Chapter III

Dimensions of the Anglo-Ottoman Interests in Najd
In this chapter, we will endeavour to examine the Anglo-Ottoman interests which had many dimensions - political, religious and strategic. Both the Ottoman and the British were mainly concerned with the steadily growing power of Abdul Aziz Ibn Al-Saud between the period 1901-14 but of course for different reasons. The Ottoman Government felt concerned because the growth of Al-Saud, if unchecked, would disturb the prevailing status quo in Central Arabia. Moreover, they had special reason to be alarmed with the growing stature of Abdul Aziz keeping in view of the past experience of the Wahabi movement. The Ottoman authorities felt that a strong power under the leadership of Saudi dynasty would assume the pretensions of independence from the empire and thus severely affect the Sultan's prestige in the Peninsula. The Sultan was also suspicious of British intention and thought Ibn Saud may have the blessing of the British.

British were concerned for they felt that the emergence of any strong power, particularly the Wahabis, in the hinterland would have serious repercussion on the Arab littoral states which were under the British protection. The British also did not relish the prospect of the growth of any power in and around their area of influence for they found it easy to deal with the weak and petty states. However, it is interesting to note that they were also not at ease with the idea of allowing the Ottomans free hand in the region so that
the Al-Saud power could be checked for consolidation of Ottoman position was detrimental to their interest in the region. Thus we will see in the following pages that the British were faced with a dilemma that how to respond to the overtures of Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud, apparently, professing the loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan was determined to revive the fortune of his dynasty.

Early Period

With the death of Mohammad Ibn Rashid in 1897, a ruler, who personified Arab unity for over a decade, the way was cleared for the revival of Wahabism in central Arabia under the leadership of Abdul Aziz Ibn Al-Saud. Abdul Aziz Ibn Rashid, successor to Mohammad Ibn Rashid, was not endowed with the qualities to fill the vacuum after the death of the latter. Meanwhile Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait also began to aspire for hegemony over the Arabian Peninsula.¹ With the British commitment for the integrity of Kuwait in mind, the Kuwaiti chief embarked upon an adventurous policy. The chief's manoeuvres involved dragged the British in the

turbulent politics of central Arabia. The emergence of the Saudis can be properly understood within the broader context of Ottoman history. The emergence of Abdul Aziz Ibn Al-Saud was viewed by the Ottoman Sultans as a serious challenge. The Ottoman government had to react to this religious political challenge, which was likely to threaten the Holy cities. As we know that the Wahabi movement in the second half of the eighteenth century brought the Ottoman claim to universal caliphate to the fore. The Ottoman Sultan declared that the fight against the Wahabi doctrine, considered heretic, was the Sultan Caliph's prime duty. Since Selim I took the exalted title of Khadim al-Harmayan al-Sharifayn, which conferred supremacy in Islamic world, the Ottoman Sultan considered it his sacred duty to keep the routes of pilgrimage open to all Muslims in the world.

But the Wahabis endeavoured to control Mecca and Medina, which they considered to be the center of idolatrous practices

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2 Memorandum on Central Arabia, F.D.S.P., No.364, August 1904; HM’s Counsul, Basra to HM’s Charge d’Affairs, Constantinople, November 22, 1900, F.D.S.P. No.73, February 1901.

3 Halil Inalcik, "Recession of the Ottoman Empire and the Rise of the Saudi State", Studies on Turkish Arab Relations, Istanbul, Annual 3, 1988, p.70
introduced against true Islam. The Ottoman Sultan was accused of disregarding the true application of Sharia. Thus the struggle soon took the character of a sacred war for both the Ottomans and the Saudis. To justify the repression of the Wahabis, which posed the most fundamental ideological basis of Ottoman sovereignty in Arab lands, the Ottoman government accused Wahabism with heresy. The idea was strongly expressed in official documents, pamphlets, and books about the movement. Despite the policy to keep independent control of the Hijaz against the Ottoman encroachments, the Sharif of Mecca sided with the Ottomans. This was partly because its existence depended on all this historically established order and partly because the social and economic antagonism between the desert tribal society and the urban society of the Hijaz was inevitable.

The British on the whole were against the formation of a powerful state on the Gulf. It was much easier to deal with local Sheikhs to acquire privileges, tracts of lands to set up factories or coaling stations etc. The British efforts to

4 ibid.

5 ibid, p.71.

6 ibid.
incite the Arabs against the Ottomans were intended to counter Pan-Islamic propaganda against England among the Indian Muslims. At any rate, it was during the adoption of Abdul Hamid’s Pan-Islamic policies, which coincided with the Ottoman central policy in the Arab provinces, that the British-Saudi cooperation became steady. Despite the non-committal British policy towards Ibn Saud in the period 1901-13, which was due partly to the aim of not alienating the Ottoman government altogether and partly to the British favour for the Sharif of Mecca, the English Government eventually became the best ally of Abdul Aziz and helped him to gain complete independence from the Ottoman Empire.7

Now we shall discuss the developments in Central Arabia which propelled it into the larger context of Anglo-Ottoman relations. Abdul Rahman, in alliance with Shaikh Mubarak, tried to make incursion in the interior of Central Arabia towards the end of 1900.8 The allies, however, were not able to make much headway and they had to beat a hasty retreat on being confronted by the forces of Ibn Rashid. They were

7 Ibid, p.79.

8Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, 5 October 1900, F.D.S.P.No.81, November 1900, Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, 3 November 1900, F.D.S.P. No.47, February 1901.
chased right up to the borders of Basra by Ibn Rashid. They would have suffered major embarrassment or set back but for the intervention of Mohisin Pasha, the Governor General of the Vilayat of Basra. In return, he was obliged to re-affirm his allegiance to Sultan Abdul Hamid. The inconclusive skirmishes in the desert did not mark the end of the struggle for Arabian hegemony. The British official were concerned with the growing ambition of Mubarak and were contemplating measures to check him. However, in December 1900, Mubarak and Abdul Rahman again ventured out of Kuwait at the head of a sizeable army. The Kuwait forces met with some initial success. Najd fell to the chief without a blow and he appointed the Wahabi leader as Governor of Riyadh. Mubarak then marched into Jebel Shammar, Ibn Rashid's home province. However, pushed to the wall, the Hail Amir fell upon the allies with a strength born of desperation and virtually annihilated their army at Sarif near Boreyda on 17 March 1901. Thus Mubarak's dream of founding an Arab Empire under his

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9Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, 14 and 17 November 1900, F.D.S.P., nos.27, 42, and 50, November 1900, HM's Consul, Basra, to HM's Charge d'Affairs, Constantinople, 22 November 1900, D.S.P., No.73, February 1901.

10Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, 26 November 1900, F.D.S.P., No.26, February 1901.
The victory of Hail's Amir was a matter of concern for the British. Kemball, the Resident at Bushire immediately rushed to Kuwait to assess the situation and foil a likely move by Ibn Rashid against Mubarak. On the other hand, Turkey's attitude gave no ground for satisfaction to the British authorities. From Basra, Consul Wratislaw reported the arrival of General Mohammad Pasha Daghestani, Commander-in-Chief of the VI Army Corps, with the probable intention of marching in the direction of the principality. However, the Porte had apparently not forgotten the warning served to it earlier by O'Connor, British Ambassador at Constantinople. Mohsin Pasha, who favoured a circumspect policy, persuaded Constantinople to desist from taking upon military measures. Pursuing an alternative line the Pasha paid a visit to Kuwait ostensibly to effect reconciliation between Ibn Rashid and Mubarak but actually to

11 Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, 20 April 1901.

12 Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, April 1901, F.D.S.P., No.151, June 1901.

13 Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, May 11, and 13, 1901, F.D.S.P., Nos.187, and 198, June 1901.
browbeat the chief into accepting Ottoman protection but in vain. Mubarak, instead, appealed to Kamball to be taken under British protection.\textsuperscript{14}

Mubarak's request for protection coincided with an unaccepted overture from Hail.\textsuperscript{15} An emissary of Ibn Rashid told Wratislaw that his master, being sick of Turkish duplicity, wanted to enter into treaty relations with the British Government. The Amir would accept the British position at Kuwait; he would further grant a concession for a trans-Arabia Railway, if the Government so desired. In return, England should let him replace Mubarak by a protege of his and permit a free flow of arms through the Gulf to Hail. O'Connor did not regard the Hail Amir's feeler with enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{16} He remarked that in view of the assurance given to Turkey earlier, acceptance of Rashid's proposal would

\textsuperscript{14}Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, June 3, 1901, F.D.S.P., No.228, June 1901.

\textsuperscript{15}HM's Consul, Basra, to HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, June 3, 1901, F.D.SP., No.190, October 1901.

\textsuperscript{16}HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, May 29, 1901, F.D.S P., No.194, October 1901.
be impolitical and impracticable. At the same time it would be foolish to antagonize a ruler, who could, if he wanted, make a nuisance of himself along the Gulf littoral. An ideal thing would be to induce Mubarak into giving satisfaction to Ibn Rashid for his past conduct. If Kuwait's Shaikh could be so persuaded, England's position in the Gulf would be strengthened without giving any cause for offense to Turkey. It is interesting to note that when the Imperial government referred Ibn Rashid's overture to Calcutta, the Foreign Department for a moment indulged in extravagant dreams of British influence encompassing the entire Arabian Peninsula. It was pointed out that the Ottoman hold over the region rested purely on military force. Dissensions in other parts of the empire could necessitate the withdrawal of Turkish garrisons at any moment. An understanding with England would be of the advantage to the Amir when such an eventuality came to pass. Nor did the British Government stand to lose through the bargain. Complications at Kuwait

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17Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, June 1, 1901, F.D.SP. No.219, June 1901.

18See Note by H. Daly, Deputy-Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, June 4, 1901, F.D.S.P., 118/230, October 1901.
would be resolved once and for all. Curzon refused to succumb to the egalomania afflicting the Foreign Department. The Viceroy concurred with O'Connor's recommendation. Ibn Rashid's requests would have to be turned down, although in a tactful way. Curzon thought that perhaps a secret mission to Hail would prove useful. The Amir could be assured that England would not permit Mubarak to embark on an aggressive course in the future. He could also be given to understand that if Turkey attempted to conquer Arabia the British Government would support the Arab cause and restrain the Sultan.

Regarding Kuwait, it was thought that either of the two alternative policies could be pursued: England could declare an open protectorate over Mubarak or stick to the status quo. However, Lansdowne, the Foreign Minister, rejected these steps. He favoured to consolidate the hold acquired over Kuwait and to work simultaneously for a rapprochment between Mubarak and Ibn Rashid.

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19 Ibid. Curzon's reaction to the suggestion was brief but eloquent. He noted on the margin: "Heven forbid".

20 The Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, June 8, 1901, FDSP, No. 229, June 1901.

21 India Office to Foreign Office, June 14, 1900, F.D.S.P. No. 208, October 1901, Foreign Office to India Office, July 15, 1901, F.D.S.P. No. 232, October 1901.
Emergence of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud

Disaster at Sarif was a severe blow to the anti-Rashid forces in Arabia. Both Mubarak and Abdul Rahman could not gather courage for further adventure. But at this juncture, Abdul Aziz Al Saud, son of Imam Abdul Rahman, gave a new turn to the situation in Central Arabia. Abdul Aziz was initiated into statecraft by Mubarak. He also inculcated in him an ambition to revive the fortunes of the house of Al-Saud and a sensitive awareness of England's pre-eminent position in the Persian Gulf.22 Abdul Aziz Al Saud captured Riyadh in a dramatic way in January 1902 with his forty committed followers. Thus supremacy of Al-Saud was declared. The overnight change was welcomed by the inhabitants of the town. Perhaps they were not happy with the oppressive regime of Ibn Rashid.23 However, Ibn Rashid made a desperate bid to challenge the growing power of Al-Sauds. His response indicates that he was already losing his grip over events. He endeavoured to draw Turkey into the struggle by making only a case before the Ottoman authorities that Ottoman possessions

22Philby, n.1, p.239; also see J.G.Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia, Calcutta, 1915, I, Part I, p.1143.

