Chapter I

Arabian Peninsula in Historical Perspective
The Ottoman Empire was, in fact, a major power in the Middle East till the World War I. The empire was founded by Turks from Central Asia who captured Constantinople (modern Istanbul) the capital of the decaying Byzantine Empire in 1453. The domain of the empire, centred in Turkey, stretched at times far into Balkans and Central Europe, along the eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean sea, and over much of the Arabian peninsula.¹

In their eastward expansion, the Ottoman forces found themselves confronted on land by Safavid of Persia and at sea by Portuguese. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese with the purpose of driving the Arabs out of India - Red Sea trade route began to terrorise the Arab merchants by indiscriminately killing the captives. The Portuguese had a plan to desecrate the holy places - Mecca and Medina.² Thus the Arab lands from Andalus to the Indian Ocean were under attack and their only hope to survive rested with the Ottomans. In 1516 the Sharif of Mecca and Medina wanted to send a delegation to the Ottoman Sultan for aid.³ In the meanwhile, Sultan Selim I assumed


² Halil Inalcuk, "Arab-Turkish Relations in Historical Perspective (1260-1914)", *Studies on Turkish Arab Relations* (Istanbul, Annual 1986), p.151.

³ Ibid.
the mantle of Caliphate following the conquest of Egypt in 1517. It is allegedly that the mantle of Caliphate was passed on to him by the last scion of the house of Arabs which does not have any historical basis.4

In 1517, the Portuguese were knocking on the gate of Red Sea. They made an abortive attempt to take over Jidda. They were defeated by the Ottoman admiral Selman, who was then in the Mamluk service, with the help of reinforcement sent by the Sultan Selim I.5 Then the Sharif Abu Numay sent his son to Cairo with the keys of Mecca to ask for his protection and suzerainty. Consequently, Sultan Selim I took the exalted title of Khadim at Harmayn al-Sharifayn, which conferred supremacy in the Islamic world.6 Since then the Ottoman Sultans considered it a sacred duty to keep the routes of pilgrimage open for Muslims from all parts of the world. It should also be noted that before 1517 the Ottomans had been sending substantial amount of money as Sadaka to Medina for the last two centuries collected from the hundreds of wakaf established in Anatolia and the


5 Inalcik, n.2, p.152.

6 ibid, p.153.
At the same time, in order to protect north Africa after the fall of Andalus in 1492, Ottoman launched naval campaign against the Spaniards in the Western Mediterranean. Similar measures were also taken in Tunis and Algeria to ward off the threat from Spanish crusaders. All Arab lands, excepting Morocco, were incorporated into what we call the Ottoman Empire in the short period, 1516-1541.

These few references to the historical events of the period during which the Ottomans assumed the task of defending the Arab lands suffice to illustrate Arab-Ottoman cooperation in its culmination. The incorporation of the Arab lands into the Ottoman Empire was one of the primary turning points not only in Islamic history in general but also in the history of the Arabs in the period 1516-1916 in particular.

It should be noted that the Ottomans themselves did not interpret the situation as a subjugation of the Arabs. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to observe that Arab world as a whole accepted the Ottoman leadership of the Islamic world and joined the Ottoman Commonwealth at the time of Islam’s

7 Inalcik, n.2, pp.153-4.
8 ibid, p.132.
crucial resistance against an expanding Europe. Without this acceptance the Ottoman take over could not have been accomplished relatively rapidly and easily. Military action, it turned out, only had to be directed against the ruling elite in these countries except in Yemen and lower Iraq. Even member of the ruling elite, seeing no other alternative, made a secret alliance with the Ottomans against the local dynasties of Circassian, Berber or Arab region.\(^9\)

As the successful ghazis for two centuries, the Ottomans presented themselves as the saviour of the Arab lands and the defender of Islam. Whether or not this was simply a tactic to expand Ottoman rule in those lands at the expense of rival Muslim dynasties will of course always remain debatable. But what is important for us to understand is that threatened by the impending Christian European control of areas vital to them, the Arabs believed that the Ottoman state was the only Islamic power at the time capable of repelling the aggressor. However, this political as well as emotional relationship had to face serious challenge from the expansionist Europe. This study is an exercise to examine the response of the Ottoman Empire to counter the growing challenges in the Arabian peninsula from the British, one of the most formidable imperial

\(^9\) ibid.
The renaissance and geographical discoveries, which had profound impact all over the world, stirred this region too. European nations, filled with adventure and dynamism, set out to explore the world for trade and commerce. Arabian peninsula, being at the cross road of three continents, was \textit{sina qua non} in any scheme of imperial strategy. The British ultimately came out victorious after defeating the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French in their struggle for supremacy in India. The key to British interest was the peninsula's location. Since antiquity, traffic between Europe and the Orient had passed through a corridor that ran in a north-west/south-east direction. The corridor was bordered on the south-west by the Sahara, and in the north-east by the mountains of Turkey and Persia. The Arabian peninsula stretched across this corridor. Being impenetrable itself, it obliged traffic to pass around it, either across Syria eastwards to the Euphrates and down to the Arabian gulf, or through Egypt to the Red Sea. Yet, from the time of Vasco da Gama's discovery of the Cape route in 1498 until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the preference for the only all-sea route, round Africa, reduced, for some four centuries, the significance of the Middle East as an international thoroughfare.

Apart from the Napoleonic interlude, which for a brief
period projected the Arabian Peninsula into the Cockpit of international politics, the region remained sheltered from European influence during most of the 19th century. In fact, throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, Great Britain enjoyed in the Gulf a position of unchallenged political paramountcy. Although in theory the Gulf was an international waterway, in practice it was a 'British Lake.'

It was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that Britain's position in the Gulf came to be seriously contested. In the 1890s Britain suffered successive challenges from France, Russia and Germany. These intrusions by the Great Powers were complemented by Turkish efforts, which were a manifestation of a general policy of consolidation in the Ottoman Empire, to assert their shadowy authority in Kuwait and along the northern part of the Arabian littoral.

It is well known fact that it was primarily with regard

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to India that the Gulf was of vital importance for Britain. Throughout the nineteenth century and till World War I, British policy in the Gulf had been mainly motivated by two considerations to protect the blank of route to India by denying other powers' access to this British preserve and to maintain peace in the Gulf in order to promote her trade in the region.\footnote{J.B. Kelly, \textit{Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795-1880}} Oxford, University Press, New York, re-issued 1991, p.10. Also see J.G. Lorimer, \textit{Gazetter of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia}, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1915, vol.1, part 1.

Strategically, the Gulf's importance to India is self-evident. British telegraphic communications with India ran through the Gulf. And as Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905, and one of the most eloquent and consistent exponents of the importance of Persia and the Persian Gulf to Indian defence\footnote{As Curzon put it: "There are few things in the world upon which I feel more strongly than on the subject of Southern Persia and the Persian Gulf: curzon (private) to Hmilton (Secretary of State for India), April 26 and May 3, 1899, Curzon MSS. Quoted in Busch, n.2, p.122.} pointed out, 30 percent of the traffic on these lines was Australasian; thus these cables - and for that matter the Gulf itself - were of imperial and not only Indian importance.\footnote{J.C. Hurewitz, \textit{Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1535-1914}. vol.I, (Princeton, 1956), p.222.}

From commercial point of view, the Persian Gulf was also
of vital significance to Great Britain. By the late
nineteenth century her earlier near monopoly in the Gulf trade
had become even more complete. In the triennial period
1895-6-7 over 80 percent of the area's entire export trade was
with British possessions. Moreover in the same period 'out of
a total of 2,161 steamers entered and cleared from the Gulf
ports, 2,039 were British, and their tonnage represented 84
percent of the total tonnage.15

Britain's first interest in the Middle East was
commercial.16 From the days of Tudor England attempts were
made to break into Portugal's trade monopoly in southern Asia,
and, in 1600, a Royal Charter was granted to the East India
Company for this purpose. The success of the Company over the
next three centuries had profound consequences: the British
replaced the Portuguese; a once commercial enterprise took on
governmental responsibilities;17 and India became the jewel
of Empire and principal raison d'etre for Britain's later
presence in the Middle East. In 1858 the Crown took over the
functions of the Company; a Viceroyalty was established; and
Indian matters, from them on, were dealt with through the

15 Ibid., p.227.


India held a special position within the Empire. It was not a colony but a separate monarchy ruled by the British King, while at the same time having an Empire in its own right, its own policy-making administration, and control of its own foreign policy.

India depended on trade and was vulnerable to foreign rivals. At the peak of Empire almost every sizable port facing the Indian Ocean was in British hands. To defend that ocean, British Governments sought to command the gateways to it and deny its ports to other powers. In the Arabian Gulf political and naval measures were taken to protect commercial interests. A Company station was established at Bushire, on the Persian shore of the Gulf, which became the home of the British Political Resident in the Gulf. In 1798 a Napoleonic drive into Egypt prompted British fears of further French expansion towards Arabia and the Gulf, which led to an

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18 Ibid., p.11. A Governor-Generalship had been established in India to supervise British interests in 1784. The Indian Mutiny of 1858 led to direct British intervention.

