to be assassinated) Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, as an attempt to govern on the cheap using a proxy combination of local actors and aerial coercion.[127] Nevertheless, the creation of new forms of client regimes in Baghdad and Cairo did constitute belated appreciation that the enhanced wartime powers of external penetration of local society could not continue indefinitely in the absence of corresponding reserves of local political capital and legitimacy. Consequently, a combination of political, military and financial constraints dictated the reversion to more traditional and pre-1914 techniques of governance based on the exercise of indirect influence that sought to maximise the benefits of empire while minimising its cost.[128]

These two declarations in Egypt and Mesopotamia in 1922 marked the end of the effort to prolong and regularise the enhanced wartime levels of control in the Middle East. The 'crisis of empire' that historians have identified between 1919 and 1922 consisted of localised reactions to the continuation of these powers and the enduring impact of socio-economic hardships and grievances that arose from the war. This more

intrusive form of colonial governance bound together the intensive mobilisation and extraction of extra-European resources for the logistical effort between 1916 and 1918. However, it could not be sustained after the end of the specific conditions of wartime necessity that made its temporary adoption possible. Thus, the greater authoritarianism of wartime control and resource extraction must be studied together with the post-war backlash against the extension of these practices into the post-war era, in an approach that integrates the two dimensions of the colonial exposure to industrial war.

Conclusion

This book has examined the impact of participation in the First World War on India, Egypt and the occupied territories in Mesopotamia and Palestine through the prism of resource extraction. It has demonstrated the symbiotic linkages between mobilisation and logistics and described how these demands for resources interfered with local political, economic and societal patterns and constituted a driving factor behind the nature and pace of imperial and political control. It has also emphasised the significance of 1916 as the decisive turning-point in the extra-European exposure to the war. This resulted in the development of a more authoritarian and intrusive form of imperial control in order to meet the demands of the war economy and regulate the expansion of state powers and its deeper penetration into local societies. Thus, the focus on the evolving techniques of state control in occupied territory adds another dimension to existing literature on 'war and society' and also provides a new approach to the study of the history of the First World War in the Middle East and India.

In addition, the book adopted a trans-regional approach to the study of mobilisation and logistics in the major extra-European theatres of the war. This recognises the multidimensional linkages and interconnected political economies of the Middle East and India, both in terms of historical patterns of settlement and exchange but also a result of their positions within the colonial system. Writing in 1981, the late John Gallagher noted that the heart of the post-war 'crisis of empire' lay in an interconnected set of problems and responses to the hardships occasioned by the war. As a result, he concluded that 'it is the issues themselves, rather than the regions, which need to be studied' since 'no analysis of any of these crises will be complete without establishing its interplay with the others.'[1]

A similar concern for comparative linkages has guided the research themes presented here. Focusing on the wartime extraction of resources and the interaction of logistics and politics has enabled a broad picture to emerge of the similarities and differences inherent in mobilising different peasant economies for participation in modern conflict. The diverse conditions encountered in each region complicated British attempts to formulate or transplant policies developed in one area to any of the others. This became most apparent in the flawed application of Indian bureaucratic and tribal codes to the occupied territories in Mesopotamia, but throughout the war, tensions between civil and military officials, between the periphery and the imperial metropolis, and between the various agencies of colonial policymaking, blurred and hampered policymaking towards the regions and territories in the Middle East and India.

Set against this is the temporary transformation of colonial governance that developed in 1917 and 1918 as officials in London and in theatre sought to maximise the extraction of local resources for the military effort. The immense logistical requirements of supplying the bloated campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia belatedly led to a series of measures that overturned the long-established political economy of empire on the cheap and interfered vigorously in local societies. These required British officials to establish new structures of governance that distorted existing power relations and substantively increased the visibility and impact of British rule. They relied on a precarious layer of collaborative local agents that subsequently broke down in 1919 as these groups and individuals began to demand a return on their cooperation. This clashed with attempts by officials to legitimate their enhanced wartime powers, and contributed greatly to the erosion and gradual breakdown of 'war imperialism' once the bonds of wartime necessities had fallen away.

The second proximate cause of the post-war unrest lay in the legacies of wartime hardship. These affected a wide range of socio-economic grouping in the Middle East and India, as rising prices and shortages of vital commodities, notably foodstuffs, eroded the thin margins of subsistence and led to conditions of near-famine in many areas in 1918. Logistical requirements for local resources destabilised labour and agricultural markets and placed intense strain on the delicate equilibrium between civil and military demands for man- and animal power, food and fodder. Both urban and rural inhabitants developed strategies of survival in response, and individually and collectively these informed their responses to the outbreak of proto-nationalist unrest in 1919–20.

