Chapter IV

Kuwait: Anglo-Ottoman Relations 1890-1914
The tiny principality of Kuwait is located towards the western head of the Persian/Arabian Gulf in the form of a deep wedge between Iraq and the Saudi Arabian province of Al-Hassa. It shot into prominence and became the main focus of international diplomacy, in the period under study, mainly because it was regarded as the most feasible terminus for a railway system linking the eastern Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf. The status of Kuwait remained a subject of controversy throughout the period under study between the Ottoman and the British mainly because the Ottomans were not able to assert their position effectively in the Gulf against the British which was able to steadily increase its hold in the Gulf for many reasons analysed in the following pages. The study has been divided into three phases.

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In the first phase (1896-1899), an attempt will be made to examine the dynamics of various forces which gave rise to the 'Kuwait question'. In this phase Kuwait within short span of three years became the main focus of the Ottoman-Anglo rivalry. In fact, as early as 1890s the status of Kuwait was not an important issue. But the situation was to change soon radically. Within 1896-1899, Kuwait developed from a backwater dependency of the Porte into a key area of British
influence in the Gulf and an area with considerable pretensions to autonomy if not to independence.¹

**Bloody Coup by Mubarak**

Though Kuwait enjoyed a *de facto* independence since its birth early in the 18th century, its chiefs acknowledged at different periods the nominal suzerainty of the Ottomans or the Wahhabi Imams of Riyadh. However, the expedition of 1871 to Najd brought Kuwait directly within the orbit of the Ottoman influence.²

In 1892 Mohammed bin Sabah succeeded to the chieftainship of the principality. The new ruler was an incompetent person and consequently affairs of the state gradually drifted into the hands of his shrewd brother-in-law, one Yusuf bin Abdullah Al-Ibrahim, a Turcophil bent upon a policy of Ottomanizing the principality. In Mohammed's half-brother, Mubarak, the patriotic party in Kuwait found a leader of outstanding ability and far-reaching ambitions. In May 1896 Mubarak assassinated the ruling chief and seized power for himself.³


²Ibid.

The new interest of the British was initiated by a memorandum by Stavrides, legal counselor to the British Embassy in Constantinople (modern Istanbul). Reporting that in his view Kuwait was for all practical purposes independent, Stavrides noted that the officials of Sultan Abdul Hamid's palace were convinced that the murder was instigated by the British Resident in the Gulf\(^4\) because of his refusal to join a pan-Arab alliance against Turkey in which other participants were to be Amir Mohammed bin Rashid of Hail, Jasim bin Thani of Qatar, and the Bahrain chief.\(^5\) The basis of this allegation is that Mubarak met the Resident just before the bloody coup. The Resident at Bushire categorically refuted the charge levied against him. At the moment it is difficult to establish the truth because of non-access to the Ottoman documents. The suspicions entertained at Porte were more symptomatic of the growing bitterness that had come to distinguish relations between England and Turkey than the actual situation in the Gulf.

\(^4\) Memorandum dated June 30, 1896, Home 612/96. The murder is discussed in Dickson, n.4, p.136; Ameen Rihani, Around the Coasts of Arabia (London, 1930), pp.246-8.

\(^5\) Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI, 30 October 1896, F.D.S.P. No.186, November 1896.
Controversy Over Kuwait's Uncertain Status

In the meantime, further trouble was caused by the pirating of an Indian ship, the Haripasa, in the Shattel-Arab. Wilson (Resident in the Gulf) and Colonel E. Mockler, Resident in Baghdad (1891-97), were both convinced that the attack had been made by a joint Kuwait-Mohammara force and suggested to the Ambassador Sir Philip Currie in Constantinople that the Porte be addressed on the question of retribution. Currie drew Salisbury's (Foreign Secretary of England) attention to the wider implications of the question. He conceded that the Consul's proposal would affix responsibility for the maintenance of order in the Gulf on a civilized authority. Yet it also involved the recognition of the Ottoman suzerainty over Mubarak who was "an independent potentate and only nominally subject to the Sultan". The question was then

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6 Wilson to Currie, November 7, 1896, Home 1683/97; Currie to Salisbury, November 24, 1896, Home 930/96, Also see in Ravinder Kumar, India and the Persian Gulf Region 1858-1907 (Bombay, 1965), p.138.

7 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, November 24, 1896, F.D.S.P. No.60, April 1897.

8 Ibid.
referred to the Government of India.9 The incident itself was not so significant, but it shows an important division of opinion; Wilson would not have made this suggestion had he thought of Kuwait otherwise than under the control of the Porte. Confusion over the "Status of Kuwait" was now only beginning.

A discussion was initiated between the Imperial and Indian authorities to form a definite opinion about Kuwait's position vis-a-vis the Ottoman Empire. However, the Foreign Department was not forthright to come out with specific response over the status of Kuwait.

Currie, meanwhile, had got the possession of intelligence reports which should have led to a reconsideration of his views regarding the independence of the principality.10 After the consolidation of Ottoman influence over Arabia in 1871 every chief of Kuwait had, as a matter of prudence, sought support for his succession by inducing the Porte to appoint him Qaimam over the territory. Mubarak, being usurper of the power, was feeling more nervous and vulnerable. He anticipated that two sons of his predecessor might approach.

9 Secret Despatch No.54 to Government of India, December 18, 1896, F.D.S.P. No.57, April 1897.

10 Memorandum on Kuwait by HM's Counsul, Basra, F.D.S.P., No.108, May 1897.
the Ottomans for revenge. Consequently, he was quick to apply to Constantinople through Basra for recognition of his succession. However, Hamdi Pasha, the Governor General of the Vilayet, refused to extend his good offices to the fratricide. Instead, he recommended to Constantinople that the opportunity be exploited to bring Kuwait directly under Ottoman rule. Luckily for Mubarak, Hamdi Pasha was replaced at this crucial juncture by one Mohsin Pasha. He successfully won over the new Governor-General through bribes and was thus able to secure confirmation of his position at Turkish hands.11 In communicating these details to Currie the Consul at Basra stated that the acceptance by Mubarak "of an appointment from the Porte as Qaimmakam precludes the possibility of any foreign power recognizing under the present conditions his independence."12

In order to understand Salisbury's attitude towards Kuwait, it is essential to consider the volte face executed by the foreign office in respect of its Near East policy in the 1890s. It is quite well known that England supported the integrity of the Ottoman Empire in order to keep the routes to India under a power over whom a commanding influence could be

11 Ibid. Also see Kumar, n.6, p.139.

12 Ibid.
exercised; this policy rested on British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. But the rapprochement between France and Russia after the fall of Bismark put an end to British predominance in the Mediterranean. Salisbury was, therefore, obliged to carry out a reappraisal of the policy he had inherited from Palmerston. He adapted himself to the new power equilibrium without much difficulty since in Egypt, England had acquired a position from which the approaches to India could be safeguarded.\(^{13}\) The Franco-Russian alliance in 1895 had altered the situation and upset the power equilibrium so much so that the British Foreign Minister was propounding his great, albeit abortive, scheme for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.\(^{14}\)

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 imparted a new dimension to the question. In 1871, a select committee of the Commons was appointed to look into the question of finding an alternative route to the French-built canal. The Committee recommended the construction of a railway-line from Alexandretta to Kuwait to enhance trade with Mesopotamia and Mesopotamia and Mesopotamia.


to block Russia’s southward advance towards the Gulf and India. The scheme, however, could not materialize for being commercially unviable, as a state guarantee could not be given.\footnote{Report from the Select Committee on Euphrates Valley Railway, Parliamentary Paper No. 386 of 1871. Also see, H.L. Hoskins, \textit{British Route to India} (Philadelphia, 1928), p. 428.}

\textbf{Mubarak’s Overture for British Protection}

Kuwait being strategically located that it was manifestly against British interests to give \textit{de jure} recognition to the tenuous ties which existed between the principality and the Porte. The inexpediency of such a step became all the more patent when Mubarak approached the British Consul at Basra for British protection.\footnote{Sir W. Lee-Warner, Secretary, Secret and Political Department, \textit{India Office}, to Sir W. J. Cunningham (demi-official), April 15, 1897, F.D.S.P. No. 101/115, May 1897.} However, Salisbury thought that in view of possible international complications a protectorate would be difficult to assume. Neither Russia nor Germany would acquiesce in such a move. But Mubarak’s overture was not outrightly rejected. Instead, Salisbury recommended that Mubarak could be safely promised British good offices in
resisting Ottoman encroachments on his independence.\textsuperscript{17} Thus it is quite clear how the British were trying to manoeuvre the situation in their favour by exploiting the "discontentment" of an Arab chief against the Ottomans.

In spite of initial hesitation on the part of Salisbury to set up a protectorate over Kuwait for fear of diplomatic problems with other powers, certain developments in the Middle East enlivened his interest in the region. The opening of Suez Canal resulted in England's gradual loss of interest in the Mesopotamian route to India. Sir William White, the British Ambassdor at Constantinople examined the issue of communications in Asia Minor in 1887.\textsuperscript{18} He recommended two important suggestions in this regard. First, it was in British interest that there should be rail communications in Asiatic Turkey; secondly he favoured that British enterprise should be associated with railway construction in the region, and that railways should not be allowed to fall into the hands of Russia.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Kumar, n.6, p.141.