19 About one half of the British Army, in addition to the Indian Army, was assigned to India’s defence, see Elizabeth Mouroe, Britian’s Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1963, p.11.

20 Interference in the Gulf came from local peoples (Persians, Arabs and Turks) and from European rivals (Dutch, French and Portuguese) operating with their governments’ support.
agreement with the strategically placed Sultan of Muscat. 21

Further, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the British Indian Government, in order to meet the challenge of "piracy" 22 in the wake of rising Wahabi Power, imposed the maritime peace on the so-called known as 'Pirate Coast'. In the process, Britain extracted a series of treaties (1820, 43, 53) treaties from Arab tribes of the Coast (henceforth known as Trucial States which is now U.A.E.). According to the treaties, all disputes had to be referred to the Chief British Officer in the Gulf, the Political Resident Stationed in the Persian port of Bushire. 23 However, by 1892, primarily in response to Turkish pressure, Britain had added non-alienating bonds to her original treaties with the Trucial Shaikhdoms as well as Bahrain and Muscat. The texts of these treaties were

21 Kumar, n.11, p.25.

22 Now this notion of Piracy has been challenged as a myth propagated by Western writers to justify their intervention in the Gulf. Sultan Muhammad Al-Qasimi argues that the threat of piracy was created by the East India Company for commercial purposes. As the company was determined to increase its share of Gulf trade with India at the expense of the native Arab traders, especially the Qawasimi in the lower Gulf, since the company's government in Bombay did not posses the requisite warships to defeat the Qawasimi's fleet. Consequently, company misrepresented the Qawasim as pirates by distorting facts in order to persuade the British Government to commit the British navy and thus secure the dominance over the Gulf. See Sultan Muhammad Al-Qasimi, The Myth Of Arab Piracy in the Gulf, Routledge, London, 1986.

all alike and obliged the respective rulers not to enter into agreement or correspondence with any power other than Britain, not to consent to the residence within their territory of an agent of any other Government, except with British permission, and not to cede, sell or mortgage any part of their territory to any one but the British Government. In essence, all these Shaikhadoms thus came under the British protectorate - on the southern side of the Peninsula, the British had already conquered Aden in 1839 - Thus the British were able to establish their position established in the region on the firm footing. Nevertheless, it was not unchallenged supremacy.

Long-standing threats to British supremacy in the Gulf, whether from France, Russia or Egypt, also threatened the viability of the Ottoman Empire which, rambling and decrepit, extended over much of south-east Europe and the Middle East. Ever since the time of Pitt Britain had feared, that, in the event of its disintegration, the Middle East would be exposed to Russia. This prospect and the measures taken to counter it became known as the Eastern Question. The objective of sustaining Turkey-in-Asia remained a cornerstone of British

24 Busch, n.11, pp.24-25.

25 At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 Britain joined with other European states in seeking to maintain the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.
By allowing the Turks to administer and police the region, the British Treasury was saved from the bother and expense of a more active role. Britain also enjoyed some measure of influence in reforming the more corrupt and inefficient practices of Ottoman rule, not possible with a more abrasive policy.

A more efficient Turkey meant more efficient guardianship of the road to India.

During the nineteenth century technological factors began to redirect traffic through the Arabian corridor. The introduction of steamships reduced the many hazards to Red Sea travel: contrary winds, fickle currents, and 'fanatical Moslems.' Steamships, however, brought problems of their own. Although faster, and less vulnerable to pirates and climatic conditions, they were dependent on bases and coaling

26 Palmerston proclaimed, in 1833: "Turkey is as good as occupier of the road to India as an active Arab Sovereign would be", (The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, 1783-1919, 3 vols., Cambridge, 1940, vol.II, p.162.

27 G. Troeller, Birth of Saudi Arabia (London, 1976), p.75. Britain at that time did not enthuse at direct Christian involvement in the Arab world. Nor could a European army operate effectively in desert conditions.

28 Sarah Searight, The British in the Middle East, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969, p.117. Efforts were also made to establish a route overland from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, and then by ship out into the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

29 The passage round the Cape took between five and eight months by sail, but could still take three months in the early days of steam, See Searight, ibid., p.117.
stations. While Britain acquired these necessary facilities in the Mediterranean; India, in 1839, annexed Aden at the south-western tip of the Arabian peninsula, which henceforth provided an essential naval coaling station and staging post to the Indian sub-continent.\(^{30}\)

The opening of the Suez Canal, in 1869, together with improvements in steamship technology, offered the attraction of a short, safe, all-sea route to the East. The French construction of the Canal and the fear of increased competition in the Red Sea led to British intervention, and eventual occupation of Egypt.\(^{31}\) Middle Eastern problems were no longer approached primarily from an Indian perspective, but from bases in Egypt. More crucially, the age-old British dependency on maritime control was abruptly modified by the responsibilities of military occupation.\(^{32}\)

It is important to emphasize this 'dual' approach to the

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\(^{30}\) In annexing Aden, India had one eye on the search for naval bases and the other on the need to combat Egyptian penetration of Arabia. In 1840, Palmerston secured Egyptian withdrawal under the threat of British intervention.

\(^{31}\) See John Bagot Glubb, *Britain and the Arabs, Study of Fifty Years, 1908-1958* (London, 1959), p.27. Disraeli bought the Canal shares off the Egyptian Khedive in 1875 before British occupation occurred seven years later. Egypt remained *de jure* part of the Ottoman Empire, while being *de facto* under British control.

Middle East. Whereas British involvement in the Gulf stemmed from strategic and regional (i.e. imperial) consideration on the part of India, questions concerning imperial rivals and the European balance of power were the business of the Foreign Office in London. Britain, in other words, approached Middle Eastern Affairs from a westerly and northerly perspective: India from an easterly one - although this distinction has less to do with any lack of administrative co-ordination than with the realisation that the 'Middle East' did not as yet constitute an identifiable, homogeneous factor in international strategy.

Concern for the security of the Suez Canal had economic and security aspects. Economically, the shortened route brought with it a manifold increase in British trade.\(^3\) Strategically, the possibility of mutual assistance for Britain and the Dominions demanded unhindered communications by sea and air. Britain herself was particularly vulnerable due to her dependence on outside sources of food and raw materials.\(^4\) The Suez route offered the shortest passage for trade and reinforcements for the Empire. Its closure, with more than a quarter of the mercantile marine of the Empire

\(^3\) Royal Institute of International Affairs, Political and Strategic Interests of the United Kingdom, London, 1925, p.105.

\(^4\) In terms of distance saved, Australasia benefited less from the Suez route than did India and the Far East. ibid, pp.125-30.
within the Indian Ocean at any one time, would have severely shaken, if indeed it did not shatter, the foundation of imperial defence.\textsuperscript{35}

Overall, British aims in the Middle East prior to 1914 comprised several aspects: naval paramountcy; the protection of trade and the communication lanes; and the avoidance of interference in the domestic policies and customs of the indigenous population, or in Islamic practices.\textsuperscript{36} India's western approaches were to be safeguarded by denying a foothold in Arabia to any rival power other than Turkey. Britain did not seek to preserve the peninsula for her own exploitation,\textsuperscript{37} for it was too inhospitable and unprofitable for imperialistic enterprise. She was neither desirous to interfere, nor to be interfered. To imperial strategists the land-mass of the peninsula, beyond its coastal fringes, presented a terra incognita - a void.\textsuperscript{38} However, it is

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp.244-281.

\textsuperscript{36} Marlowe, n.10, p.15. Even the Campaign against Slavery was directed at the Trading of Salves, not their role in Arabian Society.


\textsuperscript{38} Even Penetration of Arabia by Private Explorers was Tightly Controlled by the British and Indian Governments. Culturally and Politically Central Arabia was isolated from the outside world by reason of geography; while the eastern and southern seabords were isolated by British treaty. See M.A. Fitzsimons, \textit{Empire by Treaty: Britain and the Middle East in the Twentieth Century} (London, 1964), p.7.
perhaps not correct to say that she was not against Turkey as such. In fact, Britain had to devote considerable attention in the period under study to react to the Turkish consolidation move.

**Great Powers Rivalry**

The development of Great Power Rivalries in Gulf was of course of manifestation of the larger picture of rising colonial antagonism in Asia, Africa and the M.E. and the growing sense of insecurity which began to pervade the major governments of Europe in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In 1890, the impetuous, Sabre-rattling William II replaced the great Bismarck as the Chief of the architect of German foreign policy and set Germany on her new course in quest of a 'place in the sun'. In 1891, marking a turning point in European history, revolutionary France and autocratic Russia, failing to find other allies, agreed to act in concert if the peace were threatened. As one historian ironically described it: 'Both made a sacrifice of their principles and traditions.' The autocrat of all the Russia stood to attention for the Marseillaise; and that hymn of revolutionary nationalism was played in honour of the oppressor of the Poles.\(^{39}\)

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In 1894 this Franco-Russian agreement became a formal alliance. Consequently, the British position in the Mediterranean became much threatened. She could not defend Constantinople against a possible Russian attack without concentrating a large proportion of her fleet in the eastern Mediterranean. But such a concentration would risk the escape of the French Squadron at Toulon into the English Channel. As has been aptly remarked by Busch, close cooperation between France and Russia in the Gulf was a 'missed opportunity'. Nevertheless, intrusions by both these powers were sufficiently alarming to prompt Britain into tightening her hold over the Gulf. Although the issues of French, Russian, German and Ottoman attempts to increase their power in the Gulf were overlapping, however, it is suffice to say the French and Russian intrusions ceased to be threats by 1904, in the case of France, and by 1907 in the case of Russia. The Germans, especially with their expansionist (or consolidationist) policy, were to discomfit Britain until 1914.