Particularly in rural regions of India, Egypt and Mesopotamia, peasant participation in the violence was borne out of a desire to protect access to scarce commodities rather than affinity or adherence to a political programme or agenda. This explains the rapid spread of the violence and the inability of the proto-nationalist leaders to control and channel the unrest after its outbreak in Cairo in March 1919 and Rumaytha in July 1920.

Studying the impact of war on society in the Middle East and India therefore raises a number of broader comparative points of interest. One is diachronic, as the region again became a battlefield and provider of immense quantities of local resources of manpower, food and fodder during the Second World War. Examining the progression towards industrial and commercial organisation and inter-allied organisation in the United Kingdom has already started, and Kathleen Burk has observed that 'in this respect the First World War was a dry run for the Second…'[2] Viewed through this analytical lens, the progressively more comprehensive mobilisation of resources formed a prelude to the 'total warfare' of 1939–45 and provides the material for a comparative study of the linkages between state control and patterns of mobilisation in the later conflict.

Extending a diachronic approach to the study of the impact of warfare on state formation and societies in the Middle East and India would hold much comparative value. In 1941–42, the threat from Rommel's Afrika Korps and the Japanese invasion of north-east India once more meant that Egypt and India became supply bases for major military campaigns. Again, an uneasy relationship developed between the continuing modernisation in industrialised and motorised warfare and the demands on Indian labour and animal transport. Indian officials tapped existing recruiters of labour, such as the Assam Tea Association, for military manpower, while great numbers of men and animals were raised in Assam and Burma for the logistical units on the eastern front.[3] This carried clear echoes of the utilisation of commercial patterns of labour mobilisation in 1917–18, and a comparative study of resource extraction and the impact of war on society in both eras is deserving of greater scholarly attention.

In Egypt, the creation of the Middle East Supply Centre in 1941 expanded into a major experiment in regional economic planning. Here, again, the exigencies of warfare directed the patterns of external intervention into agricultural and labour markets in Egypt. One recent study by Robert Vitalis and Steven Heydemann has drawn attention to the critical legacy of this intervention in shaping the dynamics of post-colonial state-

building processes and normative debates over the role of the state and its relation to economic activity in the Middle East.[4] Thus, tensions between the local and the global, between competing civil and military demands for local resources, and their relationship to broader geo-strategic processes, are distinctive characteristics of both regions' exposure to large-scale, industrialised conflict in the two world wars.

A second comparative approach would situate the systems of military labour recruitment within the broader typologies of bonded and forced labour regimes in India and Egypt. In both countries, the spectre of forced labour systems hung over military recruiters as they introduced more intensive measures to maximise enlistment for the labour units. This was especially the case in India, where the competition from the military for labour contributed to the decision to suspend the emigration of indentured labourers in 1917.[5] It complicated British attempts to retain a pool of Indian labourers in Mesopotamia after the end of hostilities, as Indian nationalist political leaders suspected the Civil Commission in Baghdad of seeking to re-introduce a system of forced labour under the guise of military necessity. A look at the wartime recruitment of military labour as an essential continuation of forced labour regimes would add to the existing literature on bonded labour regimes in the years prior to the formation of the International Labour Organisation in 1920 and the adoption of a League of Nations Convention on Forced Labour in 1930.

The third issue is the examination of the role of resource extraction in shaping the parameters and processes of state formation and reconfiguring hierarchies of power and structures of governance in the Middle East. This adds a vital comparative dimension to the work of Charles Tilly and others on comparable processes in the European state system.[6] The experience of the Middle East, and also India, in the two world wars of the twentieth century, profoundly impacted the political economies of the post-colonial states that emerged. Recent research led by Heydemann has laid the conceptual foundations for the study of how participation in conflict affected patterns of state-society relations and techniques of governance in Middle Eastern states.[7] Furthermore, the divergent strategies and accommodations of various actors and groups within local societies had important implications for their role in the reconfigured polities that followed the uprisings in Egypt in 1919 and Mesopotamia in 1920. This was particularly the case in the new state of Iraq, in which the Ba'ath party's politicisation of historical memory and construction of a powerful foundational narrative played powerful roles in shaping the marginalisation of Shiite actors in the institutional

and social contours of the state structure that remained in place until their forceful overthrow in 2003.[8]