\textsuperscript{19} Memorandum by Sir William White entitled: "Remarks applying to Different British schemes for construction of the Turkish Railway in Asia", July 25, 1887.
Kapnist's Scheme for Railway

It was in this perspective the Foreign Office viewed with concern the proposal of Count Vladimir Kapnist, a Russian, to the Ottoman Government for constructing a railway from the Syrian Port to Kuwait on the Persian Gulf. It was believed that his application would be given sympathetic and favourable consideration at Turkish hands for Kapnist had good contacts in Istanbul. Apart from other proposals, the scheme envisaged a terminal port from Tripoli to Kuwait. The Kapnist scheme being a very ambitious project involving the estimated outlay of £30 million ultimately could not materialise. Now Salisbury became convinced that it was absolutely necessary to acquire a predominant influence over Kuwait with a view to thwarting any design for linking the Mediterranean with the Gulf if found contrary to her interests in Mesopotamia. However, Sir Nicholas O'Connor, successor

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20HM's Charge d'Affaires, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, August 1, 1898, F.D.S.P. No.50, May 1899.

21Petition presented by Count Kapanist to the Ottoman Government, F.D.S.P. No.51, May 1899.

22Memorandum on Kapnist Scheme by General Sir James Ardagh, November 29, 1898, F.D.S.P. No.61, May 1899.

23Foreign Office to India Office, December 5, 1898, F.D.S.P. No.677, March 1899, Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, December 24, 1898, F.D.S.P. No.582, March 1899.
of Currie, at Constantinople, advised in a dispatch to Salisbury to proceed cautiously about converting Kuwait into British protectorate. He drew the attention of Salisbury towards the fact though the question of Turkish sovereignty over Kuwait had never been specially discussed, England had by implication recognized the Sultan’s jurisdiction over the Arab littoral as far east as Qatif in more than one communication addressed to the Ottoman government concerning Gulf affairs. He felt that an abrupt volte face would therefore be rather not expedient. To take Kuwait outright under protection would be considered little short of a hostile act by Turkey, and in any case, it would be sure to produce very serious diplomatic complications not only with this country but probably also with Russia.24

Anglo-Kuwait Bond of 1899

However, the Ottoman Government’s move to formally grant the concession to Kapnist on 30 December 1898 for which he had applied earlier25 imparted a new urgency to the situation.

24HM’s Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, December 22, 1898, F.D.S.P. No.658, March 1899.

25Tel.HM’s Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, December 30, 1898, F.D.S.P. No.65, March 1899.
Consequently, Salisbury became convert to the idea of an agreement with Kuwait early in January 1899. In order to guard against "any Russian territorial claims which may possibly result from Kapnist's railway concessions", Salisbury wanted to conclude a non-alienation bond with Mubarak but at the earliest, although he opposed any declaration of a protectorate at the moment. The assignment was given to Lee-Warner on January 4 by Sanderson.  

Lord Curzon found it difficult to distinguish such a bond from the protectorate which Salisbury, at least at the moment, was not inclined to assume. According to Curzon, negotiations would, in the end, result in the protection over Kuwait. There was also disagreement between the Home and the British Indian authorities concerning the responsibilities (protection of Kuwait against any aggression and thus financial burden) accruing from any such agreement.

26 SSI telegram to Viceroy, January 6, 1899, ibid.


29 Hamilton Private note to Salisbury, January 10, 1899, Salisbury MSS. (Christ Church Oxford), Hamilton-Salisbury Correspondence file, see B.C.Busch, Britain and the Persian

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Meade, the Resident, badly needed in Muscat was, therefore, asked to conclude the agreement on the Muscat model unless he was satisfied that an attack was imminent upon Kuwait or that Mubarak’s position on the throne was unstable. Meade and Mubarak concluded the bond on January 23, 1899. The Shaikh, for a consideration of Rs.15,000 (£1,000), a figure set at Meade’s option, bound "himself, his heirs and successors not to cede, sell, lease, mortgage, or give for occupation or for any other purpose any portion of his territory to the government or subjects of any other power without the previous consent of Her Majesty’s Government for these purposes." One other clause had been added to the model: "Mubarak... of his own free will and desire does hereby pledge and bind himself, his heirs and successors not to receive the Agent or Representative of any Power or Government at Koweit, or at any other place within the limits of his territory, without the previous sanction of Her Majesty’s Government." The addition was, undoubtedly, of obvious importance and Meade did not fail to realise this


30 Viceroy telegram to SSI, January 18, 1899, FI 156/99.

31 Aitchison; I, No.100 the Clauses are used here in inverse order.
which is quite evident from his dispatch to the Indian authorities.\textsuperscript{32}

**Turkish Assertion of Its Suzerainty**

It is quite obvious that agreement with Mubarak had placed Indian interests on a secure and firm footing. But it was natural that Turkey would not easily allow the British to increase her sphere of influence in the Gulf at her expense. The reappointment of Hamdi Pasha as Governor-General of Basra caused concern among the British authorities for he was believed to be an advocate of a 'forward policy' in respect of Kuwait.\textsuperscript{33} The Government of India viewed the appointment as a signal of change for the worse in the Ottoman policy in the Gulf and, therefore, urged the Foreign Office to warn Abdul Hamid of the responsibilities which England had of late acquired vis-a-vis Kuwait.\textsuperscript{34} O'Connor too was not happy with

\textsuperscript{32}Meade to FSI, January 30, 1899, FI 319/99. Mubarak also asked, and was given, a pledged in writing from Meade that the Shaikh's position in the Fao date lands would be supported; the Shaikh clearly had his own fears about Turkish reprisals.

\textsuperscript{33}HM's Consul, Basra, to HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, April 22, 1899, F.D.S.P. No.110, June 1899.

\textsuperscript{34}Secret Despatch No.101 to Secretary of State for India, June 1, 1899, F.D.S.P. No.116, June 1899.
this development.\textsuperscript{35} Once again differences between O’Connor and the Indian authorities came out on the surface that how to deal with the Porte on the issue of Kuwait.\textsuperscript{36} However, before Salisbury could sort out the differences between them an interesting development took place. Hamdi Pasha, subtly playing on British fears, told the Wratislaw, British Consul at Basra, that Abdul Hamid had, of late, been considerably exercised over reports of English activity in Kuwait. He stated that the Sultan’s anxiety was being skillfully exploited by the European ambassadors to the prejudice of Anglo-Turkish relations. He suggested that the issue could be resolved amicably by a friendly discussion between O’Connor and the authorities at Constantinople. Turkey knew how essential it was for England that no foreign power should gain access to Kuwait. An arrangement safeguarding British interests in the principality could easily be negotiated at Constantinople.\textsuperscript{37} O’Connor noted Hamdi Pasha’s overtures

\textsuperscript{35}HM’s Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, May 29, 1899, F.D.S.P. No.100, June 1899.

\textsuperscript{36}India Office to Foreign Office, June 7, 1899, F.D.S.P. No.102, June 1899.

\textsuperscript{37}Tel. H.M.’s Consul, Basra, to HM’s Ambassador, Constantinople, 4 June 1899, F.D.S.P. No.115, November 1899, HMS’s Consul, Basra, to HM’s Ambassador, Constantinople, 3 June 1899, F.D.S.P. No.129, November 1899.
with satisfaction. The Ambassador recommended for an understanding with Turkey. He pleaded that an inflexible stand would bring the discussion to a deadlock at once and make the Sultan appeal to the other ambassadors for guidance as to his line of action, and leave the question, as far as we are concerned, much in its present condition.

The ambassador's counseling for adopting a conciliatory attitude towards Turkey was not favourably received at the India office. India Office viewed that such an understanding with Turkey would be contradictory to the letter and spirit of the Convention. Moreover, it would also be diametrically opposite to the assumption that Kuwait was independent of Turkey. Turkey set the ball once again rolling. Wratislaw from Basra soon sent reports of troop concentration in the Vilayet and the intention of the military party to forcibly occupy the principality of Kuwait. When

38 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Office, 6 June 1899, F.D.S.P. No.114, November 1899.

39 Ibid.

40 India Office to Foreign Office, 18 July 1899, F.D.S.P. No.126, November 1899.

41 Tel. Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 2 September 1899, F.D.S.P. No.140, November 1899; Tel. HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Viceroy, 8 September 1899, F.D.S.P. No.146, November 1899.
Wratislaw warned Hamdi Pasha that Her Majesty's Government would not view with indifference any hostile action against Kuwait, the Pasha ostensibly washed his hands off the entire affair. He asserted that the situation was completely out of his control and wholly in the hands of the military faction. Yet as a possible way out he again hinted the resolution of the problem through diplomatic channel. It is amply evident from the above discussion that the military manoeuvring in Basra was mainly aimed at putting pressure upon England to arrive at some settlement regarding Kuwait. But perhaps Abdul Hamid miscalculated British determination to preserve her hold over it which was so vital for British interests. A naval squadron was rushed to the Gulf to prevent occupation of Kuwait by the Ottoman authorities. Simultaneously, Salisbury instructed the British Ambassador to warn the Turkish Government against making a move in the direction of Kuwait. England, on her part, he was to warn the Porte, had no hostile designs on the principality. However, she would not countenance with nefarious design by any other power too in view of the friendly relations obtaining between

42 Tel. HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Viceroy, 11 September 1899, F.D.S.P. No.146, November 1899.

43 Tel. Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 9 September 1899, F.D.S.P. No.140.
the government and Mubarak. O'Connor at Constantinople immediately drew attention of Tewfik Pasha, the Ottoman Foreign Minister, towards the "preponderant interests" of England in the Gulf and also communicated the warning held out by Salisbury. Interestingly, the Pasha avoided any comment on the "preponderant interests" in the Gulf as well as vexed question of Anglo-Kuwait relations. But it is important to note that he remarked towards the end of interview that when Hamdi Pasha had advocated military occupation of the principality in 1897, the Sultan had refused his permission saying that "it was not worth the risk nor the expense." Soon afterwards a Turkish diplomat named Anthopoulous Pasha went to the British Embassy with a personal message from the Sultan. He reiterated the similar sentiments as expressed by Hamdi Pasha earlier to Wratislaw. He also added that the Sultan was aware of the important interests of England in the Gulf. He assured O'Connor that His Majesty could take all necessary steps including the use of force if British

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44 Tel. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, 6 September 1899, F.D.S.P. No.171, November 1899.

