BRITISH RELATIONS WITH THE PERSIAN GULF

1890 - 1902

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A Thesis submitted to the University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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BRITISH RELATIONS WITH THE PERSIAN GULF 1890-1902

Abstract

Up to 1890 British mastery of the Persian Gulf had been so complete and indisputable, that it came as a shock to London to hear that any other nations sought to dispute it. The momentous events which occurred in the Persian Gulf during 1890-1902 attracted the attention of diplomats more than ever before to the great problems which lay before Britain in that area.

The negative policy of Abdul-Hamid and the collapse of the Persian economy resulted in a severe setback to the British economic enterprises on the North and the North Eastern shores of the Persian Gulf during 1890-1893. During the period 1893-1902 Russia was consolidating her influence in Persia and was vigorously and quite openly developing her schemes for the capitulation of Persia's economy.

On the Western shore of the Gulf France was intriguing at Muscat and was preparing to establish herself upon the flank of India, and sap British predominance in the Gulf waters; while Turkey was endeavouring to undermine the independence of the rulers of Koweit, Bahrain and El-Katr.

The increase in arms traffic coincided with the commencement of unprecedented international rivalry in the Persian Gulf. Despite these difficulties Britain rigidly maintained her strategic policy of excluding foreign powers from the Gulf ports and of their acquiring rights of occupation.

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Map of the Persian Gulf area

INTRODUCTION

I.

The position of England in the Persian Gulf is unique in world politics. Without owning a square mile of territory on either of its shores, or even possessing one of its barren and inhospitable islands as a base, she has for generations borne burdens there while no other nation has undertaken duty without dominion; she has kept, and keeps, the peace amongst people who never have been, and are not, her subjects; she has policed waters over which she has no formal authority, and she has kept an open market in those distant ports equally to all the merchants of the world. This she has done for 300 years without the aid of the strong pacts of Geneva and Locarno and without even a mandate from the League of Nations. Such was the position down to 1914.

It was undisturbed by the Great War. The passage of armies which in the end defeated their ancient enemies failed to ruffle the apathetic contentment of the inhabitants of either shore: fishing, pearling, trading, went on as before; while the usual struggle for existence became slightly less arduous owing to the influence of so much

British shipping, and the coal contractors made fortunes.

The substitution of oil for coal in most of the navies of the world, and the invention of the internal combustion engine using heavy oil or petrol, entirely altered the contentment of the oil buying nations of the world. The murmurs of Mosul are hardly extinct; oil diviners are distinctly busy over wide areas in the Middle East; and, as far as the British fleet is concerned, the British Government moved Cardiff and Swansea to the Anglo-Persian oilfields and the port of Abadan, on the Shatt el-Arab, down which the Tigris and the Euphrates still continue to pour their waters into the Persian Gulf. It is, I believe, hardly an exaggeration to say that the peace of the world may well be said to lie at the mercy of the oil fields on the three shores of the Persian Gulf.

The Persian Gulf is of fundamental importance to the British Commonwealth as a link in the air route from West Europe to India because, without air bases in the Gulf, it would be difficult to move aircraft between Europe and Asia. It has been rightly said "The Persian Gulf stands to British air power in almost the exact relation as the Suez Canal to the Royal Navy",[1] namely, as an

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1. "Persian Gulf as an Air Route". Lecture given to the Royal Central Asian Society on 14 December 1932, by Squadron Leader G.W. Bentley, and published in the Royal Central Asian Society's Journal, No.20, of 1933.

essential link in Britain's air communication to the East, particularly for the passage of air forces in time of emergency.

II.

What were Britain's special interests in the Persian Gulf prior to the date of this thesis? Rooted so far into the past, it will be useful to trace their historical development.

During the sixteenth century the Portuguese[1] had made themselves masters of the Gulf, and thereafter held supreme control of the valuable trade in silk, which they carried on with Persia, though unsuccessfully challenged from time to time by the Turks. Then, towards the end of that century, the eyes of Englishmen were drawn towards that part of the world, by the desire to share in the rich trade between India and Persia.

In 1583, one Ralph Fitch, in company with three other adventurers, was sent with letters from Queen Elizabeth to the King of Cambodia and the Emperor of China. They travelled overland to Basrah, and sailed down the Persian Gulf off Hormuz, from whence, after many adventures, Fitch,

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1. Ballard, G.A. "The Century of Portuguese Supremacy in the Indian Ocean". Mariner's Mirror, Oct. 1925 and Albuquerque, Alfonso de, "The Commentaries of the Great Alfonso Albuquerque", 4 vols. Hakl. Soc. 1873.

in 1591, returned home with a glowing report of the rich trade possibilities which lay in those waters and further East. This led to the formation of the East India Company and the despatch by them of trading fleets to the East. It was not, however, until 1616 that the first English vessel, the "James", was despatched from Surat to Jask with a considerable quantity of goods from Persia. The Portuguese made every endeavour to stop the vessel, but failed. By 1619 a factory had been established at Jask, overland trade with the Persian capital was carried on and Bunder Abbas was opened to the English in 1625. Three years later the fleets of Persia and the East India Company combined against Portugal, and proceeded to capture Hormuz, which was shortly afterwards restored to the Persians. As a result of this lawless enterprise, the Shah of Persia granted trade facilities to the English, which allowed them to purchase any quantity of silk anywhere in Persia, and to import their own goods without any import duty. From then onwards the power of the Portuguese began to wane, and they found their trade supplanted by that of the English and the Dutch, who, attracted by the commercial possibilities of these ports, had likewise put in an appearance.

There now arose a period of political and industrial rivalry between the newcomers, each striving to obtain a

monopoly of the trade with Persia. In spite of this, however, the Dutch and the English combined their fleets to complete the defeat of the Portuguese. From 1640-1649, disaster after disaster overtook the latter. In 1643, the Imam of Oman captured Sohar, which had been in Portuguese hands some twenty years, in 1648-49, the Arabs besieged and took Muscat, and by 1650 the Portuguese had lost their entire hold on Oman. Two years later, hardly a trace of their régime in the Gulf remained. Meanwhile, the struggle between Dutch and English continued, and by 1640 the former had attained a position of definite superiority, which continued until the end of the seventeenth century, when the English influence began to grow at the expense of the Dutch, a result in large measure due to the arrogant methods employed by the latter, who thereby lost much of their influence over the Persians.

A French Company appeared on the scene in 1664, as a competitor in the trade, and established themselves at Bunder Abbas, but made little headway.

In 1699, the Shah showed marked preference for the English, by visiting their factory at Isphahan, and by causing arrears of customs dues to be paid them, while the disturbed state of the country and friction between the English and the Moghuls in India had an adverse effect on their prestige in the Gulf.

The year 1708, however, marked the turning point in English favour. The various companies trading with the East invited and received the official recognition of the Government. Troubles followed, mostly due to the unsettled state of Persia, and it became increasingly difficult to carry on trade using Bunder Abbas as the base, so that in 1759 the English decided to move to Basrah. This decision was considerably hastened by the Seven Years' War with France, when a squadron of French ships under D'Esting entered the Gulf and bombarded Bunder Abbas. Here they remained until 1776, when Basrah was captured by the Persians. But the Persian occupation, being purely a military one, was not conducive to trade, and so the Company's activities were removed to Bushire. Simultaneously with the disappearance of the Portuguese, piracy, which had been on the increase during the latter half of the eighteenth century, became the chief means of livelihood of the inhabitants of the Oman coast.

It was, however, by no means confined to the Arabs, as there were cases of pirate ships flying English colours, who were operating both in the Gulf and the adjacent seas. Vessels of the East India Company were attacked by the Oman pirates, who, with Muscat as a base, became so strong as to give rise to the fear that they should obtain command of the Gulf.

It is not the purpose of this introduction to detail the many expeditions made by Great Britain in dealing with piracy, or her prolonged efforts in the suppression of the slave trade - efforts made in direct contravention of her commercial interests and her political relations with the Muhammedans of the Gulf - but rather to trace the struggle with the maritime Powers of Europe in this business of "trade merchandize."

In order, however, to make clear the ascendancy reached by Great Britain in these waters, it is necessary briefly to refer to the native events in the first half of the nineteenth century. The concentration of Great Britain on the defeat of Napoleon in Europe, and on the shattering of his union in Turkey, Persia, Arabia and Afghanistan, together with internal troubles which freed the East India Company in India, eventually caused the relaxation of Britain's naval control of the Persian Gulf, the recovery of which cost much in lives and money. Piracy became rampant.

Up and down the Gulf, a perpetual terror reigned, and villages on the coast were burnt, their inhabitants massacred, trading vessels of all descriptions and nationalities were plundered and sunk, their crews and passengers tortured and shot, while from his arm chair, a benevolent Mr. Duncan, Governor of Bombay, prohibited the officers of the Indian Marine from firing first when approached.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Arab tribes had become welded together by the influence of the Wahahis, who had come down from Central Arabia to the coast. In 1803, Sultan Bin Suggar succeeded to the Shaikhship of the Jawasmi, and became the leader in their atrocities. Well aware that the hands of commanders of the Bombay Government ships were tied by their orders not to take the initiative in dealing with the pirates, the attack on British ships became frequent. At last, in 1806, the situation became so intolerable that the Bombay Government directed the East India Company's officers to act against these pirates, with the assistance of the Iman of Muscat.

A pirate fleet was blockaded at Kishm and eventually accepted terms of peace, and in that same year a treaty was concluded at Bundar Abbas, in which the Jawasmi Shaikh agreed to restore vessels that had been captured, and in future to regard the flag as property of the East India Company. For a brief period during 1807 they kept their word, overawed probably by the forces of British Indians stationed in the Gulf. In 1808 they returned to violence. The repeated aggression, coupled with an insolent demand that British ships should pay tribute to Ras-al-Khaima, in return for a safe conduct whilst trading in the Gulf, proved too much for the Bombay Government and for the Directors of the East India Company, who awoke to the absurdity of the order issued to their officers.

For a time peace reigned, but in 1814 piracy began again and increased, and it was not till 1819, when another naval and military expedition had destroyed Ras-al-Khaima and adjacent pirate refuges, that piracy in the Gulf received its death blow. Negotiations followed the second defeat of the Jawasmi pirates, and a treaty of peace was concluded in 1820, whereupon a strong squadron of vessels was stationed off Ras-al-Khaima to enforce the treaty, and Basidw became a naval base for vessels employed in the preservation of order in the Gulf.

This peace treaty was, however, insufficient to secure complete security at sea, because it did not deny the right of the various Shaikhs to carry on war with each other by sea, under the pretence many acts of piracy were committed, especially during the pearling season. In 1835, therefore, the Shaikhs were desirous to link themselves by a maritime truce not to engage in hostilities by sea under any circumstances for a period of six months, on the understanding that the British Government would not interfere with their fighting each other on land. The good effects of this truce were appreciated so much by all the signatories that it was renewed the following year, and annually till 1843 when it was prolonged for a period of ten years, during which there was no serious recrudescence of piracy.

At the expiration of the ten years' truce, another Treaty was entered into in 1853, known as the Treaty of Peace in perpetuity. This is in existence today. It was similar to the first, but with one important clause added, viz., that the perfect maritime truce now established for evermore should be watched over and enforced by the British Government, i.e. in the event of aggression on any one of the parties by sea, the injured tribe should not itself retaliate but refer the matter to the British authorities for settlement.

Sultan Sayyid Said[1] stands out prominently as the great ruler of Oman, and under his rule Oman and its capital, Muscat, reached the greatest pitch of eminence to be found in all its annals. He ascended the throne in 1804, and reigned fifty-two years. He found his country in dire distress at the time of his accession, owing to the attacks of the fanatical Wahabees from Central Arabia, who had carried their victorious army right down to Muscat, and had imposed their bigoted rules and religious regulations on the otherwise liberal-minded Muhammedans of Eastern Arabia. With Turkish-Egyptian aid on the one hand and British support on the other, Sultan Bin Said succeeded in relieving his country from this threat, and drove them back into the

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1. For an interesting study of the personality and the rule of Sultan Sayyid Said see (1) Said Ruete, "Said Bin Sultan, 1791-1856", London, 1929. (2) Salih Bin Razik, "History of the Imans and Sayyids of Oman", Hakl. Soc., London, 1870.

Central Province of Nejd, from which they had carried fanatical wars over nearly the whole of the Arabian peninsula, and when all fear from the Wahabees was over Sayyid Sultan extended his conquests in all directions; he occupied several ports on the Persian Gulf and the opposite coast of Beluchistan, and finally, in 1850, he added the important Arab settlements of Mombasa and Zanzibar on the African coast, to his dominion.

During this long reign of fifty-two years Muscat prospered exceedingly. It was the great trade centre for the Persian Gulf, inasmuch as it was a safe depot, where merchants could deposit their goods without fear of piracy; vessels going to and from India before the introduction of steam used frequently to stop at Muscat for water; and as a trade centre in those days it was almost as important as Aden, and with the Indian Government Sultan Sayyid was always on most friendly terms.

Since the death of Sayyid Sultan Said, the power of Muscat has most lamentably gone down, perhaps owing more especially to the great results which the great Sultan had himself achieved; firstly, the destruction of piracy, followed by the introduction of steam, diminished the importance of Muscat as a safe port for merchants to deposit their wares, and the jealousies which existed between the descendants of Said who ruled in Muscat - for the

Indian Government the rare astuteness had diminished the inheritance between Said's two sons - had given rise to future troubles.

During the eighteen sixties the political centre of gravity shifted inwards from the coasts again and, as forces hostile to the ruling family raised their heads, the means of conciliating or crushing them were, as time went on, to grow weaker. "Back to theocratic rule" had been the natural rallying cry of the Hinawi faction, the source of the principal defections. This is to be counted as one of the factors which have contributed to the growth of a separatist movement backed by armed forces. The revolt of 1868 which was headed by Azzan Bin Qais was a sign of unrest in the area of Oman.

Strategically speaking, the Persian Gulf had its immediate repercussion on the Persian affairs in general. The Persian attack of 1837 on Afghanistan resulted in immediate naval operations in the Gulf. A British military force from India occupied the Island of Kharag in 1838, and continued to do so until the Shah raised the seige of Herat in 1842. In 1856-1857 the island of Kharag was occupied a second time by the British, during the Anglo-Persian war which broke over the question of Herat. In this campaign the British forces operated from Bushire; but the operations came to an early close, owing to the

collapse of the Persian resistance. The principal incidents connected with the Gulf were the capture of Rishahr on 9 December 1856 and of Bushire on 10 December; the defeat of the Persians, at Khushab, on 8 February 1857; and the bombardment and occupation of Muhammerah, chiefly a naval operation, on 26 March. For a masterly statement of the incidents of this campaign, the reader is referred to Lieut.-General Sir James Outram's Persian Campaign in 1857,[1] which comprises General orders and Dispatches relating to the Military Operations in Persia, from the landing of the forces to the Treaty of Peace, which was signed at Paris on 4 March 1857, by which Persia engaged to abstain from all interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. On the close of the war, relations between Persia and Britain resumed an amicable course, that opened the way for the introduction of the system of telegraphic communication and other reforms.

The only European power besides Britain and Russia which during the period 1837-1862 displayed any interest in the countries of the Persian Gulf was France, and her activity was superficial and mostly confined to the years 1839-48. The French Government declined in 1839 to support the Shah in the difficulties in which he then

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1. Lieut. General Sir James Outram, "Persian Campaign of 1857", London, 1860.

found himself with the British Government; but they enabled the Shah's Envoy to obtain French instead of British military instructions for the Persian army. In the same year, or in the following year, a French diplomatic mission proceeded to the Persian Court; and in 1840 representatives of the French art and religion, as well as of French military science, were much in evidence in Persia. The French Mission, though its efforts were continued for some years, failed to secure a ratified treaty, with Persia, which was its principal object of commerce; such a treaty, it will be remembered, was only obtained by Britain in 1841 after great difficulties. Most of the French military instructors quitted Persia within ten years; but in 1855 a Franco-Persian treaty of Friendship and Commerce was at last secured.[1]

In the Oman Sultanate the efforts of France were more quickly successful, and then a Commercial Treaty was carried through in 1844.

Between 1841 and 1848 the French Consul-General at Baghdad asserted himself somewhat vigorously and showed an interest even in local affairs, especially in such as related to Persia; and there were other indications that France aimed at establishing political and material interests in Turkish Iraq. Perhaps in consequence of the

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1. Siassi, A. "l iran aux XIXe Siècle", Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale, Paris, Nombre 3 of 1955, p.544.

divergence of British and French policy in regard to Egypt and Turkey, the attitude of the French representatives in Persia and at Baghdad seems to have been one of distrust and hostility towards the British; but their influence except in so far as it was sustained by the interests of Latin Catholicism, had no roots in actuality, and it quickly withered away.

In 1862 France and Britain signed a joint Declaration binding themselves to respect the independence of the Oman and Zanzibar Sultanates. This instrument, which must have passed almost unnoticed at the time of its execution, for the Government of India remained in ignorance of its existence until 1871, was afterwards to be found an inconvenient restraint by both signatories.

There is reason to think that the journey of the British traveller, Mr. W.G. Palgrave, across Central Arabia in 1862 was undertaken at the instance of the Emperor of the French, with political objects.

In 1864, a French Company was understood to have applied for navigation facilities on the rivers of Turkish Iraq, similar to those enjoyed by the (British Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, and to be claiming equality of treatment with the British merchants in matters purely commercial.

A French Vice-Consulate was reinstated in 1870 at Basrah, where there had been no French representation for many years.

While Persia continued to make a moderate progress in the path of good order and administration, or at least maintained her position, Turkey, in spite of pretended reforms at home and a specious policy of territorial expansions abroad, seriously lost ground.

The Crimean War, of which the issue was seemingly favourable to Turkey, in reality injured her. At its close she found herself invested with a position in Europe which for many reasons she was incapable of filling; and her abuse of the resources of the European money market, now open to her, carried her rapidly along the road to ruin. She was led, by the conditions in which she found herself placed, to adopt an attitude and a policy that were founded on an over-estimate of her own importance and strength; and before long she fell into dire financial straits. By 1866 matters had reached such a pass that even in the remote province of Turkish Iraq recourse was had to the extreme measure of reducing military pay and civil salaries. The unsatisfactory character of the local administration throughout the Empire, which in most respects remained unimproved, was aggravated by these new financial difficulties.

The political state of the province of Turkish Iraq was at first hardly better - it could not possibly have been worse - than it was during the preceding period. The chief cause of disorder was the same as before, viz., the obstinacy of Turkish officials in attempting, with insufficient means of compulsion, to govern the Arab tribes with a high hand. In 1863-64 an ineffectual effort was made to reduce the Muntafik; in 1864-66 the Khazail was coerced with some success; in 1865 the Hammaund (Kurdish) of Anizah (Arab) tribes defied the authority of the Turkish authority with impunity.

In 1869-72 much better order was temporarily established by Midhat Pasha, the first "Wali" of Baghdad, and the whole system of local administration was recast in accordance with a system of reform then being extensively applied throughout the Ottoman Empire.

From 1863 onwards the Turkish Government possessed steamers on the rivers of Turkish Iraq, and after 1867 these seem to have been worked chiefly for commercial purposes in imitation of Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company,[1] but under the management of Ottoman officials. Notwithstanding strenuous opposition on the part

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1. For a short history of the British Steam Navigation Company see "The Story of the Euphrates Company" in The Near East and India, 24 November 1932.

of the Turkish authorities, the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company succeeded about 1864, with the support of the British Government, in increasing their fleet by the addition of a second steamer. The attitude of the Turkish Government, in increasing their fleet by the addition of a second steamer, and the policy of the Turkish Governor of Baghdad towards British interests at this time was uncompromisingly hostile; it seemed to be prompted largely by the fear that the British representatives might acquire undue influence with the mismanaged Arab tribes; and it extended to the operations of the British Staff employed on the construction of the telegraph lines, as well as to British navigation on the Tigris. The principal territorial expansion by which the Turkish Government, notwithstanding the precarious state of the Empire, were inspired was well illustrated by their restless proceedings with regard to Eastern Arabia.

One of its chief exponents was Midhat Pasha, the reforming Wali of Baghdad. In 1866, there were indications that the porte intended to assert and enforce their authority over Kowait; in 1869 they intimated that they regarded Bahrain as belonging to them; and early in 1871 it was understood that an attempt would presently be made to establish Turkish sovereignty over Central Arabia, Bahrain, Muscat, and the Arab tribes of Southern Arabia generally. An appeal made by a displaced Amir of Southern Nejid to the

Turkish Government for restoration to power in dependence upon Turkey quickly provided them with an opportunity for an open action; and in the summer of 1871 El-Hasa was occupied by Turkish troops sent by sea from Basra; while Kowait, from which armed assistance and marine transport had been borrowed for the operations in El-Hasa, was considered to have been incorporated in Turkey on the same occasion. Riadh in Central Arabia had been the original objective of the Turkish expedition to El-Hasa,of which latter province the direct administration was undertaken by Turkish officials towards the end of 1871 to the disappointment of two contending Wahabbi Amirs; but no advance was made from El-Hasa to Riadh. A warning from the British Government, to which point was given by the stationing of British political officers in Bahrain in 1871-72, sufficed to prevent actual Turkish aggression, though not Turkish threats, against that principality; but the Turkish flag was hoisted at Dohah in El-Katr, a Turkish military detachment later occupying that place; and Midhat Pasha in his official Gazette, included the chief towns of Trucial Oman in an enumeration of those belonging to the conquered province of "Nejid", a province which his troops had not entered at all, though they had taken possession of one of its outlying dependencies (El-Hasa).[1] About the same time that direct rule in

1. For details on Midhat Pasha's Campaign in East Arabia see Political Letters from the Persian Gulf, Political Department, vols.16 (1869) - 22 (1874). (India Office).

El-Hasa began, a Turkish Consulate was established at Bushehr in Persia on the opposite side of the Gulf, possibly with an eye to Bahrain affair.

The British Government in 1872-1881 did not admit the title of the Porte to any territory in Eastern Arabia except El-Hasa, which had been actually occupied; but the annexation of Hasa, even by such a power as Turkey, was a sufficient evil in itself and greatly increased the difficulty of maintaining maritime security in the waters of the Persian Gulf.[1]

Early in the eighteen eighties Russian influence and opposition to British claims in Persia was, as usual, a dominant factor in the general situation; but there were still no symptoms of Russian activity in the Persian Gulf region.

Interest on the part of France was manifest only in an attempt to obtain from the Shah a large concession for irrigation works and industrial enterprise in Arabustan. This movement, which was associated with the name of Dr. Thohorzan, physician to the Shah, was defeated by a British claim of a prior right to compensation under the abrogated "Reuter Concession".

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1. In the study of the problems of Turkish jurisdiction over the Western Coast of the Persian Gulf from the beginning of the Turkish Conquest in 1872-1881, see Confidential and Secret Report No.3969 of 2 December 1881. Government of India, Political and Secret Department. 1-100. F.O.78/5108 (P.R.O.).

During 1883-84 a French engineer surveyed the Shiraz-Firuzland-Bushire route in connection with a project for a railway from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf.

British policy in the Persian Gulf was directed by the Government of India, Foreign Office and Colonial Office through the Political Resident, who resided at Bushire, with Political Agents at Koweit, Bahrain, Muscat, Bunder Abbas (where he was the consul and Muhammerah (where he was Vice-Consul), and on the Trucial coast by a native, who was termed the Residing Agent, residing at Sharja. With all these the Senior Naval Officer kept in close touch, and there was a constant interchange of intelligence between him and the political authorities. In fact, he and his squadron provided the motive force which enabled the policy of the Resident to be carried out, trade to go uninterruptedly, and law and order to be preserved.

In endeavouring to form an approximate opinion of the course of events in the Persian Gulf where Turkey was concerned, the character of the Sultan Abdul-Hamid and of his surroundings constituted a most important factor.

At one time His Majesty had absorbed by a plan for reviving the glories of the Kaliphate by a pan-Islamic policy directed from Constantinople to all countries inhabited by Moslems, but although one notices occasionally the symptoms of the existence of such an idea in the Imperial mind, there was no occasion to consider it as of

any immediate importance. His Majesty Abdul-Hamid Khan, thirty-fourth sovereign of the Race of the Othoman, ascended the throne on the 31 August, 1876, in succession to his uncle Abdul Aziz and his brother Murad V, both of whom had been deposted by their own Ministers, an action on their part which naturally deeply impressed the new Sovereign and had had deplorable effects on his disposition.

From the first moment he appeared to have determined to prevent any of his functionaries, whether civil or military from obtaining either the popularity or the position which could make them dangerous to the throne or its temporary occupant. In this he had certainly succeeded, for there was not at that time any man of notice among the Turkish statesmen such as Rashid Pasha, Aali Pasha, Fuad Pasha and even such as Medhat under the previous two reigns. All were merely clerks and dependents, not allowed to take any initiative and not enjoying any latitude in the exercise of their respective functions. The Sultan did, or tried to do, everything by himself, thus reducing the whole administrative system to a very inefficient machine in which it was quite impossible to saddle any one with responsibility, as the Sovereign took so much upon himself, and was irresponsible with the exception of Kiamal and Agop, who were at daggers drawn, all their colleagues were either timid mediocrities or men who looked at their respective departments as a means

of making money. There were about the Sultan few men devoted to His Majesty's person, but these had neither any requisite knowledge in public affairs nor the courage necessary to make useful advices. There were also a few distinguished generals in the army, but with the single exception of Osman Pasha they were all kept purposely away from the capital. All other persons, whose jealousies and rivalries would always prompt them to act as informers in case of need were surrounding the palace.

For these reasons and notwithstanding many redeeming qualities of heart and mind, Sultan Abdul-Hamid entered early during his reign on a course highly detrimental to the good government of the Othoman Empire, and the system he had adopted had taken such a hold of him, that it was quite impossible to hope that either the combination of several Ambassadors or still less of any single one among them, could cope with it with any success.

During the first five years of his reign the Sultan had to deal with the war and its immediate consequences. During the following five years the internal system of the Empire was gradually developed. Abdul-Hamid at that period continued very anxious concerning Russian intentions towards Turkey, but he felt that with the alliance of the three Empires, whose action at Constantinople was always concerted, he had no power to adopt any particular line of policy, and that he had

therefore little responsibility as long as he kept on good terms with that important Triple Imperial Alliance. In 1882 the bombardment of Alexandria took place and the subsequent occupation of Egypt by British troops. From that moment efforts were made, and to some extent successfully by several Foreign Powers and subsequently by France and Russia alone, to poison the Sultan's mind against England and to cause doubt upon her friendship.[1]

It was under the impression of these events that the Sultan was persuaded to order the fortifications of the strong passage of the Dardanelles and also of Shatt-el-Arab on the Persian Gulf.

The Shah of Persia appeared to be a more determined character, and the condition of his kingdom was becoming quite desperate. There was evidently not a single moment to lose in attempting something with a view to breaking the spell of inaction which was reducing the country to a nonentity. Persia was in close proximity to the Indian Empire, and from this fact, as also from her previous experience, she only knew of two Empires that might do her either good or harm. The influence of Great Britain and of Russia the Shah constantly felt. Other Great Powers existed for His Majesty more in

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1. See Confidential Memorandum by Sir William White on Foreign Policy of the Sultan Abdul-Hamid, No.3179, 3 March 1889. Private Papers of Sir William White. F.O.364/6 (P.R.O.).

name than in fact, as their influence was hardly felt by him, and he neither feared them nor hoped anything from them.

III.

The possibility of the presence of a naval power of the magnitude, resources and persistence of other powers on the Persian Gulf was in itself sufficient to revolutionise the strategy in respect of the Indian Ocean.

On 20 May 1874 Lord Northbrook[1] minuted: "An attempt to extend Russian territory, or a Russian protectorate to the shores of the Persian Gulf would be so direct a menace to India that it would, in my opinion, justify a resort to arms for the purpose of securing our present supremacy in the Persian Gulf. But the action of Her Majesty's Government under such circumstances should be left free and unfettered by any previous arrangements." On 5 March 1887 the India Office addressed the Foreign Office[2] in these terms:-

> "Whether this proposal can be acted upon at once or not, Lord Cross would suggest that the recently framed concession for the construction of a railway from Ahmoz to Tehran, together with rights of navigating the Karun, should at any rate be vigorously pressed

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1. No.123, June 1875. Secret Letters from India, Government of India, Foreign Department, vol.15. (India Office).

2. No.8 of 5 March 1887. Secret Letters from India, Government of India, Foreign Department, vol.47 (India Office).

upon the Shah's attention. The establishment of British influence in Southern Persia, at the opening of commercial communications in that portion of the Empire by British traders is the last if not indeed, the only concession that can be made by this country to the rapid extension of Russian influence over northern Persia."

On 23 June 1887, the India Office[1] wrote:

"His Lordship considers it to be highly desirable, in the commercial as well as the political interests of British India, that a commanding influence in Southern and Central Persia should be secured for the British Government."

The competitors for interests in the Persian Gulf in the period 1890-1902 were Russia, Persia, Turkey, Germany, France, Muscat and Britain.

Russia exercised a predominant influence over Northern Persia, and the pressure of her advance from her territorial base was being felt in three directions. It was felt first on the north-east of Persia where the coast-road, from Asterabad to the Meshed frontier, the completion of a railroad via Merv to Kushk, and Russian action in Khorassan, were pushing forward the hand of Russia so that it might hereafter reach to Birjand and Kerman, and eventually to the Gulf. It was felt, secondly, on the north-west where the railway to Kars, almost finished in 1898, was to be extended to Erivan in the direction of the Tabriz frontier; the Nestorian community in Uromiall were being converted to a

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1. No.100 of 23 June 1887: India Office to Foreign Office. Secret. Secret Letters from India, Government of India, Foreign Department, vol.50 (India Office).

proper sense of Russia's mission; and Russian eyes were directed to Khanikin, whence, if the Kapnist railway scheme was realised, a railway line right across Mesopotamia to Baghdad at Koweit on the Persian Gulf. Thirdly, it was felt along the new line from En Zeli to Teheran, whence it was so far carried via Hamadon and Kirmanshah to Khanikin. Another line of advance might be Isphahan (southward) where there was a Russian Consul, the Shiraz of Ahwaz, and thus Bushire or Fao might prove most attractive objectives. British naval authorities heard of Russian movements to seize a port on Kishm, of Russian agents at Koweit, of a scientific expedition in Seistan, and other incidents of similar character. Under the Kapnist railway scheme of a line from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, Russian control was reserved for the branch from Khanikin to Nejaf via Baghdad.

Persia had also assured Britain that she would not part with her Persian Gulf ports or any sovereign rights. But it was found that her internal conditions might produce a revolution and her army and navy were practically useless, and of such stuff that little could be made of it. On the north, Russia's weight was irresistible, and Persia became to be a puppet in her hands.

Germany was no negligible quantity. She held an important position in the railway system in Asia Minor, and if the Anatolian railway was extended to Baghdad, her interest in

a port in the north-western corner of the Persian Gulf would be vital. Germany, too, was acquiring direct telegraphic communication with Asia Minor, through Kustendje and Constantinople, and the Emperor's tour in 1898, as well as the trend of his policy at Constantinople, indicated a possibility that, in the event of a serious conflict with Russia in the Persian Gulf, Germany might be a factor on Britain's side, or at least to be reckoned with. It was feared that not only might the Kapnist assisted German designs, but there was a concession of internal railway communication in Persia being granted to an engineer who was negotiating with German capitalists.

France had tightoned by serious diplomatic events her right to protect Muscat, and, unfortunately, Muscat included Gwadar, a port on the Baluchistan coast, and also a long line of the Arab coast, which, in the belief that India was the real protector of Oman, Britain had chosen to regard as part of Muscat. The French had a strong fleet, and the Persian Gulf was very near the Karachi port of India.

Turkey certainly possessed Fao on one side of the Shatt-el-Arab. Her right to the El-Kateefcoast had been practically admitted by Britain. South of Bahrain she had a large garrison at El-Bada.. She claimed a right to Koweit, which Britain disputed. There had been reports of her granting concessions to pearl fisheries in the Gulf

and in Asia Minor, at least, she held territories reaching to the Gulf.

Muscat's ruler,[1] the Sultan, could not exercise the slightest authority outside his isolated capital. There and at Mattrah, his subjects were only restrained by threat of punishment by Britain. Britain had upheld his rule at Dhofar, and without her subsidy the administration could not continue. But the joint Declaration of Independence signed with France on 10 March 1862 tied the hand of the British authorities, and detracted from the secret engagement of 1891, under which the Sultan could not part with his possessions to any power except the British.

The British Government, except in Baluchistan, owned no territories washed by the waters of the Persian Gulf. Gwadar, the last port in Baluchistan, belonged to Muscat. From Aden to Ras Sair, where Muscat rule was held to begin, Britain had a protectorate over the Hadramout tribes. From that point Britain shared with France a protectorate over Muscat. Bahrain, off the El-Kateef coast, was under British protection. Koweit had a treaty with Britain. On the Persian side Britain held nothing, but she had a possible

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1. Bertram Thomas: "Arab Rule under the Al Bu said Dynasty of Oman, 1741-1936". From the Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol.XXIV, of 1938.

right of reversion to Bassidor on Kishm island. Hormuz Strait belonged to Persia. The Indian frontiers began at Gwettar Bay to Kah-i-Malik Siah, just south of Seistan, British land frontiers marched with Persia, and at that boundary the Afghan boundary began. Britain had, however, for many years kept the maritime peace in the Persian Gulf, and she had alone protected trade in those waters which carried a sea-borne trade that was mainly British.

As to Persia itself, the desire of Russia and Great Britain to maintain its independence and integrity rested upon declarations exchanged between the three Powers in 1834, 1838, and 1888, printed in Blue Books Miscellaneous No.2, 15 July 1898. The boundary of Persia with India had been demarcated. That between Afghanistan and Persia, especially in the neighbourhood of Herat, had never been accepted by the Amir, and further south on the Seiston line the Afghans objected to what Britain regarded as the Persian boundary. In this case an encroaching spirit might lead to trouble in the future.

The question arose whether these understandings were sufficient for Britain's purposes. It must be admitted that they had not prevented Russia from increasing her pressure on Persia, from sending Cossack escorts with medical explorers even as far south as Seistan and

Bushire, from obtaining concessions in the matter of railways and roads in Persia denied to Britain, and from considering the question of occupying Kishm or a port near Bunder Abbas. At any rate there was a stir, and it seemed a co-operation in French and Russian movements which made the Persian Gulf, at this period, decidedly interesting. Were Britain then:- (1) to do nothing (2) to agree with Russia as to Britain's sphere of influence, as she did with France in Siam; or (3) to take precautionary steps on her own account?

In the following chapters I will discuss the reaction of Great Britain to the challenge of foreign powers in the Persian Gulf. The momentous events which had occurred in the Persian Gulf during 1890-1902 attracted the attention of diplomats more than ever before to the great problems which lay before Britain in that area. There were five important problems facing the British foreign policy which it will be convenient to examine mainly in their geographical contexts. (1) On the Northern shore of the Gulf British economic interests were endangered by growing Turkish opposition (Chapters I and II). (2) On the North Eastern Coast these interests met with a partial success (Navigation of the Karun, Chapter III); but began to lose ground as a result of the pro-Russian popular opposition

towards the Tobacco Concession (Chapter IV). During the period 1893-1902 Russia was consolidating her influence in Persia and was vigorously and quite openly developing her schemes for the capitulation of Persia's economy. The Russian impact on Persia is examined in Chapters V and VI. (3) On the Western shore of the Gulf France was intriguing at Muscat and was preparing to establish herself upon the flank of India, and sap British predominance in the Gulf waters (Chapters VII and VIII). (4) On the Western Coast Turkey was endeavouring to undermine the independence of the rulers of Kowait, Bahrain and El-Katr (Chapters IX and X). (5) The increase in arms traffic coincided with the commencement of unprecedented international rivalry in the Persian Gulf (Chapter XI).

Despite these difficulties Britain rigidly maintained her strategic policy of excluding foreign powers from the Gulf waters and of their acquiring rights of occupation (Chapter XII).

1. ANGLO-TURKISH DISPUTE OVER RIGHTS OF MESOPOTAMIAN RIVERS FORTIFICATION OF SHATT-EL-ARAB 1890-1893

Abdul-Hamid's attempts to obstruct free navigation through Shatt-el-Arab was considered as a major campaign against Britain in the Persian Gulf.

Fao was a village on the west (Turkish) bank of the Shatt-el-Arab, and was thus described in Findlay's Directory for the Navigation of the Indian Ocean. The Eastern Bank of the Shatt-el-Arab was Persian territory, and under the terms of the Articles of Agreement concluded at Erzeroum in 1847, the Persians enjoy the right of navigating the Shatt-el-Arab from its mouth to the point of contact to the two frontiers. In May 1883, the Officiating Political Agent and Consul at Basrah mentioned, among items of intelligence, that the Commander-in-Chief of the Baghdad Corps d'Armée, accompanied by the Commander Mutasarif of Basrah and other officials had paid a visit to Fao, a village on the West Bank (Turkish), where it was rumoured that the Turkish Government desired to build forts and lighthouses. Thus the matter rested until 16 December 1885, when the Basrah Consul, Lieut. Col. Mokler, reported that during the conversation with Admiral Riza Pasha, Governor General of Basrah, it had come out that the Ottoman Government contemplated building

a large port at Fao at a cost of £93,000.[1] Pending the receipt of further intelligence, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs inquired on 16 April 1887,[2] "whether, in the opinion of Viscount Cross, it would not be desirable that Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran should be instructed to call the attention of the Persian Government to the matter, and they suggested they should ascertain whether the fortifications were of a nature which would enable the Turks to obstruct the navigation of the Shatt el-Arab." If such should be the case, Nicholson was directed to declare that "the British Government would be ready to support the representation which the Persian Government could no doubt think it necessary to make at Constantinople on the subject."[3]

Viscount Cross concurred in the proposal looking to the importance in the interests of Persia of maintaining free access to Muhammerah from the Persian Gulf. At this time the project of opening of the Karun River and constructing a Railway from Ahwaz to Teheran was under consideration. The

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1. Enclosed in a letter from the Consul General at Baghdad, No.214, dated 16 December 1885. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to India Office, dated 16 April 1887. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
   Secret Letters from India, Vol.49, Government of India, Foreign Department. (India Office Library).
3. India to the Foreign Office, No.89, dated 25 April 1887. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
   Also Secret Letters from India, Vol.49. (India Office Library).

construction of a fort at Fao was consequently a menace hostile both to British and to Persian interests. The Shah asked the Persian Ambassador at Constantinople to confer with Sir William White on a joint Anglo-Persian policy.[1]

The Foreign Office, however, telegraphed to Nicholson[2] on 13 June that it approved, in the event of the Shatt-el-Arab being closed, navigation in view of this, and of the Treaty engagements of the Porte, it might be necessary to raise the question at Constantinople. Before Sir William White had received the instructions sent to him on 20 July to support the protest of the Shah's Ambassador at Constantinople, he had mentioned that Muhsin Khan had been for some time consulting him on the subject of representation to the Sublime Porte regarding the construction of fortifications at Fao, but, as the Ambassador had very little knowledge of the subject, Sir William could not give him much assistance, having received no instructions from the Foreign Office. He had, however, urged Muhsin Pasha, who was a personal favourite with the Sultan and was about to have an audience with him, "to speak to His Imperial Majesty and obtain an Iradé to stop the work to which his Government objected."[3]

On learning the above, Lord Cross observed that,

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1. Nicholson to Foreign Office, No.78, 13 June 1887. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to Nicholson, Telegraphic, No.31, 13 June 1887. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
3. Sir William White to Foreign Office, No.243, 23 July 1887, F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

according to the reports of Col. M. Smith, the projected fortifications were of a nature to enable the Turkish authorities to obstruct the free navigation of the Shatt-el-Arab between Muhammerah and the sea, and it was very possible that this might lead to work of a similar nature being constructed by the Persian Government on the opposite side of the river, a not altogether desirable result, considering the great importance of this route in connection with the British Indian Trade.[1]

Lord Cross was, therefore, pleased to learn that instructions had been sent to the British Ambassador at Constantinople to support the protest which the Persian Ambassador was preparing to address to the Sublime Porte, but suggested, for Lord Salisbury's consideration, whether it might not be desirable that supplementary instructions should be issued to White directing His Excellency, without awaiting any personal representations which Muhsin or Khan might make to the Sultan, to formally intimate to the Turkish Ministers that Her Majesty's Government could not view with indifference the action taken by the Ottoman Government in this matter. Instructions to this effect were accordingly issued to White on 21 August. His representations were not well received by the Porte as appeared from his report of 25 August. Said Pasha (Turkish

1. See Col. M. Smith's report enclosed in a letter from India Office to Foreign Office, No.213, 18 August 1887. F.O.78/4901, and Mr. Tweedie's letter to Foreign Office, No.41, 3 May 1887. F.O.78/4901. See also a confidential Note on Turkish Fort at Fao, F.O.60/578. (P.R.O.).

Minister for Foreign Affairs) to whom the subject appeared very distasteful, observed with much animation, if not irritation, that he did not see on what ground the two Governments, the British and the Persian, could fairly dispute the right of a great independent State to erect fort or fortifications on its own territories, adding at the same time that the fort in question was not at all intended to interfere with free trade and the navigation of the Shatt-el-Arab.[1] Said Pasha concluded the conversation by stating that he had even spoken to the Persian Chargé d'Affaires who had invoked in support of his representations the treaty of Erzeroum of 1847 of which he wished them to consult together with any other document which might exist at the Porte before entering into any further discussion on the subject with the Persian Embassy.

The War Office recommended that a fresh survey should be made of the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab and the adjoining port of the Persian Gulf and suggested that this matter should be referred to the Lords of Admiralty for consideration.[2]

The latter replied that "unless there is divergent political reason for a re-survey of the Shatt el-Arab, they do not propose to undertake it, in the general interest of navigation."[3]

1. Sir William White to Foreign Office, No.215, 25 August 1887. F.O.60/578. (P.R.O.).
2. War Office to Foreign Office, No.0162, 15 August 1887. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
3. Admiralty to Foreign Office, No.0356, 11 Oct. 1887. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
   A survey was finally made by Col. E. Cross of H.M.'s ship Lawrence early in March 1891. (No.27, 5 March 1891). Admiralty 1.7039. (P.R.O.).

In consequence of this denial by the Porte of the right of the British, and even the Persian, Governments to object to a construction of a fort at Fao and of the Turkish contention that it could not be considered as interfering with the free navigation of the Shatt -el-Arab, the Foreign Office sent to White copies of two memoranda relative to the negotiations connected with the Treaty of Erzeroum and stated that the contention of the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs was in a direct contradiction with the view held by the Porte in 1847.[1]

At the time when the Treaty of Erzeroum was drafted by the Russian and the British Commissioners, who acted as a mediator, the Turkish Government objected to the relinquishment to Persia of the Island of El Khayzr, on which a portion of the town of Muhammerah was situated, and only withdrew this objection on the ground that no fortification should be erected on the Island or at any point where they could interfere with the free navigation of the river and thus its mouth on the Persian Gulf. In March 1848, the Turkish Government submitted to the British Commissioner a proposal for an addition to Article 2 of the Treaty, which they desired should be inserted in the Acts of Ratification. The clause in question contained a formal engagement on the part of the Persian and Turkish Governments reciprocally to

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1. Foreign Office to Sir William White, No.222, 19 September 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

abstain from erecting fortifications on the banks of the Shatt-el-Arab in their respective possessions. The Turkish negotiators consented to sign the treaty in its original form on receiving an assurance from the British and Russian Commissioners that the wish of the Porte on these and other points should be supported at Teheran. With some difficulty the British Minister at Teheran obtained the consent of the Shah to this condition as to the non-erection of fortifications, and still further pressure had to be used by British and Russian Ambassadors on this subject.

The Treaty was signed on 31 May 1847 in the presence of Col. Williams and Col. Cairse, the British and the Russian mediating Commissioners, and the signature was recorded in a Procès Verbal signed by Col. Williams.[1] The Persian Government at first refused to have anything to do with the assurances given by the British and Russian Representatives at Constantinople, but eventually the Shah informed Col. Shiel (with reference to the question of fortification) that he was willing to declare that so long as Turkey refrained from fortifying the portion of the

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1. Memorandum on Erzeroum Treaty of 1847. F.O.248/644. (P.R.O.).

Shatt-el-Arab opposite to Persia, he would abstain from fortifying the Persian branch.

In answer to the British allegation the Porte declared that it had the right of constructing the Fao Fort, subject to no other consequence than that of conceding to similar right to the Persian Government. The Turkish Foreign Office sent a Pro-Memoria, dated 29 December 1887 to the British Government in which they said:[1]

> "Le Traité d'Erzeroum de 1847 ne contient aucune clause ayont trait aux fortifications sur la droite de le fleu, située vis-á-Vis de territoire person, la Perse de son côté s'obstiendra d'en construire sur la rive du la gauche qui lui, rivient selon les deposition du traité."

In forwarding this rejoinder, Sir William White wrote to Lord Salisbury a letter dated 2 January 1888,[2] indicating that the chief difficulties in the way are: "(1) the length of time the works have been carried on without giving rise to any spontaneous protest on the part of the Persian Government. (2) The hopelessness of obtaining any support from Russia as co-mediator. (3) The Persian Government never moved or showed any interest in this

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1. Turkish Pro-Memoria, 29 December 1887. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.). (This document is enclosed in White's letter to Foreign Office, No.1, 2 January 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

2. White to Salisbury, No.1, 2 January 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

operation until it was taken up by Britain and appeared indifferent." The Ambassador of Persia had been kept "au courant" by Sir William White of every step taken, and His Excellency's interest has been lately considerably awakened by instructions from the Shah.

It appeared to Lord Salisbury that the British Government had grounds for complaining of the action of the Porte, who having in 1847 made use of the intervention of the British Government to obtain the consent of Persia to a reciprocal engagement that neither party should erect fortifications on the banks of the Shatt-el-Arab, had thus built a fort which she considered as within the sphere of her own natural right as an independent power. But it could scarcely be said as a matter of strict international right, that Her Majesty's Government was in a position to claim that the Fort should be demolished and abandoned, and as the Porte was almost certain to suspect some hidden designs of the British Government, took too prominent a part in the discussion and Lord Salisbury proposed to instruct Sir William White to drop the controversy until the Persian Government took the matter up. In January 1888, the Persian Ambassador presented a note to the Porte in which he protested against the erection of the Fort at Fao as being contrary to the Treaty engagements, and demanded its demolition.[1] Sir William

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1. Persian Ambassador to Salisbury, No.94, 11 January 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

White was authorized to give his Persian colleague such support in the matter as he thought judicious.

In that year the Government of India forwarded a report by Col. M.S. Bell, on the position of the Fao and the effect of the entrance to the Karun being commanded by it.[1] The Report discussed in detail the geographical importance of the Fort and concluded by saying:

> "Doubtless on the first favourable opportunity the Turks will again call in question Britain's right to navigate the Tigris and endeavour to enforce the opinion by blocking access to it even as low down as Fao."

The Turkish nation was one which the jurists of some powers would probably place beyond the pale of international law, and consider worthy to be negotiated with only agreeably to the laws of nature (De Martens), and Turkey had indeed taken the same view of treaties between powers more civilized than herself; and determining that a treaty only maintained its binding powers in so far as it was guaranteed by the material strength of the constructing parties, had set aside as no longer binding the treaty of Erzeroum of 1847, leaving it for Persia to follow her example if she chose, and then challenging Britain to take her action as a party to the treaty being violated in a manner greatly prejudicial to her interests.

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1. Report on Fao Fort: by Col. M.S. Bell, February 1888. (Dy. Qr. General Intelligence, Simla). Secret Letters from India, Vol.53. Indian Government, Foreign Department. (India Office Library).

Here it is very important to indicate that the fortifications were thought to be primarily directed against Great Britain and not Persia; i.e., that it was a continuation by the Turks of their hitherto fruitless endeavours to get the river traffic into their own hands, and to compel the withdrawal of Lynch's boats from the Tigris; a river which the Turks held that British boats had no right to navigate, permission having been given by Turkey to navigate the Euphrates and not the Tigris.

Both the Indian Government and the British Embassy in Constantinople warned the Foreign Office on this issue. In transmitting Col. Bell's report the Indian Government wrote:[1]

> "Your Lordship will observe that the Fort commands the main channel of the Shatt el-Arab, and will enable the Turks to block, at least temporarily, all access to the Tigris. It will further give to the Turks the command of the traffic to Muhammerah, and thereby control British trade with Mesopotamia and Arabistan.
> "We are of opinion that the erection of the Fort is prejudicial to British interests; and if the British Government do not feel themselves in a position to demand that it should be demolished or abandoned, we would at least recommend that strong support should be given to any similar demand made by the Government of the Shah of Persia."

This view was shared by Sir William White.[2]

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1. Government of India to Foreign Office, No.82 External of 26 May 1888. Secret Letters from India, Vol.53. Indian Government, Foreign Department. (India Office Library).

2. Sir William White to Lord Salisbury. Telegraphic No.15, 16 March 1890. F.O.78/4901, see also Said Pasha's letter to Sir William White of 19 March 1890. F.O.78/4901 and Sir William White to Lord Salisbury, Telegraphic, Confidential, No.17, 18 March 1890. F.O.73/4901. (P.R.O.).

And Lord Cross, in forwarding this communication to the Foreign Office, expressed doubts whether:

> "In existing circumstances diplomatic protests on the part of the Shah against the construction of this fort would be effectual even if supported by the British Government, but if the Marquis of Salisbury should deem it opportune to press the Persian Government to take active steps at Constantinople with the object of inducing the Sultan to abandon the construction of the fort as menacing the approach to the Persian town of Muhammerah, Lord Cross would entirely concur in such a course." 1

It appeared to Salisbury that it was impossible to allow the construction of the fort to be persisted in without serious remonstrance and a warning on whom it was regarded by the British Government. Sir William White was accordingly authorised to present a Memorandum to the Porte, and, if he thought desirable, to take measures to bring its contents to the knowledge of the Sultan. Rather than leave the matter to be discussed by the Persian Government and to support their representations, Salisbury thought it was desirable to remonstrate again directly with the Porte.[2] Salisbury asked Rustem Pasha, on 4 August, to call at the Foreign Office to receive a new Memorandum on the subject. In this Memorandum the British Government called "the serious attention of the Sublime Porte to the objection which they have already urged to the erection of a fort at the mouth of Shatt-el-Arab,

1. India Office to Foreign Office, No.146, 27 January 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

2. Foreign Office to Sir William White, No.77, 11 July 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

near Fao."[1] Britain considered such action as an open hostility against the freedom of British navigation between Basrah and Muhammerh." The Memorandum accused the Turkish Government of violating the Erzeroum Treaty of 1848. The Treaty between Turkey and Persia, signed at Erzeroum on 31 May 1847, contains in Article II the following engagement on the part of the Sublime Porte:-

> "Outre cela, les navires persons auront le droit de naviguer en pleine liberté sur le Shatt el-Arab, depuis l'endroit où a fleune se jette dans la mer jusqu'au point de contact des frontières des deux parties."

The British Memorandum continued to say that before consenting to ratify the treaty, the Turkish Ministers required certain further assurances from the Persian Government, one of which was that no party should erect any fortifications on the Borders of the Shatt-el-Arab where the possession of the two States were opposite to one another. These assurances were obtained with great difficulty by the exertions of the Russian and Turkish representatives at Teheran. The Turkish Minister desired that the assurances should be confirmed by Great Britain and Russia as the mediatory Powers, and to satisfy this desire a joint Note was addressed to the Sublime Porte by the British and Russian Representatives at Constantinople on 26 February 1848 which contains the following passage:

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1. Lord Salisbury's memorandum to Rustem Pasha (Turkish Ambassador in London) 4 August 1889. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

> "La déclaration de l'Envoyé énconce enfin, quroni à la défense réciproque de bôtes des fortifications sur les côtes du Shatt-el-Arab où les possessions des deux Etats se trouvent opposées les unes aux autres, en résolution du Schah pleinement conforme au désir exprimé par la Sublime Porte et appuyé à Téhéran par les Offices des deux Représents médiateurs, c'est à dire que le Schah consent à ce qui ' aussi longtemps que la Turquire ne bôtira point de forti sur la rive driote du Shatt-el-Arab, située vis-a-vis du territoire sur la partie de la gauche qui lui revivent selon les stipulation du Traité."

In a Memorandum presented to the Persian Ambassador it has been argued by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs that the erection of the Fort was not a breach of any absolute engagement, but that the effect of this measure was merely to leave the Persian Government free to erect similar fortifications on its side of the river.[1] The last British Memorandum viewed this difficulty by saying that it was undoubtedly true that the Persian Government had the means of erecting fortifications on the left bank of the river in their possession which would obstruct completely the navigation of the river upwards towards the Tigris and the Euphrates. And for any power which desired to see Turkey and Persia in antagonism, or to make use of Persian assistance or Persian territory in furtherence of aggressive designs against the Ottoman Empire, such a solution would not be an unsatisfactory one. The Memorandum went on to say:

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1. A Turkish Note addressed to the Persian Embassy (Translation No.13) 16 July 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O).

> But Great Britain has no such military designs. Her interest is the peaceful development of trade with the districts on the Banks of the Shatt-el-Arab and of the several rivers which debauch into it, and in fact by far the largest proportion of sea-going vessels which ascend the river to Basrah and Muhammerah are under the British flag. Britain considers such fortifications a direct threat to her economic interest in both Iraq and the Karun River, in a time when the latter was opened to navigation and when Lynch's vessels were meeting a strong opposition from the Turkish authorities in Baghdad and Basrah.

The British Government was not aware of any circumstances in the relations between Turkey and Persia which could be held to call for the construction of the Fort as a measure of necessary precaution, and according to the reports which have reached them, the fort was so situated as to constitute in the existing state of things, a menace not so much to Persia as the British Commercial interest.[1]

Britain warned the Sublime Porte distinctly and emphatically that if the fort was completed and steps were taken towards arming it, they would regard this action as one of hostile preparation which they would be entitled to resent and to take the necessary measures for counteracting. A Memorandum to the same effect was supplied by the Foreign Office to the Turkish Ambassador (Rustem Pasha) at his own request.

Sir William White got a Turkish translation carefully made of the said Memorandum, a copy of which he instructed

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1. See a report by Lieut. Col. F.R. Maunsell on economic and military impact of the Fort on British interest. Very Confidential, dated 8 September 1888. Simla. F.O.248/487. (P.R.O.).

Sir Thomas Sanderson to deliver to the Grand Vizier. His Highness, after having taken some time to study it, expressed, subsequently, an opinion less favourable to the British demand than the one he has stated on previous occasions. The British Ambassador continued to urge on the Grand Vizier the representations he was instructed to make by Lord Salisbury, when he suddenly learned that the controversy so uselessly raised by the Turkish War Department had reached the Sultan's ears.[1] The Sultan then gave orders that all the documents should be submitted to himself before any further decision, and the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs declared himself unable to do anything before receiving His Imperial Majesty's commands.[2] On the 9th instant Sir William forwarded to the Sultan's First Secretary, in Turkish, a copy of the above named Memorandum and also of the Persian Note addressed to Sir William White's predecessor and to the Russian Ambassador on 31 January 1889, as bearing on this point, so as to leave no doubt whatever in the Shah's mind of the importance of his decision as affecting the future relations between England and Turkey. Furthermore, the question of Massowah and financial complications might

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1. Lord Salisbury to Sir William White, No.112, 30 September 1888. Sir William White Private Papers. F.O.364/6. (Public Record Office).

2. Admiral Wood Pasha's private letter (of the Imperial Turkish Navy) to Admiralty. 18 Oct. 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

probably have occasioned the Sultan to delay studying this subject. Sir William White explained the Russian attitude towards the Fao problem by saying that: "I couldn't, however, refrain from stating to Lord Salisbury very confidentially that M. Nelidoff /the Russian Ambassador/ has been working in a sense hostile to our demands, both at the Palace with the War Minister and even indirectly with the Persian Ambassador."[1]

The Turkish Foreign Office had addressed a note, on 31 January, to the Persian Ambassador on the subject of previous consultations.[2] The Porte pursued the Persian Embassy's Note of reply stating that the construction of fortifications at Fao was contrary to the decision arrived at when the Treaty of Erzeroum was concluded, viz: that no fortifications should be made on the borders of Shatt-el-Arab, and declaring that any modifications of this decision must be subject to the mediating powers. The Turkish Note went on to state:

> "It is needless to explain that the agreement arrived at this subject was not a reciprocal undertaking, but Turkey at that time in her own interests reserved to her own initiation the right

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1. Sir William White to Lord Salisbury, No.84, 31 January 1889. Sir William White Private Papers. F.O.364/6. Public Record Office.
   See also Admiral Wood Pasha's private letter (of the Imperial Turkish Navy) to Admiralty. 18 October 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

2. Enclosed in Sir William White's letter to Salisbury, No.84, 31 January 1889. Sir William White Private Papers. F.O.364/6. (Public Record Office).

> of constructing fortifications on those banks, and brought about the engagement that so long as Turkey should not fortify the right bank of the river, Persia should abstain from building forts on her (left) bank of the river."

To explain the note is very simple. Now that Turkey has had forts made, Persia was released from her engagement, and was also free to construct forts on her own ground and had no right to object.[1] And this Agreement being between the two Governments, there was no kind of engagement vis-à-vis the mediating powers, and the two Governments aforesaid were not dependent on their consent, and the construction of those works was no violation of any treaty between the two Governments.

The Turkish newspaper "El-Tarik" declared on 2 August 1888 that Britain "is exaggerating the question too much. The Porte has full right to construct forts either in its own territories, besides this fort has not been strong enough to make Great Britain so nervous."

Should it, however, be correct, the question of how such a step was a violation of any Treaty between Turkey and Persia surely belonged to those two countries to decide, and England's interference in the matter, while causing surprise, could only be explained on the supposition that she was seeking

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1. Letter from Sir William White to Lord Salisbury, No.84. Secret, 28 February 1889. F.O.248/493. (P.R.O.).

to acquire influence on the Shatt-el-Arab and in the Gulf of Basrah, a proceeding which was, however, contrary to England's established policy.

The Turkish Ambassador, having made no communication to the Foreign Office respecting Fao, was asked if he had instructions to present a Memorandum on the subject.[1] He said that he had no formal instructions, but had been privately told to give explanations and the assurances to the British Government. They were to the effect that the intentions of the Porte were far from being hostile to any one, and that there would be no interference with the navigation of the Shatt-el-Arab.[2] But His Excellency could give no more explanation of the object with which the fort was being built.

Rustem Pasha was warned that unless an assurance that the works were stopped was given to the British Government, ships from the Zanzibar squadron would be sent up to see what was going on, and that under no circumstances would guns be allowed to be landed at the Fort. The representations made at Constantinople by the British Ambassador, however, remained without effect, for on 28 February 1889, Sir William White wrote to Lord Salisbury:

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1. Foreign Office to Rustem Pasha, No.112, 30 September 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

2. Foreign Office to Admiralty, No.26, 26 November 1888. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

> "I have come to the conviction that it is an operation on which the Ottoman Ministers, who constitute the Sublime Porte, with the exception of the Minister of War, are entirely powerless, and that the matter rests with the Sultan with whom are all the papers. As I have some reason to believe that Russian partizans have represented here that in reality the Shah himself entertains no serious objections to these Fao fortifications, but that it is only Great Britain that has some selfish motive to prevent these fortifications, I have been constantly pressing Muhsin Khan, the Persian Ambassador, to urge the Sublime Porte on the subject; and seeing how unavailing all these repeated representations to Ottoman Ministers proved to be." 1

Sir William White instructed Sir Thomas Sanderson to present a new Memorandum to the Sultan to call the latter's attention to the importance of the Anglo-Russian side of the Erzeroum Agreement. This Memorandum was presented to the Sultan on 25 December. It said that "No action contrary to the provision of that Convention can be legitimate without the consent of the two signatory Powers of the above-mentioned Treaty, as well as that of the mediating Powers having been obtained."[2] Still the works on the fortifications were carried on. Early in 1890 the following intelligence was received:

> "Works on Fao Fort in active progress. Sign of large labour force. Works sufficiently advanced to conceal storage of arms, ammunition and warlike stores. No guns were seen in position, but sign of completion is manifest." 3

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1. Sir William White to Foreign Office, No.84. Secret. 28 February 1889. Sir William White Private Papers, F.O.364/6. (P.R.O.).
2. Sir William White to Foreign Office, 25 December 1889. Telegraphic. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).
3. From British Consul at Basrah to the British Consul-General at Baghdad, No.440, 24 December 1889. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

Meanwhile a small incident occurred at Fao. A British boat was fired on by the Turkish forces stationed at Fao. Sir William White took the opportunity to approach the matter further with the Sultan. He handed Said Pasha, the Turkish Foreign Minister a strong protest in which he asked for immediate explanation for this unprovoked Turkish aggression. Said Pasha, not trying to widen the issue regretted the incident, but he also told Ambassador White that instructions should be sent to all British ships in Shatt-el-Arab not to penetrate into the new Turkish fortifications at Fao. The Turkish Government granted Commander Boldero, of H.M.'s ship "Sphinx", permission to visit these fortifications. Commander Boldero in his report to Rear Admiral E. Fermantel did not see in those forts any immediate military danger. A similar conclusion was reached by Col. Cross of H.M.'s ship "Lawrence" who visited the fort a year later.[2]

Sir William White, after three years of negotiations with the Porte, accepted Lord Salisbury's plan of using the British naval power in the Indian Ocean to put pressure on the Turks.[3] Lord Salisbury had instructed the Lords of the

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1. Sir William White to Said Pasha, No.32, 15 March 1890. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

2. Col. E. Cross to Kennedy, No.10, 21 February 1891. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).

3. Sir William White to Lord Salisbury, No.41, 26 January 1890. F.O.78/4901. (P.R.O.).

Admiralty to issue instructions that a couple of Her Majesty's ships may go round from Zanzibar to the Persian Gulf to see how matters really stood with regard to the fortifications at Fao, as any persistent efforts to clear up the subject have proved fruitless.

The case was renewed again in 1893. Acting in accordance with instructions from the Foreign Office Nicholson, the British Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople called upon Said Pasha, Foreign Minister, and left with him a Pro-Memoria renewing the remonstrance and warnings formerly made by the British Government in regard to the construction of the Fort at Fao.[1] Said Pasha, in accepting the Pro-Memoria said that it should not be imagined that the fort was intended as a menace to British commerce, and he could not conceive the possibility of Ottoman guns ever being turned against British merchant ships.

Said Pasha was not, personally, in favour of spending too much money on the Fao fortifications. He called for more expenditure to the defences in the Bosphorus.

Negotiations between the British Embassy and the Turkish Foreign Office became critical on 18 November 1893. The British Ambassador, Sir Clare Ford, had a long meeting with

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1. Enclosed in Nicholson's letter to Earl of Rosebery, No.380, 9 August 1893. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).

Said Pasha in which he reminded His Excellency of what had taken place in the past with regard to these fortifications and he referred H.E. to the Pro-Memoria presented to him on 9 August. In this the British Embassy hoped that the Sublime Porte would give orders for the prompt discontinuance of the work in question, for should the Fort be completed, and steps taken towards arming it, H.M.'s Government would regard such action as one of hostile preparation which they would be entitled to resent and which would justify them in taking the necessary counter measures.[1] Ford warned Said Pasha that if the Turkish Government delayed in giving the required assurances the British Government would not be responsible for what might happen. Later in the same day Sir Clare Ford called on the Grand Vizier to discuss the matter further. His Highness was most unyielding and he told Ford that he could not take any initiative or even advise His Imperial Majesty to dismantle the fort, and in spite of Ford urging him to give way in the interests of the Ottoman Government he declared that all he could do on receipt of Said Pasha's letter would be to refer it to the Palace for the decision of H.M. the Sultan.[2]

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1. Ford to Foreign Office, No.521. Confidential, 9 November 1893. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).

2. The official Turkish newspaper "Al-Basrah" published in Arabic and Turkish, wrote on 13 December 1893 that the Governor of Fao had received urgent instructions from the Porte to complete the construction of the Fort. Original copy is enclosed in F.O.196/1,1841. (P.R.O.).

On 26 November 1893 Ford, in an audience with Said Pasha, declared that "the British Government considers the fortification as an immediate danger to the independence of Bahrain."[1] The Turks on their part raised no point in these controversies. The attitude which Britain had adopted constituted, in their opinion, a dangerous precedent of which the Russians would eagerly avail themselves in a quarter of far greater importance than that of the Shatt-el-Arab. "If the erection of a fort at Fao were regarded as a menace to the Turkish Trade, the Russians," Said Pasha declared, "would be able to use the same argument with regard to the erection of fortresses on the Bosphorus." Ford replied that "in the presence of international engagements which constituted the Sultan the guardian of the Straits, there should be no analogy between the Bosphorus and the Shatt-el-Arab. Moreover, the Bosphorus flowed between Turkish shores, whereas the Shatt-el-Arab runs between Turkey and Persia."

The British Government continued to press for the discontinuance of the works at Fao. On 29 November 1893, Ford spoke to the Grand Vizier on the subject of the works which were reported to be going on at the Fao fort and he expressed the hope that the proper instructions might be sent at once to the

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1. Sir Clare Ford to Earl of Rosebery, No.548, Confidential. 26 November 1893. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).
2. Sir Clare Ford to Earl of Rosebery, No.552, Confidential, 28 November 1893. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).

Turkish authorities there that they might be discontinued.[1]

Ford raised the question of the interpretation of the Erzeroum Agreement of 1847. He said that "in 1847 an urgent request had been addressed by the Turkish Government to the mediating powers, Great Britain and Russia, that as a condition to their ratifying the Treaty of Erzeroum it should be established that the Persian Government should on no account raise fortresses on their side of the Schatt el-Arab river, the prohibition to apply equally to the Turkish Government." The Grand Vizier promised to give orders to stop the work at Fao.

Delay arose in transmission of orders for the provisional cessation of work, and on inquiry as to its course, the Grand Vizier assured Sir Thomas Sanderson[2] that he had instructed the Minister of War to send the necessary orders, and that he would lose no time in ascertaining what steps the War Department had taken. On 24 December 1893 the British Embassy was informed that the Minister for War had sent telegraphic orders a week before direct to the Commandant at Fao to abstain for the time being from any works on the construction of the Fort. Later on the despatch of a British gunboat to Fao was in contemplation. Sir Philip Currie stated that the

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1. Sir Clare Ford to Earl of Rosebery, No.538, Confidential. 29 November 1893. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).

2. Nicholson to Foreign Office, No.230. Telegraphic. 23 December 1893. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).

