Keir to Oman in 1820 initiated an active British policy in the Persian Gulf. As a consequence of the expedition the chiefs of maritime Arabia came within the orbit of British influence through a series of engagements which also resulted in a British protectorate over the Gulf. The predominance which the Indian authorities had established was viewed with apprehension at Teheran and Constantinople. In the period under review, therefore, the Government of India directed its efforts towards maintaining the 'independence' of the maritime states whose integrity was essential to British control over the region.

It was at Teheran that the British position in the Gulf caused the most serious concern. The Gulf was the Achilles heel of Persia since twice in two decades she had seen her ambitions over Herat frustrated through the application of pressure on her exposed littoral. For Persian statesmen, therefore, it was important to free the region of alien influences.

The assumption in 1860 of the Viceroyalty of Fars by

1. See supra pp. 21-23.
Prince Masoud Mirza, Naser-ud-Din Shah's third son, was significant in the context of Persian ambitions in the Gulf. Masoud Mirza belonged to the pro-Russian party at Tehran, and his appointment presaged Persian activity in the Gulf.  

The Prince Royal of Pars opened his campaign with the despatch of an envoy, one Mirza Mehdi Ali Khan, to Bahrein with the object of inducing its chief to accept Persian sovereignty. Mehdi Ali Khan's mission was opportune in that it coincided with a dispute between Mohammed bin Khalifah, the ruler of Bahrein, and the Mughal Residency concerning Indian commercial interests. Because of strained Anglo-Bahrein relations, the Persian envoy was successful in persuading Sheikh Mohammed to accept Naser-ud-Din Shah as his suzerain. 

The British Resident in the Gulf, Captain Felix Jones, did not attach any significance to the manoeuvres of Masoud Mirza. However, the Bombay Government instructed him to secure a clarification of Persia's intentions through the British Minister to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 30 March, 1859; vide Adamiyat, Op. cit., Appendix IX.

1. F. Adamiyat, Behrein Islands, (New York 1955), 156.  
2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 30 March, 1859; F.D.S.B. No. 45, 3 June, 1859.  
at Teheran. The issue placed Sir Henry Rawlinson, Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran, in a quandary. Rawlinson was a protagonist of the policy of bringing Persia within the orbit of British influence as a riposte to growing Russian prestige in Central Asia. He was, therefore, confronted with the task of inducing Persia to abandon her pretensions over Bahrain without wounding her susceptibilities.

In broaching the question with the Teheran authorities Rawlinson assumed that it would be pointless to look for an unequivocal renunciation of its pretensions over Bahrain on the part of the Persian Government. He consequently presented two arguments before the Persian Foreign Minister. England, he asserted, had entered into engagements with the Bahrain chief (in the capacity of a sovereign ruler) on the basis of which she policed the waters of the Gulf. She would not, therefore, acquiesce in the transfer of the sovereignty of the island to the Persian Crown. Besides, Persia was impotent on the seas, and it would prove

1. Secretary, Bombay Government to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 18 May, 1859: F.D.F.B. No. 46, 3 June, 1859.


embarrassing for Teheran to assert rights which it
did not have the means to defend. Rawlinson's
delineation of the situation impressed the Persian
Minister and he assured him that no attempt would
be made to assert Persian sovereignty over the
island by force of arms.\footnote{1}

The Teheran negotiations put an end to the
intrigues of the Prince Royal of Fars. But it had
become clear how essential it was for relations with
Bahrain to be placed on a definitive basis. The
opportunity for doing so presented itself shortly in
the antagonism between Mohammed bin Khalifah and the
head of a rival branch of the ruling family of
Bahrain, Mohammed bin Abdullah, whom Imam Faisal of
Riyadh had established as a protege in the port of
Dammam opposite the island.\footnote{2} Towards the close of
1869 Captain Jonas learnt of preparations being
made at Dammam for invading Bahrain. The attempt

\footnote{1} Ibid; Also see K.'s Charge d' Affaires,
Teheran to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 6 June,
1860; F.D. Pt. P. No.715, October 1860.

\footnote{2} For an account of the political history
of Bahrain see: Secret Despatch No.18 to Secretary
of State for India dated 22 February, 1870;
F.D.S.I. No.164, 1870.

\footnote{3} Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay
Government dated 4 October, 1869; F.D.F.B.No.4, 23
March,1860.
was frustrated by the British naval squadron in the Gulf. When Sheikh Mohammed attempted to retaliate in the succeeding year, the Resident cured him of his aggressive proclivities by placing him within the pale of the maritime regulations on a *de jure* basis.

The agreement negotiated by the Resident at Busheir with Sheikh Mohammed went considerably beyond the Treaties of Perpetual Peace contracted by the Omani chiefs in 1853. The preamble characterised the Sheikh as "independent Ruler of Bahrain." This was followed by a clause pertaining to the acceptance of British arbitration in disputes with neighbouring states and a concluding article ensuring Indian commercial interests. The agreement was obviously directed against Teheran and led to the establishment of a de facto protectorate over Bahrain.

In spite of the agreement with the British authorities, Mohammed bin Khalifah was soon at

1. Political Despatch No. 178 to Secretary of State for India dated 22 November, 1861.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 1 June, 1861; F.O.P.P. No. 37, October 1871.

3. Convention between Mohammed bin Khalifah and Resident, Persian Gulf dated 31 May, 1861; F.O.P.P. No. 37, October 1861.

4. Ibid.

logger heads with the Bushire Residency. As a consequence of a dispute with the tribes of Qatar, over whom he exercised a nebulous suzerainty, a Behreni fleet descended upon the Arabian mainland, indiscriminately plundering Arabs and British subjects in the process. The chief's relations with the British were even otherwise strained. The infraction of the maritime peace led the Government of India to place a squadron at the disposal of Pelly, Jones' successor as Resident at Bushire, in order to chastise him. The Resident captured the citadel of Bahrain and installed Ali bin Khalifah, the chief's brother, in power.

Intelligence of occurrences in the Gulf excited concern at Tehran. Ali bin Khalifah, whom Pelly had placed in power, was an Anglophile. The Resident's action was therefore, interpreted as a move to consolidate the British hold over the island to the prejudice of Persian pretensions. Now Persia had in her diplomatic armory only one weapon. The value placed by England on her friendship as an instrument

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1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 21 December, 1867: F.D.P.P. No.138, February 1868.


3. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 25 September, 1868: F.D.P.P. No.276, October 1868.

against Russian expansion in Asia. It was this factor in Anglo-Persian relations that Mirza Saeed Khan, the Persian Foreign Minister, tried to exploit in a communication to Sir Charles Alison, the British Minister at Teheran, concerning the proceedings at Bahrein.¹

Invoking the Treaty of Paris, Article 14 of which obliged England to support the integrity of the Persian Empire through encouraging the "allegiance of Persian subjects towards the Shah", Saeed Khan contended that the Government of India's attitude towards Bahrein was not in keeping with Persia's rights in the Gulf. The agreement negotiated in 1861 had marked the first instance when the Treaty of Paris had been violated by the Indian authorities. Recent events in the Gulf, however, constituted an even more blatant contradiction of the obligations England had contracted in respect of Persia. They were subversive of the prerogatives (over the Gulf) vested in the Persian Crown. The British Government, Saeed Khan therefore hoped, would not permit (I am sure) that any delay or procrastination, which may lead to serious mischief, should take place in counteracting, in pursuance of the cordial relations existing between both Governments, these proceedings, which are contrary to Treaty, and may give rise to doubt as to

1. Persian Foreign Minister to H.M's Minister, Teheran dated 24 October, 1869; F.D.F.P. No. 164, January 1869.
the friendship subsisting between the two high Powers and their (observance of) Conventions.*

It would be wrong to read in Saeed Khan's despatch a subtle hint that if the Bahrein question was not settled to the satisfaction of Teheran, a reorientation of Persian foreign policy might become inevitable. But the communication was certainly designed to impress upon British statesmen the value of Persian friendship at a moment when opinion in England was taking anxious note of the progress of Russian arms in Central Asia. The Persian Minister's pro-Russian leanings imparted an added significance to his despatch, and explain the concessions he was able to secure from the Foreign Office.²