45 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 13 September 1899, F.D.S.P. No.194, November 1899.

46 Ibid.
interests were threatened by another Power.\textsuperscript{47}

The Ambassador repeated to Anthopoulous Pasha what he had told the Foreign Minister earlier. With the rejection of Abdul Hamid's overture, the die was cast. Prodded on by the India office, Salisbury had made it amply clear to the Ottoman authorities that he would not accord her any rights over Kuwait. In contrast to the British attitude the Sultan's stand on the problem was characterized by a willingness to accommodate England in so far as her essential interests were concerned. In a nutshell, he was prepared to safeguard British interests in Kuwait in return for the recognition of her pretension of suzerainty over the principality.\textsuperscript{48} Thus, England's special position in Kuwait, as embodied in the Secret Convention of 1899, placed in her hands a powerful lever for the protection of her political, commercial, and strategic interests in the region. The Convention primarily aimed to counter Russian design, proved equally effective when the British interests in Asiatic Turkey were threatened by Germany's steady growing influence.

\textsuperscript{47}HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 13 September 1899, F.D.S.P. No.135, November 1899.

\textsuperscript{48} Kumar, n.6, p.149.
This phase covering 1899-1905 is marked by sharpening of rivalry among Great Powers as well as Ottoman attempts to assert 'nominal suzerainty' in Kuwait in many ways. We shall make an attempt to study this period under the following head.

1899 Irade and Its Repercussions

The irade (Firman) of 1899 for the construction of 'Baghdad Railway' stands out as an important landmark in the history of the Middle East. Apart from its bearing on British imperial policy, it constituted an active orientation in German policy towards Turkey, a process which had been initiated as early as 1888. The concession also led to a deep antagonism between Germany and Russia.

Indeed, it was the emergence of Kaiser William in Germany in 1888 which imparted a new dimension to the Ottoman-German relationship. The new Emperor shared the views of the colonial party in his country, which saw in the Ottoman Empire a field for penetration by German industrial enterprise. He paid a courtesy visit to Constantinople in 1889 to cultivate
good relations with Abdul Hamid.\(^49\)

This marked shift in German policy along with the opening of a European line stimulated railway construction in Turkey. Towards the end of 1889 Abdul Hamid granted a concession to two German financiers, Herr Kaula of the Württembergische Bank and Dr. George Siemens, Director of the Deutsche Bank, for building a railway from Istanbul to Ankara.\(^50\) Shortly an Anatolian Railway Company was formed by the Germans and it completed the line till Konia by 1892. This improved land communications between Germany and Asiatic Turkey increased the volume of trade substantially.\(^51\) However, Germany had more ambitious and ulterior design in respect of Turkey. It aimed at securing monopoly over the Turkish hinterland as a field of exploitation for growing German industry. There was vociferous demand from the bodies like the Pan-German League, representing commercial interests, for a railroad that would link the Bosphorous with the Gulf.\(^52\)


\(^{50}\) Ibid, pp. 632-4.


But it was second pilgrimage of Kaiser William in 1898 to the Ottoman capital which gave needed impetus to the Ottoman-German relationship. The Emperor was very keen to realize the project of a railway from Istanbul to the Gulf. Siemens, now President of the Anatolian Railway, soon revived the scheme with the Ottoman authorities.

The Anatolian Company was awarded, in principle, the right to construct a railway from Konia to Baghdad through an Irade issued on 25 November 1899. This was followed by an agreement between Siemens and Zihni Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of Commerce. It was agreed that the Anatolian company would construct the extension to Baghdad in a maximum period of eight years on conditions to be determined by an agreement between the contracting parties. Further, the company would submit a draft convention to the Ottoman government after completion of the necessary survey work. The question of a state guarantee on the capital employed in the project would be decided after completion of surveys taking into consideration other conditions.

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53 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 30 November 1899, F.D.S.P. No.202, October 1900.

54 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 27 December 1899, F.D.S.P. No.207, October 1900.
Response of Other Nations

The German Press hailed the issue of the irade as an important achievement from the commercial point of view. Similar sentiments were expressed in England. The Times set the tone by stating that there was "no power in whose hands Englishmen would more gladly see the enterprise fall". It wrote that it would be "gratifying" if a satisfactory arrangement was worked out between England and Germany concerning Asia Minor. O'Connor also held the similar view. He was all for cooperation between the two countries in respect of the project. He felt that cooperation in this field would be to the advantage of British trade and political influence. Salisbury, in fact, since 1888, welcomed the German involvement in Turkey as a counterpoise to growing Russian influence over Abdul Hamid. It was believed that

55 Despatch from Berlin Correspondent, Times (London), 30 November 1899; also see HM's Ambassador, Berlin, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 12 January 1900, F.D.S.P. No.221, October 1900.

56 Times (London), 30 November 1899.

57 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 9 November 1899, F.D.S.P. No.175, October 1900.

Russian predominance over Asiatic Turkey would be more disastrous commercially and strategically for England. Moreover, England had a special reason in keeping Germany in good humour in view of impending war in South Africa in 1899. The encouragement given by the English Statesman for the Baghdad Railway project during the visit of William Kaiser to England might have also been motivated to create a rift between St.Petersburg and Berlin.59

Let us examine the Russian reaction over the issue of the irade. It caused, not unsurprisingly, the most serious concern at St.Petersburg. Russian papers regarded it as a confirmation of their suspicion that a secret agreement had been reached between England and Germany on the eve of the Transvaal War whereby the former was to have a free hand in Africa and the latter in Asia Minor.60 It was also believed that the railway would be extended through southern Persia to Baluchistan, thus placing a permanent obstacle in the way of Russian access to the Gulf. Most important of all, the scheme presented an incipient threat to the ambitious programme of industrialization upon which Russia had embarked in the 1890s


60 Times, 1 December 1899.
under the direction of Count Witte. At the turn of the century, a substantial share of Russian trade flowed through the straits, which made dominance over the region a matter of life and death for St. Petersburg. Moreover, the stabilization of Asiatic Turkey which would result from the construction of the line was diametrically opposite to the Russian policy of having a weak southern neighbour. Germany being fully aware of the vital interests of Russia involved in Turkey, made an unsuccessful attempt to assuage her feelings in this respect. Russian Ambassador at Istanbul soon presented a proposal known as "moral compensation" to the Ottoman authorities to safeguard its interests in Turkey.

Tewfik Pasha revealed to O'Connor that Abdul Hamid would be unable to resist the Russian demands. The Russian

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62 Secret Despatch No. 27 to Secretary of State for India, 4 February 1904, F.D.S.P. No. 20, March 1904.

63 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1 March 1900, F.D.S.P. No. 239, October 1900.

64 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1 March 1900, F.D.S.P. No. 239, October 1900.
Ambassador compelled Abdul Hamid to grant concessions regarding the Black Sea, which was similar to that it obtained from Persia earlier in respect of her northern provinces and aimed at creating a safety zone immediately to the south of Russia's frontier in Asia.

In the face of severe opposition from Russia, Germany naturally looked for cooperation to other nations for the successful execution of the Baghdad Railway project. The reasons are not far to seek. It was to note raising of necessary capital easier and blunt the edge of Russian hostility. Siemens was fully conscious of the political implications of the issue and hence was interested to make the project as international as possible. He made an unsuccessful attempt to solicit cooperation of the British owned Sunyrua-Aidin Railway company. The English financiers rejected his overtures on the ground that the terms offered to them did not involve "financial and administrative cooperation upon fair and equal terms". Thus Siemens, being

65 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 14 February and 22 March 1900, FDSP Nos.235 and 247, October 1900.

66 Memorandum on Baghdad Railway by Committee of Imperial Defence, 26 January 1905, F.D.S.P. No.143, January 1906.

67 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 27 December 1899, F.D.SP. No.208, 1900.
disappointed by this rebuff, made an overture to France.

**Prelude to the Anglo-German Understanding Over Baghdad Railway**

Having secured the concession for the construction of Baghdad Railway, a survey commission soon began its exercise in right earnest. The Commission, comprising Stemrich, the Consul-General at Baghdad, and Von Kapp, Chief Engineer of the Anatolian Railway company arrived at Basra early in 1900.68 The preliminary result of the survey was not encouraging for the project did not seem to be very sound commercially. Moreover, it would be extremely difficult, rather impossible, to execute the project unless guaranteed financially by the Ottoman Government. But what aroused the British concern most was the opinion of the survey party that Kuwait as a terminus would be absolutely essential.69 Wratislaw, the British consul at Basra, noted in his Despatch that Stemrich had revealed that "the line would not pay unless they got an outlet to the sea at Kowait, and they mean to arrange for it with the Sultan without reference to the Sheikh, leaving His

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68HM’s Consul, Basra, to HM’s Ambassador, Constantinople, 13 January 1900, F.D.S.P. No.230, October 1900.

69Resident, Persian Gulf, to Secretary, Foreign Department, GOI (demi-official), 15 January 1900, F.D.S.P. No.175/281, October 1901.

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Imperial Majesty to settle with Mubarak as he best can." 70

This Despatch alarmed Indian authorities. Curzon immediately wired to the India office noting the grave implications of the German move. 71 He favoured to impress upon Berlin the nature of English relations with the principality. O'Connor again counselled caution by pointing out that precipitation of the Kuwait issue might prove injurious to British interests. 72

O'Connor, soon afterwards, sought an interview with Tevfik Pasha and broached the status of Kuwait. He pointed out that although England was disinclined to disturb the status quo along the Arab littoral, she would not acquiesce in any arrangement which gave another European power special rights and privileges in Kuwait. The Ottoman Foreign Minister did not react beyond taking note of O'Connor's

70 Ibid.

71 Tel. Viceroy to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, 23 January 1900, F.D.S.P. No.229, October 1900; and also see Tel. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, 19 January 1900, F.D.S.P. No.213, October 1900.

