The study of India's foreign relations forms a fascinating chapter in the history of modern India. Several factors combine to impart an unusual interest to this subject; factors which are linked to the ties which existed till 1947 between India and Great Britain. In normal circumstances the foreign policy of a country is an expression of its national genius; its dimensions are determined by the tangible resources which that country commands. India under British rule departed from this norm in more respects than one. The question of dominance over imperial lines of communication, for instance, which forms the central theme of the present investigation, substantiates this contention. Again, British involvement in European politics inevitably projected India into controversies which did not affect her directly.

Of the countries bordering India, Afghanistan has received the maximum attention on the part of the diplomatic historian. This is to an extent understandable. However, the Persian Gulf constituted no less important a sphere of activity for the Government of India. The fact that it figures less prominently in studies on Indian foreign policy can be attributed to the unquestioned predominance which Great Britain, with her superiority on the seas, enjoyed over an area
that was extremely susceptible to naval pressure. The Persian Gulf by Sir A.T. Wilson, a study of the region from a frankly 'imperialist' angle, illustrates this point. But though excellent on the Gulf in ancient and medieval times, it becomes sketchy when dealing with events in the nineteenth century, and touches all too briefly on European antagonisms in the region. This defect is partly remedied in B. Prasad's *The Foundations of India's Foreign Policy*; however, since Prasad brings into focus the entire range of Indian foreign policy, events and forces of considerable importance to an understanding of the region find no mention in his book. The present study is a modest attempt to fill in this lacuna. It is based upon the records of the Foreign Department of the Government of India available with the National Archives of India.

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