23S.M.Iqbal, Emergence of Saudi Arabia, Srinagar, 1977, pp.33-34.
in Arabia had assumed great importance in British eyes because of the Baghdad Railway scheme and that Abdul Aziz's expedition was covertly supported by England and constituted part of a design to occupy El-Hassa. While the Hail Amir's attempt to play upon Turkish fears proved abortive, his Saudi rival fast consolidated his position. The worsening situation convinced Ibn Rashid of the necessity of a determined effort to retrieve his position. Therefore, he ventured out of Hail in July 1902 to crush the Wahabis but met disastrous defeat at Dilam in November 1902.

The outcome of Dilam was decisive in the struggle for supremacy between Al-Sauds and the Rashidis. Feeling confident, Al-Saud strove to establish contacts with Europeans in order to strengthen or buttress his position. Towards the close of 1902, he visited Kuwait and met French and Russian agents. Colonel C.A. Kemball, the British Resident at Bushire,

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24 Ibn Rashid to Turkish Government, F.D.S.P. No. 20, October 20, 1902; Also see Ravinder Kumar, India and the Persian Gulf Region: A Study in British Imperial Policy, 1858-1907, Bombay, 1965.

25 J.A. Saldhana, Precis of Kuwait Affairs (1896-1904), pp. 62-64; HM's Consul, Basra to HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, July 23, 1902, F.D.SP. No. 27, October 1902, Political Agent, Bahrain to Resident, Persian Gulf, November 17, 1902, F.D.S.P. No. 234, April 1903.
did not attach any significance to this meeting. He was also skeptical about the French and Russian offer of protection to the Saudi Amir as he revealed to the Resident. He was of the opinion that it was strategy of al-Saud to arouse British interest\textsuperscript{26} in the region to counter the Ottoman challenge. Thus it was clear that Central Arabia was gradually being drawn more and more into the arena of international politics.

Throughout 1903, Abdul Aziz successfully routed the Rashidi forces in a series of encounters. However, his steady growing influence was pregnant with serious implication for it was likely to disturb the equilibrium of power in Central Arabia. Consequently, the Ottomans could not afford to view with indifference the exclusion from Arab politics of her protege, especially by an anti-Ottoman dynasty. The Wahabis under the dynamic leadership of 'Abdul Aziz adopted the strategy to involve England in Arabia as a counterpoise to Turkey. Consequently, feelers in this direction were soon sent. Thus we find that a Wahabi agent met captain Prideaux, the political Agent at Bahrain in November 1903. The emissary talked of a "nationalistic" upsurge among the Arabs and their desire to free themselves of Ottoman rule. He particularly

\textsuperscript{26}Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, Government of India, March 16, 1903, F.D.S.P. No.69, April 1903.
pointed out that Abdul Aziz intended to oust the Turks from El-Hasa after the defeat of Ibn Rashid. He would hopefully succeed in this task because the people were tired of Ottoman misrule. But to make this scheme a lasting success, England would have to protect his littoral from a Turkish invasion. Would the British Government undertake such an obligation? 27

Prideaux was evasive in his reply to the above question. But the overture was received with keen interest in India. Sir Louis Dane, the Foreign Secretary, did not favour the extension of protection to the Wahabis. Yet there was need for political contact with Riyadh, for it would be inexpedient to let Abdul Aziz regard the British with hostility in case he consolidated his power. The territories of Najd included the right flank of Baghdad Railway and an established power there not restrained by treaty relations could prove troublesome. 28 Keeping in view these considerations Colonel Kemball was consulted on the expediency of a secret mission being sent to

27 Political Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Persian, Gulf, November 7, 1903, F.D.S.P. No. 207, June 1904.

28 Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, December 15, 1903; February 20, 1904, F.D.S. P.No.207/218, June 1904.
Riyadh. 29 The Resident was against the proposal for he felt that such a move could not be kept a secret from the Ottomans or Hail and would be viewed as an open espousal by England of the Wahabi cause. He argued that in spite of the growing success of the Al Saud, the possibility of staging a come back by the Hail Amir could not be completely ruled out. 30 Thus the scheme would be premature at the moment.

Although the proposed mission to Riyadh was not sent but one gets an impression of increased British interest in the region from a despatch addressed to the Imperial Government on this issue. The Amir’s overture was brought to notice of the India office and it was highlighted that in the past the government had maintained political contacts with the Wahabis which abruptly ceased in the wake of Turkish assertion in 1871 and the consequent rise of the Rashidis. 31 But now with the unfolding of developments like the maturing of trans Turkish railway schemes and the rising of fortune of the Al Saud made

29 Under Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, to Resident, Persian Gulf, January 6, 1904, F.D.S. P. No.208, June 1904.

30 Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, February 5, 1904, F.D.S.P., No.208, June 1904.

31 Secret Despatch No.69 to the Secretary of State for India, March 24, 1904, F.D.S.P. No.125, June 1904.
it necessary for the Indian authorities to exhibit a more keen interest in the affairs of Central Arabia.

It is not that Turkey was oblivious of the steadily growing keenness of the British, particularly the Government of India, in the peninsula. The concern of the Ottoman can be fully appreciated from one of the memorandum of Talib Bey, an ex-Governor of El-Hasa.\textsuperscript{32} Talib Bey's report on Arabia, though manifesting excessive Anglophobia, makes amply clear the growing suspicion of the Ottomans towards the British attitude. He based his thesis on the premise that with the projected development of communications in Turkish Arabia, England had become vitally interested in the Ottoman territories bordering on the Gulf which commanded one of the highways to India. He noted that unless Constantinople adopted a resolute policy the tragedy enacted in Egypt would be repeated in Turkish Arabia and the "whole of the regions and districts of the Persian Gulf and the Tigris would pass under the protection of England, the craftiest and most astute (country) of all."\textsuperscript{33} Talib Bey recommended many remedial measures commencing from a more active policy towards Kuwait and ending with administrative reforms to give the Arabs a

\textsuperscript{32}Report on Arabia by Talib Bey, ex-Governor of Al Hasa, F.D.S.P. No.215, June 1904.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
greater measure of internal autonomy. He mentioned particularly the necessity of annulling the engagements which the Arab chiefs had contacted with foreign powers (i.e., England) and of cautioning them against surrendering their prerogatives without the knowledge of the Imperial Government.\(^{34}\)

The Porte at last decided to intervene in the struggle between Abdul Aziz and Ibn Rashid in May 1904, the Government of India was informed about the reported instruction from Constantinople to send forces to assist Ibn Rashid.\(^{35}\) The local British authorities in the Gulf felt concerned with the safety of Kuwait whose ruler was known to be in alliance with the Al-Saud. However, it was gravest challenge of his life before the Young Saud because to vanquish the combined forces of Rashidis and Ottomans was a formidable problem. Realising the gravity of the situation, the Wahabis once again made a friendly overture to the British Government. The Imam, Abdul Rahman wrote to the Bushire Residency protesting against the Turkish invasion and formally asking for British protection. The Wahabi leader tried again to entice the British by

\(^{34}\)Ibid.