After Salisbury's return to power in 1895, it could be said that a significant change took place in the traditional

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41 Busch, n.11, p.50.
British attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. Against the background of, inter alia, Great Power rivalries, the switch of the British Centre of gravity in the eastern Mediterranean from Constantinople to Egypt, the rise of German influence at the Porte and the failure of Turkish reforms, Salisbury suggested the partition of the Ottoman Empire. Ever since the days of Pitt, British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire had been governed by the principle of preserving Turkish integrity in order to maintain the balance of power in Europe, safeguard the British position in the eastern Mediterranean and principally to protect the British routes to the East. After throwing out hints at something to partition in 1895, Salisbury contemplated, "a division of preponderance" in the Far and the Middle East, a division which would give Arabia and the Tigris - Euphrates basin (and the Gulf by implication) to Britain.

Ottoman attempts to assert their power along the northern coast of the Arabian littoral had precipitated Britain's decision to obtain non-alienation bonds from Bahrain and the

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44 Salisbury (Prime Minister and For Secy.) to O' Connor (Ambassador to St. Petersburg) January 25, 1898, British Documents in the Origins of the War: 1898-1914, London, 1938, no.9

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Trucial Shaikhdoms. But at this point the British were primarily concerned with increased Turkish activity in Kuwait and the Hasa-Qatar area. This is important because British relations with the Turks and the Saudis before 1910 largely depended upon the maintenance of the maritime peace in the Gulf, especially along the Hasa and Qatar Coast.

The Wahabis first overran Hasa and Qatar in the first decade of the nineteenth century. By 1871, Turkish authority under the famous Midhat Pasha had replaced Wahabi influence in these areas. Although Turkish authority here was less than imposing, the Porte did maintain garrisons in Hasa and Qatar. In the 1890s the Sultan’s attempts to activate the Turkish position in Qatar clashed with British interests. The Government of India feared that any development of the Turkish position in Qatar would threaten their position along the Trucial Coast. Furthermore, Bahrain had important connections with Qatar and, in turn, British interests in Bahrain were extensive.\(^4\) In 1893 the British notified the Porte that she recognised Turkish Sovereignty as extending from Basra to Qatif but that the coast south of this point was ‘debatable land’.\(^5\) Events were further complicated due to the revolt against Turkey by the of the ruler of Qatar, Qasim ibn Thani


\(^{46}\) Busch, n.11, p.25.
who held the Turkish office of Qainiaqam (district governor). His inclination to the British was not uncommon among the Arab Shaikhs on the Coast and in the interior of Arabia. British concern for Qatar and repeated Turkish pressure in the peninsula were to continue until the outbreak of War. Much the same was true of the more important area of Kuwait.

Until the mid-1890s the status of Kuwait did not pose any problem for Britain. This Shaikhdom at the head of the Persian Gulf was recognised as being under nominal Turkish jurisdiction. In 1896, however, internal Kuwait developments, coupled (especially after 1900) with the growing importance of the area as a possible terminus for the Baghdad Railway, propelled this sleepy Shaikhdom into the cockpit of international diplomacy.

Administrative Structure of the British in the Gulf

It is thus clear that in the region Britain had a sphere of influence of multi-faceted dimensions - both in the importance of the area and in the complexities involved. Issues of imperial and Indian defence, Anglo-Ottoman relations, commerce, and local gulf policy were all inter-related in the area. To complicate matters still further, and perhaps as a reflection of the diversity and

complexity of the issues involved, British administrative jurisdiction of Gulf affairs was divided between the Government of India and the Foreign Office.

The principal British official in the Gulf was the Political Resident. This Officer held the title of 'His Britannic Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf and Consul-General for Fars and Khuzistan.' He was appointed by the Government of India and was a member of the Indian Political Service. In the words of one writer these officers (usually of colonel's rank) were 'picked men picked from picked men.' As is obvious from his title, this Indian officer had several functions. As Political Resident he was responsible to the Foreign Department of the Government of India and answerable to that authority for dealings with the Arabian side of the Gulf. As Consul-General the Resident was responsible to the British Minister in Teheran who was under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Office. This complicated situation of overlapping administration and confused jurisdictional responsibility also applied to the various Political Agents in the Gulf who were subordinate to the Resident. On the Persian side of the Gulf, Consuls in ports and cities were members of the Indian Political Service and

responsible to the Government of India as Political Agents. Of course in their consular capacity they were answerable ultimately to Whitehall. On the Arabian side of the Gulf, Political Agents who by 1910 were stationed at Muscat, Kuwait and Bahrain were members of the Indian political Service and subordinate to the Resident. With the exception of the British Official in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, the officers on the Arabian littoral were not consuls.49

The administrative anomalies prevailing in the Gulf were complemented by a similar situation at the head of the Gulf. In Baghdad, another Resident was stationed who enjoyed equal status with the Resident of Bushire. Subordinate to this official was a consul in Basra. Although the Resident in Baghdad and (until 1898) the Consul in Basra were usually members of the Indian Political Service, they reported to London through the British Ambassador in Constantinople. With so many authorities reporting from the Gulf area, conflicting responsibility and interests were often complemented by conflicting information. Moreover an elongated, and obviously rather tangled, chain of command influenced the formulation and execution of Gulf policy.50


50 Busch, n.11, p.7.
This pattern of divided and overlapping administrative responsibility resulted in an inevitable clash between the two policy making centres of the British Empire: the Government of India and the Imperial Government in London. Increasingly in the later nineteenth and in the twentieth century, British policy in the Gulf was the source of friction between these two authorities. This inter-office rivalry indeed constitutes one of the predominant themes of the period under consideration. India, of course, viewed the areas as vital to its defence, while London, stressing the broader plane of international relations, viewed the Persian gulf as just another area requiring attention.\textsuperscript{51}

To add further to the complexities in the Gulf already described, there was the issue, and many times a rather heated one of financial responsibility in the area. Generally, the Government of India bore the burden of expense for the establishments in the Persian Gulf. However, as the area was drawn into the vortex of international rivalries and subsequently became important to London, the Government of India was naturally reluctant 'to provide funds for an area in which control of policy formation was increasingly in the hands of the Home Government.'\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} Troeller, n.27, pp.3-4.

\textsuperscript{52} Busch, n.11, p.7.
Now we will make a brief survey of a number of states or principalities which were gradually assuming a more or less definite form as separate political entities on the Arabian side of the Gulf, to be seriously reckoned with in the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf. The situation in Hijaz, Najd and Yemen will also be discussed.

Hijaz

For several centuries the Turks had laid claim to sovereignty over Arabia, but had found that, due to marked variations in the geography and culture of the peninsula, some areas were more amenable to direct control than others. In the west, the Hijaz extends for some six hundred miles down the Red Sea. It contains the two Holiest Cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, which host the annual Muslim Pilgrimage (Haj). Mountainous areas in the south are cultivatable, and the attachment to a major international waterway has encouraged a long tradition of trade.

These three factors - religious, agricultural and commercial - had several consequences. First, the Hijaz was the most visited and cosmopolitan region of Arabia. Chinese and Russians - is dispersed through its populace. Second, much of the Hijazi population adopted a sedentary lifestyle. A living could be made from the land, or through commerce, or for which Hijazis were notorious, by exploiting the many thousands of overseas visitors who undertook the Pilgrimage.
Third, all three factors made the Hijaz more attractive to the Turks. The link between the Caliph in Constantinople and the spiritual home of Islam provided the religious pretext for the Turks to impose their authority over the Holy Land. As a consequence, the Hijaz, at least from the nineteenth century, witnessed an active Ottoman presence denied to less holy or less accessible parts of the peninsula. The religious and commercial importance of the Hijaz also encouraged a long tradition of foreign consular posts in Jedda - the port of Mecca. In the period under review, the British began to pay more attention to this region which will be examined in depth in Chapter II.

Najd

The vast hinterland plateau of the peninsula, extending to some three quarters of a million square miles, is known as Najd. Here lies the source of the great romantic legends of Arabia. Geography has conspired to accentuate the inaccessibility of Najd. Apart from the extremes of climate, the central populated areas are effectively enclosed by largely uninhabited deserts: the Nafud in the north, the Dhna in the east, and the Rub al Khali (Empty Quarter) in the south. The mountains of the Hijaz complete the isolation of Najd.