Grand Vizier had reported his belief that no work was in progress and had asserted positively that no orders had been given from Constantinople for its resumption.[1] And notwithstanding the repeated protests, verbal and written, of the British Government, the Turkish Government had now abandoned the project of constructing a fort at Fao. Earl Kimberley did not think it would be worth while to make a serious quarrel about Fao Fort and any practical measures would probably be inconvenient to Britain as much as to Turkey, but he did not fail to remind the Porte that the establishment of the Port was a violation of the Erzeroum Treaty of 1847 and was an unfriendly demonstration.[2]

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1. Sir Philip Currie to Earl Kimberley, No.137, 22 March 1894. F.O.78/4902. (P.R.O.).

2. Kimberley to Currie, No.13. Telegraphic. 2 June 1894. Lord Kimberley Private Papers, Persia (Wymondham, Lord Kimberley's estate). The British Consular agent at Fao reported in the spring of 1897 that the Ottoman authorities are really abandoning their efforts to fortify the river. The fort seemed to have fallen into decay and to be without guns. In a report received in Bushire on 10 January it said:

> "The fort for which the Turks commanded and built at Fao has never been finished, no work having been done on it for the last six years. The walls which were built are already falling in disrepair, there are only 40 soldiers stationed here!"

"Captain J.A. Douglas's report on "Journey from India to the Mediterranean: The Vilayates of Baghdad and Basrah", 2 January 1898. Secret Letters from India, Vol.69. (India Office Library).

II. ANGLO-TURKISH DISPUTE OVER RIGHTS OF MESOPOTAMIAN RIVERS: NAVIGATION OF THE EUPHRATES AND TIGRIS 1890-1892

I.

Turkey's opposition to free navigation of the Mesopotamian rivers was another source of anxiety. The impact of foreign capital on the economic development of Turkish Iraq was described by the following passage:-

> "The riches of the country could be so easily increased and exploited if Government would only give its consent and moral support to those who are willing to use their knowledge and influence in the service of the country, to the mutual advantage of governing and governed. What grateful and extensive fields would be opened to capitalists if the Turks would only forget the jealousy with which they eye every successful foreign undertaking, and would understand that the inhabitants have not yet acquired either the experience or the necessary means for taking the initiative into their own hands." 1

The correspondence which the Turkish newspaper Terdjaman Hakikat received on 2 September 1883 from Baghdad showed that the question of the navigation of the Tigris by the steamboats of Lynch Company was more important than one might suppose it to be. This importance did not arise from the fact that the concession granted in principle

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1. Memorandum by Mr. Wartmann, respecting Asiatic Turkey. No.274, 29 June 1881. Lord Granville Private Papers P.R.O. 30/29, vol.347, (Public Record Office). For general history of Lynch Company see "The story of the Euphrates Company", The Near East and India, 24 November 1932.

2. Reproduced in the Eastern Express, 8 September 1883.

to Colonel Cheseney, which the Lynch Company took advantage of to the extent of monopolising the traffic on the Tigris by putting on four or five steamboats of from 400-500 tons measurement. This question assumed in the Turkish eye a peculiar importance from the fact that the Company had commenced a postal service between those places touched at by their steamers, which was carried on in the name of the British Post Office, and that the stamps used were those of the same administration. "This fact," wrote the Turkish newspaper, "constitutes a fresh violation of the sovereign rights of the State, since it was in opposition to the Ottoman Postal Service, and deserves the special attention of the Sublime Porte." Terdjuman Hakikat concluded:

> "We should remark that we do not speak of the political advantages from a moral point of view, which result for all Arabia from the English navigation of the Tigris. If we wished to enter into this consideration we could easily show that England will not act as a friend in putting pressure on the Imperial Government in this question."

It was evident from the Turkish point of view that the monopolisation of the traffic on a great river, recognised as the highway for Arabian commerce, without authority or Firman, constituted in itself a serious violation of the sovereign rights of the State. Mr. Lynch thought to interfere in the Postal Service, precisely at the moment when every effort was being put at the Sublime Porte to get rid of all foreign participation in it.

A copy of a highly important despatch which had come

into the hands of Lord Dufferin,[1] British Ambassador at Constantinople, addressed by the Grand Vizierat to the Governor of Baghdad respecting the navigation of the Mesopotamian rivers by Messrs. Lynch & Co.'s steamers. The despatch had also reference to the formation of an Ottoman Company for the navigation of the rivers in operation. Meanwhile, it was known by the Indian Government that the new vessel intended to replace the worn out steamship "Comet" on the waters of Turkish Arabia was approaching completion and would probably be ready to start for her destination in January next. The Foreign Office informed Earl Kimberley[2] that in order to avoid any risk of misunderstanding with the local authorities in regard to the passage of the vessel up the river Tigris, Dufferin had been instructed to inform the Porte that it was now intended to carry into effect the arrangement agreed on in 1869.

The Turkish Ambassador in London, Musurus Pasha, called at the Foreign Office on 5 December 1883 to announce that he had received further instructions in the matter of the navigation of the Mesopotamian rivers.[3] He said that his

1. Lord Dufferin to Earl Granville, No.23. Commercial. Secret. 11 October 1883. Copie d'un despâch du Grand Vizierat au Governor General de Baghdad. 18 September 1883 (in French and Turkish). F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

2. Foreign Office to India Office. No.375, 15 November 1882. F.O.78/5108. See Confidential Memorandum by E. Hertslet on the rights of British ships to go up the Tigris and Euphrates. No.4802. 8 February 1881. F.O.78/4604. (P.R.O.).

3. Granville to Dufferin, No.222, 13 December 1883. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

Government "could not continue the permission hitherto accorded to Messrs. Lynch's steamers to navigate the Tigris and that permission would in future be for navigating the Euphrates only and would be limited to the steamers belonging to Messrs. Lynch & Co." He added, however, that "in his opinion the Vizirail letter of 1846[1] did not apply to British vessels navigating under the British flag, but only to vessels built up by the English owner, or belonging to them and sailing under the Ottoman flag." The interview, however, having led to no practical result, the Ambassador was invited to address a Note to Earl Granville, setting out precisely the grounds to which the Porte defended their action in stopping the traffic of the Company. His Excellency, accordingly, addressed a Note to Granville on 28 December 1883 in which he presented his Government's view. In that Note[2] Musurus Pasha maintained that the sole right of navigation possessed by the Company was derived from the Firman of 1834 and a Firman of 1841. He denied that a general right to navigate the rivers was ever granted to British

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1. The Grand Vizier, Reouf Pasha, to the Pasha of Baghdad, 2 April 1846. Inclosure 3 in No.2. Despatch from Sir Stratford Canning in 1846 on the Question of the Navigation of the Tigris and Euphrates. Confidential. No.4828. Lord Granville Private Papers. P.R.O.30/29. (P.R.O.).

2. Full text of the Ambassadorial letter in French, 28 December 1883. F.O.78/5198. (P.R.O.).

vessels, and he proceeded to give his interpretation of the Vizierial letters of 1846 and 1861. He agreed that "if those documents were intended to concede a general right of navigation, the reference to the Firmans of 1834 and 1841[1] and the Vizierial letter of 1861[2] would have been superfluous; that it was impossible to hold that such a right could be accorded by simple Vizierial letter; that it must necessarily have formed the subject of a Treaty, the benefit of which, moreover, would be claimed at once by all the other powers entitled to most favoured nation treatment; that the Vizierial letters had no reference to British vessels, entitled to carry the British flag, but only to British owned native craft which improperly carried the British flag and thus escaped the payment of dues." As regards the argument that the Company's line of steamers had been established for more than twenty years on the Tigris, without objection on the part of the Porte; that a large capital had been expended on its establishment; that

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1. Annex 1. Memorandum by Kennedy on the Prohibition of the Porte of navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris by British vessels for Commercial Purposes, No.29, 20 July 1885. Lord Granville Private Papers. P.R.O.30/29, Vol.353. (P.R.O.).

2. Mehmed Pasha, Grand Vizier to Governor General of Baghdad, 15 January 1861. Navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris by British Merchant Vessels. Report No.4838. Lord Granville Private Papers. P.RO.30/29, Vol.353. (P.R.O.).

it was under contract with the British Government for the carriage of the Indian mail; and that the stoppage of its traffic would give rise to grave complaints on the part of the mercantile interest and in Parliament. His Excellency observed that the transport of the Indian mail could be effected by a Turkish steamer; that the friendly tolerance of the Porte could not affect its imprescriptible rights; that the expedition of the Company had been amply repaid by its profits; that its establishment on the Tigris had never ceased to give rise to disputes; that the question was not one affecting the interests of British commerce in general, but of private Company; that for political and economic reasons the Porte must insist that the navigation of the Tigris should be observed by the Ottoman vessels; finally, that although the privileges accorded by Imperial Firman to two British steamers to navigate the Euphrates had been granted for as long only as it should be mutually advantageous, and presented no inconvenience." Whatever might be the true construction of the Agreement of 1846 as to the general right of navigation, the British Government considered that the attitude of the Porte during the last twenty years debarred them from disputing the validity of the rights claimed and exercised by the Company under the Vizierial letter of 1861 and that they were entitled to insist on the <u>status quo</u> of the Company being

maintained. It was in that sense that during the discussion of the case with the Turkish Ambassador it was pointed out to His Excellency that if the British Government were to waive their claim to the right of general navigation, the rights hitherto enjoyed by the Company must be respected and maintained. The Turkish attitude was described by the Law Officers of the Crown as follows:-

> "The abrupt and the arbitrary action of the Porte in forcibly stopping the traffic of the Company without notice, and for no other course than the desire to secure their business and profits for an Ottoman Company, was marked by a singular lack of friendliness and courtesy towards Her Majesty's Government, and presents an incident unparalleled in the history of the commercial relations of this country in any part of the world." 1

The headquarters of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company in London received on 20 March 1884 a telegram from their Agent at Baghdad that the Sublime Porte had sent instructions to the Governor General inviting the natives of Baghdad to make a firm offer for all the steamers with unrestricted concession, and the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company would be prohibited.[2] The Submlime Porte would permit the public to take shares in the new company, which would be "Khalifa" and the "Mejidieh"

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1. Sir John Pauncefote to the Law Officers of the Crown. No.167, 19 February 1884. Lord Granville Private Papers. P.R.O.30/29, Vol.353, p.127. (P.R.O.).

2. Stephen Lynch to Earl Granville, 20 March 1884. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

valuation.[1]

Lord Dufferin had been in almost daily communication either personally or through the Dragoman of the Embassy, with the Turkish Foreign Office on the subject. He believed that Britain's best course was still to wait a little longer in the hope of the matter being amicably arranged with the Sultan.[2] Two months later Lord Dufferin received a personal message from the Sultan informing him of his decision to issue the necessary Iradé in favour of the despatch of the new "Comet" to Baghdad.[3] The British Embassy received on 16 December 1884 a telegram from the British Consul-General at Baghdad asking them that permission might be granted to Messrs. Lynch & Co. to possess a new barge on the Tigris to be used solely as a depôt for landing and receiving cargo; the Embassy caused an application to be made in this sense to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.[4]

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1. Ministre de l'Interieur au Governor de Baghdad, 19 Fevrier 1884. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

2. Lord Dufferin to Earl Granville, No.136, 26 April 1884. Lord Granville Private Papers. P.R.O.30/29, Vol.353. (P.R.O.).

3. Lord Dufferin to Earl Granville, No.192. Telegraphic. 17 June 1884. Lord Granville Private Papers. P.R.O.30/29, Vol.353. (P.R.O.).

4. Consul-General at Baghdad to Hugh Wyndham, Chargé d'Affaires, No.774, 3 December 1884. Lord Granville Private Papers. P.R.O.30/29, Vol.353. (P.R.O.).

Assim Pasha, in reply, expressed regret that in view of the continued demands which were being made by the French and the Dutch to have also the privilege of navigating the river, the Porte could not safely comply with this fresh request put forward on Messrs. Lynch's behalf.[1] This was mainly related to an Ottoman scheme to establish an Ottoman Navigation Company.

II.

This new scheme was quite unknown to Sir William White though its nature did not surprise him from he happened to know of the designs of Hasan Pasha, the Minister of Marine. The latter had directed all his efforts to get rid of foreign companies in Turkish waters and "therefore", wrote Sir William to Lord Salisbury that "he is desirous of having an Ottoman Company and Boats flying the Turkish flag in lieu of those of Messrs. Lynch Brothers and Co."

A commercial delegation informed White on 7 March 1891 that they had signed "ad referendum" a declaration annexed to Article XVI of the draft Commercial Treaty.[2] The object of the Declaration was to secure Messrs. Lynch their

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1. Lord Dufferin to Earl Granville. Commercial Confidential. No.248, 21 December 1884. Lord Granville Private Papers. 30/29, Vol.353. (P.R.O.).

2. Sir William White to the Marquis of Salisbury. No.74, Confidential. 27 February 1891. F.O.78/6404. (P.R.O.).

rights of navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates. The British Ambassador was well aware that at one time Messrs. Lynch Brothers & Co. were very desirous, and even sanguine of obtaining from the Sublime Porte an extension of the privileges of navigating these rivers; an extension which the Porte was by no means disposed to grant, having shown an unmistakeable disposition to curtail even those hitherto in use. Should Messrs. Lynch have since decided to merge their existing rights and those of an Ottoman Company, on these rivers, the efforts made by the British delegates to obtain from their Ottoman colleagues their assents to the annexed Declaration confirming their rights proved inadequate and might be omitted.[1]

Mr. H.F.B. Lynch, from his summer resort at Monte Carlo, sent a private letter to Sir William White in which he begged him to resist any attempts by the Turkish Government to ignore their rights by granting other privileges to Ottoman Companies.[2] Sir William White apprehended that they, by lending themselves to these proposals, might be jeopardizing their rights as a British Company they were urged to do nothing which might be

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1. Sir William White to Lord Salisbury, No.36. Confidential. 7 March 1891. F.O.78/4604. (P.R.O.).

2. H.F.B. Lynch to Sir William White. Private. 14 March 1891. F.O.78/4604. (P.R.O.).

construed as a cession of these rights.[1] Lynch Company had received information, both from Constantinople and from Baghdad, that active steps were being taken by Turkish Officials towards the formation of a river Company the shares of which were to be held exclusively by natives and the management of which was to be vested in a committee sitting at Baghdad under the Presidency of the Governor of that city. It was hoped that the free scope which would be given to the operation of that Company - they were to have full power to navigate the Euphrates and the Tigris both above and below Baghdad and to remove material obstacles - would enable them to run the British Company off the rivers inasmuch as this latter, although by right holding more general power, had in practice been restricted to those of only two steamers without barges between Baghdad and Basrah.

During the long period through which they had been dealing on these rivers it could not be denied that these steamers had conferred great benefit on the country that through facilities offered by them places which once were miserable villages had now become considerable towns. The state of affairs in that region was well described by

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1. Sir William White to H.F.B. Lynch. Private. 20 March 1891. F.O.78/4604. (P.R.O.).

M. Lynch, Chairman of the Company, when he said:

> "We have always possessed upon the Turkish Government the further benefits which could accrue to them if they would remove the artificial restrictions which they have placed upon our action and allow us to increase our fleet and extended the navigation of the river." 1

It was more than probable that if a Turkish Company was formed with the amplest powers which the restrictions placed on Messrs. Lynch's action were maintaining that Company would be used as a means of getting rid of the British steamers by running them off and would then itself collapse into the normal state of Turkish enterprise and slowly loosen and dissolve the fabric which had been so laboriously

For some years past the Liste Civile of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan had had in view the formation of a navigation Company on the Euphrates and Tigris, both above and below Baghdad and to remove national obstacles in these rivers. When Midhat Pashat was Governor of Baghdad he had proposed a similar scheme which was left in abeyance until Agop Pasha, late Minister of the Civil List revived and then Michael Effendi Portokal had carried the matter through. It was intended to navigate the river as high as Mosul. The capital was in 1892 £T.100,000, with power to increase

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1. From Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. 9 August 1892. F.O.78/4604. (P.R.O.).

the sum if required. The Company was purely a Turkish one. The capital would be held exclusively by Ottoman subjects, but it was understood while an offer had been made by the Baghdad population to find nearly the whole capital required yet was intended that the Civil List should hold the large number of shares. The number of ships was not determined but it was understood that it was prepared to start with three or four. The scheme was closely connected with one for irrigating lands on the banks of the river which had been purchased by the Civil List and naturally under the circumstances the Company would be a very influential one and no doubt they would compete most successfully with Messrs. Lynch's steamers.

The British Embassy at Constantinople thought that the Civil List was most admirably managed by Portokal Effendi and with the palace directly and financially interested no efforts would be spared to make it a paying concern.[1]

In a letter dated 27 September 1892 Mr. Lynch told the Under Secretary of State that in the latter scheme Lynch Company must have the fullest sympathy, but he added:

> "There is no need for an irrigation scheme to be connected with one for navigation, and the fear of my board is, that under the guise of an undertaking,

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1. Memorandum by the British Embassy at Constantinople (Mr. Adam Block) on the Ottoman scheme of navigating the Mesopotamian rivers. 8 September 1892 submitted to Ambassador Ford. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

which in itself would be very beneficial to the country, measures may be taken to drive our steamers out the rivers." 1

Although the Firman of 1834 was with reference to the steamers, still the general undertaking and the practice previous and subsequent to that Firman in no way out the contention of the Turkish Government that Lynch's rights did not extend beyond the use of only two steamers at the same time. Now for the through navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris it would probably be found advisable to employ steamers of different sizes and descriptions in the different ports in larger vessels in the lower water and smaller ones in the upper. The Company which was restricted to the use of only two steamers would find it very difficult to exist beside another Company which would trans-ship its goods from smaller steamers on the upper to the larger vessels on the lower river.

Within recent years the local officials had shown themselves extremely jealous of Lynch steamers passing beyond Baghdad or up to Euphrates, and could probably prevent them by force if they did so. There was nothing whatever in the Firman or Vizierial letter of the nature thus to limit their navigation; on the contrary these

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1. H.F.B. Lynch to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. 27 September 1892. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

imply or even express that Lynch were within their rights in navigating these rivers throughout that course.

In this connection Mr. Lynch pointed out that if communication was opened with the town of Mosul on the Tigris above Baghdad the port of Baghdad was almost certain to decline inasmuch as the export trade of Baghdad consisted for the most part in the produce which floated down on the river or rafts from the country above Mosul.[1]

Within the last few years the local Turkish authorities had stated that they had instructions to prevent Messrs. Lynch by force from towing their barges up and down the river. The latter had constantly unable when there had been a press of cargo to avail themselves of this means of clearing it off. Owing to the consolidation of trade and of navigation of these rivers the towing of barges was also a point of the first importance. The use of them gave a steamer an immense advantage over another which might have to forego them.

It is important to point out here that a number of Messrs. Lynch's shareholders were natives, inhabitant of Baghdad and members of families who had from the first invested their money in this Company in the belief that

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1. H.B.F. Lynch to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Memorandum on Lynch Company and the Navigation of the Mesopotamian Rivers. 28 September 1892. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

the British Government would uphold it. The Turks had only recently realized that many sources of wealth hitherto tapped exclusively for foreigners could with equal facility be made profitable to themselves and they were acting on their new knowledge with energy. In this regard Sir Clare Ford wrote to the Earl of Rosebery:

> "Unless I am instructed to bring very strong pressure to bear, I can see no prospect of prevailing on the Sublime Porte to extend the privileges accorded to Messrs. Lynch, to the detriment of a native Company the shares of which are in the hands of the Palace, and a considerable portion are those of His Imperial Majesty." 1

When the first Firman was granted in 1834, the Turkish Government was animated with different feelings towards foreign enterprise, especially British, they perceived the backward state of the country, the ignorance and apathy of the people and their governors and although desirous of developing the resources of the country, there was no initiative, and even had there been the desire, they had not either the means or the power to promote themselves their national trade and navigation. The Ottoman Government had thoroughly awakened to the necessity of developing their natural resources themselves to the exclusion of foreign enterprise and the Walis knowing that this was their constant preoccupation of the sovereign never allowed an

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1. Sir Clare Ford to Earl of Rosebery. No.336. 7 November 1892. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

occasion to pass without pointing out to the Government possible resources of revenue and seized every opportunity to thwart foreigners engaged in commercial undertakings. More especially in the Persian Gulf where Britain was watched with jealous and suspicious eye. "Since the accession of Sultan Abdul-Hamid", wrote Sir Clare Ford on 5 November 1892, "the main object of Turkey's commercial policy is to diminish Britain's influence."[1]

Abdul-Hamid, preoccupied as he always was with the idea of developing by Turkish capital and Turkish enterprise the national trade and industries of the country, had been ably seconded with respect to navigation by the Minister of Marine. It is important to note "that the obstruction placed in the way of British navigation in Turkish waters in the Sea of Marmora, in the Gulf of Samyrana, in the Gulfs of Salonica and Alexandretta, which under other circumstances might have been tolerated."[2]

The Turkish navigation scheme inaugurated by the late Minister of Finance and the Minister of the Sultan's Civil List, Agop Pasha, and completed by his predecessor Portokal Effendi, had commended itself most favourably to the Khalif

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1. Navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Memorandum. Confidential, dated 5 November 1892. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

2. Confidential Memorandum by Sir Clare Ford, 5 November 1892. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

and Minister of the Marine. His Majesty was personally interested in the success of the undertaking and as at the time he would develop the resources of his Empire and increase the prosperity of his people it was natural that he should grant the Turkish Company special facilities so as to place it in a better position than any foreign Company (Lynch Brothers & Co.). To him it was a matter of prestige not only along the shores of Shatt-el-Arab, Euphrates and Tigris, but in the Moslem world in general. It was evident, therefore, that the Sublime Porte could not listen to any proposals which would result in the Sultan's sacrificing his own personal and pecuniary interests in order to help Messrs. Lynch under extraordinary diplomatic pressure was put upon the Porte.

An elaborate Memorandum on this subject was drawn by Mr. Block and Mr. Wrench,[1] both of the Foreign Office, in regard to the steps which it would be prudent for the Embassy to take on the issue of the Iradé sanctioning the new Turkish Company for the navigation of the Tigris and Euphrates. The Memorandum stated that, according to the latest information the Iradé had been issued, but there did not seem to be any immediate prospect of steps being taken to place boats on the river as one vessel was in drydock

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1. Memorandum on Messrs. Lynch's steamers, 5 November 1892. Enclosed in Ford to Rosebery, No.12, 1 January 1893. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

being repaired, and the other was employed in service between the capital and the "Princes Island". Mr. Block further remarked that the Ottoman Government would oppose the navigation of the river without limits by Lynch's steamers; and suggested that at that moment it would be injudicious to raise other points (new concessions). Mr. Wrench considered that under the Firman of 1851 Messrs. Lynch had acquired greater privileges than they could claim as a right, and that any proposal to amend that Firman might at that moment be of disadvantage to Messrs. Lynch's interests.

III. BRITISH INTERESTS ON THE NORTH EASTERN COAST: KARUN NAVIGATION AND PROBLEM OF RAILWAYS 1890-1891

On the North-Eastern Coast of the Gulf (South Persia) Britain had to deal with similar problems. The effort of the British Government for the promotion of internal progress had been principally directed of late years towards opening the South of Persia to British and other foreign commerce by improved means of communication. They had constantly urged upon the Shah and his Ministers that the Karun should be thrown open to steam navigation, but, owing to a great part, it was believed to Russian opposition, their representations had been unsuccessful. They had also at intervals advocated the construction of railways and wagon-roads. In 1872, some months after his visit to Europe, the Shah granted to Baron Reuter a Concession for seventy years for the construction of a railway from Resht through Teheran to the Persian Gulf, with an exclusive right to the workings of all mines, except gold and silver mines, the execution of irrigation works, the management of State Forests and uncultivated lands, and the Régie of the Customs for twenty years.

The Concession was of an extravagant character, amounting to a virtual monopoly of the industrial and neutral resources of the country. Consequently, when on the failure of Baron

Reuter to perform certain conditions of the Contract, the Persian Government took advantage of the circumstances to cancel the whole Concession, the British Government did not consider that they had acted otherwise than judiciously in their own interests. But, in view of the considerable expense to which Baron Reuter had been put, and of his assertion that his failure to fulfill the contract was due to the negligence or obstruction of the Persian Officials, the British Government had urged that he was entitled to some compensation, or to a Concession of a more limited character. And, whenever endeavours had been made at Teheran to obtain railway Concessions for other parties, Britain had supported Baron Reuter's protests against the grant of such concession until his claim had in some way been satisfied.

In 1885 a proposal was made by Baron Reuter to make use of his Concession for the formation of an International Company under the protection of such of the Great Powers as might be willing to join in it, and an attempt was made by the British Government to obtain the co-operation of the Government of Germany in supporting it. But their overtures were not favourably received, and the project was dropped.

The British Government did not, however, desist from urging the Shah at every favoutable opportunity, the desirability of improving the means of communication between the capital and the Persian Gulf, and in May 1886 His

Majesty informed Nicholson that he was desirous of seeing a railway from the South undertaken by a European, or mixed Persian and European Company; that, if a railway were impracticable, he would fall back upon a road; that he had also decided to throw open the Karun to navigation, but thought this had better wait till the railway or road were open, when it would follow as a natural consequence and that he would like the navigation to be under a Persian Company.

II.

After the Shah's refusal to open the Karun River for navigation, the question was not taken up again till March 1881. At that time Persia was very desirous of coming to an understanding with the Sultan, who could easily prevent the invasion by removing their leaders, Shaikh Obeidulla, from the frontier. The Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, talking to Mr. Thomson on this subject, promised that if Her Majesty's Government would use their influence at Constantinople in order to effect the desired understanding, the Persian Government would open the Karun for navigation and construct a road from Shuster to Teheran. The British Ambassador did make representations at Constantinople as desired by the Persian Government but it appeared that the eventual removal of Shaikh Obeidulla from the frontier was at Teheran principally attributed to Russian influence.

In June 1881 the Zil-us-Sultan was appointed Governor of Fars. He immediately tried to establish friendly relations with the Resident of the Persian Gulf, and Col. Ross suggested that he might be able to effect the opening of the Karun River. In October it was reported that the French seemed desirous of establishing relations with Muhammerah, and Colonel Ross was then asked to report officially on the Karun question. Meanwhile Mr. Thomson had been instructed to communicate the results of the steps taken at Constantinople to the Persian Government to re-open the Karun navigation question with reference to the promise made by the Shah's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Thomson's first reference to the promise made by the Shah's Minister was unanswered. He then sent a reminder in September, and this was replied to in an evasive manner on 19 October. The Shah was much opposed to the concession, and finally referred the matter to Zil-us-Sultan who at that time had gone to Teheran. Mr. Thomson consequently entered into correspondence with the prince, and as the Zil-us-Sultan had informed Col. Ross that he would arrange the matter if he was promised a declaration, Thomson was authorised to give the promise on condition that a satisfactory arrangement would be effected.

On 12 January 1882 Col. Ross[1] sent an elaborate report

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1. Col. Ross, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf and Consul-General at Fars to Government of India, Foreign Department. No.11. 12 January 1882. (Confidential). F.O.248/472 (P.R.O).

to the Secretary of the Government of India on the Karun navigation. It should be remarked that while the Resident in his communications with Zil-us-Sultan worked for a special concession for British vessels to navigate the Karun, the Minister at Teheran simply wished immediate subsidy to the British Steam Navigation Company, so that as to give them advantages over the French, whose eventual success, if allowed a footing in the country could be detrimental to British interests. Col. Ross wrote:

> "The Government is aware that under encouragement of the French Government, a line of steamers has been established at Muhammerah. From the proceedings of these affairs, and there being connected with the military and naval services of France, it has appeared probable that their objects go beyond ordinary commercial business at Muhammerah, and that they aim at obtaining a footing and influence in Persian Arabistan."

It was obviously of much importance to the British Government, from a political as well as a commercial point of view, to prevent French influence being established in their part of the Persian Gulf. Arabistan was a country which was susceptible to external influence, and should a Foreign Power obtain such a footing as the French scheme aimed at, it would not be difficult to detach much of the Province from Persia. It might one day be of importance to England to have access to the centre of Persia by the route of the Karun river, a strong reason for objecting to have a European Power predominant in its valley. To France and Russia it was

necessary to see the prospect was agreeable. To France it would, in the outset, open new fields of commercial enterprise and, in the future, would render her an alliance of increased value to Russia in the East. If the French gained a footing at Arabistan, it would be almost imperative on the British Government to take political action there also, and the conflict of interest would inevitably become a source of disagreement between the two powers whose interest had not yet clashed in those ports. It was thought, therefore, that the French irrigation scheme would be opposed and if possible prevented, both as incompatible with the free navigation of the Karun and as a danger to political interests both of Russia and England in Persia.

At the time the Resident's report was written, some French merchants had tried to establish commercial relations with Muhammerah. Their undertaking was supported by the French Consul at Basrah and a French Engineer, M. Dieulafoy, had been sent to the Karun, to report on the navigation and on the Ahwaz Dam. It was rumoured that the French had obtained a concession for running steamers on the Karun, but the rumour turned out to be fake, and M. Dieulafoy reported unfavourably on the Ahwax scheme. The attempt to establish relations with Muhammerah equally failed.

The Zil-us-Sultan appeared to have done his best in order to obtain the opening of the Karun river, but the

Shah's opposition was not to overcome, and after a year of navigation Mr. Thomson forwarded in September the following report:-

> "The strong opposition which His Majesty continues to make on every occasion when the subject brought before him has had its effect upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who for some time was disposed to co-operate cordially with us in this matter. It appears that His Excellency has now withdrawn completely from his advocacy of the proposed occasion, and I am informed that he lately went beyond the objections raised by the Shah by suggesting that, if the Karun was opened to European commerce, the Arab population of the region and the Bukhtiari tribes in the adjacent mountains, neither of whom were Persians in language or feeling, would thereby be brought under foreign influence, and might at any moment throw off their allegiance to the Sha, when they were dissatisfied with the proceedings of the Persian authorities." 1

The opening of the Karun river for navigation would be equally advantageous from a political point of view. It would give England, as the country which would most largely employ the new route, paramount influence in Southern Persia, while the possibility of bringing troops within a few hundred miles. The most important Persian towns, nationally, would contribute to the establishment of British influence in the area.

From a commercial point of view it would appear that the only chance of successful competition of Russian trade was the opening up of the Karun. Twenty years earlier

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1. Thomson to Cross, 12 September 1883. Report on the Karun. Secret. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

British merchants almost monopolized the trade of Persia. Between 1885-1887 British goods were rarely seen beyond Isphahan,[1] and even at this place the Russian produces were sold in equal quantity with British merchandize. This change was due to the development of steam navigation on the Caspian and to the construction of goods roads leading from Caspian to Teheran and Meshed. Mr. Thomson was of opinion that railways most shortly be made from the Caspian to Teheran, and that, if nothing was done towards developing communications with the Persian Gulf, British trade would be out of all important and wealthy parts of Persia. Up to 1887 most of the trade was confined to the roads Trebizond - Teheran - Baghdad - Kermanshah and Bushire - Isphahan - Teheran. The Trebizond road might be left out of consideration, and could possibly compete with the Russian roads. The Baghdad - Kermashah - Teheran was 600 miles, a great part led to difficult country, and the Turkish opposition to free trade on the Tigris would be an almost unsurmountable obstacle to development of that trade route. The Bushire - Isphahan - Teheran road was almost 260 miles and was between Bushire and Shiraz so difficult that only very heavy outlay could procure a possible road. The only routes left were those, which all, if the river were opened to navigation,

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1. Intelligence Report by Mark S. Bell on British Commercial enterprise in Persia. 10 November 1887. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

would give British trade great facilities.

Five important Memoranda had been written on the trade routes connecting the Persian Gulf with the interior of Persia. The authors were: Sir Henry Rawlinson, Sir Oliver St. John, Mr. Baring, Captain Wells and Mr. Thomson.

Sir Henry Rawlinson[1] was of opinion that the question of opening up the Karun was a "delusion and a snare." He considered the Ahwaz land as an insurmountable obstable, and he was convinced that if it were surmounted the roads leading from the Karun to the interior would be impracticable, partly on account of natural difficulties, and partly owing to the lawless state of the country which they would pass. His objections were met by Captain Wells,[2] who proved that it would be very easy and cheap to turn the Ahwaz land by a canal, and by Mr. Thomson, who called attention to two routes from Dizful to Khuramabad which were unknown to Sir Henry Rawlinson, while they had recently been explored by Mr. Schinder, who found out that one of them had long been used by the Persian artillery, a fact which did away entirely with Sir Henry's objections on that score. Mr. Thomson also showed that the state of the country had altered since

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1. Memorandum on the Karun River by Sir Henry Rawlinson. 22 June 1882. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

2. Report by Captain Henry H. Wells on the Ahwaz Canal. 14 December 1881. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

Rawlinson's time, and that a well frequented trade route would be perfectly secured.

Sir Oliver St. John[1] disagreed entirely with Rawlinson. He was of opinion that it would be quite easy to render the Karun navigable throughout and he thought that the Shuste-Isphahan road could easily be made into a good caravan road, but he deprecated the idea of making a carriage road. As no carriages existed in Persia they would have to be made or imported, and it would under these circumstances be quite as cheap to make a light railway. Mr. Baring[2] thought that the Karun could and should be used as a trade route, but he was of opinion that it should be divided into two sections with two sets of steamers, one above the Ahwaz fall and one below. These two sections should be connected by tramway. He referred to Mr. Schindler's exploration of the Dizful-Khuramabad roads, and thought that the only means of maintaining British trade in Persia would be the use of these roads, unless a hitherto unknown road from Bushire to Isphahan via Behbehan should prove practical as he had reason to believe it would. Captain Wells thought that the railway could easily be made from Shuster via Behbehan to Shiraz. He

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1. Report by Sir Oliver St. John on the Karun navigation between Shuster to Ahwaz. 26 October 1882. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

2. Memorandum by Mr. W. Baring. Lisbon, 20 September 1882. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

considered the direct Shuster-Isphahan road to be impracticable, but he pointed out that the Shuster-Burujird-Isphahan road which did not present any natural difficulties was at least 100 miles shorter than the Bushire-Isphahan route.

Mr. Thomson, who had read all the Memoranda above referred to who had collected all other information in his power, was of opinion that the opening of the Karun offered other distinct advantages.[1] The Dizful-Khorambad-Teheran route was short and easy. The Minister pointed out that the Russian trade had increased to an alarming extent within the last years, and that when the railway from the Caspian to Teheran had been completed, British trade would certainly be driven out of all the great markets unless easy communications were established with the Persian Gulf. Thomson entirely dismissed the idea that the Persian Government would ever incur the expense necessary for rendering the Bushire road available for a large traffic, but he thought that they might be induced to construct the less expensive road from Shuster.

III.

In October 1888, after much diplomatic fencing, the navigation of the Lower Karun was opened to the commerce

1. Ronald F. Thomson to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. No.43, 17 April 1883. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

of the world by His Majesty the Shah, but in order to strictly limit the effect of the so-called Concession, Regulations were drawn up that not only tended to check rather than to favour commerce, but which positively abrogated one of the most important provisions of the Treaty of Turkomanchai.

These Articles were apparently accepted by the British Representative from fear lest the Shah, urged by Russia's strong protests, might entirely withdraw from what he promised to execute, in order to satisfy the jealous obstructiveness that at that time characterized the policy of that power.

To reduce the commission to its actual value, the stretch of river opened to navigation was 117 miles in length, equivalent to rather less than 80 miles by land, and, as Turkish vessels had been allowed to use the river for generations, it would seem that the British authorities were granted an extremely small advance on previous rights, while in all other respects, Britain took a backward step.

In order to show the position of British merchants in this particular part of Persia, I would refer to Appendix to quote Article VI,[1] "Il est formellement interdit aux proprietairs des navires de construire, sur les rives de la Karoun, des bâtiments cel que entrepôts de charbon au

1. Text of Réglement de la Gouvernment sur la Karun in French, Arabic and Persian. Enclosed in F.O.248/459. (P.R.O.).

de merchandise, boutiques, caravanseraits, ateliers." This, in plain language, amounted to an abrogation of the Treaty of Turkomanchai, which allowed "des maisons pour habiter, et des magasins ainsi que de emplacements pour y deposer leur merchandises." These rights were undoubtedly insisted upon by Russia's Representative in 1828, who realized what an arsenal of obstructive power the of them would constitute.

Articles VII and VIII stated that the Persian Government would construct the needful buildings, and charge a reasonable rent.

In consequence of these Articles, Messrs. Lynch Brothers were, for five years unable to obtain any suitable accommodation, as the Persian Government sold the Concession to build warehouses to the Nizam-i-Sultaneh.[1]

The attention of Lord Cross had been drawn to the concessions which Russia had obtained from Persia in compensation for the opening of the Karun. An Agreement had been drawn between Persia and Russian Government. The privileges which Russia obtained under that agreement, in regard to navigation of rivers flowing into the Caspian, the construction by the Persian Government of commercial

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1. It was not until May 1894 that a lease was signed by which Messrs. Lynch Brothers were permitted to build a warehouse. Although it was unhappily true that these Regulations had already borne bitter fruit, yet the fact that they constituted the key store of Persia's policy on the Karun was sufficient and urgent reason for their revision.

depôt in the North, and also the construction by Russia of a highroad from the principal harbour at the southern end of the Caspian to Teheran, and of another road along the whole of northern Persia. To say nothing of what appeared to be an exclusive permission to construct railways in Persia for five years seemed to Lord Lansdowne[1] to be a startling illustration of the results which Britain had to expect from the diplomatic victories as those achieved by Sir Henry Wolff.

The conduct of the Persian officials on the Karun was intolerable. It really seemed that at the very moment when Britain was professing so much friendship for the Shah, and expending so much pains upon his reception, his officials should have been permitted to act with such outrageous impertinence towards vessels flying the British flag.[2]

In 1890 Messrs. Lynch obtained a subsidy from the British Government of £2,000[3] a year, to which it was agreed

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1. Marquis of Lansdowne to Cross. No.37, 24 May 1889, Vol. November 1888 - December 1889. The Marquis of Lansdowne's Papers 1888-1894. Correspondence to and from Secretary of State. (India Office).

2. Lansdowne to Cross. No.46, 16 August 1889. Vol. November 1888 - December 1889. Correspondence to and from Secretary of State. The Marquis of Lansdowne's Papers 1888-1894. (India Office).

3. Expedition of India. Report of the Royal Commission on the many financial issues of India including the Karun river subsidy. Parliamentary Papers. Vol.29 (C 131), p.94.

that India had not the same interest in the navigation of the Karun as she had in that of the Tigris. It was extremely difficult to appraise the respective interests of Great Britain and India in these subsidised services. It was admitted that each had an interest, political as well as commercial, in these regions, and probably the of the case could be met by dividing them. If India maintained the Basrah-Baghdad service, Great Britain might maintain the Karun service.

Hitherto no detailed mention had been made of the Upper Karun, which may, for purposes of navigation, be defined as the stretch of river above the natural barrier at Ahwaz, and a point on the Ab-i-Gerger, some 6 miles below Shuster. The entire distance is some 80 miles, following the course of the river, or rather less than 60 miles by land.

This significant waterway was considered by the late Shah to possess great potentialities, and in consequence, it was jealously reserved for exploitation by Persian subjects, in return for sums of money paid into the Imperial Privy Purse. The Concession for the monopoly of traffic on the Upper Karun was sold to the Nasiri Company,[1] which practically meant the Moen-i-Tujar, a wealthy merchant of Bushire. To him grants of land were made to be constructed at both places. At Ahwaz, moreover, a tramway was to be laid from Bunder

1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's report on South Persia. Confidential. 1 April 1890. F.O.248/517 (P.R.O.).

Nassiri to Minfed, a distance of 1½ miles, while on the Upper Karun a regular service of steamers was to be maintained.

Other concessions were granted, but the main point was that the navigation was to be the monopoly of the Nassiri Company, and as Messrs. Lynch Brothers foresaw that even if the terms of the Concession were carried out, they could be forced to dispatch their goods by a rival Company, they set to work to seek an issue from the impasse.

The solution of the problem was found in the scheme of making a present to the Shah of the steamer, which the Company should work as the agents of His Majesty.

The idea was, at first, readily accepted, but the Royal ear was so constantly assailed by the insinuation that the Karun Valley would be absorbed by the agent of Messrs. Lynch Brothers, just as India had been by the East India Company, that the Shah was, at one time, desirous of breaking off all negotiations.

Finally His Majesty, with Oriental astuteness, entirely declined to sign any Agreement whatever, but the steamer was accepted in a Memorandum from the Persian Premier to the British Legation, in which it was merely stated that the Shah accepted the steamer for the transport of passengers of merchandize between Ahwaz, Shuster and Dizful.

From the opening of the Karun to navigation in 1888 Shaikh Mizal of Muhammerah had opposed Britain in every

possible way. He had left no stone unturned to obstruct her path, preventing shipments of cargo by Lynch steamers and prohibiting the sale of produce to them. He saw the development of the country must bring him loss of power and he hoped that by rendering unprofitable their work, to force them to withdraw.[1] The motives by which Shaikh Mizal Khan was actuated were easily intelligible when the treatment of other Arab Shaikhs by the Persian Government in past years was remembered, and they would continue to operate, to the defeat of the objects proposed by Persia and England, until and unless some means could be found for either enlisting his co-operation or neutralising his opposition. The late Mr. Robertson always described him as at heart friendly to Britain as far as his dread of the Persian Government would allow him to do so. If through the good offices of the British Government, he found himself secure against injury or molestation his then attitude would be exchanged for one of cordial assistance. Major Talbot[2] did not underrate the difficulty of the question, for it would probably be hard to convince the Shaikh of the value

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1. L.M. Dicey to Major Talbot. 3 July 1891. F.O.248/524. (P.R.O.).

2. Major Talbot to Mr. Kennedy. No.71, 11 July 1891. F.O.248/524 (P.R.O.). See also Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's report on South Persia. Confidential. 1 April 1891. F.O.248/517.(P.R.O.).

of any promises by the Persian Government unless accompanied by an assurance that the British Government would interest itself in this fulfilment. The alternative appeared to be either a continuance during the Shaikh's lifetime of the then unsatisfactory result of the exertions made to develop trade on the Karun, or his removal from power which might or might not be effected quietly as would be certainly attributed to British influence. The whole policy of Shaikh Mizal was to prevent the port of Muhammerah becoming a place of importance, on the ground that, if it did, the Persians would assume the direct governorship and the Arab Shaikh would lose his power.

The advantages, commercially and fincial, were so obvious and were so fully admitted, that the objections and misgivings must arise from other considerations. Possibly those were of political character, and the Persian Government might feel distrust of the motives of the British in urging this proposal. They perhaps suspected England of ulterior designs against those districts. It was thought that Persia ought, however, to be perfectly free from such distrust of the British Government.[1] Persians could see for themselves that England's position

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1. See an interesting Memorandum on Anglo-Persian Relations by Major General Sir Henry R. Rawlinson, 26 June 1888. Lord Salisbury Private Papers (Christ Church, Oxford).

in the Middle East rendered her interests in many results identical with those of Persia, and that, therefore, her policy was naturally to preserve and foster the power, integrity and prosperity of a friendly Persia. To and assist the dismembering Persia would be totally opposed to British interests.

For England had all the territory, power and wealth she could possibly desire in India. Her policy was, therefore, directed to maintaining that position and ensuring leisure to develop India and improve its people. Persia was also a power which sought no aggression, but desired peace and independence and to preserve the integrity of her territory.

When we come to other powers different motives were at work, as was manifest by their actions. This had been so obvious during 1890 as regards Russia that England felt the necessity of watching her advance and considering it as a possible danger to the peace of Western Asia and India in the future. England and Persia had a common interest in checking the further advances of Russia in that direction. If ever Russian power preponderated over British in that part of Asia, it was obvious that Persia and Afghanistan would cease to exist as independent kingdoms. Therefore, as England desired the maintenance of Persian integrity and power, so Persia must feel the vital importance of herself of the proximity and friendliness of the power which alone limited the growth of Russian Empire in Asia. The one power was, by policy of inclination, peaceful and stationary,

the other aggressive and advancing.

It was often felt to be strange that with such community of interests, Persia and England had not drawn closer politically to one another, and that the forms did not to a greater extent shape her policy in accordance with the advice of her natural ally. There was no doubt cause for this, and the fault was not all on one side. Persia had to "menger" her powerful and restless neighbour and felt uncertain what support to reckon on in an hour of danger, but it was obvious that Persia's interest to attract friendship and support of England and fully to distrust or wantonly alienate that power.

Persia should derive a sense of security and independence from feeling that she was not wholly beyond reach of aid from a strong and friendly power in time of trouble in the north, Would not an unfriendly power refusal of the Persian Government to concede the navigation of the Karun which was for the benefit of both countries tend to alienate? Whilst of the commercial advantages to be attained, England had no inducement to covet Persian territory in that quarter?

As regards the French endeavour to obtain a footing in Arabistan by a grant of land and the right to place steamers on the Karun, it was scarcely credible that after the "pour parler" for years with the British Government, Persia would now entertain proposals of the French in the matter

of river nagigation. But apart from that it would not be difficult to point out objections which would lead the Persian Government to be cautious of admitting the French in that quarter. In a private message to Col. Cross, the Zil-us-Sultan explained his fear of the French:

> "Let attention be given to the fact that the operations lately opened at Muhammerah are under direction not of more merchants, but of officers of the French military and naval Services. Russia encourages and desires the establishment of the French in that part of Persia." 1

The establishment of the French on the Karun would naturally be distasteful to England, firstly because it would interfere with the commercial advantages she "legitimately" hoped for, secondly, because political intrigues might be expected to result.

V.

The problem of railways occupied a very interesting point in the Anglo-Russian relations in South Persia. Early in October 1889 Sir Henry Wolff had now returned to Teheran, and was likely to find his hands pretty full for some time, the Russian Government having selected the best man in their diplomatic service, Monsieur Onou, who had been for twenty years chief Dragoman and Chancellor at Constantinople, to do

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1. Zil-us-Sultan to Col. Cross. 7 January 1882. Enclosure 2 in No.11. (Col. Cross to the Government of India). 13 January 1882. F.O.248/472. (P.R.O.).

battle for them in the place of their late very incapable Minister Prince Dolgorouki. "The struggle will commence about railways," Sir Henry Rawlinson told Lansdowne, "as the Russians seem determined to invade our so called monopoly of Persia, so as ultimately to gain access to the Persian Gulf."[1]

Early in January 1890 the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sir Robert Morier[2] was assured by his colleague, the Persian Minister, that a Syndicate largely supported by Russian capitalists as well as by Germans and other foreigners, had been formed to obtain from the Shah a concession to construct a railway from Resht to Teheran and onward to the Persian Gulf. A Commission presided over by Monsieur Abazar had been appointed to examine these schemes and report upon it, as a company of this kind could not be formed without the Imperial sanction. They asked for no facilities or guarantees from the Russian Government but only for a liberty of action and permission to deal directly with the Persian Government.

According to the opinion of the British military authorities, every railway starting from Russia in a southerly

1. Sir Henry Rawlinson to Marquis of Lansdowne, No.103, 11 October 1889. Correspondence (Letters and Telegrams). Marquis of Lansdowne's Papers 1888-1894. (India Office).

2. Sir Robert Morier to the Marquis of Salisbury, No.2. Confidential. 2 January 1890. Russian Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1392. (P.R.O.).

direction was a strategic railway viewed with the most dangerous consequences to Britain's own military and naval position in the Persian Gulf. Sir Robert Morier thought that Russia had no intention of constructing railways in Persia; no such railways could be built without considerable financial assistance from the Russian Government. "Now if Russia is let alone and not driven by us to construct railways out of rivalry," Sir Robert informed Salisbury, "this financial help will not be forthcoming for many years to come."[1]

In the opinion of Monsieur de Speyer the railways that suit Russia would be one from Tiflis via Tabriz to Teheran, and one from Transcaspia to Meshed. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff[2] thought that these lines would be objectionable from many points of view. They were not in a large sense "international" but were limited to Russia and Persia, affecting the commerce of these two countries alone and in other respects purely strategically. Wolff urged that any railway should be eventually international in its character,

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1. Sir Robert Morier to Marquis of Salisbury, No.41. Secret. 8 February 1890. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1392.(P.R.O.).

2. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, No.63. Secret. 24 February 1890. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1392 (P.R.O.). A similar letter had been sent by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury. No.49. Most Confidential. 14 February 1890. F.O.65/609. (P.R.O.).

so as to facilitate not only the development of Persia - but the trade of Russia with the Far East, and that of India with Persia and Russia. With this view Wolff considered the scheme which was contemplated in Russia, that of a line from Enzeli to Muhammerah (on the mouth of the Karun) was far from partial.

At Monsieur de Speyer's request the British Envoy sketched out to him generally his idea of the means of establishing that line, which could under certain conditions conciliate the support of the three countries interested. Monsieur de Speyer who seemed to approve the plan, then said to Sir Henry, "If we agree on this it will be a concession on our part for which you should make us some compensation." Wolff replied that he could not consider the arrangement as a concession but it was one of mutual convenience in which his firm belief was that the trade of Russia could gain more than that of India. Monsieur de Speyer stated:

> "No doubt we should gain a great commercial advantage but we should be giving you a great political advantage. At present you certainly possess influence in the South of Persia, but it is not a definite influence. If we come to this agreement with you it will be recognized by a public act, and this will be a political advantage for which we have right to return."

It was clear that if railways were to be made at all they should be constructed exclusively by Russia who would find capital for the purpose. Monsieur de Speyer had

informed the Persian Government that Russia entirely repudiated the idea of a division of influence and that as she possessed such a long line of frontier Russian influence should be preponderate both in the North and the South. This he had said in answer to the proposal of the Shah that England and Russia should come to terms in the construction of a through railway.[1] Russia did not accept a delimitation of influence in Persia between England and Russian interests. She had a long frontier side by side with Persia and the influence of England extended only on the sea-board of the Persian Gulf. On 29 October the Shah[2] of Persia told Mr. Churchill of the British Embassy at Teheran, "The day we have railway in the country, whether constructed by English, Dutch, Americans or Russian, on that day farewell to our independence."

Her Majesty's Government had instructed Sir Robert Morier[3] to refer, in conversation with Monsieur de Speyer, to recent events in Persia, but before doing so Lord Salisbury wished him to express the sincere desire of the British

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1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury. No.105. Secret and Most Confidential. 1 April 1890. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1393. (P.R.O.).
2. Memorandum on the Persian Railways by Mr. Churchill. 29 October 1890. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1395. (P.R.O.).
3. Marquis of Salisbury to Sir Robert Morier. No.34. Telegraphic. 10 November 1890. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1395. (P.R.O.).

Government that this matter should be dealt with in the most friendly spirit. They did not believe that there was any real divergence of interests which should impair the good undertaking at that time "so fortunately prevailing between the two Governments."

From correspondence which had been forwarded to the Home Government by Sir Robert,[1] it was clear that the Russian Minister at Teheran had been urging the Government of the Shah to bind themselves not to allow the construction of any railways in Persia for a period of ten years, after which they were to come to an agreement with Russia either to prolong the period or jointly to determine what railways should be constructed. By such an arrangement the Shah would virtually engage to postpone indefinitely the construction of railways in his dominions or make their construction dependent on the will of Russia. To such an Agreement the British Government objected. As regards the first alternative, they considered that to divert himself by an unilateral arrangement for an indefinite period of the right of constructing railways in Persia, perhaps, permanently depriving his subjects of the most powerful instrument of material development, was derogatory to the Shah's dignity and tantamount to a surrender of his sovereign rights. As regards the

1. Memorandum by Sir Robert Morier on the Persian Railways. Inclosure No.283 to Marquis of Salisbury. 12 November 1890. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1392. (P.R.O.).

second alternative, they viewed it as a distinct infringement of what they had the right to consider to tacit understanding that neither the British nor the Russian Government should endeavour to obtain a monopoly of influence in regard to measures for the material development of Persia, as well as inconsistent with the engagements of the Persian Government, who had always admitted the special interest which Britain had in the construction of railways along the Persian Gulf in the South as not inferior to that which Russia possessed in regard to railways in the north.

As to railways, Sir Henry Wolff[1] thought there were three possible cases. (1) Russia might try to make a line through Khorassaan towards Herat and this was very likely. (2) Russia might wish to make a railway from her frontiers to Teheran. Wolff thought that he should not resist this, but only insisted that Britain should have a corresponding concession in the south for a line of similar value and importance to be selected in consultation with the Legation. He thought that it was better, at all events for that moment, to deal with the railway question entirely on the defensive. Wolff did not believe that the question of the Anglo-Persian railways would be resolved until a railway had been made through Beluchistan and Seistan and along the coast of the Persian Gulf to Arabistan.

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1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. 19 May 1890. F.O.60/513 (P.R.O.).

On 9 September 1890 the Russian Ambassador had a long meeting with Nasr-ud-Din.[1] There were only three ways opened to the Shah, which he offered to the choice of Russia. (1) If Russia were disposed to construct a line commercially advantageous to both countries and not of a strategical character to which England might object. (2) During his lifetime no railways of any sort should be asked for or granted while H.M. would grant concession for roads to any company which asked for them. (3) Military pressure on Persia, in this case the Shah could refuse to sign any concession. Lord Cross expressed his fear:

> "...that the Shah has been so frightened that he will do nothing for his personal case, he may be right in saying that none shall make railroads in Persia, but for this country it is a bad policy." 2

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires, Monsieur de Speyer, observed to Sir Frank Lascelles[3] on 30 September 1892 that it would be very desirable if England and Russia would come to some understanding with regard to their policy in Asia, and he believed that a frank exchange of views between the two governments might lead to most satisfactory results. At that

1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. Very Secret. 9 September 1890. F.O.60/513. (P.R.O.).
2. Cross to Lansdowne. No.47. 30 October 1890. Jan.-Dec.1890. Marquis of Lansdowne's Papers - Letters from and to Secretary of State 1888-1894. (India Office).
3. Sir Frank Lascelles to Earl of Rosebery. No.149. Confidential 30 September 1892. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1442. (P.R.O.).

moment each country seemed to be suspicious of the other, and Monsieur de Speyer feared that if by accident it became necessary for the protection of British interests to send a gun boat to a Persian Gulf port, a Russian force would immediately be sent to the borders of Khorasan or Azerbaijan. The Russian Chargé d'Affaires ended his statement by declaring that if the two Governments could once come to a clear understanding it would surely be an easy matter to come to an arrangement as, so far as he could judge, their interests were distinct and needed not to clash at any point. With regard to the status of Persia Monsieur de Speyer stressed the idea that the existence of buffer states was a mistake and that both Russia and Great Britain ought to have a common frontier. Sir Frank Lascelles was inclined to agree with him, as the buffer state became increasingly a hotbed of intrigue, but even supposing that the intervening states between their respective frontiers were to disappear, which he did not think was likely to happen for some time to come, there was still a point upon which it would be difficult to come to an understanding. Sir Frank had always understood from his conversations with Russian diplomatists and also from the language of the Russian press, that it was the desire of Russia to have an outlet on the Persian Gulf, and he was of opinion that such an idea would be simply madness on the part of Russia. It would place her completely

at the mercy of England, as she could never protect such an outlet, such a port against the force which England could at any time bring against it. "England," thought Sir Frank Lascelles, "might as well desire to have a port on the White Sea."

Kennedy admitted the force of the Shah's argument that if the new Russian agreement had not been signed Russia might have proposed dangerous railways in Khorasan, but Kennedy pointed out that the British Government was prepared to assist the Shah in resisting demands of this nature and they now felt that the Shah had shown distruct both of England's power and England's friendship.[1] For these reasons it was absolutely necessary that the Shah should give some tangible proof that his policy towards England had in no way changed since the departure of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff from Teheran. The Shah declared that it was utterly impossible to give Britain preferential rights to trainways in the North but he promised to give Britain in writing preferential rights to trainways in the South, including that of Ahwaz.

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1. Mr. Kennedy's interview with the Shah. See Mr. Kennedy to Foreign Office. No.326. Secret. 3 December 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).

IV. ECONOMIC INTERESTS ON THE NORTH-EASTERN COAST

TOBACCO CONCESSION

The collapse of the Tobacco Concession resulted in a severe setback to the British economic policy in Persia. The first information received by the Foreign Office as to the grant of a Concession of the Tobacco Regie was contained in a telegram from Sir Henry Wolff, dated 21 March 1890.[1] This telegram merely stated that the Shah had given the above concession to a group of English capitalists represented by Major Talbot. Some weeks ago, a despatch somewhat emplifying this telegram was received.[2] Sir Henry Wolff stated that, in order to avoid friction with Russia, the Corporation working the Concession would be made international, and that the co-operation of capitalists would be invited in France, Germany, Russia, and other European countries.

In May a copy of the Concession was received by the Foreign Office from Sir Henry Wolff.[3] In his covering

1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.70. Very Secret. Telegraphic, 21 March 1890. F.O.60/510. (P.R.O.).
2. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.90, 20 March 1890, F.O.60/510. (P.R.O.).
3. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.113. 8 April 1890. F.O.90/510. (P.R.O.).

despatch Sir Henry [illegible] that the negotiations were begun at Paris and Vienna, at which capital Major Talbot had been encouraged to proceed to Teheran, and that he had "advised Major Talbot to undertake voluntarily to admit into the undertaking foreign capitalists from France, Germany, Russia, or other continental markets." This the Major, in a letter to Amin-us-Sultan, had promised to do. The despatch further stated that the Russian Chargé d'Affaires informed the Amin that Messrs. Poliakoff and Raffalovitch, two Russian subjects, had protested against the grant of this Concession as being included in a scheme which they had put forward . The Amin denied this contention, and there for the moment the matter rested.[1]

The Concession, which was dated 8th March, 1890, in its preamble says: "The monopoly of buying, selling, and manufacturing all the tobacco in the interior and exterior of the Kingdom of Persia is granted to Major Talbot by us for fifty years from the date of the signing of this Concession."

By Article I the Concessionaires were bound to pay £15,000 annually to the Imperial Treasury, whether they benefited or lost by the business. The arbitration clause, which became important in the later history of the matter, is contained in Article 14, and runs as follows:-

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1. Major Talbot thought that "Russian participation in the concession would inflict great blow to British Persian Gulf Trade." No.118 Secret and Confidential, 10 April 1890. F.O.60/511 (P.R.O.).

> "In case of misunderstanding arising between the Persian Government and the proprietors of the Concession, that misunderstanding shall be referred to an Arbitrator accepted by both sides, and in case of impossibility of consent to the appointment of an Arbitrator, the matter will be referred to one of the Representatives resident at Teheran of the Government of the United States, Germany, or Austria, to appoint an Arbitrator, whose decision shall be final."

In June, the response to inquiry from the Foreign Office,[1] Sir Henry Wolff telegraphed that Major Talbot was forming an International Company, and that particulars could not only be obtained from them.[2] The Concession had been registered, the Imperial Bank having deposited and stipulated sum on behalf of Major Talbot, and having received the Concession from him.

Russian opposition to the Concession, which had been declared from the outset, was soon renewed, for in September Sir Henry Wolff telegraphed that the Russian Minister had announced that he had been authorized by his Government to protest against the Concession in total. Sir Henry Wolff added that Major Talbot should lose no time in appointing an agent, and should at least make a show of commencing operations. A few days later Sir Henry Wolff telegraphed[3]

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1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.154. Telegraphic. 31 June 1890. F.O.60/511. (P.R.O.).
2. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.217. Telegraphic. 6 September 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).
3. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.211. Telegraphic. 9 September 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).

that the Russian Minister, on the strength of the 1st Article of the Treaty of Turkomanchai, had protested against Commercial Concessions, and had requested that thosealready granted should be rescinded. But it was more particularly against the Tobacco Concession that the enmity of the Russian Ministry was directed. On 16 September Sir Henry Wolff telegraphed[1] that M. de Bützow had made a written and formal protest to the Kawam-ud-Dawleh against the Concession, and had requested that it should be annulled. But the Shah was apparently determined not to yield,[2] and a reply which Wolff suggested[3] should be made by His Majesty in answer to a further protest to M. de Bützow was approved by Lord Salisbury,[4] this being to the effect that if the

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1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.231. Telegraphic. 16 September 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).

2. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.342. Telegraphic. 17 September 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).

3. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Foreign Office, No.239. Telegraphic. 23 September 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).

4. The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, No.95. Telegraphic. 24 September 1890. F.O.60/512 (P.R.O.). The same objection had occurred to Sir Henry (see his telegram No.59. Very Secret, 9 April 1890 and his despatch No.117 of 10 April 1890) both in F.O.60/511. It was decided by the Foreign Office that monopolies granted to foreigners by Persia would not be contrary to Article I of the Commercial Treaty of Turkomanchai or Article I of Britain's treaty with Persia of 1841, so long as they conferred only excise and internal advantages, and not preferential rights of imports or exports through the Customs (See telegram to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, No.40, 9 April 1890. F.O.60/511. P.R.O.).

Russian Minister persisted in his objections, the Persian Government would feel bound to acquaint the British Legation, as British interests and capital were involved.

At this juncture the Amin-us-Sultan took 500 shares of 10/- each in the Régie Concession, and sent a private telegram to Major Talbot informing him the Concession was quite safe.

Meanwhile Major Talbot was engaged in bringing out a Company to undertake the Concession, and had informed Lord Salisbury[1] that agents would be sent out to Persia almost immediately to commence operations.

In November Kennedy telegraphed[2] that the Russian Minister had stated that he had been formally instructed not to recognize the Tobacco Concession, on the ground of its being a monopoly. These protests of the Russian Minister failed, however, to induce the Shah to cancel the Concession, which His Majesty appeared determined to uphold and carry out. Officially, Russian opposition now ceased, but it was no doubt carried on in other less direct, but, as the event proved, more effectual methods.

In February 1891 a petition protesting against the Concession was presented to the Shah by the Tobacco merchants

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1. The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, No.95. Telegraphic. 24 September 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).

2. Kennedy to Salisbury, No.372. Telegraphic. 12 November 1890. F.O.60/512. (P.R.O.).

of Teheran,[1] who were instigated, Kennedy said, by the Russians. Major Talbot was able, however, to reassure the merchants, and the Shah declared[2] that the Concession was perfectly valid, and that the Major could count upon effective support of the Persian Government. The Concession was registered at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at Teheran and the British Legation, and the transfer to Corporation was officially effected.

The Shah issued a proclamation[3] announcing the establishment in Persia of the Tobacco Règie, and sent[4] Firmans to all provincial Governors commanding them to aid in enforcing it and to recognize it.

In April Mr. Ornstein, the Director of the Tobacco Règie, arrived in Teheran, and received the strongest verbal assurance of official support from the Amin-us-Sultan.[5]

Strong protests were received by the Shah and Amin-us-Sultan from the tobacco merchants of Shiraz,[6] but the Amin

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1. Kennedy to Salisbury, No.25. Telegraphic. 23 February 1891. F.O.522. (P.R.O.).
2. Kennedy to Salisbury. Private, 2 March 1890. Telegraphic. F.O.60/522. (P.R.O.).
3. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.61, 4 March 1891. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).
4. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.42. Telegraphic. 17 March 1891. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).
5. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.85. Telegraphic. 22 April 1891. F.O.60/553 (P.R.O.). See autobiography of Amin-us-Sultan by Nawab-us-Sultan, Oriental Secretary at the British Embassy in Teheran, 25 September 1894. F.O.248/608. (P.R.O.).
6. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.102. Telegraphic. F.O.248/519. (P.R.O.).

directed the Governor to explain to the complainants that the Concession must be accepted as it was irrevocable. The merchants at a people meeting reluctantly acquiesced, and undertook to obey the Shah's orders.

In May Ornstein had an audience with the Shah,[1] who expressed his approval with the measures taken to win over the interested classes, and promised his warm support. The Corporation's Agent at Tabreez had done much to disarm opposition then, and at this period the prospects seemed good. In August, however, the first signs of a storm appeared, the quarter from which danger threatened being Tabreez. The opposition to the Corporation had become very marked there; and the Mollahs, who had begun to preach against the Concession, sent a petition to the Shah praying him to abolish it, while they praying to seek Russian protection.[2] The Shah now first showed signs of vacillation. The menacing tone of the petition from Tabreez almost induced him to cancel the Concession, and the Amin-us-Sultan had some difficulty in persuading him to yield to the demands of the petitioners.[3] In other parts of Persia Kennedy reported

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1. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.102. Telegraphic. F.O.248/519. (P.R.O.).

2. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.168. Telegraphic. 17 August, 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

3. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.172. Telegraphic. 27 August 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

that the working of the Concession was going on smoothly, but that at Tabreez the Russian agents were very active. Eventually the Shah sent a Special Envoy to Tabreez, bearing autographed letters, addressed to Principal Ulamas, the Chief Mujtahed, and the Heir Apparent.[1]

It was hoped that the explanations and warnings contained in these letters would allay the excitement and disarm opposition. Later telegrams from Kennedy showed that the opportunity had been chosen by the political enemies of Amin-us-Sultan to strike a decisive blow at his influence. Among these enemies the chief was Amir-i-Nizam, the Governor-General of Azerbaijan, of which Tabreez was the capital. Kennedy did his utmost to induce the Shah to remain firm, and very possibly if the conspiracy had been resolutely dealt with at the outset, and later and finally successful opposition to the Concession would never have come to a head.[2]

To ensure the safe entry of his Envoy, the Shah dispatched a telegram "en clair", for communication to the people, stating that H.M. was endeavouring to make arrangements for suppressing the Tobacco Régie. It was claimed from Mr. Paton's reports that the Russians had seized on the opportunity to upset the Concession. While Kennedy's telegram proved at this juncture

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1. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.176. Telegraphic. 1 September 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

2. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.202. Telegraphic. 3 September 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

that Amin-us-Sultan was doing his utmost for the Corporation.[1]

At Tabreez the Shah's open telegram had the effect of inducing the people to receive the Envoy, but there is no doubt that this telegram was fatal to the prospects of the Règie, as was plainly shown by Paton's report of 5 September 1891.[2] The Shah and the Amin, in view of the gravity of the situation, advised that the Régie's agent should be temporarily withdrawn from Tabreez.[3] At the same time as rumours were naturally flying about that the Concession had been cancelled, the Shah sent a circular telegram to the Governors of all provinces except Azerbaijan, enjoining them loyally to support the Régie.

The effect of the Azerbaijan's example was not lost on other places, and the Ulamas and the tobacco merchants of Isphahan made an attempt to get up a movement against the Régie.[3] This was nipped in the bud by the energetic action of the Governor, Zil-us-Sultan. Had the Amir-i-Nizam been equally energetic and loyal, matters would never have come to such a crisis at Tabreez. The Russian Minister now thought it a favourable moment to renew his pressure on the Shah to cancel

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1. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.197. 28 September 1891 and No.50, 30 September 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

2. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.207. Telegraphic. 12 September 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

3. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.208. 17 September 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

the Concession.[1] England was not yet prepared to face the consequences of such a measure, though the disturbances at Tabreez and Isphahan were evidently having their effect on him. Indeed, in October the Amin[2] sounded Kennedy as to the possibility of arranging, in a friendly way, to abolish the Concession and compensate the "Corporation, pecuniarily or otherwise."