72 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 22 January 1900, F.D.S.P. No.219, October 1900.
observations. However, British Ambassador bluntly told Baron Von Marschal, his German counterpart, that England had a non-alienation bond with Kuwait and consequently, Mubarak could not lease his territory to another power without British consent. But he added that Her Majesty's Government was nevertheless, in favour of cooperation with Germany on "fair terms" in the venture. In fact, England had got a strong bargaining chip in Kuwait due to 1899 convention and wanted to extract maximum benefits in the game of imperialism. O'Connor said that "it is of supreme importance that we should hold the Sheikh of Koweit well in hand." 

O'Connor's statement alarmed Berlin. The German Chancellor, Count Bulow, therefore assured Sir Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador at Berlin, that England would be taken into confidence whenever a decision was taken to extend the Anatolian Railway to the Gulf. This assurance set the framework for the diplomacy of the Baghdad Railway.

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73 HM's Ambassador, Constantinople, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 10 April 1900, F.D.S.P. No.252, October 1900.

74 Ibid.

75 HM's Ambassador, Berlin, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 15 June 1900, F.D.S.P. No.275, October 1900.
The Porte's Attempt to Placate Mubarak

In the meanwhile, however, the Porte tried to improve its relation with Mubarak but with the use of the carrot rather than the stick. In June 1900, it was reported that the Sultan had appointed Mubarak as "Miri Miran (Pasha)" and fixed his salary at 150 Karas (1 kara = 1.5 tons) of dates per annum. In August, the brother of Mubarak's old ally the Naqib of Basra journeyed to Kuwait in an attempt to persuade Mubarak to adopt a more cooperative attitude towards the Ottomans. Finally, in October, it was reported that the Sultan had conferred upon Mubarak, as Qaimaqam of Kuwait, gold and silver medals of the "order of the Imtiaz". Mubarak now changed his mind about the proposal by the Steam Navigation Company to make regular stops at Kuwait by its steamers to which

76 Kembell to FSI, June 9, 1900, FI743/00.

77 O'Connor to Salisbury, August 7, 1900, Home 2350/00. The post of naqib (naqib al-ashraf, or "marshall of nobility") was an honorary but often influential position and title in larger Arab communities. Elected from descendants of Hasan in theory, the title was generally hereditary and carried with it prestige comparable to European aristocratic titles. The naqibs preserved genealogical registers of noble families, vaguely oversaw their conduct, and so on. See Lord Birdwood, Nuri as said: A Study in Arab Leadership (London, 1959), pp.21-22.

78 De Bunsen to Salisbury, October 9, 1900, Home 2511/00.
Mubarak had agreed earlier on the proviso that no quarantine station be established. He claimed that "the people" objected and the agreement could not therefore, be put into effect.\textsuperscript{79} It is doubtful that Turkish enticements were responsible for this; more likely, Mubarak had second thoughts about the prospect of closer British control. Anyway, he soon changed his stand and went so far as to request a formal British protectorate. The reason for his change of policy must be found in the chaotic situation in Central Arabia with which Mubarak could not remain unconcerned.

\textbf{Mubarak and the Interior}

Let us examine the rivalries in Najd in brief only so far as it had bearing upon Mubarak and Anglo-Ottoman relations. Existing rivalries in Najd, due to hostilities between the House of Saud and Rashid had its fall out upon Mubarak and consequently Anglo-Ottoman relations. Mubarak felt confident to interfere in the Central Arabia because of his alliance with the British. Mubarak's opposition to Ibn Rashid also increased due to the latter's closeness with Mubarak's main enemies, Yusuf Ibn Ibrahim and his nephews.\textsuperscript{80} However, Mubarak was made cautious by Britain in October 1900 lest the

\textsuperscript{79}Kemball to FSI, October 29, 1900, ibid.

Turks should get a pretext for interference in Kuwait affairs for his involvement in Central Arabia.\textsuperscript{81} In spite of this, in March 1901 serious fighting took place and Kuwaitis suffered severe set back.\textsuperscript{82} In this ambience opportunity was available for British intervention. Resultantly, Kembal was sent to Kuwait with a gun boat in support.\textsuperscript{83} However, Mubarak tackled cleverly by evincing that he had no intention of appearing at Basra as demanded by the Turks. Later on British were surprised by having learnt that there was sign of detente as the Vali of Basra paid a visit to Kuwait and Mubarak also reciprocated by accompanying with him up to Fao. But Mubarak revealed to the satisfaction of the British that the Vali tried to persuade him to accept a small Turkish garrisons in his town which was politely refused.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{81}Viceroy telegram to SSI, October 8, 1900, Home 2511/00; Salisbury approved: F.O. to I.O., October 12, 1900, FES February 1901, 22-107.

\textsuperscript{82}Sphinx to Admiralty, April 10, 1901; the main purpose for the ship's presence was to block any Turkish interference in the succession should the Shaikh be dead: O'Connor telegram to Lansdowne, March 31, 1901; both in Home 1884 and 1869/01.

\textsuperscript{83}O'Connor telegram to Lansdowne, April 27, SSI telegram to Viceroy and Lansdowne telegram to O'Connor, April 29, 1901, Home 1932, 1935, 1938/01.

\textsuperscript{84}Wratislaw to O'Connor, May 28, 1901, FO 602/16 Curzon had his reservations: "I have always thought the Sheikh a funk", he wrote on 25th; and the next day, "In may view the Shaikh is playing a double game", FEWS June 1901, pp.118-203.
Mubarak Renewed Requests for British Protectorate

Mubarak’s move to formally ask the Senior Naval Officer for British protection on May 28 led to flutter of diplomatic activities. British Indian authorities while maintaining positive relation with Ibn Rashid, cautiously wanted to grab this golden opportunity to formalise their relationship with Kuwait. They were cautious enough that Germany and Turkey would be unnecessarily provoked. Their concern was just to prevent the tilt of Kuwait to another power and to reach an understanding with Germany on railroad. They wanted to see Mubarak in power and were cajoled by the prevailing circumstances to avoid a self destructive crisis while South African war was on. The question of Kuwait was kept in pending and negotiation for possible joint venture in the railway extension continued sporadically throughout the years.

British Attempts to Protect So-Called ‘Status Quo’

After some time, there was contradictory suggestion on the part of Kemball that Shaikh should be advised to stop

85 Kemball to FSI, June 3, 1901, FES June 1901, pp.118-30. Viceroy telegram to SSI, June 8, 1901, with I.O. minutes, FI 656/01.

86 Hamilton Private to Curzon, June 13.
flying the Turkish flag on Kuwaiti vessels, just to assert British position in Kuwait, because Britain had clearly stated on many occasions that no change in the status quo was desired. Any how due to the disagreement between Curzon and Foreign Office no decision was yet taken. Meanwhile, on August 24 the Turkish troop of war Zuhaf sailed into Kuwait. But after non acceptance of Turkish commanders plea that Kuwait was Ottoman's territory and fruitless parley with Mubarak, the Turks retreated to Basra.

Ultimately there was apparent mutual but tenuous pledge between Turkey and Britain in support of status quo vis-a-vis Kuwait which was so vaguely defined that any defence of it by one party was open to the interpretation of a violation of a solemn pledge for status quo. Mubarak, on the other hand, had been promised Britain's good offices and if he was threatened Britain would have to intervene. Basically Britain wished to maintain the status quo. Tenuous understanding and veiled warning on the part of Britain for the moment led to the

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87 Viceroy telegram to SSI, August 18, 1901, Home 2330/01. Sanderson minute on I.O. to F.O., August 19, 1901, FO 78/5173.

88 Pears to SNO, August 25, ADM 127/28; Cin CEI to Admiralty, August 27, 1901, Home 2272/01. The Zuhaf had no soldiers on board at the time, but Pears did not know it; he did not go below on board. See Kumar, n. 6, p. 198.
peaceful ambience in Kuwait.  

Renewed Ottoman Pressure on Kuwait

But the peace was deceptive. The Porte again made an unsuccessful attempt to assert its suzerainty, if not sovereignty. Naqib of Basra sailed to Kuwait in Zuhaf with the Sultan's telegram in hand giving Mubarak a choice: either the Shaikh should go to the capital to enjoy a good life as member of the Council of State, or he would be ousted from Kuwait. Mubarak was given three days to reply. The Shaikh was very upset and asked the Senior Naval Officer to threaten to fire on Kuwait should he give in to demands; Mubarak would remain firm only if relieved of sole responsibility for refusal.

The Home authorities responded swiftly. Mubarak was asked not to move from Kuwait. Simultaneously De Bunsen, acting Ambassador in Istanbul, was instructed to protest

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89 Lansdowne telegram to O'Conor, September 7, 1901, Home 2314/01.

90 De Bunsen telegram to Lansdowne, November 28, 1901, Home 26/3/01.

91 SNO telegram to Admiralty, December 4, 1901, Home 2633/01.
strongly. The Ottoman Foreign Minister once again professed his total ignorance of the Naqib's action. On the other hand, Mubarak told the Naqib that if he gave in, the British would fire, and the Naval officers verified the statement. The Zuhaf sailed away again, but the Senior Naval Officer was left with conviction that surely now the Turks would attack. Soon afterwards, the issue was once again revived with the arrival of news from Basra that export of provisions from that port had been forbidden - a move clearly aimed at Kuwait, which was basically dependent on Basra for food supplies. Foreign Secretary told the Turkish Ambassador in a very firm manner that if the Porte was unable to control its own officials - Britain might find it "impossible to acquiesce in the continuation of a status quo which leads to a recurrence of these incidents." Not surprisingly, once again the Porte capitulated. The Turkish Foreign Minister explained that the Wali of Basra had acted without the Porte's

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92 Lansdowne telegram to de Bunsen, December 4, 1901, Home 2635/01.