Saeed Khan's finesse was lost on the Government of India³. The Foreign Department told Alison that the Imperial Government recognised the Bahrein chief to be an independent ruler. A series of treaties had been contracted with the chief in this capacity having relevance to the maritime protectorate exercised by the Government over the Gulf. The British authorities could, therefore,

1. Ibid.
3. Secretary, Foreign Department, GO I to H.M's Minister, Teheran dated 31 December, 1868; F.D.P.P. No.165, January 1869.
hardly be expected to acquiesce in the Persian interpretation of Bahrain's status. As for the chastisement of Mohammed bin Khalifah, it was a result of the violation of the maritime regulations on his part, and did not affect Persian rights. To communication ended with the expression of a desire on the Government's part to maintain friendly relations with Teheran and to abstain from "injury to Persian interests ...."¹

The reception accorded to its protest in India neither dismayed Persian diplomacy nor exhausted its patience. Saeed Khan's despatch was intended for consumption at London rather than at Calcutta. Consequently, the question was next taken up by General Mohsin Khan, the Persian Charge d'Affaires at London, in the hope that the Imperial Government would prove more tractable than the Indian authorities². Mohsin Khan presented to Lord Clarendon, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a letter from Mohammed bin Khalifah, in which the chief had made his submission to the Persian Crown, and asked for a re-consideration of Persia’s claim over Bahrain.³

1. Ibid.
2. Adamiyat, whose monograph on Bahrain presents the Persian viewpoint, clearly states that Teheran always received a more sympathetic hearing at London than it did at Calcutta. See Adamiyat, op. cit., pp.170-71.
3. Foreign Office to India Office (with enclosures) dated 16 April, 1869: F.D.S.H.No.36, 1869.
In recognition of the Indian interests involved, Clarendon asked the India Office to comment on the representation made by Mohsin Khan. The Duke of Argyll, the Secretary of State for India, took the same stand as the Indian authorities. He told Clarendon that England had on numerous occasions refuted Teheran's claims over Bahrein, the island being regarded as independent, and subject neither to Persia nor to Turkey. Besides, Bahrein had come to occupy a key position vis-a-vis the maritime protectorate which the Government exercised over the Gulf. To substitute the "ineffective authority" of Persia for that of the local ruler would prove fatal to a policy which had been advantageously pursued for over half a century. However, in one respect Argyll was prepared to go further than Calcutta. To avoid offending Teheran, he would direct the Indian authorities to inform Persia whenever punitive measures were undertaken against the Bahrein chief.

Clarendon's reply to Mohsin Khan makes interesting reading. As a concession to Persian susceptibilities, it toned down the stand taken by

1. India Office to Foreign Office dated 21 April, 1869: F.D.S.H. No.36, 1869.

2. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Persian Charge d'Affaires, London (draft reply) dated 26 April, 1869: F.D.S.H. No.36, 1869.
Argyll. Clarendon did not voice any opinion on the political status of the island. Instead, he referred to the engagements which the Indian authorities had contracted with the Bahrein ruler, engagements of which "the Government of the Shah was undoubtedly aware", and which sought to ensure the security of the Gulf. The proceedings which Persia interpreted to be a violation of her rights found their justification in British concern for the peace of the seas. Clarendon continued:

If the Persian Government are prepared to maintain a sufficient force in the Persian Gulf for these purposes, this country would be relieved from a troublesome and costly duty, but if the Shah is not prepared to undertake the duties, Her Majesty's Government cannot suppose His Majesty would wish that in these waters disorder and crimes should be encouraged by impunity.1

He ended with an assurance that, whenever possible, the Persian Government would be informed in advance if the adoption of coercive measures against the Bahrein ruler became imperative.

Considering the cavalier treatment Saeed Khan's despatch had received at Calcutta, Mohsin Khan may be judged to have scored a minor diplomatic victory. For Clarendon's reply did, by implication, surrender to Persia certain rights over Bahrein and the Gulf. However,

1. Ibid.
the Persian diplomat tried to further consolidate his country's position when the Clarendon Note was communicated to him. He expressed satisfaction at the tenor of Clarendon's reply, but asked for clarification in certain directions. England, he pointed out, should admit that perceiving no visible manifestation of Persian control, she had treated the Bahrein Sheikh as an independent chief. Persia had protested against this assumption, and her protest had been taken into consideration in view of the friendly relations existing between the two countries. Further, the British Government would be glad to see itself relieved of the duty of policing the Gulf. Consistent to a policy of appeasement, Clarendon agreed to the modification suggested by Mohsin Khan. His second note to the Persian Charge d'Affaires embodied, in addition to the points enumerated in the first communication, the admission that Persia had protested against the violation of her sovereignty over Bahrein and Her Majesty's Government, on its part, had given due consideration to this protest.

Reporting to Tehran, Mohsin Khan represented


2. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Persian Charge d'Affaires, London dated 29 April, 1869: F.O. S.H. No. 59, 1869.
the concessions he had secured from the Foreign Office as a vindication of the Persian stand and spoke of the re-establishment of Persian authority over the island. His exchanges with Clarendon had convinced him that if Teheran wanted to exercise its rights over Bahrein, England would view the idea with approval. Of course, the Charge d'Affaires also referred to the need for building up a naval force which alone would enable the Persian Government to exercise its due weight in the Gulf. Whatever reasons Mohsin Khan may have had for dispatching so optimistic a report to Teheran, it is difficult to believe that Clarendon wanted to surrender to Persia England's dominant role in the Gulf. Nor was there any reason for Persia to have adopted so naive a view of British policy. For that matter, the British Government's attitude towards the question had been made clear even earlier. When in 1868 the Shah had appealed to the Foreign Office for assistance in equipping a naval squadron to enable his administration to police the Gulf, his request had been turned down at the instance of the Government of India.

2. M.K's Minister, Teheran to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 7 April, 1868; F.D.P.P. No.112, June 1868.
3. Tel, Secretary of State for India to Viceroy dated 11 August, 1868; P.D.P.P. No.265, August 1868; political Despatch No.5 to Secretary of State for India dated 23 June, 1868; P.D.P.P. No.116, June 1868.
Yet Clarendon's attempt to reconcile the antagonistic interests of England and Persia in the Gulf was bound to result in an embarrassing interpretation of its rights by the Tehran Government. The opportunity for doing so soon presented itself. After being deposed from power in 1868 Mohammed bin Khalifah had fled across the seas to Qatif on the mainland. In the succeeding year he invaded Bahrain in alliance with his erstwhile rival, Mohammed bin Abdullah. During the hostilities which ensued Ali bin Khalifah was defeated and killed, but it was bin Abdullah who gained control of power after having imprisoned the former chief through a stratagem. Ali bin Khalifah's end was a challenge to British hegemony over the Gulf. The Government of India therefore, adopted a firm attitude towards the proceedings from the outset. Colonel Relly was sent at the head of a naval squadron to dispossess the pirate chiefs of power. The Resident accomplished the task entrusted to him with surprising ease. Both bin Abdullah and bin Khalifah were captured and imprisoned and Isa bin Ali, a son of the late ruler, installed in power.

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Government dated 11 September, 1869: F.D.S.I.No.291, 1869; Tel. Secretary, Bombay Governor to Secretary, Foreign Department, G.I dated 11 September, 1869: F.D.S.I.No.159, September 1869.
2. Tel. Viceroy to Governor of Bombay dated 13 November, 1869: F.D.S.I.No.299, 1869.
Teheran did not remain a passive spectator of events in the Gulf, particularly after the hopes aroused by the Clarendon-Mohsin Khan exchanges. Before proceeding to Bahrain to chastise the pirate chief, Pelly had informed Mr. (later Sir Ronald) Thomson, the British Charge d'Affaires at Teheran, of the measures he had been instructed to carry out for communication to the Persian Government. Thomson, however, had broached the question with Mirza Saeed Khan even earlier on the strength of a Foreign Office despatch. He expressed his Government's regret over Persia's inability to exercise a restraining influence over the Gulf, thereby implying that the claims which Teheran was wont to advance over the region were divorced from power realities. Saeed Khan was too shrewd a diplomat to let Thomson's charge pass unrefuted. He confessed that Teheran had not acquired sufficient means to enforce order in the Gulf. But efforts were being made to this end so that "before long the Shah's authority would be fully established in Bahrain, and ... Persia would be in a position to prevent further disorders there."