Meantime, the Shah had received satisfactory answers to his Circular telegram from the various provincial Governors.[3] But, although open disturbances ceased, letters and petitions against the Concession continued to pour on the Foreign Office in London, and Kennedy represented that a message of advice from Her Majesty's Government would help the Amin in his endeavour to uphold the Shah's resolution.[4] A telegram was accordingly sent pointing out how much the Shah's prestige at home and abroad would suffer if the concession were withdrawn.[5]

1. Brown, Edward G. "The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909". Cambridge, 1910. See Chapter II. "The Tobacco Concession and its consequences", pp.31-59.

2. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.211, 19 September 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

3. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.294. Telegraphic. 7 October 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

4. Kennedy to Foreign Office, No.199. Telegraphic. 24 October 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

5. Foreign Office to Kennedy, No.51. Telegraphic. 27 October 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

Meshed now became the centre of the danger but in Isphahan the determined action by the Governor-General, backed by a resolute telegram from the Shah, soon brought the agitators to their senses.

In December the Corporation wished the Persian Government to issue a Circular to the foreign Legation at Teheran, informing them that a tobacco monopoly had been created, and that the working of it had been entrusted to the Corporation.[1] The Shah thought the representation might be made by Her Majesty's Government at St. Petersburg as he felt convinced that the Russian Legation was intriguing against the Corporation.

Neither the request of the Corporation nor the suggestion of the Shah was considered opportune or judicious by Her Majesty's Government, and Sir Frank Lascelles was instructed to point out to His Majesty the Shah that the decisions of the operations affecting the Corporation lay exclusively with himself.[2]

We now come to the final disturbances which eventually wrecked down the Corporation. The Mollahs at Teheran began breaching against the Concession, and declared that monopoly was contrary to the religious law, and rendered Tobacco "unclean".

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1. Sir Frank Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.235, Telegraphic. 3 December 1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

2. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.60. Telegraphic. 4 December1891. F.O.60/524. (P.R.O.).

Smoking was consequently abandoned altogether in the capital, and the efforts of the Amin and the other Persian Ministers were unsuccessful in turning the Mollahs from their objectives. The Amin, therefore, suggested the Corporation should abandon their internal monopoly, but should maintain their external monopoly, and should levy an increased tax on Tobacco as compensation.

The Amin assured Sir Frank Lascelles that matters would go smoothly if the Corporation agreed to his proposal, and said that he had received the fullest assurances from the Mullahs and Tobacco merchants that all their opposition would cease were the home monopoly given up. The event proved that either the Amin was so genuine, or that he intentionally deceived the British Minister. The Amin continued to press his proposal,[1] and eventually the Corporation instructed M. Ornstein to negotiate on the basis of the abandonment of the internal monopoly against adequate compensation.[2] On 18 December the Amin announced to the Mullahs that the monopoly had been abolished, and reported that the monopoly had been abolished, and requested that the interdiction of smoking should be withdrawn.[3]

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1. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.210. Telegraphic. 15 December 1891. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).

2. Grosvenor to Ornstein, 15 December 1891. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).

3. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.242. Telegraphic. 19 December 1891. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).

The Mollahs, however, stated that they must an order on the subject from their Religious Chief at Kerbellah, whom they would consult. On 24 December Sir Frank Lascelles telegraphed that the prohibition of smoking was maintained, and mentioned a rumour that the Mollahs would attack the external monopoly. He had been instructed to support the Corporation "unofficially",[1] and in the course of a lengthy interview with the Shah he pointed out how important it was that the Corporation should review compensation for the withdrawal of this privilege.[2]

The Shah seemed confident that the agitation would subside, and he informed the Russian Minister that he intended to maintain the foreign monopoly. A very few days, however, sufficed to show that the Shah's confidence was misplaced, and that his intention had no reality.

Although the answer of the chief Mujtahid at Kerbella to the Teheran Mollahs expressed gratitude to the Shah, smoking was only partially resumed. The popular agitation had only subsided for the moment, and a few days later burst out again more violently than ever. It was primarily

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1. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.61. 18 December 1891. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).

2. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.246. Telegraphic. 27 December 1891. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).

the action of the Naib-us-Sultan which infuriated the Sultan.[1] His Highness without the Shah's knowledge commanded the leading Mullah either to resume smoking or to leave Teheran. The Mullah was preparing to leave, when the people rose to prevent his departure. This incident caused the Shah to make a "Coup de tête and he issued a decree putting an end to the whole tobacco monopoly. The Mullah was sent for and asked to contro.l the crowd. As the people had approached the Palace, the Naib ordered the soldiers to fire, and six persons were killed, four being Seyyids. The Shah was now thoroughly alarmed, and the Amin suggested that the moment had come for a representation at St. Petersburg by the British Government, the complicity of the Russians in the disturbance being, according to Amin, now quite plain.

The Mullah and the people, emboldened by the success demanded that all foreign concession including those given to Britain in the Karun Valley of the Persian Gulf port.[2] Finally the Mullah submitted certain conditions which would content the people, one of these being that the Tobacco Corporation shall issue a notice to the effect

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1. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.5. 4 January 1892. F.O.60/531. (P.R.O.).

2. Ornstein to Lascelles, No.6. Telegraphic. January 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

that, as the Government had abolished the monopoly the merchants who desired to repurchase their tobacco might do so at the price given for it.

The Amin requested Sir Frank Lascelles to persuade Ornstein to issue this notice. This Ornstein consented to do, being strongly recommended by Sir Frank Lascelles to agree to the terms proposed. News now was received by the Corporation from M. Ornstein confirming the above particulars, and they instructed their agent to negotiate for compensation by means of the arbitration provided in a clause of the Concession.[1]

The Chairman of the Corporation was informed that the good offices of Her Majesty's Government would be at the disposal of the Corporation "in order to obtain for them from the Persian Government the compensation to which they are entitled", and the claim which that Government appears fully to recognize.[2]

These negotiations were now pressed on by the Corporation. As the basis on which compensation should be granted was not reviewed in the same light by the Persian Government and the Corporation, the latter resolved to appeal to

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1. Grosvenor to Lascelles, 7 January 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

2. Foreign Office to Grosvenor, 9 January 1892. F.O.60/554 (P.R.O.). Sir Frank Lascelles informed the Shah that the Russians stood at the background of the disturbances. Lascelles to the Shah. F.O.60/554 (P.R.O.).

arbitration for a decision both of the basis and the amount of compensation.[1]

Lascelles was then informed that unless a speedy settlement was arrived at, the British Government must support the appeal to arbitration.[2] The Persian Government, however, was very anxious to avoid resorting to arbitration, and wished the Corporation to instruct their agents to furnish a statement of actual losses and expenses.[3] The Corporation were not prepared to instruct Ornstein to furnish such a statement, though he might give Sir Frank Lascelles particulars of the assets for his confidential information, but they communicated to the Foreign Office that their original capital was £650,000 of which £300,000 was paid to the Persian Government for the Concession.[4]

The Corporation stated[5] that they were prepared to forego arbitration on the following condition, viz., that the Persian Government should restore the £650,000, of which the Corporation's capital was composed, with interest during the period of investment, and such further sums

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1. Grosvenor to Lascelles, 9 February 1897. F.O.60/531. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.14. Telegraphic. 10 February 1892. F.O.60/531. (P.R.O.).
3. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.23. Telegraphic. 12 February 1892. F.O.60/531. (P.R.O.).
4. See statistics in P.9. Secret Memorandum on the Tobacco Corporation, No.6194. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
5. Tobacco Corporation of Persia to Lascelles, 28 February 1892. F.O.60/531. (P.R.O.).

as might be necessary to compensate their appeals. In return the Corporation would give to the Persian Government all the assets, including cash and stores of unsold tobacco.

Lascelles was informed by telegraph of the above terms, and communicated them to the Amin with the suggestion that the Persian Government should make some definite proposal.[1] In reply to this the Shah made the following proposals: the Persian Government to repay the Corporation the sum of £300,000 down in settlement of all the claims against him; and to be assisted by the Persian Government in selling their tobacco.[2] This offer was immediately communicated to the Corporation. Some misunderstanding arose through an alternative offer of £400,000 in ten yearly instalments, made by the Shah to M. Ornstein.[3] The offer communicated by the Foreign Office was at once refused by the Corporation, who declared that they would rather fall back on arbitration than assent to it. The answer of the Corporation was communicated to Sir Frank Lascelles.[4]

The Amin, however, declared that better terms could not be offered than the £300,000 down or £400,000 in ten

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1. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.16. Telegraphic. 16 February, 1892. F.O.60/531. (P.R.O.).
2. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.28, 19 February 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).
3. Grosvenor to Foreign Office, 24 February 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).
4. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.18. Telegraphic. 25 February 1892. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).

year instalments.

Lascelles recommended that the Corporation should consider the advisability of accepting these terms, as even if arbitration went in their favour, enforcing the amount might be found difficult. On being acquainted with the above reply the Corporation submitted a lengthy statement of their claims and of the reasons which led them to consider the offer of the Persian Government totally inadequate. They appealed to the British Government to obtain an adequate offer from the Persian Government or to insist on immediate execution of the Arbitration Clause.[1] In the same letter the Corporation stated that the monopoly was granted to Major Talbot with the knowledge and approval of Her Majesty's Representative in Persia, that the Major disposed of it to an association of English men entitled "The Eastern Concessions Syndicate (Limited)" and that from this Association the Corporation purchased it for the sum of £300,000 payable nominally in cash, but virtually and by agreement in shares to the maximum amount which the rules of the Stock Exchange permit to be allotted to a vendor, viz., one-third or in this case £217,000 in round numbers, reducing the actual cash payment to £831,000.

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1. Grosvenor to Foreign Office. 28 February 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

The Corporation was, however, to pay nothing, either in cash or delivery in shares, until the Shah had ratified the engagement previously entered into with Major Talbot, and the purchase was not completed till after the examination, the ratification, and Proclamation of the Shah, to whose Government all the details of the terms and price of purchase were submitted before the transfer of concessions to the Corporation.

The case of the Corporation was very ably and temperately stated in this letter, and a telegram was sent to Sir Frank Lascelles relating that, as the Persian Government had not come to terms with the Corporation, Her Majesty's Government must accede to the latter's application for official "support for their appeal for arbitration."[1] The British Government was further directed to concert arrangements with M. Ornstein and the Amir for the nomination of Arbitrator.

This action produced a fresh offer from the Persian Government to the following effect: that the Corporation should receive £300,000 in ten yearly instalments with 5 per cent interest, or, if they declined this system, in a lump sum.[2] The Persian Government would be prepared to take over the assets of the Corporation with the exception

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1. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.19. 1 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

2. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.38. Telegraphic. 7 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

of the cash for a further sum of £150,000. The Amin-us-Sultan hoped that the Corporation would accept payment of the £250,000 with 5 per cent interest on the unpaid portion. The Persian Government earnestly begged the British Government to persuade the Corporation to accept this offer of payment by instalments, as payment in a lump sum would necessitate recourse to the Banks, and probably cause serious embarrassment.

The offer was communicated to the Chairman of the Corporation, and he stated the conditions under which he would endeavour to induce the shareholders to accept it.[1] Failing acceptance of these conditions, the Corporation would insist on arbitration.

The Chairman now had an interview with the Persian Minister in London, but as the latter was instructed to negotiate only on the basis of payment to the Corporation of £350,000, leaving them to realize their assets, no result came from it.[2] Meanwhile, M. Ornstein had submitted a proposal at Teheran for the immediate payment to the Corporation of £500,000, and the inclusion of the proceeds of tobacco sold for export in the cash assets to be retained by them.[3] This proposal considerably incensed the Shah,

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1. Grosvenor to Foreign Office, 8 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).
2. Grosvenor to Foreign Office, 11 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).
3. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.39. Telegraphic. 11 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

who stated that the offer he had made was really beyond his means, and it was impossible for him to do more.

His Majesty accused the Corporation of being responsible themselves for their failure, and alleged that they aroused the hostility of the people and of foreigners by their ostentatious and overbearing proceedings. He admitted that he had received from the Corporation £40,000 but was he, he asked, to be fined more than ten times that amount? Finally, the Amin, at an interview with Mr. Ornstein and Mr. Churchill (representing Sir Frank Lascelles), decided to advise the Shah to agree to the Corporation's terms on condition that the £15,000 should be made over to H.H. which he had paid in cash to the Shah for the shares allotted to His Majesty. This information was communicated to the Chairman, and it was pointed out to him that the best plan for the Corporation was to pursue the negotiations through M. Ornstein, but to be careful not to press the Shah too closely.[1]

The Chairman of the Corporation warmly repudiated the Shah's accusation against the Corporation officials, and the facts related to this Memorandum sufficiently refute His Majesty's assertions, and prove that it was H.M.'s own weakness and irresolution in fact of mob violence at Tabreez and Teheran that ruined the undertaking.

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1. Ornstein to Grosvenor, 10 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

In a further letter the Chairman argued the question of the Shah's ability to pay the sum required by the Corporation, and pointed to the Shah's jewels and effects, which, with the sum supposed to be hoarded in his private treasury, would afford ample security for many loans of the required amount. At length the Shah agreed to the Corporation's terms, viz., payment of £500,000, proceeds of sale of export Tobacco to be retained by the Corporation, and the other assets, excepting cash, to be handed over to the Persian Government.[1] The Shah stated that he only consented to this arrangement in order to retain the friendship of England, which he feared might be impaired if the question were referred to arbitration.

Negotiations were proceeded with between the Amin and Ornstein, through Sir Frank Lascelles, for the purpose of drawing up a definite agreement embodying the above features.[2] Mr. Ornstein was authorized to accept the terms subject to the statement as to when and where the money would be paid, and the consent of the shareholders.

A draft Agreement was submitted to the Amin by Ornstein, and a counter-proposal was made by His Highness. The Persian Government raised questions as to the value of the Corporation's assets, which they were to take over.[3]

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1. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.40. Telegraphic. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).
2. Ornstein to Grosvenor. Telegraphic. 14 March 1892. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).
3. The Amin-us-Sultan to Lascelles, 17 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).

The latter undertook, as soon as the £500,000 should be lodged in safe hands, to produce proof that the assets to be handed over had cost them in purchase and subsequent expenditure £139,000.[1] For the next few days the negotiations turned on the sum of £139,000, the Corporation continuing to press for the fixing of an early date for the payment of £500,000. Finally the Corporation agreed to close the question on the following terms:[2] the Persian Government within twenty-one days, to lodge £500,000 at the Imperial Bank of Persia in London to Sir Frank Lascelles' order, the Corporation thereupon to furnish to a person mutually agreed upon between Sir Frank Lascelles and the Persian Government.

The Amin now stated that the French Minister had offered to provide the £500,000 at 5 per cent, but Lascelles doubted his having mentioned any rate of interest, and understood that he had said he could find the money at a cheaper rate than the Bank.[3] The latter offer was 8 per cent for forty years, including a sinking fund, plus 5 per cent, for the first year for expenses of issue and underwriting.

Meanwhile Ornstein[4] had been authorized to sign the

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1. Grosvenor to Lascelles, 16 March 1892. F.O.60/554. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.23. Telegraphic. 22 March 1892. F.O.60/553. (P.R.O.).
3. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.47. Telegraphic. 21 March 1892. F.O.60/1532. (P.R.O.).
4. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.48. Telegraphic. 24 March 1892. F.O.60/532. (P.R.O.).

Agreement on cash being deposited, the shareholders having agreed to the proposals. Afrer further negotiations was instructed on the 24 March to notify the Corporation's acceptance to the Amin, and the Chairman was so informed. The Persian Government were evidently in great difficulties as to finding the money. The Bank refused to lend on the terms proposed to them, and the Government then applied through the French Minister to financial firms in Paris. The Amin asked why the Corporation did not undertake the transaction themselves, and thus benefit by the 6 per cent.

The Chairman of the Corporation, on being informed of the above, pressed for a definite statement by the Persian Government as to the period within which the money should be paid.[1] He considered it impossible for the Corporation to undertake the transaction on the following grounds: (1) because it would lead to an indefinite prolongation of the liquidation which must be immediate in order not to become ruinous; (2) because the terms agreed upon had been definitely accepted by the shareholders; (3) because the shareholders would undoubtedly refuse an arrangement involving protracted relations with a Government from which they had already suffered such bad treatment.

On 4 April the Amin sent to Lascelles in an official note an Agreement stating that the Persian Government

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1. To Grosvenor, 2 April 1892, and Grosvenor, 3 April 1892. (P.R.O.).

would pay the £500,000 within four months,[1] the other points being as largely settled. Lascelles was at once informed that he might sign the Agreement with a proviso for the payment of the money within four months from the date of the signature,[2] this point not being specified by the Amin.

On the 5 April Lascelles reported that the Amin had returned the Agreement to him with the insertion that the four months should date from 30 March.[3] The British Minister then addressed an official note to H.H. stating that the Agreement was approved by the British Government and accepted by the Corporation, and transmitted a duplicate copy in Persian, with an English translation, signed and sealed by him.

The terms of the Agreement were in substance as follows:-[4]

The Persian Government, within four months from the 30 March, to pay over to the Corporation in London the sum of £500,000 and within a further period of three months to take over the assets in Persia, including tobacco in store, but exclusive of cash and tobacco sold for export. These assets are reckoned to have cost £139,000, and if the books of the Corporation showed any deficiency such deficiency

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1. From the Amin to Lascelles, No.50. Telegraphic. 4 April 1892. F.O.60/533. (P.R.O.).
2. To Lascelles, No.27. Telegraphic. 4 April 1892. F.O.60/533. (P.R.O.).
3. The Amin to Lascelles, 5 April 1892. F.O.60/533. (P.R.O.).
4. The text of the Agreement has since been received from Teheran in Lascelles' No.63, 1892. F.O.60/544. (P.R.O.).

to be paid off by the Corporation.

The Corporation to retain cash in Persia (stated in February to amount to £53,000), and to be paid by the Persian Government £2,000 a month for working expenses for any delay beyond the stipulated period for taking over of assets. £15,000 of shares allotted to the Shah to be handed over to His Majesty.

On the same day a telegram from the Amin to the Persian Minister was communicated to the Foreign Office, containing another appeal to the Corporation to accept interest instead of capital.[1]

The Persian Minister was informed, in reply, that the Amin had signed an Agreement[2] binding the Persian Government to pay £500,000 within four months from 30 March. The Corporation immediately issued a circular to their shareholders informing them of the Agreement, and the Chairman warmly expressed on behalf of the Board their sense of the effectual assistance rendered by the British Government in obtaining a settlement of the matter at issue.

The subsequent history of the case turns entirely on the efforts of the Persian Government to obtain the requisite loan.

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1. Telegram from Amin us-Sultan to Persian Minister in London, 5 April 1892. F.O.60/533. (P.R.O.).

2. To Persian Minister, 13 April 1892. F.O.60/533. (P.R.O.).

On 9 April Lascelles reported[1] that the French Minister had been officially informed that no Paris firm would undertake the loan. On the other hand, the Directors of the Bank of Persia had been approached by the Persian Minister in London, and seemed favourably disposed.

Difficulties were now raised at Isphahan by the Zil us-Sultan who demanded that the Corporation should pay the difference to be assessed by arbitration.

Sir Frank suggested that he should write privately to the Amin, to point out what an unfavourable impression would be produced by any interference on the part of the Shah's Governor with an arrangement so recently concluded after protracted negotiations. This suggestion was approved by Lord Salisbury. The Russian Minister now made his reappearance on the scene, and, according to the Amin's account, made minute inquiries as to the nature of the guarantee of interest. TheAmin stated that this made him think that some Russian firms were willing to advance the money at 6 per cent if the Russian Government guaranteed the interest.

The above information was confirmed by Sir Frank Lascelles on 18 April.[2] The Amin had sent to inform

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1. To Lascelles, No.29. Telegraphic. 14 April 1892. F.O.60/555. See also description of Lascelles's interview with the Shah to Salisbury, No.74. 14 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

2. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.60. Telegraphic. 15 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

him that the Russian Minister stated that the £500,000 was at the disposal of the Persian Government at 6 per cent without any deduction from the capital.

The Minister had asked what guarantee the Persian Government would offer, and had pressed for immediate reply. The Amin professed to Lascelles a preference for dealing with the Bank, but could hold out no hope of their being able to deal at such a low rate.

The Manager of the Imperial Bank at Teheran considered that the acceptance of the Russian offer would be disastrous for the Bank and all British enterprise. The Amin still professed to be averse to accepting it, and pointed out how greatly British interests would be damaged if the money were guaranteed by Russia. His Highness hoped that the British Government would use their influence to obtain the money on equally favourable terms.

A telegram to very much the same effect was received by the Corporation from Ornstein on 19 April, and communicated to the Foreign Office.[1]

Ornstein pointed out that the Persian Government would be bound to accept the Russian offer unless His Majesty's Government guaranteed the regular payment of annuities to the Bank, and thus enabled it to lend the money at 6 per cent.

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1. Grosvenor to Ornstein, 19 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

Next day Sir Frank Lascelles reported[1] that the Russians had intimated that they would be prepared to accept as security for the loan an order on the Persian of the customs for the yearly instalments.

On the same day Sir Thomas Sanderson saw the Chairman of the Persian Bank.[2] The Bank's terms were that if the Persian Government objected to a sinking fund they would try to issue a 6 per cent loan at 96 or 97, on the security of the monthly instalments from the customs of the Persian Gulf ports. This would bring up the amount of the loan to about £530,000, to cover cost of issue. These terms were telegraphed to Lascelles, and he was instructed to point out to the Amin the folly of giving the Russian Government a lien on the customs an excuse for interference in the administration.

It was suggested to the Chairman of the Corporation that the true solution would be for the shareholders to accept 6 per cent bonds instead of cash. The Chairman, however, refused to see the matter in this light and considered the suggestion impracticable in view of the urgent need for a prompt and final liquidation. On 21 April Sir Frank Lascelles reported that the Shah was constantly

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1. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.62. Telegraphic. 20 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

2. Sanderson to Lascelles, Private. Telegraphic. 20April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

pressing the Amin, while alive to the danger of giving them such an excuse for interference, felt that his position with the Shah was being shaken by the delay in acceptance.[1]

On 22 April Lascelles was instructed[2] to inform the Amin that he would have formally to protest against the validity of any act by which the Shah alienated to a foreign Government his control over the customs revenues of his southern ports. "The British Government," the Foreign Office said, "would be entitled to object." He was also to point out to the Amin that if the payment of the interest of the loan fell into arrears the Russians would make this an excuse for seizing a territorial guarantee in Kharasson or elsewhere.

In a further Secret telegram it was stated that the mortgaging of particular taxes to a private individual or Company did not involve any sacrifice of sovereign rights.[3] If the Shah preferred this form of security, it would be better to assign £30,000 a year out of the Customs duties to the Corporation, or to the Bank if the latter paid off the former.

If this were done the British Government would not

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1. Lascelles to Foreign Office, Private. Telegraphic. 21 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to Lascelles, (A. Secret). Telegraphic. 22 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
3. Foreign Office to Lascelles, (B. Secret). Telegraphic. 22 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

feel themselves bound to make any further representation to the Persian Government as to the discharge of the claim. Sir Frank Lascelles was authorised in the last resort, and if he saw no other means of preventing the Russian loan, to make a declaration to the above effect. Sir Frank Lascelles continued to press for delay, when the Amin declared that unless the British Government could induce the Bank to come to terms he would have to accept the Russian offer.[1] His Highness instructed the Persian Minister at London to communicate this view to the Foreign Office, but nothing came of the interview which the Minister had with Sir Thomas Sanderson on the same day.[2]

Lascelles suggested that if the Corporation would pay the expenses of issue of the proposed loan, or would make an arrangement with the Bank either to take up a considerable portion of the loan or to accept bonds in part payment, the matter might be settled. He considered it important that pressure should be brought to him or the two institutions to come to terms.

On 25 he reported that he had procured a promise from the Amin to delay giving the Russians an answer until 28 April.[3] Suspicions arose as to the genuineness of

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1. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.63. Telegraphic. 23 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to Lascelles. Private. 23 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
3. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.65. 25 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

the Russian offer, and Lascelles was asked whether he felt sure the Persian Government was not playing with him.[1] He replied that the relations of the extraordinary demand of the Shah in regard to the Russian loan, who feared possible inroads on his private treasury, and was impatient for a settlement of the matter in order that he might proceed to Iraq,[2] worsened the situation.

On 26 April the question of the Corporation was raised in the House of Commons.[3] Mr. Labouchere asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he would lay upon the table of the House all correspondence that had taken place between the British Government and the Director of the Tobacco Concession Company in Persia, between the British Government and her Representative at Teheran, and between the British Representative at Teheran and the Persian Government, in regard to the indemnity to be paid to the Company in consequence of the abrogation of the concession; whether he was in a position to state who were the persons who obtained the Tobacco Concession, and what they paid for it; whether they sold its concession to the Company now claiming compensation which the British Representative at Teheran urged the Persian Government to pay the Company abrogating the Concession. The Under Secretary

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1. Foreign Office to Lascelles, No.6. Private. Telegraphic. 26 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
2. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.66. Telegraphic. 26 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
3. Parliamentary Debates. 26 April 1892.

of State replied that "the papers referred to are being prepared, and will be discussed when the communications, which are now pressing with the Persian Government are closed. The Concession was obtained, so the British Government were informed, from the Persian Government by Major Talbot, without the intervention of Her Majesty's Government to their knowledge. They have no information as to the amount paid for it. The British Government are informed that it was transferred to the Imperial Tobacco Corporation of Paris for the sum of £300,000. The papers, when printed, will show the action taken by Her Majesty's Representative at Teheran which has been directed to an attempt to bring about an amicable solution of the difficulty." The Chairman of the Bank of Persia and of the Tobacco Corporation were both invited to an interview on 26 April, in order to see if an arrangement could be made in the manner suggested by Sir Frank Lascelles.

A telegram was received from Lord Salisbury suggesting that with this in view it might be well to warn the Corporation that the British Government were unable to use British influence to induce the Shah to accept the Russian loan, and that if His Majesty could not raise the money elsewhere, the British Government must acquiesce in his paying the Corporation in bonds for yearly interest.[1] The

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1. Lord Salisbury to Lascelles, Telegraphic. 26 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

Chairman of the Bank called and professed the willingness of the Directors to do all in their power to issue the loan on favourable terms.[1] But he explained that the Bank could not advance the money from its own funds, and that the loan would certainly not be taken up in the market at a higher price than 96 or 97. The Bank was ready to give its service free of charge. The Chairman of the Corporation called later and Sir Thomas Sanderson, the First Lord of Treasury, was informed generally of the state of affairs. He was told that grave doubts existed whether the Russian offer was sold and genuine, that in any case the Government would feel to oppose it as contrary to the British interests; that it became, therefore, of great importance that the Corporation should co-operate with the Bank of Persia so as to make an arrangement practicable by other means; that unless the Corporation would do so it must not count on further assistance from the British Government. The Chairman explained that the Corporation was in liquidation on the basis of their Agreement with the Persian Government, that the liquidators could not take the responsibility of departing from the terms of the Agreement while consulting the whole body of shareholders, which would take some time. He considered it most unlikely that the shareholders should consent to take up a large proportion of the loan. But he was ready to agree that, as a matter of private arrangement,

1. Grosvenor to Lascelles. 26 April 1892. Telegraphic. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

the liquidators should consent to accept the deduction of 3 per cent discount from the total sum of £500,000, thus enabling the Bank to reduce its terms by £15,000. The Bank Directors were again consulted, and the result was stated in a telegram sent to Sir Frank Lascelles.[1] The Bank were prepared to put the loan on the British market on the same conditions as the Russian offer, and would endeavour to arrange with the Corporation as to any reduction arising out of price of issue. They, however, entertained grave doubts as to the loan being taken up, and the effect of failure on Persian credit must be considered. If, on the other hand, the Corporation take one half of the loan, and contribute towards expenses of issue, the Bank would take the other half "firm".

On 28 April it was suggested to the Chairman of the Tobacco Corporation that it might be better that any further discussion with regard to the loan arrangement should take place directly between the liquidators and the Bank, and he was reminded of the warning already conveyed to him verbally by the First Lord of Treasury and Sir Thomas Sanderson to the effect that the British Government was not prepared to press the Persian Government, not to support the Corporation in pressing it, for the literal Agreement concluded at Teheran on 30 March, beyond what they considered to be commitment with the general

1. Grosvenor to Lascelles, Telegraphic. 27 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

public interest.[1] The Chairman replied that the matter was not one for the Corporation or the liquidators, but for the Persian Government, if so disposed, to discuss with the Bank of Persia.[2] That Government, having agreed to pay £500,000 to the Corporation or its liquidators attempted to dictate the means of that fulfilment. He further denied that any request had been put forward on behalf of the Corporation for pressure on the Persian Government to carry out the Agreement beyond what would be consistent with the public interest. At his interview with the First Lord of Treasury and Sanderson he had merely deprecated sounded to him like a suggestion of impediment to the progress of that arrangement. He was entitled to assume that if there then had been anything improper or impracticable in the proposals of the Persian Government, Lascelles would not have been authorised to enter into and sign the Agreement in which they were embodied.

As regards the genuineness of the Russian offer, and which the Manager of the Bank at Teheran appears to have been convinced, Sir Frank Lascelles thought that he could not take upon himself the responsibility of disbelieving the categorical statement made to him by the Amin-us-Sultan,

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1. To Grosvenor, 28 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).
2. Grosvenor to Lascelles, 28 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.)

and he thought that pressure might be put on the Corporation to enable the Bank to undertake the operation, and at the same time, the Bank might be called upon to make a sacrifice in order to save its existence, which would be imperilled if the Russians obtained the loan. He was doubtful whether, from a political point of view, the Russian loan would not be a lesser evil than allowing the Persians to erode the recent Agreement, though either course would deal a heavy blow to all British influence in Persia.

Lord Salisbury, however, thought that the acceptance of bonds secured on the customs would be less injurious to British prestige than the Russian loan; and his Lordship also pointed out, with reference to Lascelles's suggestion that pressure should be put on the Corporation and the Bank to come to terms, that the Corporation, being now in liquidation, could no longer spend money without the liquidators' consent, and that the Bank might be waiting until the bonds were given to the Corporation, in order to purchase them at a reduced price.[1]

Meantime, the Persian Government continued to press for an immediate decision, and Lascelles accordingly asked the Amin-us-Sultan whether the Russian loan would be stopped if the Corporation could be induced to accept bonds in payment of their claim. His Highness thought the suggestion

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1. To Lascelles, Secret, Telegraphic. 23 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

a good one, though he would much prefer the Bank should undertake the business of paying the Corporation.

In reply to his inquiry as to what he should say in reply to the Russian offer, Sir Frank Lascelles[1] suggested that he should put it off by stating that he (Sir Frank Lascelles) had given hope of a satisfactory settlement. The following instructions were sent to Sir Frank Lascelles on 30 April:-

(Secret)

"Previous instructions hold good. Her Majesty's Government have a decided objection to Russian loan. The Corporation have a similar aversion to being paid in bonds. If one or the other is inevitable, our influence must support our objection not theirs. It is for you to decide when the above alternative becomes inevitable.

"If £500,000 in 6 per cent bonds secured on customs is all that can be got out of Persia, whatever capital these bonds will raise can be obtained for them as earily when they have become property of the Corporation as it can now if, as a last resource, you have to offer to accept bonds, you should do it something in this form:- "We are satisfied that the sum required for payment in cash cannot be had elsewhere on terms as low as those of the Russian loan, to which there are political objections.

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1. Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.68. Telegraphic. 29 April 1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

"Therefore, if Persian Government prefer to deal with the debt by offering adequate security for annual interest at 6 per cent, the British Government will offer no objection to this course."

In a separate telegram it was further suggested that the Bank might be commissioned by the Persian Government to find means of paying the £500,000, as this would give time, and furnish a reply to the Russian offer.[1]

Acting on the above, Sir Frank Lascelles informed the Amin us-Sultan that he had received instructions which would enable him to settle the question. His Highness refused to give a written assurance officially that the Russian offer was genuine, on the ground that the Russians had insisted on the greatest secrecy.

Lascelles then communicated to the Amin the suggestion that the Bank should be commissioned to arrange with the liquidators the method of executing the Agreement. H.H. approved of the suggestion, and inquired whether he should at once hand over to the Bank the bonds to be given by the Shah, and commission them to settle with the Corporation.

Lascelles replied that he did not yet know whether the Bank would accept this arrangement, but thought that he had said enough to enable the Amin to refuse the Russian loan, and on H.H. asking whether he was to do replied in the affirmative.

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1. Lascelles, Telegraphic. 30 April1892. F.O.60/555. (P.R.O.).

The Amin then said that he clearly understood the arrangement to be as follows:-

The Persian Government bound themselves to pay forty yearly instalments of £12,500 to pay off the capital, together with 6 per cent interest on the unpaid portion; payment to be secured on customs revenues of Persian Gulf, and Persian Government to have right at any time of paying off the capital. H.H. added that, if in future a more satisfactory guarantee of interest could be found, Persian Government would be willing to assign it in exchange for the customs.

On being informed by Sir Frank Lascelles that he understood the above to be to which Her Majesty's Government would offer no objection, the Amin said that he would inform the Russian Legation that their offer was declined. But when the Amin us-Sultan repeated his conversation with Sir Frank Lascelles to the Shah, H.M. declined to listen, and decided to close with the Russian offer, and had granted an audience to the Russian Minister that day to inform him of its acceptance.[1]

On hearing this, Sir Frank Lascelles authorized the Amin to inform the Shah that Her Majesty's Government strongly objected to the Russian loan for political reasons, and that they would consider the acceptance of it a most unfriendly act, more especially as they had now given

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1. Lascelles, No.72. Telegraphic. 8 May 1892. F.O.248/538. (.P.R.O.).

assurances that the matter might be settled on terms as favourable as those offered by the Russians.

The Amin stated that he had the greatest difficulty in persuading the Shah to send a message to the Russian Minister telling him that, as the creditors had accepted the proposed terms, His Majesty could not do otherwise than close with them.

Sir Frank Lascelles considered that the fact that the Shah had sent a message to the Russian Minister without the Amin's knowledge showed that H.M.'s confidence in H.H. was somewhat shaken. It was, therefore, most desirable that the matter should be terminated without further delay. On 5 May Sanderson saw the Chairman of the Bank of Persia, and explained to him the details of the proposal made to the Persian Government, by which the latter would constitute the Bank the agents for settling the claim of the Tobacco Corporation.

Sir Thomas Sanderson further informed the Chairman of the Bank that the British Government would be ready to use their good offices to obtain punctual payment of the interest and instalments, but they would not press the Persian Government, nor be party to any pressure on it, to obtain terms in excess of this offer, which was as much as they thought could reasonably be demanded.

The Chairman, Mr. Keswick, said that the Bank was ready to accept the commission, and that it would be their

business to confer with the representatives of the Corporation as to the best means of placing the bonds, which, though they might not command a market, would, he thought, in time, become saleable.

Lascelles was accordingly instructed to inform the Amin[1] that the Bank was ready to accept the Commission to arrange the matter with the liquidators of the Corporation, and to ask him to hand over the bonds to the Manager of the Bank and commission the Bank as proposed.

On the 7 instant Sir Frank Lascelles telegraphed that the Amin had sent the bonds to the Manager of the Bank at Teheran, and that the latter would telegraph their wording to London.[2]

M. Ornstein, he added, had communicated the following telegram from his Board, dated the 6th instant: "We know nothing of arrangements as per your telegram of 2nd of May, and consent to nothing outside the Agreement entered into on behalf of the Régie by Sir Frank Lascelles."

Lansdowne was much relieved that means was discovered for preventing the Persian Government from taking up a Russian loan.[3]

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1. To Lascelles, No.21. Telegraphic. 5 May 1892. See above, Lascelles to Salisbury, No.85, 11 May 1892. F.O.248/538. (P.R.O.).

2. Lascelles, No.73. Telegraphic. 7 May 1892. F.O.248/538. (P.R.O.).

3. Lansdowne to Wolff, No.46. 4 June 1892. Papers of the Marquis of Lansdowne, 1899-1894, Correspondence, vol. January - December 1892 (India Office Library).

The collapse of the Tobacco Concession was due to three things:- First and foremost, the greed displayed by the Régie itself to realize enormous profits at the expense of the poor Persian people;[1] secondly, to the undoubted action of the Russian Agents sent amongst the leading Mujtahids and Mullahs, in whom they found ready and willing material to do their work for them, and thirdly, to the teachings of the famous Jamal-ud-Din El-Afghani, who called for the abdication of the Shah. This alone, thought Jamal ud-Din, would keep Russia out of Northern Persia and would prevent the British Navy in the Persian Gulf from grabbing the Persian Gulf ports.[2]

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1. Rabino, Chief Manager of the Imperial Bank of Persia, to Lascelles, 16 February 1892. F.O.60/532, Amin us-Sultan told his Minister in London that the failure could only be attributed to the unbearable behaviour of the inexperienced employees of the administration of the Régie who gave complaint to all classes of people, including the seller, the purchaser, the cultivator and the merchant. His Highness Amin us-Sultan, to Persian Minister in London, 18 February 1892. F.O.60/554. See also Memorandum (Confidential) on the prospects and position of the Imperial Tobacco Corporation by the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 5 August 1891. F.O.60/555. See Indian Government Memorandum on the Tobacco Corporation and the reasons for its failure. 3 March 1892. F.O.55/1437. M. Feryiries: Trois Ans à cour de perse, p.211.

2. Jamal-ud-Din to Hasan Sherazi (not dated) in Arabic. F.O.248/540. Case Volume on Jamal-ud-Din, his religious and political ideas, 1881-1897. F.O.60/594. (P.R.O.).

V. THE DIPLOMACY OF DURAND AND HARDINGE

1894-1898

The abolition by the Shah of the Tobacco Concession opened the door to economic penetration of Russia which for many years had been consolidating itself at the expense of Britain.

During 1894 the feeling of dissatsfaction at the Shah's rule was very high. Nasru-ud-Din put the blame on Russia. He told Ambassador Durand:

> "Our neighbours wanted the country to go from bad to worse in order that they might eventually have a pretext of interference. Britain must resist the Russian encroachment of Afghanistan and the French interference in Muscat."

Meanwhile the bankrupt Persian Government had decided the practical revival of the Tobacco Regie which was to work under Persian auspices. The Amin-Ud-Dawleh, The President of the Council, had told the Shah that he would benefit from the scheme to the extent of £200,000 a year. On 1 June 1894, the Sadr-i-Azim called on Sir Mortimer Durand to ask his private opinion on the subject. Sir Mortimer told His Highness if he meant that the British Government would feel any jealousy at a Persian project succeeding where a British had failed

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1. Sir Mortimer Durand to Lord Kimberley, No.22. 11 Feb.1894. F.O.248/588 (P.R.O.)

2. Sir Mortimer Durand to Lord Kimberley. No.173 Secret 1 June 1894. F.O.60/577 (P.R.O.)

he was assured that His Highness need be under no apprehension. He however, thought it essential to know whether the Amin-Ud-Dawlah's project was likely to be really beneficial to the country, whether it was directed to the advantage of the many, or to the interests of the few and lastly whether it was liable to meet the same oppostion as the previous scheme, which might be a source of danger to the country. The Sadr-i-Azim replied that he personally was not in favour of the idea because he foresaw that in the critical and disconted state of public feeling, it would be sure to give rise to trouble. The Sadr-i-Azim also said that he was told by M. de Speyer, The Russian Chargé d'Affaires that he would not allow the scheme to proceed. Sir Mortimer Durand was aware that the Persians were negotiating with M. Grandjean a loan through the Ottoman Bank. The idea of the loan scheme was that the Persian Government should borrow a million pounds sterling at 5½% interest, the half the sum should be devoted to clearing off the existing debt and the rest for the reform of the Persian currency.[1] The Shah rejected the Ottoman Bank's proposals because of a possible European control of the Persian Gulf Ports. The refusal of the Persian Government to allow the British steam ship "Shushan" to navigate the upper part of the Karun resulted in the sudden decision of the Indian Government to withdraw its annual subsidy of £4,000 towards maintenance of the Karun River Service.[2]

1. Durand to Kimberley. No.2307 Confifential. 18 March 1895 F.O.60/567 (P.R.O.)
2. Lord Elgin to Foreign Office. Secret & External, 28 January 1895. F.O.60/568. (P.R.O.).

Salisbury was exceedingly anxious that Lord Elgin should reconsider his refusal to contribute the moiety of the Karun subsidy. Lord George Hamilton informed the Viceroy:[1]

> "I do not question the soundness of your objection, but it may have partially escaped your notice that your refusal now to contribute may bring the Company to an end, and just now is not the moment to advertise in Persia an English commercial collapse."

The central Government was weak, and was defied not only by the provincial authorities, but by the Mullahs or priesthood, whose power had become greater than it should be. The finances were in disorder, and during the period 1894-1895 there had been an annual deficit of about £50,000. The army was a worthless force without serviceable arms drill, or the semblance of discipline.

During 1895 there was a growing social discontent with the conduct of the ruling classes. Among the principle causes of this state of affairs was the greed and timidity of the Shah. It was his lack of courage and firmness which brought his country to ruin. The Heir Apparent was a man of weak character and allowed his Northern Provinces of Azerbijan to be dangerously misruled and to be a Russian sphere of influence. The Shah's third son, the Naib us-Sultaneh, who held the office of Commander-in-Chief, encircled himself at the expense of the troops, whom he neglected and robbed. Finally the Zil-us-Sultan, the

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1. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Elgin. M.46, 6 December 1895. Letter from and to Secretary of State, 1895 (E). Lord Elgin private papers (India Office).

pro-British Governor of Faristan was allowing disorder to spread in the South.

The Prime Minister had gradually drawn into his own hands nearly the whole work of the Government Offices, which he was unable to discharge. Though clever and bold in his management of the Shah and in fighting his numerous enemies, he had shown little administrative or power of organization. No doubt the proceedings of the Shah and the others who ought to set an example increase the prevailing corruption of the state, but they had not excited it.

The outlook with regard to Persia's relations with England during 1895 was, from the latter's point of view by no means satisfactory. Though so feeble as to be at the mercy of almost any assailant Persia was inclined to adopt towards all powers but one an aggressive and peremptory tone. She encroached steadily her frontier of Kelat, Afghanistan and Turkey, and her reliance on the good nature of England was so complete that the Shah frequently permitted himself to treat Durand with neglect.[1]

Towards Russia, on the other hand, her attitude was one of respect and fear. She felt the pressure of Russia along her Northern Border from the Caucasus to Meshed and she regarded as almost certain the eventual absorption of Northern Persia in the Dominions of the Tzar. The fact that Teheran

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1. Very confidential Memorandum on Persia by Sir Mortimer Durand. No.6704. September 1895. F.O.248/608.(P.R.O.).

itself was in the North had a very marked effect upon the making of Persian foreign policy.

There could be no doubt that in Teheran the influence of Russia was predominant, it was, too, antagonistic to the British policy.

In spite of the indifference Britain had shown at times, her connection with Persia had sufficed to prevent for many years any material encroachment on Persian territory or any sensible curtailing of Persian independence and thinking Persians knew this very well.

The first cause which suggested itself was the radical change of policy which at one time found an advocate in Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. In his famous Memorandum on Persian Affairs of 1895, Sir Mortimer Durand wrote that:

> "If Russia is not prepared to make any serious encroachment on Persia, it occurs to one as possible that we might come to a friendly understanding with her, and that we might enter upon joint action, for the reorganization and development of Persia."

Such a scheme was very attractive. In 1895 Persia was playing Russia and England against each other with the result that neither could do much and that Persia remained misruled and undeveloped. A guarantee loan, sufficient to permit the re-organization of the finances and of construction of certain public works could be easily raised, and Britain could then proceed to open out the Southern port by land and water communications, to extend the area of cultivation and to increase the remainder, and to create a considerable

trade. A little steady pressure on certain main lines by the English and Russian legations acting together would, probably make Persia in a few years a solvent, flourishing country, and in the course of time it should become a comparatively rich one. Both England and Russia would gain largely from a commercial point of view, but the question was whether Russia could ever fall in with such a scheme, if so, could they carry it out without disagreement and ultimate trouble. This seemed unlikely. Sir Mortimer[1] thought in 1895 that it was possible that the proposal, if made by Britain, might be accepted by Russia especially if it formed part of a larger scheme for the general settlement of Anglo-Russian relations in Asia.

What Persia needed in 1895-1896 was a loan which enabled her to hand over to Britain the management of her Southern customs, and to let Britain try reorganizing her finances. But any such scheme involved the downfall of the Sadr-i-Azim, Britain's only strong friend in Persia, and before he would fall he would fight desperately, backed by the Russian legation.

He definitely informed the British Ambassador that if Britain could help him about the Régie debt he wouldthrow open the upper Karun to the British trade and would undertake

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1. Very confidential Memorandum on Persia by Sir Mortimer Durand. No.6704. September 1895. F.O.248/608. (P.R.O.).

to maintain security along the routes branching out eastwards and northwards from Shuster to Isphahan and Burjurd. There was every indication that the Persian Government thought such a loan would help Britain asserting herself in the South and would result in the withdrawal of the Persians from the Island of Siri near Hormuz Strait and to a solution for the problem of Beluchistan-Persian frontier.

Britain's alliance with the Bakhtiari tribes was very necessary not only politically but strategically for the general defence of the Persian Gulf. Durand who was a very intimate friend of their Chief once wrote:

> "It is a very serious thing to advocate the establishment of a British possession or protectorate in Persia, for it is impossible to say to what proportions that might develop, or what exertion of armed strength it might entail, and our military resources are not capable of unlimited expansion; but my impression is that if we found it necessary to advance from the ports into the interior of the country it might possible be desirable, from a military point of view, to have a portion of our Indian garrisons Europeans and natives - stationed in the upland districts of Persia, and forming nucleus of a larger force raised from the Arabs and Buktion tribes."[1]

The Persian policy was magnificently described by Sir Mortimer with the following words:

> ".....Persia is pleasant enough in itself. The climate here, at Gulek, is to my mind delightful, like a hot English summer, with occasional thunderstorms. I can be in my shady garden all long if I like. But it is not pleasant to think

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1. Sir Mortimer Durant Memorandum on Persia. Very confidential. No.6704. September 1895. F.O.248/608. (P.R.O.).

that one is practically helpless for good. Unless Russia and England combine, all reforms are practically hopeless. There is no patriotism in the country, and from the Shah every man in authority lives only to fill his own pocket. If Russia and England combined, we could do anything we liked and in ten years Persia could be made a flourishing state, but I fear Russia is not likely to do anything in common with us."[1]

II.

Sir Mortimer Durand's Memorandum displayed deplorable conditions of things in Persia, but not one that could surprise in British diplomatic circles. Persia, so long as it remained under the ruling Shah was incurably rotten, and there was not one of his sons who would not, in all probability, be a change for the worse.

Lord Curzon in a confidential Memorandum[2] on the Persian situation dated 12 April 1896 agreed with Durand as to the advisability of intimating to the Russian Government that any aggressive movement on their part in North Persia would probably lead to some counter disposition by Great Britain in the South. Curzon thought that there was necessity to bind themselves to take the Gulf ports, or to occupy any territory, or indeed to adopt any specified course of action!

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1. Sir Henry Mortimer Durand to Lord Elgin, No.48. 2 August 1895. Correspondence with persons in India. Vol. July-December 1895 (E). Lord Elgin's private papers. (India Office).

2. Memorandum on the Persian situation by Lord Curzon, Confidential. No.6765. 12 April 1896. P.3. F.O.60/581. (P.R.O.).

He assumed that Russia wanted Persia, not merely for intrinsic value of the Northern provinces, but in order to get to the Gulf, and they would not rashly take any step that would effectually, and at a blow, prevent the realization of that dream. He explained that one real chance, however, of doing something that would be enormously beneficial to Persia, that would conciliate the Shah, and that would promote British interests and influence, would be to Anglicize the Administration of the Custom of the Persian Gulf, with the hope of making this venture a financial success and of ultimately extending the system inland, possibly over the whole country! The last plan was more practical to British diplomacy. There could not be the same native objection as there was, for instance for the Régie, seeing that the bulk of the dues were collected from freight i.e. British or Indian merchandize, while there would probably before long be a native demand that the interior dues should be similarly treated in order to escape the infectious speculation of the various stations or by province.

Lord Curzon's last point in the important Memorandum was the position of the province of Seistan. He declared:

> "Seistan is contiguous to Afghanistan. It is certain that when Persia breaks up one cannot allow it to be quietly absorbed by Russia. If it is so absorbed she will get to the Gulf. Seistan is a British interest. That the bulk of it now belongs to Persia is due to us."

On 5 July 1896 The Times[1] wrote that the Government of the Shah, through the agency of Djevat Pasha, its Minister at Brussels, had first engaged for the purpose of executing reforms in the Customs department of Persia. The head of the Mission who would have the rank of Mushire, was M. Naus, the Director of Taxes of Custom for the province of Brabant. M. Theunis, Inspector of Customs at Antwerp, and M. Priem, Controller at the same port, were members.

English interests were naturally concentrated in Southern Persia, and it was practically useless to compete commercially with Russia in the north owing to the frontiers of Russia and Persia being continuous and to the facilities of inter-communication, which British trade could only penetrate from the South over impossible roads and difficult mountain-passes. Hardinge's instructions on leaving for Persia were to do all he could to push forward the construction of the Baktiari road from Ahwaz to Isphahan in which the firm of Messrs. Lynch was deeply interested owing to their having navigation rights on the Karun River and to the advantages that such a route would present not merely for their trade but for the general trades of Persia. It was not easy to negotiate an agreement between Messrs. Lynch and the Bakhtiari Chiefs owing to the suspicious character of the latter and their dislike of any foreign interference. After a long negotiation an agreement was signed on 23 April 1897. Hardinge signed

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1. The Times, 5 July 1896.

it on behalf of Messrs. Lynch and Mushir-ud-Dawleh on behalf of the Persian Government while Sardar Assad and Isphander Khan presented the Baktiari Chiefs.

Charles Hardinge ascertained that the Persian Government were negotiating a loan for 40,000,000 Fr. with a Soloman Oppenheim, of Paris and Cologne, the revenue of the Custom of the Southern ports being offered as guarantee.[1] These revenues had already been assigned as guarantee for the Régie Loan, but he was given to understand that one of the principal objects of the loan was to pay off the Régie debt. He was assured that no foreign control of the Customs of the Persian Gulf was included in the scheme, but it was obvious that this would be the natural sequence in the event of the Persian Government at some date failing to pay the interest when it was due. It would mean an increase of French and German influence in the Persian Gulf at the expense of the British.

Salisbury asked his Minister at Teheran to represent to the Shah and his Ministers that it would be a grave error of policy to pledge to "foreign" financiers Customs revenue of the Persian Gulf ports.[2]

On 23 October 1897 Hardinge received a satisfactory assurance in writing from the Persian Government that the control of the Customs had not been given as a guarantee

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1. Charles Hardinge to Salisbury No.65. Telegraphic. 13 October 1897. (F.O.60/601).

2. Salisbury to Charles Hardinge. No.29. Telegraphic. 15 October 1897. (F.O.60/601).

of interest for loan, and that the Persian Gulf Customs would never be placed under "foreign" supervision or control.[1] On the same day it was known that the negotiations for a loan had failed owing chiefly to the action taken by the French Government to prevention of its issue in Paris. Hardinge, consequently impressed upon the Prime Minister of Persia the urgent need for money was only temporary and that a loan of any magnitude would be prejudicial to Persian interests, and that money for the immediate requirements of Government could be obtained from the Bank of Persia by lodging gold from the treasury with the Bank as security for a small loan.

Efforts were also being made to get a loan floated in Amsterdam, Brussels and Vienna.[2] It was also known that the Persian Government were making a proposal to the Bank of Persia on London, through their Minister, for a small private loan of £400,000.[3] The condition they asked was payment at par, interest at 5 per cent., repayment of capital in fifteen years. The guarantee they offered was that this loan should be a second charge on the Custom of the Persian Gulf, to which was added Muhammerah and Kermanshah.[4]

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1. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.68. Telegraphic. 23 October 1897. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).
2. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.69. Telegraphic. 3 November 1897. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).
3. Salisbury to Hardinge, No.32. Confidential. Telegraphic. 8 December 1897. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).
4. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.85. Telegraphic. Secret. 7 December 1897. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).

The loan was to be employed in paying off following debts:- Bank of Paris 150,000, The Russian Bank 50,000, The Indo-European Telegraphic Company 30,000. The remainder to meet current expenses during the next three months before the reorganization of the finances could take place.

There was in Hardinge's opinion an absolute necessity for the Persian Government to obtain this loan through the Bank.[1]

The Belgian Minister at Teheran told Hardinge on 26 February 1898 that the Persian Government had made a proposal to him to raise a loan in Belgium of 32,000,000 Fr. or 40,000,000 Fr. with the control of the Persian Gulf Customs as guarantee of interest. Hardinge told him that the Bank was in the course of negotiating in a similar loan, of which fact the Belgian Minister was unaware, and he explained to him the views of the Persian Government as to any foreign control of the Customs of Persian Gulf ports and he showed him the guarantee he had received from the Persian Government in this regard.[2] The Sadr-i-Azim sent for Hardinge on the night of 2 March and impressed on him the critical nature of the financial situation of Persia and the absolute necessity of finding money within the next few days.

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1. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.85. Telegraphic. Secret. 7 December 1897. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).
2. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.31. Telegraphic. 26 February 1898. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).

Proposals had been received from the Russian Legation, and from a new syndicate, headed by the "Banque de France". The latter offered more advantageous terms than the former Paris Syndicate.

Owing to the attitude of London Stock Exchange, and the necessity of buying off the lottery Syndicate, which he absolutely declined to do, the Sadr-i-Azim did not consider that there was the slightest prospect of a successful then in progress in London. He therefore, in the interests of the Bank, and with the desire of further British interests in Persia, made the following proposals: That the Bank should raise a private loan of 250,000 of which 100,000 shall be paid at once and the remainder a month later. The guarantee should be the "immediate" control of the Customs of Muhammerah and Kermanshah and if this should be insufficient that the loan should be on second charge on the Customs of the Persian Gulf ports.[1]

Lord Salisbury made it clear that it was absolutely necessary that the Bank should be able to state that the Customs of the ports to be assigned as security had been placed under the control of a European employé nominated by them.[2]

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1. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.35. Telegraphic. 2 March 1898. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).
2. Salisbury to Hardinge, No.21. Telegraphic. 2 March 1898. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).

The Sadr-i-Azim impressed upon Hardinge the following points:-[1]

"1. It is understood that the nomination of the Controller by the Bank will imply their ability and readiness to make the loan, and an immediate advance to the Persian Government.

2. This small loan shall not be public, but should take the form of an advance and that the rate of interest shall be 6 per cent, the same as the Régie loan, the guarantee of control in this case being better than the former.

3. The Bank to become the State Bank.

4. No further mention to be made of loan for a larger amount."

In view of the very unusual concession made by the Persian Government for which they had nothing in return, Mr. Charles Hardinge sincerely hoped that the Directors might be able to meet the wishes of the Persian Government, and to profit by the very exceptional advantages offered to them.

On 5 July 1898 the Imperial Bank of Persia telegraphed a draft contract of the loan to the British Embassy in Teheran. The contract stated that "His Imperial Majesty the Shah and the Imperial Government of Persia of the one part and the Imperial Bank of Persia (hereinafter called the "Bank") of the other part were desirous of raising and issuing in London a public loan of the amount of £1,250,000 sterling". The contract stated that the loan

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1. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.37. Telegraphic. 7 March 1898. F.O.60/601. (P.R.O.).

should be raised by the issue of 12,000 bonds of £100 each and that such bonds to carry interest at the rate of 5 per cent. The Persian Government had the right to redeem the loan at any time after the year 1910 on giving six months notice. The most important article in the contract was Article IV which declared that "The Shah and his Government in addition to the General Revenue of the Country specially assigned to the service of the loan, and as a credit charge thereon all the customs due of every description with the Government now or at any time hereafter may be entitled to collect and receive all or any ports or places in the Persian Gulf and the town of Kermashah, Shiraz, and Muhammerah."[1]

Economic progress received the moral support of the British Government in the Charter granted to the Imperial Bank of Persia, but from various courses from which the Bank was not responsible, principally the financial its continuance without material assistance given to the Persian Government was now jeopardised. On the other hand when a small Russian Bank found itself unable to compete with the Imperial Bank, not only brought up the understanding but continued to carry it on at a loss. This might appear an imprudent course, but there now existed an organization ready to take their place should their discouraged holders

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1. The Imperial Bank of Persia to Hardinge, Telegraphic. 5 July 1898. F.O.60/601.

determine to abandon the business. The Imperial Bank did not feel easy towards British diplomacy. Mr. Rabino, the Director, told Picot that England had great influence in Persia and the Bank had very considerable powers throughout Persia but this would be immensely increased by giving their help prudently but unhesitatingly in that critical moment and should be greatly impaired if not annihilated by their refusal.[1]

Discontent was rife throughout the country, provisions were dear, but worse than all the troops were not paid, and all civil servants as well as smaller traders dependent upon them were in distress.

The Russian newspaper "Caspi"[2] in French, published on 17 July 1898 a long article attacking the Imperial Bank. The aricle argued that the desire to take possession of the Persian Custom Houses in the Persian Gulf had long been the main purpose of the English Banks dreams. It went on to say:

> "The abolition of the transit trade through the Caucasus The Persian Gulf has become the most important thoroughfare between Europe and Persia and jointly Afghanistan. While having the Custom Houses in the Persian Gulf in their possession, the English would be able to concentrade the whole of the trade in their own hand, by creating obstacles against foreign importers and of the Persian Government as well.

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1. Mr. Rabino to Col. Picot. Private and Confidential. 14 May 1898. F.O.248/684. (P.R.O.).

2. "Caspi". 15 July 1898. Enclosed in F.O.248/685. (P.R.O.).

III.

Shaikh Khazal, the head of the Muhaisen tribe of the "Chaab" (Kab) Arabs succeeded his brother Shaikh Mizal to the Chieftainship in 1897. The Shaikh was acknowledged head of the Arab tribes living on both banks of the Karun river from near Shuster to its junction with the Shatt-el-Arab near Muhammerah, and on the left bank of the Shatt-el-Arab from Muhammerah to its mouth, and between the Tigris and the Shatt-el-Arab in the west, and to the Jerrish river on the East. The customs of Muhammerah had been formed by the family for sixty years, latterly for the yearly sum of £8,000, and the Shaikh had been credited deriving an income of equal amount from them, while the total revenue was estimated at £40,000 a year as a minimum. He was also the possessor of a large private fortune derived partly by inheritance from his father and brother and partly accumulated by trading. He was the owner of an armed paddle steamer, protected against the rifle fire down the water-line and many sailing vessels, and was said to be able to collect 30,000 all of whom were well armed with Martini and other relatively modern rifles, which in spite of all the regulations of the Persian Government to the contrary, could be freely purchased in South West Persia. The position of the Shaikh of Muhammerah as regards the Persian Government had always been that of a great feudal Prince, who in smaller matters had thought it better to humour the Central Government, while remaining at the same time extremely jealous in matters touching his quasi-independence.

His relations with the British officials in the Persian Gulf had been on the whole of a cordial nature, and it could not be doubted that, as regards the Karun trade, he had been friendly to British interests, in striking contrast to the attitude of the Persian Government Officials in South-West Persia, though he was not forcing his own people to use his own steamer on the Karun, and to pay him higher freights than were charged by Messrs. Lynch Brothers.

During 1898-1899 the Shaikh had gradually been growing more nervous about his position in the event of the break up of the Persian Empire, which was a most frequent subject of discussion among the inhabitants of the South West, and which was fully believed to be imminent, and had been anxious to obtain guarantees regarding the independence of his territories in certain eventualities.[1]

In November 1899, when Sir Mortimer Durand visited the Karun valley, Shaikh Khazal sent through Col. Meade, the Resident at Bushire, a request for assurances, and expressed his regret that fear of incurring the suspicions of the Persian Government prevented him from meeting the Minister at Ahwaz. Col. Meade was instructed to inform the Shaikh to the effect that:

> "We cannot, of course, undertake the maintain the Shaikh against the Persian Government, nor can we say that if the Persian Government breaks up we shall guarantee his independence. But we can tell him that we consider him the most influential person in this part of the world, and that we

1. Consul General of Baghdad to Sir Philip Currie, 6 June 1898. F.O.195/2,020. (P.R.O.).

intended as far as possible, to support him, believing that it is in the interests of Persia that he should be strong. In return he will help us in matters of trade."[1]

In the course of his conversation with the Resident Shaikh Khazal alluded to the impending break of the Persian Empire, and denied that he had any desire to sever his connection with that power so long as it continued to last. But his anxiety to obtain some kind of guarantee had been increased by rumours that the Central Government intended to interfere in the state of affairs in the Customs as a pretext of putting an end to his power, as that of the last great feudal Chiefs of Persia, and he could be trusted as had the Bakhtiaris and the Vali of Pushti-i-Kuh. It was this question of the Shaikh's ability to resist the authority of the Central Government to include Muhammerah of the newly organised customs system.

It was more than likely that the Persian Government would make use of their favoured method of intrigue, and endeavour to create division in the tribe by setting up the nephew of Shaikh Khazal (Shaikh Aboud), who lived at Ahwaz, and was not on the most cordial terms with his uncle, as candidate for Chieftainship. Shaikh Aboud was, however, a man with little influence among the tribesmen, and it was improbable that he would be accepted by them so long as Shaikh Khazal was alive.

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1. Durand to Salisbury. No.2. Confidential. 6 January 1898. F.O.248/672. (P.R.O.).

A point that must be considered in the operation of interfering with the Shaikh's quasi-independence and of his possible resistance, was the probability that hostilities on the Karun would meet difficulties with Turkey. Many of the adherents of the Shaikh lived in Turkish territories, and the old question of the Perso-Turkish frontiers might very well again rise. "The possession of Muhammerah had been a source of much soreness between the Ottoman and the Persian Empire, and hostilities with the Chaab Arabs might well lead to difficulties with all the Arab tribes living along the frontier of the two countries."[1]

In a memorandum on the Persian Southern Provinces dated 11 November 1898 Col. Sykes told Sir Mortimer Durand that Persia was mainly important to Britain owing to her trade in the Persian Gulf and the Indo-European telegraph line. If Southern Persia was in British hands it would form a grand outlet for the superfluous population of India. More than this Col. Sykes thought that possession of the Southern provinces of Persia signified enhancement of their great keystone of the Empire.[2]

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1. From Col. Meade to the British Embassy in Teheran, No.65. Telegraphic. 14 March 1900, F.O.248/715. (P.R.O.).
2. Confidential Memorandum on the Southern Provinces of Persia, by Col. P. Sykes to Sir Mortimer Durand. 11 November 1898. F.O.248/685. (P.R.O.).

VI. THE RUSSIAN ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM IN PERSIA AND THE STATUS OF MUHAMMERAH 1899-1902

During 1899 there were growing indications of the apprehension felt in British mercantile circles at the intrusion of various other European Powers into Persia and the Persian Gulf. There seemed to be much reason for thinking that the apprehensions were well founded, and that certain powers were endeavouring to obtain a foothold in these regions, where British trade had hitherto been paramount. Amongst others, Col. Meade mentioned the following facts which were significant:- 1. A recent trip up the Karun River made by the French Vice-Consul at Bushire, was undoubtedly undertaken with the object of promoting French trade in the province of Arabistan, and on the Karun, where the British firm of Messrs. Lynch Brothers were opening out an important trade route. 2. There were reasons for thinking that Russia had designs on Koweit, which were attempted through the Ottoman Government. 3. Russia had long been suspected of wanting a coaling station at Bunder Abbas. 4. The French had endeavoured to obtain a coaling station on the Muscat coast.

Russia's economic influence over Persia was in 1900

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1. Col. Meade to Government of India. Inclosure 1 in No.1. 19 March 1899. F.O.60/612. (P.R.O.).

at its maximum. It looked as if the results of 1900-1902's diplomacy would dominate British relations with that region for many years to come.

I.

The loan made to the Persian Government by the Russian Bank at Teheran in January 1900[1] was for 27,500,000 roubles (about £2,343,000). The Persian Government was to pay off all the previous loans out of the produce loan, and was not without the assent of the Russian Bank, to conclude a "nouvel emprunt extérieur quelconque" until the loan had been paid off. The payment of interest and sinking fund was guaranteed for seventy five years from 1900 by the custom receipts of Persia, with the exception of the receipts of the Custom Houses of Fars and the Persian Gulf ports. The greater portion of the fund obtained by the Persian Government had undoubtedly been expended without much result. Large sums were necessarily disposed of in connection with the Shah's visit to Europe, and for some time past there had been indications that the Shah would be compelled shortly to look for further assistance.

The public impression seemed to be by the terms of this loan that Russia obliged Persia to free herself from all her financial obligations to Great Britain and by debarring her

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1. Journal de St. Petersburg. 19 January 1900. Enclosed in F.O.60/630. (P.R.O.).

from contracting any foreign obligations during the currency of the new loan without Russia's consent - forced her to look solely to Russia for assistance - and support in the future. It was considered further in military circles that the demonstration by Russian military strength on the South frontier of her possessions in Central Asia, and her readiness at any moment to act in case of any sudden emergency in Persia or Afghanistan, could not fail to create an impression on Persia which was thus at the military as well as the financial mercy of Russia, and that having thus barred the door and matter safe in Persia, Russia could abstain from any further action for that moment and quietly awaited the natural development of events.[1]

These advantages were held to be sufficient compensation for any risk which Russia might have undertaken in the matter of the loan and its guarantee. It looked that in view of Britain's entanglement in South Africa, the Persian Government thought that it could leave out of account any consideration of a possible conflict of her interests with those of Great Britain in Persia.

Early in January 1900 Sir Mortimer Durand[2] went on a tour

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1. Sir Charles Scott to Salisbury. No.39. Confidential. 9 January 1900. F.O.60/630. (P.R.O.).

2. Report on a Tour in Western Persia by Sir Mortimer Durand. No.7288. Confidential. 18 January 1900. F.O.60/616. (P.R.O.).

to Southern Persia. During his stay at Isphahan, the Zil-us-Sultan sent him a private note written in French by one of his sons, asking Durand to send him someone whom he could thoroughly trust and who knew Persian, as he wanted to make an important communication. Sir Mortimer deputed Mr. Rennie. The Prince told Mr. Rennie that, to his certain knowledge, there existed a written and secret Agreement between the Persian and the Russian Governments, under which BunderAbbas was to be occupied by the latter within ten years. His Highness also informed Mr. Rennie that the Persian Government was entirely in Russian hands.