As a result of geography and climate, natural resources were meagre and the object of fierce competition.
Communication was slow, distorted by word of mouth, and that with the outside world almost non-existent. The inhabitants of Najd were, confining the energies of their troops and administrators to the periphery of the peninsula. The absence in Najd of a peasant class that was bound to the land denied the Turks any social leverage, and its people evolved a culture quite distinct from the urban areas elsewhere in the Arab world where the civil foundation was built on agriculture, commerce and urban structures; where nomads were treated with contempt, and where a greater or lesser familiarity had long been established with the western world.\textsuperscript{53}

By contrast, the geography of central Arabia imposed a range of livelihoods, from nomadic pastoralists to settled merchants and agriculturalists.\textsuperscript{54} Contrary to the inferior position held by nomads in the more developed parts of the Arab world, in Najd the bedouin\textsuperscript{55} had long thrived on a tradition of independence, pride, nobility and military prowess.\textsuperscript{56} It was not uncommon in urban areas for young


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p.28.

\textsuperscript{55} Camel-herding nomads, sometimes referred to as bedu (badu).

\textsuperscript{56} Helms. n.53, p.30
Najdis to be sent into the deserts to acquire the bedouin virtues.\textsuperscript{57}

Despite the handicaps of nature, Najd developed a coherent social organisation, producing a wide range of foodstuffs and artifacts.\textsuperscript{58} Large oasis settlements acted as agricultural, mercantile and manufacturing centres, and were often located at the intersection of caravan routes. The social structure reflected an acute dependence on water and grazing. It was characterised by an inter-woven, segmentary tribal system which formed economic and military units, and by a complex inter-dependence between the urban and nomadic communities.\textsuperscript{59} Competition for scarce resources precipitated fluctuating military alliances between tribes and townspeople that impeded the development of any central authority.\textsuperscript{60} The bedouin tribes could, and did, transfer their support at will, as expediency demanded:\textsuperscript{61} The lack of foreign influence or

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.45; for a comprehensive list of domestic products.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p.30.


\textsuperscript{61} At any one time a chief would be on hostile relations with some, and truce relations with other, chiefs Sweet, ibid., p.1141.
any centralised state apparatus encouraged the development of protector-client political, economic and social relationships. The bedouin tribes offered military protection in return for goods and services. These patron-client relationships, leading to the forced payment of tribute, have been described as having legal and ideological implications reminiscent of the mafia, by keeping clients safe and reducing economic competition.  

This was the environment into which a dynamic, puritanical, religious doctrine was introduced in the middle of the eighteenth century. It eventually led to the political and social transformation of central Arabia, and culminated in the modern state of Saudi Arabia. A Najdi theologian, Mohammad ibn Abd al Wahab, incensed by what he saw as the prevalent superstitions, the laxity and materialism of life in central Arabia, founded a strict Unitarian Islamic movement, which became known to its opponents after the name of its founder. Wahabism urged a return to the simple teachings of the Koran, giving no place to reason in religious

62 Helms, n.53, p.65

63 This included such activities as tree and stone worship. John S. Habbib, Ibn Saud's Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and their Role in the Creation of the Saudi Kingdom 1910-1930, (Leiden, 1978), p.3.

matters. It preached monotheism. God was omnipotent, and nothing and no-one could intercede between Him and man. For that reason shrines, tombs and other manifestations of paganism or polytheism were to be destroyed. Traditionally, the Jihad (Holy War) had been employed by Moslems against non-Moslems. Such was the fanaticism of Wahabism that non-Wahabi Moslems were despised as much as non-Moslems.

As a result, the instrument of the jihad was revived in Wahabi hands to be directed not only against non-Moslems, but also against decadent, non-Wahabi Muslims. With Najd surrounded by other Islamic lands, it followed that the proselytizing crave of Wahabism would be directed, at first, against fellow Muslims.

Wahabism was dogmatic and fundamentalist. It did not develop political theory on matters of state-craft or temporal authority. It might not have made any lasting impact on Arabia, were it not for one particular disciple. Among its early converts, around 1745, was Mohammad ibn Saud, Emir of Daraiya in central Najd. He was, at that time, a minor

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66 Helms, n.53, p.91.

67 Ibid., p.103. On the other hand, Wahabism did defer to the secular authority which prosecuted its aims. Few other religions have harnessed the state so effectively to its aims (personal correspondence from Robert Lacey).
Arabian figure. The Al Sauds were not bedouin, though they had proud ancestral links with the prominent Anaiza of northern Arabia. In the hands of Mohammad ibn Saud, Wahabism became exploited for political ends. The propagation of a common religious faith was aimed at binding the inhabitants of Najd together. During the rest of the eighteenth century the Saudi-Wahabi combination embraced Najd with unbridled fervour. Whom the Koran could not convert, the sword could. In Philby’s words:

Wahabism became a religio-military ideal under which desert people, stirred by a great idea, embarked upon common action. Common cause was maintained as long as fanaticism was kept at white heat.  

Wahabism accepted Al Saud as a legitimate and hereditary Islamic government. The Saudi ruler was no longer simply a secular authority but, ostensibly, the representative of God and his Divine law on earth. From the time of Mohammad ibn Saud’s conversion the Al Saud were no longer referred to as 'shaikhs' or 'emirs', but as 'imams', having religious authority over the populace. The Saudi state was known as


69 Helms, n.53, p.81.

70 Ibid., p.103. Broadly, an emir rules over a settled population, while a sheikh rules over bedouin tribes. Both are secular, not religious titles. In modern times the distinction between emir and Sheikh has become blurred.
an imamate.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century Wahhabism was strong enough to break loose from Najd and came to the attention of the outside world. Shiite shrines at Karbala near the Euphrates were desecrated, and Wahabi hordes ransacked Mecca and Medina, considered sacrosanct. By 1811 Saudi-Wahabi tentacles extended as far north as Aleppo near the present Turkish border, and over the Hijaz, southern Mesopotamia and eastern Arabia as far as Muscat. 71

Wahabi desecration of the Holy Cities, as well as in Syria and Mesopotamia, brought about a century of intermittent Saudi reversals. 72 The Turks harnessed the ambitions of Mohammed Ali, the Francophile Albanian Viceroy of Egypt, to combat the Wahabi surge. 73 Egyptian forces were finally withdrawn from Arabia, at British insistence. 74

71 Troeller, n.27, p.14

72 Safeguarding the Holy Places of Islam was one of the main self-appointed tasks of the Ottoman Empire See, R.Bayly Winder, Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1965), pp.6, 312.

73 By the second decade of the century the fire of Wahhabism was temporarily extinguished. Daraiya, the Saudi capital, was razed in 1818. When Wahhabism rose again its capital was nearby Riyadh.

74 Mohammed Ali's early forays into Arabia were under the direction of Constantinople. A concerned Egyptian invasion in the late 1830s was more ambitious, the Viceroy seeking to carve out an Egyptian empire from Turkey's Arab provinces, which, to British disquiet, threatened to undermine the stability of the Ottoman Empire. The only active British move
The opening of the Suez Canal not only eased Britain's communications with the East, but also encouraged Turkey to consolidate and expand her position in Arabia. The Turks increased their presence in the Hijaz and the Yemen. They also extended their influence in the Gulf beyond Kuwait by establishing a garrison, in 1871, at Hofuf in Hasa\textsuperscript{75} Turkish influence seemed to be gaining further impetus when, in 1891, a rival Najdi emir, ibn Rashid of Hail, with Turkish encouragement captured Riyadh.\textsuperscript{76} The Saudi family, including the eleven year old future King of Saudi Arabia, went into exile, finally taking up residence in Kuwait at the invitation of Shaikh Mubarak.\textsuperscript{77} There, the young Ibn Saud was introduced to great-power intrigue amid the proposals for the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, and, through her treaty with Mubarak in 1899, to Britain's paramount position in the Gulf.\textsuperscript{78}

\footnotesize{in central Arabia during the nineteenth century was to despatch Colonel Pelly, Political Resident in the Gulf to Riyadh in 1865 to investigate claims that Saudi tribesmen were raiding into the Gulf Shaikhdoms. Winder, n.62, pp.219-21.}

\textsuperscript{75}Leatherdale Clive, \textit{Britain and Saudi Arabia, 1925-1939 - The Imperial Oasis} (London, 1983), p.15.

\textsuperscript{76} ibid, p.30.

\textsuperscript{77} Troller, n.27, p.30.

\textsuperscript{78} ibid.
Kuwait

The tiny principality of Kuwait is located towards the western head of the Arabian Gulf in the form of a deep wedge between Iraq and the Saudi Arabian province of El-Hasa. It shot into prominence and became the main focus of international diplomacy, in the period under study, primarily because it was regarded as the most feasible terminus for a railway system linking the eastern Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf.\textsuperscript{79} Kuwait though enjoyed a \textit{de facto} independence from its birth early in the 18th century, its chiefs recognized at different periods the nominal suzerainty of the Ottomans or the Wahabi Imams of Riyadh.\textsuperscript{80} The expedition of 1871 to Najd brought Kuwait directly within the orbit of Ottoman influence. The importance of this principality vis-a-vis the Mesopotamian route to India had attracted British attention even earlier. But at the time of the Ottoman’s reassertion the Government of India was engaged in salvaging its influence over the trucial states that Kuwait’s fate did not attract any attention. An attitude of indifference towards Kuwait is also discernible in the tentative overtures which Salisbury, made to the Ottoman Government in 1880 for a division of the Gulf into spheres of

\textsuperscript{79} Precis on Kuwait Affairs by India Office, F.D.S.P. No.57, March 1901.