\(^{35}\)Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, To Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, May 3, 1904, F.D.S.P. No.329, August 1904.

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pointing out to Mubarak that Russians had offered protection. Thus it seems that the Wahabis were desperately trying to enkindle the interest of the British in the politics of Central Arabia and then use them as counterbalance against the Ottomans. Foreign Department of the Government of India did not treat it as a bluff and requested Home authorities to warn the Porte against military intervention in Arabia.

These developments in Arabia found the Indian authorities involved in a conflict of opinion with the British Ambassador at Constantinople. O'Connor pointed out to the Foreign Office that there was no ground on which we can request Sultan Abdul Hamid not to take measures against Al-Saud. He noted rightly that the Porte will forward the argument of preventing the disturbance of the status quo in Arabia. In fact, the logical extension of the Indian authorities opinion was the violation of the undertaking of 1901 through which England bound herself to respect the status quo. O'Connor dismissed the Imam's reference to the Russian offer as a tactical ploy better.

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36 Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, of Foreign Department, GOI, May 16, 1904, F.D.S.P., No. 335, August 1904.

37 Tel. Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, April 28, 1904, F.D.S.P. No. 323, August 1904.
designed to alienate rather to encourage support. Accordingly, the best course in the given situation would be to wait for the developments while maintaining a resolute attitude towards the territorial integrity of Kuwait.\textsuperscript{38} The policy outlined by the Ambassador found favour at the hands of Home authorities. The Foreign Office in London felt that encouragement to the Saudi might ultimately prove dangerous to the British interest itself, as in the past, the reestablishment and consolidation of the Wahabis would lead to increased pressure on the maritime principalities under British protection, particularly Kuwait.\textsuperscript{39}

The Government of India contested the arguments advanced by O'Connor.\textsuperscript{40} It was true that England had undertaken to uphold the status quo in 1901. But consistently with this undertaking it could be argued that England would abstain from interference in Najd only as long as Turkey also did so. The government had no concern with Central Arabia. But British

\textsuperscript{38}Tel. HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Foreign Office, May 23, 1904, F.D.S.P. No.368, August 1904.

\textsuperscript{39}Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, May 25, 1904, F.D.S.P. No.349, August 1904.

\textsuperscript{40} Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, May 29, 1904, F.D.S.P., No.350, August 1904.
interests in eastern Arabia and along the littoral were such that Turkish intervention in favour of the Rashidis could not be viewed with indifference. The outcome of the struggle in the interior would necessarily affect the maritime Arab principalities in treaty relations with England. The understanding of 1901 imposed neutrality equally upon England and Turkey. Indian authorities also questioned the Foreign Office analysis of Wahhabi motivations. The re-establishment of the Saudi dynasty would be territorial rather than ideological. It would present no difficulty in respect of British sphere of influence. Contrary to this, Ibn Rashid with the backing of the Ottomans, might be a more serious menace. On the analogy of 1871, it would result in the virtual absorption of Najd by Turks. Besides, Mubarak's position would be endangered and it would become difficult for the Imperial Government to protect him.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Foreign Office, hesitantly, agreed with the Indian prodding to strongly protest on the suggested lines against the Ottoman move. But in the meanwhile, Turkey had already rushed contingents to help out Ibn Rashid. The Wahabis had to reckon with the Turco-Rashidi forces at Bukairiyah in Qasim. There was confusion and chaos all around. But Al Saud, at
last, won the day. Consequently, the Porte, became convinced of the paramount necessity to arrive at some settlement with the Wahabis if at all any influence was to be retained in the peninsula. On the other hand, Abdul Aziz, who had by now got fair understanding of warfare and diplomacy, also realised that he needed respite from confrontation. Though he had won the first round but still he was not confident of meeting the full scale onslaught of the Ottomans that too without British support. Thus, we find that He took the initiative to approach Constantinople with professions of loyalty to Sultan Abdul Hamid. Consequently, Abdul Rahman representing the Wahabi side, met a senior Ottoman official at Safwan to negotiate a settlement, with Mubarak playing the role of mediator. The Turks recognized the Al Saud ruler of Najd and assured non-interference on the part of Ibn Rashid. In return, Abdul Aziz recognised the Ottoman suzerainty and agreed to be Qaimaqam of the Najd. The province of Qasim was made into a buffer state between Hail and Najd, garrisoned and


43 H.M.’s Consul, Basra, to HM’s Ambassador, Constantinople, February 18, 1905, F.D.SP. No.175, July 1905.

44 HM’s Charge d’Affaires, Constantinople, to Foreign Office, November 8, 1904, F.D.S.P., No.1126, February 1905.
administered by Turkey. The settlement, in essence, amounted to a recognition by Turkey of the re-establishment of the Wahabis in their former territory. However, neither of the parties was serious about its implementation. Perhaps both intended to play for time. The Ottomans wanted to surmount the difficulties they were facing in Yemen. Ibn Saud wished that the Ottoman hold over Qasim was rendered somehow impossible.