The impression which remained on Durand's mind after three days in Isphahan, and three interviews with the Prince, was that Zil-us-Sultan was really well disposed towards England. He had given up all hope of succeeding, by her support to the Persian throne, but he believed that the partition of his country would not long be delayed; he thought his interests lay with the British. He hoped to be established by Britain as independent Governor of the South. On the other hand, his loss of money was growing on him, and his energy seemed to be decreasing, so that he did not protect Britain's interest in the south as thoroughly as he might do.

On 6 March a telegram[1] was received in Teheran from Col. Meade, reporting that the Shaikh of Muhammerah had heard

1. Col. Meade to Durand. Telegraphic. 6 March 1900. C.O.60/617. (P.R.O.).

that the Belgian Administrator of Customs was about to take over the Muhammerah Custom-House, and that if he consented to this step he would be in danger of his tribesmen. Colonel Meade was of opinion that the Shaikh could, if he wished, offer an effective resistance to the Persian Government, and that the alternative would be his departure to his Turkish estates. In either case troubles would result which would be detrimental to British interests. Col. Meade also drew attention to the possibility of Russian interference and the presence of a Russian warship in the Gulf. The latter telegram arrived just as Sir Mortimer Durand was leaving Teheran, but he directed Meade to reply to the effect that they could neither advise the Shaikh to rebel, nor could they advise the Persian Government to give up the idea of taking over the Muhammerah customs, which was a necessary part of the Customs Organization scheme on which the financial stability of Persia depended. Cecil Spring-Rice, the Chargé d'Affaires[1] was careful to explain to the Persian Government that there was no intention of interfering with the internal affairs of Persia, but that the Shaikh had been of great service to the British merchants in keeping order on the river Karun, and that any disturbances in his district would close the country to English trade.

Naus, the Belgian Customs Administrator frankly told

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1. Cecil Spring-Rice to Salisbury, No.15. Confidential. 20 March 1900. F.O.60/617. (P.R.O.).

the Chargé d'Affaires that the Shah desired to put an end to the semi-independence of the Arab tribes in the south, and the Persian Government preferred "taking one bite at the Shaikh to two". If the Shaikh consented to the arrangements proposed, the Persian Government would lose an excellent pretext for interference. If he resisted, the Shah's journey would have to be postponed. He would use force to carry his schemes.[1]

There would be no doubt that it was in the interest of the general Customs administration that Muhammerah should not be expected from the direct control which was to be extended over the entire Empire, and it would seem in consonance with the general policy of the British Government to assist the Persian Government to carry any measure of reform, especially in one on which their independence from the Russian control immediately depended. On the other hand the Shaikh had deserved well of the British Government. His relations with the British officials in the Persian Gulf had been on the whole of a cordial nature, and it could not be doubted that, as regards the Karun trade, he had been friendly to British interests, in striking contrast to the attitude of the Persian Government officials in South-West Persia, though he was not above forcing his own people to use his steamers on the Karun and to pay him higher freights

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1. Pro-Memoria on Muhammerah submitted to the Mushir-ud-Dawleh. Inclosure 1 in No.2. Spring-Rice to Salisbury. No.17. Confidential. 27 March 1900. F.O.60/617. (P.R.O.).

than were charged by Messrs. Lynch and Brothers.[1]

"It was plainly in the interests of the Persian Government," thought Spring-Rice, "that the extent of territory guaranteed to Russia's loan should be as restricted as possible, and Muhammerah, being accessible to sea-going vessels, must be considered as a Gulf port."[2]

The situation was a difficult one. On the one side it was essential for the Persian Government from the point of view of their finances, as well as of administrative convenience, that the control of the Customs at Muhammerah and elsewhere on the Karun River should be in the hands of that Government. On the other side the position taken up by the Shaikh was that it was impossible for him to consent or to assist in the establishment of the Persian Customs within the limits of his jurisdiction. No compromise, he maintained, was possible as his tribe would be certain to resist any encroachment on their cherished rights. Britain could not but admit that the desire of the Persian Government to establish their Customs in the place was reasonable and their right to do so was unquestionable, but on account of her trade interests and of the possibility of serious trouble and dislocation of trade being occasioned by the introduction of

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1. Memorandum by Ernest Rennie respecting Shaikh Khazal of Muhammerah. Inclosure in No.1. 1 March 1900. F.O.60/617. (P.R.O.).

2. Cecil Spring-Rice to Salisbury, No.27. Confidential. 5 April 1900. F.O.60/617. (P.R.O.).

the new régime, she thought she was undoubtedly within her rights in claiming an interest in the matter.

The policy of the Persian Prime Minister had been to keep the British Legation in a good humour by expressions of friendship and to do nothing except what Russia told him. This was not his fault but the necessity of his position. But it wounded his pride to think that he was regarded as a mere puppet in Russia's hand who let him see that fact in apparent was certain to win his enmity. Hardinge's cordial manner was just what was needed and it was thought that he would for some time be a great success. But this was certain to change as soon as the Foreign Office in London asked for deeds and not words.

Spring-Rice, as well as Hardinge, put the blame on Sir Mortimer Durand for the then existing political relations between Britain and Persia. The former wrote to Lord Lansdowne:[1]

> "The longer I am here the more convinced I am that Durand was the man the least to blame for the attitude of the Persian Government towards him and us. He began by exceptional ability and gradually forced by a repeated instance of intrigue to drop his attitude of friendship. He had a dry manner which they hated."

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1. Spring-Rice to Lord Lansdowne. Confidential and Private. 10 December 1900. Lord Lansdowne's Papers. Persia. Vol.1. 277. (Foreign Office Library).

II.

The turn of the century showed an increasing interest in the affairs of Persia and the Persian Gulf in both London and Simla. In the Foreign Office there was a growing sense of responsibility towards the area which was up to the last decade of the nineteenth century the main interest of the Indian Government. Between 1888-1898 there was a considerable co-ordination of policy between the Indian Government and the Foreign Office towards the area. The coming of Curzon to the Viceroyalty of India left the Foreign Office's idea of "upper hand" in managing the affairs of the area impossible. Curzon wanted India to control not only the affairs of the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan but also the affairs of Persia - the Gate to India. During his visit to Nepal, April 1901, Curzon wrote an interesting private letter to Lord Lansdowne in which he outlined his Middle Eastern policy in view of what he called "the official course of events".[1] Its discouraging effects were enhanced by the private intimation which reached him that His Majesty's Government did not want to be troubled about Persia, while they were engaged in warfare or complications elsewhere (with Russia in the Far East and with France in Africa), and that he was regarded as prendre da tête in connection with a country which no one else

1. Lord Curzon to Lord Lansdowne. Private and Confidential. Nepal. 5 April 1901. Persia. Vol.29. 277. Lord Lansdowne's Papers (Foreign Office Library).

appreciated at his exaggerated valuation.

Curzon did not wish this letter to be seen by another, since it would probably merely confirm their ideas as to his political views. He went on to say:

> "You are the ex-viceroy of India. You know what Persia means to India and to the Indian trade, and you must have realized over and over again how great the strain upon us would be, if the whole or the greater part of Persia were to pass under the control of a foreign power, and if ports or points of vantage were leased to them in the Persian Gulf. There is no dissentient voice in their representation that within the last quarter of a Century British prestige and influence have never sunk so low. The Shah is against us, because owing to the narrow pedantries of the British treasury, we refused him the loan which he was anxious to take from us three years ago, but for which we drove him into Russia's arms (at the expense of conditions that were almost tantamount to an abdication of sovereignty). The Grand Vizier is against us because we deserted him while in exile, and left the Russians to bring him back; while our friends and allies in the country, such as the Nasr-ul-Mulk are being banished to distant governorship.
>
> The Russian Bank at Teheran is rapidly cutting out the Imperial Bank. The Persian Cossacks under Russian officers have been greatly resisted in numbers are to be increased to 4000. Their advance guard is already at Isphahan. We shall personally send detachments at Shiraz, Muhammerah and Bushire.[1]
>
> We have told the Persian Government that we will now allow the control of the customs in the South to pass under foreign supervision or control, and yet an arrangement is in contemplation at Muhammerah which will be almost damaging to our interest.
>
> Make up your minds as to how far we are going to allow Russian encroachment to advance to the South (the Persian Gulf) without resisting it.
>
> There is no use of drawing a mythical line in the middle of Persia as the boundary between the two spheres of influence, if Russia is then to be prevented

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1. Shiraz was the capital of the South-Western Province of Persia. Muhammerah was the port of the Karun river and Bushire was the main port on the Persian Gulf.

to ignore it by creating a new sphere for herself inside our sphere on the south of the line.
Do they mean to let the Shaikh of Muhammerah be dispossessed by the Persian Government? Do you intend to acquiesce in a Russian coaling station at Bunder Abbas?"

Curzon saw the necessity for a quarrel with Russia but he most emphatically urged that there should quietly and deliberately be formed (1) a policy for the use of His Majesty's Government at home; (2) for the guidance of the Government of India at Simla: (3) for the clear understanding of the Persian Government. The latter had no more idea as to what Britain's ultimate views and intentions were than she had herself. Curzon thought that British policy in the Persian Gulf was drifting slowly towards another Port Arthur and a second Manchurian Convention.

The policy of partition was doubtful. The time would not be easy to draw a line between the two spheres of influence in Persia, and while it would keep the British out of Northern Persia, it would not prevent Russian and other intrigues in Southern Persia.

About the Persian Gulf there was a great deal to be said. Lord Lansdowne wrote a letter to Lord Curzon on 5 May 1901 in which he explained his Persian Gulf policy by the following words:-

"We cannot expect to enjoy for ever the predominance which we held for so long in these waters, and I don't see how we can announce that no Russian or other

foreign steamers will be permitted to enter those waters for commercial purposes. On the other hand I would not allow Russia to acquire a footing for naval or military purpose in the Gulf. Nor would I allow Persia to play tricks at Muhammerah, which she is apparently now trying to do." 1

Hardinge was under the impression that the Persian Agreement with Russia was so rigid that it would be difficult for the Persian Government to emancipate themselves from it upon the grounds that the Russian terms were exorbitant.[2]

Salisbury appealed to the Government to grant half a million pounds to the Persian Government.[3] Lord Curzon was not willing to provide £500,000, and he could do so without inconvenience, but he thought that the then opportunity one of the greatest political importance which should not be lost. On the other hand he could not lend India's money without adequate return to Indian interests, and he made his offer subject to the following conditions:- (1) Loan to be secured upon Customs of the Persian Gulf ports, and upon revenues and Customs of Seistan. (2) Contemplate changes in the Persian tariff to be submitted to, and to receive assent, of Government of India. (3) Loan to be accompanied by plain statement from the Persian Government that, in view of British interests then created, in

1. Lord Lansdowne to Lord Curzon. Private and Confidential. 5 May 1901. Persia. Vol.29. 277. Lord Lansdowne's Papers (Foreign Office Library).

2. Hardinge to Lansdowne. Private. 15 August 1901. Vol.21. 277. Persia. Lord Lansdowne's Papers (Foreign Office Library).

3. Salisbury to Curzon. Telegraphic. 2 October 1901. F.O.60/645. (P.R.O.).

addition to those already existing in Southern Persia and Seistan, the British authorities could not admit of creation of any rival interests in those regions.[1]

III.

Early in January 1902 the Persian Government, in view of its commercial and financial interests, had deemed it necessary to change its tariff on account of the priority of the Turcomachai treaty. The negotiations in connection with this matter were to be carried out first with Russia. Hardinge stated that the Persian Government must in Southern Persia, and especially in the Persian Gulf, give to that of Great Britain advantages which had been given to other powers.[2] He also called on the Persian Government not to lease the Ports of Seistan to Russia.

As regards the first point the Atabeg-i-Azim pointed out that should such advantages be in conformity with the independence of the Persian Monarchy they would not be given to the British Government in the same way that they had not been given to any one in any part of Persia. As regards the second point His Excellency declared that the Imperial Government was

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1. Curzon to Salisbury. Telegraphic. 3 October 1901. F.O.60/645. (P.R.O.).

2. Hardinge to Lansdowne. No.9. Confidential. 13 January 1902. F.O.60/650. (P.R.O.).

much astonished at the request, since the Persians had never had and had not any such intention, and were of opinion that any formal documentary guarantee to this effect was unnecessary and inconsistent with the dignity of an independent State.[1]

Sir Arthur Hardinge complained early in 1902 that the position of the Persian affairs was in the highest degree unsatisfactory and even dangerous to British interests; that the decomposition of Persia was proceeding with great rapidity, and unless the country including the northern shores of the Persian Gulf and the south-western land frontier of the Indian Empire was to become in all but name a Russian dependency, Britain must be prepared to risk money in the form of advances or inadequate security, but perhaps also expend it on a fairly large scale for exclusively political, as distinct from financial, returns.[2]

There was a growing Anglo-Russian controversy over the Persian oil. The British Ambassador at St. Petersburg was instructed by the Marquis of Lansdowne to mention to Count Lamsdroff that reports had reached the Foreign Office that the Russian Banque des Prêts was demanding, as one of the conditions for a further advance of money to the Persian

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1. Atabeg-i-Azim to Sir Arthur Hardinge. Inclosure in No.9. Confidential. 5 December 1901. F.O.60/650. (P.R.O.).

2. Sir Arthur Hardinge to the Marquis of Lansdowne, No.2. 29 January 1902. F.O.60/660. (P.R.O.).

Government, a concession for the construction of a pipe-line for carrying mineral oil from Baku to the Persian Gulf,[1] and that it was considered right, in order to avoid any possible complication, that Sir Charles C. Scott should point out to His Excellency that a concession was already granted in May 1901 to a British subject, Mr. W.K. D'Arcy, by the Persian Government for the construction of such a pipe line from certain provinces to the south coast and that by Article VI[2] of this contract the Persian Government bound itself not to concede to any other person the right of constructing a pipe line to the river in the south or to the Persian Gulf ports.

M. de Witte was pressing upon Persia Russia's right to lay a petroleum pipe from Baku to the Persian Gulf. Lord George Hamilton remarked on this move by saying:

> "If he succeeds in his object, there must spring up round the outlet of this pipe in the Persian Gulf Russian commercial interests, which will develop and expand, and in which in return for the cheap petroleum which they bring will get a considerable amount of Indian produce and Indian commerce. And

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1. Secret Memorandum on the Anglo-Russian Relations by Sir Charles Scott, St. Petersburg. 15 February 1902. F.O.60/660. (P.R.O.).

2. The text of this article in the original French is as follows: "Nonolestant ce qui est contenu ci clesaus, le privilèges accordé par les presente ne s'etendre pas aux provinces d'Azerbaijan, Ghilon, Mozaderan, Astrabad et Khorassan, mais à la condition explicite que le Gouvernement Impérial Person n'accordera à aucune autre personne le droit de construire un "pipe-lin" aux fleuves du sud ou à la côte mèridiconalle de la Perse."

> thus there will gradually grow up in the Persian Gulf a recognised Russian influence, but so commercial in its character that it would be exceedingly difficult for us to take any effective steps to prevent its development." 1

On the other hand, the Grand Vizier had urged Mr. Grescom, the United States Minister to impress upon his Government the idea of opening American trade in Persia, and had stated that if an American line of steamers to the Persian Gulf could be started it would secure every encouragement and support at the hands of the Persian Government. His Highness alluded in this connection to the important part recently played by the United States in maintaining the independence and integrity of China, and indicated a hope that if the creation and development of American commercial interests in Persia similarly led the American Government to watch with greater attention the political future of Persia.[2]

M. de Witte absolutely refused to afford Persia any financial assistance unless the pipe-line he asked for to the Persian Gulf were conceded.[3] The Russian Government pointed out that when Persia was in financial difficulties two years ago,

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1. Hamilton to Curzon, 6 February 1902. Private Correspondence. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. EUR. MSS. c.126/3. (India Office).
2. Sir Arthur Hardinge to the Marquis of Lansdowne, No.24. 15 February 1902. F.O.60/660. (P.R.O.
3. Sir Arthur Hardinge to the Marquis of Lansdowne. Telegraphic. 16 February 1902. F.O.60/660. (P.R.O.).

and England and France had both refused to help her, Russia had generously come to her rescue. Since then the Persian Government had given the British Government a central telegraphic line across Baluchistan, and had granted to an English capitalist the monopoly of the petroleum and other mineral soils to be found in the whole of central and southern Persia.

Count Lamsdroff was powerless to alter M. de Witte's decision. He had already asked M. Witte verbally what were his reasons for refusing consent to Persia's acceptance of a British offer and his reply had been that his refusal was solely based on provision inserted in the loan contract of 1900, and to prevent Persia increasing her general indebtedness.[1]

For the Foreign Office the month of March 1902 was the most gloomy and unhappy one as regards the Persian Gulf question. The Belgian Customs House Officers had been apparent throughout the Persian Gulf ports and even down the frontier of Baluchistan at points where there were no customs to collect. Russian emissaries were working to prevent the development of British trade via the Karun river and Bakhtiari country. Russia was negotiating a new commercial treaty to replace the treaty of

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1. Sir Charles S. Scott to Marquis of Lansdowne. No.59. 20 February 1902. F.O.60/660. (P.R.O.). Lamsdroff had conferred already with Sir Charles who handed him a written pro-memoria in which he said that use should be made of the engagement attached to the loan of 1900 to prevent the acceptance of Russia of an advance of no great magnitude on very favourable terms, and secured on revenue not in any way pledged to a Russian Bank." See text of pro-memoria. St. Petersburg. 26 February 1902. F.O.60/660. (P.R.O.).

Turkomanchi, which provided for a 5 per cent duty on all imports, and, seeking to have less than 5 per cent charged on goods she supplied to Persia, whilst suggesting that more than 5 per cent could be levied on other imports chiefly sent by Britain, for example, Russia proposed that the duty on tea be raised from 5 per cent to 8 per cent. It appeared certain that Persia would require additional money from Russia very soon, and that amongst other conditions imposed might be included a concession for a railway down through Seistan and by some route to Bunder Abbas with connecting lines to Kerman, Isphahan, Teheran, Enzeli or Tiflis. The so-called lease of Bunder Abbas would also be insisted on.

When the projects were completed Russia would dominate a large portion of South Afghanistan, including the rich valley of the Helmund and also the western portion of British Baluchistan. By thus extending her claws around Afghanistan, Russia would largely turn the flank of the mountainous frontier of India and be in a position to attack India and the Persian Gulf through South Baluchistan. Given Bunder-Abbas, Russia could attack Britain at any point around the Indian coasts whilst drawing away Britain's land forces to meet possibly three or four expeditionary forces by land.

The Zil-us-Sultan strongly advised Britain's earmarking Bunder Abbas by constructing a road from Bunder Abbas via Kirman, and Yzd to Isphahan at once, to check Russian advance

southward through Kharrasan. The latter danger was elaborately discussed by a Foreign Office Memorandum written early in March 1902 which said without hesitation:

> "The domination by Russia of Southern Persia and especially the possession of a naval base on the Persian Gulf connected directly with Russian Empire by a system of railways would entail an increased expenditure for the defence of India by land and sea of many millions a year." 1

As was known, the Russian Imperial Government in 1900 permitted the discount and Loan Bank of Persia to take up 5 per cent gold loan, issued by the Persian Government in that year, to the amount of 22,500,000 roubles on the security of the whole of the Persian customs revenue, with the exception of the revenue of the customs houses on the Persian Gulf and the ports of Farsistan. At the request of the Government of the Shah the Russian Government had permitted the said Bank to take up a new loan of 10,000,000 roubles under the designation of the 5 per cent Persian gold loan of 1902.[2] The Grand Vizier gave away to his supposed neutrality[3] and his Ministers at St. Petersburg signed the contract with the head of the Russian Bank on 26 March 1902. Russian domination of Persia seemed complete

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1. Memorandum on Persia by Mr. Walton. Foreign Office. 10 March 1902. F.O.60/656. (P.R.O.).

2. Messager Official, 9 April 1902. A statement re-appeared in the Times of the same date.

3. Sir Arthur Hardinge to Salisbury. Telegraphic. 26 March 1902. F.O.60/660. (P.R.O.).

by this disastrous Russian loan which now hung like a millstone round the neck. The last loan would be issued by the Persian Government on the security of the same customs receipts as were assigned to guarantee the payments for the redemption of the loan of 1900 and on the same conditions as those conditions existing for that loan.

The "Rapprochment" between Persia and Russia, which had found expression in the two loans which had "liberated" the Persian West Provinces from British control had been effected by Russian diplomacy by means of gradual but sustained effort. In a land where the struggle between Russia and England did not date from 1902, the ground had been prepared for Russian enterprises in railway construction, commerce and industry. The loan of a hundred million roubles which these realised in Russia was the corner-stone of the formation of the Russian Middle East and East Asiatic Railways. The loan of 1902 to Persia had marked the climax of Russian economic foreign policy under M. de Witte. It was that specific policy which threatened the very foundation of Britain's prestige not only in Persia but also in the Persian Gulf.

The cordial relations between Russia and Persia since the Shah's visit to St. Petersburg left no room for doubt that the construction of railways in Persia would gain for Russia a free outlet on the Persian Gulf. It was evident to everyone who had observed the developments of events in South Persia since 1890 that a main line from the Caspian to Teheran and further to

Bunder Abbas acted as a stimulus to Russian commerce in Asia. Moreover, the development of Railway construction in Persia could have a most beneficial influence on Russia's industrial revolution which had just passed through a period of temporary stagnation. It was necessary that Russian railways in Persia should be opened to traffic before the Baghdad Railway reached its first stage.

In Western Persia it was thought in 1902 that English influence would give place to Russia, in proportion as Russian capital, knowledge and activity extended there. In this respect the political state of affairs had turned very favourably to Russian Imperialism. Here, as in Afghanistan, British prestige had been undermined in consequence of the South African War. Russia's trend of policy had been clearly explained by a prominent Russian journal in April 1902:[1]

> "It is of importance that those who are striving to reach the Persian Gulf by way of Syria and Asia Minor should not gain the object before Russian enterprise pulls itself together.
>
> "We have repeatedly drawn the attention to the fact that in the dtruggle for domination which has been waged in Asia between Russia and England for over a century, West and East Iran are destined to play an important part.
>
> "The new Russian loan is one of the natural expressions of this policy, which summons Russian capital to new and creative effort in Persia, which expects from us the realization of its economic revival.
>
> "In close community of interests we will gain a firm position on the Indian Ocean, and consequently dominate the whole Near East, where Russian interests have been concentrated.

1. Bourse Gazette, 8 April 1902. Article on Russia's loan of 1902 to Persia. Enclosed in F.O. 60/660 (P.R.O.).

IV.

During his visit to London, in the company of the Shah, Sir Arthur Hardinge conferred with Lord Lansdowne on the British attitude towards a possible internal disturbance in Persia.[1] The clergy were very much discontented with the subserviency of the Shah and the Prime Minister to Russia, and especially with the second Russian loan, and talked openly of excommunicating (which meant practically deposing) the Shah on his return unless he changed his policy. If they carried out this threat or either forbade the people to pay land tax or organized disturbances in various centres such as those which brought about the overthrow of the Tobacco Regie in 1892, the Government, short of money, discredited, and with no means of compelling obedience to its authority and saw a worthless, ill-paid and untrustworthy military force, might have to invite the Russians to restore order.

Sir Arthur Hardinge told Lord Lansdowne that if the Russian troops crossed into Persia to suppress a "popular movement", His Majesty's Government would be prepared to intervene passi passu in the south and in Seistan, the points nearest to the British Navy in the Persian Gulf, and would

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1. Conference on Persian Affairs between Sir Arthur Hardinge and Lord Lansdowne, 27 August 1902. Most Secret. Persia. Vol.21. 277. Lord Lansdowne's Papers (Foreign Office Library).

occupy - ostensibly on the same principle as Russia was acting in the North, and on the same professed object, viz., the maintenance of internal order - the various ports of the Persian Gulf, remaining there as in China, till they had, jointly with Russia, whom they should then oblige to discuss the Persian question with them, re-established the authority, solvency, and independence of the Shah Government. or should this prove impossible, till Great Britain had found other means os securing British interests in the Persian coast on the Gulf.

Lansdowne agreed on Hardinge's question in the affirmative. He declared that:-

> "Russia is as deeply committed as we are to respect the independence and integrity of Persia. If she departed from the understanding and virtually appropriates North Persia, a corresponding move in the South (Persian Gulf), to my mind, inevitable. The character and scope of the demonstration which we should make should be considered without loss of time by the Admiralty and War Office."

Sir Arthur went on to enquire whether Great Britain should be prepared to intimate beforehand as soon as such disturbances became iminent: (1) to the Shah, (2) to Russia, (3) to the Persian clergy and opposition, and to what extent His Majesty's Government should encourage the latter, if they asked her assistance or advice to promote either "constitutional" or a "revolutionary" agitation against the further Russofication of Persia. If money, for instance, were requisite, should

Great Britain give it dé couvrir le pot aux roses as the Russians did at the time of the Regie to the religious leaders? Hardinge thought that there was no harm in letting it be known that if the Persian Government provoked such an agitation by its "nationalist policy" Britain should, in the event of Russian intervention to suppress it, herself intervene in the Persian Gulf. Sir Arthur also asked how far His Majesty's Government should subsidise the clergy, on the understanding that their opposition remained within constitutional limits, and thus acquire the means of regulating their movements. He thought that they should fund for the purpose of careful payments to the principle men of the "Church party", both in Persia and at Najaf and Karballa (in Iraq).[1]

It was quite likely that none of these difficulties could arise; that the clergy thought they might talk; would not act, and that they would be bought by Russia, and then the Persian Government would muddle for a few months longer till it became necessary to mortgage the remaining revenue of Persia as security for a third Russian loan, or to hand over the Persian Gulf Custom Houses in lieu of the payment of the annual interest.

Hardinge thought that Great Britain must be prepared for

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1. See also a telegram in this sense from Mr, De Croz to Sir Arthur Hardinge. 20 April 1902. F.O.60/652. (P.R.O.).

the possibility of an attempt by the clergy to make the Shah change his policy, or a Persian Minister at an early date, and for the probability that the clerical leaders would ask him, on his return to Teheran, as to their best course with a view to preventing their country from further absorption or subjugation by Russia as well as for information as to whether they might count either directly or indirectly on the British Government.

Lansdowne while approving the idea of financial support to the opposition warned that Great Britain should avoid committing herself to the individuals so deeply that their fall would imply no "political defect" for herself. As to the form which that help might take, Britain should act not for affection for the opposition, but in order, if possible, to serve Persia, and, failing this, to secure herself within her own "sphere of interest" in the "southern" port of that country.

Arthur J. Balfour who was aware of the previous conference wrote the following letter to Lansdowne explaining the methods of carrying out that policy:[1]

> "The fundamental principle which should govern us in discussing a forward policy is simple; while Russia moves we remain still; as soon as Russia moves in the north we move in the Persian Gulf. But the application of the principle is not so simple. Would be enough, in

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1. Mr. Arthur J. Balfour to the Marquis of Lansdowne. Secret and Private. 6 September 1902. Persia. Vol.21 277. Lord Lansdowne's Papers (Foreign Office Library).

the first instance at least, to content ourselves with occupying the ports of the Persian Gulf? If so the Fleet, so necessarily in great strength, should be sufficient. But if anything in the nature of an inland expedition is contemplated we ought to consider what troops we have available, and whence they are to come - India, England, or, as Kitchener suggests the Sudan? The following points of view should be considered. In the first instance, at all events, there would be no question of war with Russia. Each power would simply profess to be policing portion of a country whose integrity it had governed. If therefore we thought it necessary to carry the policing operations beyond the coast, it perhaps need not be done with any larger force than would be acquired to secure our troops from attack by Persians, It goes without saying that even the smallest appearance of military activity on our part, whether by way of massing ships or otherwise, should follow, not precede, any threatening language or movement on the part of Russia, but it should follow it immediately."

It seemed to Sir Arthur Hardinge[1] that two courses were open to Britain:

"The first was the heavier one of resolving to recapture at great sacrifice and by a very determined stroke her lost influence in Persia - i.e. by procuring, through the support of the Persian Government, and if need be by a guarantee, the advance of a really big sum, to Persia by London capitalists, on the security of the Persian Gulf customs, through the fictitious medium of an internal loan from the Imperial Bank, The second was to try and help Persia as far as they could to raise her a new Russian loan on conditions as little injurious to Great Britain and her as possible".

In an interview with Lord Lansdowne on 6 August 1902. the Persian Prime Minister made it clear that his policy was to

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1. Sir Arthur Hardinge to Lansdowne. Private and Confidential 18 September 1901. Persia Vol.21 273. Lord Lansdowne's Papers (Foreign Office Library).

maintain the balance between Russia and England, as shown by having given Britain the d'Arcy Convention in face of Russian opposition.[1]

His Imperial Majesty the Shah asked Sir Arthur whether he was to understand that His Majesty's Government desired to recognize the independence of Persia, Sir Arthur replied that the recognition of the independence of Persia had always been a cardinal point in British foreign policy, and they adhered as strongly as ever to that policy. But the Anbassador added:

> "Our special concern was, of course, with the southerm part of Persia and with the Persian Gulf, and we should, if occasion arose, put forth the whole of our strength in order to prevent encroachment by other powers in these regions."[2]

Withmregard to the last statement of Ambassador Hardinge the Shah wrote a long letter to his Prime Minister explaining his own ideas on Persia's relations with Britain. He indicated that the Persian Government has never had the intention of giving away any of its sovereign rights to any foreign power. He told Atabeg-i-Azim that Persia should be neutral towards the Anglo-Russian conflict. He explained his dilemma by saying:[3]

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1. Note on discussion with the Prime Minister of Persia. Atabeg-i-Azim. 6 August 1902. Persia. Vol. 1 277. Lord Lansdowne's Papers (Foreign Office Library).

2. Sir Arthur Hardinge to de Graz. Telegraphic. 21 August 1902. F.O. 60/649. (P.R.O.).

3. Translation of a letter from His Majesty the Shah to the Grand Vizier. H.E. Atabeg-i-Azim. 13 October 1902. F.O. 68/650 (P.R.O.).

> "In the same way that the British Government gives us advice so too the Persian Governement on its part especially requests that Government not to consent to any diminution of the sovereign rights of Persia because if the Persian Government were to overlook or acquiesce in a small matter proposed by one party and which might be inconsistant with its own independence, the other party would at once demand the same concession, and the Persian Government would have to take even greater concessions."

His Majesty's letter also indicated that in order to establish financial equilibrium the Persian Government desired to increase its resources and to put different administration of the country, such as customs of the Persian Gulf, etc., on a proper footing, but in doing that he did not wish to give differential treatment to the trade of Foreign Powers. Commenting on Sir Arthur Hardinge's previous assurance the Shah wrote:

> "The British Government according to its own statements and for the maintenance of friendship and integrity of Persia ought to give its assistance in this matter, but not prevent such measures or ask that exception should be made from the general rule. It has never been nor is it the intention of Persian Government to pledge the revenue of the country to any one, without the consent of the Persian Government itself and not at the bidding of any Foreign Power."

The Shah felt uneasy towards the growing British backing to his rival and brother, Zil-Us-Sultan, Governor of the South. He was also afraid of Britains encouragement to the Shaikh od Muhammerah for further independence. While he argued that the Persian Governement was doing its utmost to move friendly and commercial relations with Britain, he also considered

himself justified in changing any of the provincial Governors whether great or small wherever he though necessary to do so and the British officials as well as the officials of other Governments must look forthe maintenance of such "friendly" and "commercial" relations to the Persian Government and not to the"local authorities." He "has never come and will not come to any understanding with any power against Britains interests and has never and does not now desire to alienate any part of his territory to any power to be used against Great Britain."

V.

Haji-Rais-Ut-Tujar, the confidential Agent of the Shaikh of Muhammerah, has his first conference with the Mushir-Ud-Dawleh and M. Naus on 16 April, and had laid before them certain proposals, identical with those agreed on between Shaikh Khazal and the late M. Simais. The Persian Ministers, while rejecting some of these as inadmissable, seemed disposed to accede to others, and he thought that a compromise was not impossible but he asked whether Hardinge's own advice to the Shaikh would be to accept or reject a Belgian Custom official at Muhammerah.[1]

The Arabs suspected that such an official would try, as

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1. Sir Arthur Hardinge to the Marquis of Lansdowne. No.71. Confidential. 17 April 1902. Admiralty 1/7623. (P.R.O.).

had been seen in Bushire, to absorb all the functions of Government, and it was open to question whether it would not be better to make a firm stand from the first against his appointment. They were not in the least afraid of the Persian Army or of any native allies whom the Persians might employ against them, but they were aprehensive that, in the event of Khazal continued contumacy, the Shah's Government might be induced to ask Russia to coerce against his. Sir Arthur thought it very unlikely that the Shah would ask for Russian assistance against the Arabs, or that England, if he did, would acquiesce in the destruction of Shaikh Khazal's power by Russia, whose naval strength in the Persian Gulf was very inferior to the British Navy.

It was much more probable that the Persian Government, if it resolved on the use of force, would endeavour to employ the Bakhtiari and other nomad tribes against the Arabs; and, as much as whatever the issue of such a struggle, which might conceivably have disastrous effects.

What Shaikh Khazal wanted was that the Agreement between himself and the Persian Government should be guaranteed or countersigned by Sir Arthur Hardinge, or, if that were impossible by either Russian or Belgian Legations. Sir Arthur thought that it would be difficult to induce the Shah to agree to a formal guarantee in a matter of that nature by any foreign power, but

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1. Ibid.

that it might be possible to attain, for all practical purposes, the same end by a different procedure. The Persian Government had promised England not to place the southern customs under foreign control and to make no alteration in the status of the Shaikh without consulting Britain. This would give Britain the right to ask to be officially informed of the conditions of the new Agreement between him and them respecting customs, and these conditions might be placed on record in an exchange of notes between them, with an intimation on Britain's part that she should expect to be made acquainted with any proposed change of them.

Muhammerah with as much precision as possible might be called the Arab capital of Arabistan. In that part of the Tigris, which was on the Persian side of the Shatt-el-Arab, had enjoyed in those years disturbed history analogous in a certain degree to that of Koweit. The Arab tribes inhabiting the Delta, of which the Chaab with its many sub-divisions was by far the most important, had reached that state of dependency on Persia which in a few years had been attained by Koweit in its relation with Turkey and had not been for the timely intervention of Great Britain. There was then also the condition of Arabistan, which led to the extension of direct Persian control, that the Arabs were much more numerous and inhabited far larger territory than their bretheren at Koweit, and being split up at different branches, practising the annual feuds of all Arabs, they had fallen to the aggressive but

not otherwise formidable power of Teheran.

For two years since Sinais introduced the Belgian system into Bushire Lingah and Bunder Abbas, Muhammerah had continued to go its own way. The Shaikh collected the Customs and remained practically supreme in his own sphere.

M. Naus, the Belgian Director of Customs had introduced his new system of tariff. Under the old system the actual duties paid on importation were supplemented by a number of imports levied more or less irregularly in transit into the market of the interior, or in the shape of octroi at the place of destination. The duties paid on importations were often considerably lower than the 5 per cent duty sanctioned by the treaty of Turkomanchai with Russia and extended under the most favoured nation clause of other treaties to the rest of the foreign powers, with the single exception of Turkey. The new tariff, proposed by M. Naus, did away with these clauses by abolishing straightaway all the old transit dues and octroison internal as well as foreign trade, subject to a small transportation tax of 22 Shahis, or less than 5d per loan on foreign goods for or from the interior, and at the same time undertook to increase the legitimate revenue of the Treasury by insisting on a uniform payment of 5 per cent duty on every port or land frontier station on the whole of all imports and exports.

The importance of that move was described by H.J. Whigham in a despatch to the Morning Post dated 21 February 1902.[1]

1. The Morning Post, Saturday, 27 March, 1902.

> "The issue is one of no little importance, for if the Persian Government were to prove itself incapable of indicating its authority, and the whole of Arabistan should fall away from its rather precarious allegiance at Teheran, an enormous change would take place in the politics of the Gulf, and the Shah, with his already failing prestige thus rudely shattered, might lose in a moment his control over the whole Persian littoral of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean."

Early in March 1902 a Belgian Customs official was told off to Muhammerah to inspect the ground for future operations. He came up with a great flourish of trumpets, backed by the entire Persian Navy in the shape of the gun-boat "Persepolis". He also talked rather proudly and intimated that unless the Shaikh immediately handed over the Customs the Governor-General of Arabistan, who was the Shah's own son, would come with an army to teach the Arabs a lesson. The "Persepolis" anchored in the river of Muhammerah, ready to blow up the town to pieces if opposition were shown.

The Arabs, who were armed to a man, resented to the utmost this attempt to foist a foreign authority on their soil. The result was that the commander of the "Persepolis" - who rose to the post of the Commander of the Persian Navy from the humble position of river pilot for the merchant steamers - not liking the look of things at all, and fearing the safety of the one ship of the Persian Navy, made a clean bolt for Bushire, taking with him the discomfited custom house official.

One of the Bakatiari chiefs told Sir Arthur that the Shah had said to them that he relied on them, if necessary, to

reduce Muhammerah to obedience, but that the "Bakhtiaris" quite recognized that it would not be to their interest to become the instrument of the Persian Government for destroying the Arab tribes in the South-West. He added that his own fellow-tribesmen fully realized that the foundations of the Persian Monarchy had become rotten within the last few years and that its break-up and perhaps a revolution and change of dynasty were not far off. Should this happen, they looked to Britain for protection and support, as against a possible armed intervention by Russia and a Russian occupation of Isphahan, capital of the south.

Much of this was, perhaps, said to impress upon Hardinge with the value of their friendship, and to secure his assistance in their disputes with Messrs. Lynch Brothers, but it was clear that the Bakhtiaris fully realized to what extent during the then reign the decomposition of Persia as a State had advanced, and were anxious to ascertain how far they could rely on Britain in the event of contingencies which they believed, in common with most Persians, to be not very far distant.

Lansdowne told Hardinge that there were strong objections to giving a positive pledge[1] to the Shaikh of Muhammerah because this might commit Britain to naval and military actions of a

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1. Sir Arthur Hardinge to the Marquis of Lansdowne. No.71. Telegraphic. 20 November 1902. Admiralty 1/7623.(P.R.O.).

very inconvenient nature. He warned Hardinge that he should not go further than to say that as long as he acted in accordance with Britain's advice and remained a faithful subject to the Shah he would have their good offices in support.[1]

Hardinge feared an evasive reply to his very definite questions would convince the Shaikh that he could not surely count upon Britain, and that he would therefore make terms with the Russians and enable their new Consul, through a new Belgian Chief of Customs at Muhammerah, to injure British trade in the northern mouth of the Persian Gulf in the same way as in Seistan.[2]

Hardinge told the Foreign Secretary:

> "Unless we can give him (Shaikh of Muhammerah) real confidence in our strength and resolution, His Majesty's Government must be prepared to see Russian influence supreme and active at Muhammerah very shortly."

There were obvious objections to a personal guarantee of this kind, which the Shaikh might at any moment invoke for the purpose of compelling Britain to support him against the Shah, whose subject he was, nor was it desirable to place him in the position of being able to call upon the British authorities

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1. Lansdowne to Hardinge, No.59. Telegraphic. 22 November 1902. Adm1/7623. (P.R.O.).

2. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.72. Telegraphic. 23 November 1902. Adm.1/7623. (P.R.O.).

to support him both by land and by sea, in the event of a threat from Persia with Russia behind her.

Lansdowne thought the best means of maintaining British influence would surely be a more frequent visit of British gunboats to the port, and not the giving of personal assurances which, if in general terms, afforded one satisfaction, and if precise, would commit Britain to a very inconvenient extent.[1]

In so far as Russian influence was exerted to promote reforms, it unquestionably conferred a considerable boon upon the trade of all foreign nations as well as upon the internal trade of Persia. Moreover, in spite of occasional complaints, there was no reason to believe that the Belgian Customs Administration had been on the whole otherwise but fair in its dealings with foreign traders of all nations. The extension of Belgian control to the customs of the Persian Gulf was still recent and was only gradually carried into effect. It was, however, inevitable to Russia, to whom the Customs had been pledged, should take special interest in their administration, and it was quite possible that as the margin of her security diminished with both additional loans.

She might insist upon a more direct control even in the absence of any specific default. The Belgians, too, knew that perfectly well that without strong external pressure, no progressive work could be done in Persia. On 10 November 1902.

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1. Lansdowne to Hardinge, No.61. Telegraphic. 26 November 1902. Admiralty 1/7623. (P.R.O.).

The Times printed an article by her correspondent in Teheran which said:[1]

> "The appointment of a Belgian for the directorship of the Persian Customs and Post Offices showed that Russia appreciate their co-operation though they have so far preserved at least the outward appearances of independence."

The British Ambassador had on 1 December 1902 a long conversation with the Grand Vizier[2] on the problem of Muhammerah. His Highness endeavoured to argue that Britain's interests were not affected by any changes in the position of the Shaikh, who was a Local Governor like any other. Sir Arthur did not hesitate to make it clear to the Grand Vizier that they were determined not to have, if they could help it, another Seistan in Muhammerah, and to let Shaikh Khazal, therefore understand that if Russian Agents attempted to intimidate him, or insinuate that they could bring pressure to bear on him owing to the influence which they exercised at Teheran, Britain on her part was ready to support him.

The Grand Vizier observed that it was the Persian Government rather than the Shaikh of Muhammerah the proper guardian of Britain's interests in the south. As to the Russian influence, it was Britain's fault that unsympathetic policy pursued in Teheran in Durand's time and the British Government's refusal to help Persia financially, notwithstanding

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1. The Times, Monday, 10 November 1902.

2. Sir Arthur Hardinge to Lord Lansdowne, No.67. Confidential. 5 December 1902. Admiralty 1/6523. (P.R.O.).

the urgent representations by Sir Mortimer, had driven the Persian Government to the position of which Britain complained.

On 7 December 1902 Sir Arthur Hardinge sent a very amicable letter to the Shaikh of Muhammerah[1] which the latter was anxious to receive. Sir Arthur pointed out that the relations between the British and Persian Governments were of a friendly character, and the preservation of the integrity and independence of the Persian monarchy had for many years been one of great objects of British policy in the Middle East. Hardinge thought that the Shaikh had acted wisely in giving up all idea of forcible resistance to the establishment of a Custom House and in seeking friendly relations with the Central Administration. He assured the Shaikh that:

> "So long as you behaved to us as you have done in the past in a friendly manner, our influence would be exerted here to maintain you and your tribes in the enjoyment of your hereditary rights and customs, and to dissuade the Government of Teheran from any endeavour to diminish or interfere with them. We shall protect Muhammerah against naval attack by a foreign power, whatever pretext for such action might be alleged, and also, so long as you remain faithful to the Shah and act in accordance with our advice, shall continue to give you our good offices and support."

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1. Sir Arthur Hardinge. Inclosure 1 in No.1 to Shaikh Khazal. 7 December 1902. Admiralty 1/7623. (P.R.O.).

VII. BRITISH RELATIONS WITH FRANCE AT MUSCAT 1894-1900

France, too, was a source of anxiety to the British Foreign Office through her attempts to establish herself as a rival to British supremacy in the Gulf.

Muscat was advantageously situated, as far as Britain was concerned, for commercial and strategic purposes, on the North-Eastern face of the Arabian peninsula, where the Arab Sea, then called the Gulf of Oman, opened out. It was about 130 miles from the Strait of Ormuz, which form the entrance of the Persian Gulf, and 92 miles from Ras el-Had the extreme Eastern limit of the peninsula from which the coast began to run South towards Aden and the entrance of the Red Sea. It was 880 miles from Bombay, 430 miles from Karachi, 136 miles from Jask and 148 from Charbar. Thus the last named places were important as telegraphic stations on the Mekran coast, and were in Persian territory. The Harbour of Muscat afforded good anchorage, and although not extensive, was sufficient to hold several ships of almost the largest size. It was well protected from all winds except the North-Western Monsoon. Muscat itself contained the Political Agency of the Gulf, and those of the French and American representatives. It had a large wealthy population of traders, the greater majority of whom were British Indians.

The possession of Muscat and of the Oman coast by the British, or at any rate, a decided and acknowledged protectorate by them, was very desirable to British interests. And if they were not disposed themselves either to take possession of the coast or to bring directly under their own protection, it was certain that they could never allow any other European power to take the place they then held in that part of Arabia.

Strategically the possession of Muscat by any other power, would be a menace to her prestige and influence, not only in the Persian Gulf but in India itself. From Muscat, as I have shown, the cities of Bombay and Karachi, the entrance of the Persian Gulf and the Mekran coast could be reached in a short time, and it would be incumbent on Britain to dispossess without delay any power, European or native, likely to be hostile to her. Were such an influence even paramount at Muscat, her prestige in the Persian Gulf would be most seriously affected, and her position in India would also, no doubt, suffer While the strategic considerations enjoin a firm hold being kept on Muscat the commercial ones are not less important, and there can be no doubt that no other power had equal claims to those of Great Britain to a paramount position on the Coast of Oman.

It was a necessity if Britain wanted to maintain the "Pax Britannica" which she had extended on the Arab Sea and the Persian Gulf, and which she expended many lives and treasures. It was a necessity if Britain wished to keep down

down the slave trade and to suppress the importation of arms, which would eventually be employed against their own commerce by land and by sea. It was finally a necessity, if they wished their legitimate trade to be fostered and extended in the countries bordering on the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf.

These facts were, however, well known to the British Government, and I record my own views regarding the importance of Muscat before I proceed to deal with the efforts which were being made by the French, probably with the connivance and co-operation of the Russians, to oust Britain from the commanding position which she held on the Oman Coast.

It is not necessary here to recapitulate the circumstances which have connected the French Government with the British Authorities in Muscat affairs, and I will only refer to the treaty of 1862 by which both powers bound themselves to respect the independence of Muscat State. This Treaty treated France on equal terms with Great Britain in regard to Muscat, though the interests of France in Oman could not for a moment be compared with those of England, as it was the knowledge that the Sultan could play off one nation against the other that had in my opinion been the chief obstacle to satisfactory relations with him, and had prevented the establishment of some sort of protectorate over Muscat and the rest of the Oman Coast, which would otherwise in the natural course of events have been effected before this.

Upon the death of Sayid Turki in 1888, the British Government, notwithstanding the rival claims of Sayid Abdul-Aziz, continued to the new Sultan, Sayid Faysal, the subsidy of 40,000 crowns a year which had been paid to his predecessor, in order to enable him to carry the Government and to maintain order; and by those means His Highness was enabled to consolidate his position on the throne. This subsidy had been guaranteed in 1878 to Sultan Sayid Turki during his rule "so long as he continues faithfully to fulfil his treaty engagements and manifest his friendship towards the British Government." No similar guarantee of the continuance of the subsidy had ever been given to the new Sultan, Saiyd Faysal, but, nevertheless, the payment was continued annually to him by the British Government from 1888-1899. In 1890 the British Government formally recognised him as Sultan of Muscat. Upon the occasion the Sultan intimated his intention to maintain to the full the same relations as existed with the British Government in the time of his father and to act upon all engagements undertaken by his predecessors in Muscat. He also said:

> "It is my earnest desire to be guided in all important matters of policy by the advice of the British Government, and to so conduct the Government as to secure the continued friendship and approbation of the Viceroy and the British Government." 1

This was a formal assurance, which pledged the conduct of the Sultan and which the British Government had never

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1. Col. Wilson to Indian Government, No.115, 10 November 1895. Secret Letters from India, Vol.84. (India Office Library).

ceased to bear in mind. Sayid Abdul-Aziz, the rival candidate, subsequently retired to India as a political exile.

I.

In 1891 reports were received[1] from the Government of Bombay and from the Resident in the Persian Gulf that the French Consular Officer at Aden, Obokh and Zanzibar had, on numerous occasions, given French papers and the French flag to Native vessels belonging to Sur and other places within the territories of the Sultan of Musca. In passing on these reports to the Secretary of State,[2] the Government of India expressed the opinion that the action of the French Consul at Aden amounted to an assertion of protection over Oman, and the French Government should be requested to put a stop to the proceedings. Shortly after the matter had been referred to the British Government, a further report was received from the Resident at Bushire[3] to the effect that the Sultan of Muscat proposed himself to address a representation to the French Government, protesting against the issue of the

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1. Government of Bombay to Foreign Office, No.92. 9 June 1891. Secret Letters from India, Vol.63. (Government of India, Foreign Department). See also, Major Talbot's report to Viscount Cross, No.106, 22 June 1891, p.1213. Secret Letters from India, Vol.63. (India Office).

2. Secret Despatch No.62 (External), 9 June 1892. Secret Letters from India, Vol.66. (India Office).

3. Major Talbot to the Secretary of Government of India, No.166, 9 September 1891. Secret Letters from India, Vol.64, Government of India, Foreign Department. (India Office).

French flag and papers to vessels belonging to his subjects. His Highness represented that the sole object of the dhow-traders in assuming French protection was to obtain a cloak for slave-dealing operations. The Government of India, while holding that it was undesirable that the Sultan should address a protest direct to the French Government, informed the Resident that the use of the French flags by Muscat subjects could have no effect as against His Highness.[1] The Sultan, it was averred, "has full authority to punish any of his subjects who may infringe the laws of his country, whatever flag or paper they may have accepted; and he may safely take any steps he pleases to uphold his jurisdiction in his own waters over such of his subjects as have got French flags".[2] In replying to these two despatches, the Secretary of State forwarded[3] a copy of correspondence with the Foreign Office, from which it appeared that the French Government had repudiated the action of the French Consul at Aden in granting French papers and flags to the Suri dhows, and had given an assurance that it would not be repeated.

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1. From Col. E. Mokler to Major Talbot, No.224, 18 September 1891. Secret Letters from India, Vol.64, Government of India, Foreign Department. (India Office). Also in Muscat. F.O.54/25. (P.R.O.).

2. Government of India to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Secret despatch No.147 (External), 25 August 1891. Secret Letters from India, Vol.61. (India Office).

3. Secret despatch No.441, 4 December 1891. Secret Letters from India, Vol.64. (India Office).

It appeared, however, from further reports received from Bombay and Bushire that the statement regarding the grant of flags and papers at Madagascar and Obokh was not without foundation.[1]

The subject was again brought to the notice of the Government of India in 1894 in connection with the appointment of a French Vice-Consul at Muscat. The Sultan, having reason to believe that this appointment was likely to be made, was considerably disturbed at the prospect. He anticipated the fact, that the only object of sending a French Consular representative to Muscat was to assert French protection over the Arabs of Sur who had accepted French flags and papers.

The Resident referred the matter to the Government of India and was informed that, in the event of the French Vice-Consul putting forward such a claim, the Sultan should be advised to "refer him to the Declaration, dated 10 March 1862, respecting the independence of Muscat and Zanzibar, and inform him that the assertion of French protection over Suri boats in Oman waters would be a contravention of that Declaration."[2] In the meanwhile a circumstantial

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1. Secret Despatches Nos.46, 66 and 98 (External) dated respectively, 23 March, 4 May and 7 June 1892. Secret Letters from India, Vol.66. (India Office).

2. Government of India to Secretary of State for India, No.160 (External), 4 September 1894. Secret Letters from India, Vol.77. (India Office).

report was received from Major Sadler at Muscat to the effect that the importation of slaves to Oman by Suri khows carrying the French flag was still actively carried on, and the British Government was informed accordingly.[1]

In April 1895, however, it was stated on the authority of the Commander of a French war vessel (La Troude) that the practice of granting the French flag and papers to these dhows had been discontinued. Whatever value may have attached to this statement was minimised by the events of the succeeding year, when the Political Agent reported the seizure of the two Suri dhows, flying the French flag, with a cargo of slaves on board. M. Ottavi, the French Vice-Consul, protested against the detention of these vessels; and although the dhows were captured in the territorial waters of the Sultan, and the owners were known to be H.H's subjects, the jurisdiction of the French Vice-Consul over them was not questioned, and the vessels, together with the owners of the slaves were handed over to M.Ottavi for disposal.[2]

In the meantime a report of these seizures and of the attitude of the French Vice-Consul had been submitted to the

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1. Government of India to Secretary of State for India. Secret despatch No.218 (External), dated 26 December 1894. Secret Letters from India, Vol.77. (India Office).

2. Lord Elgin to the Secretary of State for India. Secret Despatch No.15. (External). 27 January 1897. Secret Letters from India, Vol.90. (India Office).

British Government through the Admiralty and Lord Salisbury directed[1] the British Ambassador in Paris to address the French Government on the subject. "Her Majesty's Government feel sure", the Ambassador was directed to say, "that the Government of the Republic will agree with them in wishing that persons so guilty of so gross an abuse of the French flag as the Ottoman owners of the dhows should have been brought to justice, and that the slaves who have sheltered by the flag, should have been rescued from their fate," and he was also instructed to enquire whether the instructions discontinuing the grant of French flags and papers to Suri dhows were still in force.

The only result of this reference was a disclaimer[2] on the part of the French Anbassador that there had ever been any intention of discontinuing the practice. In July 1897, an opportunity was taken to repeat the instructions contained in Sir Mortimer Durand's letter of 4 August 1891.

In August 1897, the Government of India referred the matter to the British Government,[3] and suggested that the

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1. Salisbury to Sir Edward Monson, No.388, 22 December, 1896. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

2, Secret despatch from Secretary of State for India to Lord Elgin, No.12. 2 April, 1897. Secret Letters from India, Vol.92. (India Office).

3. Secret despatch from Lord Elgin to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, No.117 (External), dated 4 August, 1897). Secret Letters from India, Vol.94. (India Office).

attitude now adopted by the French Government (mainly their intention to continue the practice of granting French flags and papers to Muscat subjects) was inconsistent with their previous admission that the action of the Vice-Consul at Aden in granting such papers was incorrect.

On receipt of the communication, the British Government directed[1] the British Ambassador at Paris to place the matter again before the French Government. The reply of the French Ambassador was to the effect that the Admission in the case of the Vice-Consul at Aden was not of a general application. In the meanwhile a suggestion emanating from the Foreign Office, was put forward to the effect that the Sultan should be advised to institute a distinctive flag for the vessels of his subjects and to "issue orders prohibiting the flying of any other flag on their ships". This suggestion was put to the Political Agent at Muscat, who gave his opinion that so long as the French flag continued to be granted to Muscat subjects, the prescription by the Sultan of a special flag for the use of his subjects would be productive of no good unless H.H. was assured of the active support of the British Government in asserting his authority over those of his subjects who claimed French protection.

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1. Despatch from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Sir Edmund Monson, No.38. Secret. 29 October, 1897. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

In forwarding this report to the Secretary of State, the Government of India asserted[1] their opinion that "no effective measures for the supression of slave trade can be adopted unless and until the French Authorities at Aden and elsewhere discontinue the practice of supplying French flags and papers to Muscat subjects," and they argued that steps should be taken to secure the discontinuence of the practice.

In the year 1898 events occured which indicated that the uncertain policy adopted by the British Government towards the Sultan was having an unfortunate effect. The French Vice-Consul having gained considerable influence over the Sultan, induced him to lease the port of Bunder Jisseh to the French Government as a coaling station, and to adopt other measures inimical to British interests, It was found necessary to remind the Sultan of his treaty obligations in a forcible manner, and an ultimatum was presented to him containing among other provisions and demanding that to prevent the infringement of his rights, he should order all his subjects to use a distinctive flag, and "should explain that, after the issue of such an order, the grant of an officer of a foreign power of a foreign flag and the assertion by such officers of the subject is an instigation of such subject to disobey the

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1. Secret despatch from Government of India to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, No.59, 31 March, 1898. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

lawful orders of his own sovereign, and if such instigation is made by French official, it is an infringement of the Declaration which was entered into during 1862 by the Government of England and France to respect the Sultan's independence."[1] This demand was stated to be the outcome of the correspondence which had passed by the Government of India and the British Government on the subject of the French flag. This despatch contained a letter from the Foreign Office, dated 20 December 1898, in which the opinion of Lord Salisbury was given at some length. Discussing the suggestion that the French Government should be asked to desist from granting the French flag to Muscat-owned vessels, Lord Salisbury considered that "there may be difficulty in following this line of procedure. Her Majesty's Government have no positive authority or unimpeachable locus standi entitling them to represent the matter to the French Government, seeing Muscat is not a British Protectorate, and they have received no request from the Sultan to do so."[2] It would be possible to put the representation on the ground that the Sultan had by treaty given to their country to search and detain Muscat vessels in connection with the supression of

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1. Col. Meade's Memorandum to the Sultan of Muscat, 7 May 1898. Secret Letters from India, Vol.III. (India Office).

2. Salisbury to Government of India. Secret despatch, No.48, 20 December, 1898. Secret Letters from India, Vol.109. (India Office).

slave trade, and that Her Majesty's Government could not allow the assumption of the French flag by such vessels to interfere with the exercise of a right thus formally delegated to them.

The correspondence between the French Vice-Consul and the Sultan shows that the answer to such a representation would be that the Sultan and his predecessors had allowed the assumption of the flag for years; that this constant practice had created a right that was no longer open to question; that the flag was, in fact, granted and accepted with the permission of the Sultan as an independent Sovereign; and that Her Majesty's Government must address their representations to His Highness. This position would point the way to the French Vice-Consul to represent to the Sultan that the abandonment of the French flag would put the vessels of the Suri at the mercy of every British cruiser; that their trade would be practically ruined; and that his Suri subjects would no doubt rebel sooner than submit. It appeared not unlikely that the Sultan would fall in with this view, and openly announce that the French flag would be granted with his permission. Lord Salisbury, in his secret despatch of 20 December told the Indian Government:-

> "The proposal that the Sultan should prescribe to his subjects the exclusive use of a distinctive Muscat flag was made with the object of avoiding this position. The usefulness of the proposal does not depend on the Sultan being able to enforce it. On the contrary, if, after the issue of such orders, any Muscat subject accepted the French flag, the French authorities would by its grant have abetted such subject in disobeying orders of the

Sovereign, and Her Majesty's Government would be in a strong position for announcing they would be unable to recognise the validity of the grant.

"But in order to produce this position, it is necessary that the Sultan should issue the proposed order before any communication is addressed to the French Government, on account of the French Vice-Consul being able in any other case to induce His Highness to declare that the flag is granted with his permission.

"At the present time, Her Majesty's Resident appears to have a powerful means to persuade the Sultan to issue the suggested order. His Highness's correspondence with the French Vice-Consul shows that he very strongly resented the French contention, on which the French Authorities consistently act, that the owner or a master of a dhow under the French flag becomes a French protected person, even in Muscat territory. It could be represented to the Sultan that the right way to prevent his subjects from passing in every increasing numbers under French protection is to order them not to take the French flag."

In the same despatch was inclosed a Memorandum by the Law Officer of the Crown, dated 4 August 1898, in which the opinion was expressed that "the Arab slave trader, to whom these permits (i.e. to fly the French flag) are granted, do not become French subjects, and the allegation that they become French protected persons is, it would appear, merely colourable. It is possible that they acquire this character by French law, but in order to validate the claim to fly the French flag from the point of view of international law, they should be so in reality. The subject is one on which there is an almost entire absence of authority, but the claim of the French Government seems to us to be unsustainable on principle."

As a result of the ultimation the Sultan, while complying with the other demands pressed upon him, wrote to the French Consul informing him that "we do not recognize the right of France to exercise jurisdiction over our subjects residing in or visiting our dominions whether they are in possession of French papers or not", and that the practice of granting French protection to his subjects at Sur was contrary to the spirit of the Declaration of 1862. At the same time he wrote to the heads of the Jeebah tribe at Sur recommending them to return the French flags and adopt their original flag again.

In commenting on this Declaration on the part of the Sultan, Her Majesty's Government expressed[1] their opinion that no exception need be taken to the intimation made by the Sultan to the French Consul refusing to recognize the right of France to exercise jurisdiction over His Highness's subjects while residing or visiting his dominions, provided that Article IV[2] of the French Treaty with Muscat of 1846 was not contravened.

II.

During the rebellion of 1894-1895 against the Sultan of Muscat, the British Government warned Shaikh Abdullah Bin Saleh to cease from attacking the Sultan. They also

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1. Secretary of State's Secret Despatch, No.14. 21 April 1899. F.O.54/29. (P.R.O.).
2. "The Subjects of the Sultan of Muscat actually in the service of the French shall enjoy the same privileges which are granted to the French themselves."

authorized His Highness in March 1895 to issue a notification warning the leading Shaikhs of Oman that, whatever differences they might have in the future with the Sultan, the British Government would not allow them to attack the towns of Muscat and Mattrah.

The reasons given by the Sultan for declining British aid were that he refused to be bound to follow the advice of the Indian Government with regard to future arrangements at Dhafar;[1] whether this was the real reason or whether it was simply put forward as an excuse in order to allow him a free hand to employ the late Wali, Shaikh Suleiman Bin Salim, it would be difficult to say. I should say that both reasons have operated to lead the Sultan to his decision, suspicion of the British intentions and a desire to meet the wishes of the Government. They have on two occasions granted His Highness loans of money to assist him in carrying on the Government, and in discharging debt which had been incurred by him personally. The first loan was Rs 60,000 in December 1895, and the second loan was of the same amount, this given in August 1897.

From the point of view the British failure to protect the property of their subjects at Muscat during the rebellion

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1. From Major H. Sadler to the Political Residence in the Persian Gulf, No.94. 15 April 1896. Confidential. Secret Letters from India, Vol.87, Government of India, Foreign Department. (India Office Library).

of 1895[1] and their subsequent demand for compensation have been the cause of much bitterness, and its attitude towards the English have been more decidedly unfriendly ever since. In 1897 the British Navy aided him to recover his authority in Dhafar but I doubt if he was really obliged to them for their assistance and he probably regarded the British share in the expedition as an effort to establish some sort of protectorate over the tribes of the south east coast.

The French seemed to have little interest in Oman, and it was not until 1894 that a first Vice-Consulate was established at the place. It did not appear that this step was taken to guard any previously existing French interests or the advance of any fresh ones but was intended to thwart the English, and to aid eventually the efforts of Russia to gain a footing in the Persian Gulf.

"We are now threatened with Franch taking an active part in Muscat Affairs", wrote the British Consul at Muscat to the Government of India on 11 September 1896, "and in such a position it is all important to have a Sultan who will follow our advice.[2]

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1. Details of the rebellion in Annual Report of the Persian Gulf Residency of Muscat Political Agency. No.CCCXXIV, 1895-1895, pp.10-11, and on the problem of compensation see No.CCCXLIII, 1896-1897, p.1. See also a letter from Col. Wilson (Resident at Bushire) to the Secretary of State to the Government of India, No.115, 10 November 1895. Secret Letters from India, Vol.84 of 1896. (India Office).

2. Consul at Muscat to Government of India, Foreign Dept. M.38. 11 September 1896. Political and Secret Despatches to India, P.297. Vol.22.1896. (India Office).

The "Journal des Débats"[1] of 20 November 1898, contained an announcement that the French had established a coaling station at Bunder Jisseh, 5 miles south-east of Muscat. On being questioned by Sir Edmund Monson,[2] M. Delcassé denied all knowledge of the statement, but on 16 January 1899, the Sultan admitted to Major Fagan that he had promised the French a place for storing coal.[3] This act could not be regarded by the British Government otherwise than a violation of the Agreement of 1862,[4] between Great Britain and France, to respect the independence of Muscat, and also of the engagement given by the Sultan to Great Britain in 1891, not to alienate any portion of his dominions to any other power.[5] As there was no doubt that Bunder Jisseh was the place intended, the Commander of the English ship "Sphinx" left an officer and boats' crew there with orders to hoist the British flag if a French man-of-war appeared in the harbour.[6] The payment of Muscat subsidy was suspended pending inquiry.

In view of the recent intrigues and evident disloyalty

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1. Journal des Débats, 20 November 1898.
2. Sir Edmund Monson to Salisbury, No.663, 2 December 1898. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).
3. Major Fagan to Government of India. Telegraphic. 19 January 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).
4. Aitcheson, C.E., "Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads". Delhi, 1933. Vol.XI, p.304.
5. Enclosed in Secret Letters from India, Vol.68, (India Office), See Appendix VI.
6. Admiralty to Foreign Office, 22 February 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

of the Sultan to the British, Lieut. Col. Meade, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, was instructed to proceed to Muscat and to present to the Sultan a Memorandum containing the following demands: [1]

(1) Dismissal of Abdul-Aziz from employment under the Sultan's authority.

(2) Settlement of the outstanding question concerning indemnity to British subjects for losses sustained in 1895.

(3) Cessation of taxes on trade which had been imposed in contravention of the terms of Britain's commercial Treaty with Muscat.

(4) Cancellation of the lease of Bunder Jisseh to France.

Abdul-Aziz had been compelled to leave Zanzibar in 1893 on account of his anti-British activities. He then came to Muscat, where he became Munshi both to the Sultan and to the French Vice-Consul. His influence was considered most prejudicial to British interests. The Sultan was also advised that the way to obviate the protection of his own subjects by a foreign power with his own dominion was to order them to use a distinctive Muscat flag.

Early in 1899 Lieut. Col. Meade had been directed to demand the recession of the grant of a port or harbour as a coaling station to the French. He had not been instructed or intended to demand a public cancellation of this grant. But he did not

1. Full text of Col. Meade's Memorandum to the Sultan of Muscat, 7 May 1898 in Secret Letters from India. Vol.III. (India Office).

consider that reliance could be placed on an act of repudiation by the Sultan, which was not public, and he therefore considered himself justified in exceeding his instructions and in insisting upon a public withdrawal of the grant.

This Memorandum of demands was presented to the Sultan. His Highness's reply was considered by the British authorities evasive and unsatisfactory. On the arrival at Muscat of Rear-Admiral Douglas, Commander-in-Chief of the East India Station, Lieut. Col. Meade handed over the matter to deal with. The Admiral immediately assumed a threatening attitude and ordered the Sultan to come on board his flag-ship. After some attempts at evasion, The Sultan came on board and agreed to comply fully with all the demands of the British Government. On the same day the Sultan held a general meeting, in which he publicly announced the cancellation of the lease into which he had entered with the French Government. He afterwards informed the French Consul of the cancellation and also of an order which he had issued to all his subjects, directing them in the future to make exclusive use of the Muscat flag. He further wrote to Mr. Ottavi that it was not possible for him to receive Abdul-Aziz in future and requesting him to appoint another person to be the medium of communication between them.

When these events became known in Paris M. Cambon was instructed to protest against the excessive action of the Admiral and the publicity which had been given to the affair.