These three reasons demonstrate the utility of adopting a multidisciplinary approach that integrates the study of comparative politics and international political economy within broader studies of war and society. The targeting of Iraqi political and institutional structures in 2003 and the resulting invasion and occupation of the country highlighted the enduring role of warfare and the deployment of organised and other forms of violence in the Middle East state system that emerged after the First World War. Examining the emergence of these polities in the context to their exposure to a larger conflict, the fate of which was decided on other battlefields but which nevertheless had an enormous impact on local state-society structures, therefore brings the local impact of mobilisation and logistics to the centre of the study of the experience of the 'peripheral' campaigns undertaken by the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces. The frequently neglected or misunderstood dimensions of logistics and mobilisation formed the core elements of a deeper, more authoritarian mobilisation of imperial resources that made possible the eventual military successes that culminated in the capture of Baghdad and Jerusalem in 1917. This fundamentally challenged social relations and political structures in the existing colonial polities of Egypt and India, and clashed with prior experiences of Ottoman administrative rule in Palestine and Mesopotamia. The domestic reactions to the wartime tightening of imperial control then played a crucial role in the 'crisis of empire' between 1918 and 1922 and the subsequent return to more traditional, informal techniques of imperial control. This book consequently fills the gap in the periods between the pre- and post-war historiography of empire and broadens the literature on the nature and conduct of the extra-European campaigns during the first truly global war.

Notes

Introduction

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39. W. Nunn (2007) *Tigris Gunboats: The Forgotten War in Iraq 1914–1917* (London: Chatham Publishing), p.220.
40. Evidence of Major-General Sir George Gorringe to the Mesopotamia Commission, 14 September 1916, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
41. MacMunn, *Many Wars*, p.216.
42. '*Report by Major-General H.F.E. Freeland on the Working and Future Development of the Port of Basra and of the River and Railway Communications in Mesopotamia*,' April 1918, p.9, TNA: PRO MUN 4/6517.
43. Nunn, *Tigris Gunboats*, p.220.
44. Moberley, *Mesopotamia Official History*, II, p.278.
45. Ibid.
46. Telegram from GOC IEF D to CGS India, 8 February 1916, TNA: PRO WO 106/905.
47. Telegram from the Commander-in-Chief, Army in India, to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, London, 9 February 1916; telegram from CIGS London to C-in-C India, 10 February 1916, both in TNA WO 106/905.
48. Telegram from GOC IEF D to CGS India, 11 February 1916, TNA: PRO WO 106/905.
49. Telegram from GOC IEF D to CGS India, 15 February 1916, TNA: PRO WO 106/905.
50. In a telegram to the Secretary of State for India on 26 January 1916, the outgoing Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, placed the blame for the failure of the initial relief operations on a supposed 'deficiency of moral courage' on the part of Aylmer.

51. Telegram from the GOC IEF D to CGS India, 13 March 1915, TNA: PRO WO 106/906.
52. *'Dispatch by Lieutenant-General Sir G.F. Gorringe on Operations of Tigris Corps in Mesopotamia from 23 January to 30 April 1916,'* p.17, TNA: PRO WO 32/5201.
53. Evidence of Sir Percy Lake to the Mesopotamia Commission, 11 January 1917, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
54. Telegram from GOC IEF D to CGS India, 22 April 1916, TNA: PRO WO 106/906.
55. Telegram from Kitchener to Duff, 25 April 1916, TNA: PRO WO 106/906.
56. Evidence of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice to the Mesopotamia Commission, 3 October 1916, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
57. In particular, Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Altham, who became Quartermaster-General. Altham had previously served as the Chief Administrative Officer in Gallipoli and Egypt and was widely recognised within War Office circles as a talented administrator.
58. G. Barrow (1931) *The Life of General Sir Charles Carmichael Monro* (London: Hutchinson), p.132.
59. Letter, Major-General Holloway to Sir George Buchanan, 17 December 1915, TNA: PRO WO 95/4993, Appendix I.
60. In his evidence to the Mesopotamia Commission, Captain W.B. Huddleston, the Principal Maritime Transport Officer at the time of Buchanan's arrival in Mesopotamia, stated that to have co-ordinated military work with a civilian 'would be a most extraordinary thing and not in accordance with anything ever done before anywhere...'.
61. *Freeland Report*, p.9, TNA: PRO MUN 4/6517.
62. Sir George Buchanan, '*Port Administration and River Conservancy Department, MEF – Report for Month Ending June 30th, 1916*,' TNA: PRO WO 95/4993.
63. *Freeland Report*, p.11, TNA: PRO MUN 4/6517.
64. W.M. Parker (1921) 'Supply Services in Mesopotamia – Being a Lecture Delivered at the R.A.S.C. Training College,' *Royal Army Service Corps Quarterly*, II, 424.
65. '*Report on Operations 28 August 1916 to 31 March 1917 by Lieutenant-General F.S. Maude*,' TNA: PRO WO 32/5206.
66. *Mesopotamia Transport Commission Report*, p.21, TNA: PRO WO 32/5209.
67. Evidence of Brigadier-General R. Stuart-Wortley to the Mesopotamia Commission, 31 October 1916, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
68. '*Memorandum on India's Contribution to the War in Men, Material, and Money: August 1914 to November 1918*,' IOR L/MIL/17/5/2381.
69. Evidence of Major-General Davison to the Mesopotamia Commission, 28 November 1916, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
70. Telegram from the War Office to GOC IEF D, 29 July 1916, IOR L/MIL/5/791.
71. Telegram from GOC IEF D to War Office, 4 December 1916; telegram from GOC IEF D to CGS India, 30 December 1916, both in IOR L/MIL/5/791.
72. *Freeland Report*, pp.17–19, TNA: PRO MUN 4/6517.
73. Ibid., Appendix D.
74. Ibid. p.18.
75. A. Forbes (1929) *A History of the Army Ordnance Services: Vol.3 – The Great War* (London: The Medici Society), p.211.