However, the peace treaty of Safwan imparted a new dimension to Arab politics. The Ottomans soon afterwards occupied Qasim which the Al Saud could not fail to take note of. Abdul Aziz now turned his attention to the Gulf, he visited El-Hasa and endeavoured to revive the ties that had existed in earlier times between the Wahabis and the coastal people. He addressed letters to the various trucial chiefs to the effect that he would visit them early in 1906, ostensibly to present a demand for Zakat (or the traditional

45 Memorandum on Safwan Meeting by Political Agent, Kuwait, February 28, 1905, F.D.S.P. No.181, July 1905.

46 Lormier, n.22, pp.1649-51.

47 Diary of Resident, Persian Gulf, October 15, 1905, F.D.S.P. No.762, May 1906.
This impending move caused a great deal of concern in Oman where memories of Wahabi expansionism in the past were still alive. Major Cox, now Resident at the Bushire Residency, urged the Indian authorities to be vigilant against the spread of Wahabi influence. The various trucial chiefs were apprehensive about the British support for in accordance with the provisions of the treaty the government would not interfere to protect their integrity so long as Riyadh did not commit aggression by way of sea. Such a policy had been actually followed in the past. But it would be unwise, from the British point of view, to adhere to it in the altered state of affairs.

The Foreign Department appreciated Major Cox's concern and was not prepared to countenance its influence on the Arab littoral. The Government of India urged the India office through a despatch that Wahabi expansion towards Oman ought to be checked, the more so since the Al Saud had accepted Abdul

48 Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, October 29, 1906, F.D.SP. No.765, May 1906.

49 Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, February 13, 1906, F.D.S.P. No.767, May 1906.

50 Note by Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, November 28, 1905, F.D.SP. No.767, May 1906.
Hamid as their nominal suzerain. They favoured to ask Abdul Aziz whether he considered himself bound by the Treaty of 1866. Pending such a move, the Amir could be warned that England would not permit encroachments on her sphere of influence in Arabia.

Foreign Office now agreed to serve a warning to Abdul Aziz. In pursuance of this, when Cox broached the issue with Mubarak thinking that he will communicate the British's sentiments to the Wahabis, he surprisingly learnt that relations between Kuwait and Najd were not so cordial as was the case earlier. Mubarak told Cox that he had already warned Abdul Aziz, even to the extent of jeopardising relationship, if the Amir ventured upon a policy of aggression towards Oman. However the real reason for Mubarak's newly

51 Secret Despatch No.7 to Secretary of State for India, January 11, 1906, F.D.S.P., No.769, May 1906.

52 In 1866 the Wahhabis had agreed not to interfere with the Arab states in treaty with the British Government. C.U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties etc. (Delhi, 1933), p.206.


54 Political Agent, Kuwait, to Resident, Persian Gulf, January 19, 1906, F.D.S.P. no.771, May 1906.
developed antagonism towards the Wahabis lay in Riyadh’s growing power. For Sheikh Mubarak the most desirable state of Arab politics was the existence of rival factions of equal strength, with his principality holding the balance between them. It is keeping this important end in view that Mubarak tried to manoeuvre to prevent the exclusion of Ibn Rashid, his enemy so far, from Arab politics. The Sheikh had sent feelers to the Hail Amir and received a satisfactory response. The reason for the change in Rashid’s attitude is easily discernible that he was also unhappy about the Turko-Saud rapprochement.

Mubarak told Cox that he would propose to the rival parties a scheme dividing Central Arabia into three political entities under Ibn Rashid, the Wahabis and Kuwait respectively. This scheme he observed, was like a Pan-Arab alliance against Turkey.\(^5^5\) The resident considered Mubarak’s proposal impracticable for various reasons but more so because the Sheikh had been so generous with himself in the allocation

\(^5^5\) Memorandum on Interview between Resident and Sheikh Mubarak, March 7, 1906, F.D.S.P., no.414, July 1906.
of territory.\textsuperscript{56} The scheme, at the best, was a piece of futile imagination, for even as Mubarak was drawing up his plans, events in the interior had radically altered the situation. Simmering tension surfaced once again leading to fight between the Wahabis and the Hail Amir. Abdul Aziz was successful early in 1906 in defeating and killing Ibn Rashid in a battle near Boreyda.\textsuperscript{57} With this a principal rival of the Wahabis in the Central Arabia vanished from the scene.

It seems that with the death of Ibn Rashid the deck was clear for the establishment of the Wahabis' supremacy in Central Arabia. However, ground realities were not so. They had yet to reckon with the two powers - England and the Ottoman Empire - most intimately interested in the peninsula. It was imperative for Al-Saud's survival to make an alliance with one of the aforementioned powers. Left to themselves, the Wahabis would have opted for an alliance with the British. They regarded the Ottoman as traditionally imperialist power. More importantly, it was England, with her supremacy over the adjoining seas, that held the key to the Arabian peninsula in

\textsuperscript{56} Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, March 15, 1906, F.D.S.P., no.414, July 1906.

\textsuperscript{57} HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Foreign Office, June 11, 1906, F.D.S.P., no.464, March 1906.
her hands. However, in view of the reluctance of the British Government to be exploited towards the Wahabi ends, Abdul Aziz had a difficult role to play between the two powers.

Under these circumstances, Saudi Amir sent an emissary in March 1906 to meet Political Agent at Bahrain. He reiterated before Prideaux that his master would throw the Turks out of El Hassa if England pledged to protect his littoral from the Turks. In return, Abdul Aziz was ready to consent to the stationing of a British representative in one of his coastal towns. The British Agent refrained from making any commitment to the Wahabi envoy.\(^{58}\) Then the latter visited Bushire and addressed a long letter to Constantinople professing the sentiments of loyalty toward Sultan Abdul Hamid on behalf of the Al Suad. Cox at Bushire was not unduly upset at the envoy's behaviour.\(^{59}\) The Amir was obviously sitting on the fence. However, the fact that his agent had first overtured to a British representative was indicative of his real feelings.

\(^{58}\) Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, March 6, 1901, F.D.S.P. no.775, May 1906.

\(^{59}\) Tel. Abdul Aziz Al Saud to Sultan Abdul Hamid, February 18, 1906, F.D.S.P., no.775, May 1906.