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1. Cambon to Monson. Nos.55 &65. 22 February 1900. F.O.27/3530. (P.R.O.).

Lord Salisbury maintained that France had violated the Treaty of 1862, and that although in the matter of sentiment, the French Government might have a grievance, in the matter of substance the action of the British authorities had been entirely right.[1]

In his letter to Salisbury dated 1 May 1899 M. Cambon said:

> "J'ai fait, connaître à mon Gouvernement votre interprétation des vos arrangements de 1862 et j'ai été chargé par M. Declassé de nous dire que nous en prenions acte et que nous y adhérions. En faisont cette declaration à notre seigneurie, j'ai ajoute que nous ont n'aurions jamais en l'intention d'user plus largement que le Gouvernement Britannique lui-Même des droits résultant de nos traités communs et que nous procèderions à l'installation de votre depôt dans les conditions adoptées par l'administration Anglais.
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> "J'ai dit également à votre seigneurie qu'il serait utile de faire connaitre au Sultan de Muscat par nos Consuls en cette residence l'accord intervenir entre le deux Gouvernements sur l'interpretation des arrangements de 1892. Vous avez admis le mode de procéder mais vous avez exprime l'anais qui à raison de l'agitation qui d'aprés le Vice-roi de India, regnait parmi les tribes du littoral il convenait de retardes un peu l'etablissement de notre depôt et la démarche des nos consuls duprés du Sultan. 2

Privately Lord Salisbury stigmatised the proceeding as a "serious mistake". Britain was approaching France towards a settlement of some of the outstanding difficulties, both as regards a division of Britain's respective sphere of influence in Central Africa, and even on the more thorny question of their fishing rights on the New Zealand coast. It was

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1. The Marquis of Salisbury to Sir Edmund Monson, No.58. 22 February 1899. British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, London, 1927, Vol.I, pp.209-210.

2. See full text of this letter in Secret Letters from India, Vol.113. (India Office).

obvious that these considerations might induce the Foreign Office to try and do something at Muscat in order to obtain an advantage elsewhere. At a later date when the excitement over the crisis had died down he wrote privately to the Viceroy:

> "The only incident which seriously disturbed me was the unnecessary publicity of the whole proceedings. I have no doubt that from an Indian point of view Col. Meade and the administration were right, and that Indian prestige is protanto increased by what was done. But for us the more pressing question whether we could bring our African negotiations to a decent conclusion while Col. Meade was pluming his own feathers, it would have occurred that he was possibly ruffling ours." 1

It would be impossible, now that that view had been so clearly laid down and become generally known, for the Indian Government to accept a less advantageous solution, without exposing itself to much reproach on the part of the leaders of native opinion both in the Persian Gulf and in India. Without wishing to exaggerate the results which either alternative of action would bring with it, it appeared to Lord Salisbury that the objections present to the mind of the Government of India were more important to their character than those which were apprehended by M. Declassé.[2] All that he had to fear was an adverse opinion in the chamber. If the

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1. Letter from Lord Salisbury to Lord Curzon, 21 April 1899. Earl of Ronaldshay, "Life of Lord Curzon", Vol.II, p.48. London, 1928.

2. The Marquis of Salisbury to Sir Edmund Monson, No.3484, 7 October 1899, British Documents on the Origin of the War 1898-1914. Paris, 1927. Vol.I, p.214.

Indian Government relinquished a right which they had so strongly asserted, upon a matter which lay within the sphere hitherto regarded as their own, they would lose the confidence of Chiefs and populations whose feelings towards the British rule were a matter of significant importance.

In the House of Commons[1] on 23 February 1899 Mr. Labouchere (Northampton M.P.) asked the Secretary of State for India "whether it is a fact that the Sultan of Oman has revoked the grant that he proposed to make to France, under a threat from the British Admiral on the station of a bombardment of the fort of the capital; what was the nature of the contemplated grant; whether the French Government had been previously notified of the intended action of the Admiral; whether there is any treaty between this country and the Government of Oman by which the latter pledged itself not to alienate territory, or to grant a lease of territory to any Foreign Power without the previous permission of Her Majesty's Government; whether the relations of this country and of France towards Muscat are based upon the Treaty concluded between Great Britain and France in 1862 by which both countries reciprocally engaged to respect the independence of the Sovereigns of Muscat; and whether Her Majesty's Government claims any special right to control the exercise of full sovereignty by the Sultan of Oman within his kingdom

1. Parliamentary Debates, Vol.67, 4th Series, pp.293-295.

which is not possessed by any other European Great Power."

In answering the first question the Secretary of State for India replied that the grant which the Sultan proposed to make was contrary to treaty, and had not been proceeded with. He added that "it was a question between the Government of India and the Sultan of Muscat, not between the Government of India and any other Power." He said that no hint was given to the Government of India of the transactions that were being completed at Muscat. As regards the position of the Sultan, the Secretary of State for India declared that "He is under a special obligation to the British Government in respect to the alienation or assignment of any part of his territories; he has been for many years in receipt of a subsidy from the Indian Government, and has on various occasions received the help and advice of that Government in maintaining his authority and quieting disturbances in his territory. The relations existing between him and the British Government are special, though they do not necessarily interfere with the exercise of any sovereign rights he may possess."

The Times[1] declared in a leading article that the first act of the new Viceroy of India in the domain of Foreign policy deserved high praise for promptitude and decision. The Times went on to say "Whether we must insist that the facilities shall be of such kind as to afford no pretext for political claims we can neither ourselves agree, nor allow the

1. The Times, 22 February 1899.

Sultan to agree to concessions whether to France or any other power, which later could be made a plausible ground for such claims."

On 9 March 1899 Mr. Labouchere[1] in the House of Commons asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether "the concession which the Sultan of Muscat had granted to France in regard to a coaling depôt included the right to fly the French flag on the depôt and fortify it." Mr. Brodnitz, who considered the giving of a coal depôt to France a mark of favour and respect to the French Government, declared that, "there is no stipulation in the grant to preclude the hoisting of the French flag or the erection of fortifications."

In a subsequent conversation M. Cambon[2] stated that the French Government accepted the British version of the treaty, but it was necessary for them to be able to procure coal in Muscat waters, as they accordingly proposed to establish a coal depôt on exactly the same terms as that of Britain, that is to say on sufferance. His Excellency requested that the British Agent might be informed that this was being done with the assent of the British Government, as otherwise the Sultan might object to the arrangement.[3]

On the British Government agreeing to this, it remained to settle the sites of the coal sheds. The French proposal

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1. Parliamentary Debates, Vol.68, 4th series, p.295.
2. Sir Edmund Monson, No.2883, 10 August 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).
3. Sir Edmund Monson, No.331, 7 October 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

to utilize the Bay of Riyam in the neighbourhood of Muscat was objected to for its strategic importance.[1] The French Government were then offered the choice of one or two sites at Makalla Cove near Muscat, where the ground admitted of division into three parts by means of a wall built from the sea to the high ground at the back. The port thus chosen by the French was to remain the British coal depôt. "If Cambon chooses to decline such an offer," wrote Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, "he makes it self evident to the whole world that his object was not the acquisition of facilities for coaling, but acquisition of a port to be expanded and developed politically."[2] The French Government chose the southern site and the choice was recorded by an exchange Memoranda on 11 and 12 May 1900. After some discussion between Captain Cox and M. Ottavi, the French Consul, the partition of Makalla Cove was finally ratified by the latter on 8 August 1900.[3]

The ultimatum to the Sultan on 9 February 1899 demanded the dismissal of Abdul-Aziz from the Sultan's service, but did not require His Highness to refuse to receive him as a French Agent. The Sultan, however, wrote to the French Consul that he refused to receive Abdul-Aziz in any

1. Viceroy to India Office, Tel.10, 10 September 1900. Secret Letters from India, Vol.126. (India Office Library).
2. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, Private Correspondence Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, E.U.R.C. 126/2. (India Office Library).
3. Viceroy to India Office, Telegraphic. 10 September 1900. Secret Letters from India, Vol.126. (India Office Library).

capacity whatever, and requested that some other go-between might be employed in future. The French Consul protested against His Highness's action, and Col. Meade was authorized to give the Sultan an assurance of the effective support of the British Government. It appeared, however, that notwithstanding his letter to the French Consul, the Sultan continued to receive Abdul-Aziz only for a time, and finally desisted after an official representation had been made to him on the subject by Major Fagan.

In Paris La Déspâtch Coloniale wrote:-

> "Comme nous agissons ici pour le grand bien de tous et qu'il n'entre dans notre resolution aucune pensée de faire de l'opposition à qui que ce soit, sauf aux enemis de notre pays, nous prenons soin de prévenir respecteusement au Ministre de Affairs Etrangères que nous sommes bien renseignés, que nous savons même beaucoup plus qu'il ne nous parait convenables d'en dire, mais que si une faiblesse et surtout une lâcheté nous paraissait à craindre d'où que de fut, nous crainons plus devoir nous inspirer que l'interest majeur de las nation." 1

No attempt was made to reinstate Abdul-Aziz until the arrival of the "Drôme" at Muscat in 1900, nominally to bring coal for the French depôt at Makalla.[2] On the arrival of the Sultan from the interior a series of stormy interviews took place between His Highness and the Commander of "Drôme", and M. Ottavi. The latter repeatedly urged the Sultan to receive Abdul-Aziz as a medium communication with the French Consulate,

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1. "La Déspâtch Coloniale", Paris, 16 June 1900.
2. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. Telegraphic. 24 September 1900. F.O.27/3530. (P.R.O.).

and went so far as to threaten to use force if his demands were not complied with. The Sultan firmly declined to receive Abdul-Aziz and altogether refused to succumb to pressure and intimidation.

Finally on 5 September, the Sultan appealed to Captain Cox for the support of the British Government of which he had been assured in the event of any reprisals on the part of France on account of his compliance with the demands of the ultimatum of 1899. Captain Cox decided to comply with the Sultan's request, and accordingly addressed a letter to M. Ottavi protesting against his action as incompatible with the Declaration of 10 March 1862, whereby the two Governments agreed to respect the Sultan's independence.[1] This letter which was dated 7 September, was not answered by M. Ottavi until the 10 September when he stated he had referred Captain Cox's protest to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. On the same day Captain Martel, of the "Drome" called at the British Consulate to say that he was unexpectedly compelled to proceed to Jask and that he should be absent for a few days.

After the receipt of Captain Cox's protest, M. Ottavi left the Sultan entirely alone.[2] Abdul-Aziz made no attempt to enter the palace and was said to be on the point of proceeding

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. Telegraphic. 15 October 1900. Muscat 54/30. (P.R.O.).

2. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. Telegraphic. 15 October 1900. Muscat, 54/30. (P.R.O.).

to his native village on leave of absence.

The "Drôme" returned on 16 September but left again for Lingah on the morning of the 18th. On 23 October the Secretary of State for India telegraphed to the Viceroy that "Her Majesty's Government commended Captain Cox's action, and he was authorized to inform the Sultan that his desire to observe his promise of engagements to the British Government was appreciated by them."[1]

The outcome was reviewed by the "Journal des Dêbats" by the following:-[2]

> "Cette attitude étrange du Sultan omanion à l'egard des protégés étrangeres, qu rien d'alleurs ne justifait, obligeait le gouvernement de las Republique a rappeler le raitelet nétro à une plus saine appréciation des sentiments de défferences qu'il doit manifester à une grande puissance dans les eaux de Mascote d'un transporte de la marine de l'Etat, la Drôme, que était charge de débarques du charbon dans la Loie de Meballa où le France et l'Angleterre ont établit des depôt d'approvisionnement pour régler, sans plus tardes l'incident des propriètoirs de boutres francais."

The French had been struggling all the way to get their site outside of Muscat Harbour. The English had steadily refused it. "It they win and we give way," said Lord Curzon, "their prestige will gain and ours will suffer."[3]

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1. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. Telegraphic. 23 October 1900. Muscat 54/30. (P.R.O.).
2. Journal des Dêbats, 17 October 1900.
3. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 25 January 1900. Lord Curzon's Private Correspondence to Lord George Hamilton, Vol.XVI. 510/4. (India Office).

The Viceroy accused Lord Salisbury of attempting reconciliation with the French. He wrote to Hamilton[1] saying that:-

> "Lord Salisbury lays reiterates stress upon the nominal Treaty equality of the French. He declined to remember that he himself was the first to break it down by the Secret Agreement of 1891, he fails to see that it is only being worked by the French at the present time, not for any legitimate objects or aspirations of their own, but in order to help the Russian plans in the Gulf."

As far as this point was concerned, Lord Curzon showed less complaint that in the case of the coal depôt. Lansdowne, in his view, showed much more spirit and interest in opposing the French interference in Muscat affairs.[2]

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 5 September 1900. Lord Curzon's Private Correspondence with Lord George Hamilton, Vol.XVII, D 510/5.(India Office).

2. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 18 June 1901. Lord Curzon's Private Correspondence with Lord George Hamilton, Vol.XX, D 51038. (India Office).

VIII. BRITISH RELATIONS WITH FRANCE AND MUSCAT 1900-1902

I.

Britain's success in dealing with the French rights over the territorial waters of Muscat was a great triumph for Col. Percy Cox. He had only been in his post a few months and he seemed during that interval to have entirely effaced the hostility of the Sultan towards the British Government, "he saw the trump card which must infuriate the French, and could not fail to bring the Sultan and M. Ottavi, the French Consul, into collision."[1]

It would seem, however, that though the British Government were ready to applaud the Sultan's determination in refusing to recognise French protection, the French Government were not equally ready to accept the situation. For in June[2] 1899 we find the French Ambassador complaining that the British Consul at Muscat had disputed the validity of the French protection granted to a Muscat dhow, and in August he had demanded from the Sultan that he should enforce the

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1. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, 24 May 1900. Private Correspondence, Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. EUR. C 126/2 (India Office).

2. See Salisbury to Curzon. Telegraphic. 24 June 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

discontinuance of the use of the French flag by his subjects, promising the assistance of a British man-of-war:-

> "Toutefois, mon Gouvernement ayant en l'occasion de consentter que l'autorisation de bottre pavillion François avait été dans quelques cas accordée sans un examen suffisomment sérvère des conditions que justifferaient cette faveur, s'occupe en ce moment meme de faire reviser les autorisations de manière à mêttre a l'arbi de toute critique les boutres auxquels sera mainteneau le droit d'arborer notre drapeau." 1

As a consequence of these complaints, the Foreign Office requested that, without previous reference to them, nothing should be done in the way of forcible intervention by a British man-of-war. The complaint was reported by Major Fagan[2] to be unfounded.

In December 1899, a despatch[3] was received from the Secretary of State in which certain suggestions were made to the steps which might be taken to neutralise the effect of the grant of the French flag. These suggestions were:

(1) That the Sultan should make an ordinance compelling every subject of Muscat who owns a ship to register it as a Muscat ship, and sail it under the Muscat flag.

(2) That the Sultan should declare that he would not in his territory, after a date to be fixed, recognise any

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1. M. Cambon to the Marquis of Salisbury. Enclosure 1 in No.4, 22 August 1899. F.O.54/29. (P.R.O.).

2. Lord Curzon to Lord Salisbury. Telegraphic. 12 July 1899. F.O.54/29. (P.R.O.).

3. Lord Salisbury to Lord Curzon. Secret Despatch No.47. 24 November 1899. F.O.54/29. (P.R.O.).

protection of naturalization thereafter conferred on his subjects otherwise than with his sanction or under the provisions of his treaties.

(3)That the use of the British flag should be extended so as to outbid the French Consul.

At the same time it was requested that, with a view to the possibility of coming to an arrangement with the French Government, a more precise amount should be furnished of the modus operandi of the French, and of the evidence forthcoming to prove a connivance on their part in the slave-trade, or the exact details in respect of which they could be held to fail in the obligations under the Brussels Act, Articles 25 and 30. The despatch was sent to the Resident at Bushire for report.

In the interval before the report was furnished,[1] the situation was further developed by the Sultan's offering to sign a letter definitely requesting the British Government to intervene with the French Government on his behalf in order to "effect the removal of the flags now in use and discontinuance of the practice" of granting the French flag to his

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1. It was eventually transmitted to the Secretary of State with Secret despatch No.102 (External), dated 26 July 1900. F.O.54/30. It contained a full account of the modus operandi of the French, giving ample evidence to show that the French flag-holders had engaged in slave trade, with the connivance of M. Ottavi, and that the provisions of Articles 25 and 30 of the Brussels Act had been systematically disregarded.

subjects. This request, as Captain Cox pointed out, seemed to supply the locus standi required by Lord Salisbury in the Foreign Office letter of 20 December, 1898 and Her Majesty's Government were, therefore, asked[1] whether they were prepared to act.

While the references were being considered in London, the Sultan took matters into his own hands and visited French protégés at Sur. His visit resulted in the presentation to him of a solemn declaration by the two tribes at Sur, including all the holders of the French flag to return to their allegiance to the Sultan. Three of the flag-holders who had received their papers from the French Consul actually handed them over to the Sultan for return to M. Ottavi. The Sultan thereupon issued an edict to the effect that he would not recognise in his territories (in the hands of his subjects) French flag and papers and he would "not forgive" any one who took them without his permission[1] and in accordance with the suggestion made in the Secret despatch from the Secretary of No.97, dated 24 November 1899, and was also a tardy compliance with the orders contained in the ultimatum of January 1899, which were based on instructions from the Foreign Office.

Her Majesty's Government did not, however, see their

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord Salisbury. Telegraphic. 2 May 1900. F.O.27/3530. (P.R.O.).

way to supporting the Sultan in the position which he had assumed, and in a telegram dated 20 July 1900, they directed that the "Sultan should be advised to make it clear that the edict affected only the issue of flags and papers to his subjects after the date of his communication to the French Consul; while in regard to those issued before that date, any doubtful or disputed case would be the subject of examination between himself and the French Government."

M. Cambon having intimated that in future no papers of protection would be given, and that the existing papers should be carefully examined, so as to exclude those for the grant of which no just cause existed, a French man-of-war was despatched to Muscat with the ostensible object of conducting the examination and of investigating the question whether any dhows and French papers were implicated in slave trade.

The actual proceedings of the Commander of the French vessel were reported by Captain Cox to be of a different nature.[1] The attitude maintained by the Sultan in this situation was most satisfactory. He persisted in his refusal to receive Abdul-Aziz, and declined to return the papers to their owners. The French vessel then visited Sur, and apparently persuaded some of the shaikhs to recant from the undertaking given to the Sultan, and the pledge that they had given it under pressure Two of the persons, however, he had handed over to the Sultan,

1. Telegram to the Secretary of State, 26 August 1900. F.O.54/30. (P.R.O.).

came into Muscat and, after receiving their papers back from the Sultan, handed them over to M. Ottavi. On her way to Sur, the "Drôme" met and stopped several Suri dhows proceeding to Basrah, and compelled them to come to Muscat flying the Tri-Colour.[1]

It is important to note that, in the course of this incident, no exception was taken either by M. Ottavi or by the French Commander to the terms of the Sultan's edict and that M. Ottavi stated, with a somewhat remarkable divergence from the truth, that he had never claimed to give the flag-holders protection.

It was not until the "Drôme" had left Muscat that the Government of India were authorised[2] to convey to Captain Cox the approval of the British Government of his action in supporting the firm and becoming attitude of the Sultan and in protesting against the French demand.

A second French vessel (the "Catinat") called at Muscat in December 1900, and took the opportunity to visit Sur. The French Commander was said to have met much of the French flag-holders, and to have assured them that he had settled the matter of the flag with the Sultan in a satisfactory way, and that His Highness had agreed to let them all remain

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1. Details of the incident in Annual Report of the Persian Gulf Residency and Muscat Political Agency, No.CCCLXXIX (1899-1900) p.4.

2. Lord Salisbury to Lord Curzon. Telegraphic. 20 September 1900. F.O.55/30. (P.R.O.).

French subjects.

In April 1901, Captain Cox suggested that the Sultan might be advised to issue a further notification, in continuation of his edict above referred to, to the effect that, from a date to be fixed, none of his subjects would be permitted to fly within his territories or in his territorial waters any foreign flag except with the written authority of the Sultan: and that any one acting in contravention of this order would be liable to fine and other punishment. This suggestion[1] was forwarded to the British Government with the remark that, in the opinion of the Government of India, the Sultan would be within his rights in issuing the notification. But they required the authority of Her Majesty's Government before advising the Sultan to issue it.

The French did not fail to make use of anti-British propaganda. An Arabic newspaper, Fath el-Basiyer,[2] published in Paris, was discovered early in 1900 at Aden, Muscat and Bahrain. The task of this newspaper was "to secure the interests of the Muslims in the Persian Gulf, Aden and Muscat." This newspaper, which appeared in January 1900, reported to the people of these areas news regarding British relations with Persia, Turkey, Sudan and even Burma, India and the Far

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1. Secret Despatch from Lord Curzon to Lord Salisbury, No.69 (External), 9 May 1900. Secret Letters from India, Vol.124. (India Office).

2. The Arabic paper is enclosed in Resident of Aden to the Government of India. No.10, 27 May 1900. F.O.54/30. (P.R.O.).

East. Its real aim was to arouse Muslim solidarity against British commercial and political interests in the Middle East generally. On the problem of Muscat and Sur the editor of the newspaper wrote in the January issue:

> "The British Government is as covetous as ever of the soil of the Arabs, and their consul, Mr. Cox, ceases not to devote all his energies to the acquisition of (British) sway over the territory of Oman. He is especially bent upon placing his grip upon Sur and the neighbourhood."

The author then goes on to give a version of Captain Cox's visit to Sur last January. The article concluded with the news that the French Government were sending up a "large ironclad, the "Infernet" for the protection of "their subjects" who own dhows flying the French flag, and that the Russian Government also intended sending men-of-war to the Gulf to safeguard the interests of the Russian trade.

The subject of the increased French influence in Oman was again brought into prominence in the summer of 1901, when Captain Cox with a geological expert[1] deputed by the Government of India, visited the neighbourhood of Sur in order to examine a coal reef said to be situated in the vicinity.[2] The exploration was conducted with the full knowledge and consent of the Sultan, it met with considerable opposition

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1. Dr. Von Krafit as a geologist.

2. Captain P. Cox's Report on inner Oman to H.S. Barnes, Secretary to the Government of India and the Foreign Department, No.229, 12 June 1901. F.O.27/3568, also Secret Letters from India, Vol.126. (India Office).

from local tribes, which Captain Cox attributed, apparently with justice, to the adverse influence of the French Consul Abdul-Aziz, who arrived at Sur in a French vessel (the "Infernet") a few days before the British party, and stirred up the tribes against them.

On 7 June 1901, a telegram was received from the Secretary of State, intimating that the Foreign Office considered it impossible to maintain that French protection and the use of the French flag were limited to the high seas and to ports outside the territory of the Sultan of Muscat; and that the issue by the Sultan of a notification, forbidding the use of the French flag by his subjects in Muscat territory or territorial waters, was thought to be undesirable.

In view of the previous declarations made by the British Government, an explanation was asked for in Lord Curzon's telegram of 30 June, in which a reference was made to Sir Mortimer Durand's letter of 11 August 1891, and a hope was expressed that the Government of India might be permitted to give the Sultan an assurance to the effect that the assertion of the French Government of a claim to jurisdiction over, and protection of, His Highness's subjects in Muscat territories and territorial waters would be regarded as incompatible with the Sultan's independence, and that the British Government would support him in resisting any such claim.

In the meantime the Government of India pointed out to Captain Cox the desirability of the Sultan's strengthening his authority over his subjects at Sur, whether French protégés or not, and suggested certain measures, i.e. the entertainment of a force of sepoys at Sur, had hitherto been deterred from taking a strong line by the fear of French interference on behalf of their Suri protégés.[1] Captain Cox had not yet communicated to the Sultan the views of the British Government as to the admissibility of the French claim to jurisdiction over their protégés in Muscat territory, and had expressed his conviction that it would be most prejudicial to British interests and to his own personal influence for him to do so.

Another important report which needs notice was the letter from the Foreign Office to Sir Edmund Monson, dated 14 August 1901, which contained M. Cambon's views of the situation. M. Cambon's Memorandum was chiefly directed towards showing that the papers which have been granted to the dhow-owners at Sur and elsewhere had been granted in accordance with the provisions of the Brussels Act, and that the charges that these dhow men engaged in the slave trade were unfounded. The Memorandum also contained a distorted account of the Sultan's proceedings with the French flag-holders

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1. Secret despatch from the Government of India to Foreign Office (External), No.128, 1 August 1901. F.O.27/3568. (P.R.O.).

at Sur, which were, M. Cambon was at pains to point out, inspired and supported by the British Government.

In a private letter to Lord George Hamilton the Viceroy declared:[1]

> "I shall certainly push the idea of strengthening the Sultan of Muscat at Sur. It occurred to me some time ago as perhaps the best means of frustrating French intrigues at that place. I am ready to supply an Indian ship-of-war, if necessary, to the Sultan of Muscat to defend his interests."

M. Cambon submitted a secret and elaborate Memorandum to the British Government.[2] He claimed that the French Government had made the most careful inquiries in regard to the accusations constantly brought against the Muscat and Sur dhows flying the French flag, or engaging in Slave Trade. They have caused investigations to be made in the French possessions in the Indian Ocean and by the French Consuls at ports in the Indian Ocean, with a view to revising the list of dhow owners authorized to fly the French flag. The Memorandum went on to state that unfortunately the British Resident, to whom the subsidy given by the Indian Government affords special means of influencing him, appeared to have suggested this attitude to His Highness. "In view of the assurances repeatedly given to the French Ambassador by the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Consul's

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 25 September 1901. Private Correspondence: Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, Vol XXI, D510/9. (India Office).

2. M. Cambon to Foreign Office. Inclosure 16 in No.1, 2 January 1902. F.O.27/3611. (P.R.O.).

action cannot be ignored by London, but there can be no doubt of the line he is adopting." The Memorandum in conclusion expressed the opinion that the Sultan should leave the French protégés in peace, if the British Agent allowed him. "If he refrains from molesting them, the French Government will have nothing to do, but to keep in force the measures which they have taken to prevent the proceedings of the dhows flying the French flag from giving rise to any complaint; if on the other hand, the Sultan of Muscat were encouraged to continue his attempts to hamper the French protégés in the exercise of their rights, a complicated and difficult situation might arise in Oman."

It was evident that the Sultan had been totally ignored in the course of these investigations, though the French Government promised to consult him. His Highness's contention was that none of them were "authorized" by international law.

Any inquiries made by the French Consul have been based on the assumption that the practice was constitutional. The British Government was well aware that in dealing with the Sultan the Representative had no power or opportunity for the juggling with the Muscat subsidy, except under very extraordinary and urgent circumstances, and on his own responsibility. When Captain Cox was appointed Consul to Muscat, he did, in pursuance of instructions given him in London and Simla, lay himself out to bring the Sultan to a

more lively sense of his own dignity, and his attitude in regard to the flag question was naturally regulated as his precedessor had been by the very explicit statement of the position communicated to the Sultan by Lord Lansdowne's Government on 11 April 1891, to the effect that "the use of the French flag by subjects of the Sultan of Muscat can have no effect as against His Highness." "I have never sought," wrote Captain P. Cox, "to encourage the Sultan to assert this position in any unconstitutional way."[1]

The practical outcome of the foregoing abstract may be summarised as follows:-

(1) The practice of granting French flags to the subjects of the Sultan at Muscat had grown up during the previous ten years, and had produced a state of affairs which constituted a standing menace to the Sultan's independence, and hampered him in exercise of his authority.

(2) There was sufficient evidence that the French flag-holders had engaged in the slave trade under cover of the French flag and probably with the connivance of the French Consul, and that flags and papers had been granted irregularly to persons who were not properly entitled to them. These charges had been laid before the French Government from time to time, and reparations had been promised.

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1. See Memorandum by Captain Cox dated 2 September 1902. F.O.27/3611. (P.R.O.).

(3) The Government of India had on several occasions caused the Sultan to be informed that he was at full liberty to uphold his own jurisdiction in his own territory or territorial waters over those of his subjects who had taken French flags and papers, and that the assertion of the French protection over Suri boats in Muscat waters would be regarded as a contravention of the Anglo-French Declaration of 1862. This principle was first announced to the Sultan in 1891, was again affirmed with the approval of the British Government in 1894; was implicitly asserted in the suggestion made by the Foreign Office in 1897, and was fully enjoined by the ultimatum presented to the Sultan in 1899. It was not until June, 1901 that instructions were received from the British Government which cast a doubt upon the tenability of the position which had been assumed by the Government of India.

(4) Neither the French Government nor the French Consular Representative have ever asserted in so many words the principle that the possession of French flag or papers by a Muscat territory, but, the French Consul had frequently acted on this assumption.

(5) The Sultan had actually issued a notification to the effect that he would not recognise in his territories (in the hands of his subjects) French flags and protection

papers, and would punish any of his subjects who took them without his written permission. He had also directed to issue a second notification forbidding any of his subjects to fly within his territory or territorial waters and foreign waters except under his own authority.

The first notification had, under the instructions of H.M.'s Government, been made to apply only to cases in which French flags and papers might be taken after issue of notifications: that is to say it had no effect against the dhow owners who possessed French flags and papers, although the latter were only valid for one year. The issue of the second notification had been prohibited under instructions from the British Government.

The Sultan had solicited, or at least had shown himself ready to solicit, British intervention with the French Government on his behalf, but though he had acted consistently in accordance with the advice given to him by the British Consul, he had been given no assistance in his difficulties with the French, and had received no assurance of support in the position which he had taken up by the advice of the British Representative.

II.

The Law Officers of the Crown advised that the right to use the flag of a country "is only that has been left to be regulated regularly by the laws of that country, but that the principle had rested on the assumption that the right will not be abused and that the permission to use the national flag will be granted only to vessels which can fairly be considered as national".[1] They further advised that "the case of the French flag to Suri-owned dhows is an abuse, and that such vessels might, even on the high seas, be treated as not entitled to the protection of that flag."

The Under Secretary of India's letter of 20 December 1898[2] expressed agreement with the opinion of the Government of India, founded on that of the Resident at Muscat, to the effect that nothing would be gained by urging the Sultan to prescribe to his subjects the exclusive use of a distinctive Muscat flag; that His Highness would be unable to enforce the use of such flag on his Suri subjects; that he would not dare to interfere with those who had already accepted the flag; and finally, that the influence of the French Vice-Consul at Muscat had grown considerably of late years. Lord George Hamilton suggested, therefore, that it would be

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1. The Law Officers of the Crown to the Marquis of Salisbury. Enclosure No.2, 4 August 1898, France. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

2. Foreign Office to India Office, 20 December 1898. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

better, in the first place, to ask the French Government to desist from granting the French flag to Muscat owned vessels. But, subject to any observations which Lord George Hamilton might have to make, it appeared to Lord Salisbury that there might be difficulties in following this line of procedure. The British Government had no positive authority or locus standi entitling them to represent the matter to the French Government, seeing that Muscat was not a British Protectorate, and they had received no request from the Sultan to do so. It would be possible to avoid any representation on the ground that the Sultan had by treaty given to England powers to search and detain Muscat vessels in connection with the suppression of the slave trade, and that the British Government could not allow the assumption of the French flag by such vessels to interfere with the exercise of a right thus formally delegated to them.

The British Government sincerely aimed at the prevention of the slave trade in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and the operation on increased facilities for passing under British flag. Sir Arthur Godley, Under Secretary of State for India, turned to the advice of the prominent international lawyers. In a note dated 25 January 1899,[1] Sir Arthur asked Sir Dennis FitzPatrick and Sir Arthur Wilson whether:

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1. Sir Arthur Godley to Sir Dennis FitzPatrick and Sir Arthur Wilson, 25 January 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

> "Could we not do something to increase the facilities for passing under the British flag? It may be that it would not be open to the French to protest against this possible British action on the ground that it was illegal from the point of view of their own municipal law, but nevertheless it would be prudent to see how the British stood with reference to their own law before moving."

Sir Dennis FitzPatrick, in his letter of 25 April 1899, raised the question as to the possibility of getting legislative sanction. He said:

> "It would not be wise of Parliament to help. It approved that parliamentary legislation while it has left Section 24 of Act X of 1841 standing, has placed it in somewhat awkward predicament with reference to that section, apart altogether from the question now before us, and this being so it might be possible to bring in a Bill to set us right generally, and at the same time take the opportunity of doing the little that would be needed to enable us to give our flag to the vessels now in question."

If it should ultimately turn out that there was a difficulty about giving a British flag, it would perhaps be possible to give some special flag that it would be recognised as in some sense British. Sir Dennis FitzPatrick pointed out that:

> "Where there is a protected State whose foreign relations are entrusted to Her Majesty's Government like North Bornoe, a special flag is given under some sort of Admiralty Warrant."

Sir Dennis FitzPatrick, apparently, had mentioned these points because Sir Arthur Godley had raised them, but he did not hesitate to declare his doubt whether "we could by granting any flag do much towards getting over our difficulties."

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1. Sir Dennis FitzPatrick to Sir Arthur Godley, 25 April 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

The granting of a flag would only help Britain in the case of shipowners to whom both she and the French were entitled to grant a flag, and in regard to whom she might hope to forestall the French, but, if the allegation that these ships took the French flag with a view to obtaining protection in carrying on the Slave Trade was true to any large extent, Britain should come off badly in the competition with the French. The 32nd Article of the Brussels Act provided that "owners of ships must be either subjects of or persons protected by the power whose flag they claim to carry," and the ordinary and natural course of things there would be hardly any persons who would be at the same time "subjects of or persons protected by" Her Majesty, and "subjects of or persons protected by" the French Government. But the French were accused by the British authorities of taking hold of Muscat subjects and having them under their protection, or in some cases naturalize them, simply in order to be able to give them their flag and this was clearly an evasion of the Brussels Act, and perhaps also, as the Law Officers of the Crown suggested in their opinion of 4 August 1898, contrary to the general principles of international law. But, meantime, it would be, apparently, a most important check on the action of the French if Britain got the Sultan to declare that he could not in his territory recognise any protection or naturalization conferred on his subjects

otherwise than with his sanction or under the provisions of a Treaty. The French could not say anything against this, as they had to acknowledge, after the most solemn considerations, that the Porte was in its right in taking exactly this course.

In his reply to Sir Arthur Godley, dated 4 August 1899, Sir Arthur Wilson followed the same attitude:[1]

> "The Merchant Shipping Act appears to me to prohibit the use of the British flag in the case of any ship owned wholly or in part by persons who are not British subjects. I do not see, therefore, how anybody can lawfully sanction the use of flag by such ships."

The Imperial British legislation in regard to the British flag was directed mainly against the use of the flag by vessels not entitled to it; for, as pointed out by Sir John Kirk,[2] "a British subject need only sell a share in his vessel to a foreigner to disqualify her from flying the British flag." On the other hand, it was possible that, if the share were small and were sold with the intention of evading the obligation of wearing the British flag, it might be held that the sale would not prevent action being taken against the vessel on her coming within British jurisdiction.[3]

It was known that the French authorities in the Indian Ocean constantly granted the French flag to native shipowners not of French nationality. In Ottoman, Persian, Muscat and

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1. Sir Arthur Wilson to Sir Arthur Godley, 4 August 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).
2. Memorandum by Sir John Kirk, 6 August 1899. Enclosure 2 in No.5. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).
3. Foreign Office to India Office, No.5, 27 September 1899. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

Zanzibar waters, craft flying the French flag, irrespective of nationality of the owner, claimed all the privileges of extra-territoriality enjoyed by French-owned ships. The immunity thus obtained by native-owned ships from all political control by the local authorities when in port, and by inspection of British cruisers when at sea, undoubtedly enable them to carry on the Slave Trade in a manner which would otherwise be impossible. The British Government have for this reason endeavoured, though without success, to induce the French Government to abandon the practice of granting the French flag to non-French ships. It appeared, therefore, desirable that, even from the point of view of suppression of the Slave Trade, there should be effectual means of preventing native ship-owners of British nationality, and also, if possible, British protected persons, from sailing their ships under a foreign flag; and apart from this consideration, it seemed in itself irregular that a ship-owner should sail under a flag other than that of his own nation. The Board of Trade thought it would be sufficient for a note to be issued by the British Government, stating that "attention having been called to the use on several occasions of flags other than British by British subjects and protected persons, the latter were reminded that they were liable to certain penalties for such use, under various provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act.[1]

1. Board of Trade's Memorandum on the flying of a Foreign Flag by British subjects. Enclosure 3 in No.5, 12 February 1898. F.O.27/3489. (P.R.O.).

The Law Officers of the Crown in their letter to Lord Salisbury[1] declared that "the right to use the flag of a country is one that has been left to be regulated by the laws of that country. But this has rested on the assumption that this right will not be abused, and that permission to use the national flag will be granted only to vessels which can be fairly considered as national."

That was a reasonable decision. The Arab Slave-Traders, to whom these permits were granted, did not become French subjects, and the allegation that they became French-protected persons were, it would appear, merely colourable. It was possible that they acquired this character by French law, but, in order to validate the claim to fly the French flag from the point of view of international law, they should be so in reality.

III.

Finally we come to the problem of British protection over Muscat. It appeared that the Agreement of 10 March 1862 between Great Britain and France would preclude Great Britain from assuming an exclusive protectorate over Muscat, without first coming to an understanding with France. This point was cleared early in December 1890 by the Foreign Office who wrote to Viscount Cross[2] saying that "on general grounds, however,

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1. Law Officers of the Crown to Lord Salisbury. Enclosure 5 in No.5, 4 August 1868. F.O.27/3589. (P.R.O.).

2. To Viscount Cross (Secret. External) No.113, 10 December 1890. Secret Letters from India (Government of India, Foreign Department). Vol.61 (India Office).

we think that there are good reasons for asserting a territorial protectorate over Muscat, and unless our relations with the country, and its rulers, for nearly a century past, are taken into consideration, we feel that neither France nor any other power, could, with justice, deny that Muscat falls legigitimately within the sphere of British influence for securing the protection of British interest." The issue with which involved the annexation of Muscat and Mattrah, and the pensioning of the Sultan, was not officially settled.[1] With regard to the second proposal - the establishment of an exclusive British Protectorate - the Government of India thought they adhered to the views expressed by Lord Lansdowne's Government, but they recognised that France would almost certainly object to the establishment of British protectorate over Oman, and might demand for the abrogation of the Anglo-French Declaration of 10 March 1862, which was a heavy price. Finally they did not therefore anticipate that H.M.'s Government would think it prudent to open negotiations with France at that time.

Most of the British officials in the Persian Gulf were in favour of declaring British protection over the Sultanate of Muscat. They pointed out that the authority of the

1. India Office to Foreign Office, No.43, 12 August 1895. Secret Letters from India, Vol.84. (India Office). See also India Office to Governor-General of India in Council. Secret despatch No.29, 24 October 1890. Political and Secret Despatches to India, p.145, Vol.16, 1890 (India Office).

Sultan was limited and feeble, that future troubles were anticipated, probably at an early date, and that the protection of their important interests in the coast town of Muscat and Mattrah could safely be left to his unaided efforts. Lord Curzon declared that:-

> "We venture to think, however, that the entire question should be regarded not merely in its local application, but also from the wider standpoint of national interest, and of the influence which may legitimately be claimed not alone by parity of treaty right but by concrete facts of history and geography, by Great Britain and France respectively in Oman. If French susceptibilities have been offended by the firm indication of British interests in the recent occurrences in Muscat, we, on our part, have we consider far more valid and solid ground for remonstrance against a course of action for which we can imagine no motive except that of supplanting our influence with the Sultan of that country. This influence is as we have shown a century old, and is the legitimate and inevitable consequence of neighbourhood, of a long course of friendly action, of close commercial relations, and of subsidiary position in which the Sultan has now stood for 25 years toward the British Government." [1]

Lord Curzon was trying to keep the Russians out of the Persian Gulf. He wrote to Lord George Hamilton saying "What is the good of the Russian Government assuring us of its almost passionate desire to be friends with us all over the world, when it is constantly performing almost deliberately unfriendly acts? A Russian Consul at Muscat simply meant

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. Private and Secret. 16 February 1899. Private Correspondence: Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, Vol.XIII. D 510/1. (India Office).

assistant to the French."[1] Curzon also told Hamilton that "A French coaling station at Muscat, where they have no bona fide interests, political or commercial, is an absurdity, unless it be intended as a deliberate act of political offence."[2]

It was an assertion of political equality, not called for in itself, but significant as a move in a concerted and well-planned game. "Coaling station to-day," said Lord Curzon, "it will be something else tomorrow; and the constitutional fiction of equality (for though it rests upon equality it is a fiction) will rapidly crystalline into a fact."[3]

Although Muscat was in theory an independent state, it had been for years in practice resembled an Indian Protectorate State. It was similar to the semi-French Kingdom of Cambodia, the independence and integrity of which the French Government guaranteed by a Treaty with Siam, but over which, nevertheless, they tolerated no interference. The intrusion of the French, therefore, at Muscat where they had no genuine interest, political or commercial, even though it had been based upon treaty rights, stood upon a different footing from a similar action elsewhere and could only be viewed in the light of a gratuitous attempt to give trouble to the British.

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 10 February 1899. Private Correspondence: Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, Vol.XIII, D510/1. (India Office).
2. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 2 February 1899. Private Correspondence: Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, Vol.XIII, D510/1. (India Office).
3. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 2 March 1899. Private Correspondence: Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, Vol.XIII, D510/1. (India Office).

IX. TURKEY'S CLAIM ON SOVEREIGNTY ON THE WESTERN COAST KOWEIT, BAHRAIN AND EL-KATR (1890-1899)

We must now turn to examine the British position over the Western Coast of the Gulf when Turkey was the main source of trouble.

During the last decade of the 19th century, the position of Koweit, as regards Turkey, had given rise to considerable discussion. There seems no doubt that in 1871, when Midhat Pasha made a successful attempt to reduce the Amir of Nejd to subjection, the Shaikh of Koweit declared himself on the Turkish side, assumed the Turkish flag, and was instrumental in inducing other Chiefs on the Arabian Littoral of the Persian Gulf to imitate his example. For this action he received the title of Pasha, and was granted considerable tracts of land in the neighbourhood of Fao. It would appear that about this time the Turkish Custom-House was established at Koweit but it must have been maintained for a short time only.

In 1876 Lieut. Col. Prideaux, the acting Resident at Bushire, enumerated as the principal Turkish ports on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf, Koweit, Kateef, and Ojair. In May 1878 the Government of India proposed that[1] "from

1. Government of India to India Office. 17 September 1878. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

Basrah to Ojair" (which is situated on the coast considerably south of Koweit) "the authority of the Porte should be recognized as established on land, but that on sea the British Government should continue to exercise some concurrent protectorate, pursuing pirates if necessary into Turkish waters and dealing with them wherever found, whether at sea or on shore within certain limits through the Resident in the Gulf." This proposal was discussed later by the Foreign Office and the India Office and somewhat modified. In a dispatch dated 5 January 1879, Lord Salisbury authorized Sir Henry Layard, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, to "propose to the Porte an arrangement by which the British ships-of-war should be instructed to pursue the operations for the repression of piracy as far as possible outside the territorial waters of the Arabian mainland north of Odeid, but should also have authority to pursue and capture piratical vessels within three miles limit on that part of the coast wherever this might seem indispensable to the sttainment of their object."[1] This arrangement, which would by implication have admitted the Turkish territorial sovereignty as far south as El-Odeid (which was south of Ojair) was mentioned by Sir Henry Layard to the Turkish Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, and

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1. Salisbury to Sir Henry Layard, No.12, 5 January 1879. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

submitted by them to the Council of Ministers, but got no further.[1]

I.

The appointment of a man of Nafiz Pasha's high rank, and a favourite and confidant of the Sultan, to be Wali of Basrah, which was still a second class Wilayat was for the object of extending Turkish influence southward in Eastern Arabia and the Persian Gulf. When Mr. P. Robertson, the British Assistant Political Agent at Basra called on him during December 1887 to discuss the Anglo-Turkish relations in the Persian Gulf , Nafiz Pasha did not hesitate to point out that his intention was to establish close and suitable relations with all the Chiefs of the coasts of the Persian Gulf; and with the Sultan of Muscat. His Excellency said that Bahrain Islands having formerly paid tribute to the Wahabi Amirs of Nejd had been subject to them; and that now all rights possessed by the Amirs having passed by conquest to the Ottoman Government.[2]

It was improbable that Nafiz Pasha's advances would expect the kind of response he desired from the Trucial Chiefs but they were considered as a first concrete challenge

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1. Sir Henry Layard to Foreign Office, No.496, 11 May 1880. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

2. From P. Robertson to the Political Resident in Turkish Arabia, No.297, 14 December 1887. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

to the long established maritime power in the Persian Gulf. Godley was instructed by Lord Cross to forward for the information of the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs copy of a telegram from the Viceroy of India[1] relative to an intention of Nafiz Pasha to effect a landing on the Island of Bahrain. As to the pretensions of the Ottoman Porte to sovereignty over Bahrain had been repeatedly rejected by the British Government, Lord Cross proposed to approve Lord Dufferin's instructions to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf that any attempt on the part of the Turkish authorities to effect a landing on Bahrain should be resisted. Lord Cross went further to suggest for the consideration of the Marquis of Salisbury that the Government of Turkey should be reminded of assurances given by Sever Pasha on 10 December 1871 to the British Ambassador at Constantinople that the Porte had not the least intention to attack or obtain any supremacy over Bahrain; and that the Porte should be urged to issue instructions to Nafiz Pasha to abstain from any interference in the affairs of Bahrain.[2]

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1. From Viceroy to Lord Cross. Telegraphic. 17 January 1888. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

2. Godley to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. 18 January 1888. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

II.

At Constantinople Sandison of the British Embassy told the Grand Vizier,[1] in an interview held at the request of the former, that orders had been given to the Royal Navy in the Persian Gulf to resist any landing at Bahrain by Turkish, Persian or Arabs from the mainland. His Highness replied that there was no intention whatsoever of sending Turkish troops to Bahrain.

The Turkish guard at El-Bada was increased to two companies of Infantry[2] and the Viceroy believed that serious movement was contemplated towards Oman, which would lead to a further extension of Turkish domination eastwards.[3] It was found that Ibn Rashid would lead or despatch a large force into Oman with Turkish support from El-Hasa and El-Katr. Salisbury told White that the British Government recognized Turkish jurisdiction on the Western Coast of the Persian Gulf as far south as El-Kateef, and were anxious that this should be efficiently exercised within those limits. Beyond that point they considered the Chiefs of the Coast to be independent and having arrangements with them the British Government would object to attempts to extend Turkish authority over them.[4]

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1. Sir William White to Salisbury. Telegraphic. 11 August 1888. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).
2. Viceroy to Salisbury. Telegraphic. 21 June 1888. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).
3. Viceroy to Salisbury. Telegraphic. 11 August 1888. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).
4. Salisbury to White. Telegraphic. No.101. 29 August 1888. F.O.78/5108, also Salisbury to White, No.269, 29 August 1888. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

Sir William White reported confidentially to Salisbury that Sultan Abdul-Hamid had sent Ahmed-Bin Asad on a friendly Mission to Nejd, and that the Sultan intended to place the province of El-Hasa under his jurisdiction whereas the Sultan was bent on turning Nejd into an Ottoman vassal province.[1] Whether or not the Ibn Rashid ever had the intention to invade Oman it was obvious that the chronic state of hostility between the Shaikh of El-Bada and Abu Dhabi on the borders of territories of the Sultan of Muscat afforded a tempting opportunity to the Sultan of Turkey to extend his authority and garrisons on the coast line in direction of the Indian Ocean.[2]

The Turkish Embassy in London sent the following Memorandum to the Foreign Office:

> "Le Gouverneur Général du Vilayet de Bassorah informe la Sublime Porte que M. le Consul d'Angleterre résident au chef bien de cette province demande la restitution des droits perçeus à Bassorah des hotelier originaires de Bahrain en alléguant que ces iles trouvet sous le protectorat anglais. Il est de fait certain que les habitant de Bahrain n'ont aucum droit à la protection Brittanique et le Ministére des Affaires Estrangéres est par consigneur persudé que l'ambassade de S.M. la Reine voudra bien, lorqui elle aura pris connaisance de ce qui précede, inviter son urgent à Bassorah à ne pas insister sur sa demande."[3]

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1. White to Salisbury. Telegraphic. No.172. Confidential. 9 May 1889. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).
2. White to Salisbury. No.265. 12 July 1889. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).
3. Minister des Affaires Etrangéres au M. Ford. le 22 Octobre. F.O.78/5108. (P.R.O.).

On 11 November 1892 the British Ambassador at Constantinople addressed a Note Verbal to the Sublime Porte drawing the attention of the Imperial Government to the assurance given on 10 December 1871 by Sever Pasha, the Minister for Foreign Affairs to M. Pisani, First Dragoman of the British Embassy to the effect that the Sublime Porte had no intention of obtaining any supremacy over the independent tribes on the Western coast of the Persian Gulf, and stating that, as Bahrain was now under the protection of the Queen of England, no interference by Ottoman authorities with natives of that Island could be admitted.[1]

In reply the Turkish Ambassador on 19 April told the Foreign Office:

> "Sa protection dont les Consul Anglais pritendant courier en Turquie les Parsit pas se concilier avec les assurances antérieurs donnéesà ce sujet par le Foreign Office; et Rustem Pasha a été par la Sublime Porte de demander au Gouvernment de sa Majesté que le Consul Anglais à Bassorah soit invité à ne plus intervenir dans ils affairs de gens de Bahrain et a cosser de leur accorde une protection laquelle ils n'ont aucun droit". 2

Ford informed Said Pasha on 22 April 1893 that in view of recent events at El-Katr, Her Majesty's Government had directed the British Resident at Bushire to proceed to that place of a ship-of-war to enquire into the affairs of the

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1. Note Verbal from Sir Clare Ford to The Sublime Porte. 11 November 1892. Enclosure No.1. P.273. Political and Secret Despatches to India. Vol.22. (India Office Library).

2. From the Turkish Embassy London to Foreign Office. 19 April 1893. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

Shaikhdom.[1] Said Pasha expressed surprise at the communication Ford made to him, and stated that the place in question formed most of the Wilayat of Basrah and had been in occupation of Turkish troops under a Turkish Governor for the last 25 years, during which period barracks have existed there, on which waved the Turkish flag. Said Pasha also informed Ford that the appearance of the ship-of-war in those waters would produce considerable excitement among the Arabs.

Ford recommended that an effort be made to procure the withdrawal of the Turks from El-Katr Peninsular, and to reinstate on a footing of independence the El-Katr Chiefs Jasim and Ahmed Al-Thani. The latter had been authorized by his brother to settle pending questions with the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf and had undertaken to renew the Treaty of 1868 on the same terms as those recently entered into with the Shaikh of Bahrain. It was also understood the El-Katr Chiefs would be willing to pay a small yearly installment or reasonable indemnity which might be demanded by the Turks for the cession of its supposed rights at Bada and its withdrawal from El-Katr. Lord Kimberley suggested that negotiations should be entered into with the Sultan for the withdrawal of the Turkish establishment on that coast.[2]

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1. Sir Clare Ford to Foreign Office. No.67 23 April 1893. F.O.78/5109 (P.R.O.).

2. Kimberley to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. 1 May 1893. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

Sir Arthur Nicholson caused some confidential enquiries to be made as to whether the Ottoman Government were contemplating any action in consequence of the defeat Shaikh Jasim had inflicted on the troops sent by the Wali of Basrah against him.[1] The result of this enquiry tended to show that the Imperial Council of Ministers were desirous of taking decisive steps for punishing Shaikh Jasim, but that that advice was overuled by the Sultan who seemed to have listened to the more peaceful counsel of Shaikh Abu-Ul-Huda[2]. The latter personage wasreported to have suggested that means should be adopted for inducing Shaikh Jasim[3] to make his submission to the Shah. The Naqib of Basrah, under instructions from Abu-Ul-Huda visited Shaikh Jasimand persuaded him to sign letters of submission which had been sent to the Porte. Nicholson thought that it did not seem likely that the Ottoman Government would, at any rate for the moment undertake serious action and she might very probably be endeavouring to settle matters by diplomatic means.

Meanwhile the Ottoman Government had of late distinctly asserted its claims to sovereignty over the El-Katr. The

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1. Sir Arthur Nicholson to Earl of Rosebery. No.287 confidential. 28 June 1893. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

2. Abu-Ul-Huda on Turkish Foreign Policy. Memorandum dated 3 February 1896. Lord Currie's Private Papers. Foreign Office Library.

3. Shaikh Jasim resigned as Kaim-Makam of El-Katr under protest Major Sadler to Viceroy No.13. 25 June 1893. Secret letters for India. Government of India,Foreign Dept. Vol.73 of 1893. (India Office).

Turkish local authorities forbade Captain Streeten, of H.M.S. "Brisk" from holding torpedo practise in the harbour of El-Bada and prevented the officers of the ship from visiting the shore.[1]

In an interview Nicholson had with the Grand Vizier on 18 November 1893 he stated that the nature of the convention entered into on 31 May 1861 between the Shaikh of Bahrain and the British Government, the ruler of the former must be regarded as entirely independent of Turkish Sovereignty and that any interference on the part of the local Turkish authorities would not be tolerated by the British Government. His Highness remarked that he was not disinclined to show any opinion, but whilst maintaining that the Turkish Government possessed claims over Sovereignty of Bahrain, he promised to issue instructions to the Governor General at Basrah to refrain from interfering further with its affairs. He concluded by observing that the fact of the British Authorities excercising a protectorate on Turkish territory over the inhabitants of Bahrain would have the effect of exciting the fanatical feelings of the wild Arab tribes along the Western coast of the Persian Gulf[2].

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1. Viceroy to Kimberley. Government of Indoa, Foreign Dept. No.141. Secret and Confidential 11 July 1893. Secret Letters of India. Vol.70 of 1893. (India Office).
Governor of El-Kateef proclaiming that whole Western Coast should be considered within their jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire. Text: The Governor's proclamation 20 Aug. 1893. Secret Letters from India. Vol.72 of 1893. (India Office

2. Nicholson to Kimberley. No.532. Confidential. 19 Nov.1893. F.O.78/5109. See also Nicholson to Rosebery. No.598. 26 Dec.1893. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

Bahrain was not within the jurisdiction of any British Consular Representatives, but fell within the sphere of duties of the Political Representative of the Indian Government in the Persian Gulf; and having regard to the relations that existed between the British Government and the Shaikh. On the occasion in question, Col. Wilson's visit was in ordinary course. He arrived at Bahrain in H.M.S. "Sphinx" on 4 March, accompanied by a member of the Residency who was also Vice Consul at Bushire. Among the matters discussed was a complaint at the annoyance to which the people of Bahrain visiting Basrah in course of business were liable, owing to the pretensions of the Turkish authorities to treat them as Ottoman subjects.[1]

III.

The Political Representative in the Persian Gulf reported on 17 April 1895 that the Al-Bu-Ali tribe, a branch of the Uttobees, who made themselves master of Bahrain in 1783, had

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1. From Col. F. Wilson, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to the Secretary of the Government of India, Foreign Dept. No.50, 22 June 1894. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).
The question of Bahrain was raised at the Conference Sanitaire de Paris during February 1894. The Ottoman delegate Zurkha Bey considered Bahrain as "integral part of the Ottoman Empire." His claim was backed by the French and Italian delegates. Sir Philip Currie, presenting Britain, warned the delegates that his Government would not sign any sanitary agreement if the Conference considered Turkey's claim over these Islands. (Letters from Paris, 9, 14, 21 February 1894). Lord Currie's Private Papers. (Foreign Office Library).

deserted and were forming a settlement at Zobara with the support of Shaikh Jasim of El-Bada. The Government of India authorised the Resident to warn Shaikh Jasim that the settlement would not be allowed. The Resident wished to enforce the warning by seizing the Al-Bu-Ali's boats. The Government of India said that this might raise the question of Turkish jurisdiction in El-Katr.[1] The settlement at Zobara was, however, a menace to Bahrain.

The Turkish military authorities decided on sending troops to Zobara. This action was reported to the Foreign Office by the Viceroy who considered it as a serious menace to the security of Bahrain.[2]

Meanwhile the Earl of Kimberley requested the British Ambassador at Constantinople to call the attention of the Porte to this matter and to state that the Government of India would be compelled to take measures for the protection of the Chief of the Island.[3]

Sir Philip Currie lost no time in informing the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs of the renewed intention of the Al-Bu Ali tribe to form a settlement at Zobara on the

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1. Secretary to Indian Government, Foreign Dept. and Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Telegraphic. 22 May 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
2. From Viceroy to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. 21 May 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
3. Earl of Kimberley to Sir Philip Currie, No.266, 3 May 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).

Persian Gulf, with the support of the Turkish Mutassarif of El-Hasa.[1] The Viceroy in a telegram dated 3 July 1895 asked the Political Resident to issue strict orders to Shaikh Sultan to return immediately with his tribe to Bahrain, and to state his allegiance to Bahrain Chief.[2] The Shaikh refused to reply, and H.M.S. "Sphinx" accordingly seized seven boats without opposition.[3]

Turkish authorities protested on this action, claiming Zobara as Turkish territory and Al-Bu Ali as having come under Turkish protection. Soon after the Turkish ship-of-war Zohaf arrived at El-Kateef Coast with reliefs on board and it looked as if the Turkish meddling was at the root of the whole difficulty. The Viceroy instructed the Resident to inform the Mudir of Zobara that the Turkish claims to Bahrain were totally inadmissible and anyone making an attempt against Bahrain must take the consequences.[4] He also recommended strong remonstrances to the Porte on proceedings of their local officials on Katr Coast, over which Britain admitted no Turkish jurisdiction.

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1. Sir Philip Currie to Kimberley, No.206, 22 June 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
2. From Viceroy to Political Resident. Telegraphic. 3 June 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
3. From Viceroy to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. 14 July 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
4. Viceroy to Political Resident. Telegraphic. 4 August 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).

The Marquis of Salisbury who had just come to the Foreign Office conferred on 20 and 22 August, with the Turkish Ambassador, Tawfik Pasha, on the Anglo-Turkish relations in the Persian Gulf and it appeared that the menacing situation produced by Turkey was becoming an element of danger.

Lord George Hamilton considered that the suzerainty exercised by Great Britain over Bahrain justified the adoption of forcible measures for the recovery of the Bahrain coasts which were detained at Zobara by Turkish authorities.[2] The Mutassarif of El-Hasa had written to the Political Resident of the Persian Gulf accusing him of violating Nejd coast by seizing boats of the Al-Bu Ali; and warning him that the people of El-Katr felt impelled to attack Bahrain and stating that he had restrained them hitherto, but could not restrain them longer.[3]

The result of the operations undertaken had been entirely satisfactory. About forty-four of the Arab dhows had been destroyed and several others captured. Zobara had been [illegible] Turks, and a number of Al-Bu Ali tribe had returned to the allegiance of the Shaikh of Bahrain, while Shaikh Jasim-Bin Thani of El-Bada at whose instigation

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1. Marquis of Salisbury to India Office. 22 August 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
2. Hamilton to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. 3 September 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
3. Viceroy to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. 14 September 1895. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).

and with those support the recalcitrant tribe had endeavoured to form a settlement at Zobara, had disclaimed any responsibility for any hostile proceedings against Bahrain.

The Russian Embassy at Constantinople, who had lately received telegrams from St. Petersburg and Baghdad, reporting the occupation of Zobara by an English force, the hoisting of the Union Jack there and the exaction of heavy indemnities from the Arabian Shaikhs under Turkish protection in the Persian Gulf, had been using very strong language at the Porte in regard to England's "grasping" policy vis à vis Turkey, and had not failed to point out how she never lost an opportunity of seizing some port of the Sultan's dominions in Cyprus, Egypt and now the Persian Gulf. As regards the incident at Zobara Mr. Herbert the British Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople did not fail to point out to Lord Salisbury that the Russian Embassy would make the most of it, in order to embarrass them.[1]

The Sultan, prejudicial from the first against Britain, easily took offence to the claims on Bahrain, and taking into consideration the unscrupulous methods of the Russian Embassy who were well aware of His Majesty's proud and susceptible character, it was easy to understand the difficulties which English diplomacy had to face.

Sir Philip Currie addressed on 4 July 1896, a Note Verbal

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1. Herbert to Salisbury, No.455, 10 June 1896. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).

to the Sublime Porte on the right of the British Consular Office to protect subjects of the Shaikh of Bahrain.[1] The Porte did not reply and the latter protested and it appeared from the correspondence of the British Consul General at Baghdad that the Turks intended to disregard Britain's contention that the Bahrainees were British protected persons, and the right of the British Consular Offices to intervene on their behalf.[2]

It was not until November 1896 that the Turkish Ambassador in London protested on the Zobara incident. In a letter dated 6 November of that year and addressed to the Marquis of Salisbury, Anthopolous Pasha, the Turkish Ambassador, stated that Zobara had been under the domination of the Turkish Empire from the earliest times, and that the Imperial Government considered that the proceedings of Her Majesty's ships against a tribe which had taken refuge under the Ottoman flag constituted an act of hostility incompatible with the friendly relations existing between the two countries.[3]

Lord Salisbury in reply, reminded Anthopolous Pasha of what was stated in regard to Bahrain and Zobara in the Memorandum which was communicated to His Excellency's predecessor

1. Memorandum from Sir Philip Currie to the Sublime Porte, No.36, 4 April 1896. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
2. Mokler to Sir Philip Currie, No.293/52, 22 June 1896. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
3. L'Ambassadeur de Turquie à le Marquis de Salisbury, le 6 Novembre 1896. Enclosed in a private letter from Salisbury to Sanderson, 7 March 1896. F.O.78/5110.(P.R.O.).

Rustem Pasha, on 23 August 1895. Lord Salisbury continued to say that "Her Majesty's Government adheres to the view expressed in that Memorandum and they consider that the measures in question were necessary for the defence of Bahrain which is under the protection of Great Britain, and they cannot contest that the portion of the coast on which Zoabara is situated is within the jurisdiction of Turkey."[1]

The Government of India expressed their full concurrence with the Foreign Office in endeavouring to admit these claims, and in insisting on the rights of the British Consular Officer to intervene in Ottoman territories on behalf of subjects of the Bahrain Chief.[2] The position of the Shaikh of Bahrain now changed. On 22 December 1886 and on 13 March 1892 the Chief bound himself and his successors by an engagement to abstain from entering into negotiations or making treaties with any Government other than the British without the consent of the British Government the established Consular Agencies or coal depôts in Bahrain save with the consent of the British Government. The Chief was, therefore, to a considerable extent already under the protection of the Government of India, and he seemed anxious to provide for a forceful

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1. Salisbury to Anthopolous Pasha, 5 December 1896. F.O.78/5110.

2. Lord Elgin to Lord George Hamilton. No.200 of 1896. Government of India Foreign Dept. Secret External. 30 December 1896. F.O.78/5110. See text of the agreement between Britain and the Shaikh of Bahrain. C.U. Aitcheston, Collection of Treaties etc. Calcutta, 1933. Vol.XI, p.238. (Appendix No.111).

succession by obtaining the formal recognition of the Government of India to the succession of his son Shaikh Hamid. To this Sir Thomas Sanderson stated that Lord Salisbury had seen no objection to authorise the Indian Government to accede to the Chief's wishes.

Clouds soon gathered over Bahrain, and Britain was faced with a new dilemma. French and Russian co-operation which appeared to be real at Muscat moved northward to Bahrain. The Russian and French offensive failed this time mainly because neither the geographic position of Bahrain nor the nature of the British engagements with the Chief were of any help to their objectives. A French agent, M. Goguger, appeared in Bahrain in the early days of December 1898 for the purpose of buying off the lease of Bahrain customs for Rs 400,000 a year.[1] M. Goguger reminded the Chief of France's cordial relations with the Sultan of Muscat and of Russia's intention to seize the port of Bunder Abbas from Persia. The Chief rejected the French offer and repeated his allegiance to previous engagements with Great Britain, the power which has recently saved from pro-British attack.

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1. Foreign Office to India Office, No.2, 10 January 1898. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).

IV.

Two Memoranda prepared in 1896-97, at the time when Shaikh Mubarak of Koweit was making efforts to consolidate the position he had acquired by the murder of his brothers, show considerable divergence between the view of the British official as to the actual status of Koweit at this time.

The first by Mr. Stourides, legal adviser to the British Embassy at Constantinople (dated 6 July 1896) contained the following statement:[1]

> "The country of Koweit, although entirely independent, figures in the maps as being part of the Ottoman Empire; the reigning family possess large landed property at Basrah, and especially at Fao which belong to them. This is the reason why the Shaikh accepts the investiture sanctioned by the Sultan, who grants him the title of Kaim-Makam, with the title of Pasha, of which the Shaikh does not deign to make use."

A subsequent Memorandum by Captain Whyte, formerly British Consul at Bushire stated:

> "Mr. Stourides describes Koweit as being entirely independent, but it seems that the acceptance by the Shaikh of an appointment from the Sultan as Kaim-Makam precludes the possibility of any foreign power recognizing under present conditions his independence." 2

In view of the conflicting statements, Sir Philip Currie, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, inquired

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1. Attached to Sir Philip Currie's telegram to Foreign Office. No.465, 16 July 1896. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

2. Whyte to Sir Philip Currie, No.203, 24 March 1897. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

what was the view of the British Government to Turkish authority. The answer was that "Her Majesty's Government have never admitted Koweit is under the protection of the Turkish Government. But while it is practically under Turkish influence, it is doubtful whether we could deny the latter."[1]

The Government of India were at the time inclined to recognize Turkish authority in order to extract satisfaction from the Ottoman Government for the alleged connection of Koweit with a piratical attempt on the Indian vessel "Hariposa" during the previous year.[2]

By the autumn of 1897, the question of Koweit had assumed more political importance. The Shaikh Mubarak, despairing of obtaining from Turkey a recognition of his independence, had called for a definite request for British protection.[3]

The answer of the British Government was conveyed in a telegram to the Government of India, stating that "they are not disposed to interfere more than necessary for maintenance of general peace of the Persian Gulf, or to grant protection

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1. Foreign Office to Sir Philip Currie, No.307, 1 July 1897. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).
2. India Office to Foreign Office, 24 March 1897. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.). Secret Letters from India, Vol.92. (India Office).
3. From Viceroy (Telegraphic) 19 September 1897. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.). Secret Letters from India, Vol.91. (India Office). From Viceroy to Foreign Office, 13 October 1897. Secret Letters from India, Vol.93. (India Office).

to Koweit."[1]

But this declaration was afterwards modified. In his excellent and confidential Memorandum on Koweit's affairs Col. Meade, the officiating Political Resident in the Persian Gulf said:[2]

> "Koweit possesses an excellent harbour, and will, under our protection, undoubtedly become one of the most important places in the Persian Gulf. Apart from the chance of its being the sea port for the projected railway from Port Said, which is under consideration, and which the possession of Koweit would enable us to protect, the trade with the interior is already considerable, and will greatly increase. Piracy and Slave Trade would receive a blow if we brought the place under our protection, and would also enable us to exercise a supervision over its trade which would undoubtedly advance our interests in the Persian Gulf."