93 SNO to Admiralty, December 6, 1901, Home 2647/01.

94 Lansdowne telegram to O'Connor, December 27, 1901, Home 2719/01.
instructions and order had been issued to cancel his decree.\textsuperscript{95}

At the beginning of 1902, the Ottoman Government again tried to assert her authority in Kuwait which found expression in two forms: extension of military control in the area between Basra and Kuwait, and legal pressure on Mubarak’s extensive date holdings in the Fao area. Both were long-drawn out. From the British standpoint, the military threat was more dangerous, but since Mubarak was more concerned for his income, considerable attention had to be focussed on the legal aspect as well.\textsuperscript{96} The key to this problem was the existence of Mubarak’s nephews, who laid claims on the Shaikh’s property within the Empire. Mubarak was summoned to civil court in Basra to answer these claims. Since he could not visit Basra, therefore, judgement on the first estate in question - a small property north of Fao - went against him.\textsuperscript{97} This put Britain in a difficult situation. Mubarak would lose his holdings if he stood with Britain, but Britain had no \textit{locus standi} to

\textsuperscript{95}O’Connor telegrams to Lansdowne, December 27 and 28, 1901, Home 27/9 and 2724/01.

\textsuperscript{96}Kemball to FSI, January 18, 1902, FI 344/02; Kemball estimated the income from these properties at £6,000.

\textsuperscript{97}O’Connor telegrams to Lansdowne, January 26 and 30, 1902, Home 1726 and 1741/02.
interfere in a domestic case in civil court which did not involve her own subjects. Foreign Office instructed concerned authorities to advise Mubarak to appeal to a higher court. Thus, with it began a series of legal disputes which lasted for years and considerably hampered his freedom of action and there was no alternative in sight. 98

On the other hand, the alternate Turkish policy of piecemeal expansion, like the legal wrangling, was to last virtually until 1914. Turks started their expansion in early January 1902 with the occupation of Zubayr, Safwan and then Umm Qasr. 99 Finding no British protest forthcoming, the Turks further moved and established in Qasr Sabiya and were set upon reaching up to Bubiyan Island. 100 This was again a very tricky situation. In spite of Mubarak's claim, concerned British authorities were doubtful about the validity of his claim to ownership. 101 Thus far, British adopted the policy

98 Lansdowne telegram to O'Connor, February 3, and SSI Telegram to Viceroy, February 8, 1902, Home 1753 and 1755/02.

99 O'Connor telegram to Lansdowne, January 2, and Wratislaw to O'Connor, January 10, 1902, Home 1656 and 1793/02; Cin CEI telegram to Admiralty, January 31, 1902, F078/5251.

100 SNO to Cin CEI, January 31, 1902, Home 1898/02.

101 O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 13, O'Connor telegram to Lansdowne February 8, and SSI telegram to Viceroy, February 18, 1902, Home 1839, 1758, and 1779/02.
of watch and wait. Mubarak particularly insisted that his claims to Bubiyan should be made good as Kuwaitis regularly travelled to the island while fishing in the nearby waters. Curzon felt this sufficient to justify a demand to the Porte but his view did not find favour with the Imperial authorities. Thus, it is quite obvious that the central question continued to be the meaning of the status quo. Meanwhile, O'Connor was asked to protest the occupation of Bubiyan, for the Foreign Office had reversed its decision, deciding Mubarak's claims were sufficient to support a protest. As usual, the Porte disclaimed any knowledge and again pledged support of the status quo. \(^{102}\)

**The Raid of September 1902**

Very soon the lull was broken. Yusuf ibn Ibrahim made the last attempt to capture Kuwait presumably with at least the tacit approval of the Wali of Basra. Yusuf made a desperate bid to reach an agreement with Mubarak in June of 1902. But Mubarak had a dangerous ally (from Yusuf's viewpoint) in Khazal of Mohammera, with whom Shaikh was very close. \(^{103}\) Finding Mubarak unresponsive to his overture,

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\(^{102}\) O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 16, 1902, Home 1912/02.

\(^{103}\) Wratislaw private to O'Connor, June 13, 1902, Home 2386/02.
Yusuf resorted to force. But unfortunately for him, the expedition was worse than a failure. Yusuf dispatched two dhow loads of locally recruited Arabs to proceed by sea as well as another 300 by land to raid Kuwait. But Lieutenant J.G. Armstrong, commanding the Lapwing gave the chase and pursued the ships into Gulf waters.¹⁰⁴ O’Connor expressed strong reservation of any British action at Constantinople, at least until the Turks should raise the issue or proof of Turkish complicity was uncovered by Wratislaw at Basra.¹⁰⁵ Again Curzon disagreed with this view as he noted in one of the minutes "We cannot sit down and do nothing in a case where British sailors (sic) have lost their lives. In the old days there would have been a bombardment if not something stronger."¹⁰⁶ This time the Viceroy won out, and in late October O’Connor was instructed to protest.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Armstrong (Lapwing) to Cin CEI, September 7, 1902, FI 1513 A/02. SNO to Cin CEI, September 16, 1902, Home 2952/02.

¹⁰⁵ O’Connor to Lansdowne, September 9, 1902, Home 2952/02 2613/02. The Turks soon raised the issue in the form of a complaint against the British action, but O’Connor still advised waiting; O’Connor to Lansdowne, September 17, 1902, Home 2629/02.

¹⁰⁶ Viceroy telegram to SSI, October 8, 1902, Curzon MSS. Minute dated October 12, 1902.

¹⁰⁷ Lansdowne telegram to O’Connor, October 22, 1902, Home 2740/02.
denied their involvement. The Porte was forced to remove Yusuf and two of the nephews away from the area.\textsuperscript{108} Here the matter remained, as usual, unsettled, while attention passed to the other events and, in Kuwait, to the possibility of a negotiated settlement between Mubarak and the nephews. The latter, without Yusuf's financial support, found themselves in difficult position.

\textbf{Recourse to Diplomacy}

Now the focus shifted to the diplomacy and negotiating table for some time. Foreign Office now decided, in principle, to approve any settlement arrived at between Mubarak and his nephews.\textsuperscript{109} Mubarak was not ready to go very far and grant all the nephews claims. With Wratislaw as mediator, a compromise was reached between the parties after a protracted negotiations in September 1903. Mubarak paid cash to the nephews - Rs.1,00,000 borrowed from India without Home approval and thus claims were settled by mid 1904.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{108} O'Connor to Lansdowne, December 30, 1902, Home 2060/03.

\textsuperscript{109} Lansdowne telegram to O'Connor, March 13, 1903, Home 2283/03.

\textsuperscript{110} Wratislaw telegram to FSI, September 12, 1903, FI 1405/03; FSI to Cox, May 24, FES August 1904, pp.286-373; O'Connor to Lansdowne, July 13, 1904, Home 3076/04.
Now we can say that at least one aspect of complicated Kuwaiti affairs had come to a satisfactory conclusion and consequently pressure on Mubarak was reduced. But this was not so for the British Gulf officials. Most important of all, the situation in the interior was changing fast with the successful emergence of Ibn Saud in Najd and his subsequent capture of Riyadh. British learnt from Ibn Saud that the Russians had promised guns and money. This was one of the reason for Lansdowne's policy declaration in May 1903.

Railway Negotiations with Germany

If the Russian overture to ibn Saud was an ominous portent then the railway negotiations with Germany were an immediate problem. In the early months of 1903, these negotiations reached the climax. After considerable delay, the German financial group was at last ready to offer a 25 percent share of financing to Britain on the condition that the British government pledge to approve the required custom increase and to provide all necessary terminal facilities at Kuwait - including an Ottoman custom house. The Foreign Office was apparently ready to agree, provided British finance was willing to cooperate and certain adjustments were made in details - such as the removal of the word "Ottoman" in connection with Kuwait customs; but, in the closing days of
April, a sudden and determined attack against the whole scheme was mounted in the British press. Consequently, the Foreign Office drew back.\textsuperscript{111} Lansdowne viewed that the railway would come, and if it came without British participation, it would be a "national misfortune".\textsuperscript{112} "[W]e had the game very much in our own hands," he wrote privately to Curzon, and might have pulled off a great stroke by achieving internationalization of the line. To conclude, it would have meant the end of Gulf questions for years to come.\textsuperscript{113} Curzon was not happy with this view as he felt that it would lead to Germinization of the Gulf. In a sense, both Lansdowne and Curzon were correct for Britain did not again get an opportunity to participate in the railway project on terms so favourable, as Lansdowne had predicted. Yet that railway was never to approach the Gulf before the World War I worked to England's benefit where the wartime security of the Gulf was concerned. Anyway, the Baghdad Railway was to colour

\textsuperscript{111}For examples of attack, \textit{Times} (London), April 18, 21, 22, spectator, April 18. See Lansdowne private to O'Connor, May 6, 1903, Lansdowne correspondence, 27; Kumar, n.6, pp.173-6.

\textsuperscript{112}Lansdowne memoranda of April 7 and 14, 1903, FO 78/5322, and Cabinet Files (Public Record Office) (CAB), 37/64.

Anglo-German and Anglo-Turkish relations in the following decade. Since an agreement over the issue could not be arrived at for the moment, hence further wrangling and trouble was expected and natural. The temporary break in negotiations, in fact, marked a change in British policy.