1. H.M's Charge d'Affaires, Teheran to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 14 November, 1869; P.D.S.I.No.156, 1869.
2. Ibid.
and it would be pointless for Her Majesty's Government to bother itself about the situation there.¹

The diplomatic exchanges at Teheran bore no relation to the situation in the Gulf in the context of Felly's vindication of British supremacy over Bahrein. But the aplomb with which Saeed Khan spoke of Persian rights over the island caused consternation in the Foreign Department. Mitchison pointed out that the Imperial Government appeared to have made a free gift of Bahrein to Persia.² The whole sorry business could be traced to the weak stand taken by Clarendon earlier and it was really very painful to see the complacency with which Mr. Thomson, without one word of remonstrance and without the least appreciation of the interests involved, allows Persia to assume the position of suzerain which we have all along denied to her ....³

Mayo shared the apprehensions of the Foreign Secretary and suggested that his Government's policy in the Gulf be outlined before Argyll in a forthright fashion.⁴

The Indian standpoint on Bahrein was communicated to the India Office in a comprehensive despatch.⁵

¹ H.M.'s Charge d'Affaires, Teheran to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 16 November, 1869; F.D.S.I. No.157, 1869.
² Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 3 February, 1870; F.D.S.I. No.155/165, 1870.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Note by Viceroy dated 5 February, 1870; F.D.S.I. No.155/165, 1870.
⁵ Secret Despatch No. 18 to Secretary of State for India dated 22 February, 1870; F.D.S.I. No.164, 1870.
Analysing Teheran's claims in historical perspective the Government of India admitted that under the Safavees Persia had exercised sovereignty over the island. But since the Bani Utub came into power, Bahrein had enjoyed a de facto independence. This had acquired a de jure status over the course of time, the Bahrein chiefs having entered into treaties with the Indian authorities in a sovereign capacity. The assurances given to Mohsin Khan in 1869 had encouraged Persia to think that England had acquiesced in her interpretation of Bahrein's status and was willing to surrender her police rights if Teheran undertook to ensure peace in the Gulf. The Shah's Government ought to be disabused of such misapprehensions. For the Indian authorities would not abandon their hegemony over the Gulf on any condition.

Before the Imperial Government could be acquainted with the Indian standpoint, Mohsin Khan had addressed a sharp note to Clarendon in which he drew his attention to the proceedings at Bahrein, and spoke of Calcutta's indifference to the assurances which Persia had received.

1. The Bani Utub are a section of the Anizah, an Arab tribe which migrated from inner Najd to the Gulf littoral in the eighteenth century. The ruling families of Bahrein and Kuwait belong to this tribe. See H.R.P. Dickson, Kuwait And Her Neighbours, (London 1956), p. 26.
earlier. The Persian representative held that Pelly had detained an envoy sent to bring about a settlement in Bahrain; the Resident had further "nominated" Isa bin Ali to power. Mohsin Khan's protest apparently put Clarendon in a difficult position and he asked the Indian authorities to explain the Resident's conduct, regretting that Pelly had adopted a course of action "calculated to indispose Persia to this country."

Clarendon's strictures evoked an apprehension in India that the Foreign Office had actually sacrificed Bahrain to gain the friendship of Teheran. "At this rate", a bitter Foreign Department official commented, "history counts for nothing, and treaties are not worth the paper on which they are written."

Mayo's Government again entered upon a defence of its policy in the Gulf and the measures this policy had inspired. It was pointed out that the envoy referred to by Mohsin Khan had been detained by the Resident.

2. Foreign Office to India Office dated 22 March, 1870: F.D.S.H. No.88, 1870.
3. Note by Under-Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 11 May, 1870: F.D.S.I.No.206/212, 1870.
4. Secret Despatch No.28 to Secretary of State for India dated 20 May, 1870: F.D.S.I.No.212,1870.
because he lacked proper credentials. Further, Isa bin Ali had not been installed in power by Pelly; he had been "elected" as chief by the local notables. After refuting the charges levied by Moin Khan, the Government of India proceeded to a vindication of its broad policy in the Gulf. It pointed out that both Persia and Turkey harboured an ambition to acquire hegemony over Bahrain and the adjoining seas. If the British Government withdrew its restraining influence, the incipient rivalry between the two powers would assume an open form and precipitate a return to those sanguine conditions which had prevailed in the Gulf prior to the 1890's. As the guardian of Indian interests, the Government would oppose an abandonment leading to such a state of affairs. In conclusion, the Indian authorities hoped that their arguments would lead Her Majesty's Government to the resolution to maintain the independence of Bahrain, and to continue that policy in the Persian Gulf which ... has been extended with the happiest results to the peace of the Gulf, the extension of trade, and the prosperity of the Chiefs of the islands and the littoral.1

Moyo's cogently reasoned despatch marked the end of a controversy between the Imperial Government and the Indian authorities. However, in spite of the

1. Imd.
ostensible differences between the India Office and the Calcutta Government, it is to be wondered whether any point of principle stood between them. Admittedly, Clarendon's note to Mohsin Khan acknowledged that Persia had certain rights over the Gulf in general and Bahrein in particular. But to further conclude that the Foreign Minister wanted to barter away British pre-eminence over the Gulf or the island would be unwarranted. Clarendon's principal concern was to avoid wounding Persian susceptibilities. Consequently, his communication to the Persian Charge d'Affaires was so framed as to convey the impression that the Foreign Office did not desire to refute Tehran's pretensions. It was, in all probability, deliberately phrased to admit of conflicting interpretations.

OTTOMAN FORWARD POLICY IN ARABIA

Soon after the Government of India had emerged triumphant of a conflict with Persia, it confronted in Turkish expansionism an even more formidable threat to its influence over the Gulf. Various factors combined to give a dynamic impulse to Ottoman policy in Arabia.

1. In 1927 Persia revived her claim over Bahrein before the League of Nations and presented the Clarendon Note as a proof of the fact that England too had acknowledged that claim earlier. See Persian Foreign Office to H.M.'s Minister, Tehran dated 22 November, 1927; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Persian Minister, London dated 18 January, 1928; Vide Official Journal of the League of Nations, No. 5 of May, 1928, pp. 605-07.
in the 1870's. The Crimean War had left Turkey in a strong military position. Sultan Abdul Aziz was thereby encouraged to think in terms of consolidating his position in Asiatic territories where his sovereignty was a polite fiction. Besides, the construction of the Suez Canal threw open a line of communication to Arabia which avoided the difficult land route across desert tracts. Finally, the antagonism between the Amirs Sand and Abdullah had weakened the Wahhabis after the death of Imam Faisal, and opened the way for Turkish intervention in the country.

The appointment of Midhat Pashe, a statesman of "restless and ambitious temper", as Governor-General of Baghdad in 1868 signified the adoption of an active Arabian policy by the Porte. Midhat was aware of the hostility which a forward policy would evoke in British circles. But though his 'liberal' predilections marked him as a man of the English orientation, he was not prepared to sacrifice to the English alliance the

1. Dickson, op. cit., p. 123.
interests of the Ottoman Empire. Abdullah and Saud provided him with an opportunity for furthering his designs. In 1869 hostility between the two brothers assumed an open form. Saud at first suffered a reverse at Ma'talatn the hands of the Riyadh forces. But he avenged himself through inflicting a defeat on Abdullah at 'A'rab in 1870. The reverse unnerved the Wahhabi Imam. He fled towards Mesopotamia, leaving his brother in control of Najd. In course of his flight he met emissaries of Midhat and a bargain was struck whereby the Pasha promised to restore Najd to Abdullah in return for an acknowledgment on his part of Ottoman suzerainty.