The Shaikh, though he had procured his title by double murder, appeared to British officers in other respects a popular and enlightened ruler. It was urged (1) that the responsibility of protection would be amply repaid, (2) that the Shaikh's position was precarious. If the British help was refused, he would make terms with Turkey or risk protection elsewhere, in either case changing the "status quo" to British disadvantage. Sir Nicholas O'Conor was consulted,

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1. Foreign Office to Indian Government. Telegraphic. India Office, No.23, 13 March 1898. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

2. Col. Meade to Secretary to Government of India (Confidential) No.20, 25 April 1897. F.O.78/5113.(P.R.O.).

but before any reply was received the India Office was informed as follows:[1]

> "If the Government of India is of the opinion that the Protectorate can be undertaken without difficulty, or inconvenient extension of the duties of the police already exercised in the Persian Gulf, Lord Salisbury would approve of such a step, and would be prepared to acquiesce in the establishment of such protectorate, and to support it diplomatically in case the Porte should raise counter-claims."

O'Conor's observations were shortly afterwards received.[2] While supporting generally the idea of British protectorate he pointed out that caution was necessary. A minute existed recording a conversation between Sandison, Oriental Secretary to the British Embassy at Constantinople, and the Grand Vizier, which implied a recognition of Turkish sovereignty as far as El-Kateef. The Grand Vizier was of the opinion that any formal assertion of British Protectorate would produce very serious diplomatic complications. He thought, however, that acts of piracy and of regular traffic in slaves would justify the interference of the Indian Government and afford ground for coming to a direct and special arrangement with the Shaikh, which needed not necessarily to be made public, if such frequent acts were of frequent occurrence. At this

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1. Foreign Office to Viceroy (Telegraphic) 24 December 1898. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

2. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Lord Salisbury, No.667 (Secret), 22 December 1898. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.). Memorandum addressed by Sandison to Sir William White, 4 July 1898, enclosed in the previous letter. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

stage more decisive action was precipitated by the report of a Russian railway concession from Tripoli in Syria to Koweit on the Persian Gulf.

It was then proposed to enter into a separate engagement which was to take the form of a promise by the Shaikh not to alienate any portion of his territory to any Foreign Power, and was to be considered distinct from the question of an ultimate British Protectorate. The Imperial Government merely availed themselves of the superior facilities for negotiation possessed by the Government of India,[1] while in no way pledging the latter to accept any liability under any circumstances that might arise in the future. The proposition for the establishment of the Protectorate was tacitly dropped, though the Government of India was of the opinion at the time that the proposed negotiations would have a Protectorate as their final result.

The Viceroy called on Col. Meade not to proceed to Koweit unless he was satisfied that "Mubarak is in imminent danger."[2] He asked the Officiating Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to enter into secret engagement with the Shaikh on the lines of the agreement with Muscat of 20 March 1890, but

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1. To India Office, Very Secret (Telegraphic) and draft Reference to F.O. letter of 4 January. Secret and immediate. 18 January 1899. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

2. From Viceroy to Col. Meade (Telegraphic) 18 January 1899. F.O.78/5113 (P.R.O.). Secret Letters from India, Vol.116. (India Office).

in more precise terms: he had already called the attention of Col. Meade that "Government desire to take immediate steps with utmost secrecy possible, in order to avoid suspicion attaching to open Protectorate."[1]

It was obvious that a declaration of open protectorate over Koweit might evoke serious responsibilities if the Turkish Government should either resent those measures or take steps to counteract them. The motives by which the Shaikh might be actuated would not be confined to him. The Amir of Nejd would equally be desirous of making the best he could for himself by playing off one power against another, and it was known that very little reliance could be placed on the good faith of either. Engagements made to protect Koweit and to restrain the Shaikh from further aggression upon Nejd might lead to serious interference in the affairs of both Chiefs,[2] and to the establishment of authoritative control, which might in time require a material force upon the spot for its enforcement.

On 23 January 1899, the Shaikh signed an agreement (to be kept utterly secret) pledging himself not only to cede no territory but to receive no Foreign Representatives without British sanction. In return for this he was promised

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1. From Viceroy, 9 January 1899. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.). Secret Letters from India, Vol.116. (India Office).

2. Viceroy to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. 12 February 1899. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

the good offices of the British Government, and a payment was made of 15,000 rupees from the Bushire treasury. The Government of India were also authorized to instruct British naval officers to prevent by force any attempt on the part of the Turks to attack Koweit.[1] The conclusion of the Agreement, however, involved a serious problem regarding the position of the Shaikh in Turkish territory. Aliens were by Turkish law precluded from holding landed property, and it was found that, if the Shaikh were suspected of having agreed to a British Protectorate, the Turkish authorities would attempt to dispossess Mubarak of his property near Fao. The hope was, therefore, held out that the British would "do what they could"[2] to protect him and his brothers in the matter.

It was not possible to carry out such an important negotiation without the knowledge of the Shaikh's brothers, who had known all along of his overtures to Britain, as they were co-sharers in the family property, it was desirable to have their assent. As this, however, could not be obtained, Shaikh Mubarak's signature was eventually attested by Agha Muhammad Rahim, the British Agent at Bahrain.[3]

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1. O'Conor to Lord Salisbury. Secret. No.328, 5 July 1899. F.O.28/5114. (P.R.O.).

2. Consul Wratislaw to O'Conor, No.27. Confidential. 3 January 1899. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

3. Col. Meade to the Secretary to the Government of India. No.10. Enclosure 1. (Confidential) 30 January 1899. Secret Letters from India, Vol.16. (India Office).

While, however, a decided advantage had been obtained by the conclusion of this agreement, it must be borne in mind that the fact that the Sabah family possessed considerable estates in Turkish territory complicated relations with them. According to Turkish law aliens could not hold landed property in Turkey, and they feared that if they passed under protection of the British Government, the Turks would put the law in operation, and deprive them of their estates, which formed their chief source of revenue. Shaikh Mubarak himself appeared to understand this, and to realize the advantage which would result to the Arab rulers of Koweit from having an understanding with the British Government. So long, therefore, as the agreement was kept secret, no difficulty was likely to arise; but the Turkish authorities were no doubt aware of Mubarak's relations with the British.

Mubarak asked for a definite promise of protection and assistance, especially in regard to the property belonging to his family situated in Turkish territory, and he declared that these assurances should form part of the document which he was asked to sign. As he still pressed for guarantee being given that the British Government would guard the family property in Turkish territory, Col. M.J. Meade informed him that he must leave Koweit, and ask for fresh instructions if he did not see his way to sign the agreement as it stood, and accept the general assurance of the good

offices of the British Government. On 23 January the Shaikh signed the agreement.[1] Col. Meade followed his example and his signature was duly attested by Capt. Hore, I.M.S., Residency Surgeon, and Mr. Gaskin, who had accompanied him. After he had signed the Shaikh said he would like to call in his brother Hamud, to show him the agreement and get him to attest his signature. He evidently expected that his brother would do this without raising any difficulties. Hamud refused to sign the former document, and declared that it was necessary that the British Government should engage to protect the family in their Turkish property before he could be party to an engagement which might bring him into conflict with the Turks.

Col. Meade recommended[2] that negotiations with Turksy should not be delayed and one gun-boat should be kept ready at the end of the Gulf to stop any attempt by Turkish authorities at Basra to send a force by sea. But he also asked that action should not be taken unless the Navy would know the exact destination of the Turkish ship-of-war, "Zohaf".[3]

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1. Letter from Foreign Office to Admiralty (Secret) 6 February 1899. See also enclosed report on the Secret Agreement. Admiralty 1/7422. (P.R.O.).

2. Col. Meade to the Secretary to the Government of India. No.58. (Confidential) 7 May 1899. F.O.78/5133. (P.R.O.).

3. The Ottoman ship "Kilid-el-Bahr" was now ordered to Basrah. O'Conor to Wratislaw, No.22, 22 September 1899. F.O.602/119 (Various Embassy and Consular addresses) Special Volume on movements of men-of-war in Persian Gulf, 1891-1901. (P.R.O.).

An appointment made at this time seemed likely to disturb the peaceful outlook. Hamdi Pasha, the new Wali of Basrah, was intimately acquainted with the family history of the Shaikhs of Koweit, and opposed the present ruler.[1]

During Hamdi's first tenure of office Mubarak had procured the murder of his two brothers and usurped the Shaikhdom. Hamdi supported the claim of the nephews, urging upon the Porte the necessity for effective occupation of Koweit and the danger of recognizing a determined usurper who would aim at independence.[2] For the moment Mubarak's position was precarious, but with much energy and decision he succeeded in buying every official of any importance and, fully, secured his investiture. Two years later the re-appointment of Hamdi Pasha seemed to forbode the revival of a counter-claim on behalf of the nephews, and with it, in all probability, a reassertion of the dormant rights of Turkey.

Hamdi Pasha spontaneously introduced the subject of Koweit in the course of conversation with Wratislaw, the British Consul at Basrah, on 4 June 1899. His Excellency stated that reports of British design have much disturbed

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1. Consul Wratislaw to Sir Nicholas O'Conor, No.27. Confidential. 3 January 1899. F.O.78/51141. See also Secretary of State's telegram to Viceroy, 16 February 1899. F.O.78/5113.(P.R.O.).

2. O'Conor to Lord Salisbury,No.259. Secret. 24 May 1899. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

the Sultan and that foreign representatives who have views of their own on Koweit were exciting His Majesty's suspicions.[1] The Wali was confident that if O'Conor were to approach the Sultan on the subject personally, His Majesty would welcome such an opportunity of frankly discussing the matter and arriving at a friendly settlement. Sir Nicholas accepted this proposal only if he was approached by the Sultan himself.[2]

O'Conor looked on the matter more cleverly than the Government of India. "If the Turks are preparing to attack Koweit", he wrote privately to Sir Thomas Sanderson, "I do not see why we should not give a word of serious warning to Turkish Government before proceeding to employ force."[3]

Meanwhile Col. Meade told Lord Curzon privately that "British protection should be afforded to Mubarak as soon as possible, as otherwise the pretended Turkish protection will be made real, and Koweit will become really, as well as in name, a port of the Basra Villyat."[4] He went on to say "I am positive to think that if Turkey or any other power (Russia) gets permanent influence at Koweit it will be the

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1. From Mr. Wratislaw to Sir Nicholas O'Conor, 4 June 1899. (Confidential) Enclosed in Sir Nicholas O'Conor's letter No.292 (Secret) 6 January 1899. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

2. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Lord Salisbury, No.328. Secret. 5 July 1899. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

3. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Sir Thomas Sanderson, 6 February 1899. Private. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

4. Col. Meade to Curzon. Private. Bushire, 28 March 1898. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

worse for us."

The outward and visible sign of Turkish supremacy in Koweit was the acceptance by the Shaikh of the post of Kaim-Makam, but though this was frequently mentioned in despatches, it seemed as if Mr. Stourides' view was correct. It would certainly have been more satisfactory if Britain could have come to an arrangement about Koweit in 1897, before the Shaikh was offered Turkish recognition, but there was no doubt that neither he nor his predecessors have considered that any recognition or title bestowed by the Sultan affected the independent position at Koweit itself, and that the title of Kaim-Makam, when accepted, had been chiefly regarded as referring to their states in Turkey, the possession of which was undoubtedly a source of weakness to them, as they were liable to be constantly harassed in regard to these properties by Turkish officials. Mubarak was well aware that whatever recognition he might have received from the Sultan, would be of little avail if it suited the Turks to support his nephews against him, and he himself welcomed the opportunity of obtaining British support. There was no doubt that whatever may have been done to reassure the Shaikh by offering him recognition and a title, the Turks had for some time been waiting for a favourable opportunity to interfere in Koweit affairs, with the object of completely absorbing

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1. Mr. Stourides, 6 July 1896. F.O.78/5113. O'Conor to Lord Salisbury, 15 February 1899. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).

it into the Turkish Empire.

A local quarantine Board on several occasions attempted to impose illegal and vexatious restrictions on British vessels in the Gulf, but its protests were disregarded when clearly contrary to the Venice Convention, and Col. Meade understood that the "Quarantine arrangements under the Sanitary Board at Constantinople in no way implied that the Turks have any jurisdiction or rights at Koweit."[1]

It was reported that a Turkish Harbour Master had been appointed. This was considered a more serious matter, and for the first time since the conclusion of the Agreement, it was proposed to intimate to the Porte the interest taken by the British Government in the Shaikh's affairs.[2]

After consultation with the India Office, Sir Nicholas O'Conor was informed that this "was not a matter we could recognize as depending on the Porte. Turkish Government should be warned we have friendly relations with the Shaikh, and that a disagreeable question would be raised if it was attempted to establish Turkish Customs without previous agreement with Her Majesty's Government.[3]

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1. Col. Meade to Secretary to the Government of India, No.59, 6 May 1899. (Confidential) F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
2. India Office to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 7 September 1899. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
3. Foreign Office to O'Conor, No.87. Telegraphic. 8 September 1899. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

X. TURKEY'S CLAIM ON SOVEREIGNTY ON THE WESTERN COAST KOWEIT, BAHRAIN AND EL-KATR (1899-1902)

I.

The Sultan himself was very much interested in the Koweit affairs. In a letter dated 4 September 1899 to the British Ambassador His Majesty wrote that he was aware of the important interests of England in the Persian Gulf and of the desire of Her Britannic Majesty not to allow any Foreign power to interfere with their routes to India. His Majesty ha , therefore, desired him to state that if British interests were threatened by another power he was ready and willing to prevent this by armed forces.[1]

A gun boat was ordered to Koweit, but, at the suggestion of O'Conor[2] it was afterwards directed merely to call at Koweit and come away. It was easy, he thought, to watch Turkish action and to counteract it without any hostile demonstration.

Admiral Douglas had reported in February that in case of attack the Navy alone could undertake the defence of Koweit Mamdi Pasha was soon afterwards dismissed. The cause of

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1. Enclosed in O'Conor to Foreign Office, No.442, 4 September 1899. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

2. O'Conor to Foreign Office, No.41. Telegraphic. 12 September 1899. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

his fall was neither apparent nor important, but the effect was to replace a prominent official with a definite anti-British policy by a rival who, in order to maintain his position was anxious for the moment to avoid controversial matters, and to limit the interference of the Government in the Shaikh's affairs.[1]

But difficulty had already arisen in the first direction. It had become apparent to the German railway from Konia to Baghdad that an outlet upon the sea was virtually necessary to their scheme. They proposed, therefore, to acquire Kathama Bay at the Western end of Koweit Harbour and Sir Nicholas reported that the Germans would in all probability negotiate directly with the Sultan without regard to the Shaikh of Koweit, who would not be asked to grant a concession of land.[2] Lieut.-Col. Meade feared that the Turks and Germans combined would take some action on the strength of which Turkish authority over Koweit might afterwards be claimed to exist.

The impression prevailed that it was intended to take advantage of the entanglement of England in South Africa

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1. Mr. Wratislaw (Consul at Basrah) to O'Conor, No.85, 13 March 1900. F.O.78/5114. See also le baron de Marchell Ambassadeur à Constantinople, au Ministère des Affairs. No.8. 1er fevrier 1900. La Politique Extérieure de l'Allemagne 1870-1914. Paris, 1932. Tome XVIII, p.5.

2. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Foreign Office, No.2. Telegraphic. 12 January 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

to push the matter to a conclusion in conjunction with Turkey. In the opinion of Captain Denison, of the "Melpomere",[1] then in the Gulf, "the presence of the German Consul-General for Constantinople pointed to greater things than a single railway terminus."[2] Colonel Meade's views were unchanged: "Our own preponderating influence at the place must be maintained to the exclusion of every other. The presence of Turkish, Russian or German officials was equally injurious to British interests."[3]

O'Conor pointed out that "the enterprise was private and international rather than political." "A friendly warning," he thought, "to the promoters of the scheme would obviate any official notification of our relations with the Shaikh, a course of action likely to induce an international scramble in which England at the moment would be heavily handicapped."[4] The view of the British Ambassador at Constantinople received confirmation some time later from Berlin.

Count Bülow informed Sir Frank Lascelles that the German Consul-General had been granted leave to accompany the Mission, not in his official capacity, but for his local

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1. Foreign Office to India Office, No.1, Secret, 12 January 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

2. Captain S. Denison to Admiral Douglas. Admiralty. 14 February 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

3. O'Conor to Foreign Office, No.24, 22 January 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

4. Ibid.

"knowledge".[1]

In the month of April some more definite steps were taken towards an understanding with Germany. Sir Nicholas O'Conor while pointing out in January that immediate action was inexpedient in view of the situation in South Africa,

did not fail in April to make it clear to the German Ambassador in Constantinople "the full sense of Britain's Agreement with the Shaikh of Koweit which, although not opposed to the status quo, yet prevented the Shaikh from making any concession of territory to another power without the consent of the British Government."[2]

> "I was anxious," Sir Nicholas O'Conor proceeded, "that no doubt should remain in his mind as to the position in which the Shaikh of Koweit stood towards the British Government, and to make it clear that the Shaikh was not at liberty to cede or otherwise alienate to the Railway Company either the harbour of Kathama or any other port of his territory without the consent of H.M.'s Government. In the course of conversation he said that Koweit was a port of the Turkish Empire, to which I promptly replied that we do not want to disturb the status quo, but that the Shaikh was not a free agent."

At the same time Sir Nicholas O'Conor informed Tawfik Pasha that:-[3]

> "Her Majesty's Government did not desire to interfere with the status quo, or with the Sultan's authority in these parts, but in view of their great interests

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1. Sir Frank Lascelles to Foreign Office, No.156 (Confidential), 15 January 1900. F.O.78/5113. (P.R.O.).
2. O'Conor to Foreign Office, No.130 (Confidential), 10 April 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
3. O'Conor to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. 21 April 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

> in the Persian Gulf, they could not view with indifference any action which would alter the existing conditions or affairs or give another power special rights of privileges over territory belonging to the Shaikh, with whom the British Government has certain Agreements."

Meanwhile, it was reported that the German Railway Company had taken the matter into their own hands, and were already making arrangements for the construction of a pier.[1]

O'Conor suggested the appointment of a British Secret Agent. The India Office replied that "until the question of policy was determined, the presence of a secret agent is a mere waste of money."

At this juncture the Admiralty forwarded a report stating that two German steamers were expected to go to Koweit, and inquired what would be the policy of the British Government in the event of collision between Germans and Arabs.[2]

The reply was that Lord Salisbury scarcely thought that any definite instructions were necessary until some confirmation was received of the reported intention of German ships to visit Koweit or until there was some indication of the methods of action they intended to pursue.[3] If the construction of a pier was by a private person without a mandate from some recognized authority, the Shaikh would be

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1. India Office to O'Conor, 10 May 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
2. Admiralty to Foreign Office. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
3. Lord Salisbury to India Office, 31 May 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

within his rights in opposing such an attempt and, in this event, if any action was to be taken by Her Majesty's ships it would be in support of the Shaikh's authority.

After the summer of 1900 various incidents began to point a renewal of Turkish interest in Koweit. In August several attempts were made to induce the Shaikh to visit Basrah,[1] and Mubarak found some difficulty in avoiding direct communication with the Turkish authorities. In October the order of the Imtiaz was conferred upon him as "Kaim-Makam" of Koweit, and the "Ikdam" of 10 November announced that at Mubarak's request a mosque erected by him was to be called after the name of the Sultan.

But an opportunity of more effective intervention, of which the Government was now slow to avail themselves, was afforded by growing dissension between Mubarak and the neighbouring Ruler of Nejd. The affair, which on its merits was little more than intertribal squabble, led to political results of such importance that it is necessary to describe in some detail the course of the struggle.[2]

The quarrel arose from a raid by Shaikh Abdur Rahman Ibn Faysal upon Nejd territory with the connivance and assistance of Mubarak, the movement being supported in the North by Sadun Pasha, a Turkish subject, Chief of the Muntafik Arabs.[3]

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1. O'Connor to Lord Salisbury, No.275, 7 August. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
2. Mr. de Baunsen to Lord Salisbury. Tel. No.63. 30 October 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
3. Mr. de Baunsen to Lord Salisbury. Tel. No.68. 1 November 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

At the first news of disturbance it was at once suggested to send Col. Kemball to Koweit "to counsel Mubarak to avoid giving the Turks an excuse for interference" and as the Agreement of 1899 had promised the good offices of Her Majesty's Government the Resident was also to be instructed "to endeavour to warn the Amir that no attack on Koweit would be permitted."[1] Preliminary measures were to be taken to protect the Shaikh, but no force was to be landed without reference to the Home authorities. Shortly afterwards, however, reports were received that the crisis was over, and at Col. Kemball's own request this visit was postponed. It appeared that Mubarek was able to hold his own, and the presence of a ship of war would give him undue encouragement.[2]

A despatch from the Consul at Basrah summed up the situation.[3] A conflict had been averted, though at the cost of considerable increase of Turkish prestige. The Wali, Mohsin Pasha, having prevailed upon both sides to keep the peace, had induced Mubarak to accompany him to Basrah, there to make solemn professions of allegiance to the Sultan, and to promise to cease "coquetting with foreign powers". The result seemed to an independent observer likely to "prove a considerable blow to any pretensions of Mubarak to being an

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1. India Office to Foreign Office. Immediate. 14 November 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
2. India Office to Foreign Office, 16 November 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
3. Consul Wratislaw to Mr. de Baunsen. No.44. (Confidential). 22 November 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

independent Shaikh.[1]

II.

On the night of 2 December 1900 the Shaikh of Bahrain's cousin, with the son, nephew and twenty-three others, where returning from a hunting expedition and were killed by men of Almurrah tribe at Alderya, near Dharan, about 30 miles south of El-Kateef. The Government of India adopting the expression of the Officiating Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Col. Kemball, described the scene of the murder as in "Turkish territory".[2] The Shaikh was prepared to organize an expedition against the Almurrah, but he suggested to the Political Assistant at Bahrain as an alternative, that Her Majesty's Government should make strong representations to the Turkish Government for the punishment of the murderers,[3] and Col. Kemball on receiving the Political Assistant's report undertook that this should be done.

These murders were without parallel in the annals of Bahrain, and Shaikh Sulaiman was the most intelligent member of the ruling house of Al-Khalifa, and the murder was much lamented by the people of Bahrain.

While it was advisable to discourage the Chief from

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1. Mr. Lyle to Mr. Mackenzie, 28 December 1900. F.O.78/6115. (P.R.O.)
2. India Office to Foreign Office, Confidential. 8 December 1900. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).
3. Translated purport of a letter from Shaikh Esa-Bin-Ali Al Khalifa, Chief of Bahrain to the Political Assistant Agent. 10 December 1900. F.O.78/5110. (P.R.O.).

organising an expedition to operate against Almurrah, who inhabited the southern part of Al-Hasa, which was likely to give rise to complication with Turkey, which it was desirable to avoid, the case was of too serious a nature for the British Government to allow it to pass unnoticed without doing material harm to the value of the British protection and to their prestige in the Gulf.

The outrage seemed to have occurred to the South of El-Kateef where the Turkish Govefnment had been informed that their superiority was not disputed and within the country described to the Turkish Foreign Minister by Ambassador Bord in 1893 as debateable land.[1] Britain had hitherto declined to recognise Turkish superiority over this stretch of country, she had exacted punishment for piracies along the coast in operation without giving notice to Turkey, although there had been for many years a Turkish garrison at El-Bada, the most important place on the coast.

If Britain then called upon Turkey to punish the Almurrah tribe it was probable that her demand would be considered by them as implying an admission of their superiority to the south of El-Kateef, although the British Ambassador, Sir Nicholas O'Conor, promised[2] that he should

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1. Ford to Foreign Office. Telegraphic. 23 April 1893. F.O.78/5109. (P.R.O.).

2. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to the Marquis of Salisbury, No.81, 22 February 1901. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

endeavour to erect the matter in such a manner as to avoid any explicit mention of the question of superiority over the coast, and repel any attempt to question Britain's protectorate over Bahrain or of her right to protect Bahrainees with Ottoman territories on both of which points the Ottoman Government had been repeatedly informed of Britain's intention. O'Conor felt very sure that the Ottoman Government would make fair promise, and probably would even take such steps as might be in their power to punish the murderers, but their forces at El-Kateef and El-Bada were not probably sufficient to enable them to pursue the Almurrah tribe into the desert. It was known from communications received by the Chief of Bahrain that the Ottoman Government intended to take severe action in the matter of punishing the murderers and a sum of Rs 30,000 was offered as indemnity.[1]

In the uncertainty prevailing as regards the future of the British Empire with political developments in the Persian Gulf, Sir Nicholas thought that "Any arrangement that affirms and strengthens the authority of the Indian Government over Bahrain must be regarded with great satisfaction," he also welcomed the news that a Britain Indian

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1. J.G. Gaskin, Assistant Political Agent at Bahrain, to the Political Resident of the Persian Gulf, No.40, 10 March 1901. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

subject had been appointed Director of Customs of the Island.[1] Such an appointment would seem to the Turks as a material proof of the British authority over Bahrain. Persian attempts to induce the Shaikh to accept a Persian Custom House with a Belgian Custom Director were utterly rejected by the British Ambassador at Teheran, Sir Arthur Hardinge, who considered the Island to be exclusively under British protection.[2]

III.

Late in December Mubarak was reported to be making fresh preparations for an attack on Nejd, and the second phase of the quarrel began. Shaikh Mubarak being aware that Abdul Aziz-Bin-Rashid, the Amir of Nejd, had espoused Muhammed Bin Sabah and Jarrah, was not likely to neglect any opportunity which should arise, whereby the authority and influence of the Amir might be weakened. Such an opportunity was at hand in the person of Abdulla-Bin-Faysal of the Saud dynasty, the former ruler of Riadh, who was dispossessed by Muhammed Bin Rashid, uncle of the Amir, in 1886. Shaikh Jabir assured Col. Kemball that the operations which were then being conducted by Shaikh Mubarak were not in the least likely to bring about any more active interference in Koweit affairs by the Turks.

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1. O'Conor to Foreign Office, No.108. Confidential. 6 May 1901. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

2. Hardinge to Curzon, No.47, 6 September 1901. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

The Shaikh of Koweit appeared to be a Ruler of considerable determination of character, wily and self-seeking. He was probably emboldened by his Convention with the British Government to go further than he otherwise would do, and possibly counted upon Her Majesty's Government saving him from the consequence of an unsuccessful attack upon his powerful neighbour Abdul-Aziz of Nejd. An outbreak of hostilities between the two Chiefs could hardly fail to bring the Turks into the field, and to offer the Ottoman Government and the astute Wali of Basrah, Mohsin Pasha, a further opportunity of affirming the Sultan's suzerainty. Sir Nicholas O'Conor was correct when he said:[1]

> "Being aware how sensitive the Sultan is in regard to British policy in the Persian Gulf, and how much his feelings in this respect are worked on by another Power, I should regret being obliged without very strong reason, to do anything that would encourage His Majesty's Government in this respect, and more particularly at the present moment when it is our duty to try and stave off any complications which might possibly lead either to intervention or to the loss of prestige and influence."

In February O'Conor expressed his opinion of the general situation. "An outbreak of hostilities," the Ambassador observed, would scarcely fail to bring the Turks again into the field. He went on to state:

> "Her Majesty's Government may thus be placed in a difficult position, and to be forced either to raise an unpleasant question with the Ottoman

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1. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to the Marquis of Lansdowne, No.59, Confidential, 10 February 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

> Government, or to assert effective control over Koweit, or else sacrifice the privileged position acquired by the convention of January 1899. It is hardly to be expected that the Shaikh of Koweit will respect an Agreement from which he derives no security and little material advantage." 1

His Excellency was strongly averse to doing anything which would "encourage the Sultan's anxiety in respect to British policy in the Persian Gulf," and he suggested that the Amir of Nejd should be approached through his Basrah Agent, while the Porte might be informed that Col. Kemball "would use every effort to retain the Shaikh."[2]

On 28 February the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, telegraphed that the Resident's advice had been already tendered to Mubarak (though, as afterwards appeared, not personally but through the News Agent) and was refused. The proposed visit, therefore, did not seem likely to have any result, while a "second failure might be embarrassing."[3]

On 29 March the complete defeat of the Koweit forces was reported,[4] and it was rumoured that the Shaikh had been killed in action. If the report was true it was obvious that Mubarak's death would seriously endanger the

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1. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Lord Salisbury (Confidential) No.59, 10 February 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
2. From Col. Kemball to the Secretary of the Government of India, Foreign Dept. No.38, 23 February 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
3. Viceroy to Kemball. Telegraphic. 28 February 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
4. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Salisbury, No.11. Telegraphic. 29 March 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

Agreement of 1899, and a ship-of-war was placed under orders. Colonel Kemball visited Koweit on 18 April.[1] He found the Shaikh alive, but was satisfied that he was severely defeated. Nothing was said to the Amir.

Since his return to Koweit Mubarak, it appeared, had been at considerable pains to keep back the fact of his defeat. He was evidently anxious that the Turkish authorities should not know the extent of his reverse, as he feared that if they knew it, they would no longer consider him as the formidable person he had hitherto been considered. Even to his friend the Shaikh of Muhammerah, he wrote an account of the affair which was impossible to believe, and his eldest son Shaikh Jaber who came to see Col. Kemball on the morning of his arrival, "appeared also to have been kept in ignorance of the true state of affairs and did not know even of the death of his uncle Hamud."[2]

Mohsin Pasha had remained comparatively inactive since his diplomatic success in November, but the defeat of Mubarak now brought on Turkish interference of a more acute form. A Turkish Field Marshall left Baghdad for Basrah on 9 April, followed the next day by Turkish troops. It was generally believed that "the Ottoman Government intended to make use

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1. From Col. Kemball to Viceroy. Telegraphic. 18 April 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

2. Col. Kemball to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Dept. No.77, dated 23 April 1901. (Confidential) F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

of force with a view to the disposition of Mubarak."[1]

A British gun-boat was ordered to Koweit and Sir Nicholas O'Conor was definitely authorized, in the event of hostilities being renewed, to warn the Porte to "refrain from any action against the Shaikh in view of the British arrangement with him." But the astute policy of Mohsin Pasha prevented matters from coming to a head. The Turkish Field-Marshal stopped short of Koweit, and the Wali himself, with a small escort, paid a friendly visit to the Shaikh. He was unable to enforce proposals for the establishment of a Turkish garrison, but Mubarak accompanied him to Fao, renewed his protestations to the Sultan, and returned to Koweit after a second act of "apparently spontaneous loyalty."[2]

The Mushir, Commander-in-Chief of the VI Army Corps, Muhammad Pasha, told Mubarak that "I desired to meet you and in company with the Vali, to discuss how to prevent the destructbn and shedding of the Muhammadan blood and peace may be secured for all Muslims and the Sultan may be pleased with you."[3]

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1. Kasim Pasha, brother-in-law of the Sultan, Col. Kemball to the Secretary to the Indian Government, No.56, 11 March 1900. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
2. Mr. Wratislaw to Sir Nicholas O'Conor, No.31, 1 June 1901. F.O.78/5173. Mohsin Pasha has been since dismissed, (Sir Nicholas O'Conor, No.358, 2 October 1901) Nura Pasha replaced him as Vali and Military Commander of Basrah.
3. Muhammed Pasha to Mubarak Pasha (Text in Arabic) 2 May 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

Fahad Pasha, Amir of Nejd's personal adviser, appeared in Basrah early in June 1901.[1] He sent a message to Consul Wratislaw to the effect that the Turkish Government had been playing fast and loose with them for a year past, and that his master's patience was at last worn by the duplicity. He wished, therefore, to be taken under British protection in the same manner as the Shaikh of Koweit. It was essential, however, that Mubarak should be deposed and his nephew appointed Shaikh in his stead. Ibn Rashid could effect this unaided were he sure of British neutrality. Further, any arms he might require must be supplied him by Great Britain. In return, Great Britain would be left complete control over Koweit, and the Amir would undertake to guarantee the safe construction of a railway across Arabia, which he had been given to understand by a previous Consul-General at Baghdad (Colonel Loch) was desired by the British Government.

Mr. Wratislaw told Fahad Pasha that Britain had considerable respect for the Amir of Nejd, whose high qualities and eminent position were well known. I am doubtful how far Fahad Pasha was playing off his own bat in making these bold proposals. He was sent to Basrah with wide powers to meet the Mushir, and gave the British authorities to understand that he was empowered to engage in every way. He had attacked the Wali in public and accused him to his face of

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1. Consul Wratislaw to Sir Nicholas O'Conor, No.31. Confidential, 3 June 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

being bribed by Mubarak. The question between Ibn Rashid and Mubarak was not merely one of personal pique and outraged dignity on the part of the former. It was vitally important to him that Koweit should be in friendly hands, for it was through Koweit that Rulers of Jebel Shammer have hitherto imported the supplies of arms and ammunition which were essential for the maintenance of an Empire founded on force. Koweit was also important to Britain. The Foreign Secretary warned Amir of Nejd that "while anxious to effect amicable solution, we cannot allow Koweit to be attacked by Nejd."[1]

"As regards Amir of Nejd," Lord Curzon wrote, "while unable to concede his request, we should not alienate his sympathy. He is seeking to discover from which patron he can get best terms, Turkey or ourselves."[2] Lord Curzon suggested a private mission to him of British Officers from side of Akaba, so as to avoid Turkish suspicions, to be arranged confidentially through Amir's agent at Basrah. He went on to say:

> "We could explain inability to depose Mubarak because of agreement, but could undertake to restrain latter from future aggression and to use good offices to prevent Turkish aggression on Nejd."

On 28 May the Amir of Nejd, unexpectedly, appealed for British protection, but, after consultation with Lord

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1. From Secretary of State to Viceroy, 23 July 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

2. From Viceroy to Foreign Office, 8 June 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

Curzon, the India Office expressed the opinion, in which the Foreign Office concurred, that it was not advisable to:[1]

> "Incur the difficulties of embarrassments which must ensue from the declaration of a protectorate over either of the territories of the Chiefs of Koweit and Nejd."

Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, pointed out that some answer would be given to the Chiefs, and Col. Kemball again visited Koweit with general instructions to find some modus vivendi between the Shaikh and the Amir, while maintaining the British hold upon the Shaikh.[2] Early in August he saw Shaikh Mubarak who suggested Shaikh Kazal of Muhammerah as intermediary, and Mr. Wratislaw was subsequently authorized to assist communication between the latter and the Agent of the Amir. But renewed rumours of Turkish concentration again raised the larger diplomatic question. In July Sir Frank Lascelles had had a conversation with Dr. Rosen, of the German Foreign Office, upon the prospects of the Arabian Railway and the general situation. An expression used by His Excellency described the Shaikh as[3] "technically a subject of the Sultan but enjoying a considerable amount of independence" which on previous occasions had passed without

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1. India Office to Foreign Office, 14 June 1901 (Telegraphic). F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
2. Telegram communicated by India Office, 14 August 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
3. See Lord Lansdowne's report to Lord Salisbury on the progress of the German Railway scheme. No.191, 30 July 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

comment, now drew from the German Representative an assertion that the Shaikh was merely a subject of the Sultan.[1]

The view that the Shaikh was solely a subject of the Sultan was one that the British Government were totally unable to accept, and Lascelles was instructed to use language on the lines of O'Conor's despatch. O'Conor was at the same time authorized to state, if occasion arose, that if Koweit were threatened, the British Government would use force to prevent attack.[2]

Importamt communications now took place at London and Constantinople. Considerable pressure was being exercised on the Ottoman Government by the German and Russian Embassies,[3] though a proposal of the Wali of Basrah to use force against the Shaikh had been rejected by the Council of Ministers, Tawfik Pasha informed O'Conor that Koweit was regarded as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.

On 19 August Sir Nicholas called on the Turkish Foreign Secretary to discuss the Anglo-Ottoman relations in the Persian Gulf and Eastern Arabia. Britain was very much disturbed at the news that the Turkish authorities were concentrating troops with a view to attacking Koweit, and

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1. Foreign Office to Sir Frank Lascelles, No.128. Telegraphic. 10 August 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to O'Conor, No.103. Telegraphic. 10 August 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
3. O'Conor to Foreign Office. Telegram. 23 August 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

that the Wali of Basrah was endeavouring to force the Shaikh to accept a detachment of Turkish troops in the capital. The British Ambassador declared that "Her Majesty's Government had no desire to disturb the status quo, but for the reasons already known to the Sublime Porte, they could not view with indifference any course of action calculated to affect the position of the Shaikh of Koweit or to disturb the existing conditions."[1] The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs gave an elaborate answer which revealed information regarding a secret session of the Ottoman Cabinet on this specific issue.[2] In that meeting the whole subject had been carefully examined and it seemed beyond doubt that Koweit was an integral part of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks depended on historical and contemporary evidences. When Midhat Pasha was Wali of Iraq he had nominated a certain Shaikh Muhammed there and included his territory within the Sandjak of Nejd. It was true that troops had not been stationed there during the hot months, in the same way as they had been sent to El-Kateef and El-Bada, but there were many other places in Arabia where the Imperial troops had

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1. O'Conor to Lord Lansdowne, No.310. Confidential. 20 August 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).
Le comte de Metternich, ministre plénipotentaire faisant fonctions d'Ambassadeur à Londres, au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Tel. No.613, 4 September 1901. La Politiques Etrangères de l'allemagne 1870-1914, Paris, 1932. Tome XXI, pp.18-19.

2. Ibid.

never been stationed, and their absence in no way invalidated the Sultan's sovereignty. It was clearly impossible for the Imperial Government to admit that a third power could, by a secret convention with an Arab Chief whose territory was an "enclave" in the Ottoman Empire, withdrew this Chief from his allegiance or his territory from the sphere of Turkish sovereignty. Sir Nicholas, the British Ambassador, replied that Great Britain's political and commercial interests were not only considerable but paramount in the Persian Gulf, and Her Majesty's Government's agreement with the Shaikh of Koweit was of such a nature that they could not view without deep concern any interference there.

A warning given by the Commander of the "Persus" to the Captain of a Turkish corvette off Koweit that no troops would be permitted to land was largely magnified in transmission, and occasioned further protests.

Tawfik Pasha inquired on 29 August whether the British Government intended to establish a Protectorate,[1] and on the same day the German Embassy in London received a pressing instruction to state that a British Protectorate would be contrary to the Treaty of Berlin, and that in view of her interest in Koweit in view of the future terminus of the Anatolian Railway, Germany would be compelled to regard such

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1. Tawfik Pasha to Foreign Office, Telegram No.1 & 2, 29 August 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

a proceeding as an unfair act.[1] The reply in each case was that the British Government had no such intention, O'Conor adding the reservation "provided that Turkey did not force our hands by interfering with the Shaikh."

On 3 September Count Metternich called to say that "if by threats of force H.M.'s Governement prevented the Sultan from landing troops at Koweit, they were refusing to recognize the Sultan's authority with which they had stated that they did not desire to interfere in those parts, and that the German Government considered that Koweit formed unquestionably part of the territories belonging to the Sultan."[2] Sir Thomas Sanderson promised to report his observation to Lord Lansdowne and said that he could at once state that "Her Majesty's Government had no desire to disturb the status quo." Next day a telegram was communicated by the Turkish Ambassador protesting against the reported intention to declare a British Protectorate and describing the S Agreement of 1899 as without validity, but the Sultan had meanwhile been advised by the German Government to be satisfied with the assurances given by Count Metternich, and to ask for the repetition. On 4 September, O'Conor was sent for by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The assurances given by His Excellency on this occasion were considered by the Ottoman Government

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1. Foreign Office to Lascelles. No.306 3 September, 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

2. Sanderson to Lascelles, attached to the above letter. 3 September. 1901. F.O.78/5173. P.R.O.).

"of a nature to terminate the present contoversy", and Anthopoulous Pasha was instructed to ask for the confirmation.[1] On the 9th instant the Turkish Minister instructed his Ambassador in London to communicate to Lord Lansdowne an assurance "that the Turkish Government will not send troops to Koweit, and will maintain the status quo there, on condition that His Majesty's Government will abstain from occupying that place or establishing a British Protectorate there."[2] To this Lord Lansdowne replied:[3]

> "I have pleasure in confirming the assurance which has been given to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs by our Ambassador at Constantinople that provided the Turkish Government abstain from sending troops to Koweit and respect the status quo there, His Majesty's Government will not occupy or establish British Protectorate over it."

In a secret telegram dated 7 September, Lord Lansdowne, while pointing out that" the situation requires very careful handling as the British arrangements with the Shaikh were not very precise, and it was entered into without the knowledge or concurrence of the Porte". He instructed O'Conor that "we cannot recede from our position, and if Porte should insist on raising question of their rights we might have to convert into something much more precise the present

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1. O'Conor to Foreign Odfice No.125 4 September 1901. F.O.78/5173. (P.R.O.).

2. Foreign Office to Sir Nicholas O'Conor No.132 Telegraphic. 9 September, 1901. F.O.78/5174. (P.R.O.). With full text of th the Turkish telegram.

3. Lord Lansdowne to Anthopoulous Pasha. 11 September 1901. Enclosed in letter to O'Conor, No.209. 11 September,1901. F.O.78/5174. (P.R.O.).

indefinite understanding with the Shaikh."[1]

In view, however, of the assurances recorded in the note quoted above, Sir Nicholas had not foun occasion to communicate these instructions, and the controversy with the Porte rested for the moment on the basis of mutual maintainance of the status quo.[2] The Turkish Ambassador in London had expressed himself well satisfied with the recent state of affairs and O'Conor was assured by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs "Most positively that the Imperial Government had no intention whatsoever of occupying or attacking Koweit."

There was an understanding that the two Governments were to co-operate in maintaining the peace, Turkey endeavouring to restrain the Amir, while Britain would do what she could to discourage the Shaikh from aggressive action. Mubarak had been told that the good offices of the British Government would be extended to him only if he followed their advice.

On 9 September a further communication was made to Count Metternich. A Memorandum upon various subjects, including Koweit, drawn up by Lord Lansdowne[3] for the King's personal use, and handed by his Majesty to the German Emperor

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1. Lansdowne to O/Conor, No.131. Telegraphic. 7 September 1901. F.O. 78/5173. (P.R.O.).

2. O'Conor to Lansdowne, No.356, 1st October 1901. F.O.78/5174. (P.R.O.).

3. Lansdowne to Lascelles, Nos.304 and 312, Telegraphic. 11-12 September, 1901. F.O.78/5174. (.P.R.O.)

at the August meeting, had elicited a formal reply from the German Government which Count Metternich had left at the Foreign Office on the 3rd. It was now explained to him that the Momorandum, which had been hastily prepared, was purely informal and unofficial document. The statement referred to by Count Metternich was a repetition of O'Conors language In 1900 which might be more correctly described as having stated that the British Government had no desire to interfere with the Sultan's authority as it existed in those parts. There could be no doubt that this authority was of a very limited description. The Shaikh belonged to a class of native Chiefs enjoying a large measure of political independence with whom the British Government found it necessary to have direct relations for the sake of the maintainance of tranquility and the protection of British trade. Therefore, although ready to maintain the status quo, the British Government had been unable to acquiesce in attempts recently made by Turkey to impose conditions on the Shaikh, who now regarded the incident as closed. and Count Metternich was informed of the assurances exchanged. The French Chargé d'Affairs at Constantinople wrote to M. Delcassé:

> "l'ambassade d'Allemagne est assez nécontente de l'accord intervenue; elle avait dans ces derniers temps, poussé le Sultan à affirmer par la force sa souveraineté sur Koweit, et elle lui recommondait de faire advancer au plus vite vers cette ville les troupe ottomanes massées á Samaona, sur l'Euphrates. Elle voit avec déplaisire que, malgré ses conseils, le Sultan consent à laisser tomber ses droits de souveraineté devant une menace de l'Angleterre, et

qu'il recourt même aux bons offices de cette puissance pour réfréner les villéités belliqueuse de Mouborak." 1

Lord Lansdowne on his return to London said to Count Metternich that it was necessary to bear in mind that where minor Eastern States were concerned it was not unusual to find that they owed a divided allegiance to more than one power.[2]

Count Metternich had since confirmed this assurance in conversation with Lord Lansdowne, adding that the railway might be made five years or fifty years hence, or not at all, but that when it was made it was important for Germany to find a peaceful condition of things in that part of the Persian Gulf.[3]

With regard to the military defence of Koweit, reports have been received by the British Government since the statement made by Admiral Douglas in February 1899 that the Navy alone could afford effective protection.[4]

The declarations repeatedly made by the British Government of non-interference with existing Turkish authority have had

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1. M. Bapts, Chargé d'Affaires de France à Constantinople à M. Delcossé, 8 Octobre 1901. Documents Diplomatiques Français, 2e Serie (1901-1911). Tome 1r, p.517. Paris, 1930.
2. Lansdowne to Lascelles, No.325, 28 September 1901. F.O.78/5174. (P.R.O.).
3. Lansdowne to Lascelles, No.447, 16 October 1901. F.O.78/5174. (P.R.O.).
4. Commander-in-Chief, East India to Admiralty. Communicated by latter to the India Office and Foreign Office on 31 August 1901. F.O.78/5174. (P.R.O.).

some controversy with regard to the use by the Shaikh of the Turkish flag to which British Officers in the Gulf were strongly averse. Mubarak had constantly flown the Turkish flag not only in his own dhow while in the Company of the Wali of Basrah, but also on his house on the occasion of the British Resident's visits. When asked the reason for that he replied that "it was flown by his father and grandfather on such an occasion as a Muhammedan flag and it did not indicate that they are under any control or protection of the Turks."[1]

On 19 August the India Office forwarded a suggestion of the Resident that the flag should be discontinued on the ground that it was inconsistent to allow the Turkish flag to be flown while Turkish troops were forbidden to land. The Foreign Office inquired what flag it was proposed that the Shaikh should fly, but it was pointed out that Lord Lansdowne[2] was not prepared to support any action which might seem inconsistent with the assurance given by Sir Nicholas O'Conor that the British Government would respect the status quo.[3] The Resident of the Gulf had replied recommending the use of the ordinary Red flag,

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1. India Office to Foreign Office, 9 July 1901. F.O.78/5174. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to India Office, 24 August 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
3. O'Conor to Lansdowne, No.130, 12 April 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

and intimating that the events of the last two and a half years have so disturbed the status quo that a determination of the status of Koweit could not be much longer postponed.[1] The India Office made no comment on the suggestion, but it had been thought advisable to point out that the Shaikh had accepted the post of Kaim-Makam that he had held property in Turkish territory, that the Turkish flag had been flown since 1871, and that "Lord Lansdowne does not consider that there was anything in the events of the last two and a half years to justify a departure from the status quo upon the maintenance of which His Majesty's Government have always laid the greatest stress."[2]

In July 1900 an attempt was made to establish a weekly call at Koweit of the British India Company's steamers. Mr. Lyle, an agent of Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie & Co., of Basrah, was well received by the Shaikh, who made, however, the important stipulations that the call of steamers should not bring with it the establishment of the quarantine. The Turkish authorities who were paying much attention to Koweit would almost certainly enforce at that place, as at Basrah, a ten days' quarantine against arrivals from all ports other than Turkish. It was generally agreed that the extension of quarantine would both be ruinous to the trade of Koweit

1. Viceroy to India Office, 12 September. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to India Office, 24 September. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

and undesirable as increasing the influence of Turkey in the Gulf. Col. Kemball further pointed out that in the event of the British Government making successful representations to the ports against a quarantine for Koweit the Shaikh would be subjected to a general system of reprisals and his town treated as a foreign port , a similar difficulty having already presented itself in connection with the Shaikh's property in Turkish territory.[1]

The question was solved for the moment by the Shaikh withdrawing his consent to the scheme. The withdrawal was not,.however, conveyed in very decided terms, the compulsion of extraneous influence was apparent, and it seemed to Colonel Kemball that his objections would be removed at a future date. In June 1901 the Shaikh intimated that he was now favourable to the scheme. It was accordingly arranged that the mail steamers should call at Koweit on the upward voyage from Bombay to Basrah. The quarantine officials at first imposed certain restrictions, but their objections were not of as serious a character as had been anticipated, and they were not maintained. Viewed solely from the commercial point of view the enterprise did not seem likely to be lucrative but it was hoped that when the state of the

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1. Col. Kemball to India Office. Telegraphic. 5 September 1900. F.O.78/5114. (P.R.O.).

country was less disturbed there would be a remunerative export of horses from Nejd through Koweit.

IV.

The El-Katr Peninsula was beyond the sphere in which the nominal suzerainty of the Porte had been reorganised by the British Government; but the Turkish authorities had for a number of years maintained a garrison at El-Bada, a port on the eastern coast of the Peninsula.

It was observed, during the summer of 1901, that the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf aimed at the conclusion of a protectorate agreement with the Chief of El-Katr, and he would desire, if possible, to secure the consent of the Turks to the withdrawal of their garrison from El-Bada.[1] But as a prelude to the discussion of these questions, it was necessary to ascertain the real position of the new Shaikh Ahmed, and to consider more fully the choice of Residence for the Chief of El-Katr on the coast.

Shaikh Ahmed undertook in this case to reside at any place in El-Katr the British authorities might approve; to hold himself responsible for keeping the adjacent waters from pirates, and to co-operate with the British officers and with the Chief of Bahrain in matters of common interests on the mainland. Col. Kemball in communicating his wishes

1. India Office to Foreign Office. Confidential. No.1, 11 August 1901. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

expressed the opinion that an agreement of the nature indicated might be expected to produce most satisfactory results.[1] The Arrangement made, however, involved an assurance to the Chief of protection against Turkey and other Powers, but recent activity of the Turks in the neighbourhood of El-Hasa indicated the desirability of losing no time in consolidating British prestige in El-Katr Peninsula.

Col. Kemball had lately received information that the Turks intended to reinforce their garrisons at El-Kateef and El-Hasa, and that the Turkish gun-boat "Zohaf" was to leave Basrah immediately for Kateef with troops on board, whilst a squadron of cavalry had already left Basrah by land, presumably for El-Hasa.[2] These movements were presumably on account of the disturbed state of the interior and were intended to restrain the tribes from throwing in their lot with Abdul-Aziz-Bin-Abdul Rahman Bin Faysal Al-Saud, whose recent success at Riadh would appear to be, as Gaskin pointed out "contrary to the interests of the Turks."[3]

V.

At this stage the British Government had come to realize that the situation in Koweit was becoming more and more

1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. Secret. Inclosure 1, in No.1, 10 July 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).
2. Col. Kemball to Government of India. Inclosure 2 in No.1, 7 March 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).
3. Gaskin to Kemball. Inclosure 3 in No.1, 23 February 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

embarrassing, and that it was time to look it in the face. They had saddled themselves with an impossible client in the person of the Shaikh. He was apparently very ambitious, no one knew where his possessions began and ended, and the British obligations towards him were ill-defined as the boundaries of his principality. They had distinctly announced that he did not enjoy "British Protection"; on the other hand, they had once made him a present of £1,000, and promised him their "good offices", whatever that might mean. When Britain made this promise she was, undoubtedly, thinking of Koweit proper, if there was such a thing, and not of Boobyan or other outskirts over which the Shaikh had rights of one sort or another. They had up to 1902 sheltered themselves not unsuccessfully, during the discussion with the Turks on the one side and foreign Governments on the other, behind the plausible announcement that they desired to maintain the status quo. "It is nothing to us," wrote the Correspondent of "The Morning Post" from Basrah, "that one Shaikh should murder another in the same family and usurp power; but it is quite a different affair when a great Power of the interior like Nejd threatens to encroach on a maritime principality and therefore disturbing the status quo."[1]

During the spring of 1902 the Marquis of Lansdowne wrote

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1. H.J. Whigham, "On the Persian Gulf: The Koweit question and the Shadowy Turkish Supremacy". Morning Post, Friday, 23 March 1902.

a brilliant Memorandum[1] on the problem of British jurisdiction on Koweit. He was inclined to explain to (1) the Porte, (2) to the Shaikh and (3) to foreign powers immediately interested the object of British policy. As regards the first point he wrote: "I should be inclined to say that our engagements to Koweit do not extend beyond the district adjoining or close to the bay of that name, and to endeavour to obtain the adhesion of the Porte and of the Shaikh to an approximate definition of that district." As regards the Shaikh His Excellency wrote: "I would make it clear to the Turks that we do not want to stay in the way of an arrangement under which the terminus of the line might be placed at some spot other than Koweit to their advantage if they can make anything out of it." As to Foreign Powers the Marquis of Lansdowne declared:

> "I have already explained to most of them that we are not going to oppose the Railway project, provided British capital receives a share at least equal to that of any other Power to obtain a foothold on its shores for naval and military purposes. This, I take it, is the 'bed rock' of our policy in the Persian Gulf, we shall pursue that policy, not in virtue of ambiguous understandings with the local Chiefs, but as the predominant Power in Southern Persia and the Gulf; the Power whose commercial interests in those regions far exceeds those of other Powers, the Power to whose efforts in the past it is due that the waters of the Gulf are open to the trade of the world, and whose duty it will be in the future to protect the new trade route. If it is understood that we have to be reckoned with, whoever builds the railway, and wherever it finds a terminus, because we are that power, we can regard with indifference the local intrigues of any member of Shaikhs and Emirs."

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1. Memorandum by the Marquis of Lansdowne. No. Koweit. Confidential. 21 March 1902. F.O.78/5251. (P.R.O.).

The British attitude was commented on by Tawfik Pasha. He told Sir Nicholas O'Conor that "England desires to possess Koweit which really belongs to the Sultan, in order to have a basis of operations in case of conflict with Russia which country intends to push a railway across Persia to a port on the Persian Gulf, probably Bunder Abbas. Being unable to resist their advances in Persia where her influence has almost ceased, England falls back on Koweit."[1]

On 26 March 1902 O'Conor reminded the Grand Vizier of the understanding that had been come to between His Majesty's Government and the Sublime Porte for a maintenance of the status quo; of the strict and loyal manner in which His Majesty's Government had on their part observed this Agreement and of their right to expect, and even to demand, that the Ottoman Government would on their side be equally loyal and sincere.[2] Instead of this, they had not ceased, in one way or another, continually to harass and molest the Shaikh, with a view to diminishing his prestige or to encroaching upon his territories, thus creating a series of irritating discussions between His Majesty's Government and the Sublime Porte. "We had no aggressive intentions against

1. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Lord Lansdowne, No.84. Confidential. 29 February 1902. F.O.78/5251. (P.R.O.).
2. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to the Marquis of Salisbury, No.144. (Confidential). 26 March 1902. F.O.78/5251. (P.R.O.).

Turkey," O'Conor went on to say, " - our traditional policy in the Gulf was to open the road to the trade of the world; but we had interests of a high important order both political and commercial to protect, and we were prepared to see that the Shaikh should not be attacked or molested, and we were prepared at the same time to undertake that he does not give the Ottoman Government any just cause to complain." He went on to state that he thought the Grand Vizier was well advised in doing all in his power to remove the grounds of complaint on the part of His Majesty's Government in insisting upon the status quo not being disturbed in any way. His Highness agreed with Sir Nicholas's remarks and he considered that the Agreement with His Majesty's Government should be faithfully observed.

Lord Curzon was not very much interested in these further communications. To him Koweit was an important point on the route to India and on that should be defended at any cost. Open Protectorate, from the point of view of the Indian Government was the logical policy to follow. In a private letter to Lord George Hamilton the Viceroy wrote:[1]

> "If it is important to protect Koweit, it must have been equally important to protect Bahrain, over which Turkey has never ceased to make precisely the same sort of claims that she now does over Koweit. Indeed the argument would apply to any and every protectorate. But,

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, 1 May 1901. Correspondence of Lord Curzon with Lord George Hamilton, Part II, Vol.XX. D510/8. (India Office Library).

after all, are not these questions invariably decided, not by morality or legality, but by expediency, though by this of course I do not mean that expediency is inconsistent with either the one or the other! When a nation takea a smaller and independent, or quasi-independent Power under its protection, it does so in the defence of its own interests. Thatis the history of every protectorate that we ourselves have ever assumed. If, therefore, we think that these interests are imperilled by the intrigues to which Koweit is liable, and if we think that our attention is likely to result, as I think it ultimately will, in the protectorate of some other Power, then it seems to me that the highest interests of statesmanship authorize us to interfere, and that the only conditions under which we should either abstain, or postpone, such interference, are those of expediency also, namely, that for the time being, owing to troubles or complications elsewhere, the game is not worth the candle."

VI.

Further confidential reports had been received to the effect that the Commissary on behalf of the Amir of Nejd asked Shaikh Jasim to take measures towards expelling Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud from the environs of the El-Hasa, and before he gave a definite reply the news of the taking of Riadh reached them, when Shaikh Jasim was able to state that under the circumstances his help was unnecessary. It appeared also that Shaikh Jasim discouraged the idea of making overtures to the tribes in El-Katr, and the Commissary's endeavours in this direction seemed to have met with no success.

Shaikh Jasim was a Wahabi, of the same creed as Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, and while professing friendship with the Amir of Nejd, he was at heart with Abdul-Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud.

On 23 February 1902 Col. Kemball received a confidential report as emanating from Shaikh Muhammed Bin Abdul-Wahab to the effect that the Turks had instructed the entire control of all the Arab tribes in Nejd, El-Katr and El-Hasa districts to the Amir, and had given him a free hand to organize within those regions expeditions against refractory tribes, and the Turkish officials in El-Hasa and El-Katr were to give him their support and had no authority beyond the walls of the towns in which they resided.[1] This arrangement had been adopted with a view to strengthening the hands of the Amir, as well as to ensure the security of the roads, and Saad-ul-Hazami had been nominated by the Amir for the above purpose to reside in El-Hasa coast.

Abdul-Aziz's recent success at Riadh was an element of danger to the Turks, and if he was left unmolested by the Amir of Nejd for any length of time the chances were great that he would succeed to win over considerable forces from the tribes in Southern Nejd, in which case he might be able to hold his own against the Amir, and Abdul-Aziz once established in that port of his ancestor's dominions, might be inspired with ambition to oust the Turks from El-Hasa. Anticipating such possibilities, the Turks were induced to pander to the wishes of the Amir of Nejd.

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1. Kemball to Viceroy. Confidential. 23 February 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

In his letter dated 22 March 1902 Consul Wratislaw wrote to the British Ambassador at Constantinople that "It will possibly suit the Turkish Government to allow the present state of things in Nejd to continue."[1] Abdul Aziz-Bin-Abdul Rahman-Al- Saud in announcing the capture of Riadh to the Wali of Basra, declared that he would hold it under the Sultan, and the latter could hardly fail to profit by the division of power in Central Arabia, so long as the Turks continue to recognize his suzerainty.

It is extremely interesting to know what was the British view on the Saudi's success. The general impression that the Amir of Nejd was a different stamp of man from his predecessors, and the fact of his having left Abdul-Aziz-Al -Saud in undisputed possession of Riadh for so long augured well for the final success of the Wahabi dynasty. British authorities in the Gulf decided to "follow a neutral stand in the Arabian conflict despite Russia's approach to Ibn Saud."[2]

The Amir of Nejd sent a special message to the Grand Vizier in which he warned him of British intrigues in Koweit and the Persian Gulf.[3]

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1. Consul Wratislaw to Sir Nicholas O'Conor, No.12. Confidential. 22 March 1902. F.O.78/5251. (P.R.O.).
2. Col. C.A. Kemball to the Government of India, Nos.1-3-A. 23 May 1902. (Confidential). F.O.78/5252. (P.R.O.). (Enclosed in this letter is Ibn Saud's letter received on 14 May 1902).
3. Amir of Nejd to Tawfik Pasha, 21 March 1902, enclosure in the Secret letter No.282 from O'Conor to Lord Lansdowne, dated 17 June 1902. F.O.78/5252. (P.R.O.).

"It does not escape you what has occurred through the intrigues of Mubarak es Sabah with the British Government at the descent of the latter in Koweit, and you know that Koweit is an important point; the key of Iraq and Gazerat el-Arab and its loss will be a very serious thing to the muslim nation. Britain's real intention is to dominate El-Hasa and El-Kateef and then Arabia itself with the help of Mubarak."

During the late days of March 1902 it appeared that Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud had received the whole of Southern Nejd, and the tithes of the districts had paid for him, and the majority of the nomad tribes had also thrown in their lot with him, owing to the Amir having taken no step so far to regain Riadh which was considered a sign of weakness.[1]

Shaikh Ahmed Bin Muhammed Thani of El-Katr was anxious to come under the protection of the British Government. During 1900-1902 he had been periodically sending Col. Kemball messages to the effect that he was desirous of meeting him privately, and on each occasion he hinted that he wished to obtain British protection.[2] Shaikh Ahmed was a wealthy Chief and consequently was influential with the nomad tribes, and his influence and prestige would rapidly increase directly it was known that he enjoyed British protection. Also, any settlement in El-Katr under British protection would quickly expand and draw away most of the inhabitants of El-Bada. The Government of India

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1. Gaskin to Kemball. Inclosure 7 in No.1, 29 March 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

2. Kemball to Viceroy. Inclosure 8 in No.1. Confidential. 26 April 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

was aware that for many years the state of affairs in El-Katr had not been satisfactory. Inland disorders and piracies at sea had been of frequent occurrence, and a constant menace existed to the peace of Bahrain, in the maintenance of which the British Government was so intimately concerned. The prosperity of Bahrain was then on the increase, and it appeared that if some arrangement could be made whereby the tribes inhabiting El-Katr might be brought under efficient control and the adjoining seas rendered safe, the effect on the prosperity and trade of Bahrain would be beneficial. "The occupation of El-Katr," wrote Gaskin, the Assistant Agent at Bahrain, "would of course, be a menace to Bahrain, but if the Treaty of Alliance is concluded by the two parties, the enforcement of which is guaranteed by the Government, no doubt all apprehension of danger will disappear."[1]

It was clear that bringing Shaikh Ahmed under British protection at Zobara would be an effectual step towards establishing their policy of not recognizing the claims of Turkey to El-Katr, at the same time diminished the number of places on the mainland from which Bahrain could be threatened, and draw a line across El-Katr to prevent Turkish encroachment toward the northern end of the Peninsula.

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1. Gaskin to Col. Kemball. Confidential. Inclosure 9 in No.1, 22 March 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

"Turkey is now turning her attention to strengthen her position in these regions," wrote Mr. Gaskin, "and she may go so far as to establish herself in a manner from which it may be difficult to dislodge her hereafter."

The arrangement would, however, involve an assurance to the Chief of protection against Turkey and other Powers and in view of the presence of the Turkish garrison at El-Bada and of the complications which had lately arisen in connection with Turkish claims at Koweit and the Trucial Coast.

Lord Curzon desired to receive instructions of the British Government before making any communication to Col. Kemball.[1] The Turkish Ambassador at Constantinople had protested to the Foreign Office with regard to the proceedings of the British PoliticalAgent at Bahrain and made it clear that the Sublime Porte to any agreement between Britain and the Shaikh of El-Katr similar to those concluded with the Trucial Chiefs on the Arabian Coast.[2]

Lord Lansdowne thought that it was essential that there should be further consultation between the India Office and the Foreign Office before any steps were taken for the establishment of British Protectorate over El-Katr, and

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1. Curzon to Hamilton, No.113. Secret. 10 July 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

2. Hamilton to Curzon, No.33. Secret. 15 August 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

for the conclusion of arrangements with the Chief of a nature implying a claim to British protection.[1]

1. Foreign Office to India Office. Inclosure No.2. 25 August 1902. F.O.78/5250. (P.R.O.).

XI. ARMS TRADE IN THE PERSIAN GULF

1890-1902

I.

The commencement of unprecedented international rivalry in the Persian Gulf coincided with the alarming increase in arms traffic. During the Third Afghan War the trade in modern arms and ammunition in the Persian Gulf attracted the attention of the British and Indian Governments for the first time.

In 1880, when it was placed beyond doubt that quantities or percussion caps exported from India to Persia were reaching the Afghan troops at Herat and elsewhere, the Government of India recognising the political and military importance of the question, instructed the Government of Bombay "to abstain from granting licences for the export of heavy consignments of arms and ammunition to Persian Gulf ports, and to watch carefully the import of such articles at Karachi and on the coast to the westward."[1] On 1 October in the same year a notification was published by the Government of India to legalise the detention at Indian ports of cargoes of arms and ammunitions of war consigned to the Persian Gulf from other countries.

Meanwhile the Persian Government had been persuaded to prohibit the percussion caps from Persia, and instructions

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1. Lord Lytton to Viscount Cranbrook (Secretary of State for India). Government of India, Foreign Department, No.34 of 1880, 24 March 1880. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

2. For the general History of Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf see Chapters IX and X in "Gun Running in the North Western Frontiers of India" by Hon. Arnold Keppell. London, 1911.

in this sense had been issued by them to the local authorities at Bundar Abbas, Bampur, Kirman and Yazd, as well as to those in Khurasan. The Persian Government appear soon after this to have developed an interest in the purely Persian aspect of the question, and in 1881, at the personal instance of the Shah, the importation of arms and ammunition into the country was made illegal. The prohibitionary edict came into force at Bushire on or about 1 July 1881; and the principal firms doing business there under British protection were duly warned by the Political Resident of the change of law.

The first diplomatic mention of the problem raised the Traffic in Arms came in a letter dated 12 July 1881[1] sent to Earl Granville from Mr. Thomson, the British Minister at Teheran. Mr. Thomson said that he had frequently applied to the Persian Government to stop the importation of arms into Afghanistan, and his representation had always been attended to.[1] Lately (owing to the change in the Governorship of Kharasson,) the prohibition of the export of arms was relaxed, and the Meshed Agent reported that some loads had been sent across the Afghan frontier. Mr. Thomson immediately applied to Mirza Said Khan, the Persian Foreign Minister;[2] orders

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1. Mr. Thomson to Earl Granville. Teheran, 12 July 1881, No.6 (Commercial). F.O.60/646. (P.R.O.).

2. Mirza Said Khan to Mr. Thomson. Enclosure in No.6, 3 July 1881. F.O.60/646. (P.R.O.).

were sent to Meshed, and the acting Governor stated that he had re-imposed the original prohibitory order, and would take care that it was not violated.

Some of the British Embassy Officials in Teheran had shown a disposition to take exception to the last Persian communication but under the circumstances Sir Ronald Thomson, the Chargé d'Affaires,[1] had not thought it desirable to offer any objection to the proposed interdict." In the first place it was desirable to impede, rather than to give facilities for the free purchase of arms by the many wild and lawless tribes inhabiting Persia. Again the British Embassy had frequently applied of late to the Persian Government to stop the importation of arms into Afghanistan, and the representations had always been attended to. Should they then raise objections to the new regulations, the Persian Government might very likely hesitate to continue the prohibition then in force in Kharassan.