\textsuperscript{80} Lorimer, n.12, vol.I, Part I, pp.1000-16.
influence.\textsuperscript{81}

This principality came into prominence during the fierce controversy which raged, just previous to the World War I, over a site for the terminus of the 'Baghdad Railway'. The strategical and commercial advantages of its situation, its proximity to the Tigris - Euphrates corridor, and its intimate connection with central Arabian Kingdom of Ibn Saud, to which region it afforded easy access, have all combined to render the position of the Kuwait Shaikhdom of special importance.

The territory of Kuwait forms a semicircle of rather featureless country on the western side of the head of the Gulf, of which the base is a stretch of low coastline of some two hundred miles. The region has received much less attention by the independent traveller than most places in the Gulf, and until comparatively recent times was little known.\textsuperscript{82} The town of Kuwait, situated on the southern side of a fine bay, has no very ancient history. It is, Pelly tells us, only of 100 to 200 years of age. The name is a corruption or diminutive of 'kut', or fort. The ancestors of the present chief lived on the creeks near the mouths of the Shatt al Arab, and were probably not strangers to occasional acts of piracy. Their original fort was at Umm Qasr, at the head of the Zubair Creek. The bay of Kuwait is also called

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Wilson, n.10, p.305.
Gurn (Grane), or horn, in allusion to the shape of the bay. 83

The first settlers of Kuwait are said to have belonged to the Utubi, themselves derived from the Anaiza of Northern Central Arabia, and in the beginning the place was probably an ordinary Arab settlement, situated on the southern side of the bay and protected by a small fort. In the first fifty years after its foundation the settlement grew rapidly in wealth and importance; and the Utubi, partly by means of matrimonial alliances with other tribes in the neighbourhood, succeeded in making their position strong against the Bani Khalid who, hitherto, had dominated the whole north-eastern coast of Arabia.

Great impetus was given to the growth of Kuwait with the siege and capture of Basra by the Persian in 1776-79, in consequence of which numbers of its inhabitants migrated from there. During the occupation of the town by the Persians 84 the bulk of the Indian trade of Basra with Baghdad, Aleppo, Smyrna, and Constantinople was diverted to Kuwait. By 1790 the town had begun to share in the commercial prosperity which the seizure of Bahrain by the Utubi in 1783 had brought to these last, by drawing them into the carrying trade of Arabia; goods were imported there from Muscat, Zubara, Bahrain and

83 ibid, p.312.

Qatif.

After the recovery of Basra by the Turks, on account of difficulties with Ottoman officials, the staff of the British factory at Basra withdrew temporarily to Kuwait in 1793. Among those who migrated to Kuwait was Mr. Harford Jones, afterwards Sir Harford Jones Brydges, to whom we are indebted for a valuable history of the Wahabis. The latter committed aggressions on Kuwait during that period, and subsequently made various abortive attempts to incorporate the town with their dominions.

For about forty years after the return of the British factors to Basra we hear little of Kuwait politically, and the town seems to have escaped notice by the British. In 1831, however, the traveller Stocqueler was there, 'having been', he says, 'almost the only European who has visited the place for many years'. He gives a highly interesting account of the town, which in his time extended about a mile along the shore, and contained about four thousand inhabitants. He suggested that the harbour may probably have been occupied by the Portuguese, 'on account of the command it gives over the mouth of the river of the Arabs, and the power it thus conferred of interrupting the Turkish and Venetian trade with India.' The town, he says, was then governed by a Shaikh who kept no armed

85 Wilson, n.10, p.340.

86 ibid, p.350.
forces, but levied a duty of 2 percent upon all imports.

On reaching the coast of the Persian Gulf in Hasa, when fighting the Wahabis in 1838-9, the Egyptians placed an emissary at Kuwait, whose real functions were undoubtedly political. At this time the ruler of Kuwait was one Shaikh Jubair, who, on the whole, maintained friendly relations with the British government up to the time of his death in 1859. He was succeeded by Shaikh Subha, during whose rule Colonel Pelly, in 1865, made his remarkable journey from Kuwait to meet the ruler of Najd at Riyadh, and first realized the possible future of Kuwait as a commercial port and meeting-place of sea-borne and other trade in the Persian Gulf. Palgrave (1862-63) supplies details of interest concerning Kuwait, in his day.

'Among all the seamen,' he says, 'who ply the Persian Gulf, the mariners of Koweyt hold the first rank in diving skill, and in solid trustworthiness of character. Fifty years since their harbour with its little town was a mere nothing; now it is the most active and the most important port of the northerly Gulf, Aboo-Shahr (Bushire) hardly or even not accepted. Its chief, Eysa, enjoys a high reputation both at home and abroad, thanks to good administration and prudent policy; the import duties are low, the climate is healthy, the

87 ibid.

88 ibid, pp. 350-55.
inhabitants friendly, and these circumstances joined to a tolerable roadstead and better anchorage than most in the neighbourhood, draw to Koweyt hundreds of small craft which else would enter the ports of Aboo-Shahr or Basra.... In its mercantile and political aspect this town forms a sea outlet, the only one for Jabal Shammar, and in this respect like Trieste for Austria. Kuwait, is only fifteen days' distance or thereabout from Hail'.

Before many years had elapsed, steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company began to make Kuwait a port of call. This aroused the jealousy of Turkish authorities in Iraq, who were apprehensive that Kuwait's prosperity might be prejudicial to the trade of Basra; the steamship service was therefore suspended, but only for the time being.89

Bahrain

From the eleventh to the beginning of the sixteenth century the inhabitants of Bahrain, to whom an Arab and Persian descent has been variously assigned, were subject to chiefs of their own race. In the time of Alboquerque the island fell into the hands of the Portuguese, and appears to have been retained by them till 1622, when they were expelled by the Persians. Of the Portuguese rule in Bahrain, unfortunately, little is known; even the exact date of their

89 A weekly service was established in 1901 and has been maintained ever since.
occupation has not been ascertained, but in 1521 we read of an Arab insurrection in Bahrain against the Persians and Portuguese, in which the Portuguese factor was tortured and crucified. Portuguese power was again restored after a few years by an expedition under Simeon d'Acunha, now, the sole remaining trace of their power in the island is a ruined fortress near Balad al Qadim (The Old Town).\textsuperscript{90}

After the final eviction of the Portuguese the defenceless islanders continued to be subject to an interminable succession of purposeless tyrannies, which has no counterpart elsewhere in the Gulf. The Persian occupation was of uncertain duration, but about the year 1718 a descent was made upon the island by the Omani,\textsuperscript{91} who then occupied it for a short period. In the middle of the eighteenth century control appears to have passed into the hands of the once powerful Huwala Arabs (who even at the present day are strongly represented there), but they were so divided among themselves by feuds, that, in 1753, reconquest by Persia was an easy task, and the islands again became a dependency of Persia, at least in name.

The more recent history of Bahrain may be said to date from 1783, in which year the Persians, after the death of Kerim Khan (1779), were driven out by the powerful Utubi

\textsuperscript{90} Kelly, n.12, p.35.

\textsuperscript{91} Under Sultan bin Saif.
Arabs. The petty chiefs of the Persian Gulf, who had been kept in check by the strong hand of Nadir Shah and his immediate successors, became involved in contests for supremacy, and in 1783 the Utubi tribe - who inhabited Zubara on the mainland, and were virtually independent - with the help of the Al Subah tribe, made themselves masters of the islands. In 1808 the Sultan of Muscat succeeded in conquering Bahrain, but was driven out the following year by the Utubi assisted by the Wahabis. In 1810 the Utubi drove out the Wahabis, and in 1816 repelled another attack by the Sultan of Muscat; since this event, the Utubi have remained paramount in the island, though at various times they professed unwilling allegiance to Muscat, to the Wahabis, to Turkey, and to Persia in turn. Throughout this period, the attitude of Britain towards Bahrain was one of complete abstention from interference between the rivals.

Direct dealings with the newly formed Arab principality by Britain may be said to have begun towards the year 1820, during the British operations against piracy. The Shaikhs of Bahrain participated in the benefits of the General Treaty of Peace made with the Trucial chiefs in the year. When, however, the First Maritime Truce of 1835 was arranged, the

92 'The ruling family is the Al Khalifa section, of the Utub. The Al Khalifa held the kingdom of Hasa too, on the opposite mainland; but they were driven out by the Turks about 1840, and now the Bahrain Islands is all that is left to them of their former extensive territory'. Kelly, n.12, p.37.
Shaikh of Bahrain was not invited to become a signatory. During the occupation of the neighbouring territory of Hasa by the Egyptians, in the thirties of the nineteenth century, the Shaikh, in spite of protests on the part of the British, fell under their influence and so remained until their retirement in 1840, when the island again came under Wahabi control. In spite of the unsettled state of political affairs, the Shaikh, in 1847, signed a treaty with Britain for the suppression of the Slave Trade similar to that executed by the Trucial chiefs. At about the same time, a proposal for the establishment of a British protectorate over the islands was considered and rejected, Britain continuing merely to exercise a ‘beneficent supervision’ on general matters.

