Summary & Concluding Remarks
The Arabian peninsula turned into the cockpit of international diplomacy in the last decade of the nineteenth century; the main contending powers were the Ottoman Empire and Britain. The clash of interests between the two powers in the region had many dimensions and varying degrees which differed from part to part of the peninsula. Some of these dimensions were, sometime, overlapping and interacting with each other.

The Ottomans claimed this region as part of their empire. In fact, the Ottomans were regarded by the Arabs as saviours for they had saved them from the growing menace of the Portuguese in the early 16th century. The Ottomans allowed the Arabs to manage their own affairs after securing their recognition of the Sultan as Caliph. The Ottomans were mainly concerned with the protection of the holy places - Mecca and Medina - as the Sultan was supposed to be the custodian of these places. The Sultans regarded it as their primary duty to keep the route to Mecca open for pilgrims from all parts of the Muslim world. Otherwise, this area was an economic liability to the Ottomans. The Arabs too acquiesced in this position for long.
However, as the Ottoman Empire showed the symptoms of decline the emerging industrial imperialist powers of Europe began to put pressure on it. In particular, the British, after they had firmly established themselves as rulers in India, began to carve out a sphere of influence in the peninsula. They established their supremacy with a series of treaties starting with the Sultanate of Oman (1798-1891), Trucial Coasts (1820, 1835, 1853 and 1892), Bahrain (1861), Kuwait (1899). They also occupied Aden in 1839 and Egypt in 1882. The main instrument of British colonial expansion was its naval strength as well as various British officials (Resident, Agents, Consuls) posted at different places in the peninsula. The Ottoman Empire had neither resources nor much time to assert its hold over the region as the empire became involved in a series of disastrous wars starting from the Russo-Turkish war (1877-78). The Tripolitan war with Italy (1911) and the Balkan wars (1912-13). Besides, the empire had to tackle the growing unrest of its Christian nationalities. Thus, it lost major portion of European territories by 1914.

The Ottomans, however, began to pay more attention to the Arabian peninsula in consequence of their policy of centralisation started in 1839 but more so since 1869 with the
opening of Suez Canal. The peninsula received further attention during Abdul Hamid II’s reign because he became increasingly suspicious of the British design after their unhelpful attitude in 1878 and occupation of Egypt in 1882. However, with the perceptible tilt in German policy towards Ottoman Empire, it got some leverage to face British challenge. The British themselves were not happy with Sultan Abdul Hamid for his policy of Pan-Islamism as they thought that it might create severe problems in India and Egypt and in case of open confrontation leading to war, it might assume the colour of *jihad* and compound their problems. So they were apparently very cautious in not provoking the Ottomans to the point of confrontation. However, local officials were always more than enthusiastic to exploit the ‘resentment’ of Arabs against the Turks and created an atmosphere of confusion and chaos. They always magnified the threat from the Ottomans and then offered protection to the Arab chiefs assuring them of independence. But this solemn pledge was observed more often in breach than in peace. They concluded a number of secret treaties with Arab chiefs; thus the Arabs mortgaged their freedom.
We can identify five circles of activities in the region where Ottoman and British interest clashed in varying degrees. In case of Hajaz, British consulate at Jidda was not like other foreign consulates. The British always tried to interfere in the working of Hijaz affairs. They wanted the Sharif to be always favourable and amenable to their interests. They always tried to cultivate good relations with the Sharif and perhaps were preparing for any eventuality to face jihad by weaning him away. They were extremely successful in this respect. There were also occasions when open confrontation with the Ottomans became imminent but the Porte withdrew at the last minute perhaps realising well its weakness to face the British onslaught.

In case of Najd, the British were feeling much concerned with the growing power of Al-Saud under the leadership of Abdul Aziz Ibn Al-Saud. In spite of the instruction from the Home authorities to resist the adventure of Al-Saud, the British were slowly drawn into the Central Arabian politics and they ultimately promised him their neutrality and thus encouraged the Al-Saud. Their hesitation to support him was not based on any moral principle. It was merely the result of expediency as they were, inter alia, not sure of the...
Wahhabi’s success.

We have examined in respect of Kuwait how the British felt concerned with Baghdad Railway and then promptly concluded an agreement with Shaikh Mubarak. Though Shaikh Mubarak was equally responsible for giving the British foothold there. As regards Shaikh of Kuwait we find a classic case of British imperialism that in spite of their professed reiteration to maintain status-quo they went on concluding a series of agreements with Mubarak to ward off any threat to their interest. Herein the other major powers, Germany, France and Russia, also played a role in varying degrees. The Ottomans in spite of their claim to Kuwait could not assert it effectively and ultimately entered into agreement with the British recognising British interests in lieu of recognition of their suzerainty which was for all intent and purposes only on paper.

The British and the Ottomans also clashed in the area of Qatar, Bahrain. We have already seen that how British used force in case of Zobara to subdue recalcitrant Qasim, chief of Qatar. The Ottomans here too utterly failed to do any thing, thus the British proving their claim wrong that they were not
interested in tribal matters.

In case of Yemen, the British concluded a series of agreements after the occupation of Aden with tribes in the hinterland. But later on in the mid-1890s there was clash between the Ottomans and the British. The Ottomans suspected that the British were instigating the tribes to revolt against them. However, once again, the Ottomans gave up their claim over the area, giving the British further foothold in the region.

In sum, we can say that the Ottomans were not expansionist at least in the period under review. They were merely concerned to save their remaining territory. After the loss of almost their whole European territories it became more imperative for them to maintain hold over the peninsula for it was sine qua non for the prestige of the Sultan as well as the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Had they allowed to cede this region by default then it was likely to set in the process the revolt in many parts of Arabia and thus further strain the precious but scarce resources of the Empire. Moreover the prestige of the Ottoman Sultan as the Caliph of Islamic World was at stake. The British undoubtedly were not
interested to unnecessarily provoke the Ottoman Empire due to its impending demise and due to consequent diplomatic complications of the distribution of the booty among European powers. Nonetheless, they took all necessary, overt and covert, steps to safeguard their interests. However, one thing which comes out clearly from the study of this period is that in spite of their professed policy of 'non-intervention', the British always managed to find pretext to intervene in the affairs of the region to suit their interests and thus steadily increased their hold over it.

Despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire was the most powerful Islamic state in history, capable of protecting Islamic lands for five centuries against the crusaders or colonial powers it could not survive in the twentieth century, in the face of nationalism of its own minorities like the Arabs or its ruling element, the Turks.

The links of the Ottoman Empire with Arabian peninsula were severely affected with the beginning of the World War I and more particularly with the proclamation of 'Arab Revolt' in 1916 under the leadership of Sharif Hussain of Mecca against the Ottomans when British policy of cultivating him
paid rich dividends. However, the Sharif of Mecca was stabbed in the back and his dream of assuming the mantle of Caliphate, as promised by the British, was shattered. But most part of the peninsula, except Yemen and the states on the Arab Gulf, was united under the leadership of Ibn Saud, which later crystallised in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On the Arabian Gulf side, various states which emerged in the 18th century after the European wave of colonialism, that accompanied geographical discoveries, became distinct political entity. The new wave of imperialism which reached its zenith in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, brought about the end of the Ottoman Empire itself and its relationship with the region formally ended in 1923 when the Turkish Republic was proclaimed. Thus Pax Britannica was ultimately established which was to remain almost unchallenged, therefore, it was a landmark in the history of the region.