76. J. Marlowe (1965) *Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800–1956* (London: Frank Cass), p.221. In June 1915 the High Commissioner, Henry McMahon, described Egypt as 'one large hospital' which 'brings the war and our losses closely home to Egyptians.' Letter from McMahon to Fitzgerald, 15 June 1915, Kitchener papers, TNA: PRO PRO 30/57/47.
77. Letter from Sir John Maxwell to Ian Hamilton, 13 May 1915, Papers of Sir Ian Hamilton, LHCMA, box 7/1/15; '*Note, General Staff, Army Headquarters,'* Cairo, 23 July 1915 – The Egyptian Labour Corps, TNA: PRO FO 141/797/2689.
78. Letter from McMahon to Hamilton, 2 October 1915, Kitchener papers, TNA: PRO PRO 30/57/47.
79. Jonathan Newell (1990) 'British Military Policy in Egypt and Palestine, August 1914 – June 1917,' unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, p.102.
80. Davies, Lecture on Supply and Transport, p.198; Newell, British Military Policy, p.103.
81. Letter, Maxwell to Hamilton, 24 September 1915, LHCMA Hamilton papers, 7/1/15.
82. '*Lessons from the Great War. Egypt and Palestine up to June 1917,*' in Papers of General Sir Walter Kirke, LHCMA, box 4/7; '*Campaign in Egypt – Report on Water Supply,*' in IWM Murray papers, box 79/48/2.
83. '*Campaign in Egypt 1916 – Report on Engineer Works*,' IWM Murray papers, box 79/48/2.
84. A. Murray (1920) *Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons), Appendix F – Egyptian Labour Corps, p.206.
85. Telegram from CIGS. to the Secretary of State for War, 30 December 1915, Papers of Sir William Robertson, LHCMA, box 4/5/1.
86. J.E. Marshall (1928) *The Egyptian Enigma, 1890–1928* (London: John Murray), p.149.
87. Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, p.230.
88. Newell, British Military Policy, p.162.
89. C. Falls & G. MacMunn (1928) *Official History: Military Operations. Egypt and Palestine* (London: HMSO), Volume I. p.173.
90. This analogy was first used by Elliot and Kinross in Maintaining Allenby's Armies, p.119.
91. Gullett, *Australian Official History*, p.123.
92. Telegram, GOC EEF to McMahon, 9 March 1916, TNA: PRO FO 141/478, file 2201/3.
93. Gullett, *Australian Official History*, pp.47–48.
94. '*Campaign in Egypt – Report on Water Supply,*' p.15, in IWM Murray papers, box 79/48/2.
95. Ibid., p.27; also, letter from Sir Ronald Graham to Hardinge, 20 July 1916, Hardinge papers, CUL, Volume II – '... the usual blunders have been committed, such as a calculation to raise the water 150 feet when it should have been yards – the pipes were laid accordingly – then the error was discovered and more powerful engines were put in with the result that the pipes were blown sky high!'
96. Newell, British Military Policy, p.247.
97. Gullett, *Australian Official History*, p.213 and p.241; Murray, *Despatches*, Appendix E, p.195.