In 1861 in consequence of political claims put forward both by Persia and Turkey - a convention of much importance, as initiating the subsequent friendly relations between Britain and Bahrain, was signed by the Shaikh. By this convention he acknowledged the validity of the various treaties and conventions previously concluded and promised to abstain - in return or the support of the British Government against external aggression - from ‘the prosecution of war, piracy and slavery by sea’. He also engaged to submit cases of aggression on himself to British arbitration and, further,

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undertook to recognize the jurisdiction of the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf over British subjects in Bahrain and, subject to certain conditions, to permit the latter to reside and trade in his dominions.

When the Turks annexed Hasa in 1871, they manifested a desire to claim suzerainty of other surrounding districts, including Bahrain. In May that year Colonel Pelly, the British Resident, visited Bahrain and renewed the assurances of British protection as long as the Shaikh continued to observe the convention of 1861. The constant presence of British ships in adjacent waters also proved an effective check on Turkish pretensions, which finally ceased on their evacuation of Hasa in 1913.

The Trucial Coast and Qatar

The Trucial Coast is about 325 miles coastal area from the northern tip of Ra’s Musandandam to Khor al-Udayd\textsuperscript{94} at the eastern base of the Qatar peninsula. The area began to be referred as the "Trucial Coast" when the Shaikhs of this region were forced to sign the General Treaty of Peace in 1820 by the British. Earlier, British called it the "Pirate Coast". The coast is divided into Shaikhdoms, or petty principalities, each with a considerable degree of independence, their number varying subject to the dynamics of internal succession and landwarfare. In the period of this

\textsuperscript{94}"Khor" (in the latest transliteration, Kh\textsuperscript{OY} ) means bay or inlet.
study there were six: from northeast to southwest, Ra‘s al-Khaimch, Uum al-Qaywayn, Ajman, Sharjah (ash-Shariqah), Dubai and Abu Dhabi.\textsuperscript{95}

However, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi were the most powerful among them. Sharjah had control over much of the interior behind the Shaikhdoms, reaching the Gulf of Oman in the area Dibba-Khor Kalba. Ra‘s al-Khaimah, an appendage of Sharjah, aspired to become independent. The town of Sharjah, with a population of 15,000 including a colony of 200 British Indians, was the most important on the coast, as Britain recognized by stationing a native agent here under the supervision of the Bushire Resident.

Spreading over 250 miles of coastline, and territory reaching it and as far as the Oasis of Buraimi, was perhaps the strongest of all of them, but the town of Abu Dhabi with 6,000 inhabitants was overshadowed by Sharjah. However, Abu Dhabi was fortunate to get a succession of competent rulers in the late nineteenth century. The only other town of importance on this coast was Dubai. Though the Shaikhdom was comparatively small, its capital was important trading centre mainly because of its connections with Arab enclaves on the Persian coast, particularly that of Lingah.

\textsuperscript{95}Information about this coast and its population obtained from the following: Loriner, n., vol.I, Part I, p.738; Winder, n. 72 , pp.28-37; also see Charles D.Belgrave, The Pirate Coast (London, 1966); J.B.Kelly, Eastern Arabian Frontiers (London, 1964).
From Dubai and Abu Dhabi the coastline - barren, waterless, and uninhabited - was a mixture of desert, inlets, shoals, and mangrove swamp. Until Udayd, nearly 200 miles West of Abu Dhabi, approach was difficult even for native craft. This area was of no particular concern for the British statesman owing to the lack of natural harbours or settlement until the era of large scale exploitation of petroleum. But this was not the case with the Trucial Coast itself for, Britain had been interested in this region since the late eighteenth century. By various means, including force, Britain had imposed a series of treaties in the nineteenth century which eventually culminated in a "treaty of peace in perpetuity", and a supplementary series for suppression of slavery. Once piracy and slavery were controlled, Britain interfered in internal affairs only when the agreements were broken or when changing events, such as the movements of other powers or the development of the arms trade, made such action necessary. Britain was anxious to preserve the area from any encroachments, and in the 1890s the major danger appeared to be from Turkey, which claimed control of the Qatar peninsula.

Qatar is a low, sandy and sparsely vegetated peninsula

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96 Busch, n.11, p.22.

97 Kelly, n.12. For treaties in full see Hurewitz, n.14, and Aitchison, n.93.

98 Wilson, n.10, p.218.
about 115 miles from north to south and 55 miles wide; surrounded by dangerous reefs and shoals, it is most difficult to reach by sea. The main occupation of the people of Qatar was pearling, fishing and trade. The settlements of Doha, known more commonly at that time as Bida, and Wakra, with roughly 12,000 and 8,000 respectively are situated about half-way up the eastern coast. The area assumed some importance in the international relations of the Gulf, however, largely because of its history.

Under Wahabi influence in the early nineteenth century, Qatar like the province of Hasa fell under Ottoman domination during the campaigns of Midhat Pasha in 1870-71, although it had been once controlled and long claimed by Bahrain. Effective Turkish control of the interior was short-lived, but Turkish garrisons were maintained in Qatif, Hasa, and Doha. Britain, too, had interests there, and later attempts to revive and expand Turkish jurisdiction clashed with these interests.

British claims on Qatar could be traced to the perpetual Treaty of 1853, for Bahrain, whose jurisdiction over Qatar was recognized by Britain at that time, signed for Qatar. The Shaikhs of Qatar had themselves signed earlier treaties. Moreover, British interests in Bahrain was extensive, and Bahrain in turn had important link with Qatar. In addition,

the settlement at 'Udayd had originally been established by the Shaikhdom of Abu Dhabi and was considered under its suzerainty, although it had been soon abandoned for climatic conditions. The jurisdictional question became of some importance when the Turks attempted to establish an additional garrisons there at the end of the century.

British Indian officials were very concerned with the spread of Turkish influence into the Trucial Coast, and even before the rise of the Udayd issue, India had requested that the Ottoman Empire be warned off. Salisbury had opposed the idea. But when the Ottomans moved on Udayd in 1891 then Salisbury changed his stand; a "remonstrance and a copy of the truce of 1853 (as proof of the British connection) were handed to the Porte. The Turks, however, stated that they were well within their rights in maintaining post at both Udayd and Zobra (a small settlement on the northwest corner of Qatar and another trouble spot), for the truce had no bearing on the Sultan's sovereignty over Qatar.

British obtained non-alienation bonds from the Trucial chiefs in 1892 mainly because of this renewed Turkish pressure. Though these were similar in form to the Muscat bond, but the new agreements gave the British much control.

100 Viceroy telegram to Secretary of State for India, August 11, 1888, and minute by Salisbury, F078/5108.

101 White Constantinople to Salisbury, August 28, 1891, FO 78/5108.
The texts of these assurances were all alike and obliged the concerned rulers not to enter into agreement or correspondence with any power other than Britain, not to consent to the residence within their territory of an agent of any other government, except with British permission, and not to sell, or mortgage any part of their territory to anyone but to the British government.\textsuperscript{102}

In sum, there was no serious danger to the British's interests on the Trucial Coast for the time being. However, neither power was ready in case of Qatar to make adjustment. In 1893, Britain endeavoured to clarify the situation, informing the Porte that the British, while recognising the sovereignty of the Sultan extending from Basrah to a place called Qatif, considered that the coast running south of that place was looked upon as debatable land.\textsuperscript{103} India was willing to expel the Ottomans from the peninsula, particularly since the local population, under their chief Qasim Ibn Thani, appeared favourably inclined toward Britain. Qasim, concerned, with Turkish expansion of control, even asked that he be accorded British dependency status.\textsuperscript{104} The Foreign

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102}Aitchison, n.93, XI, no.30.
\item \textsuperscript{103}Ford (Constantinople) to Rosebery, April 23, 1893, FO 78/5109.
\item \textsuperscript{104}Qasim to Resident, March 10, 1893, FES July 1893, 124-231. Qasim is given as "Jasim" in the documents of the time.
\end{itemize}
Office opposed the suggestion, seeing little chance of permanent success and not fully certain of the possible gain in any case. Unwilling to abandon their Qatar position, the Ottoman authorities were not only active here but also looked enviously toward Bahrain.

Sultanate of Muscat and Oman

Though the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman was under the jurisdiction of Ottoman Empire but a brief survey of the British role there will be helpful to understand the complexity of the British interest and its bearing upon the Anglo-Ottoman relations. Up to this time Muscat formed, nominally at least, an integral part of the wider dominions of the Imam of Oman. In 1793 Sultan bin Ahmed revolted against his uncle, Sayyid Hamad, the nominal Imam, and having made himself master of the forts at Muscat, Matra, Barka, and other posts along the coast, set up an independent rule under the title of Sayyid Sultan. This event marked the beginning of separate dealings on the part of the Bombay Government with the Sultan of Muscat, which developed with the passage of time. British commercial interests had, hitherto, been represented at Muscat by a native broker only, negotiations for the establishment there of a factory having failed.