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In spite of indifferent attitude on the part of the British authorities, Abdul Aziz was bent upon drawing them into the vortex of Central Arabian politics. He persisted in sending feelers to the English representative in the Gulf. The Resident, on the other hand, had gradually come to the conclusion, keeping in view growing stature of the Al Saud, that it was the need of hour to reconsider the British policy of 'non intervention' in the Central Arabia. Cox viewed that the peoples of Arabia seemed disposed to group themselves under the Al Saud to free their country of the Turks. Realizing that they were not strong enough to stand alone they wanted to secure the support of a European power, if England did not respond they would approach some other country. He also felt that an understanding with the Wahabis would remove the uncertainty about their impending move towards the Gulf and safeguard the maritime districts under British protection. The Resident however concluded his despatch by saying that he too did not want the outright declaration of a protectorate over Najd. But the minimum of that British interests demanded was that the agreement of 1901

60 Political Agent, Kuwait, to Resident, Persian Gulf, August 28, 1906, F.D.S.P. no.488, November 1906.

61 Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, September 16, 1906, F.D.S.P. No.488, November 1906.
be interpreted in favour of an independent Central Arabia.\textsuperscript{62} The President failed to cut ice with the Foreign office in spite of his fine arguments.\textsuperscript{63} They were fully conscious of the fact that in any case Saud would not be able to challenge our predominant influence on the Coastal Gulf. However, Abdul Aziz made another overture to the British putting somewhat different argument. He explained to Cox that the resources of Najd had been strained to the utmost in the wars with Ibn Rashid and it was essential for him on economic grounds to secure El Hasa, one of the most productive regions of Arabia.\textsuperscript{64} Keeping this end in view, Al-Saud was keenly interested to enter into a secret agreement with the British Government. He planned to apply to the Porte for the governorship of El Hasa. If his request was granted he would declare himself independent at an opportune moment. If not, he would invade the province as soon as he was ready. In either case, a public appeal for British protection would be

\textsuperscript{62}Major P.Z. Cox to Sir Louis Dane (do... official), September 16, 1906, F.D.S.P. No. 434/511, November 1906, Tel. Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, October 9, 1906, F.D.S.P. No.493, November 1906.

\textsuperscript{63}Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, November 9, 1906, F.D.S.P. No.607, November 1906.

\textsuperscript{64}Political Agent, Bahrain, to Resident, Persian Gulf, November 17, 1906, F.D.S.P. No.739, March 1907.
made only after the rupture. In return, Abdul Aziz was ready to accept a treaty similar to that contracted by the trucial chiefs. The Amir's overture, which exhibited sensitivity towards England's diplomatic entanglements with Turkey convinced Cox of Riyadh's earnestness and he told Calcutta that diplomatic courtesy demanded that some reply, positive or negative, be given to the Wahabis.65

Now the politics of Arabia had assumed an interesting dimension. With the Imperial Government initiative to solicit the views of the Indian Government in respect of the policy to be pursued towards Arabia,66 a debate was initiated among the British officials. The discussion is illustrative of the trends of opinion prevailing in the Foreign Department. The incipient force of Arab nationalism had already attracted attention in official circles. The interest was specially aroused by the speculations of a French journalist, Eugene Jung, who had written of Arab nationalism manifesting itself in the form of a great Wahabi Empire, stretching from Egypt to Persia and Aden to the Gulf, and launched under the patronage

65 Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, November 24, 1906, F.D.S.P. No. 739, March 1907.

66 Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, February 1, 1907, F.D.S.P. No. 762, March 1907.
of the triple extents. Jung concluded that the creation of such a state would serve a check on the German ambition of establishing a protectorate over the Ottoman Empire.  

It would be pertinent to note here that England had consistently opposed Turkish expansion in Arabia because Ottoman ambitions in the peninsula clashed with British interests in the Gulf. Thus it is not surprising that the idea of an Arab national state, was not entirely repugnant to British opinion. This sentiment is amply reflected in an analysis by a Foreign Department Official. To quote him:

"If a great Arab Empire were on the verge of materialisation, it would very likely be to England's advantage to give the magic touch which would call it into being, provided that to do so would not disastrously affect the balance of power elsewhere, and provided that the ruler of the new Empire would undertake to regard British ambitions and desires with a sympathetic eye."  

However, R.E. Holland, the same analyst of the Foreign Department confessed that the government's policy had to be based on concrete premises rather than on abstract speculation. Truly speaking, the question of an Arab national

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67 Extract from the Muhammedan, September 17, 1906, F.D.S.P., No. 492, November 1906.

68 Note by R.E. Holland, Assistant Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, October 16, 1906, F.D.S.P. No. 434/511, November 1906.
revival did not belong to the sphere of practical politics. As Turkey was deeply interested in the peninsula because it was very vital for the Sultan's prestige as a Caliph of the Muslim world. So long as this interest remained it would be diplomatic blunder to promote the disintegration of the empire. The problem could also be viewed from the angle of the British protected maritime states whose politics was inseparable from that of Central Arabia. Thus considering these factors, the growth of Wahabi power was not a favourable development. It seems to be quite logical that a consolidated power in the interior would necessarily attempt to break through the Gulf. However, assuming the validity of this argument, it was El Hasa which offered the path of least resistance to the Wahabis. Therefore, Al-Saud made several overtures to enter into a deal with England which were equally aimed at undermining Turkey's strategic hold over the peninsula. The power whose interests were irreconcilably hostile to Wahabi aspirations was Turkey and not England. The one important argument which Cox had put forward against a negative policy in Arabia was that if Wahabi overtures were rejected they would assume a different direction. But was such an apprehension justified? England was supreme in the

69 Note by R.E. Holland, Assistant Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, January 22, 1907, F.S.D.P. No. 734/767, March 1907.
Gulf. Considering his naval weakness, no matter when Abdul Aziz over threw the Ottoman rule in Arabia, it was to the British that he must turn for protection. The foreign office could then decide upon its attitude, taking into consideration its relations with Constantinople.\textsuperscript{70}

The conclusion which crystalised from the analysis were presented to the Imperial Government. the Government of India did not offer any comment in respect of an Arab revival under the Wahabis. However, it placed on record its opinion that Al Saud would make an endeavour to clear El Hasa of the Turks at the first opportunity. Such a development would result in the stabilization of their authority. British interests on the Arab littoral required an understanding with Riyadh in case of such eventualities. In the meantime, there was no risk of alienating the Wahabis if their overtures remained unanswered, for the Wahabi Amir could not afford to antagonize the British authorities. Thus in the given situation, the best course of action would be to refuse the request for protection; at the same time, Ibn Saud could be told that the British Government wanted to maintain friendly relations with him so long as he