A British "Forward Policy"

After withdrawing from the negotiation over the Baghdad Railway, Britain initiated a slightly more forward policy, which was pushed in the Gulf by Curzon and his subordinates to the limit of Home approval, and sometimes beyond. Lansdowne’s statement in Parliament, in the mean time, loaded with warning was indicative of British mood.

O’Connor revived an old proposal regarding posting an agent in Kuwait. The Foreign Office did not approve the plan in toto for the step would not be only a departure from the status quo but a definite move towards the still unclaimed independent status for Kuwait. However, the Foreign Office suggested an alternative that the Resident could visit the area more frequently if the situation warranted so.

This was followed by Curzon’s visit to the Gulf with all

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114 O’Connor telegram to Lansdowne, July 18, 1903, Home 2787/03.

115 F.O. to I.O., August 13, 1903, Home 2896/03.

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the pomp and show. In the last leg of this trip, he visited Kuwait too. It was his first visit to the Shaikhdom as well as the first by any Viceroy. Curzon had a lengthy meeting with Mubarak. Like Kemball, Curzon was convinced of Mubarak's loyalty. Mubarak stated to Curzon that he had cut himself off entirely from the Turks. He did not ask for any new agreement with Britain and demanded no protectorate and, therefore, Curzon felt that Mubarak believed it already existed. The Shaikh asked only a title or decoration and a subsidy.\footnote{Curzon private to Brodrick, December 1, 1903, Curzon MSS; memorandum by Dane on Mubarak, Curzon Conversation, November 29, 1903.} The visit on the whole was very successful as it had demonstrated Britain's continuing keen interest in the area as well as the might of its sea power. Thus the year 1903 ended on a high note, despite the failure of the railway negotiations.

In the beginning of the following year, Curzon made an attempt to activate the matter with a suggestion that a medical officer should be stationed at Kuwait, both to supervise quarantine for the steamers which had ultimately begun to call in 1903 and to stand in as postmaster for a branch of the Indian post office. The plan was approved after some discussion. As a preliminary step, a bond was secured from Mubarak in March not to allow another power's post office
here. But subsequently, the Home authorities had second thoughts about the scheme and shelved it for the time being. Meanwhile, Curzon revived the defense of Bubiyan island urging the Home authorities to take some concrete measures. But it also did not find favour from London. Then Curzon took up the feasibility of appointing an agent to ibn Saud. The Foreign Office once again disapproved the idea on the plea that it would be inexpedient to incur difficulties and embarrassment involved. O'Connor was in agreement with the stand of the Foreign Office keeping in view the Turkish susceptibilities which had already been aroused by Curzon’s Gulf visit. However, he emphasized the point that Britain should have more information of the interior which would help in better policy formulation "in case of a serious revolutionary outbreak and the cession of Ottoman rule in El

117 Viceroy telegram to SSI, January 16; O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 4, F.O. to I.O; February 6; Kamball to FSI, March 3, 1904, SF 34/04, 264, 2246, and 1630/10.

118 Curzon to Brodrick, February 4, 1904, SF 38/04, 412/04; with minute by Lansdowne, in FO 78/5383.

119 Kamball to FSI, February 5, 1904 FI 701/04, L.W. Dane, FSI, may have prompted this suggestion; six months earlier he had warned that should the Saudis defeat ibn Rashid, "We may find that, as so often happens, we have been backing the wrong horse". Minutes July 23, 1903, FES January 1904, pp.140-205.

120 Lansdowne to O'Connor, February 5, 1904, Home 2346/04.
Hassa", at that crucial moment such an agency might be necessary. But for the time being, the Foreign Office overlooked this most prophetic warning.\textsuperscript{121} The question of Bubiyan island once again was revived. This time Curzon prevailed. His pleading that Britain's whole claim to participate in the railway terminus might hinge on this island carried the day. O'Connor was persuaded to take up the issue with the Porte. O'Connor broached the problem with Tewfik Pasha. The Minister was not averse to the idea that some degree of "semi-independence" was held by Mubarak, but the boundaries of his territory were most vague. He contended that the claims of a few fisherman were not sufficient enough to prove ownership of Bubiyan. O'Connor obviously took the diametrically opposite stand and the discussions were deadlocked.\textsuperscript{122}

**The Appointment of an Agent for Kuwait**

After a great deal of discussion among the concerned authorities, at last, the Viceroy was given green signal to appoint an Agent to Kuwait. Captain S.G.Knox was asked to take up the assignment with the brief only to cultivate

\textsuperscript{121}O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 26, 1904, Home 2433/04.

\textsuperscript{122}O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 16, 1904, Curzon's urging is in Viceroy telegram to SSI, April 27, 1904. Both SF 38/04, 2730 and 807/04.
Mubarak, safeguard British trade, observe Turkish activities, and collect information where possible on such points as the arms trade and events in the interior.\footnote{FSI to Cox, September 7, 1904, SF 34/04, 855/04, SSI telegram to Viceroy, October 19, 1904, SF 34/04, 3217/04.} Mubarak surprisingly was not at ease with this development. To quote Mubarak, "Please God, I say that, from today and henceforth, I see from the British Government friendship and protection for my interests and honour. I at present am paying all honour to Captain Knox as I thereby see that I will have peace and secure protection of my rights". But he added, "If I will not get the same, no good will result to me from the stay of Captain Knox."\footnote{Mubarak to Cox, August 7, 1904, FO 78/5385. The translations from Arabic were by Cox.}

However, Cox promptly replied in a reassuring manner. He stated that Britain had not lost sight of the Shaikh's interest, and His Majesty's Government "have arranged to send a representative to live in your territory and to be always at hand to give you advice and help."\footnote{Cox to Mubarak, August 16, 1904, FO 78/5385.} As usual the Ottoman authorities lodged protest against this move. But the Foreign Office this time took more definite stand by pointing out that it was only temporary,
although Britain reserved the right to send an official to check on the status quo from time to time. Subsequently, in spite of great pleadings by Indian authorities, Knox was asked to leave Kuwait and he left Kuwait in March 1905. While it may be interpreted that Curzon suffered a defeat, in fact the precedent had been established and within a few years the Kuwait agency was to be a permanent post.

We may say in brief that by the time (1905) Curzon left India, Kuwait was firmly and unquestionably in Britain's sphere of influence, even in the Turkish view. Curzon made a vigorous attempt to extend the British influence in rapid sequence through bond, defense measures, agent, steamers, doctor. In spite of many problems remaining unresolved, the foundation of British control had been firmly established in an area almost totally unknown as early as 1898.

III

The last phase, 1905-1914 is marked by vigorous efforts by England, though in circumspect manner, to tighten its hold

126 Townley (Charge, Constantinople) to Lansdowne, November 2, and SSI telegram to Viceroy, November 11, 1904, SF 34/04, 3363/04.

127 See FES, July 1905, pp.350-64, on details of the final withdrawal. See Busch, n.30, pp.231-2.
further over Kuwait. The Ottomans made desperate but unsuccessful attempts to counter the growing influence of the British for the empire faced serious challenges from many quarters. Finding themselves exhausted and weak, the Ottomans, ultimately, formally recognised the British predominant influence by signing the Convention of 1913.

This phase is also marked by Lord Curzon's resignation in 1905 regarded as a turning point in the realm of Persian Gulf affairs. However, it marked no significant change in Kuwait. Of course, it was during his tenure as Viceroy, that British position developed from virtually nothing to near-protectorate status. Yet the position was by no means unchallenged, and much consolidation remained to be done.

Knox as an Agent at Kuwait

In November Knox was again sent back to his post, but this time without a time limit on his stay. This was necessitated, apart from other factors, by the German engineers' impending visit to Kuwait to inspect terminus sites.\textsuperscript{128} Knox soon afterwards made many recommendations to strengthen the British position. He advised the purchase of a steam launch to be placed at his own disposal to keep an eye

\textsuperscript{128}SSI telegrams to Viceroy, October 3 and 12, 1905, Home 3416, 3454/04.
on nearby sites, and British lease of a section of the southern shore of Kuwait Bay at Bandar Shuwaikh (one of the possible terminus sites). The Home authorities approved only the launch and kept the proposal for acquisition of land in abeyance following O’Connor’s suggestion that such measures be carried out in a gradual fashion.\textsuperscript{129}

In the meantime, Cox discussed with Mubarak a plan to adopt a special (non-Turkish) flag. The Shaikh was not averse to the idea provided that Britain would furnish a guarantee against any consequence resulting from the predicted Turkish reaction. The proposal was shot down, at least for the time being, following O’Connor’s warning of inevitable Turkish protests. The authorities felt that the advantages gained would not be worth the resulting inconvenience.\textsuperscript{130} The plan for the lease of land was seen in a favourable manner. It was felt that it would have the double advantage of providing a possible location for a coal depot and preventing the acquisition of the same spot by another power. On the instruction of India office, Cox broached the issue with

\textsuperscript{129}Cox to FSI, November 11, 1905, and SSI telegram to Viceroy, February 20, 1906, SF 35/04, 1897/05 and 2669/06.

\textsuperscript{130}SSI telegram to Viceroy, March 1, 1905, Cox to FSI, March 18, 1906, Minto to Morley, December 27, 1906, I.O. to F.O.; January 24, 1907, SF 37/04, 2653/05, 873 and 2205/06; O’Connor to Grey, May 23, 1906, F.O. 371/151.
Mubarak. The Shaikh, as usual, responded positively. He even revealed that Germany had already made an overture for such a concession. Mubarak seemed more interested to sell instead to lease. Mubarak expressed his desire for payment and referred to Curzon's promise (during his visit to Kuwait). The discussion was left here, for the whole issue of Kuwait and the railway came up for review in the light of the new emergency situation of 1907, when Britain was heading towards an entente with Russia.