In 1798 a Persian of influence, Mehdi Ali Khan, was

\[\text{\textsuperscript{105}}\text{I.O. to F.O., May 12, 1893, with minutes by Lord Rosebery (Foreign Minister, 1892-1894, FO 78/5109).}\]
selected by the Bombay Government for appointment as Resident at Bushire. In this capacity he was assigned, among other things, to ascertain at Muscat the real disposition of Sayyid Sultan towards the French, and to endeavour to dissuade him from assisting them; further, he was to report on the trustworthiness of the Company's native agent, who had come under suspicion. He was further instructed to obtain, if possible, a concession for the establishing of a British factor at Muscat; and to promise, if the Sultan undertook to exclude the French from Oman, that a surgeon should be sent from India for his personal service, as he desired.

In due course, an agreement was signed in 1798, whereby Sayyid Sultan bound himself away to take the side, in international matters, of the British government; to deny a commercial or other foothold in his dominions to the French and Dutch nations so long as a state of war existed; to dismiss from his service and expel any employee of French nationality; to exclude French vessels, which then made Muscat a base of privateering operations; in case of hostility ensuing between English and French ships, to actively assist the former; and, finally, to permit the British to establish, should they so wish, a fortified factory and garrison at Bandar Abbas, which the sultan then held on lease from Persia. But Sayyid Sultan firmly refused to permit a British factory

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106 ibid, pp.30-40.
at Muscat, on the ground that such a concession would involve him in war with the French and Dutch, and though he at first agreed to receive an English political Agent at Muscat, he subsequently withdrew consent.

At the end of 1799 Captain (afterwards Sir) Joh Malcolm was sent by the Government of India on his first political mission to the Persian court, with instructions 'to adjust while at Muscat, any points relating to our interests at that place'; and with him was a surgeon. When Malcolm arrived at Muscat the sultan was absent on a cruise, but in January 1800 he found him on board his ship, anchored between Qishm and Hanjam. Sayyid Sultan, 'after a short but explicit conversation', set his seal to a new agreement, which confirmed that of 1798, and provided further for the acceptance of a British Political Agent at Muscat, so that misunderstandings should not arise. Having achieved this, Malcolm proceeded to Bushire and Tehran, and Surgeon Bogle, who meanwhile had established himself in the sultan's confidence, then assumed the position of first British Political Agent at Muscat.

In September 1803 a French mission, under M. de Cavaignac, arrived, and became aware, for the first time, of the existence of the British agreements of 1798 and 1800. The

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107 On account of the unhealthiness of the climate of Muscat for Europeans, after 1809 British interests were administered from Bushire; but after 1830 the political officer again resided at Muscat, or in Zanzibar.
sultan, while willing to discuss purely commercial matters, informed the French mission that on account of the agreements with the British he could not accept a French representative at Muscat or even entertain proposals thereon. The French mission accordingly withdrew. The sultan's scrupulous regard for his obligations was doubtless due to the importance to Muscat of the Indian trade, rather than to any personal preference on his part for Englishmen over Frenchmen; and may be it had been hinted more than once, that should he throw in his lot with the French, the British government would have no alternative but to place his territory under a commercial blockade from the side of India.

Sayyid Sultan was killed in 1804 by a shot through the head from a Musket ball, on board one of his vessels, in an encounter with jawasmi, while returning from a cruise in the Persian gulf in search of pirates.\textsuperscript{108} He was succeeded, after some opposition and disorder, by his nephew Badr, who was backed by the Wahabis. But Badr was assassinated in 1807, and the power passed into the hands of a usurper, Sayyid Sa'id, a man remarkable alike for ability and energy, who controlled the affairs of Muscat for nearly half a century, and greatly extended its territory and influence both along

\textsuperscript{108}Vincenzo, Maurizi, History of Seyd Said, Sultan of Muscat, 1819, p.2.
The early period of Sa'id's rule was occupied in struggles against the Wahabis, generally in cooperation with the British and later he had to tackle Egyptian machinations, again with British support. He spent the last half of his reign mostly in his East African possessions at Zanzibar, rather to the neglect of his Arabian dominions. Indeed, but for the prompt assistance of the Bombay government, who sent ships of war to Muscat and intervened between the sultan and his turbulent subjects, the reign of Sa'id would have come to an untimely end in 1829, when he had gone to Zanzibar to suppress a rising.

Early in his reign, Sayyid Sa'id showed a preference for the French, but after the capture of Mauritius in 1810 his political sagacity prompted him to seek a good understanding with the English. The assistance against the Wahabis, which he received on several occasions, disposed him to agree to further treaties with the British, of far-reaching importance. Thus, in 1822 and 1845, as we have seen, he set his seal to treaties for the suppression of the slave trade; in 1839 to a Treaty of Commerce, which confirmed also the

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109 For details of the life of Sayyid Sa'id, see ibid.

110 Aitchison, n.93, pp.53-56.

111 Ibid, p.59. A Treaty of Commerce, in a similar terms, was also come to with the United States in 1843, and in 1844 with France - the latter after having first received the approval
provisions of the treaty of 1822 regarding the slave traffic; and in 1846 to a Customs agreement. By the latter, the dues on cargo for transshipment was fixed in general at 5 percent, while cargoes, the property of the British government, were exempted from duty altogether.

The friendly disposition of Sa'id to the English was evinced by his gift of the Kuria Muria Islands, situated off the south coast of Arabia, to the British Crown in 1854. The French had also made several abortive efforts to secure to these islands. In 1856 Sayyid Sa'id died, and two sons, Thuwaini and Majid, succeeded, after some dispute, to his divided dominions - the former to the rule of Muscat and the latter to Zanzibar. Agreement to this arrangement was brought about between the two parties in 1861 by the friendly intervention of Britain and the award of Lord Canning in Council, whereby Zanzibar and Muscat were separated, and an annual subsidy made payable by the former to the latter.

of the British government. The privileges conferred by this treaty on French citizens and protected subjects entailed very troublesome political consequences, as will be seen, when the question of the suppression of the Arms Traffic arose.


113 An earlier act of courtesy on the part of Sayyid Sa'id was the sending of a mission to England, to congratulate Queen Victoria on her accession.

114 Aitchison, n.93, pp.75-77.
On the separation of the territories, the Government of Bombay decided that each of the rulers should in future be styled 'Sultan'. In 1861 a British Political Officer again took up residence at Muscat.

The most important treaty agreement which was to come during Sultan Thuwaini's reign was one in which he was not a party. In March 1862 Britain and France subscribed to a Declaration, or reciprocal agreement, respecting the independence of the sultanates of Muscat and Zanzibar. 'The Contracting powers', the treaty ran, 'taking into consideration the importance and independence of His Highness the Sultan of Muscat and of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar, have thought it right to engage reciprocally to respect the independence of these Sovereigns'. However, this treaty was pregnant with unforeseen consequences.

In 1864 and the following year or so, the Wahabis renewed their aggressions on the district of Oman, the casus belli being, ostensibly, a demand on their part for an increase in the annual customary zakat (tribute). They made a serious raid on Sur and inflicted much damage which fell largely upon Hindu traders who were British Indian subjects, which called

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115 Wilson, n.10, p.403.

116 It arose largely out of Zanzibar affairs, and was entered into by the Home Government without reference to the Government of India, which latter did not, in fact, know of its existence till some ten years later. Aitchison, n.93, pp.203-5.
for British intervention. Direct action, taken at the advice and under the guidance of the British Resident, at Qatif and Buraimi, the key positions of the Wahabis in Oman, brought about a settlement, and assurance was given by the amir of the Wahabis that he would not in future attack Arab tribes who were in alliance with the British, especially those of Oman, provided the tribute\textsuperscript{117} was regularly paid. From this time, acts of Wahabi aggression on the principalities of the Arabian shores of the Persian Gulf became less and less frequent and effective.

The rule of Sultan Thuwaini is marked by yet another important agreement, concluded in 1864, whereby 'my faithful ally, the British Government, is at liberty to construct one or more lines of telegraphic communication anywhere within the territories pertaining to the State of Muscat, and in any territories which I may hold in lease from the Shah of Persia'.\textsuperscript{118} This agreement was supplemented in 1865 by a convention for the extension of the electric telegraph through the dominions subject to His Highness in Arabia and Makran. Sultan Thuwaini was assassinated by his son at Sohar in 1866, little regretted, it seems, alike by the Europeans with whom he came into contact or by the members of his own family.

\textsuperscript{117} Aitchison, n.93, pp.210-12. The treaty was signed on behalf of the British by Colonel Pelly.

\textsuperscript{118} ibid, pp.225-9.
Two short reigns followed, during which few events having any important bearing upon the general affairs of the Gulf occurred. There were, as usual, domestic dissensions and internal rebellion, culminating in 1871, when the power was seized by Turki, a son of Sayyid Sa'id, who had become master of Muscat and the coast towns of Matra and Sur, and held besides a number of fortified positions in the interior. He was recognized as ruler by the British in the same year. The early years of Turki's rule were marked by the quarrels of the rival religious factions, Hinawi and Ghafiri,119 and by attacks by rebels of the interior on Muscat, Matra, and other coast towns. The political disturbances called for British intervention, on account of losses sustained by British subjects; the British did not, however, again interfere in Oman affairs beyond giving, in 1886, an undertaking to uphold the sultan in repelling unprovoked aggressions.