98. F. Maurice (1929) 'The Campaigns in Palestine and Egypt, 1914–1918, in Relation to the General Strategy of the War,' *Army Quarterly*, XVIII, 17.
99. Newell, British Military Policy, p.245.
100. E.K. Venables, 'They Also Served – The Story of the Egyptian Labour Corps in Sinai and Palestine,' unpublished memoir, IWM Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel E.K. Venables, file EKV, chapter 3, p.1.
101. I.M. Brown (1998) *British Logistics on the Western Front 1914–1919* (London: Praeger); K. Grieves (1989) 'Improvising the British War Effort: Eric Geddes and Lloyd George, 1915–18,' *War and Society*, VII, 40–55.
102. '*Work Performed by Egyptian State Railways*,' in TNA: PRO FO 371/3713.
103. Ibid.
104. Letter from GOC EEF to McMahon, 29 June 1916, TNA: PRO FO 141/478, file 2201/7.
105. Kantara Military Railway: General Correspondence, TNA: PRO FO 141/479, file 2201.
106. '*Campaign in Egypt – Report on Water Supply*,' p.7, in IWM Murray papers, box 79/48/2.
107. E. Allenby (1919) *A Brief Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force Under the Command of General Sir Edmund H.H. Allenby, July 1917 to October 1918* (London: HMSO), p.115.
108. '*Water Supply Report by Edmund Sandeman*,' TNA: PRO WO 158/608.
109. '*Note by Engineer-in-Chief, G.H.Q., 23 January 1917*,' TNA: PRO WO 158/608.
110. Evidence of Major-General Frederick Maurice to the Mesopotamia Commission, 3 October 1916; evidence of Brigadier-General R. Stuart-Wortley to the Mesopotamia Commission, 31 October 1916, both in TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
111. W. Marshall (1929) *Memories of Four Fronts* (London: Ernest Benn), p.294.
112. Gullett, *Australian Official History*, p.337; '*Campaign in Egypt – Report on Water Supply 1914 to 1917*,' p.39, IWM Murray papers, box 79/48/2.
113. '*Statement of Egyptian Natives Employed with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force*,' TNA: PRO FO 371/3192.

3 Intensification of Wartime Control, 1917–18

1. A. Forbes (1920) *A History of the Army Ordnance Services. Volume 3: The Great War* (London: The Medici Society), p.216.
2. P.E. Coletta (1996) *Allied and American Naval Operations in the European Theater. World War I* (Lewiston, NY: Lampeter), p.318.
3. F.J. Moberley (1923) *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914–1918. Volume III* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office), p.54.
4. W. Robertson (1926) *Soldiers and Statesmen 1914–1918. Vol. II* (London: Cassel), p.166. Convoys were first introduced in 1917, but divisions between the French, British and Italian navies in the Mediterranean hampered the introduction of a unified convoy system there.
5. D. Chapman-Huston and O. Ritter (1924) *General Sir John Cowans, G.C.B.: The Quartermaster-General of the Great War. Vol. II* (London: Hutchinson), p.181.

6. Evidence of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice to the Mesopotamia Commission, 3 October 1916, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
7. J. Darwin (1981) *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918–1922* (London: Macmillan), p.12.
8. E. Goldberg (1992) 'Peasants in Revolt – Egypt 1919,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies, XXIV*, 268.
9. K. Grieves (2000) 'Lloyd George and the Management of the British War Economy,' in R. Chickering & S. Forster (eds), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.386.
10. R. Holland (1999) 'The British Empire and the Great War, 1914–1918,' in J.M. Brown & W.R. Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV – The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.125.
11. K. Jeffery (1984) *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p.3.
12. Note by Arab Bureau, '*The Pax Britannica in the Occupied Territories of Mesopotamia*,' forwarded by the India Office to the Foreign Office on 5 May 1917, IOR L/P&S/10/617.
13. Moberley, *Mesopotamia Official History*, III, pp.110–22.
14. Ibid., pp.195–200.
15. Ibid. p.146.
16. Lieutenant-General F.S. Maude, '*Report on operations 28 August 1916 to 31 March 1917*,' TNA: PRO WO 32/5206.
17. Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 10 March 1917, Papers of Gertrude Bell, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, available online at www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk .
18. Telegram from the War Office to C-in-C MEF, 11 March 1917, IOR L/MIL/5/757.
19. '*Sketch of Military Operations in Mesopotamia 1917*,' TNA: PRO WO 106/912.
20. Telegram from GOC MEF to C-in-C India and CIGS London, 19 March 1917, IOR L/MIL/5/757.
21. Gertrude Bell, '*Report on the Najaf-Karbala District*,' TNA: PRO FO 371/3060.
22. '*Sketch of Military Operations in Mesopotamia 1917*,' TNA: PRO WO 106/912.
23. A. Wilson (1931) *Mesopotamia 1917–1920: A Clash of Loyalties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.56.
24. B. Schwarz (1993) 'Divided Attention: Britain's Perception of a German Threat to Her Eastern Frontier in 1918,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXVII, 106–09.
25. L. Dunsterville (1920) *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London: E. Arnold), p.3.
26. '*Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force: Despatch on Operations by Lieutenant-General Sir W.R. Marshall, 1918 April 1-October 31*,' TNA: PRO WO 106/916.
27. Ibid.
28. '*Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force: Despatch of operations by Lieutenant-General Sir W.R. Marshall, 1918 1 October-31 December*,' TNA: PRO WO 106/917.
29. Letter from Webb Gillman to Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, 8 February 1918, in Papers of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, LHCMA, file 3/5/68.
30. Letter from Maurice Hankey to Sir Eric Geddes, 30 July 1918, TNA: PRO CAB 21/119.