No larger or systematic trade, however, as yet existed in the Gulf; and for several years no marked symptoms of expansions were observable. In 1881 a consignment of breech-loading rifles and ammunition were imported by the French merchants at Muhammerah; it was at first seized by the local authorities, but was subsequently returned and sold off by the owners at very low prices. At Bushire the pioneers

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1. Sir Ronald Thomson to Earl Granville, Commercial, No.6. 12 July,1881. F.O.60/646. (P.R.O.).

of the traffic were Messrs. A.& T.J. Malcolm, a Persian Armenian firm under British protection. Messrs. Malcolm began to import arms in 1884, and they were followed by Messrs. Francis, Times & Co., a Persian and English house, whose first agency was established at Bushire in1887.

On the East Coast of Africa the arms trade was an auxiliary of the slave trade, and a blow was struck at it in the General Act of the Brussels Conference of 2 July 1890, which was formally adopted by Great Britain on the 2 April 1892. The contraction of the African market compelled manufacturers and exporters to seek another outlet for their goods, and the unfortunate result was the diversion of the African arms trade to the Persian Gulf, which, lying altogether above the 20th parallel of north latitude, was not subject to the arms clauses of the Brussels Act. The importation of arms at Muscat was now considerable, and the possibility of their introduction thence into the Native States of Western India was observed; but inquiry revealed no real danger, and a slight supervision to be excercised over the trade by the British Political Agent at Muscat was regarded as sufficient safeguard for the time being. Attention was directed at the same time to facilities which were alleged to exist for the importation of arms and ammunition through Gwadar and Bundar Abbas into Afghanistan and the Indian frontier trade; and the facts were investigated by Sir Robert Sandeman, Agent to the Governor -General in Baluchistan,

under the order of the Government of India.

To meet the incipient danger in Makran the Sultan of Oman, at the instance of the Government of India, forbade by means of a proclamation dated 3 March 1891 the importation and exportation of arms and ammunition at Gwadar.

In Persia, in the same year, the Shah's prohibitionary edict of 1881 was reiterated in stringent terms, apparently in consequence of infraction of the law having come to the notice of the authorities through the sale of arms by British and Persian merchants at Teheran.

The stream of arms flowing from Zanzibar into Muscat continued to increase in volume, and it was estimated that, between April 1891 and June 1892, no less than 11,500 firearms were landed at the latter port. A large proportion of these were brought by the Sultan of Zanzibar's steamers. Direct shipments from Europe had also begun, and at the end of 1891 a consignment of 420 Enfields from Austria-Hungary for merchants at Gwadar was stopped at Karachi. More than half the arms received were, even at this period, re-exported from Muscat to Koweit, Bahrain, and other ports in the Persian Gulf. Thus early was the development of Muscat into the chief arms emporium of the Middle East foreshadowed. A few arms were carried also from Muscat to Sur, and other places of the Oman seaboard, and complaints began to be received through Zanzibar of exportation from Muscat to the Somali and Bandir

coasts of Africa.[1] The allegation was not clearly established, but the Sultan of Oman, to satisfy the scruples of the British Government, by an order[2] dated 30 April 1892 - prohibited "the re-exportation from his territories to Africa of firearms received from that quarter". The Sultan, however, from a fear that his subjects might be led to seek French maritime protection in increasing numbers, would not consent to the search of Omani vessels by British men-of-war, and the order remained virtually a dead letter.

During November 1893, the Agent at Bushire of Messrs. David Sasson & Co. informed the Secretary to the Government of India that seventeen cases of fire-arms and ammunition had arrived from London at Bushire, for the purpose of being trans-shipped to the consignees, Messrs. W.J. Tawell & Co. at Maskat, but had been seized by the Custom Authorities at Bushire under order from His Highness the Sadr-i-Azam of Persia.[3] The Agent therefore applied to the Government of India, on behalf of Messrs. Tawell & Co., for assistance in obtaining the release of the seventeen cases, with a view to

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1. Lord Cross to the Indian Government, Political No.23, 14 April 1892, Political and Secret Despatch to India, Vol.18 of 1892. P.48. (India Office Library).
2. The full text in Secret Letters from India, Foreign Department, Vol.67 of 1892. (India Office Library).
3. From J.A. Crawford, Officiating Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, to the Secretary to the Government of India. Foreign Department, No.197 dated 18 December 1893. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

being forwarded to Muscat. They argued that:-[1] (1) So far as they were aware, no treaty or law existed prohibiting the importation of fire-arms into Muscat from England. (2) Only fire-arms landed for trans-shipment at British Indian ports came under the "Indian Arms Act." (3) They had previously imported arms from Karachi, and on applying to Her Majesty's Consul and Political Agent for a letter to the Collector of that port authorising trans-shipment, the letters were always granted without difficulty. (4) Under the existing treaties it was possible to land fire-arms at Muscat by direct steamer from England, and if such landing was prohibited to Englishmen it could still be done by Americans and Frenchmen, Muscat not coming within the scope of the Brussels Conference. And the firm disclaimed any desire of acting contrary to the law.

On the general question of the importation of arms into Oman British treaties with the Sultan were silent. Not only so, but by Article 4 of the Treaty of "Friendship, Commerce and Navigation" concluded with His Highness in 1891 "the perfect freedom of Commerce and navigation between the High contracting parties" was assured, and Article 7 of the same Treaty provided that "no article whatever shall be prohibited from being imported into, or exported from, the territories of His Highness the Sultan of Muscat."[2]

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1. From Major J. Hayes-Sadler to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, No.330, dated Muscat, 8 December 1893. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

2. See the full text of the treaty in State Papers, Vol.83, 1891-1892, p.11.

America, France and Holland had also entered into commercial treaties with the Sultan, by which the subjects of these nations were, equally with the English, guaranteed the benefits of the most favoured nation clause, whilst in the case of America there was a special provision in Article 2 of the Treaty between the United States and the Sultan, by which ammunitions of war defined in the Article as "articles of muskets, powder and ball", might be freely sold without any restriction in all the Sultan's ports other than the island of Zanzibar; Zanzibar being then a dependency of Oman. It was thus evident that no treaty or law existed prohibiting the importation of arms into Muscat direct from Europe.

Two causes appeared to stand in the way of the British checking the traffic in arms imported into Muscat from other than British ports:- (1) The engagements entered into by the Sultan with other countries. (2) His own disinclination to check the traffic for fear of an injury to Custom's receipts. It was thought that some good would be done if the Home Government were to issue a new prohibition; but the difficulty would only be partially be met till His Royal Highness was prepared to put a stop to this trade, and then the question might arise how far such action on his part was compatible with the treaty engagements with the countries concerned. Perhaps a solution of the difficulty would be found by bringing Oman within the sphere of the

During 1895 it appeared that arms and ammunition was conveyed to Muscat from Bushire and direct from England to Muscat on orders sent to England from Bushire; the persons dealing in those arms being Messrs. T.J. Malcolm & Co. of Bushire and Ruttonsi Purshotam of Muscat, who held the Custom contract of the Sultanate that year. From enquiries Major J. Hayes-Sadler had made at Muscat it seemed that the arms were sold in the interior of Oman, and that some were sent up the Gulf to Bahrain and the Turkish littoral from whence they were smuggled to south Iraq, Southern Persia and even Yeman and Southern Arabia.[1]

According to the reports received by the Persian Government from the ports of the Persian Gulf, fire-arms were imported from time to time as merchandise into the interior of that country through the ports. When any official of the Persian Government got to know of the fact, the owner pretended that the arms were destined for the district of Oman. "In order to prevent this pretext", wrote the Prime Minister of Persia to Sir Mortimer Durand on 8 April 1895, "it is necessary that an order should be issued to the effect that all fire-arms intended for Oman should be imported direct by sea, without entering the ports of the Persian Gulf, so that, should fire-arms be found at any of the

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1. Major J. Hayes-Sadler, Political Agent at Muscat, to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, No.32, dated Muscat, 5 February 1895. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

Persian ports, they may not be considered destined for the Oman district."[1] To this W.J. Cunningham, Secretary to the Government of India, replied:-

> "It rests with the Persian Government to adopt any measures which may be considered necessary in respect to the introduction of arms through Persian Ports. The Government of India would prefer to avoid any action which might tend, directly or indirectly, to stimulate the trade in Arms with Oman, and do not propose to move in the matter." 2

Muscat was evidently the centre of a trade which supplied the Arab littoral up to Koweit with modern Arms of precision. The demand was brisk and showed every indication of increasing. With regard to the question of amending the Commercial Treaty so as to allow the Sultan to levy from British subjects a higher rate of duty on the import of Arms, Major J. Hayes-Sadler observed that "before such an arrangement could be effective to check the traffic, it would be necessary that the treaties which the Sultan had with other Powers should be similarly amended, and that a really prohibitive duty, which 15 per cent. would not be, should be imposed."[3] Even then the Sultan could only exercise control over Muscat and Mattrah, and the traffic would

1. A letter from Sadr-i-Azam to Sir H.M. Durand, 8 April 1895. Secret Letters from India, Vol.78 of 1895. Government of India, Foreign Department. (India Office).

2. From Secretary to the Government of India to Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran. Enclosure No.5, No.1385, dated Simla, 15 July 1895. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

3. From Major J. Hayes-Sadler to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, No.49, dated Muscat, 25 February 1896. Secret Letters from India, Foreign Department of the Government of India, Vol.84. (India Office).

probably be diverted to other places on the coast where no means of collecting the duty would exist.

The arms trade to Muscat had assumed considerable importance, and that port had become the disturbing source of arms to various quarters, and some check upon it would seem desirable. The Resident in the Persian Gulf, Col. P.A. Wilson, was not however prepared to assent to the Sultan's request for sanction or an increase of the duty, unless the assent of other powers allowed without the increase to be applied generally, the interests of British manufacturers and merchants alone would suffer.[1]

As trade was found to be so flourishing during 1895-96, and the sums obtained by the local authorities for conniving at it were so considerable, the central government considered that there was room for other partners in it and a special official was accordingly appointed from Teheran, nominally to enforce the prohibition against the import of arms, "but as the official in question for the post was appointed in the usual fashion" remarked the British Resident in the Gulf on the trade report of that year, "it is certain that neither he nor the Government had any intention of really carrying

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1. From Col. P.R. Wilson, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, enclosure No.9, No.41, 17 April 1896. Secret Letters from India, Government of India, Foreign Department, Vol.85. (India Office).

out the order."[1]

During the year 1896-1897, some hundred and twenty five cases of arms, aggregating 20,000 rifles and 750 cases of ammunition, had been imported into Muscat.[2] With the exception of about fifty cases imported from Marseilles, the whole trade appeared to be in the hands of Messrs. Joyce & Kynach, and any increase in the import tax would act in a manner detrimental to British trade.

The trade in arms was a most lucrative one, and profits of from fifteen to thirty per cent. were said to be rather the rule than the exception and Col. Wilson was of the opinion that an additional tax of 2½% would not materially affect the trade. He considered that if it was desired to put a stop to the import in arms into the Persian Gulf, a tax of at least 15 per cent. would be necessary. It was possible, however, that in the event of a heavy tax being placed upon the import of arms into Muscat, one of the ports on the Pirate Coast would be made the future centre of the arms trade, the effect of which would be merely to cause heavy loss of revenue to the Sultan which he could ill-afford.

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1. Annual Report by the Persian Gulf Presidency at Muscat Political Agency, No.CCCXXVIII of 1895-96.

2. From Capt. F.G. Bevuille, Political Agent at Muscat to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf. Encl. No.9, No.98, dated Muscat, 31 March 1897. Secret Letters from India, Foreign Department, Government of India, Vol.92. (India Office). See also Annual Report of the Persian Gulf Residency and Muscat Political Agency, No.CCCXLVII of 1896-1897.

The Sultan was of opinion that the import duty of 5 per cent. should not be made to apply to those articles which were formerly not considered as merchandise, and were not imported from Europe. The continued import in large quantities of arms and ammunition was likely to cause serious harm to the Sultan himself, and he, therefore, trusted that Great Britain would agree to permit him to levy an additional duty of five per cent. on these articles. The duty on arms and ammunition would then be 7½ per cent. "By agreeing to this," the Sultan told the British Agent at Muscat, "the Great Government will confer a favour upon us."[1]

Under date of 4 April 1897 a despatch was received by the Department of State from the Deputy Consul of the United States at Muscat accompanied by a translated extract from a letter from H.H. the Sultan, of 30 March 1897, asking the consent of the United States Government to increase duty upon fire-arms and ammunition imported into His Highness's dominions as a measure of greater security, an additional duty of 2½ per cent. instead of the 5 per cent. allowed by the Treaty of Amity between His Highness's Government and that of the United States of 21 September 1833. His enquiry was answered on 18 May 1897 by making reference to Article 2

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1. From the Sultan of Muscat to the British Agent, 30 March 1897. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

which defined and regulated the traffic by arms by citizens of the United States within the dominions of H.H. the Sultan, and to Article 3 which specifically provided that "vessels of the United States entering any port within the Sultan's dominions, shall pay no more than 5 per cent. duties on the cargo landed, and that this shall be in full consideration of all import and export duties, tonnage, licence to trade, pilotage, anchorage, or any other charge whatever." As well as to Article VI of the Treaty[1] whereby "the citizens of the United States resorting to the ports of the Sultan, for the purpose of trade, shall have leave to land and reside in the said ports without paying tax or imposition whatever of such liberty, other than the general duties on import, which the most favoured nation." Nevertheless the Government of the United States told the Sultan that "she would be ready to negotiate, if so desired, an amendatory or supplementary article, which when ratified or exchanged between themselves and His Highness's Government would approve the 7½ per cent. duty to be collected on American shipments of arms, whenever the Government of Muscat should be in a position to collect such a tax generally from the other treaty states trading with Muscat."

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1. Full text of the treaty in W.S. Ruschenburger's "Narrative of an Embassy to the Sultan of Muscat and the King of Siam". London, 1838, pp.151-154.

2. Pro-Memdre, Confid. from Secretary of State S. Sherman to the British Ambassador in Washington, 8 November 1897. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

The French Foreign Minister communicated the following remark to the British Ambasseador in Paris:

> "J'ai l'honneur d'informer Votre Excellence que Seyyid Fezzal a, en effect, au mois de juin dernier, presente á cet égard le Vice Consul de France à Muscatt, mais que notre agent a été invité à déclarer au Sultan que le tarif d'importation des produits francais ayant été fixe á 5 pour cent per notre traité de 1844. il ne nous paraissait pas possible d'y apporter des modifications." 1

The other European power in relation with the Sultan of Muscat was the Netherlands. Monsieur de Beaufort, the Foreign Minister, informed the British Embassy at the Hague on 29 October 1897 that "the Netherlands Government had not received any communication respecting the proposal of the Sultan of Muscat to raise the duty on arms imported into his dominions from five to seven and a half per cent. There was no Dutch official stationed nearer to Muscat than the Netherlands Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran, and although it was possible that the Sultan might have addressed the letter on the subject in question, no report to that effect had been received by the Dutch Foreign Office."[2]

It appeared that the only existing agreement between the Governments of the Netherlands and of Muscat was a Declaration signed at the Hague on 7 April 1877, and at

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1. Monsieur G. Hano-Teaux to Sir Edmund Monson. Paris, 28 October 1897. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

2. Mr. Henry Hammond to Lord Salisbury, The Hague, No.73. Confidential. 21 October 1897. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

Muscat on 17 August following. The treaty accorded the most favoured treatment to the subjects and flags of the two nations concurrent in regard to general rights, to duties on imports, and to all matters relating to exports and transit trade. Under these circumstances it seemed that whenever the Governments of all the other Treaty Powers were in accord on the subject of the amount of duty to be imposed on any article of commerce imported into Oman, the Government of the Netherlands would conform to the agreement then arrived at.

The British Government and the Government of His Majesty the Shah of Persia were informed "that arms and ammunition were being imported into Persia and Baluchistan from the territories of Muscat and its dependencies and it was believed that they were by these means distributed among the tribes subjects in Persia, and also carried to tribes on the North-Western front of India who were enhaged in hostilities with the British Government.[1] Any such traffic in arms and ammunition was contrary to the existing laws of Persia and the British Indian Government; so accordingly the two Governments united in requesting H.H. the Sultan of Muscat to warn his subjects and all persons resident in his territories from exporting the articles mentioned from H.H's dominions to Persia or British

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1. From Sir Charles Hardinge to Lord Salisbury. Telegraphic. 18 December, 1897. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

Indian ports where the importation was illegal. H.M. Government was prepared to co-operate with H.H. in enforcing this order, as well as those issued by the Sultan in 1891, prohibiting exports to Gwadar and its adjacent territories.

The Lords Commisioners of His Majesty's Treasury had communicated with the Commissioners of Customs with a view to their making every effort to carry out the wishes of the Marquis of Salisbury in the matter of the export of Arms and ammunition from England to the Persian Gulf. His Lordship was desirous that whatever was possible should be done to discourage and restrict the exportation of Arms in this area. That such measures should be taken by the Board of Treasury as were open to them, for the purpose of obtaining early an accurate information in regard to shipments and Munitions of War to those ports. With regard to the first of these requirements it was not proposed to issue any proclamation under section 138 of the Customs Consolidation Act of 1876. Therefore what the Board could do towards that object could only be through directed results that may follow from action taken under the second object. With regard to the last object Lord Salisbury directed the Treasury to use their discretion carefully, but with more than usual freedom in calling (under Section 11 of the Customs and Inland Revenue Act of 1887) for Bills of Lading and other documents in order

to test the specifications of goods shipped to the Persian Gulf and adjoining coasts not only unless the goods were described as arms, but more specifically when they were described under some general designation such as "Merchandise" or "Hardware" as might be used as a convenient cloak for arms.[1] It is useful to know that the ships that they were understood to be engaged in the trade were those owned by the Anglo-Algerian Steamship Co. and the Anglo-Arabian Persian Co. and in particular the steamships Turkestan, Arabustan, Baluchistan, Tresco, Alphonso and Tripoli.

Belgium had also contributed to the Arms Trade. At Brussels the British Ambassador, Sir Thomas Plunkett, called at the Belgian Foreign Department, and in the absence of Monsieur de Fenereau who was away at Liége that day, he showed to Baron Lambermont the telegram from Hardinge respecting the seizure at Bushire of 2,000 rifles of Belgian origin. The Ambassador informed Baron Lambermont in confidence that Her Majesty's Government had every reason to believe that these arms were part of large supplies of ammunitions of war which were being sent to the Persian Gulf for the ultimate use of the tribes against the English on the North-Western frontiers of India. He added that under the circumstances,

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1. Foreign Office to Secretary of the Customs. Very Confidential. No.17058, 20 November, 1897. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

the British Government trusted the Belgian Government would desist from protecting so illicit a traffic.[1]

It was well known that the Foreign Minister had, through his wife, considerable banking and industrial interests in Liége and was then intimate with principal business people of that town which was his winter home until he was appointed to be Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The acting Belgian Foreign Minister told Sir Thomas Plunkett that the Government could not prohibit the manufacture at Liége of arms, and in this case moreover, as far as the manufacturers were bound to know, the arms had been ordered by an English firm - Messrs. Francais and Son Ltd.,

Lesss than six months had elapsed after the investigation made at the instance of the Indian military authorities, when the tribal risings on the Indo-Afghan frontier of 1897 suddenly brought the question of the Gulf arms trade into great prominence, and the theory was propounded that a part of the tribal armaments might have been derived from the Persian Gulf. It was decided, however, without waiting for definite proofs that the frontier of India was affected, to take measures against the illicit trade in arms between England and Persia, - an evil in itself with no slight magnitude.

To this end the Persian Government were warned through Charles Hardinge, the British Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran,

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1. Sir Thomas Plunkett to Lord Salisbury. Confidential. 25 December 1897. F.O.60/591. (P.R.O.).

to take steps for enforcing the actual law and for confiscating the stores which had been illegally imported into Bushire and were accumulated there.[1] The British proposals were heartily welcomed by the Persian Government, themselves now thoroughly alarmed at the proportions which the trade had attained; nor were their fears without justification. In the neighbourhood especially of Bushire, no grown man any longer enjoyed social considerations or could obtain a wife who did not possess a rifle; the Bushire-Shiraz road was frequently closed by the heavily armed tribes of Tangistan, who if they had been united among themselves, might even have been able at this time to capture the town of Bushire; and in fact, as aptly remarked by a Persian, "Martini Khan" was now Shah of the South of Persia. On 11 December the Persian Government announced that orders had been given for the confiscations to take place, and on 15 December they went so far as to agree that all mercantile vessels trading in the Persian Gulf under the flag might be searched for arms and ammunition by British men-of-war, any contraband found on board being handed over to themselves. They also associated themselves with the British Government in a request to the Sultan of Oman that he would warn his

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1. Charles Hardinge to Sir Ronald Thomson. Private. 10 December 1897. Private Papers of Lord Hardinge. Persia C.H. (1896-1898). (Cambridge University Library).

subjects of the illegality of exporting arms to Persia, and would authorise British war-vessels to search British, Persian and Omani vessels in his territorial waters, and to seize and confiscate the cargoes of arms owned by British or Omani subjects which might be found on board, if destined for illicit importation into Persia.

In pursuance of the Anglo-Persian understanding the Sultan of Oman was approached by Colonel M.I. Meade, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, and the adherence of Muscat Government to the arrangement was secured; not however without difficulties, for the Sultan apprehended the interference with arms would result in a diminution of his Customs revenue.[1] No notifications and proclamations in the sense required, applying equally to British, to Persian and to Omani subjects and vessels, were issued by the Sultan on 30 January 1898. At Bushire the Persian Government had appointed the Malik-ut-Tujar, a former Governor of the port, to be prevention officer, on the curious condition that one-third of the arms confiscated by his instrumentality should be given him as a reward.

Lord Salisbury asked the Viceroy of India on 21 February 1898 to "instruct authorities in the Persian Gulf to transmit to him a full report as to the seizure of arms on a British ship

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1. Hardinge to Lord Salisbury. Telegraphic. 1 February 1898. F.O.248/668. (P.R.O.).

called the "Baluchistan" and many other British vessels directly seizure was effected."[1] He also told him that "it was important to bear in mind that they co-operated with its territorial authorities who were primarily responsible, and that reports might possibly have to be produced in Court, and in any case needed to dispose of legal questions raised in London."

Events in the Persian Gulf, in connection with the trade in arms and ammunition were likely to cause ruinous loss to British traders unless some satisfactory settlement was soon arrived at. The British firm who were concerned in shipments of arms and ammunition to Muscat and the Persian Gulf, and whose interests had been seriously prejudiced by the action of the Persian authorities in seizing the goods both in Bushire and whilst on board of the "Baluchistan" at sea in the neighbourhood of Muscat, called on Lord Salisbufy to protect their interests, and prevent any loss arising through the seizure and detention of their goods.[2] They argued that for many years a regular and considerable trade in arms and ammunition had been carried on between England and the Persian Gulf, including Bushire. There had been absolutely no secrecy about it; orders had been openly placed

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1. From Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Viceroy, 21 February 1898. F.O.60/603. (P.R.O.).

2. Malcolm, Bunker & Co., Adams Co., etc., to the Marquis of Salisbury, 25 February 1898. F.O.60/603. (P.R.O.).

with Birmingham and other makers, packages clearly port-marked, and carried openly by Railway Companies to London, Cardiff or Manchester, for shipment by the regular liners sailing direct to the Persian Gulf. Full details of packages and contents had been declared for Customs clearance, and ships' manifests issued in accordance therewith.

Of the full cognizance of the British Government there could be absolutely no doubt, as, in addition to the Company's argument, the following extract from the 1896 Bushire Consular Report, issued by the British Foreign Office for the benefit and information of British Traders:[1]

> "Theoretically this trade is prohibited by the Persian Government, but like all similar prohibitions in Persia, this practically only substitutes an arbitrary impost for a fixed duty, and the large increase in any values shown are mainly due to high valuation caused by the raising of this impost by the local authorities, though there was also a slightly increased demand in Basht and Dashistan."

These were really only trans-shipped in Bushire, but were usually kept a short time before re-shipping, owing to restrictions on account of the nominal embargo given; those were imported direct to Muscat and the other markets of the Arab Government, usually fed from Bushire, so the business

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1. Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance in Persia: Report for the year 1896 on the Trade of Bushire (c.8277-15).

fell by £4,944. Those reports also gave full details and statistics of value and number of packages at Bushire and other ports in the Persian Gulf.

In a letter dated 30 November 1897 the British Resident wrote to one of the firms in arms among other things, as follows:-

> "The Resident is aware that prohibition to import Arms is evaded, and for this reason the Residency has hitherto done nothing to interfere with the action of certain European firms who have, for some time back, been largely engaged in the trade and have been making enormous profits on it. The only reason why the Residency has not interfered is that, as long as prohibition is not enforced by the Persian Authorities, and as long as there is a ready sale for Arms in Persia and other neighbouring countries they will certainly be brought in, and prohibiting English firms from joining in the trade, will, as explained by you, only mean it passing into the hands of other Nations; the Residency has hitherto not in any way interfered with British firms, or prevented them from benefiting from the traffic, but this is a different thing to encouraging it." 1

The remarks as above in the Consular Report by the British Resident at Bushire were, in themselves, a recommendation to British merchants to compete in the trade and only warned them that the rate of duty on the importation of arms was a fluctuating one. But in spite of these prominent public records, it had been contended that the Persian Government prohibited the importation, and even suggested that they were unaware of the fact that arms were thus imported.

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1. Col. Meade to Malcolm Barker & Co. No.680, 30 November 1897. F.O.60/603. Enclosed in Malcolm Barker & Co. to Lord Salisbury, 25 February 1898. F.O.60/603. (P.R.O.).

These theories cannot be upheld when the actual facts are examined.

Provincial Government in Persia was carried on by appointment, from Teheran, of Governors to administer certain districts. These Governors were paid no salary, but on the contrary, were required to guarantee a fixed payment per annum to the Shah, reimbursing themselves out of the Customs and other resources of revenue, the whole of which they pocketed. It was well known and admitted, that the Governorship, which included the port of Bushire, was valued at a high rate on account of the extra profits derived from the "arbitrary imposts" levied on arms imported; without this branch of trade the revenue would largely decrease, and in exacting from the representation a value for the post, inclusive of and dependent upon, the revenue derived from arms, the Teheran Government directly sanctioned the trade, and benefited thereby. It was not, and could not , be denied that Duty had been paid, to the duly appointed representatives of the Shah, and it was to contend that the Shah, or his Government, were ignorant of what was being done, in view of these facts and that the British Foreign Office's reports were freely circulated in Teheran, as in other parts of Persia, and that everybody else in the country knew of the trade, which had in fact at times formed the subject of diplomatic communications between the British and the Persian Governments. These arguments seemed weak if

viewed by Mr. Hardinge's private letter, dated 10 December, 1897 to Sir Ronald Thomson on this matter. He approved the idea that, "although the importation of arms for many years absolutely prohibited, large quantities had been imported by Messrs. Malcolm of Bushire, who enjoyed the British protection, by paying the Amin-us-Sultan so much per case. But since the fall of the late Sadr-i-Azam the traffic became more general but also stressed the danger of this trade to the integrity of the Persian Government who were fully alive to the grave situation which they, as the tribes of the South were in reality better armed than the Government troops."[1]

In a letter dated 1 March 1898, the Foreign Office told Sir Arthur Rollit,[2] M.P. that the importation of arms into Persia without the express permission of the Persian Government had for years been prohibited, and that this fact was well known to all merchants trading to that country, although a certain traffic in arms and ammunition to the ports of the Persian Gulf had undoubtedly been carried on by illicit means with the connivance of the local Custom Authorities. In consequence of the disturbed state of

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1. Mr. Charles Hardinge to Sir Ronald Thomson, 10 December 1897. Private Papers of Lord Hardinge, Persia (1896-1898). (Cambridge University Library).

2. From Sir Thomas Sanderson to Sir Arthur Rollit, M.P. No.151, 1 March 1898. F.O.60/603. (P.R.O.).

certain districts in Persia, the Persian Government had lately found it necessary strictly to enforce the prohibition, and requested the co-operation of the British Government. There could be no question that the Persian Government were in their right in taking this step, and as British interests were also affected, the British authorities had been wise to co-operate with the Persian Government in carrying out the Regulations.

At Muscat action was taken with even more striking success. The "Baluchistan", a vessel of 2,400 tons gross tonnage belonging to Messrs. F.C. Strick & Co. (The Anglo-Arabian and Persian S.S. Co.) in London which had left Europe towards the end of 1897, was known to have on board a heavy cargo of arms and ammunition, partly consigned to Persian ports, and preparations were accordingly made for searching her in the territorial waters of Oman under the Sultan's proclamation of 13 January 1898, by H.M.S. "Lapwing", under Commander Carr. The destination of arms and ammunition originally intended for Persian ports had been altered in the course of the voyage to "Muscat", but this was not considered to affect their liability to seizure, and they were accordingly landed, to the number of 7,856 rifles and 700,000 rounds of ammunition, and deposited in the British Consulate.

The unforeseen difficulty occurred through the refusal of the Sultan to convene a court to try the seizure, though made under his own authority in his own territorial waters, and he at first appeared anxious to throw the entire responsibility on the British Government; but his objections were in the end overcome, and the court which he appointed arrived without difficulty at the satisfactory conclusion that the arms and ammunition seized were intended for Persian ports, that the change of destination upon the voyage conferred no immunity from seizure, and that the seizure was in accordance with the Sultan's proclamation of 13 January 1898 and was consequently legal in every respect.

Charles Hardinge, the British Ambassador at Teheran was very pleased with Col. Meade's action. On 5 February 1898 he wrote a private letter to Resident Meade in which he said:

> "It is most satisfactory that you were able to conclude the arrangement with Muscat just in time for the "Lapwing" to seize the "Baluchistan" in Muscat waters. The incident and the seizure of arms at Bushire should strike a most effectual blow at the traffic in Arms in the Gulf." 1

But this policy led to a considerable excitement in the British industrial circles. The case of the "Baluchistan" which was brought before the Courts revealed important historical information. Because of the last factor the author found it necessary to discuss this case in detail.

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1. To Col. Meade. Private. 5 February 1898. Lord Hardinge's Private Papers. Persia C.H. 1896-1898. (Cambridge University Library).

II.

On 21 February 1898, Mr. J. Dillon (M.P. Mayo) asked Mr. G.N. Curzon, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,[1] "whether he was aware that interference with the exportation of arms from Birmingham to the Persian Gulf had seriously affected several of the gunmakers in the city, and if so, on what grounds had the trade been interfered with?" Curzon replied that the Sultan of Muscat represented in 1897 to the Indian Government the trouble occasioned to him by the increasing importation of arms in Muscat, and in the same year the Persian Government mentioned to H.M.'s Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran, the great danger arising from the arming of the tribes of Southern Persia, notwithstanding the prohibition of the trade. Her Majesty's Government, after making inquiry into the manner in which the trade was being conducted, determined to assist the Persian Government in putting a stop to the illicit traffic in arms, which affected territories and tribes under British and Persian influence, which had already proved to be injurious to British interests. This issue was also raised in the House of Commons again on 4 April, for when asked by Mr. F.W. Low[2] (M.P. for Birmingham) whether the notification of British gun manufacturers whose

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1. Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Vol.LVII, 21 February 1898, p.1200.
2. Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Vol.LVI, 4 April 1898, p.37.

trade had been stopped, to lay on the Table of the House papers showing the reasons for the action which the Government thought it necessary to take in this matter. Curzon declined to commend before receiving the full report of the British Resident, Col. Meade, on this matter. The same answer had already been given to a question on the seizure of the "Baluchistan" raised in the House by Mr. Charles McArthur (M.P. Liverpool) on 29 March.[1]

On 9 June 1898, at the Foreign Office, Curzon[2] received a deputation representing Birmingham gunmakers with reference to the prohibition of the import of arms at certain ports in the Persian Gulf and the seizure of a quantity of ammunition there. The deputation was introduced by Mr. Kenrick, M.P., and was accompanied by Mr. Low, M.P., and Captain Eric Hutchinson, M.P. Mr. Mathews, who spoke on behalf of the general body of the deputation, thanked Mr. Curzon for affording them an opportunity to lay before him what they considered to be their just grievances, and expressed a hope that, as representing the Foreign Office he would listen to their representation with an open mind. It was, he thought, common ground that the trade in Arms and ammunition made in Birmingham and sold to merchants trading to the Persian Gulf had been

1. Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Vol.LV, 29 March 1898, p.1250.

2. Biringham Daily Post, 16 June 1898. See also the Birmingham Daily Gazette of the same date and Memorandum by Mr. Curzon to Lord Salisbury, 12 June 1898. F.O.60/604. (P.R.O.).

carried on for nearly twenty years. Within the latter portion of that period it had grown very rapidly, and had become of considerable amount. In Bushire alone its value in 1881 was R15,700, by 1887 it had increased to R34,900, in 1889 it was £4,750, in the following year £3,332, and in 1891 £2,531. In 1894 it had risen by leaps and bounds, and reached the total of £31,673, and the next year the amount was £56,301. The trade, therefore, whether rightly or wrongly carried on, had been continuous and increasing during all those years, and now it had been suddenly, and as they thought, capriciously stopped without a note of warning having been given to the manufacturers and the merchants engaged in it.[1]

Mr. Curzon, in replying, said that, although the answer of the Government to many of the arguments and propositions that had been put forward had been given already in communications sent from the Foreign Office, he had consented to receive the deputation in deference to the wishes of his three colleagues who accompanied it, and he was glad to have heard the statement which had been made concerning their grievance. Personally he drew some distinction between the two sets of persons interested in the trade that had been stopped. There were, first, the merchants and shippers who had been engaged in the trade, and, in the second place,

1. Statistics of the Arms trade in the Persian Gulf. Appendix No.IX.

there were those whom the deputation represented, who for some years past had been producing large quantities of arms and ammunition with the intention of selling them in Persia, and who complained that, owing to the action of the Government, this legitimate trade, as they asserted it to be, had been stopped, and grave damage had resulted. He was prepared to accept the assertion which the deputation had made in that they had acted in ignorance of the fact that the importation of arms was prohibited in Persia, but he was quite unable to to accept that explanation on behalf of the bulk of the shippers connected with the trade. While fully accepting the statement of the manufacturers of Birmingham, he must say that the merchants engaged in carrying the arms and ammunition were perfectly aware that they were engaged in an illicit trade, the proclamation of prohibition having been made by the Shah so far back as 1881, and never withdrawn. There might have been laxity and venality among officials, but that did not alter the fact that such goods were universally known to be contraband, public proclamations having been made from time to time since 1881. If there was nothing wrong in the trade why, for instance, had British merchants paid more than the 5 per cent. Customs duty to get their goods through? It was, as the merchants very well knew, prohibitive trade, and they were willing to take the risks. The British Government, on a question of international comity, and to protect their own interests, could not do less than join with the

Shah in putting down the trade. Mr. Curzon also pointed out that the armament around the Persian Gulf had become a menace not only to the Persian Government, but to the large volume of British trade carried on in those ports. Piracy on Indian and British-Indian vessels was becoming rampant, and telegraph offices and survey parties were being continually attacked.

The rigid attitude of Downing Street was unwelcomed by the arms industry in Britain. Mr. Arthur Chamberlain presiding over the annual meeting of shareholders of Kynock's Limited held in Birmingham on 14 June 1898, blamed the Foreign Office for the loss of foreign trade. He told the shareholders that "the business was done through merchants and manufacturers who were themselves being brought to the verge of bankruptcy."[1] He went on to say that "the matter had been prejudiced in the eyes of the country because of the statement put forward by the Foreign Office that the confiscated guns were going out to their enemies, the hill tribes in Afghanistan." Mr. Chamberlain also spoke of the "possibility that the Arms Trade would be driven into the hands of the Belgians, the Germans, and the French as a result of the mischievous activity of the British Foreign Office."

At a general meeting of members of the Gun Workers Union held on 19 July 1898 the following resolution was

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1. Birmingham Daily Mail, Wednesday, 5 June 1898.

unanimously adopted:[1]

> "The Gun Workers Union regrets that Her Majesty's Government continues to occupy the position it does in relation to the seizure of Arms in the Persian Gulf question and is of opinion that their employees are entitled to compensation for loss of trade occasioned thereby and also respectfully desire to call the attention of the Foreign Office to the circumstance that English workmen have been thrown out of employment and have suffered much want in consequence."

The question of the seizure of arms in the Persian Gulf was also discussed on 5 November 1898 at the annual meeting of the Birmingham and Provincial Gunmakers' Union.[2] The chairman, Mr. W.H. Hughes, declared that he was prepared to admit the existence of the prohibition since 1881, but there were many shippers interested in the trade who had been absolutely unaware of it. The shippers who were in the trade a number of years ago were advised, but those who had gone into it within recent years had no knowledge of prohibition. He would tell them candidly that he was unaware of any prohibition until the trade was stopped, and there were many there who were in exactly the same position, although they might be expected to have better opportunities of being unaware of it than he had. It was absurd to suppose that for 18 years the trade had been going on in spite of the Shah's prohibition. Mr. Hughes finally emphasized that:-

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1. National Sporting and Military Gun Workers' Union to the Marquis of Salisbury, 20 July 1898. F.O.60/605. (P.R.O.).

2. The Times, Saturday, 5 November 1898.

"Birmingham gunmakers could not accept the statement by the British Government that it was the Persian authorities that were responsible for the seizures of arms in the "Baluchistan". No one could seriously suggest that that was a Persian seizure, because the "Lapwing" was manned by British officers and men, and was sailing under the orders of the British Government."

The proceedings in the case of Messrs. Francis Times & Co. v. Sea Insurance Co., though contributing little to the public information on the subject of Marine Insurance law, were at any rate valuable as throwing a light on the singular seizure of the warlike stores in which they were originated. The defendant underwriters having disclaimed liability, mainly on the ground of concealment of material fact on the part of the shippers - i.e., as regards the Persian prohibition - the Court gave judgment for the latter, holding that they were entitled to regard the prohibition as a mere paper proclamation, involving no confiscation, so long as duty was paid, and there had, in view of all facts, been no concealment. This was Mr. Justice Bigham's view, after having the evidence and arguments fully before him. "I cannot help thinking," said Mr. Justice Bigham, "that the action of the Persian Government --- when the services of the "Lapwing" were required was really due, not to the prohibition against the exportation of arms, but to some British representations made to the Shah."[1] Mr. Justice Bigham also

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1. The case of Francis Times & Co. v. Sea Insurance Co. at the Commercial Court. The Times, 25, 30 June, 5 July 1898.

told the jury that the export of arms from England to Persia was certainly not contrary to the English laws. The Economist[1] of 16 July 1898 argued:

> "So far as British citizens are concerned there was absolutely nothing illegal in the trade in which Messrs. Francis Times & Co. were then, and had for many years been engaged. For even if the goods were destined for a Persian and not for an Arabian port, which seems by no means clear, the fact that the Persian Government may, either in fact or colourably have prohibited them, did not render the trade illegal in this country."

So far as subjects other than the Persians were concerned the Economist said that the trade resembled that of contraband of war; "whoever chose to engage in it did so at his own risk, and could not come crying to his Government if the contraband be seized and confiscated by a belligerent. On the outbreak of the Spanish American War, for example, the usual Royal Proclamation of neutrality was issued enjoining the national subjects, inter alia, not to carry contraband of war. But no Order in Council was issued prohibiting such shipments, and, as a matter of law and practice, anybody could freely engage in them at his own risk."

It was argued that if it was necessary or desirable in the British interests that the shipment of British arms to the Persian Gulf should cease, it was open to the Executive to

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1. The Economist, July 16 1898.

issue an Order in Council accordingly. In the absence of such Proclamation, the action of the Government in seizing British goods on the high seas (ostensibly in support of a Persian Proclamation) seemed to the British Arms Firms, as well as to the British press, high-handed, illegal, and indiscreet.

Messrs. Francis Times & Co. presented their case against Commander Carr before Mr. Justice Graham and special jury of the High Court of Justice. This case had been reported in The Times of 6, 7, 8, 9, 19 and 20 June of 1899. The action was brought and recovered damages for a seizure of ammunition belonging to the plaintiffs on board the steamship "Beluchistan" in the Persian Gulf.

Sir Robert Reid[1] in opening the case, said that for some years the plaintiffs had been in the habit of shipping arms to Bushire, a Persian port, and also to Muscat and Bahrain and there had, since 1881, been a nominal prohibition of the importation of arms into Persia in practice that prohibition had only been used to substitute an arbitrary impost for a Regular Customs duty, but much under the control of the British Government. Up to the time when the "Baluchistan" sailed there had been no sort of prohibition of the importation of arms into Muscat, and indeed, there wa a treaty by which goods of all kinds were allowed admission on payment of a

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1. The Times, Tuesday, 6 June 1899.

fixed duty. The Shaikh of Bahrain was also an independent sovereign. The plaintiffs had carried on the trade with all three places quite openly making no concealment of the nature of the goods and paying duty on them. In 1897 the partner at Bushire required the London partner to mark all consignments "Bahrain, via Bushire - optional Muscat", and to order the master of the ship to deliver them at either place as he might be instructed by Bushire partner. In March 1897, the firm shipped ammunition from London to the value of £600 on board the "Baluchistan" marked as above. "Optional Muscat" was, by an error, omitted in the first instance, but the mistake was corrected before sailing. The ship sailed on 26 November, and while she was on her voyage the British Government, in consequence of the war on the North-West Frontier, made arrangements with the Persian Government for the seizure of all arms at Bushire, and on 7 December the seizure was effected, to the value of £30,000. In consequence of this order the plaintiffs had all the arms consigned to Muscat; as they knew of no prohibition applying to the port.

The defendant pleaded that the seizure was justified by a proclamation of the Sultan of Muscat dated 13 January 1898, and also by a judgement of a Muscat Court, dated 15 April 1898. As to the latter point, the plaintiffs contended that the judgement could not bind them, because the matter was outside the Sultan's jurisdiction, and also because the plaintiffs had had no opportunity of being heard.

The plaintiffs had had a long correspondence with the Foreign Office, but had been unable to obtain any redress, and were therefore driven to follow this action. They disclaimed any desire to interfere with any measures taken by the Government which might be necessary for the public interest, but it was right that such measures should be carried out at the expense of individuals who had received no warning.

The Attorney-General,[1] in opening the case for the defence, said that when Captain Carr stopped the "Baluchistan" that vessel was in the waters of the Sultan of Muscat, who was an independent sovereign, not a salaried servant of the British Government. On 13 January 1898, the Sultan by a proclamation having the force of law, gave permission to British vessels of war to confiscate arms found in ships within the territorial waters of Muscat, if it should appear that these arms were intended for Indian or Persian ports. Captain Carr was acting under the proclamation. The plaintiffs must have known quite well that the trade with Persia was illegal and liable to be stopped at any moment. Col. Meade, the British Resident in the Persian Gulf throughout this business, both at Bushire and Bahrain, "acted", said Mr. Justice Bigham[2] "with great discretion and ability, and the

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1. The Times, Wednesday, 7 June 1889.
2. Commercial Court (Before Mr. Justice Bigham). Francis Times & Co. v. Col. Meade. The Times, 23 May 1901.

strictest regard to the law."

So far as Col. Kemball was aware, the decision to make over the arms which were seized to the Sultan had nothing to do with the decision of the Law Courts in England in the case of Messrs. Francis Times & Co. v. Commander Carr. The arms were delivered over to His Highness, as belonging to him, his Court having "declared that the arms were properly confiscated."[1] This being so, it seemed clear that no claims could be brought against His Highness the Sultan in this connection.

Captain George S. Carr, the Commander of the "Circe" was then called. He said that in December, 1897, he was in command of the "Lapwing", cruising in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf. There was an illicit traffic in arms from Oman to Persia, and it was his duty to intercept it. This traffic was carried in big dhows, which also carried dates, native grain, and carpets. It was his duty to stop this trade, under the order of his Commander-in-Chief. There was a road from Bushire to Shiraz, and a caravan route from Bunder Abbas to Herat in Afghanistan. These caravans were the

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1. Col. Kemball to Government of India. Enclosure 1 in No.1. (Confidential) 16 July 1900. Traffic in Arms. F.O.60/646. (P.R.O.).

2. The Times, Thursday, 8 June 1899.

ordinary mode of transporting arms and cartridges. In December 1897, he got orders from Admiral Drummond in regard to seizing arms in Persian waters. Early in January he received similar orders in regard to Muscat waters. He then went to cruise in that neighbourhood.[1] He did nothing to the "Baluchistan" outside the three mile limit, she was less than two miles from the shore.

The respondents, by their statement of claim, alleged that in the ordinary course of their business as merchants trading in London and at Bushire and Muscat, they shipped in the steamship "Baluchistan" certain cases of ammunition to be carried to Bahrain via Bushire, and that, for the purpose of enabling them to avail themselves of whichever might prove to be the most advantageous market, it was a term of the said shipment that the plaintiffs should have the option to land the said cases at Muscat. They further alleged that the said cases were marked "Bahrain via Bushire - optional Muscat", and on 24 January 1898, the vessel, while making for Muscat, but several miles distant therefrom, was stopped by the now appellant, then in command of Her Majesty's ship "Lapwing" who took possession of the cases of ammunition.

The appellant, by his defence, denied that the said cases of ammunition were shipped by the respondents in the ordinary course of their business, or were marked as alleged;

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1. Admiralty to Foreign Office. M 15037 , 2 January 1899. F.O.60/603. (P.R.O.).

he further pleaded that on 9 January 1898, prior to the acts complained of, the Sultan of Muscat proclaimed that all arms and ammunition within the territorial waters of the Sultan of Muscat belonging to British, Persian, or Muscat subjects, and intended for Indian or Persian ports, would be confiscated, and that the Sultan on or about 13 January 1898, in accordance with the law of Muscat, authorized and required Commanders of Her Majesty's ships of war to search vessels sailing under British, Persian, or Muscat flags, and to seize and confiscate all arms and ammunition found on board such vessels and intended for Indian or Persian ports. He pleaded, that acting upon such authority, and in compliance with such requests in accordance with the said proclamation as Commander of British Ships of War, and by the authority of Her Majesty the Queen and not otherwise, he searched, within the territorial waters of Muscat, the steamship "Baluchistan", and finding on board the said ammunition, intended for a Persian port, directed the Commander of the vessel to bring her into the harbour of Muscat, and there seized and landed the said cases of ammunition.

He further alleged in his defence that a judgement in rem was delivered by the Court of Muscat confiscating the goods and rendering the seizure thereof lawful by the law of Muscat. He further alleged that all the acts complained of took place within the territories of an independent Sovereign, the Sultan of Muscat, and were lawful by the law

of the country where they were committed, and had been adjudged to be so by the duly constituted Courts of that country.

The "Baluchistan" left London on 26 November 1897. When the vessel on her passage out was at Port Said, on or about 6 January 1898, the master, acting in accordance with instructions received from the agents of the owners of the vessel, obliterated and planed out so much of the markings on the cases as preceded the word "Muscat" that, though traces of alteration were apparent, the cases appeared to be marked with the single word "Muscat". He also made a similar alteration in the bills of lading relating to the said cases of ammunition, striking out the port of destination other than Muscat in blue pencil, and leaving Muscat alone standing as the port of destination. No consignees were mentioned in the bill of lading; but on endorsement of the port marked on bill of lading, the words were written "Bahrain via Bushire - optional Muscat". On 15 April 1898, proceedings were taken to Court constituted by the Sultan of Muscat to inquire into the circumstances in which certain munitions of war which included the said cases of cartridges, were seized by Her Majesty's ship "Lapwing", and it was decided by the Judges of the Court, after they had examined the outside of the cases and had taken the evidence of the appellant:-

(1) That the said munitions of war ex steamship "Baluchistan" were seized by the British man-of-war "Lapwing".
(2) That the seizure was in every respect legal and in accordance

with the permission given by His Highness the Sultan to British men-of-war and at the request of the British and the Persian Governments. (3) That these munitions of war were intended for Persian ports. (4) That the alteration in port marks of destination on the cases took place during the stay of the steamship "Baluchistan" at Port Said on or about 6 January 1898, with the intention of misleading as to the true destination of those cases, but such alteration did not confer any immunity on them from seizure in accordance with the above-mentioned permission. The judgement was contained in a written document, and at the foot thereof the Sultan added the following words, and signed and sealed the same:- "I, Faysal-Bin-Turki, Sultan of Muscat, having carefully considered the decision of my High Court, approve of it, and agree with it." At the conclusion of the case the Jury found as follows in answers put to them:- (1) That the goods were intended for Muscat only. (2) That when they arrived at Muscat a reasonable man would have believed them to be from Persian or Indian ports. (3) The plaintiffs shipped the goods in question bona fide in the ordinary course of trade. (4) That Her Majesty's Government knew of the trade. (5) That the words "Muscat optional" were added to the port marks before the vessel left London. (6) That the words were added with bona fide intention that the goods should be landed at Muscat if the exigencies of the trade made it desirable. (7) That the plaintiffs were

parties to the alteration of the marks on board the ship at Port Said.

There were three further questions, namely - (8) Had the plaintiffs an opportunity of appearing at Court in the proceedings at Muscat? (9) Had they any notice of the proceedings? (10) Had the public any notice of the proceedings? The jury found that no evidence had been given that the Court at Muscat notified the plaintiffs or the public of the proceedings. Upon these last questions, it having been agreed that the Court should have power to draw inferences of fact at Mr. Justice Grantham found that the plaintiffs, even if they did not have direct notice, had an opportunity of appearing before the Court, but wilfully abstained from raising any objection to the seizure at Muscat. Mr. Justice Grantham, after hearing the arguments of counsel on the questions of law arising out of the findings of the Jury, on 19 June 1899, gave judgement for the defendant. The judgement was set aside by the Court of Appeal and judgement entered for the plaintiffs (respondents).

The Attorney-General (Sir Robert B. Finlay, K.C.), the Solicitor-General (Sir Edward Carson, K.C.), and Mr. R.B.D. Acland appeared for the appellant, Sir Robert T. Reid, K.C., Mr. Joseph Walton, K.C., and Mr. Hallam for the respondents.

At the House of Lords,[1] the Lord Chancellor, in moving

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1. Proceedings of the House of Lords, dated 8 July 1901.

that the judgement appealed from be refused, said that this was an action in which the plaintiffs claimed in tort, for the act which, in the first instance, he should assume to have been done within the territorial waters of the Sultan of Muscat. The arguments of the respondents came to this, that the Sultan was not entitled within his own territory to say what should or should not be a sufject of traffic. The Sultan had said - and he enforced this prohibition by authorized armed intervention - that he would not permit a particular kind of traffic to pass through territory. His Lordship was somewhat surprised that there should be any contest on this point, or that any doubt should be suggested. He agreed, indeed, that there was no analogy between the proceedings and a judgement in rem. There was no relation between an act done or authorized by a Sovereign in his own territory and a judgement in rem. It was in general in disputing the validity of the action that, if done in another country, it would have been unlawful. Before the abolition of slavery - to take an illustration from the British history - no action would have been permissible in England on the ground of a restraint of liberty in Jamaica which, though unlawful in England, was perfectly legal in a country in which slavery prevailed. In this case the Sultan had declared what his own law was. It was contended

that this was a question for an English jury, who could go behind the Sultan's act. But no such position could be maintained. The Sultan's authority was supreme within his own territory. The broad proposition was that the Sultan's declaration was an act of State, which could not be infringed in an action in England. The law of the Sultan of Muscat was his will. In his Lordship's opinion no British Tribunal was competent to go behind the Sultan's declaration. A serious question of policy was involved, and British Tribunals could not decide as against the Sultan what was the law of the Sultan's country.

This case had been very fully and ably argued, but, after all, it came to an extremely short point. The respondents who were merchants carrying on business in London, Bushire, and Muscat sued the appellant, Captain Carr, for an alleged wrong committed abroad. He seized their goods as they alleged, illegally, and they claimed compensation. Lord Macnaghten said that in order to find an action in England for a wrong committed abroad two conditions must be fulfilled:

> "In the first place the wrong must be of such a character that it would have been committed in England; and secondly the act must not have been justifiable by the law of the place it was, however, committed."

In the present case the whole question turned upon the second proposition. Lord Macnaghten thought that "it was not disputed that the alleged wrong would have been actionable if it had been committed in England or on the high seas."

It was, however, committed within the dominions of the Sultan of Muscat, who was duly proud to be an independent Sovereign. It was committed within the territorial waters of Muscat, which were, for that purpose as much a part of the Sultan's dominions as the land over which he exercised absolute and complete sway.

The appellant said that the act complained of was done under the authority and by the direction of the Sultan; that he adopted it as his act, and declared it to be legal. In support of this assertion the appellant relied on two documents, the Proclamation of 13 January 1898, and the report of 15 April 1898, adopted and confirmed by the Sultan himself. The real question was what was the true meaning and the effect of these documents? The respondents contended that the documents in question came to nothing more than this, that the Sultan of Muscat announced by formal Proclamation that, so far as he was concerned, Her Britannic Majesty was welcome to seize munitions of war destined for Indian or Persian ports, if they were the property of the British subject, when found within the territorial waters of Muscat; that he could not resent such an act as an invasion of his sovereignty and that afterwards, on inquiry, he declared he was satisfied that the British Government had done no more than he had permitted them to do. Lord Macnaghten rejected this interpretation of these documents. He said:

> "I think the meaning was that the act, if done, was to be done under his authority, as his act, and that after inquiry he adopted the act as his own and declared it to be legal according to the law of Muscat."

Lord Shand and Lord Brampton concurred. Lord Lindley was of the same opinion, and said that the answer to the claim, that the seizure complained of was lawful by the law of the State in which it was effected, was sufficient in point of law.

The plaintiffs complained that the findings by the Court of Muscat that the arms were intended for Persian ports was wrong. An English jury might probably construe a proclamation more narrowly than a Muscat Court or a Muscat lawyer, and an English jury had found that when seized, the arms were intended for Muscat only. But the findings of an English jury, even if relevant for any purpose, did not invalidate the declaration of the law of Muscat and showed that the authority who made it misconstrued the Sultan's proclamation, which authorized the seizure, or did what was wrong by the law of Muscat.

As regards the revision of the agreement of 13 January 1898, with the Sultan of Muscat it was clear that the decision of the Lords confirmed the view which Lord George Hamilton[1] had expressed before, that the ownership

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1. Lord George Hamilton to Government of India. Enclosure 1 in No.5. Secret. 2 August 1901. F.O.60/646. (P.R.O.).

of the arms confiscated should rest with the Sultan of Muscat under whose authority they were seized. He was, therefore, of opinion that no revision of the Agreement with His Highness in that respect was required.

In connection with the seizure of certain munitions of war on the S.S. "Baluchistan", it was observed by Lord Curzon[1] "that arms and ammunition, having been seized under the authority and on behalf of the Sultan of Muscat in His Highness's territorial waters, belonged to the Sultan and should be delivered to him under the terms of the Sultan's Proclamation dated 13 January 1898, and in the absence of any words of limitation, the permission to confiscate, which had been conferred by the Sultan on British and Persian vessels, might perhaps be construed to mean that the confiscating Government was entitled to take for its own benefit arms and ammunition seized in pursuance of that proclamation. Unless that interpretation of the agreement with the Sultan could be accepted, the Indian Government considered that the agreement should be revised". Both the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf and the Political Agent at Muscat were of opinion that any concession, whereby all such seizures would become the sole property of the Sultan, was unnecessary action and would involve undesirable risks.

It seemed that as long as the Sultan of Muscat's treaty

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, No.100, Foreign Department, Secret. External, 26 July 1900. F.O.60/634. (P.R.O.).

obligations to other powers remained as they were, and there was at the same time no restriction against reimportation to the Arab Court, so long must the Arms Trade from Europe to Muscat be accepted as a difficulty which could not be got over, and which could only be reduced within certain limits, and that in this connection "it was to the British ultimate interest that any pressure which they might put either upon the Sultan or upon British subjects engaged in the trade, should be cautiously exercised."[1]

The arms and ammunition taken remained in deposit at the British Consulate until the spring of 1900, when, all legal actions arising out of the matter having been decided, they were made over to the Sultan. By this time the rifles had suffered much from neglect; but the concession of a claim on which he had laid much stress, and which at first had been treated by the Government of India as doubtful, gave great satisfaction to the Sultan.

Having lost their case in the Courts of law and taken remedies which were offered to them, (£1,579.4.1. for damages) they asked for a "further inquiry by an impartial person in Committee."[2] At the same time they admitted that several English houses carried on the trade in like manner,

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1. Captain P. Cox, British Consul and Political Agent, Muscat, to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf. No.119, 6 March 1900 (Confidential). F.O.60/634. (P.R.O.).

2. Francis Times & Co. to Treasury, 22 August 1901. F.O.60/646 . (P.R.O.).

from which it was evident that any relief granted to them must be equally granted to others.

Even if it should be admitted that the arms confiscated could still be recovered by diplomatic intervention and on payment to Muscat and Persia of the value, it was clear that considerable expense would be involved in bringing down those which were sent to Teheran, and most probably rust and neglect would have injured their value to the importers. In those circumstances Lord George Hamilton[1] "saw no advantage to be gained by holding the inquiry sought. Nor could he suggest any other relief which could probably be given at the expense of the taxpayers in order to mitigate the consequences which that firm had brought on itself by engaging in an illicit trade."

The growth of a secondary arms depôt in Bahrain had already been mentioned; and shortly after the seizure of arms at Bushire and Muscat, an important confiscation took place there under the orders of the Shaikh. In 1895, when an attack on Bahrain by Arabs of the mainland was threatened, there were not a hundred rifles in the principality, and the weakness of his position was forcibly brought home to the ruler of the islands. On 21 January 1896 the Shaikh issued

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1. India Office to Foreign Office. 23 August 1901. F.O.60/646. (P.R.O.).

an ambiguous proclamation, forbidding the importation of firearms into Bahrain under penalty of a fine (or special Customs duty) equal to one-fourth of the value of arms; but, immediately afterwards, he granted special exemption or monopoly in favour of the Wazir Abdul-Rahman-Ben-Abdul Wahab. This concession was for the life of the grantee and included a special stipulation that arms should not be sold to inhabitants of Bahrain, El-Katr, or the Arab coast except the coast of Oman, but its principal provision was one designed to secure a supply of arms to the Shaikh.

The Wazir without delay transferred his concession to Agha Muhammad Rahim, a respectable Arab merchant who was also political representative of the British Government in the islands; and he in his turn, on certain conditions as to division of profit, passed it on to the now entirely Parsi firm of Francis Times & Co., a house of doubtful reputation, whose profits from the Gulf arms were supposed to have amounted by the middle of 1897 to not less than £40,000. In April 1897, the Shaikh became alarmed at the growth of the trade and the Wazir intimated to Agah Muhammad Rahim that operations must be discontinued for four months. A little later a rupture occurred between Agha Muhammad Rahim and Messrs. Francis Times & Co. over the division of the profits; and in January 1898 the Shaikh, either in connection with this dispute or because the concession was being infringed by the sale of arms in Bahrain, attached the whole stocks of the

firm, amounting to 2,667 rifles and 637,500 cartridges. His action was not in any way prompted by the British authorities, but it may have been instigated by Agah Muhammad Rahim, who beside having private claims against Messrs. Francis[1] Times & Co., had recently become aware that the British Government, whom he represented, viewed the traffic with disfavour. Col. Meade, the British Political Resident at Bushire, arrived in Bahrain on 4 February 1898, and partially examined the arms seized, but he declined to intervene in the matter, either by taking charge of arms, as suggested by Shaikh, or by pressing for their release, as desired by Messrs. Francis Times & Co.

On 6 February 1898 the Shaikh of Bahrain, Esa-Bin-Ali-Khalifah issued a new proclamation[2] to his subjects in which he said that whereas the British and Persian Governments had represented to him that they were desirous of preventing introduction of arms and ammunition into India and Persia, and there was reason to think that many arms and much ammunition were exported from Bahrain and taken to the above-named countries, he had resolved to join them and to assist them as far as it lay in his power in suppressing the trade in arms and ammunition between Bahrain, India and Persia.

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1. Eventually Agha Muhammad Rahim died and the Shaikh restored the arms to Francis Times & Co. on 2 June 1906 in a much damaged condition.

2. Text of the Proclamation dated 13 Ramazan 1315. 6 February 1898. F.O.60/605. (P.R.O.).

The Shaikh finally told his people that "We therefore warn you that all arms and ammunition sent to those two countries will be confiscated, and those engaged in this trade will be punished, as the introduction of arms and ammunition into India, Persia and Bahrain is prohibited by the Courts of those countries and therefore illegal."

The Indian Government thought that "the position at Bahrain was not complicated, as at Muscat, by treaty engagements with other powers. What was required from the Chief of Bahrain was simple and unconditional agreement to prohibit all import and export of arms into or from the Island."[1] The Indian Government also told the Resident that the proclamation he had accepted from the Chief of Bahrain was unacceptable and it alleged that the Chief's proclamation erred in giving permission to confiscate arms intended for Muscat. The Chief finally agreed to absolutely prohibit the importation of arms into Bahrain territory or exportation therefrom.[2]

In September 1899 an attempt, noticed in the history of Bahrain, was made by a favourite of the Shaikh to tamper with the confiscated arms and gave rise, in consequence of

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1. From the Foreign Secretary, Simla, to Resident of the Persian Gulf. No.710E. Telegraphic. 20 April 1898. F.O.60/605. (P.R.O.).

2. Third Proclamation dated 8 Zil Hijjah 1315 (30 April 1898). F.O.60/605. (P.R.O.).

an assault on Hindu British subjects which it involved, to some unpleasantness between the Shaikh and the British Government; but it did not in any way affect the general issue of disposal of arms.

On 24 May 1900 the Shaikh of Koweit, Mubarak-Bin-Sabah, issued a proclamation that "British and Persian vessels of war had permission to search vessels carrying their and his flags in Koweit territorial waters, and to confiscate all arms and ammunition in them, if these arms and ammunition were intended for Persian and Indian or Koweit ports."[1] The Proclamation also declared that "Koweit vessels found in Indian or Persian waters by British and Persian vessels of war suspected to contain arms and ammunition for Indian, Persian and Koweit ports were liable to be searched by the said vessels, and all such arms and ammunition would be confiscated."

The British object had been to arrest the trade in munitions of war through Persian ports to the tribes on the Indian frontier or to Afghanistan. If that object was gained, the Sultan of Muscat or the Shaikh of Koweit would inevitably lose some revenue then received, or likely to be received, at the customs house; and the Persian customs authorities in the same way were liable to lose the profits which they

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1. Proclamation dated 24 Muharam 1318, 24 May 1900. Enclosure No.7. Letter No.140, 26 May 1900, Captain C.A. Kemball, Officiating Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to the Secretary to the Government of India. Foreign Department. F.O.60/634. (P.R.O.).

derived from a continuance of the illicit trade. "It is therefore not unreasonable," the India Office told the Foreign Office as late as 25 August 1900 that "if the arms are seized in the territorial waters of Muscat or are taken from Muscat boats outside those limits and not within the territorial waters of another power, they should be held to be confiscated for, and in the interests of, the Sultan of Muscat."[1]

In the same way all seizures made by British ships in the territorial waters of Persia, or from Persian boats outside those limits and not within the territorial waters of another power, they should be glad he held to be confiscated for the Persian Government. The British Government was acting in each case as the agent of the governments by whose authority the boats were seized and its character as agent was maintained by the disposal of the arms for the benefit of those Governments. It was true that the ships which seized the arms incurred some expense, and might perhaps claim some prize money. But the benefit which the British Government derived was the arrest of the trade, and in the case of disputes arising with owners of the arms seized or with their Governments, it seemed better that there should be no room for the importation that the British Government sought any other profit from its action than that of

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1. Memorandum from India Office to Foreign Office, 25 August 1900. F.O.60/634. (P.R.O.).

arrest an illicit traffic.

A Prohibition of Exportation of Arms Bill was passed by the House in July 1900. The only operative clause of it said:

> "It shall be lawful for Her Majesty by proclamation to prohibit the exportation of arms, ammunition, and military and naval stores to any country or place therein named whenever Her Majesty shall judge such prohibition to be expedient in order to prevent such arms, ammunition, military or naval stores being used against Her Majesty's subjects or forces, or against any force engaged or which may be engaged in military or naval operations in co-operation with Her Majesty's forces." 1

The object of this bill was to check arms rate in both Persian Gulf and the Chinese waters.

The Earl of Halsbury (Lord Chancellor) thought the circumstances of the time were such that there was no one who could read those words without seeing what they were pointing out - the absolute necessity of being able by law to prohibit the exportation of arms, ammunition, military and naval stores, which though exported from England, might be used in and out of Her Majesty's possessions.

III.

As regards the seizure of arms from vessels carrying the Turkish flag, Lord George Hamilton considered that "without a special agreement with the Porte similar in

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1. Parliamentary Debates, Vol.86, 4th Series. (House of Lords) 23 July 1900.

character to that made with the Sultan of Muscat, such an act would not be justified."[1] At the same time it was understood that the Turkish authorities prohibited the import of arms without licence into the territories on the Persian Gulf.

The question then raised seemed to refer rather to the search for and seizure of arms on board of vessels flying the Turkish flag in the territorial waters of Muscat, and not on the high seas. In the latter case an understanding with Turkey would be necessary to enable British ships to carry out such a search in time of peace, as a merchant ship while in non-territorial waters was subject to sovereignty of that country only to which she belonged, except in the case of piracy.

Jurisdiction in territorial waters prevented a double aspect (a) over vessels visiting, and lying in, the port, &c. of a country: (b) over vessels merely passing through the waters within the territorial limits. Both aspects were discussed by the legal adviser to the Foreign Office, Mr. R.W. Brant.

"(a) As far as the external relations are concerned, foreign merchant vessels are subject to the jurisdiction of the State in whose waters they were lying, unless there were

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1. India Office to Foreign Office. Enclosure No.1, 25 August 1900. F.O.60/634. (P.R.O.).

any treaty stipulations to the contrary, such as is the case in countries where ex-territorial jurisdiction is granted.

"(b) With regard to vessels merely "passing through the territorial waters of a State", Hall says, "looking at the case of passing vessels by itself, there being no clear usage in the matter, a State must be held to preserve territorial jurisdiction, in so far as it may choose to exercise it, as full as over ships and persons within other ports of its territory. At the same time it is evident that the interests of the State are confined to acts as taking effect outside the ship and it seems reasonable to conclude that States, besides exercising such jurisdiction as is necessary for the safety and for the fulfilment of their international duties, ought to reserve to themselves such ordinary jurisdiction as is necessary to maintain customs and other public regulations."[1]

Neither the declaration, relating to the independence of Muscat made by Great Britain and France on 10 March 1862, nor the Treaty of Friendship, &c., between Great Britain and Muscat of 19 March 1891, contained any stipulation which would affect the question.