In 1873 Turki signed another treaty with the British, which was instrumental for suppression of the slave trade, an act which gave him a high place in the good graces of the British authorities,120 whereas the Sultan of Zanzibar at first declined to negotiate on the question. Turki made sincere efforts, in co-operation with the British, to enforce


120 ibid, pp.525-9

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the treaty, but his attitude tended to make him unpopular with certain sections of his subjects. His loyalty in this particular respect was a principal reason of the great personal regard in which he was held by all British Political Officers with whom he came in contact.\(^{121}\)

An important question of status was settled in 1873 by the sultan's unqualified acceptance of the principle that the subjects of Indian states resident in the sultanate were, equally with British subjects, amenable to British consular jurisdiction. The Muscat agency was provided with a military guard, for the first time, in 1880. The sultan's personal prestige favoured the freer movement of the Political Agent in the interior, who, in consequence, was able to make frequent excursions into these hitherto little-known regions - to Buraimi, to Jabal Akhdhar, and to Wadi Tayin. Much new information regarding the political conditions about the interior of Oman were thus obtained.\(^{122}\)

In 1880 the United States appointed a Consul at Muscat in the person of a British merchant, who the next year became also Consular Agent of France in Oman.

Sultan Turki died in 1888 and was succeeded by his second son, Faisal, who had served as a wali under his father and had thus gained some experience of public affairs; his claim to

\(^{121}\) ibid, p.532.

\(^{122}\) ibid, pp540-50.
the title of Sultan of Muscat was recognized by the British Government in 1890, but no guarantee of support was at first given to him. Faisal eventually expressed his 'earnest desire to be guided in all important matters of policy by the advice of the British government, and so to conduct the government as to secure the continued friendship and approbation of His Excellency the Viceroy and the British Government.'

The first important event after the formal recognition of Faisal, was the conclusion, in 1891, of a 'Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation'\textsuperscript{123} to replace the earlier Treaty of Commerce made with Sayyid Sa'\textsuperscript{id}, which it was declared to supersede. This treaty was to remain in force for twelve years; there was no material departure from the spirit of the old treaty, but it contained a new provision whereby the sultan was precluded from prohibiting the import or export of any particular article of trade, and the export tariff was made conditional upon the consent of the British Government. Previous to this enactment, it had been suggested, as a consequence perhaps of the activity of the French, that a British protectorate over Muscat should be instituted; but, such a course would have been contrary to the terms of the Anglo-French Declaration of 1862, and was most unlikely to meet with the sanction of the French, an agreement was concluded, in March 1891, whereby the sultan bound

\textsuperscript{123} Aitchison, n.80, pp341-45

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'himself, his heirs and successors, never to cede, to sell, to mortgage, or otherwise give for occupation, save to the British government, the dominions of Muscat and Oman or any of their dependencies'.

Yemen

South West Arabia is an area of great strategic importance, controlling as it does the entrance to the Red Sea which gives access to the "front doors" of Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Ethiopia, and the "backdoors" of Egypt and Israel. The Ottomans, who came in the early sixteenth century in the wake of Portuguese depredation in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, could not firmly hold the region under their grip. However, after the withdrawal of Muhammad Ali's forces from the region in 1840, as a part of a settlement, the Ottomans were able to regain their position. British had already occupied Aden in 1838 to facilitate easy communication with its colony, India. Aden was used as a coaling station for British ships. Soon, British concluded a series of treaties with various tribal chiefs and endeavoured to prevent the Arabs from uniting against the intruder (British). With the policy of centralisation being pursued by the Ottoman Empire and particularly with the opening of Suez Canal in 1869, the

124 ibid, pp.360-8.

Ottomans began to increase their hold for they were now able to move reinforcement by sea and strengthen their armies in Arabia. Asir was conquered, the Tihamah brought under control and in April 1871 Sanaa was reoccupied.126

Initially the British were not against the Ottoman consolidation move - perhaps feeling that it would be easier to deal with a "quasi-civilised"127 power rather than with unstable tribal or religious leaders. However, they became worried after some time as there appeared to be no obvious limit to the Ottoman Pashalik of Yemen, which three centuries earlier had embraced both Aden and Hadhramouth. The British authorities in Aden had not really thought out how much of a hinterland they needed to protect the settlement, and they received no directives from the Indian or imperial authorities. In such a situation, local British officials decided the course of action. The British concluded a series of agreements with various Subayhi leaders who undertook to keep security on the roads and to return any plunder, in return for monthly stipends which varied from 25 Maria Theresa Dollars up to 40. The following year a new Amir of Dhala

126 ibid, pp.44-45.

sought and was accorded British recognition.\textsuperscript{128}

During 1872 the Turks completed the pacification of Hujariyyah and their influence started to stretch out into what the British now regarded as their own territory. There were reports of Turks· intrigues with the Subayhis and then in October 1872 the Hawshabi Sultan was summoned to Taizz where he made a formal submission to the Ottoman Sultan. In the same month the Abdali Sultan received a letter from Ahmad Mukhtar Pasha asking him to acknowledge the Sultan. In December the tone changed to a peremptory command.\textsuperscript{129}

The British were now very alarmed. The Ambassador at Istanbul was instructed to discuss the problem with the Grand Vizier who said, reassuringly, that although the Porte officially regarded Lahej as part of the Yemen, he would instruct Ahmad Pasha not to take any further action there. At the same time the Government of India prepared a list of nine tribes (referred to as "cantons") which it regarded as being in the British zone of influence.\textsuperscript{130} These tribes should be protected against external aggression in return for an agreement not to have any relations with other powers and to submit their internal disputes to the British for settlement.


\textsuperscript{129} Bidwell, n.125, p.48.

The tribes concerned were the Abdalis, the Fadhlis, the Aqrabis, the Hawshabis, the Amiris (Dhala), the Alawis, the Subayhis, the Yafais and the Aulaqis. The British Ambassador at Constantinople drew the attention of the Grand Vizier to this list with the request that British interests in these tribes should be recognised and that they should be left alone.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Mukhtar Pasha continued his forward policy. In May 1873 the Resident in Aden, reported that the Amir of Dhala had submitted to the Turks, given a hostage and accepted the status of an Ottoman official. Similar news were received in respect of other tribes.\textsuperscript{131} Throughout the summer diplomatic pressure at Constantinople was tried in vain; the Turks refused to withdraw. The Foreign Office became concerned at the thought that the India Office might get Britain into a war with its old ally Turkey. At the end of October Schneider (Resident) was authorised to send troops to Lahej to protect the Sultan but not to attack the Turks, and he marched out with 300 men. It was not, however, until December that the Turks finally left Abadali, Hawshawbi and Alawi territory, and it took another three years of diplomatic pressure to get them out of Dhala.\textsuperscript{132}

The events of 1873 are of great importance in Yemen's

\textsuperscript{131} Gavin, n.128, p.69.

\textsuperscript{132} Bidwell, n.125, p.55
history because for the first time South Arabia was formally divided into two distinct territories separate by a boundary, which although not yet delimited, was apparent to the tribes recognised and recognised by international agreement. Secondly, the British had, in effect, established a protectorate over a large part of the hinterland, far beyond what was required for the immediate defense of the Aden Base.

Although the Turks had evacuated from certain areas as a result of British pressure, they did not retract their claim, as successor to the Caliphate of the Prophet, to sovereignty over whole of Arabia as the cradle of Islam. This remained a constant threat to the British, and so did the apprehension that any discontented notable might accept the suzerainty of the Ottomans and invoke their intervention within the protectorate. The Aden authorities therefore moved to consolidate their position with a system of formal Treaties of Friendship and protection with the surrounding tribes. Qishan and Socotra came first in 1886, and then in 1888 there were a whole series of which those with the Aqrabis, however Aulaqis and Fadhlis were the most important. In 1895 a second batch included the Alawis, the Hawshabis and the Lower Yafais.

The closer relationships with tribal chiefs led to growing involvement in the hinterland where attempts had to be made to settle local quarrels in order to prevent the Turks

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133 Gavin, n.129, p.74.
interfering. There were a series of revolt against the Ottomans suspected that the British were investigating them by providing weapons,\textsuperscript{134} etc. In March 1900 a Yemeni tribal chief, probably assisted by the Turks, occupied a fort called al-Darayzah which the British regarded as being within Hawshabi territory and thus within the protectorate. After the failure of diplomacy, in July 1901 Hawshabi tribesmen attacked the fort but were repulsed and this time it was the turn of the Ottomans to protest. The British lost patience and despatched a force of 500 men to expel the invaders. British and Turkish regular troops fought a pitched battle which left the British masters of the port. Then both the parties agreed to set up a joint Commission to decide the frontier and an agreement was signed in this respect.\textsuperscript{135}

So while non-intervention was the policy in practice the British were heavily involved in tribal politics and very soon discussion developed in Aden about the methods of political control. But this was opposed by the Foreign Office. The relations between the Ottomans and the British continued to be characterised by intrigues and counter intrigues until the World War I. It is hoped that this brief analysis will help to understand the dynamics of the Anglo-Ottoman relations in Yemen.

\textsuperscript{134} ibid, p.64.

\textsuperscript{135} Macro, n.127, p.55.

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