31. Wilson, *Clash of Loyalties*, p.11.
32. '*Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force: Despatch of operations by Lieutenant-General Sir W.R. Marshall, 1918 1 October-31 December*,' TNA: PRO WO 106/917.
33. Philip Chetwode, '*Secret Notes on Operation of Desert Column*,' 15 March 1917, in Papers of Field Marshal Lord Chetwode, IWM. P 183, folder 2; F. Maurice (1929) 'The Campaigns in Palestine and Egypt, 1914–1918, In Relation to the General Strategy of the War,' *Army Quarterly*, XVIII, 18.
34. M. Hughes (1999) *Allenby and British Strategy in the Middle East, 1917–1919* (London: Frank Cass), p.26.
35. B. Millman (2001) *Pessimism and British War Policy, 1916–1918* (London: Frank Cass), p.12.
36. C. Falls & George MacMunn (1928) *Official History, Military Operations, Egypt and Palestine, Volume I* (London: HMSO), p.279.
37. Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, p.163.
38. Falls & MacMunn, *Egypt and Palestine Official History*, I, pp.293–303.
39. Telegram from C-in-C EEF to CIGS, 28 March 1917, Papers of Sir William Robertson, LHCMA, box 4/5.
40. Y.Sheffy (2000) 'The Introduction of Chemical Weapons to the Middle East,' in Y. Sheffy & S. Shai (eds), *The First World War: Middle Eastern Perspective* (Tel Aviv: s.n.), p.80.
41. The railhead had reached Khan Yunis and the pipeline Rafa, some eleven miles from the front, when the first battle of Gaza was launched.
42. J. Newell (1990) 'British Military Policy in Egypt and Palestine, August 1914–June 1917,' unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, p.278.
43. The correspondence between Philip Chetwode, commander of the Desert Column of cavalry, and Guy Dawnay, his Brigadier-General General Staff, in February-March 1917 covers the difficulties in ensuring an adequate water supply; see IWM Chetwode papers, P 183, folder 2.
44. Newell, British Military Policy, p.339.
45. '*Report on Railway Situation – GS Z/31*,' sent from C-in-C EEF to CIGS London, 7 May 1917, IWM Chetwode papers, p.183, folder 3.
46. Telegram from CIGS London to C-in-C EEF, 21 July 1917, TNA: PRO WO 33/935; telegram from GHQ Egypt to the War Office, 4 May 1918, TNA: PRO WO 33/946.
47. Philip Chetwode, '*Notes on the Palestine Operations*,' 21 June 1917, in Papers of Sir William Bartholomew, LHCMA, box 1/2.
48. E. Allenby (1919) *A Brief Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force Under the Command of General Sir Edmund H.H. Allenby, July 1917 to October 1918* (London: HMSO), pp.84–85.
49. The capture of Beersheba's water supplies before the Ottomans could destroy the wells was a stroke of great fortune for the attacking force which would otherwise have been forced to withdraw for lack of water.
50. Critics of the plan became known collectively as the 'Gaza School.' The principal critic was Sir Clive Garsia, who had served as a staff officer with 54th Division at Gaza; C. Garsia (1940) *A Key to Victory: A Study in War Planning* (London: Eyre & Spotiswoode).
51. M. Hughes (1996) 'General Allenby and the Palestine Campaign, 1917–1918,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, XIX, 70.