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
left the maritime Arab States alone. 71

It is important to note that the Indian Government could not reconcile herself fully with Cox's suggestion for entering into some deal with Al-Saud, even its cautious recommendations were considered inexpedient by O'Connor. 72 He admitted that Wahabis had consolidated their position to some extent but he did not rule out the possibility of the Turks staging come back. But it should be particularly mentioned that his opposition to England's committing herself to a pro-Wahabi orientation was influenced by the considerations in which Arabia figured only indirectly. He visualised that, before the much talked-of Arab national revival manifested itself concretely.

the chances are that the present Ottoman regime will have come to an end and be succeeded by a nationalist and popular government or that the disintegration of the component parts of the Empire will have begun. In the latter case we cannot escape our responsibility, but I should be sorry to see England enter into relations with a new Turkish regime, having previously agreed to a secret agreement with Ibn Saud for the disruption of the

71 Secret Despatch No. 28 to Secretary of State of India, April 1, 1907, F.D.S.P. No. 448, September 1907.

72 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Foreign Office, April 1, 1907, F.D.S.P. No. 448, September 1907.
O'Connor carried the day with the plea that to extend support to secessionist elements in Arabia would damage beyond repair the chances of an independent Turkey being weaned away from its pro-German orientation. Consequently, the Imperial Government instructed the Indian Government against any kind of involvement in the affairs of Arabia.

England's refusal to grant protection to the Wahabis has been dubbed as a blunder by certain Arabists on two grounds. First of all, it was argued that it was pursuing a futile policy of appeasements towards Turkey. Secondly, it failed to appreciate the sentiments of "nationalism" which were activating the Arab people under the leadership of Abdul Aziz Al Saud.

However, critics of British policy overlooked the fact that England, being the greatest imperialist power of the world at that time, could not allow the altruistic motives to

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73 Ibid.
74 Secret Despatch No.17 to the GOI, May 3, 1907, F.D.S.P. No.448, September 1907.
influence her policies. It is not correct to argue that Arab nationalism was totally lost on the British Government. Nor was O'Connor incorrect in asserting that support to the Wahabis would irretrievably push Turkey in Germany's lap. In fact, to the imperial authorities, a friendly Turkey outweighed the advantages which could accrue from an understanding with the Wahabis. Nevertheless, we have already discussed the assessment of the obtaining situation in the Peninsula in 1907 by the British Statesmen and found that they were not very confident of the Arab national revival under the aegis of the Wahabis (Riyadh). A revival on terms of amity with Turkey, which was inherently impossible, would have been disastrous for British policy in the Gulf. But short of such an eventuality there was no fundamental clash between British and Turkish objectives in Central Arabia. The Ottoman Government, being fully conscious of the fact that it would be unable to control a consolidated Arab State, pursued a "divide and rule" policy. The emergence of a unified political entity was equally dangerous for British interests on the Arab Coast.

The single danger that could be associated with the policy adopted by England in this respect lay in Abdul Aziz making a common cause with some other European power. But this was again, undoubtedly, a remote possibility as long as England Remained paramount power in the Gulf. It was in this
context, that the government of India asserted that the Wahabis could never pursue an anti-British policy. It was confidently believed that whenever they liberated Arabia from Turkey, they would be:

compelled to turn to the British Government for protection against attacks by Sea, and H.M.G. will be in a position, if they consider it to be to their advantage ... to stretch out a hand which Bin Saood will be compelled in his own interest, to take. 76

Thus we can say that the Wahabis would be dependent upon England diplomatically and strategically for a considerable time to come. In spite of rejection of the Wahabis overture, there can be little doubt that Abdul Aziz's success would have been impossible but for British support for the integrity of Kuwait. As we know that England was keenly interested in the independence of Kuwait and it was only through an anti-Ottoman alliance with Mubarak that the Al Saud found the means to rehabilitate themselves. Thus while upholding the integrity of Kuwait, England supported the Wahabis. Thus we can say that in some way the British Government contributed significantly to the contemporary Wahabi revival.

By the end of 1906, Al-Saud was able to establish his

76 Secret Despatch No.28 to Secretary of State of India, April 1, 1907, F.D.S.P. No.448, September 1907.
hegemony, to great extent, over Central Arabia. But before he could devote himself to consolidation and organisational work, there were insurrections in many parts of Ibn Saud's domirion. The discontented tribes and the jealousy ridden neighbours of Ibn Saud were not willing to accept his supremacy in the politics of Arabia. The tribes revolted, first in the north and then in the south. Ibn Saud had to devote his resources to fight insurgents from 1907 to 1911. The year 1909 was the turning point in the history of these revolts. In the first period, Ibn Saud directed his forces against the northern rebels and in the second he dealt with the southern insurgents. In 1909, his future rival, Sharif Husayn bin Ali, began to contribute his own share of trouble. Apart from the Sharif, the Ottomans, the Rashids of Hail, the tribes of Mutayr and the Ajman also backed the insurgents and thus contributed to the uneasiness of Ibn Saud. It is also believed that Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait also encouraged the rebels indirectly in order to keep balance of power in the region in his favour. The details of rebellions and its suppression by Ibn Saud is beyond the scope of the study. So we will briefly outline the reason for the tribal revolts


78 Iqbal, n.23, p.20.
Apparently, the aim of the tribes in joining Ibn Saud was to lay their hands on the booty of the war and not to help him in expanding his political power. Discipline in fighting was a temporary phase of the tribal pattern of life. Once the aim was achieved, the tribes reverted to their age-old freedom. They would look upon discipline and an organised form of government as an intolerable constraint and an offense against their traditional liberty. It seems that the tribes were labouring under a misunderstanding to which Ibn Saud also made his contribution. While keeping himself at the helm of affairs, he had allowed tribal loyalties to stay intact. But there could be no two supreme authorities in the same state.