It was the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, who first informed the British of the proposed Ottoman expedition to Najd. The intelligence was received with alarm in India for two reasons. The Foreign Department was afraid that British acquiescence in the denunciation

5. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 5 April, 1872: F.D.S.P.No.120/122, July 1872.
by Russia of the clauses of the Treaty of Paris concerning the neutrality of the Black Sea had led the Porte to seek an adjustment with St. Petersburg.

As Aitchison put it:

It is generally understood that, since we threw the Turks over in the Black Sea affair, they are on far better terms with Russia than they ever were before .... I think the opening of the Suez Canal has made it ten times more our interest to be on good and intimate terms with Turkey than it ever was before, and the course taken in the Black Sea discussions is much to be regretted as far as the interest of India is concerned.

However, of more immediate concern was the fact that the expedition threatened to undermine the foundations of British policy in the Persian Gulf. British supremacy over the seas, the Foreign Secretary pointed out, rested on arbitrarily assumed rights rather than on de jure premises. For instance, the interdict on naval warfare had strict relevance only to the Trucial Principalities, though in practice India had refused to tolerate naval operations by any power in the Gulf. Such a policy could only be upheld in its totality. To admit of any exception

1. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 5 April, 1872: F.D.S.P.No.120/122, July 1872.

2. Ibid.

3. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 3 May, 1871: F.D.S.I.No.581/655, 1871.
would mean an abandonment of the entire position. Aitchison's arguments were incontestable from the British standpoint. Mayo, therefore, pressed the Imperial Government to secure from the Porte a cancellation of the expedition, or failing that, an assurance that no hostilities would be prosecuted by way of sea.

As the protagonist of the policy of maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire since Palmerston's days, the Foreign Office was in no position to prevent the Turkish Government from consolidating its position over Central Arabia, a region over which Sultan Abdul Aziz had claims to 'spiritual' suzerainty. However, Indian apprehensions were communicated to the Porte by Sir Henry Elliot, the British Ambassador at Constantinople. Ali Pasha, the Ottoman Grand Vizier, assured the Ambassador that Turkey had no idea of challenging the British position in the Gulf. Najd, however, was an Ottoman province; and its de jure governor

1. Tel. Viceroy to Secretary of State for India dated 31 March, 1871; F.O.S.I.No.588, 1871.

2. C. Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston (1830-41), (London 1951); I, p. 628; J.J. Krawitz, Diplomacy In The Near And Middle East, (1836-1914), (New York 1956); I, pp. 111-12; H.I. Koskins, British Routes to India, (Philadelphia 1928), pp. 266-68.

3. H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 3 April, 1871; F.D.S.H.No.73, 1871.
having been deposed by Saud, it was incumbent upon the Sultan to come to his rescue. But Turkey would respect the independence of the maritime Arab states not under Wahhabi jurisdiction. Again, the Ottoman Army could not follow the land route to Central Arabia; but the maritime operations connected with the expedition would be limited to the transport of troops.¹

It was the Resident at Bushire who drew the Foreign Department's attention to some problems attendant upon the situation in the Gulf which Ali Pasha's assurances had not resolved.² Both the Bahrein chief and Amir Saud had asked Pelly for an elucidation of the British attitude towards the Ottoman invasion. Saud was apprehensive of his flanks being exposed to naval operations. He pointed out that the British Government should either rigorously enforce the interdict on maritime operations, or permit him to assume the offensive on the seas. Isa bin Ali was afraid that the chief of Kuwait, with whom he had a feud, would urge the Turks to attack his principality.³ The Government of India did not reply.

¹ Note by H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople to Ottoman Government dated 25 April, 1871; F.D.S.H. No.119, 1871; Memorandum on interview between E. Pisensi, Dragoman of the British Embassy, and Ali Pasha dated 25 April, 1871; F.D.S.H. No.120, 1871; H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 26 April, 1871; F.D. S.H. 116, 1871.

² Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Bombay Govt. dated 6 May, 1871; F.D.S.I.No.198,1871.

³ Amir Saud to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 14 April, 1871; F.D.S.I.No.203, 1871; Isa bin Ali to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 22 April, 1871; F.D.S.I.No.204, 1871.
to Saud, since his query was not innocent of a desire
to involve England as a counterpoise to Turkey in
Central Arabia. But Isa bin Ali and the Trucial
Chiefs were assured that the Government would stand
by its treaty obligations provided they maintained
an attitude of neutrality towards the Turco-Wahhabi
conflict.¹

The Ottoman Army under Nafiz Pasha embarked
from Basra in May, 1871 on its way to the Wahhabi
littoral.² It disembarked at Ras Tamrah, on the
mainland opposite Bahrein, and after overcoming
resistance at Qatif and Demman marched towards Hufuf,
the capital of El Hasa.³ Abdullah, in the meanwhile,
had engaged Saud west of Riyadh, but was again defeated
and joined the Turks at Hufuf. Saud too was soon in
trouble. Local discontent forced him to quit Riyadh,
and he was subsequently defeated by Nafiz Pasha. With
Abdullah a virtual prisoner in the Turkish camp, Nafiz
Pasha appointed Abdullah bin Turki, a brother of the
late Imam Faisal, as military Governor of Riyadh.⁴

² See Memorandum on Najd Expedition by H.H.'s Ambass.: Tor Constantinople dated 27 June, 1871;
F.D.S.I. No. 70, August 1871.
³ Secretary, Bombay Govt. dated 17 May, 1871; F.D.S.I. No. 646, 1871.
⁴ Tel. Political Agent, Baghdad to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 12 May, 1871; F.D.S.I.
No. 639, 1871.
The Turkish expedition passed off initially without any disturbing incident so far as the British authorities were concerned. But complications soon set in. The principality of Qatar, which lay between the Trucial States and Al Hasa, had contracted to observe the peace of the seas in 1868, being a party to the dispute which led to the overthrow of Mohammed bin Khalifah. It had thus come under British influence, albeit to a lesser degree than the Trucial States. Soon after Nafiz Pasha had established himself at Hafuf, the Indian authorities learnt that an emissary of the general had persuaded the Qatar chief to accept Ottoman suzerainty.

The Bombay Government discerned in the Qatar incident a Turkish probe towards the British sphere of influence in the Gulf. It did not regard the assurances which Ali Pasha had given to Eliot as satisfactory. The Ambassador had been told that

2. Tel. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GCI dated 18 July, and 7 August, 1871; F.D.S.I. No. 176 and 225, August 1871.
3. Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GCI dated 22 July, 1871; F.D.S.I. No. 11, December, 1871; Secretary, Bombay Government to Secretary, Foreign Department, GCI dated 9 September, 1871; F.D.S.I. No. 145, 1871.
Midhat's aim was to restore the Sultan's authority over Najd. But what was the extent of Najd? And could not Ottoman pretensions over it be stretched to include the maritime states as well? To voice such a claim would not be irrelevant. Masqat as well as the Trucial Principalities had in the past acknowledged the suzerainty of Riyadh and had even paid tribute to the Wahhabi Imams. The only way to safeguard British interests was to make Turkey agree to the demarcation of the boundary between Najd and the maritime states.

Though the Indian Government was alive to the situation in the Gulf, it did not share the views of the Bombay authorities. Aitchison asserted that the engagements which the maritime chiefs had contracted with India had been negotiated without reference to Turkey or any other power. Even if the Trucial Chiefs lost some of the external attributes of sovereignty, their position vis-a-vis the Government of India would remain unaltered. So long as the Government was supreme on the seas, the Ports had no power "to touch those relations which as independent States they have formed with us." To the extent that the British position on the seas was secure, there was no need to get involved in mainland

1. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 28 July, 1871: F.D.S.F. No.1/153, December 1871.
2. Ibid.
Arabia. For once the Government undertook to demarcate the boundaries of Oman, it would be obliged to interfere every time a territorial dispute arose between Turkey and the Arab chiefs. Mayo expressed himself against the Bombay proposal in terms more categorical than those voiced by Aitchison. According to the Viceroy it was one of the maxims of diplomacy, that a Government who desired peace should not initiate the discussion of complicated and difficult subjects, and should not reply to anticipated questions until they were put. I see no necessity whatever for expressing any opinion as to the boundaries of Najd, Muscat, or any portion of Oman, or the littoral of the Persian Gulf.