52. W. Elliot & A. Kinross (1925) 'Maintaining Allenby's Armies: A Footnote to History,' *Royal Army Service Corps Quarterly*, XIII, 122–24; A.P. Wavell (1922) 'The Strategy of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force,' *Army Quarterly*, III, 243.
53. D. Lloyd George (1938) *War Memoirs* (London: Oldhams Press), Volume 2, p.1090.
54. Falls & MacMunn, *Egypt Official History*, II, p.413.
55. J.M. House (2001) *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas), p.58.
56. The standard reference for the development of logistics on the Western Front is I.M. Brown (1998) *British Logistics on the Western Front* (London: Praeger).
57. Allenby, *Advance*, p.92.
58. Ibid. p.91.
59. Elliot & Kinross, Maintaining Allenby's Armies, p.124.
60. '*Report on Palestine and Syria Situation by William Yale*,' 10 July 1917, TNA: PRO FO 371/2784.
61. R. Storrs (1937) *Orientations* (London: Nicholson & Watson), pp.336–38.
62. Telegram from GHQ Egypt to the War Office, 31 October 1918, TNA: PRO WO 33/960.
63. Allenby, *Advance*, p.94.
64. Goldberg, Peasants in Revolt, p.261.
65. C. Falls (1964) *Armageddon 1918* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson), p.56.
66. Allenby, *Advance*, p.102.
67. Forbes, *History of the Army Ordnance Services,* p.260.
68. Ibid. p.265.
69. '*Lessons from the Great War. Egypt and Palestine up to June 1917.*' Report by Brigadier Andrew James McCulloch for the Lessons of the Great War Committee, 1932, in Papers of General Sir Walter Kirke, LHCMA, box 4/7.
70. HMSO (1922) *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War. 1914–1920* (London: HMSO), pp.62–63.
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4 Deepening the Colonial State

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2. M. Redha Bhacker (2009) 'The Cultural Unity of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean: A Longue Duree Historical Perspective,' in L.G. Potter (ed.), *The Persian Gulf in History* (New York: Palgrave), p.166.
3. R. Holland (1999) 'The British Empire and the Great War, 1914–1918,' in J.M. Brown & W.R. Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire – Volume IV – The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.125.
4. J. Fisher (1999) *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916–1919* (London: Frank Cass), pp.167–70.
5. B. Millman (2001) *Pessimism and British War Policy 1916–1918* (London: Frank Cass), pp.12–13.

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8. T.J. Parrs (1998) 'British Middle East Policy-Making After the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools,' *Historical Journal*, XLI, 774.
9. Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, p.117.
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11. R. Adelson (1995) *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power and War, 1902–1922* (Yale: Yale University Press), p.4.
12. G.R. Atiyyah (1973) *Iraq: 1908–1921 A Socio-Political Study* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing), p.158.
13. H. Young (1933) *The Independent Arab* (London: John Murray), p.73; B.C. Busch (1971) *Britain, India and the Arabs* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p.70.
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17. L. Grafftey-Smith (1970) *Bright Levant* (London: John Murray), p.24.
18. Letter from Wingate to Murray, 23 May 1917, TNA: PRO FO 371/2932.
19. J. Marlowe (1965) *Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800–1956* (London: Frank Cass), pp.213–14.
20. M.W. Daly (1997) *The Sirdar: Sir Reginald Wingate and the British Empire in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society), p.203; H. Strachan (2001) *The First World War. Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.701.
21. Letter from McMahon to Hardinge, 2 February 1915, CUL Hardinge papers, vol. 93.
22. '*Memorandum on Martial Law in Egypt'* by General Sir Archibald Murray, 26 November 1916, TNA: PRO FO 371/2930.
23. J.E. Marshall (1928) *The Egyptian Enigma* (London: John Murray), p.141; Marshall was a Judge in the Egyptian Court of Appeal throughout the war years.
24. P.G. Elgood (1924) *Egypt and the Army* (London: Arnold), p.85.
25. E.W. Poulson-Newman (1928) *Great Britain in Egypt* (London: Cassell), p.210.
26. Daly, *Sirdar*, p.274; A similar process occurred elsewhere in the British Empire, most notably in Africa.
27. R. Wingate (1955) *Wingate of the Sudan* (London: John Murray), p.206; letter from Hardinge to Wingate, 14 February 1917, CUL Hardinge papers, 1917 vol. 1; letter from Graham to Hardinge, 9 September 1916, CUL Hardinge papers, 1916 vol. 4.

28. Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, p.21.
29. Letter from Ronald Lindsay to Wingate, 26 August 1917, Durham, Sudan Archive Durham (SAD), 165/2.
30. Wingate, *Wingate of the Sudan*, p.205.
31. A.J. Stockwell (1988) 'The War and the British Empire,' in J. Turner (ed.), *Britain and the First World War* (London: Unwin Hyman), p.44.
32. Amine Youssef, *Memorandum*, 23 March 1919, TNA: PRO FO 371/3715.
33. M.E. Yapp (1987) *The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792–1923* (London: Longman), p.295; letter from Wingate to Hardinge, 6 May 1917, CUL Hardinge papers, 1917 vol. 4.
34. '*The Future Political Status of Egypt*,' by Brigadier-General Clayton, 22 July 1917, TNA: PRO FO 371/2932.
35. J. Darwin (1981) *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918–1922* (London: Macmillan), p.65.
36. Letter from Hardinge to Wingate, 7 May 1917, CUL Hardinge papers, 1917 vol. 4.
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38. '*Memorandum by Lieutenant-Colonel Ryder on Meetings with Well-Informed Egyptians*,' CUL Hardinge papers, 1918 vol. IV; also R. Furness, '*Note on a Conversation with Mohammed Es-Sayed Lutfi*,' enclosed in letter from Allenby to Lord Curzon, 12 April 1919, TNA: PRO FO 407/184.
39. '*Political Situation in Egypt – Notes by Wingate on conversation with Sultan, 12 December 1918, and Rushdi, 13 December 1918*,' TNA: PRO FO 371/3711.
40. Ibid.
41. The proportion of Egyptians employed in higher government positions actually decreased from 27.7% in 1905 to 23% in 1920; Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, p.334; also P.J. Vatikiotis (1969) *The Modern History of Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson), p.252.
42. G. Kramer (2008) *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp.156–59.
43. C. Dewey (1979) 'The Government of India's "New Industrial Policy," 1900–1925: Formation and Failure,' in C. Dewey & K.N. Chaudhuri (eds), *Economy and Society: Essays in Indian Economic and Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), p.232.
44. B.R. Tomlinson (1979) *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914–1947: The Economics of Decolonisation in India* (London: Macmillan), p.58.
45. Evidence of Sir Robert Carlyle to the Mesopotamia Commission, 28 September 1916, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
46. Evidence of Sir William Clark to the Mesopotamia Commission of Enquiry, 23 November 1916, TNA: PRO CAB 19/8.
47. '*Development of Man Power in India, and its utilisation for Imperial Purposes*,' Army Headquarters, April 1918, IOR L/MIl/17/52398.
48. Monro had commanded First Army in France while Altham had experienced the demands of modern industrialised warfare at the Dardanelles; moreover, he had authored a book on The Principles of War in 1914 which emphasised the importance of harnessing technological innovations such as mechanised transport to military operations in addition to recognising 'the vital importance of railway communication to the armies in the field'

as 'the great numerical strength of modern armies, and the greater regard for the civilian population of a theatre of war ... makes the Napoleonic system of living on the country possible only to a very limited extent.' E.A. Altham (1914) *The Principles of War* (London, s.n.), pp.392–393.

49. '*Memorandum on India's Contribution to the War in Men, Material and Money, August 1914 to November 1918*,' p.20, IOR L/MIL/17/5/2381.
50. Ibid. p.21; also L.F. Rushbrook Williams (1932) 'India and the War,' in H.H. Dodwell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire. Volume V – The Indian Empire 1858–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.483.
51. Telegram from Lord Chelmsford to Edwin Montagu, 4 August 1918, IOR Papers of Lord Chelmsford, Mss Eur E264, box 9.
52. Letter from Sir Claude Hill to Chelmsford, 11 October 1918, IOR Chelmsford papers, Mss Eur E264, box 21.
53. M. O'Dwyer (1921) 'India's Man-Power in the War,' *The Army Quarterly*, II, 255.
54. Ibid. pp.253–55.
55. E. Candler (1919) *The Sepoy* (London: John Murray), p.218.
56. O'Dwyer, India's Man-Power, pp.253–55.
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102. Telegram from the War Office to General Stanley Maude, 11 March 1917, IOR L/MIL/5/757.
103. Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, p.48.
104. Telegram from Austen Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 29 March 1917, IOR L/MIL/5/757.
105. Telegram from Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 10 May 1917, IOR L/MIL/5/757.
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108. '*Future of Mesopotamia – Note by Political Department, India Office, on Points for Discussion with Sir P. Cox*,' 3 April 1918, IOR L/P&S/10/686.
109. Note by Sir Percy Cox, '*The Future of Mesopotamia*,' 22 April 1918, TNA: PRO FO 371/3387.
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111. Telegram from Wilson to India Office, 25 July 1920, IOR L/P&S/10/535.
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5 Mobilisation of Labour for Logistical Units

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7 Post-War Backlash and Imperial Readjustment, 1919–22

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Index