While Ibn Saud was busy in suppressing the revolts with considerable degree of success in his dominion, an entirely new situation had arisen in the capital of the disintegrating Empire of the Ottomans. With the emergence of Young Turks in 1908, Sultan Abdul Hamid was no longer on the scene. The Committee of Union and Progress, was seriously concerned with the maintenance of the integrity of the Empire. For this

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Ibid., p.44.
purpose, their main plank, at least initially, was the introduction of reforms in the Arab provinces. Having in mind the earlier secessions of the Balkan territories, the Committee was determined to hold together the Arabian possession. In particular, it would not like the separation of the Hijaz which formed the bed-rock of the Ottoman prestige. As for the Qasim, an area in Central Arabia, they intended to recapture it if they could. Thus the committee appointed Husyan bin Ali to the Sharifate of Mecca in 1908. Soon afterwards, the Sharifian forces crossed into Najd and arrested Saad, brother of Ibn Saud. This compelled Ibn Saud to accept the terms conveyed to the Sharif by the Ottomans. Ibn Saud agreed to pay 6,000 Majidis annually and accepted nominally the Ottoman supremacy over the Qasim. He also ransomed his brother Saad.

Ibn Saud was widely criticized by his people for this compromise. But in fact, he wanted to buy time with the signing of this accord. We may recall here that he had signed such pacts in the past with the Ottomans and the Rashidis and they had served his political interests well.


81 Ibid., p.13.
The Conquest of El-Hasa

Having overcome all his domestic difficulties by 1911, he could freely turn to the work of re-organisation and consolidation. The period after 1911 and before the annexation of Hasa was one in which Ibn Saud, undoubtedly, showed capacity for constructive work. He organised the Ikhwan movement which was a religious-cum-economic movement with underlying military, political and material aims. Starting with the improvement of the social life of the nomads and thereby establishing a stable central government, Ibn Saud was determined to make Islam the foundation of his plan.\(^{82}\) Ikhwanaism, in short, was Ibn Saud’s first step towards modernising Arabia and founding the Saudi Arabian state on the basis of teachings of Islam.

Armed with this new weapon Ibn Saud now thought in terms of territorial conquest in order to achieve unification of Arabia. For this he had his plans ready for sometime. The Ottoman province of El Hasa was the first to become the target of his policy of reconquest for economic, strategic as well as political considerations. Ibn Saud, however, was looking for strong reason to begin with. Philby remarked that it was the Ottomans who provoked the Al-Saud. Philby says, "They

\(^{82}\) Iqbal, n.23, p.48.
regarded him as an enemy, unamenable to reason or other inducements; and they did not believe in leaving enemies alone to become strong."

Thus by the beginning of 1913, they had spread a wide net of intrigue and unrest on the fringes of 'Wahabi Arabia'. He preferred to recapture this vast and fertile territory of Arabia and not the Hijaz where the Sharif was becoming dangerous to Najdi interests. In the first instance he ignored Sharif who was the principal factor in the Ottoman efforts to keep the desert in ferment. Ibn Saud also by-passed the Shammar\textsuperscript{84} which was always liable to form a bridge head for the Ottoman political system, or at least, for an advance into the Qasim (temporarily lost after the little peace with the Sharif). He might have felt Ibn Saud had desired to take El Hasa. In this regard he made many overtures to the British for British support but in vain. The British authorities turned down his request for it was likely to adversely affect Anglo-Ottoman relations. Ibn Saud again broached this vital issue for him with Captain Shakespeare, who was on unofficial visit. The captain repeated the same

\textsuperscript{83} Philby, n.1, p.250.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
position that the British were not interested in the interior (i.e., Najd) and that they would stick to the policy of 'non-intervention'.

Ibn Saud selected an opportune moment for striking at the Ottomans. It was a time when they were in great difficulty. Political decline was looming large over the decimated Empire. The upsurge of the Christians and the Arabs and the territorial interests of the Western powers threatened to destroy it. Yet Ibn Saud was very cautious in his move. He again approached the British and fortunately for him, this time British Government gave him assurance of its neutrality.

This change in the British policy was influenced by two considerations. The British thought, first of all, that occupation of Al-Hasa by Ibn Saud would not be as dangerous as the continued Ottoman control of the Arabian coasts. Secondly, the British had begun to count the Ottoman power as an opponent in international politics. Hence inwardly, they favoured any anti-Ottoman developments in eastern Arabia,

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85 Troeller, n.80, p.30

86 Ibid.
although their conduct after the conquest of El Hasa surprised Ibn Saud. The British attitude in all probability, would have been different, had they known the fact that El Hasa concealed under its surface vast oil reserves.

Ibn Saud, after securing the British neutrality, embarked upon the conquest. He suddenly took the historical fortress of al-Kut, then Hufuf. Soon the ports of Qatif and Uqayr, port city of Hasa also capitulated without much difficulty. Thus in less than a month, Ibn Saud had cleared eastern Arabia of the Ottomans and won a victory against a big power. Had he made any delay in annexing El Hasa, Ibn Saud would have endangered his own freedom, for there can be little doubt that eighteen months later the British would have occupied it to complete their control of the western littoral of the Arabian Gulf.

Thus Ottomans were now forced to reconcile with the fait accompli. They concluded agreement with Ibn Saud on 1913 by which they formally recognised the rights of Ibn Saud as a ruler and Hasa as an integral part of his state. They also promised him by promising assistance in money and weapons. In

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Iqbal, n.23, p.55.
turn, Ibn Saud accepted the Ottoman suzerainty, which for all intents and purposes, was harmless and ineffective. He was fully conscious that the Ottoman government would be unable to enforce the relevant clause, the inclusion of which was perhaps meant to satisfy their vanity.

Thus with the conclusion of 1913 agreement between the Ottomans and Ibn Saud, his position became supreme in the region. The conquest enhanced his importance and increased his political standing in Arabian affairs. The termination of the Ottoman rule in El Hasa impressed the minds of the insurgent tribes. The tribes now tended to accept his indisputable leadership. The British also began to consider him a partner in the politics of the Arabian Gulf. The dramatic capture of El Hasa not only placed Ibn Saud in the field of international politics, but it also increased his revenue from the customs on the coasts as it gave him two ports besides wide access to the sea. These revenues, however, stood no comparison with the vast income of the future that would accrue to the Saudi Government on account of the oil royalties. Hasa played very important role in inevitable changing the destiny of the whole country and its people.

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88 Troeller, n.80, p.33.