British responsibilities in the Gulf were onerous enough without the Government adding to them through undertaking to defend the integrity of the maritime principalities.

While the Viceroy believed that British influence had not suffered any serious setback through the consolidation of Turkey's hold over Arabia, he was not prepared to concede supremacy over the seas. Turkey was a naval power to be reckoned within the 1870's and according to some estimates her fleet was second only to the English in strength. Consequently, when Selly reported that

1. Note by Viceroy dated 29 July, 1871; F.D.S.P. No.1/153, December 1871.
the Ottoman Government had decided to establish a naval squadron in the Gulf, Indian apprehensions were fully aroused. Mayo told Her Majesty's Government that it was essential to preserve British supremacy over the seas. Constantinople ought to be told that England would not view with indifference any attempt on its part to build up its naval strength in the region.¹

When Eliot communicated the Viceroy's apprehensions to the Ottoman authorities, Server Pasha, the Turkish Foreign Minister, assuaged British fears by repeating the assurances which Ali Pasha had earlier given to the Ambassador. He also spoke of Abdul Aziz's desire to incorporate Najd in his empire and asserted that his Government was sending a squadron to the Gulf only to render its authority effective along the Arab littoral. The Porte did not entertain any idea of challenging British supremacy in the region.

The military situation in Arabia, too, had reached an impasse by the summer of 1871. When he first learnt of the expedition, Colonel C. Herbert, the Political Agent at Baghdad, had drawn Eliot's attention

¹ Secret Despatch No.59 to Secretary of State for India dated 26 September, 1871.
² H.M.'s Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 21 December, 1871; quoted in Memorandum On Turkish Jurisdiction In The Persian Gulf: F.D.P.P. No.23, May 1880.
to the difficulties Nafiz Pasha would confront as he marched from qatif towards Riyadh, his ultimate objective.1 With an extended line of communication, a hostile rear, and a force halved through disease and fatigue, the Ottoman General was forced to mark time at Hufuf.2 Midhat Pasha also became sceptical of the expeditionary force ever reaching Riyadh. He decided to visit El Hasa to capitalise on whatever gains the army had made. A 'spontaneous' petition from the principal chiefs of the province requesting Abdul Aziz to take Najd under his rule prepared the ground for the Pasha's visit. On reaching Hufuf he issued a proclamation relieving the Saudi dynasty of its regnal functions, and appointing Nafiz Pasha as Governor of Najd. The annexation of Najd concluded the "most important event" which marked Midhat's governor-general-ship over Baghdad.

1. Political Agent, Baghdad to H.M.'s Ambassador, Constantinople dated 11 April, 1871: F.D.S.P. No.49, August 1871.


4. Memoir on Najd by Col. S.C. Ross; Also see Midhat- Bey, op. cit., p. 60.

Kidhat pasha's departure from Baghdad in 1872 put an end to the dynamic character of Ottoman policy in Arabia. However, the Pasha left behind him a state of affairs which Turkey could contemplate with satisfaction. The expedition of 1871 constituted the first tangible intrusion of Ottoman power in Central Arabia; and Midhat's strategy was worthy of the statesmanship with which he is generally credited. By gaining possession of El Hesa, the province through which ran the lines of communication from the Gulf to inner Arabia, Turkey could exercise a controlling influence over whomsoever ruled Najd. The Porte actually did so for the next four decades. It is significant that the first decisive act of revived Wahhabism under Abdul Aziz Al Saud was the expulsion of Ottoman power from El Hesa, alien control over which rendered Arab 'independence' illusionary.

**OTTOMAN JURISDICTION IN THE PERSIAN GULF**

While Mayo salvaged for the Government of India a considerable share of its influence over the Persian Gulf, it would be wrong to contend that the British position was not at all affected by the establishment of Turkish rule at El Hesa. Prior to 1870, and in the absence of effective opposition, the British had appropriated rights which had no basis
in contractual engagements. The presence of Turkey in the Gulf raised difficulties in the exercise of such rights by the Indian authorities. More important still, it endangered the integrity of the littoral states over which Calcutta had established its hegemony.

Characteristic of the problems attendant upon the new equilibrium in the Gulf was the question of Bahreini rights over the mainland. The Bahrain chiefs had claims to suzerainty over the Qatar promontory of which the Government of India had first been made aware in 1366. In 1873 Isa bin Ali informed the British authorities of Turkish encroachments on his possessions in the mainland and asked them to restrain Constantinople. The request put the Indian authorities in a difficult position, since they had undertaken to defend the integrity of Bahrain through the treaty of 1861, and they turned to the Resident for advice.

Pelly confessed that the problem was a difficult one. It was true that Bahrain had certain rights over the Qatar coast. But they were so vague that it would be

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1. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 28 July, 1871; F.D.S.F. No.1/153, 1871.
4. Sir Lewis Pelly to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 27 October, 1873; F.D.F.P. No. 420, December, 1873.
inexpedient to raise discussions with the Turkish authorities over them. Besides, the issue could be settled only when the extent of Turkish jurisdiction along the Arab littoral had been determined. To discuss this question would be useful only when the significance of the Ottoman expedition had been discerned. It mattered little how much of the cost the ports controlled if the expedition of 1871 had not been inspired by an alien source. But if the conquest of Arabia had been concerted between Turkey and Russia "the matter would become grave, for it would mean a dominating influence ... in the Gulfs of Oman and Persia".¹

Pelly's fears concerning Russian complicity were baseless and the question assumed a quiescent state soon after Midhat's departure from Baghdad. Thereafter, two factors combined to make the Turkish hold over El Hase tenuous: the remoteness of Arabia from the empire's centre of gravity; and the rapacious character of Ottoman administration. Even Turkish sources acknowledge that the Arab tribesmen soon began to "manifest restlessness"² because of the financial burden imposed on them under the new regime. The

1. Ibid. Also see Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 4 September, 1873; F.D.F.P. No.411, December 1873.
result was that in 1874 El Hasa rose in revolt against its Turkish masters and invited a Saudi scion, Abdul Rahman bin Faisal, to rule over the country. The Wahhabi prince seized hold of Hufuf, but failed to maintain his position when Abdul Aziz entrusted the task of quelling the revolt to Nasir Pasha, the ruthless Munefik chief.¹

While the Ottoman hold over El Hasa had always been precarious, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 resulted in complete anarchy in the province. Simultaneously, there was a revival of piracy in the Gulf.² Being the police authority in the region, the Government of India was naturally concerned and instructed its representative at Basra to devise measures for enforcing peace in the seas in co-operation with Abdullah Pasha, the Governor-General of the vilayet of Basra.³

Since the proposals which the Foreign Department

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². Political Despatch No. 26 to Secretary of State for India dated 24 September, 1878: F.D.P.P. No. 264, January 1879.

³. Te. Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI to political Agent, Baghdad dated 10 January, 1879: F.D.P.P. No.153, September 1879.
forwarded to Basra involved a partial abrogation of her sovereignty over the territorial waters of El Hasa on the part of Turkey, they were rejected by the Pasha, who maintained that his Government was strong enough to enforce its authority in Arabia.

The disturbed conditions in the Gulf had also attracted the attention of Sir Henry Layard, the British Ambassador at Constantinople. Layard viewed the problem in the larger context of Anglo-Turkish relations, and his advice to the Foreign Office reflected concern for Ottoman susceptibilities. He held that lawlessness in the Gulf arose of the internecine quarrels of the Arab tribes of the mainland, whom the Ottoman Government was unable to restrain in its weakened condition. The proper way to deal with the situation was to resist encroachment on British rights over the seas, but to

avoid any direct interference in the quarrels of the Arab tribes in the mainland, holding the Turkish Government responsible for any acts that they may

1. Tel. Political Agent, Baghdad to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 12 January, 1879; F.D.P.P. No. 158, September 1879.