Reconsideration Over the Railway Project

Britain, by now had formulated its main goal, that is, instead of a share of international financing, it wished to control the southernmost section of the line. Germans were also keenly interested to arrive at some settlement keeping in view the British leverage in respect of Kuwait and approval of Ottoman custom-rates increase. The British statesmen were in dilemma that how to conclude an agreement which would satisfy Britain and at the same time aroused neither Turkish nor German

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131 FIS telegram to Cox, September 19, and Cox telegram to FSI, October 9, 1906, SF 35/04, 1846/06.

132 Knox to Cox, January 27, 1907, SF 35/04, 1286/07.
reactions against British "blackmail". In late 1906 an additional complication was introduced: preliminary agreement became necessary with France, England's entente ally, as well as with Russia. Anyway, the problem had to be resolved because construction of the line without British participation would be a disaster.

British Secure a Lease in Kuwait

In the interim period of waiting for a new German overture and Franco-Russian response, it was decided to revive the negotiations to secure lease of land from Mubarak. He was still willing to sell though he had slightly shifted his stand as he now preferred a yearly rent. On the other hand, India office now desired not only a larger plot of land but also preemptive rights to such possible sites as Kathama Bay. The lease was finally concluded after great deal of discussion by October 1907. According to the terms of the

133 O'Connor to Grey, April 12, 1906, FO 406/30; "blackmail" is not O'Connor's word but used by Busch, n., p.307.

134 See British Memorandum to Isvolsky (Russian Foreign Minister), November 27, 1906, ibid.

135 Viceroy telegram to SSI, July 7, 1907, FO 371/351.

136 SSI telegram to Viceroy, July 23, and I.O. to F.O., July 17, 1907, and minutes, FO 371/351.
lease, the Shaikh was to be paid Rs.60,000 (£4,000) annually. The British got, among other things, the exclusive right to terminate it either by cancellation or conversion to purchase. But most important of all, British also obtained the absolute preemptive right to Shuwaikh island, Kathama as well as Warba and Bubiyan islands, in addition to right to station a local agent.137

Mubarak's Misplaced Pretention to Independence

To facilitate extension of British influence, Knox suggested to Cox that Britain should equip and maintain station in Kuwait to ensure an efficient and adequate sanitary service for which Mubarak might be paid a fee. Cox agreed without accepting the need of monetary payment. Due to the disagreement on the issue between Knox and the Shaikh, former favoured intimidation but Cox cajoled Knox in favour of negotiation, which was in conclusive. Mubarak during the talk remarked wryly that his people and the interior tribesmen much disliked the restrictions and cited a proverb "What God wills,

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137 Knox demi-official to Assistant Resident, August 14, 1907, FO 424/224; Viceroy telegram to SSI, August 27, 1907, SF 35/04, 1568/07; Knox to Cox, September 8, October 2, 1907, SF 43/04, 1772.
does; what He wills not, not".\textsuperscript{138} The matter ended there. However, it shows that Mubarak was not happy with the steadily tightening of the British hold over him.

By the end of 1908 Mubarak realised the strategic importance of Kuwait and his own political importance and tried to some extent successfully to exploit Cox by telling that the Porte had even offered him the governorship of Qatif and Hasa\textsuperscript{139} which he had indifferently refused. Mubarak was soon in the pool of crisis which began with the destruction of a river embankment near Mubarak’s Shatt al-Arab properties by the Ottoman authorities. Albeit Mubarak staked his claim but after not getting any kind of support from any quarter he rebuilt it by hook and crook.\textsuperscript{140} In the meanwhile focus of attention shifted to Baghdad Railway project with which Kuwait was inevitably linked. The Foreign Office formulated many schemes (as Anglo-Russian cooperation) unsuccesssfully

\textsuperscript{138}Knox to Cox, April 22, Cox to FSI, March 8 and June 7, Mubarak to Cox, June 14, and Knox to Cox, June 28, 1908, FO 424/217.

\textsuperscript{139}Cox telegram to FSI, December 9, 1908, FO 424/218.

\textsuperscript{140}Knox to Cox, July 17 and 20, 1908, FO 424/217; March 15 and May 27, 1909, SF 38/04, 864/09. (Knox was unable to forward any evidence regarding bribery. At the best it seem to be a conjecture).
aimed to force Germany to come to terms over this question due to the fiasco of earlier direct negotiations. But no significant progress could be made.

Impact of Young Turk Revolution

The momentum of diplomatic manoeuvering could not continue for long as in 1908 Young Turk Revolution intervened. As a result the situation in the Ottoman Empire became very fluid. Negotiations could be resumed only after the assessment of the character of the new regime at Constantinople and the problems resulting from the proclamation of Bulgarian independence and the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The new regime could firmly establish itself by April 1909 after the deposition of Sultan Abdul Hamid and suppression of counter-revolutionary forces. Now the atmosphere was congenial for negotiations. By this time the Anglo-Russian project was shelved. Now Britain had chosen another scheme, suggested by Willcocks, a British engineer working on Mesopotamian irrigation. It envisaged for a British railway to run from the Euphrates to the

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141Charles Hardinge (Permanent under-Secretary, F.O.) private to Adam Block (Ottoman Public Debt Commission, Constantinople), June 2, 1908, Hardinge MSS, 13.
Mediterranean, a proposal which had been considered in 1890s.\textsuperscript{142} The modified version of this scheme was rather more attractive, which called for a railway from Baghdad to Basra along the Tigris (the German line was scheduled to follow the Euphrates). Accordingly, if Britain got such a concession, there would be no point in extending the German line further than Baghdad. In pursuance of this scheme, Sir Gerald A. Lowther, Ambassador in Constantinople (1908-13), made a formal request in September 1909 to the Porte to grant the Tigris Concession, with an option for a line to the Mediterranean. The Grand Vizier was personally not averse to the idea but expressed serious concern about possible German resentment.\textsuperscript{143}

Germany too had a bargaining point for its consent was essential to approve the "customs increase" for the Ottoman railway guarantee. Consequently, it might ask for its price by demanding that no other concessions be granted to other power. Sensing the keenness of the British in railway venture, the Germans offered a 50 percent share of the southern section provided that the revenue from increased

\textsuperscript{142}Willcocks private R. Graham (F.O.), February 14, 1909, FO 371/764.

\textsuperscript{143}Grey to Lowther, August 18; Lowther to Grey, September 14, 1909, ibid.
customs be used for the rest of line, which would have no British participation. The offer was not enough. Britain had reservations on two counts: it wanted absolute control of that section, and also opposed such use of the customs revenue. Finally, the Russians seemed most sensitive on the question of British control in the south as they allowed Britain's freedom to negotiate toward such an end, but simultaneously they presumed themselves free to secure a settlement in their own favour on the line north of Baghdad. There was mood of jubilation among the British at the progress being made, the Russians were likely to be satisfied with a Persian railway link into the new system.

However, the optimism of 1909 proved to be shortlived. Goschen, British Ambassador in Berlin, left discussion in a huff with Bethmann Hollweg (German Chancellor since July 1909) for he was convinced of the latter's firm resolve to use the railway and Gulf questions to force Britain into a general

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144 Marling (Charge, Constantinople) to Grey, November 9, 1909, and minutes, FO 371/765. See also Sir E. Cassel to C. Hardinge, December 20, 1909, FO 406/34.

145 Nicolson (Petersburg) telegram to Grey, November 24, 1909, FO 406/34. In any case, France, too, would require some quid pro quo (Bertie [Paris] to Grey, December 1, 1909, ibid) - and both France and Russia would have to approve any custom increase.
diplomatic understanding. 146 Britain, subsequently, decided that it would not conclude an agreement, which would cut her off from Russia and France. Lowther was instructed to vigorously pursue for the Tigris concession. 147 When pressed further, the Turks pointed out that they inform Germany that the Ottoman Empire would itself undertake the construction of the southern section. Rifaat Pasha, Turkish Foreign Minister (1909-1911) further clarified the situation during his visit to London in May 1910. He stated that the Tigris concession was most undesirable, for Germany would insist on its rights to continue the Baghdad line, and thereby full financial responsibility would fall on Turkey. 148 If Rifaat could not budge, neither could the British - they wanted to have more than 50 percent line, including the terminus. Further discussion took place but no solution was forthcoming. Thus situation remained at deadlock. This problem was further complicated owing to other emerging Anglo Turkish issues. Kuwait had played little part in the negotiations of 1908-1910. Mubarak's own relations with the Empire remained

146 Goschen Private to Hardinge, April 14, and Hardinge Private to Goschen, April 19, 1910, Hardinge MSS, 20 and 21.

147 Hardinge Private to Lowther, May 3, and Private to Goschen, April 26, 1910, Hardinge MSS; 21.

148 F.O. Memorandum (Mallet), May 23, 1910, FO 371/992.
unaffected. The new regime offered various enticements for his loyalty, but the Shaikh steadfastly refused. 149 The Young Turk regime, infused with vigour and determination, at least initially wanted to retrieve the decaying position of the empire. This necessitated, among others, the reestablishment of effective control over the area to the south of Kuwait (Udayd, Zabra, Qatif etc.). But it is important to note here that being in proximity to Kuwait, it had bearing on it as well, for after 1910, this area too, was included in the larger negotiations.

**British Policy Formulations**

With the agreement signed between Germany and Russia in November 1910, the earlier British insistence on four-way discussions was no longer applicable. Russians tentatively approved the line in return for a connection to any Persian Railway which might be constructed and recognition of a free Russian hand in northern Persia. 150 Now the British became much more convinced than earlier of the necessity to reach an

149 Viceroy telegram to SSI, October 31, 1910, SF 38/04, 1579/10.

understanding with the Ottomans. They hammered out a plan willing to recognize the Ottoman suzerainty over Kuwait as a part of a larger agreement in return for guarantees on internal control of local customs, security for Mubarak’s Shat al-Arab properties, and joint Anglo-Turkish control of the terminus. This plan did not find favour with the authorities in India. Now the Porte took the initiative and set the ball rolling over this vexed question. The Porte gave a memorandum containing proposal to Lowther on March 1, 1911. The proposal outlined that the line be internationalized, with a 20 percent share each for Britain, France, and Germany, and 40 percent reserved to the Empire. Kuwait was the preferred terminus, but any terminus must be under the Empire.