2. H.M.'s Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 11 September, 1879; F.D.S.P. No. 4, September 1879; Political Agent, Baghdad to H.M.'s Ambassador, Constantinople dated 4 March, 1879; F.D.P.P. No. 231, September 1879.
commit against the lives and property of British subjects within territories to which the right of the forts has been admitted.1

Layard's delineation of the situation did not win the approbation of the Government of India, which attributed the disturbances off El Hasa to the neglect of the Turkish authorities to deal vigorously with the infractors of the maritime peace.2 Yet the ambassador had raised points of basic importance in his memorandum to the Foreign Office and he provoked the Indian authorities into presenting a counter-analysis of the Ottoman position in the Gulf before the Imperial Government.3

In a despatch to the India Office it was held that Layard's recommendations could be reduced to two essential clauses: (1) that the Government ought to abstain from interfering in the Arabian mainland under Turkish control; and (ii) that the ports should be held responsible for acts of maritime lawlessness committed by the tribes over whom its jurisdiction was

1. Ibid.

2. Political Despatch No.91 to Secretary of State for India dated 28 July, 1879; F.D.P.P. No.350, September 1879.

3. Note by Under-Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 21 March, 1879; F.D.S.P. No.25/47, September 1879; Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 7 April, 1879; F.D.S.P. No.25/47, September 1879.
acknowledged. However, before these recommendations could be implemented it was essential to determine what were the limits of Ottoman control along the Arab littoral. Then only was it possible to decide the degree of interference it was necessary for England to reserve to herself in the coast under Turkish rule. Examining the limits of Ottoman control, the Government stated that from Basra to Ojair the authority of Constantinople was incontestable. The recognition of Turkish jurisdiction east of Ojair would be uncalled for. The Porte had no control over the Qatar peninsula, except at Biddah, whose chief had subordinated himself to the Governor of Hufuf in 1871. Beyond Biddah lay the Trucial States and "it would be impossible, consistently with the maintenance of British rights and performance of our duties, to permit the further extension of Turkish rule or influence."  

The question as to who should police the Gulf was more complicated. If experience was to be the guide, Turkey was incapable of enforcing peace in her territorial waters. India had vital interests in the region, and could not wait indefinitely for the Porte to assert its authority there. Besides, even if Turkey was capable of policing her waters, the introduction of the Ottoman Navy in the Gulf would create an impossible situation.

1. Secret Despatch No.127 to Secretary of State for India dated 22 May, 1879; F.D.S.P. No.46, September 1879. 2. Ibid.
In conclusion, the Government of India made certain recommendations concerning the maritime principalities. It suggested that in return for British recognition of her rights along the littoral upto Ojaïr, Turkey should acknowledge the 'independence' of Bahrein, Masqat and the Trucial States. Further, to give concrete expression to the relationship existing between India and the Arab states, they should be made to pay a nominal tribute to the British authorities.

The Indian despatch envisaged a settlement of a far reaching character. It sought a division of Arabia-on-the-Gulf into English and Ottoman spheres of influence. Turkey's jurisdiction over Najd and El Hasa was to be recognised in return for an acknowledgment on her part of English predominance over the seas as well as the maritime states. The timing of the despatch was probably determined by events in the Near East, the Indian authorities assuming that, enfeebled by the War of 1878, Turkey would agree to whatever was being offered to her in the Gulf.

Yet the proposal failed to win the approval even of the Foreign Office. Salisbury, who was in

1. Foreign Office to India Office dated 23 August, 1879: F.D.S.P. No.20, May 1880.
charge of the Foreign Office, confessed that the scheme was excellent from the Indian stand-point. But why should Turkey agree to it? The Porte was expected to partially abrogate its rights over its territorial waters; to renounce pretensions over Oman and Bahrein; all in return for the recognition of its control over the coast between Basra and Ojair. It was pointless to offer such terms to Constantinople. It would be better for the Government of India to set the limit beyond which the eastward expansion of Ottoman influence was not to be tolerated. West of this limit the Porte could be expected to exercise general control, though the intervention of the British Navy in extraordinary cases could not be ruled out anywhere in the Gulf.

While acquiescing in Salisbury's assessment of the Indian despatch, Lord Cranbrook, the Secretary of State for India, was sceptical of the efficacy of the measures suggested by the Foreign Minister. He maintained that lawlessness in the Gulf was a result of ineffective administration over the territories acquired by Constantinople in 1871, and the obstacle thus placed in the exercise of its police rights over the Gulf by the British Navy. The recognition of Ottoman authority over a part of the littoral would be an invitation to the predatory elements to transfer their bases to this

1. Ibid.
2. India Office to Foreign Office dated 17 September, 1879; F.D.P.P. No. 22, May 1880.
area. The only practical solution was to relegate the question of territorial jurisdiction to the background. The British Navy should assume complete liberty of action along the entire Arab coast of the Gulf. Cranbrook's proposal sought to revive for the British Navy the role it had played in the Gulf prior to 1871. But Salisbury would have nothing to do with so extreme a stand. He was willing to recognise the desirability of reaching a settlement with Turkey in the Gulf. However, it would be inexpedient to adopt a course in the matter which might be regarded in the Porte as unduly aggressive, or which might be pointed out by any other power as showing an intention of subverting or weakening the Sultan's authority in a portion of his Asiatic dominions.

The correspondence between the India Office and the Foreign Office reveals that British statesmanship was faced with the reconciliation of two contradictory objectives. Salisbury's attempted resolution of the dilemma found expression in two despatches to Layard. In his first communication the Foreign Minister asked the Ambassador to draw the Porte's attention to the unrest which prevailed in waters off the Arabian

1. Ibid.
2. Foreign Office to India Office dated 22 December, 1879: F.D.P.P. No.47, May 1880.
3. Ibid.
mainland under Ottoman jurisdiction, and which the local Turkish officials were unable to control. Her Majesty's Government could not tolerate such a state of affairs indefinitely. A formula for an effective system of police in the Gulf was essential. To this end it was proposed that British ships in the Gulf should pursue their operations, as far as possible, outside the territorial waters of the Arabian mainland north of Odeyd. However, they should have the authority to pursue and capture piratical ships even within these waters whenever such a course became imperative.

In a covering despatch Salisbury told Layard that he had desisted from raising the question of the extent of Turkish sovereignty because of the extravagant claims which the Porte advanced when such issues were discussed, and the obduracy with which it stuck to them afterwards. However, the British attitude was clear. The Imperial Government would recognise Ottoman authority wherever it existed in a tangible form. But it attached no significance to abstract pretensions. Further, as regards Muscat, Bahrain, and the possessions of the Trucial Chiefs on the coast between

1. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople dated 8 January, 1880; F.D.P.F. No.52, May 1880.
2. Odeyd marked the western limit of the British protected Trucial States.
3. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople dated 8 January, 1880; F.D.P.F.No.53, May 1880.
Odeid and Rasul-Khymah inclusive, H.M's Government, while they think it unnecessary to seek for any formal declaration from the Porte renouncing all claims of sovereignty over those territories, are in no way disposed to recede from their repeated denials of those claims, and they consider themselves bound by their treaty with the several Chiefs to resist any attempt to ... give them practical effect.

The Foreign Minister's scepticism regarding the possibility of a settlement with Turkey probably reflects the bitterness which existed in relations between the two countries after the Russo-Turkish War. England's role at the Congress of Berlin amounted to an abandonment of her traditional policy for one involving a "partition of Turkey disguised very thinly by Beaconsfield's phrase 'redistribution of territory' ...." Be that as it may, it was the British attempt to impose reforms on Asiatic Turkey and transform her

1. Ibid.

2. According to Prof. A. Vambery, an authority on Turkey, England's refusal to assist the Porte in 1878 made Abdul Hamid very bitter towards her. See Vambery's article on "Sultan Abdul Hamid and the Turkish Debacle" in The Asiatic Quarterly Review, July 1913, pp. 3-4; Also see Cambridge History of British Policy, (1868-1914), (Cambridge 1923), III, p. 124.

into an obstacle in the way of Russian expansion southward which recoiled in the worst possible manner. It irritated Abdul Hamid beyond measure; and once the immediate fear of Russia was removed, England came to occupy in the Sultan's mind "much the same position as that which the Russians had (formerly) held".  

Whatever chances there were of Salisbury's overture evoking a positive response were set at rest through the fall in 1880 of the Conservative Government of which he was a member. Power passed into the hands of a Liberal Cabinet under Gladstone, who had roundly berated the "unspeakable Turk" in his election speeches. When George (later Viscount) Goschen, the new British Ambassador at Constantinople, communicated Salisbury's despatch to the Porte, he was blandly informed that the situation in the Gulf was normal, though a naval detachment was being sent there to deal with emergencies. The attitude assumed by Constantinople convinced the Foreign Office that attempts to seek an arrangement

1. Ibid., p. 160.  
3. H.M.'s Ambassador, Constantinople to Ottoman Foreign Minister, dated 13 November, 1880; F.D.S.P. No.227, December 1881; Ottoman Foreign Minister to H.M.'s Charge d'Affaires, Constantinople, dated 8 February, 1881; F.D.S.P. No.230, December 1881.
with Turkey would be futile. The Ottoman Government was consequently informed that England would assume complete liberty of action in the Gulf for the protection of British commerce "without reference to the claims of the Sultan to territorial jurisdiction in the matter".

Goschen's brusque intimation to Constantinople concluded the British attempt to demarcate spheres of influence in the Persian Gulf. Turkey's negative attitude towards the proposal is not surprising in view of the distrust which the behavior of the European Powers at the Congress of Berlin had engendered at Constantinople. It is further conceivable that Abdul Hamid looked upon a fluid situation in the Gulf as a potential means for the application of pressure on the British Government for concessions elsewhere. However, he must have regretted his decision at a later stage. While Salisbury was willing to accept Turkish jurisdiction up to Odeyd, that is, inclusive of the Qatar peninsula, successive British Governments

1. Foreign Office to India Office dated 25 January, 1881; F.D.S.P. No.232, December 1881.

2. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople dated 22 July, 1881; F.D.S.P. No.234, December 1881.
came to treat that promontory as 'independent'.

More important still, the rights which England asserted over Kuwait at the close of the century would have been difficult to assume if Salisbury's offer of 1880 had led to an agreement.

**INDO-TURKISH CONFLICT IN THE PERSIAN GULF**

Though the Congress of Berlin had prepared fertile ground for such an eventuality, it was the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 that precipitated an acute crisis in relations between England and Turkey. Abdul Hamid reacted very bitterly to the loss of Egypt, since events in the Balkans had convinced him that the future of his empire lay in Asia. Thereafter, the Sultan opposed British interests wherever it was possible for him to do so; a fact which is clearly reflected in his policy in the Gulf during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Turkey's attempt to encroach on the British sphere of influence led the Government of India to


define its predominance over the maritime states of Arabia in precise terms. In 1879, on learning of an Ottoman design to establish a coaling station at Bahrain, the Foreign Office instructed Layard to secure a disavowal of the project from the Porte. Simultaneously, the Resident persuaded Isa bin Ali to sign an engagement whereby he contracted to refuse permission to any other Government than the British to establish diplomatic or consular agencies or coaling depots in our territory, unless with the consent of the British Government.

The antagonism between England and Turkey also found expression in a dispute concerning the status of Qatar. Exploiting the uncertain situation in the area after 1871 an exiled Bahraini chief had established himself in Qatar under Ottoman aegis and from there he tried to effect Isa bin Ali's overthrow. The Government of India was at a loss to judge how far would it be expedient to undertake punitive

1. Political Agent, Baghdad to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 30 April, 1879: F.D.S.F. No. 308, 1879; Foreign Office to India Office dated 5 June, 1879: F.D.S.F. No. 313, September 1879.

2. Declaration by Isa bin Ali dated 22 December, 1880: F.D.P.P. No. 18, March 1881; Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GDI dated 24 December, 1880: F.D.P.P. No. 17, March 1881.

3. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GDI dated 2 April, 1881: F.D.S.P. No. 27, June 1881.
Mortimer Durand, the Under Secretary to the Foreign Department, pointed out that Salisbury had virtually accepted Ottoman sovereignty north of Oleyd, which meant that he regarded Qatar as lying within Ottoman jurisdiction. However, the Foreign Secretary argued that the Imperial Government would recognise Turkish control only within the limits it was effective. If Constantinople permitted Qatar to be exploited as a springboard for aggression against Bahrain by malcontent elements, then the Government ought to assume complete liberty of action in respect of the peninsula. The issue was referred to the India Office for clarification.

The Imperial authorities favoured the position taken by the Foreign Secretary. However, no clear verdict was pronounced until Jasim bin Thani, the chief of Qatar, forced the Government’s hand by persecuting the Indian trading community residing in

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1. Note by Under-Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 26 April, 1881: F.D.S.P. No. 15/47, June 1881.
2. Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 5 May, 1881: F.D.S.P. No.10/47, June 1881.
3. Secret Despatch No.27 to Secretary of State for India dated 27 May, 1881: F.D.S.P.No.41, June 1881.
4. Foreign Office to India Office dated 16 August, 1881: F.D.S.P. No.239, December 1881.
his territory. When the Calcutta authorities punished the chief for his behaviour, Musurus Pasha, the Ottoman Ambassador at London, protested against the measure as a violation of the Sultan's sovereignty. The Foreign Office, in reply, explained that Jasim's intransigence had compelled the Indian authorities to punish him, and that the Porte's claim to "sover­eignty over the Katr coast ... (has) never been admitted by Her Majesty's Government".

The Foreign Office stood the Pasha to assert that Turkish rights over Najd and its dependencies (later belonging to the latter category) were well known, and it was impossible for his Government to acquiesce in the British contention. But though the Ambassador's insistence made the Foreign Office retreat somewhat from its original pronouncement, in that its second note did not expressly repudiate the claim voiced by Turkey, Her Majesty's Government reserved to itself the right to deal directly with the

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GGI dated 12 November, 1881: F.D.S.P. No. 446, January 1882.

2. Aarif Pasha to Musurus Pasha dated 8 February, 1883: F.D.S.P. No. 239, May 1883.

3. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Musurus Pasha dated April, 1883: F.D.S.P. No. 487, October 1883.

4. Musurus Pasha to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 2 August, 1883: F.D.S.P. No. 487, October 1883.
Qatar chief in the protection of its interests in the Gulf. It may thus be observed that the rebuff the British authorities had received at Turkish hands in 1880 led them to treat the promontory as a buffer state between the Trucial Principalities and El Hasa.

A decade later the British Government made another attempt to detach Qatar from Ottoman influence. Jasim bin Thanl was known to be in league with certain Bedouin tribes which raided caravans as they journeyed between Qatif and Hufur. In 1892 the Ottoman authorities sent an expedition to the Arab coast under Hafiz Mohammed Pasha, the Governor-General of Basra, to chastise the chief. However, Jasim decoyed the Pasha into the interior and defeated him with heavy losses. Turkey could not permit a defeat at the hands of a petty Arab chief to go unavenged. Consequently, Sir Clare Ford, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, was informed that a revolt in Najd had necessitated the despatch of troops across the Gulf to Arabia and that Abdul Hamid trusted that in pacifying his Arabian provinces "he might count on the support of her

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1. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Musurus Pasha dated 22 September, 1883; F.D.S.P.No.264, December 1883.

2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GCI dated 5 May, 1892; F.D.S.P.No. 185, July 1893.

3. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GCI dated 11 April, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.145, July 1893.
Majesty's Government. The communication was made with the dual object of securing a clarification of the status of the promontory and assuring the British authorities that the despatch of troops to Arabia was not motivated by any aggressive design.