The question was no longer confined to academic domain as in late March the Turkish Government and the German Railway company concluded an agreement. Accordingly, the company abandoned its existing concession for the Gulf section in return for a pledge of a share equal to that of any other power in the new company to be formed for that section, reserving the right to claim compensation for any financial

151 F.O. to I.O., January 20, and SSI telegram to Viceroy, January 27, 1911, SF 34/04, 2893/11.

152 Lowther to Grey, March 1, 1911, SF 46/04, 3146/11.
losses which might ensue. 153

After a great deal of discussion between the British authorities in India and the Home authorities, at last, a memorandum was submitted to the Porte on July 29, 1911. Britain agreed to the offer of 20 percent participation provided that the Ottoman Government must accept interalia the validity of certain agreements which the Sheikh has concluded with the British Government, in recognition of Turkish suzerainty over Kuwait.

To start with, Turkey requested for copies of the "agreements" to which reference had been made. Britain soon passed on the copies of the 1899, 1900 (arms prohibition), and 1904 (Post Office) agreements along with the already published Trucial Coast and Bahrain treaties. 154 A copy of the lease of the land was deliberately not given.

Britain had to wait for some time for the detailed and proper response from the Porte. Delay on the part of the Ottomans was understandable for the Empire was facing serious challenge to its integrity itself. The Ottoman government was fighting a war with Italy. Starting in September 1911, which not only taxed the resources of the Empire but brought the

153 Lowther telegram to Grey, March 21, 1911, Home 3202/11.

154 Ibid.
dismissal of a number of high officials, including one Foreign Minister and a Grand Vizier who had pressed for conclusion of the agreement.\textsuperscript{155}

\textbf{The Treaty of 1913}

Once again, the Ottoman and British Government came to the negotiating table by March 1912 to discuss the British proposals submitted earlier. The Ottomans were willing to concede Britain on all but Qatar. The Ottomans pleaded that withdrawal in Qatar would be seen within the Empire as a cession of territory. They, therefore, suggested as a face saving compromise, joint policing of the Gulf by both powers.\textsuperscript{156} Javid Bey, the Turkish negotiator, furnished a draft reply in which all affected powers except Russia would receive 25 percent of the railway section. The draft also noted that Britain should not press on Qatar or the island of Zakhnuniya.\textsuperscript{157} There were discussions at various levels among the British authorities over the proposal. Indian authorities were having serious objections to many clauses of

\textsuperscript{155}Lowther to Grey, December 22, 1911, SF (RS), 2/12, 171/12.

\textsuperscript{156}Crewe private telegram to Hardinge, March 20, 1912, hardinge MSS, 96.

\textsuperscript{157}Javid Bey demi-official to Parker, March 22, 1912, FO 371/1484.
the proposal.

However, for some time, negotiations could not be carried out as the Ottomans were busy in another war in the Balkans. The Ottomans were weakened considerably after this disastrous war and thus forced to compromise. This was evident when Hakki Pasha in London told Parker and Louis Mallet that Turkey was ready to admitting the British Gulf claims and to abandoning Qatar and hoped in return for some compromise on Kuwait which would include Turkish possession of Warba and Bubiyan and a right of passage for Turkish troops to reach the south. One issue on the frontier line which was also a subject of debate was the possession of several bituminous oil wells.¹⁵⁸

In March, a British draft agreement was prepared. Accordingly, Kuwait was to be autonomous, under Turkish suzerainty, with the Shaikh as Qaimaqam. Nothing was to stand in the way of the appointment of a Turkish agent. The territory of Kuwait proper was to be that of a circle drawn with a radius running from Kuwait town to the northern tip of Warba island, but including all of Bubiyan. An outer circle was also drawn in which the tribes were to be considered subordinate to Mubarak and the Turks were neither entitled to

¹⁵⁸A. Hirtzel minute and Hirtzel demi-official to Parker, February 26, 1913, SF (RS) 28/12, 741/13.
make garrisons nor to make administrative changes.\textsuperscript{159}

Now, there was dilemma before the British that how to secure Mubarak's consent to this proposal. The Shaikh was now aging rapidly and was ill. Cox warned that he should not be disturbed.\textsuperscript{160} The Resident was apprehensive about his reaction to some of the clauses, particularly that of Turkish Agent, something which he had been fighting all his reign. Shakespeare, too, predicted trouble. He felt that the title of Qaimaqam was too low, certainly lower than "Ruler of Kuwait", and he should at least be Mutasarrif. Shakespeare further pleaded "That we may obtain a quid pro quo elsewhere does not affect Kuwait for the Shaikh will judge the agreement as it touches himself and his people...."\textsuperscript{161} Mubarak had entrusted his entire case in British hands, and his consistent loyalty deserved consideration.

The Turks formulated yet another counter-draft, and the negotiators now proceeded to work out the differences. Since the Turkish and British interpretations of "sovereignty" or 'suzerainty' were irrevocably opposed, both terms were deleted

\textsuperscript{159} Draft in SF (RS) 28/12, 1166/13.

\textsuperscript{160} Cox telegram to FSI, April 16, 1913, FES December 1913, 1-245.

\textsuperscript{161} Shakespear to Cox, April 30, 1913, SF 66/12, 2370/13.
and Kuwait merely mentioned as autonomous Qada’(Kaga) of the Empire. In respect of flag, the Turks conceded the right to use their flag with the special device denoting Kuwait. Warba and Bubiyan, too, were won for Kuwait. Right of passage for Turkish troops were not granted, and other problems, such as customs, were left for future resolution.\textsuperscript{162}

The draft was initialed by both parties on May 6, 1913.\textsuperscript{163} Now Shakespeare was asked to tell Mubarak about it. The Shaikh was quite expectedly, vehemently opposed to the idea of Turkish agent. He stated that for fourteen year he had faithfully observed the 1899 bond, which had been directed precisely against such measures as were now planned. He became suspicious of British motives and asked the railway terms on the assumption that the British had received a Turkish concession in that matter - at his own expense. However, the Shaikh ultimately approved the agreement after a great persuasion by Shakespeare and his old associates Cox and Khazal. He was also given a written assurance from Cox regarding good offices of His Majesty's government. In any case, he had no alternative but to accept the fait accompli.

\textsuperscript{162} Mallet-Hirtzel memorandum, May 3, 1913, SF 47/04, 1786/13.

\textsuperscript{163}Grey to Lowther, May 8, 1913, enclosing "Declaration Secrete" on Kuwait, FO 424/238; Hritzel demi-official to McMahon, May 9, 1913, FES December 1913, 1-245.
The formal convention was signed by both powers on July 29, 1913. It took the form of a collection of documents referring to every issue under discussion. Shatt al-Arab, Tigris-Euphrates Steamers, customs duty increase, and the Gulf.164 At the last moment, changes had been introduced on extradition of criminals and certain other minor points, but in essence it was the agreement as discussed earlier. In an annexe, the Anglo-Kuwait agreements, with the exception of the property lease, were published for the first time. Kuwait's boundaries were as suggested by Britain, but Turkey received Zakhnuniya in return for a consideration of £1,000 paid to "Isa of Bahrain".165

Britain further consolidated its position in Kuwait by securing a pledge from Mubarak regarding the disposition of any possible oil finds in October 1913. The bond was a precautionary step, for, although, the ground was believed to be promising, the vastness of Kuwaiti oil reserves was totally

164Earl, n.150, pp.252-7, on terms and reactions and on Tigris-Euphrates issue, FO 371/1791-3.


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unknown. Mubarak, in return, was given a guarded assurance that Britain would support the Shaikh's designated successor on his own demise, provided that they approve the nominee.

Thus we can summarise that there was no direct attack in the period 1905-14 on Kuwait by Turkey for Britain had already shown its firm resolve to defend Mubarak. Kuwait was a trump card of great value in the railway negotiations and closely linked with the larger issues of Anglo-Turkish relations. Preservation of British influence in Kuwait was, in fact, a cardinal principle of British policy in the Gulf and there was no question of compromise on this score. Britain modified its stand on questions such as Zakhnuniya and even the percentage to be held in the railway, but never, in essence, in respect of Kuwait. If there had been regrets over the addition of responsibilities by the 1899 agreement, these must have certainly vanished when negotiations over the railway were in progress. By 1914, these responsibilities had increased enormously: Kuwait was definitely in the British sphere of interest, and any doubts about this would quickly be dispelled.

166 Hurewitz, I, No.109, dated October 27, 1913. A similar pledge was obtained from 'Isa in May 1914; 'Isa to Trevor', May 14, 1914, SF 5/13, 2968/14.

167 Cox to FSI, December 7, 1913, FO 424/251.
by an examination of the permanent Agency, launch, leased land, bonds on the alienation of territory, post office, oil deposits and regular steamer traffic. Kuwait was thus never a formal protectorate before the World War I, but practically there was little question about it. The story of the British machination has been summed up by one eminent author as "There seldom happened in the long history of the Ottoman Empire that foreign intervention came, the way it did by the British in the case of Kuwait, with the result of complete de facto suzerainty secured by a foreign power over an Ottoman subordinate, whose de jure allegiance to the Sultan was simultaneously admitted by all. That was a significant case, the true nature of which has apparently never been sufficiently revealed."\textsuperscript{168}