When Ford's despatch was received at London, the Foreign Office decided to make capital of the Porte's difficulties. It asked the Indian authorities whether it would not be better for the Ottoman Government to postpone military action in Arabia pending an attempt at the resolution of its dispute with the Qatar chief by the British Resident. The suggestion was welcomed at Calcutta, the Viceroy pointing out that to permit Turkish troops to land at Qatar would imply acquiescence in the Ottoman interpretation of the state's political status. Besides, once a Turkish force landed there it would be impossible to restrict its activities to the limits of the Porte's control along the coast.

1. Tel. H.M.'s Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 12 April, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.172, July 1893; Also see H.M.'s Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 12 April, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.208, July 1893.

2. Foreign Office to India Office dated 12 April, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.172, July 1893.

3. Tel. Viceroy to Secretary of State for India dated 16 April, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.134, July 1893; Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GCI dated 16 April, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.133, July 1893.
Government of India opposed to the consolidation of Turkish authority over Qatar, Lord Roseberry, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, instructed Ford to request the Porte to settle the dispute through the mediation of the British Government. Jasim, the Ottoman authorities could be informed, had contracted in 1868 to accept British arbitration in disputes with third parties. On the strength of this engagement, the Resident at Bushire had been instructed to proceed to Qatar and resolve the differences between the Turkish Pasha and the chief.

Roseberry's communication aimed at securing an acknowledgment of Qatar's 'independence' from the Porte. However, Said Pasha, the Turkish Foreign Minister, saw through his move. He expressed astonishment at Roseberry's stand and told Ford that he hoped immediate steps would be taken to countermand the Resident's mission to the Arab coast. The promontory in question was a part of the vilayat of Basra since 1871 and it would be a negation of Ottoman sovereignty over it to accept the mediation of a third party in the dispute with Jasim bin Thani.

The Ottoman representative in the Gulf proved

1. Tel. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople dated 20 April, 1893: F.D.S.F. No.177, July 1893.
2. Tel. H.M's Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 23 April, 1893: F.D.S.F. No.210, July 1893.
equally obdurate about his prerogatives. The Resident at Bushire found Hafiz Pasha totally disinclined, to permit outside interference in his dealings with Sheikh Jasim. The Qatar chief, on his part, was willing to enter into relations with the British Government on the same terms as the Trucial Chiefs. The India Office wanted to accommodate him, and inquired of the Foreign Office whether the Porte could not be persuaded to withdraw its claims over the State for a "consideration." But Roseberry dismissed the suggestion with the remark that it would be pointless to approach Constantinople with any such proposition. The net result of the 'interdict' placed by the Foreign Office on the passage of Ottoman troops across the Gulf was that the Turks were unable to consolidate their authority over Qatar.

In addition to Ottoman activity, the period under review witnessed Persian attempts to undermine

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 5 May, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.185, July 1893; Hafiz Mohammed Pasha to Resident, Persian Gulf dated 7 May, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.186, July 1893.

2. India Office to Foreign Office dated 12 May, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.223, July 1893.

3. Foreign Office to India Office dated 12 May, 1893; F.D.S.P. No.224, July 1893.
British influence over the Trucial Principalities. The Persian assault on Oman came in the form of a visit by a Teheran functionary, General Ahmed Khan, to the Arab coast in 1887. That the object of the General's mission was the neutralisation of British influence is evident from the fact that the draft treaty he presented to the Trucial Chiefs embodied a stipulation that there would reside on behalf of the Persian Government "an Agent in Oman to be received and treated in the same way as the Agent of the British Government". While representations at Teheran secured a disavowal of Ahmed Khan's mission, Ross sought to safeguard the position through obtaining an undertaking from the Trucial Chiefs that they would not permit the representative of an alien power to reside in their territories.

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, CCI dated 9 September, 1887; F.D.E.P. No.264, July, 1888; Resident, Persian Gulf to H.M's Charge d'Affaires, Teheran (demi-official) dated 7 December, 1887; F.D.E.P. No.214/302, July 1888.


3. H.M's Charge d'Affaires, Teheran to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs dated 19 April, 1888; F.D.E.P. No.297, July 1888.

The purview of the declaration of 1888 was extended in 1892 due to the activities of a French agent, M. Chapuy, who tried to persuade the Oman chiefs to establish relations with the French Government. By virtue of the new engagement the chiefs undertook: (i) not to enter into an engagement with any power other than the British Government; (ii) not to allow any agent of an alien power to reside in their territories; and (iii) not to lease any part of their possessions to a foreign Government.

The engagements contracted in 1888 and 1892 secured the British position in Oman vis-a-vis Teheran and Constantinople. However, the ambitions of the rulers of inner Arabia, over whom the Porte exercised a nebulous authority, presented a different problem. The expedition of 1871 had eclipsed the Wahhabis of Najd, the authority of the Saudi Amirs being reduced to the confines of Riyadh barely a decade after Imam Abdullah's fatal acceptance of Ottoman assistance. The decline of the Wahhabis was accompanied by the rise of a new dynasty in central Arabia, the Rashids of Jebel Shammar. Towards the close of the 1880's Amir Mohammed bin Rashid had established his hegemony over

north Arabia, and began to look about for fresh fields of conquest.¹

In 1889 Ross learnt that Amir Mohammed had made overtures to Constantinople for concerting an offensive movement towards Oman². The Resident viewed the prospect of a Turco-Rashidi combination with alarm, apprehending that it would prove fatal to British influence. In the circumstances the Government would be well advised to work for an understanding with Constantinople concerning the Gulf. So tangible were the advantages that would result from such a consummation that it would be worth-while to recognise the Porte’s de facto position in Qatar if Turkey, on its part, agreed to respect British interests in Oman.³

While the Government of India was not opposed to a settlement with Turkey, the difficulty in inducing the Porte to agree to ‘reasonable terms’ made the

1. Memorandum on Central Arabia dated nil; F.D.S.P. No.364, August 1904.
2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 7 February, 1889; F.D.S.P. No.69, May 1889.
3. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 15 March, 1889; F.D.S.P. No.247, August 1889.
Residents suggestion impracticable. The alternative to an agreement with Turkey was an understanding with the Rashidi Amir. The Government's attention was drawn towards this possibility by Sir Henry Rawlinson.

Referring to Abdul Hamid's ambitions in Arabia, and the danger they presented to British interests after having found in the Jebel Shammar Amir so formidable a tool, Rawlinson spoke of the necessity of a secret mission to Hail to win over Ibn Rashid to an English orientation. In view of the "implacable enmity" between the Arabs and the Turks, Mohammed could not be expected to entertain deep sentiments of loyalty for the Sultan. Skilful diplomacy would, therefore, "convince Ibn Rashid without great difficulty of the errors of his ways." Rawlinson's suggestion did not commend itself to Boss, though he was reluctant to present any counter proposal of his own. The Resident, in fact, confessed his inability to forecast what turn events would take in Central Arabia. The Rashidi Amir's ambition might well be to found a great Arab Empire; in which case he


2. Ibid.

3. Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 28 February, 1889: F.D.S.P. No.73, May 1889.
would try to clear El Hasa of the Turks. But it was
to acknowledge their supremacy wherever he establishes his power. This, in the case of his extending eastwards, will eventually be injurious to British interests. On the other hand, if he appeared as a "liberator" and swept the Turks out of Arabia, I don't suppose we should grieve, and it would go to restore the old order on the shores of the Persian Gulf.1

Yet whatever be bin Rashid's ultimate design, Ross felt that a mission to his capital would be inexpedient from every point of view. It would antagonise Turkey and be unwelcome to Mohammed as compromising him with his suzerain.2

Fortunately for the British, occurrences in inner Arabia prevented the Rashidi Amir from pursuing his plans concerning Oman. With the death of Imam Abdullah in 1889, leadership over the Wahhabis passed into the hands of Abdul Rahman bin Faisal. The new Imam immediately exhibited symptoms of restlessness and engaged the full attention of his Rashidi rival for the next few years. As a result of this, Amir Mohammed's interest in Oman ceased as abruptly as it had earlier projected itself on to British notice.

1. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI (demi-official) dated 17 September, 1888; F.D.B.P. No.102/151, November 1888.
2. Resident, Persian Gulf to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI dated 27 February, 1889; F.D.B.P. No. 233/306, August 1889.