The Judgment delivered by Lord Justice Vaughan Williams in the appeal in the case of the "Baluchistan" did not seem

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1. Sub-Enclosure - Memorandum by R.W. Brant of the Foreign Office, 9 October 1900, in No.2 Foreign Office to India Office, 29 October 1900. F.O.60/634. (P.R.O.).

to question the right of the Sultan of Muscat to delegate his powers to Her Majesty's ships, though in that case, only a British and not a Turkish or other foreign ship, was affected.

It was the intention of the Persian Government, as soon as the new Tariff being negotiated with Russia (1901) came into operation, "to publish a list of ports in the Persian Gulf at which goods may be imported and to prohibit the importation through all other, with a view to checking contraband."[1] The Government of India were disposed to agree that the closing of the smaller ports, which appeared to be contemplated by the Persian Government, was likely to injure the coasting trade in the Gulf, and, owing to the absence of vital communications, would probably react on foreign trade by impending the collection of produce for export from larger ports as well as the distribution of important supplies. The Government of India,[2] have suggested that the difficulty might partly be met if the Persian Government were willing to adopt the principle of Section 12 of the Indian Sea Customs Act (Act VIII of 1878) and to declare certain of the smaller ports "to be ports for carrying on of coasting-trade with Customs ports, or with any specified Customs port and for no other purpose." This step would, of

1. British Embassy at Teheran to Col. Kemball, No.19, 21 July 1901. F.O.60/662. (P.R.O.).

2. J.B. Wood, Under Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department to Col. Kemball, No.2057, 14 December 1901. F.O.60/662. (P.R.O.).

course, require some form of Customs control at these ports, but a preventive service would be needed even if all trade at these ports were prohibited.

It was evident that British Agreements with Persia and Muscat, and the action which they had taken under them, had not sufficed to place a permanent and effective check upon the flow of arms into the Persian Gulf; and the British authorities could not avoid convictions that, so long as Muscat remained a free port for the import and export of warlike material, the trade would continue to flourish. Such prohibition, they were aware, was contrary to the provisions of the Treaties between His Highness and the Government of France and the United States, and they did not overlook the fact, on many occasions, when His Highness desired to increase the duty upon Arms imported into Muscat, the French Government declined to acquiesce in the proposal on the ground that it would constitute an infraction of the Treaty of 1844. Lord Curzon was not without hope that, if it were explained to the Governments concerned that, owing to the free importation of arms into Muscat, the turbulent tribes in Arabia and Persia and on the Indian frontier might obtain an unlimited supply of ammunitions of war, their assent might be procured to a proposal which alone offered a satisfactory solution to the existing difficulty. The considerations which led to the inclusion in the general Act of the Brussels Conference of the

Article (VIII) relating to the control of the arms traffic with Africa may not unreasonably be urged in support of the adoption of a similar policy in Arabia, and Lord Curzon accordingly suggested, for the consideration of the Government, that representations should be made to the Governments of France and the United States with a view to some modifications in respect of fire-arms of those clauses in their Treaties with the Sultan of Muscat, which prohibit the Sultan from imposing any restrictions upon the import or export of any kind of merchandize.

In the event of this proposal meeting with a favourable reception from the Powers concerned, Lord Curzon thought[1] that it might be necessary, in order to induce the Sultan of Muscat to comply with their wishes in this matter, to grant him compensation for the loss of Customs revenues that he would thereby incur. The Sultan, it was said, was realizing a profit of Rs.60,000 per annum in Customs due on the importation of these arms which pleased him for the time, but the result of all that importation would be just as serious for His Highness as it was for Britain's interest. "The whole of Oman territory was in 1902 heavily armed, and the Sultan would no longer be able to control the tribesmen of the interior even to the limited extent that he had

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, No.5 of 1902, Government of India, Foreign Department. Secret. External, 9 January 1902. F.O.60/662. (P.R.O.).

hitherto been able to do."[1] The history of Oman of late years teems with accounts of rebellion and attacks on Muscat. At the last rising in 1895 the Sultan was driven out of his Palace, Muscat was looted, and much damage owing to non-interference on the British part. Since that date the British have given the Sultan a guarantee that they would defend him against the repetition of such an occurrence. But traffic in arms added new difficulties. "The fulfilment of our guarantee to the Sultan," wrote Col. Yate[2] to the Indian Government, "will be no longer the case of a few shells from a man-of-war lying securely at anchor, but will entail the despatch of a costly expedition, and the occupation of Muscat in fact."

Russia also wanted to participate in the trade of Arms in the Persian Gulf. Two Russians, M. Leontieff and M. Ermtere, arrived at Muscat on 9 March 1901. They visited the French Consul who introduced them to the Sultan. They asked His Highness for a written permit to start operations in the arms and ammunition business. The Sultan replied that there was no necessity for a written permit, as the import of arms was prohibited.[3]

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton, No.5 of 1902. Government of India, Foreign Department. Secret. External, 9 January 1902. F.O.60/662. (P.R.O.).
2. From Col. C.E. Yate, Agent to the Governor General of Baluchistan, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, No.1.F.C. (Confidential) 5 May 1902. F.O.60/662. (P.R.O.).
3. Consul-General at Bushire to Hardinge. No.155, 1 July 1901. "Précis on International Rivalry in the Persian Gulf". 1869-1902. Secret. (India Office Library).

XII. BRITAIN AND THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE PERSIAN GULF

In this my final chapter I intend to discuss three important points in British strategy which increased in importance in view of the problems that we have examined in earlier chapters. Firstly; the Persian Gulf as a system of defence; secondly, the strategic problem of the Railways and thirdly, Russia's claim to access to the Persian Gulf.

I.

It is important here to mention a confidential War Office Report on the possibility of sending an expedition from the Persian Gulf up to the valleys of the Euphrates or Tigris. The point which was investigated in that Memorandum[1] was, whether, in the event of war with Russia it would be possible to send a British force from India and then up the valley either of the Euphrates or Tigris, with a view to operating against the Russians either in the east of Asia Minor or the northern portion of Persia. The active co-operation of the Turks, and the friendly neutrality - if not active co-operation - of the Persians must, of course, be assured.

1. Secret Memorandum on the possibility of sending an expedition from the Persian Gulf up the Euphrates and Tigris Valleys dated January 1876. War Office 33/30. (P.R.O.).

The local difficulties to be encountered in the valley of the Euphrates and that of the Tigris were similar in nature, although differing in degree and in many points of important detail. But, inasmuch as the two rivers, though meeting at their mouth, diverge widely as their sources were approached, it followed that the strategy involved, and the object which it might be presumed the supposed military operation had in view differed widely in the two cases. As regards the Euphrates the Memorandum went on to say:

> "It may be at once assumed that, were it intended to take the offensive against the Russians and invade one of their Caucasian provinces, the operation would have to be conducted from the Black Sea. No idea of sending troops up the Euphrates for such an object could for a moment be entertained. A glance at the map may be sufficient to show this. Even supposing all the difficulties of navigating the Euphrates to be overcome, the troops would eventually be obliged to disembark at some point far removed from the Russian frontier, and separated from it by a rugged and mountainous country presenting exceptional difficulties to their movement. The supposition of such an attempt being ever made therefore, be dismissed without further remark." 1

Again, it was clear that for operations in Azerbijan on the neighbouring province of Persia, or in Kurdistan, the Euphrates route would be of no value. It was true that the Euphrates runs approximately parallel to the line of march which the Russians must adopt did they ever invade Persia from Georgia, and that these troops landed at some point on the river would be on the flank of the Russian line of operation. But the two lines were separated by a very wide

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1. Ibid., p.106.

interval, whilst the intervening country - in one part desert, and at the other mountainous - presented insuperable difficulties to the movement of a force eastward from the Euphrates.

We may now turn to the case of the Tigris. The last Memorandum considered:

> "We have first to consider the hypotheses under which it is conceivable that an expedition up the Tigris could be contemplated. First, it may be desirable to operate northward from Diarbekir; or, secondly a movement westward from some point lower down the river may be under contemplation. In both cases, points far inland have to be reached, which are nearly as remote, and, perhaps, more inaccessible from the coast of Palestine than from the Persian Gulf."

So it was out of the question that the necessity of sending any expedition to the head-waters of the river should ever arise. It was within the range of possibility that it would be strategically desirable to move a force to Baghdad. The obstacles to a flank march from Baghdad to the main routes which lead from Russian territory into Persia were very great, but probably not altogether insurmountable. The difficulty of moving a military force from the mouth of the Tigris to Baghdad would be immense.

If, however, an absolute strategical necessity arose to accomplish the manoeuvre, British land forces with naval backing might overwhelm in a unique offensive any enemy's forces in the Mesopotamian valley as they did fourteen years later. But the rigid Kurdistan mountains would stand against

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1. Ibid., p.111.

any attempt to march northward.

To Britain Kermanshah had considerable interest, both politically, strategically and commercially and as the years went on this interest was largely increased. The political interest to Great Britain consisted in its being the frontier Province of Persia and Turkey in Asia. It had been the battleground of the two nations for centuries. It afforded an easy access into Iraq. Strategically the province was of importance as it was practically the centre of communication through Baghdad, Tabreez, Isphahan and Teheran. The possession of Kermanshah either for offensive or defensive measures would be of great utility. As an offensive point it would afford a good forward position for an attack towards Armenia and the Caucasus, being easily accessible from the Persian Gulf via Karun river, Dizful and Khoramabad.

From a defensive point of view it afforded many magnificent positions against an attack from Russia towards the head of the Persian Gulf or southern Persia, supposing that the advance was made from the Caucasus or Armenia via Mosul or through Kurdistan via Hamadan. An army acting with Kermanshah as a base would be in a position to defeat these columns separately or if not strong enough to do this, could take up such a defensive position at or near Kermanshah as would enable them to hold them in check for some considerable time. On the other hand, it would cover and prevent any turning movement against the Bakhtiari position. Commercially it was important

as it acted as the port for the entry of all British trade entering Persia via Baghdad and Tigris. The state of the Province was absolutely defenceless. The British Consul at Isphahan paid a visit to this province during March 1898. He submitted a long confidential report to the British Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran in which he argued that a "small Turkish or Russian force could make its way to Kermanshah in a few days without any difficulties, then all Arabistan at the mouth of the Persian Gulf would be under their merch."[1]

The possession of Batoum was very greatly coveted by Russia as the only port to the south-east coast of the Black Sea, and therefore the natural port for her trans-Caucasian provinces, and terminus for the railway through the great valley between the Caucasian and Armenian ranges connecting the Black Sea with the Caspian Sea.

Great as the distance was from Erzeroum to Constantinople, over 700 miles, the effect of the fall would be seriously felt, and if it coincided with successes on the side of the Balkans, it was not improbable that it might induce the Porte to accept such terms as Russia might dictate. At any rate, the power of Turkey in Asia, which the Turks more especially regarded as their home, would have received a most severe shock. It would be felt that the Russian forces on the high plateau of Armenia, at the sources of the Euphrates, Tigris and the Kizil-Irmat,

1. Mr. Preece to Hardinge. Confidential Memorandum on South Western Persia, inclosed in Hardinge to Salisbury, No.43, 15 March 1898. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1572. (P.R.O.).

would have the command of the whole of Asia Minor with no obstacles to encounter in their onward march to the Mediterranean and to the Persian Gulf via Mesopotamia. Such a position might well induce the Porte to accept any terms that might be imposed upon it and would give Russia a preponderating influence on an Asiatic power. Being also at the head water of the Euphrates and Tigris, their position would seriously menace the Persian Gulf.[1]

Late in 1891 Salisbury had been deeply impressed with the conviction that there was a "defect" or "gap" in the plan which the Indian Government had been forming and carrying out for some years for the defence of the North-West Frontier against a Russian attack.[2]

In that year the balance had inclined to the positive or more gloomy side of that discussion. It was not only that Russia had advanced to the very borders of the countries over which the Indian Government exercised influence, but that circumstances had tended to increase the probability of Russia being involved in war. The unabated thirst of the French for their revenge, the fact that a war between them and Germany would remove the principal military check on Russian ambition, the growing weakness of Turkey, the approach of Russian armaments

1. Confidential Memorandum on the Defence of the Straits by Sir Linton Simons. 26 July 1877. Lord Granville's Private Papers. P.R.O. (30/6)15. (P.R.O.).

2. Salisbury to Lansdowne, No.115, 21 October 1891. The Marquis of Lansdowne's Papers Correspondence 1889-1894, Vol. January-December 1891. (India Office).

to their full development, all these things seemed to point an early effort on the part of Russia to make herself mistress of the Straits, and there was no doubt that she would try an expedition against India to put pressure upon England in order to paralyse her resistance in the Bosphorus.

Britain had long contemplated the war and made preparations for it, and several valuable papers existed as the method and extent which the Indian Government could meet a Russian movement in Afghanistan and Persia. Lord Salisbury thought that the mastery over Baluchistan, and the provision of sufficient railroad accommodation to enable the Indian Government to exercise that mastery, must be an important element in the military calculation of those who would have to defeat Afghanistan, because it was obvious that, if the Indian Government was in a condition to advance troops from the sea to the south-west of Afghanistan, the movement of Russia towards the east would be full of hazard to the maintenance of her long and dangerous line of communication.[1]

As regards the Persian Gulf the defence of Persia proper was the most important. The Russian forces provided the sea and railroad passage, ran along the whole north of it. Its powers of resistance were a matter of speculation but they were probably very small. The only effective resistance it could offer would be of the irregular kind in a predatory and partizan warfare which would make the nourishment of troops

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1. Ibid., p.151.

and the supply of ammunition difficult. But was there any chance, under the then existing circumstances, that Persia would offer any such assistance, when once Russia began to move. Salisbury declared:

> "Persia will not resist Russian attacks without encouragement, the only encouragement that is of value is a certain support in troops, and a more considerable support in officers, money and ammunitions of war. Any such support is out of the question now on account of the distances which any Indian Government's assistance would have to cover." 1

It was only by a railway from the sea, which it started from Quetta, Karachi, or Gwadur, that that distance could be covered, and the possibility of assistance to Persia on the part of the Indian Government could become one of the elements in the calculation.

As regards Persia the distances were large, the chance of profit was infinitesimal, the burden was too heavy for the Indian Government's already embarrassed exchequer. Meanwhile if Persia was not encouraged to resist, there was no reason why Russia should not become mistress of Isphahan, Shuster, Teheran, Muhammerah and even Bunder Abbas. The material basis which such an occupation would give her for operations against India would not be trivial. Much of the country, in proper hands, was very fertile and full of resources, and the population had a great military reputation at no very distant date. But the moral value of such an occupation would be much greater. And what would be the effect

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1. Ibid., p.152.

on the Indian population, who knew something of their own history, and who would draw perilous auguries as to the achievements of a power which had been able to conquer Persia?

In an article contributed to the "Journal of the Royal United Service Institution" in September 1899, Col. Mark Bell,[1] whose authority on military matters was undoubted, had drawn an elaborate and masterly survey of the strategic deficiencies and requirements of Turkey's Asiatic frontier. It is unnecessary to examine his plan of operation in detail; I will content myself with stating concisely the conclusions at which he arrived, and the grounds upon which they were based.

He pointed out that the natural line of defence, from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf, ran in a south-easterly direction, partly on Turkish and partly on Persian territory, between the towns of Samsun, Sivas, Kharput, Mosul, Dizful and Bushire on the west, and the parallel towns of Trebizond, Erzerum, Bitlis, Suj Bubak, Hamadan, Gulpaigan and Van. The northern belt, forming the "offensive" zone, to which he assigned three-fourths of the fighting strength of Turkey in Asia, and having for its base the line connecting Mardin with the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, was a region of grassy mountains and hills, fertile undulations and rich agricultural valleys, generally difficult for military

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1. Col. Mark Bell, "The Highway of the Nations: The Turko-Persia-Indian Commercial route". Royal United Service Institution Journal, September 1899, pp.485-1016.

operations, with a climate for four months of the year of severity to almost prohibit them, and traversed by a few and difficult roads but, nevertheless, including in its areas the rich corn-growing districts ot Erzeroum, Passin, Khanis, Bulanik, Mush, and Alashgerd.

The southern or "defensive" zone, in which the remaining fourth of the army would operate, and for which the Mardin-Baghdad line would supply the necessary base, consisted of the main watershed of Armenia and Persia, a mountainous country, difficult to traverse except by hill-paths, suited to pack-transport only, and closed by snow for four or five months in the year - inhabited by unruly tribes, practically free of control, chiefly nomads, and subservient only in name to either Turkey or Persia. There was, however, a possibility, and even a probability, that the Russians would make a simultaneous advance upon the Karun plain from the regions in the vicinity of lake Urmia. In this case Persian territory would be violated, and the arena of conflict immeasurably extended. The defensive force would be deployed among the Kermanshah-Burujird-Hamadan line, so as to protect the passes westward through Kurdistan and southward through the Lur, Bakhtiari and Kashgai hills; and its base would extend from the Tigris at Baghdad to the Karun ports, Shuster and Muhammerah.

In view of the superior naval strength of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf, the port selected by Russia should be

in a defensive position, because it should be fortified; as otherwise the shipping and stores there would be exposed to capture and destruction at the hands of a British Squadron.

The efficiency and security of the land communications with a source from which naval and military supplies in large quantities would be drawn, would be of great importance, because the sea communications would be unsafe in the face of the superior British Squadron.

The port selected by Russia must, therefore, be on the mainland, or an island immediately adjacent to it, it should be either at the head of the Persian Gulf or on the Persian side. Strategically, the position most advantageous to her, from the naval point of view, would appear to be on the mouth of the Persian Gulf - the most advanced position - but the choice must be largely influenced by climatic and local conditions.

The advantages of an advanced position were that a Russian naval force in such a port would be on the flank of the communications of any British force operating in the Gulf, and would, therefore, have to be masked before any advance was made into the Gulf; it would also be nearer to the British line of communications between the Red Sea and the Far East, and thus in a better position for attacking British Trade Routes.

Communications by rail with the general system of Russian railways would have to be established, so as to

admit of men and stores being readily brought to the ships. As the nearest coal mines which were being worked in southern Persia, and the nearest oil at Baku, and as a sufficient fuel for a large fleet could hardly be transported by rail over such a distance, either coal or oil must be found more conveniently situated. It was obvious that the development of a Russian naval force in the Persian Gulf would be attended with great difficulties, not the least of which the great heat and the unhealthiness of the climate.

Assuming these difficulties to be overcome, the presence of a Russian squadron in the Persian Gulf, based on a fortified port connected by railway with a source from which it could draw supplies, could affect the naval position both of Russia and of Great Britain.

If Russian naval resources were divided into four widely separated ports - China Sea, Persian Gulf, Black Sea and the Baltic instead of into three, as it was, they would be weakened for any operations which involve concentration; as the British force would be on the communications, and would be able to crush the ports in detail. The force in the Persian Gulf might be made strong at the expense of that in the Baltic, or of that in the China Sea, or of both.

Whether Russia would be wise to concentrate this in the Persian Gulf would depend upon international relations at the time, but if she did, and war broke out between Great

Britain and the Franco-Russian Alliance, the Russian force in the Persian Gulf could be neutralized by the dispatch of an equal British force without altering the relative strength between the belligerents elsewhere, unless it were considered necessary to provide against the possibility of German hostility during the conflict, in which case the presence of the Russian Squadron in the Persian Gulf would be of greater difficulty for Great Britain than of those ships in European waters.

In the latter case the concentration of British forces in Europe would meet the forces of Russia and France, and would at the same time, help to avert the German danger, but in the former case the British forces necessary to meet the German squadron, would not be available in the event of German intervention. It would be for the advantage of Great Britain that the decisive struggle should take place in Europe, and preferably in the British seas, where her resources were concentrated and where she held a commanding strategic position between the Mediterranean and the North Powers. On the other hand it would seem advantageous to Russia to be in a position to transfer the centre of struggle to the Persian Gulf, where the Russian force would occupy a central position on the flank of the British position with the East.

This argument was based entirely on the possibility

that a great Russian naval base might ultimately be established on the shores of the Persian Gulf, that supplies for a large squadron could be obtained by land carriage from the continent of Asia, and the Russian interests in the Baltic and the Pacific would admit of concentration of Persian waters.

In the period 1898-1902 this was far from being the case; the port had yet to be founded and fortified, the land communications had to be completed; the coal mines and other sources of fuel had to be discovered and developed; and when all this had to be done it would always be very doubtful whether the pressure of the Northern Powers in the Baltic, Japan in the Pacific, would permit Russia to concentrate in any central position.

Generally speaking, the altered condition, brought about by the establishment of such a Russian base, would not occasion a vital change in the naval situation as a whole, but would add to its complexity, and necessitate further heavy expenditure, both on ships and dockports at Bombay and Mauritius.

In short, a Russian occupation of Persia would be a cause of increased naval expenditure. Bearing this increased naval expenditure in mind as the inevitable outcome of such action on Russia's part, it was very desirable as far as possible, to prevent by diplomatic means the fulfilment

of any plans of such nature. On the other hand, a permanent British military occupation of ports only in the Persian Gulf, without any intention to occupy southern Persia, would seem to be unwise, seeing that the port could not be permanently held against a really serious attack by a powerful enemy in possession of the hinterland. It was suggested by Lord Curzon[1] that a naval force should use the peninsula of Masandum as a permanent base in the Gulf.

As regards Russia, Hamilton thought that her advance on the borders of Persia and her assimilation of the territory absorbed by her in Central Asia, had assured her a safe stepping stone for a fresh move. He added:[2]

> "Our base of operations remains on the sea, while Russia has moved, and as she has advanced her influence has increased. If we lay down the principle of independence of Persia, we are met by the fact that Russia has already gained on a land a position which dominates and threatens almost the whole of Persia, and enables her, under cover of concessions and monopolies, to exercise a practical and exclusive control over a considerable proportion of the administration of the country. The very independence which we struggle to maintain may become the most effective instrument which Russia can use against us."

The naval operations during the Spanish-American War had clearly shown that a naval force dependent for its

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord Hamilton, 22 October 1902. Private Correspondence: Curzon to Hamilton, Vol.XXIV. D 510/12 (India Office).

2. Memorandum on Measures for Protection of British Interests in Persia from Hamilton to Curzon, No.14. Secret. 6 July 1900. F.O.60/623. (P.R.O.).

efficiency during hostilities upon the possession of an adequate number of coaling stations.

As regards the Persian Gulf it was feared that some naval power, in their desire to obtain possession of places of strategic value for coaling purposes, might bring measures to bear or offer inducements to their Arabian or Persian owners which the latter, owing to weakness might be unable to resist, and the change of ownership thus brought about many material advantages added to the relative strength of other navies as compared with Great Britain.

Salisbury was aware of the strategic value of naval coal stations. He was anxious to obtain from the Persian and Turkish Governments, from the Sultan of Muscat and from the Chiefs of Bahrain and Koweit an undertaking that they would not alienate any port of their territory, on the Persian Gulf, to any foreign power without first giving the British Government the option of acquiring them.[1]

In a long Memorandum on Persia Lord Curzon pointed out:

> "The strategical interests of Great Britain in Persia arose from conditions which India is most intimately concerned. Long before the boundaries of British India had been extended to their present limits, or before Russia had become a great Central Asian Power, approaching or infringing at many points upon the Indian frontier, though not at that time of a conterminous country, had become a matter of vital concern to the British dominion in India. In the early days of the present century, when the

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1. Foreign Office to Admiralty, 26 December 1898. Admiralty 1/7389 B. (P.R.O.).

> ambitions of France were the main source of apprehensions, it was through Persia that a blow at British supremacy was expected to be struck, and that an invasion of India was planned.
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> It is clear that Persia has assumed a strategical importance in relation to British India, which might not be serious, were the resources or the designs of that country itself alone to be considered; but which was indisputably great, when it is remembered that closely pressing upon Persia and upon Afghanistan is the ever-growing momentum of a power whose interests in Asia were not always in accord with our own, and that the Persian Gulf is beginning to attract the interest of others and some rival nations." 1

By controlling the south of Persia, with Bushire, Muhammerah, Ahwaz, Shuster, Dizful and Isphahan as strategical centres, the Persian Gulf was thus commanded. Britain would therefore secure the comparatively fertile South West province, with the Karun, Persia's only navigable river, which the British sea-power would enable them to utilize to the greatest advantage and would prevent Germany carrying out an unfriendly policy when firmly seated at Baghdad, Basrah and Koweit. Britain would have two powerful allies, Kawam ul-Mulk in Shiraz and Shaikh Khazal in Muhammerah.[2]

In her struggle against the growth of Russian influence in Turkey, China and Persia Britain had not sufficiently

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1. Memorandum on Persia by Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. No.175 of 1899, Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret, External, 21 September 1899, p.3. F.O.60/615. (P.R.O.).

2. Major P. Sykes to Salisbury, No.4, 29 June 1900. F.O.60/621. (P.R.O.).

acknowledged the changed conditions under which the contest proceeded. As Russia annexed territory she contrived with determination to assimilate the territory absorbed that in a short time it became a valuable "satellite" for a fresh move.

In the past Britain was more successful because sea communication gave Britain a power of concentrating naval forces at any given spot on which no one nation could withstand. Railways in 1900 gave to a great military power on land the advantages Britain used to enjoy on sea but Britain in Asia did not seriously attempt to shape her policy to the changed circumstances to modern locomotion. Great Britain, as the Empires of the Roman and the Arabs before,was constantly proclaiming interest in territories more extensive than she could protect, with the necessary consequence that her assertions, if acknowledged in theory, were disregarded in practice.

It was found that an increasing exertion to develop the route from Queta to Seistan and to establish an influence in Seistan would only induce both Russia and Persia to combine for the purpose of shutting India out. But it seems to me that it was very improbable that Russia would undertake a system of Railway through Seistan by some route to Bunder Abbas. It was clear that neither Russia nor Persia was equal to such projects. Moreover it was an open question whether if such development of Persia by Railways were

actually contemplated, it would be Britain's business or interest to oppose it, unless indeed her Indian frontier or her position in the Persian Gulf were threatened strategically or her commerce hampered by unfair regulations. "So long as our naval power is predominant in the Persian Gulf," wrote Sir Alfred Lyall, "we ought to be able to dictate our terms. We have told Persia that we expect to be consulted before Persia takes any important steps that might disturb the status quo in the Persian Gulf."[1]

All the correspondence that had taken place between the India Office and the Viceroy, both official and private, pointed to the fact that, if war broke out with Russia, the Indian military establishment, unless largely reinforced from England, would be unable to maintain those positions which both politically and strategically it would be essential to occupy. These considerations governed Britain's policy to a large extent. Britain could not hope to obtain any material help from Imperial resources unless it could be naval, for the prosecution and maintenance of a forward policy in this part of Asia. The Secretary of State for India remarked:

> "We should oppose, so far as we can, the Russians from making any progress in south Persia, this is a policy which I entirely agree with, but I do not

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1. Sir Alfred Lyall to Sir Thomas Sanderson. Secret and Private. 13 March 1902. F.O.60/656. (P.R.O.).

> want to occupy positions or to indulge in a policy, from which we should be compelled to recede whenever time becomes critical." 1

Unfortunately the extension of warlike operations in South Africa continued to lock up there the whole of Britain's standing army, and Britain really was in a position almost of impotence as regards the great Continental Powers. It was hardly thought in India how weak for the time being Britain was in all international affairs. From this standpoint Britain had to regard the action which some time back she took in Koweit, and it was absolutely necessary that she adopt as conciliatory a tone as possible towards the great powers in giving reasonable explanations of what her object was and what her intentions were. The importance of this possible danger was described by Lord George Hamilton:[2]

> "The allegation made by Germany, and I believe supported by Russia, is that we, a signatory of the Treaty of Berlin, and one of the guarantees of the integrity of the Turkish Empire, have behind the back of the sovereign of that Empire, made a secret arrangement for an individual advantage with a chief who is under the suzerainty of the Sultan."

Hamilton believed that there was a sufficient truth in the allegation to make it necessary for Britain to give a soft answer, otherwise she might combine against herself, on this very ticklish question, all the great powers of

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1. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, 6 June 1900. Private Correspondence, Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. EUR. C.126/2. (India Office).

2. Hamilton to Curzon, 25 September 1901. Private Correspondence. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. MSS. EUR. C.126/3 (India Office).

Europe, who, in combination with the Sultan, might endeavour to extract from Britain either a repudiation of the agreement that she made with the Shaikh of Koweit, or on the other hand they might take combined action in rejecting the arrangement Britain had made, in encouraging the Sultan to resist it by force.

So long as Britain was the most powerful Embassy at the capital of Persia, Turkey and China, the independence of these countries was very useful cloak behind which Britain got legally the concessions and advantages she wished for; but, as with the development of railroads the power of Russia had steadily increased at Constantinople, Teheran and Peking, the independence of these countries was the very instrument through which concessions and arrangements were made to her detriment and to the exclusion of her interests; and she could not hope to improve her position so long as she fatuously adhered to what seemed to be an absolute policy so far as her interests were concerned. On the other hand, any attempt to define the sphere of interest of herself and Russia would probably lead to a partition of the country, and any proposal of that kind would at once be communicated to the Government of the country, and represented to them as a <u>base</u> attempt on her part to smash them up as a sovereign nationality. Meanwhile Britain might adopt an

intermediate course, that was, without in any way sanctioning the idea of a partition, or in any way giving leave to the other power to assert its influence over certain areas, to adopt the negative attitude of saying that no foreign intrusion could be tolerated. Unless she did something of that kind she would find herself compelled to go to war, and a war just with Russia on the Persian Gulf question of course would mean a war with Russia and France in Europe.

In a book called "The problem of Asia", Captain Mahan, of the American Navy, had devoted much of his attention to the question of the Persian Gulf and adjacent countries. He bade us suppose for the sake of discussion that the various territories known as Turkey in Asia, instead of composing a flabby body, enfeebled by centuries of misrule, were to be braced together into a highly organized modern state stretching from the Black Sea and the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, this hypothetical state would control the communications between Europe and Asia, and play in the Eastern Mediterranean the part played by France in the Western. He proceeded to draw a most instructive comparison between the relative importance of modern world movements between China on the one hand, and, on the other, Persia and the territories component of Asiatic Turkey. In the case of China it was her wealth, both actual and potential, that

attracted the nations to her gates.

A much more important role was rightly assigned by Mahan to the countries between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. If their resources, as then so very little developed, indeed less than those of China, they were nevertheless sufficiently vast to satisfy the loftiest ambitions. Directing his vision to the struggle between Great Britain and Russia in Asia, Mahan warned Britain against the dangers of a Russian advance towards the Persian Gulf. On the Gulf, Russia outflanked the Afghanistan position and placed herself upon Britain's line of communications with India and the Far East. Such an advance would, in his opinion, materially improve her prospects both of initiating and of sustaining operations in India. Britain should have her on the flank of her great dependency, controlling the issue of any railway from the Mediterranean through Mesopotamia, and barring the way to its prolongation towards India. It was a consummation which should carry with it - I quote his actual words - "a perpetual menace in War". It would entail on Britain's part the maintenance in Indian waters of a large and costly fleet. To lock her up in the Gulf would involve an exhausting effort to Great Britain and her natural allies. The presence of Russia on the Persian Gulf would go far towards counterbalancing her occupation of Egypt. "There is no motive," Captain Mahan went on to say, "in the good

of Russia for the other states to consent to an arrangement which carried with it hazard to them."

Captain's Mahan's writings, excellent as they were, Lord George Hamilton thought, had put too much wind into the head of the Imperialist school. It was a mistake, he thought, to multiply and increase British interests in antagonism to other nations along the sea-coast in the belief that, when the stress of war comes, those places would receive adequate defence from the sea. He concluded:-

> "In any contest between Britain and Russia, so far as Persia, China and Asiatic Turkey are concerned, time is on the side of Russia. Her power of assimilation and consolidation, being a semi-Asiatic power herself, is far in excess of anything that Britain can ever hope to attain." 1

II.

It is important to note that whilst Lord George Hamilton readily admitted that Britain could not allow Russia to interfere or to obtain a territorial status in Persia, and must maintain as far as they could their hold on all ports in the Persian Gulf which were on the Indian side, he was averse to adopting a provocative or aggressive policy at the other end of the Gulf. He never linked the step that was taken, by which Britain entered into so ambiguous an arrangement

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1. Hamilton to Curzon. Private Correspondence: Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, 26 January 1900. EUR.c.126/2 (India Office).

with the Shaikh of Koweit; and the only ground upon which the India Office agreed to the arrangement made by the Foreign Office was that they declined in any way to be responsible for or to supply any land force for the purpose of protecting Koweit. The India Office came to that conclusion after very careful consideration. They found that the military establishment of India would have more than they could do to protect territories in the vicinity of India's immediate frontiers, and they did not feel justified, therefore, in giving their sanction to any arrangement which at a critical moment might deplete establishments already insufficient for the discharge of the primary duties upon them. Lord Curzon suggested, as one of two alternatives, that Britain should assert a protectorate over Koweit. The only reason why Britain took so great an interest in this port of the Gulf was because Koweit was the only port in the upper end of the Gulf, and the only one that could be made available for sea-going ships of heavy draughts. The claims of Koweit to be independent as against those of Turkey to assert a sovereignty over Koweit were very nicely balanced. But the Turkish claim was the stronger, Germany had an interest in preventing this port from becoming a British Protectorate. If Britain adopted this alternative, she should to a certainty provoke strong expostulations from Turkey and possibly from Germany. Morally Britain should put herself in the wrong, and naturally she had not

the force to assert and maintain her claim should be severely contested by Turkey at a time when Britain was involved in foreign complications. As regards this point Lord George Hamilton declared:-

> "We must content ourselves with preventing Koweit from alienating any part of her territory to foreign countries, and see in the meantime if we could come to some arrangement with Germany by which, if the Germans ever did wish to establish a railway terminus in the Persian Gulf at Koweit under concessions that have obtained, they should do so subject to the conditions which we have imposed upon Koweit. We are having imposed upon us a very severe lesson by the embarrassments and troubles which have sprung out of our South African policy." 1

Hamilton's policy was to open the Persian Gulf to all international commerce. In a very important Memorandum dated 3 April 1900 he wrote:-

> "Let us concentrate our attention on that which is essential to us, which we can hold, and let us not interfere with Germany getting her foot into this region. Let us, without in any way encouraging Russia to get a port in the Gulf, avoid having our whole policy upon the idea that we ought to prevent her from accomplishing this project.
>
> By more definitely stating what we want and what Russia is not to have, we may accelerate the partition of Persia, and we may quicken the extension of Russian influence outside the area upon which we have a lien, but we shall avoid the double mortifications of knowing that we are pursuing a policy which not only must fail, but which in the process of its failure unites foreign nations against us." 2

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1. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, 13 June 1901. Private Correspondence. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. EUR. MSS. c.126/3. (India Office).

2. Confidential Memorandum by Lord George Hamilton on the Persian Gulf, 3 April 1900. Secret Letters from India. Government of India, Foreign Department, Vol.120 of 1900. (India Office).

Germany had begun to display a positive and increasing interest in Persia and also in the Persian Gulf. This interest had been the historical and perhaps the natural, sequel of a commercial policy that had for some time aimed at securing the control of the principal railways in the Turkish dominions in Asia and Asia Minor, and of a political ambition, would appear to aim at the protection of the Ottoman Empire, unlike in Europe and in Asia. Already the Germans had procured a concession for the construction of a road from Khanikin on the Turco-Persian frontier, to Teheran, and had apparently only abstained from pressing a railroad in the same quarter, because of the violent opposition with which the Persian Minister met the proposal at Teheran.

While the British authorities regarded these symptoms of increasing German interest in the Gulf as emphasizing the international aspect which the Persian Question appeared more and more destined to assure, and therefore as adding to the complexities of an already sufficiently difficult situation, they did not question the bŏna fide commercial enterprises which were carrying German trade then, as to the so many other open seas and ports in the world, and they could conceive that they might even find, in the existence of German political interests, an occasional ally or safeguard for their own.

German interests had had a tendency to grow with some

rapidity, and by steps they were not always acceptable to their neighbours, and the need for an early decision upon the future policy to be adopted by the British Government was not diminished, but was enhanced by the appearance of so active a competitor upon the scene of the Persian Gulf.

"I do not love the German Government, but I have felt, for years past, that we are not straightforward, or frank enough, in our dealing with them," Hamilton stated on 27 April 1900.[1] "I should prefer to be allied, if allies are necessary, which I think they are, but although we have made considerable concessions in recent years to Germany, we have always been so clumsy in our methods and manner as to cause more offence than good feling by the transaction associated with the concession."

In the Commons Mr. Walton told the House of 22 January 1902 in course of debate on the Middle Eastern Affairs:[2]

> "Germany is doing for Turkey what we have been doing for Persia. She is working for the social improvement and material welfare of Turkey; and I believe, that if the struggle of the future is to be between the Slavonic policy of compelling stagnation or the Teutonic policy of spreading the blessing of enlightenment of the victory will lie with those nations which were striving selfishly or unselfishly for fulfilling the high aims of Christendom."

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1. Hamilton to Curzon, 27 April 1900. Private Correspondence. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. EUR. MSS. C.126/2. (India Office).

2. Parliamentary Debates, 22 January 1902, Vol.101, 1902, p.587.

An opposite view was presented in a leading article in the National Review of 1901 which said:-[1]

> "With both (Russia and Germany) alike making for the Persian Gulf, a compact to push us out of Asia altogether would be one of the bargains by which Germany might hope to secure Asia Minor as her share of the spoils. India will never be successfully attacked except by sea, and when the Baghdad Railway reached El-Koweit the doubling of the German fleet will be complete. The new Power at the gate of India will not only be the first military power in the world at ten days' running from Berlin, but the second naval, at four days' steaming from Bombay. Let us look to it betimes, for when three Powers meet upon the Persian Gulf two may be hammer and anvil and one the thing between."

It is true that the "Grane" (Koweit) had gained a new importance since the Germans came to the fore in Arabian politics with their Mesopotamian Railway. But Koweit was on political carpet ever before the German Commission which travelled from Baghdad to Basrah in 1900 to hit on provisional alignment for the railway."

It was right to attribute the increased British interest in the Shaikhdom to three factors: (1) The German advance through Baghdad Railway. (2) The quarrel between Koweit and the Amir of Nejd and between Koweit and Turkey. (3) Treaty relations with all the Shaikhs of Koweit, Bahrain and El-Katr.[2]

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1. "The Forces of Asiatic Policy", National Review, Vol.37, 1901, p.637.

2. See a despatch by H.S. Whigham on "Rival interests and the Koweit Question" dated 13 February 1902 in the Morning Post, 22 March 1902.

It was pretty clear that although Britain declined to admit that Koweit was an integral part of the Turkish Empire, she admitted that Koweit had nominal connection with the Porte, which from time to time was emphasised by declarations made by the British Ambassador at Constantinople, and by the fact that the Shaikh himself had flown the Turkish flag, and accepted the rank of Kaim-Makam with the title of Pasha. They came Britain's Agreement with Koweit, and the moment that Agreement was made she to a certain extent turned round, and went as far as previous statements and correspondence would allow her in asserting the independence of Koweit. But Britain was prevented from pushing this doctrine far by the appearance of Germany upon the scene. She undoubtedly should have had a very awkward diplomatic crisis with Russia, Germany and France if she had not admitted that there was a kind of connection between Turkey and Koweit, not well defined and possibly not enforced for a long period, and that, so far as this connection or authority was concerned, she did not wish in any way to disturb it by upsetting the status quo. Germany had no political objection for building a railroad to the top of the Persian Gulf. It would certainly bring her into collision with Russia. These commercial interests were absolutely antagonistic, and the more the commerce and trade of that country were developed assuming that Turkey would not adopt a protectionist or prohibitive tariff, the more British trade expanded.

Both Curzon and Lansdowne were pleased with a policy founded upon a mere attempt to preserve the status quo as to Koweit. But Lansdowne thought that Britain's relations with the Shaikh Mubarak of Koweit had always seemed to him to be able of the most unsatisfactory description. "I felt very strongly," wrote Lord Lansdowne, "that our policy in the Persian Gulf and our attitude towards the Baghdad Railway scheme ought not to depend upon the extent of our hold upon this barbarous personage."[1]

During the course of a prolonged conversation between Lansdowne with the French Ambassador[2] on 19 March 1902, the latter referred to the attitude of the British, or as he put the Indian Government towards other powers in the Persian Gulf. He regarded the pretensions of the Indian Government as excessive, and attributed to them a desire to treat the Gulf as a British lake. He thought it would be impossible for Britain to persist on a policy of this kind. The Anatolian Railway had its terminus at some point upon the Persian Gulf, which would then become a highway for international commerce, and Britain should look this prospect in the face. The Marquis of Lansdowne replied that His Excellency was mistaken

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1. Lord Lansdowne to Lord Curzon. Private and Confidential. 10 April 1902. Persia, Vol.29. 277. Lord Lansdowne's Papers. (Foreign Office Library).

2. Lansdowne to Monson, No.117. Confidential. 19 March 1902. Admiralty 1/7557. (P.R.O.).

in attributing to Britain or to the Government of India to exclude the trade of other countries from Persian waters.

Britain's attitude towards the Anatolian Railway project had been far from friendly. The Marquis of Lansdowne had indeed explained to the German Ambassador that Britain was quite prepared to facilitate the construction of the line, but her support was not to be expected unless she was given a share at least equal to other powers in the capitalization of the Company, in its management. M. Cambon observed that he could say confidently that there was no desire to deny sufficient opportunities to British capitalists, but when the project had been mooted in financial circles, the overtures which had been made had met with a very cold response in London. Lansdowne thought that might be so, but the question was still under discussion. He went on to say that while these were Britain's feelings with regard to the commercial exists in the Persian Gulf, they entertained the strongest objection to, and should certainly oppose, any attempt on the part of any other Power to create strategical base or fortified harbour in those waters. The necessity for taking any precautions against such an event had been strikingly illustrated by the example of Batoum. As regard to Britain's "mefiance" of Russia in those regions, Lansdowne said that it had been his earnest wish to arrive at an amicable understanding with Russia in regard to Persian as well as Chinese affairs, and that he had made a tentative

approach in that direction, but unfortunately without success.

The desire of Russia to post pone all railways in Persia pointed out but to one object, viz., her desire so to surround the country with a network of railways in her own dominions as to make it indifferent to her whether or not there were railways in the intervening territory.

The constant presence of Russia on the borders naturally exercised a predominant influence on the Persian mind, for, however strong the belief of the Persian Government in the friendliness of England, they perceived the impossibility of material assistance in case of Russian aggression. The immediate construction of railways from Quetta to Seistan would be a powerful factor in the future policy of Central Asia. The Russians thought that the construction of a line from Teheran to Bunder Abbas was of a very great importance. By it they should kill the German line to Baghdad and Basrah, and also they should not give the English the power of competing with them, since to the east of this line the country was poor, while in the south, near Bushire, the country presented so many difficulties as to make the construction expensive. Further, the expense of trans-shipment at coast of merchandize and goods would remove any advantage that the German Railway might possess. As regards England the Russians thought that their diplomacy must profit by the situation which existed, and must exact from the Persian

Government a complete monopoly. The importance of a strategic railway was well explained in a Russian Memorandum which said practically acquired that the railway would increase her prestige, and the question would no longer be put as to whether Russia or England is the strongest, this question being definitely decided in Russia's favour. The Memorandum went on to say:

> "As regards Bunder Abbas branch, its construction would give us influence over the whole of Persia, and would exclude the question of a partition of Persia into two spheres of influence, Russia in the North and England in the South. From a strategic point of view the Bunder Abbas line does not entirely meet military requirements, for the latter it would be better to construct a line of Seistan and Baluchistan. This way we should fall upon the rear of England and would be at once upon the scene of action." 1

Lord Curzon had no objection whatever to the construction of railways but he doubted as to whether in a country like Persia, so backward and so mountainous, they would repay the expense of construction. He made it clear that if Persia decided to transit railways in the south, she should not do so except with Britain's consent; and the so-called development of the country should not be made an excuse for open and flagrant detriment to British interests.[2]

Nor was it possible to separate the question of a port

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1. Secret Memorandum by M. Rittich on the Persian Railway. St. Petersburg, April 1900. Persia. 1898-1903. Lord Charles Hardinge's Private Papers (Cambridge University Library).

2. Curzon to Hamilton, No.177, 16 September 1900. F.O.60/624. (P.R.O.).

on the Gulf from the question of a railway connecting it to Russian territory. If, as was alleged, the dominant object of the Czar's advisers, and especially of De Witte, was to obtain uninterrupted passage and egress for their trade, a port without a railway would clearly be useless. Now the only line which had been discussed in this connection was one from the Trans-Caspian border at Askhabad, via Meshed and Kerman to Bunder Abbas. Major Yate in an article in the January issue 1902 of the "Quarterly Review" wrote that "it was unlikely that this idea had yet been seriously entertained because such a line would encounter the "endless succession of mountain terraces that run east and west between Meshed and Bunder Abbas."[1] In any case, its construction would admittedly affect the whole problem of Indian defence, and entail new and expensive precautions on the south-west frontier.

From her base at Kushk, although within fifty miles from Herat, Russia had still to surmount obstacles which, in the opinion of many military experts, were almost prohibitive before she could deliver any effective attack upon India. Established in the great corn-growing plain of Khorasan,

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1. Col. C.E. Yate, "Persia and the Persian Gulf", Quarterly Review, Vol.195, 1902, p.251.

with an uninterrupted line of communication as far as the Caspian behind her, she would be able to strike either at Herat or at Kandahar, from Meshed and Seistan bases, while British Beluchistan and Quetta would lie open to a flank attack by Kuh Malek Siah-Nushki caravan road without the necessity for any violation of Afghan territory.

H.J. Whigham, special correspondent of the Morning Post in Teheran sent an article on the subject of Russian Railways which appeared on 27 September 1902 and contained the following extract:-[1]

> "The building of Russian Railways in Southern Persia would be almost as disastrous for our trade as in the North, for we do not imagine that the system of differential rates which ontain in Russia would fail to exercise its full force against British goods coming in by way of the Gulf. What Russia wants is still monopoly, her method of securing it is fairly simple. She is fast getting the Shah and his Government so much in her power that in another year or two she will be unable to refuse Russia anything."

Lord George Hamilton continued his conciliatory attitude towards this problem. He told Lord Curzon:[2]

> "We have now practical monopoly of trade in the Persian Gulf. Can we maintain this against the intrusion of railways in the Gulf? Have we the right to say that the civilized world is to be

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1. H.J. Whigham, "Russian Railways and Persia", Morning Post 27 September 1902.

2. Confidential Memorandum by Lord George Hamilton. 3 April 1900. Secret Letters from India. Vol.120. 1900 (India Office).

deprived of railway access to the Persian Gulf, because it will infringe upon the monopoly of Sea borne Traffic we there possess? Can we say that, because of Persia is next to Baluchistan and Beluchistan next to India, therefore no one is to have any part of Persia (or any port on her Gulf) lest such as position might facilitate the invasion of India or disturb our political prestige."

It was obvious that a trading entrance to the Persian Gulf Russia had of course a perfect right to claim, and to work, if she chose, at a loss. But the political ascendancy which she had been allowed to acquire in the north could not be permitted in the south. Britain could not consent to a Russian military, naval, or coaling station in the Persian Gulf, for the reason that such a station would be a challenge to Britain and a menace to India.

Lord Curzon, in a very secret and private letter dated 15 June 1901 told Lord George Hamilton that India could not afford to see Russia acquire any political concession in the south of Persia since their interest would be thereby inevitably suffer. He thought that if the Persian Government chose in the face of this warning to concede, they should hold her responsible, and should protect themselves by such measures in the Persian Gulf as their naval strength would render.[1]

Britain remained the main trading power in the Gulf.

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1. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. Very Secret and Private. 15 June 1901. Private Correspondence: Lord Curzon to Hamilton. Vol.XXXII. D 510/10 (India Office).

As the result of careful calculation of the trade returns of the three years, 1895-96-97,[1] it was clear that the total value of Imports and Exports in the Persian Gulf (including the Persian ports of Bunder Abbas, Lingah and Muhammerah, the other ports on the opposite coast, and Bahrain) in that triennial period amounted to £17,241,300 (at the rate of Rs 15 = £1). Of the total, local trade accounted for £5,124,000, and External Trade for £12,117,300; while of the latter total the trade with the British possessions (including India) amounted to £9,707,500, or over 80 per cent of the entire external trade. In the same three years, out of the total of 2,161 steamers which entered and cleared for the Gulf ports, 2,039 were British, and their tonnage represented 84 per cent of the total tonnage.[2]

How valuable the trade was may be seen by a mere cursory glance at the statistics. In 1899 and 1900,[3] of the total

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1. Annual Reports on the Administration of the Persian Gulf Residency and Muscat Political Agency, No.CCCXXIV (1894-1895), No.CCCXXXVIII (1895-1896), No.CCXLVII (1896-1897). (India Office).

2. Table showing the total number and tonnage of vessels of each nation entered in the Gulf 1894-1897. Annex.23. Enclosed in F.O.60/587. (P.R.O.).

3. Annual Report of the Administration of the Persian Gulf Residency and Muscat Political Agency, No.CCCXIX (1898-1899), No.CCLXXIX (1899-1900).

imports of the Persian Gulf, amounting to £21,000,000 the United Kingdom and India sent no less than £14,800,000. The import trade sent by Russia amounted to no more than £57. Of the export trade, which amounted to a little over £2,000,000, the United Kingdom and India took £908,858, or nearly a half. Taking individual ports, we see that the trade was not only very large, but was growing. It is impossible to take all the ports, because with regard to two of them, there were special circumstances which made it impossible to institute a relative comparison. In these two ports there was a great falling off in trade, owing, in the case of Lingah, to failure of the pearl fishery, and at Bunder Abbas, partly to the insecurity of internal communications, and partly to a general and unwise strike against the control of the Belgian customs' officials - a strike which resulted in a general standstill of business for four or five months, and a loss of 25 per cent of the receipts.

Taking the port of Bushire British imports rose from £666,000 in 1899 to £992,000 in 1900, and British exports rose from £173,000 in 1899 to £291,000 in 1900. In Muhammerah and Karun ports British imports rose from £41,000 in 1899 to £81,000 in 1900, and exports from £191,000 in 1899 to £251,000 in 1900. It was, therefore, quite obvious that the value of Britain's trade, and the possibilities of its

growth, infinitely outweigh the value of the trade which Russia possessed in the northern markets.

On 19 January 1902 the Times published a statement by the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the Persian Gulf in which he said:

> "There was no change in the attitude maintained by the British Government in the affairs of the Gulf. Our position in the Persian Gulf, both commercially and politically was of a very special character, and His Majesty's Government had always considered that the ascendancy of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf was the foundation of British policy. This was not merely a question of theory, it was a statement of fact. Our trade interests have far exceeded those of any other country. Our recognised maritime supremacy secured our political ascendancy." 1

III.

It may be useful to append the vigorous sentence in which Lord Curzon had summed up the conclusions he arrived at after study on the spot: "I should regard the concession of a port on the Persian Gulf to Russia by any power as a deliberate insult to Great Britain, as a wanton rupture of the 'status quo' and as international provocation to war; I should impeach the British Minister who was guilty of acquiescing in such a surrender as a traitor to his country."[2] Shortly after he

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1. The Times, 19 January 1902.

2. "Persia and the Persian Gulf". London, 1892, Vol.II, p.465.

became Viceroy of India a leading article in the Russian paper "Novoe Vremya" declared on 24 December 1898 that Curzon was planning to cut Russia from the Persian Gulf and to bar her natural advance southward to a geographical frontier. The article added that England, despite the pacific attitude of Russia would proceed to establish her protectorate over the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia.[1] Lord Curzon's Persian Gulf policy was clearly outlined in his famous Confidential Memorandum of 21 September 1899 which he submitted to Lord George Hamilton. The most important extract of that Memorandum was the following:

> "The de jure position in the Persian Gulf is that an area open to the flag of all nations, the northern shores and territorial waters of which are included in the dominion of the Shah of Persia, while its western and southern coasts are partially owned and partially claimed by Turkey, or are in the occupation of the Arab tribes, who have entered into treaty relationships of varying character, constituting a sort of veiled protectorate with Great Britain. The Islands in the Gulf are owned either by Persia, or by Chiefs (in the case of Bahrain under British protection; but upon one of the Persian Islands; viz., Kishm, Great Britain possesses a piece of land by virtue of an original grant from the Imam of Muscat, to whom the Island once belonged ...
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> "The de facto position upon the waters and on the shores of the Persian Gulf reflects a more positive British predominance. In the early years of the present

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1. Translation of an article which appeared in the "Novoe Vremya" on 24 December 1898. Enclosed in Scott to Salisbury. No.418. Confidential. 26 December 1898. Russia. Proceedings in Central Asia. F.O.65/1575. (P.R.O.).

century, the slave trade was rampant in the Gulf, and the vessels of Indian Marine were engaged in a long and arduous struggle with the Arab Pirates who infested its southern coasts. The conflict which was conducted entirely by British agency and means, without any help from the Persian Government resulted in the establishment of treaty relations with the great majority of the Arab Chiefs, under which they bound themselves to observe perpetual peace and to refer all the disputes to the British Resident at Bushire. Meanwhile, British trade had acquired almost a monopoly of the foreign commerce of the Persian Gulf ports." 1

Towards the close of an interview which Sir Nicholas O'Conor had with Tawfik Pasha on 30 October 1899 at the Sublime Porte, His Excellency informed him confidentially that he had heard a short time ago that the Russian Government intended sending a couple of ships of war to the Persian Gulf, and that, upon his inquiring, the Russian Ambassador confirmed this report. M. Zinovieff explained that the ships were being sent as complaint had been made the Russian flag was never seen in those waters; that they probably would not go there before December; that he did not see how it affected the Turkish Government, and that it certainly need not cause them any uneasiness. Tawfik Pasha said that, according to secret information he had received, the presence of ships of war was in connexion with an arrangement for the cession of a port in the Gulf as a terminal station of a

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1. Memorandum on Persia from Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. No.175 of 1899. Government of India. Foreign Department. Secret. External, 21 September 1899. F.O.60/615. (P.R.O.).

railway, and that he had reason to believe that the Russian Government were negotiating; if they had not already actually come to an understanding with the Persian Government in the matter. Tawfik Pasha added that he had made a report to the Sultan, showing that any accession of Russian influence in the Persian Gulf was opposed to the interests of Turkey, and that His Imperial Majesty also took this view, observing that the Russians must send ships from the Baltic, as he certainly would refuse permission for any ships of war from the Black Sea Fleet to pass through the Straits.[1]

At St. Petersburg Sir Charles Hardinge met the Persian Minister and asked him if there was any truth in the report of such negotiations (with a view to the acquisitinn by Russia of a port as a terminus or for a railway on the Persian Gulf). He assured Hardinge most positively that the report was absolutely without foundation, and showed him an article written on 1 November in "Petersburgh Viedomsti" in which the lease of a port by Russia in the Persian Gulf was advocated, and that advantages should be taken at that moment when Britain was preoccupied with South African affairs. The Prime Minister had brought the article with him in order to make a formal complaint to Count Lamsdorff, and to ask that an end might be put to such rumours.[2]

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1. Sir Nicholas O'Conor to Salisbury, No.505. Confidential. 31 October 1899. F.O.78/4995. (P.R.O.).

2. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.326, 2 November 1899. F.O.78/5995. (P.R.O.).

Lord Curzon did not see any possible compromise with Russia. He declared:

> "You cannot divide up a sea like the Persian Gulf, and say that the east end of it is British and the west end open to anybody, and again, if you say to Russia we cannot allow you at Bunder Abbas or Lingah, but pray do what you like in Muhammerah, then what becomes of the whole of the Karun enterprise, upon which the Foreign Office embarked some years ago, which they are always pressing India to support and which they have always been told is to be the nucleus of a permanent British interest, if not a British occupation." 1

On 14 February 1900 the Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy:[2]

> "If the Russians should appear to contemplate hoisting their flag on Bunder Abbas or land a force there or attempt to occupy the port, you are to protest. Then if in spite of such protest the Russian flag should be hoisted at Bunder Abbas, you are to hoist the British flag on Hormuz or Henjam or Kishm islands, or whatever island is considered by naval authorities as offering best advantage for a naval base in that neighbourhood."

In connection with the visit of the Russian ships of war to the Persian Gulf and her overtures for a coaling station in the Gulf, Her Majesty's Government ordered the naval Commander-in-Chief of the East India station to arrange that a Captain of Her Majesty's Navy would visit the ports and islands of the Persian Gulf and to report on their

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1. Curzon to Hamilton. Private. 4 January 1900. Private Correspondence, Curzon to Hamilton, Vol.XVI, D510/4. (India Office).

2. Lansdowne to Curzon. Telegraphic. Private. 11 April 1900. Admiralty 1/7471. (P.R.O.).

harbour accommodations, capacity for defence and other natural suitability for coaling purposes and for the control of the Gulf. H.M.S. "Pomone" was ordered to the Persian Gulf to carry out the Viceroy's scheme.[1]

On 12 March 1900 the Russian cruiser "Gilayak" visited the Persian Gulf. The Commodore was reported to have made overtures to the Governor of Bunder Abbas for a coaling station.[2] The Russian Government declared that they had no intention to acquire coaling or other stations in the Persian Gulf and that the Commodore of the "Gilayak" was distinctly ordered not to entertain any such idea. The "Gilayak" was said to have taken the Shaikh of Koweit a present from the Russian Consul at Baghdad. M. Obsenko, Chancellor of the Russian Consulate at Baghdad arrived at Basra to prepare for the reception of the Russian ship. The "Gilayak's" visit was made the occasion of considerable demonstrations on the part of the Russian Consul and of the ship itself with the apparent object of impressing the population with a sense of their importance.[3] Their attention was carefully attracted to the modern armament and equipment of the vessel.[4]

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1. India Office to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Telegraphic. 13 February 1900. Admiralty 1/7471. (P.R.O.).
2. Foreign Office to Secretary of Admiralty. Immediate and Confidential. 12 March 1900. Admiralty 1/7472. (P.R.O.).
3. British Consul at Basra to Sir Nicholas O'Conor. No.7. Confidential. 21 March 1900. Admiralty 1/7472. (P.R.O.).
4. Report from the British Embassy at Constantinople to Admiralty on the Russian Fleet. Confidential. 18 January 1898. Admiralty 1/7384. (P.R.O.).

Information was received to the effect that a certain M. Soromiatnikoff was despatched in 1900 to the ports of the Persian Gulf for the special purpose of studying the trade at those ports. On his return he submitted to M. de Witte a report on the results of his mission.[1] The following recommendations were made. (1) The establishment of a line of regular steamers subsidised by the Russian Government to conduct a trade in Persia, particularly at her southern ports. (2) The establishment of a Russian bank at one of the ports in the Persian Gulf, also a consulate protected by a strong guard of Cossacks, and the stationing of at least one Russian vessel-of-war in the Persian Gulf, and the establishment of a coal depôt at Bushire.

These recommendations were considered by a commission appointed by the Russian Minister of Finance, and it was reported[1] that it had been decided to establish: (1) a Russian Consulate at Bushire. (2) Steamship connection between Odessa and Bunder Abbas; commercial intercourse between Russian firms in the south of Persia was also to be strongly encouraged by the Russian Government. The first vessel of the new Russian line of steamers was to have left Odessa on 14 February

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1. Russian Projects in the Persian Gulf. Persia and Arabia. Confidential. Section I. Admiralty to Foreign Office. 14 January 1901. Admiralty 1/7472. (P.R.O.).

2. The Times, 30 December 1900. See Article on "Russia in the Persian Gulf".

to trade in the Persian Gulf. Prince Dabija, the Russian Consul-General at Isphahan, visited Bushire on 4 March 1901. He told Colonel Kemball that his visit was in connection with the arrival, which was shortly expected of the Russian merchant steamer. The Russian merchant steamer Korniloff,[1] the first of the Russian line of steamers to the Persian Gulf, arrived at Bushire on 21 March 1901 from Odessa, having called at Muscat, Jask, Bunder Abbas and Lingah. At Muscat the Commander, accompanied by the French Consul, M. Ottavi, called on the Sultan.

The Russians not only wanted a port in the Persian Gulf, but had set their eyes upon Bunder Abbas; and they were making their plans with the ultimate view of getting possession of that place. To this Hamilton objected. He told the Viceroy on 6 June 1900:[2]

> "Now this is just the port that they cannot be allowed to have; and I think if they were plainly told no, and that there were certain other spheres in which we asserted we had a paramount interest, they would turn their attention to other places and other objects, although they might not be convenient to them or suit them so well, would be preferable to the risk of going to war with as for the possession of the alternative places."

Curzon was very glad to see that Lansdowne was pursuing a

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1. Col. Kemball to Sir Arthur Hardinge, No.18. Political. 19 February 1901. F.O.248/733. (P.R.O.).

2. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon, 6 June 1900. Private Correspondence. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. EUR. c.126/2. (India Office).

a more active policy in regard to Persia than the Viceroy succeeded in pursuing with the British Government at home in 1899. "The Ostrich policy which we have adopted in Southern Persia," the Viceroy declared, "is accordingly beginning to bear its natural fruit, and the Russians were now issuing to us a direct political challenge in a sphere in which our political influence has hitherto been uncontested."[1] He assured Hamilton that the only way to meet this challenge was by immediately taking it up, and by a show of superior activity, and, if necessary, greater expenditure, on his side he was prepared, if only the Home Government would back him to contest Russia all along the line. He was ready to send Indian troops to the Persian Gulf.

The Persian Gulf, to this extent, was within the sphere of Indian interests. The Indian Government paid for the political Residency and establishments whom they kept upon its shore.

Britain believed it to be of great importance that Russia should not acquire a port on the Persian Gulf to which she could apply her prohibitive tariff; and Britain also believed that, as Russia advanced, and as her influence extended in Persia, so did her power of intrigue and stirring

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1. Curzon to Hamilton. Private. 22 April 1901. Private Correspondence. Lord Curzon to Lord George Hamilton. Vol.XX. D 510/8 (India Office).

troubles along India's North Western frontiers. And it was indisputable that if Russia were to consolidate her position in the north and east of Persia, she could obtain an admirable basis for operations for a serious invasion of India; if she were so disposed, through Baluchistan. Do what she liked, Britain could not prevent the influence of Russia increasing in Persia. Hamilton showed more practical understanding for this problem than Lord Curzon. He declared, "We should not attempt to spread-eagle ourselves in our interests over Persia; but should confine ourselves and our interest to those particular parts of Persia which are of real importance to India's interests."[1]

It was clear that there, indeed, Britain could perfect, if she was less ambitious in her procedure, but if, on the other hand, she would choose deliberately to embark on a policy which as time went on became more and more impracticable, Britain might imperil those limited interests which, if she adopted a more restricted policy, she would have safeguarded. The Russians could bluff better than Britain could, and they had the material force behind them to a greater extent than Britain had in the Middle East.

Public opinion, both in Russia and England was very interested in the problem of the Bunder Abbas port. Both

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1. Hamilton to Curzon, 7 November 1901. Private Correspondence. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Curzon. India. EUR. MSS. c.116/3 (India Office).

sides considered it a symbol of their prestige in Western Asia. A leading Russian paper "St. Petersburg Zeiting" called for a compromise between Britain and Russia in the Persian Gulf. "We are firmly convinced that on the Persian Question we can come to an understanding with England. England must give up the idea that her Indian frontiers extend as far west as Mesopotamia. The English must give up their fear of Russian invasion on India and they must understand that in Asia there is enough room for both of us."[1]

In England the "Imperialist School" objected to the idea of leasing Bunder Abbas to Russia. Sir Richard Temple in a lecture to the Royal United Service Institution on 3 May 1899 declared:[2]

> "If we allow any Russian interest at Bunder Abbas we may as well give up the garrison altogether. Russia would not have to make such a move, or if she did, I hope the British lion would begin to roar in earnest. But I do not believe that for a moment. Bunder Abbas is practically a British port. It has always been so since it was given up by the other powers who have long yielded to England in the East."

Sir Rowland Blannerhassett wrote in the National Review:[3]

> "But while England should make her own position clear as far as Afghanistan is concerned, there is no reason why she should maintain an attitude of hostility

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1. Précis from "St. Petersburg Zeiting", 18 April 1900. Enclosed in Persia 1898-1903. Sir Charles Hardinge's Private Papers (Cambridge University Library).

2. The Strategic Relations of Persia and British Interests. Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 3 May 1899, p.742.

3. Blannerhassett, Sir Rowland B. "England and Russia", National Review, Vol.37, 1901, p.30.

> to Russian expansion elsewhere. As regards Persia, there are, no doubt, points on which the English and the Russian interests are antagonistic. But difficulties arising out of these conflicting interests might be got over, particularly if England supported Russia elsewhere. We might bear in mind that the desire of Russia to be mistress of Constantinople is old and deep. More than any other power, England has stood in the way of her realizing the object of her ambition. The aims of Russia on the Bosphorus and her action in Asia are most closely connected."

In the course of debate on the Persian Gulf question in the Commons Mr. Joseph Walton (M.P. Yorkshire, W.R., Barnsley) told the House that in the case of Persia and in the case of China, Britain ought to come to a friendly understanding with Russia, as to which were to be their respective spheres of influence and their sphere of practical action as regards railway construction. He declared that in connection with concession for the construction of new roads, Britain ought also to have recognised in South Persia a priority of right sooner or later to construct any railways along the Persian Gulf, while they should not object to Russia having similar priority on the north. He paid the attention of the House that there was no question that British influence had declined in Persia in recent years and in his opinion the gravest mistake that had been made, and the greatest blow inflicted upon British influence in Persia, was the refusal of the Government of Great Britain to guarantee the two and a half million loan to Persia in 1900.

Mr. Walton concluded his elaborate speech by stating that to give Russia a port on the Persian Gulf, which possibly would ultimately be made a naval base, connected with the railway system of the Russian Empire, would alter the whole situation in the East. It would enable Russia to turn the flank of the Indian North-Western frontier, and would certainly necessitate an enormous increase in the defensive forces of India both by land and by sea.[1]

Sir Edward Grey (M.P. Northumberland, Berwick), pointed out that the most desirable and the most practical policy was that of understanding between the two Governments which would result in a fair exchange of views and adjustment of interest in Asia. Russian policy in Asia and British policy in Asia must be looked upon as a whole, and only in that way can the Persian question be adjusted between the two countries.

"The Persian Gulf", wrote the Edinburgh Review of April 1902, "must be either a British lake, as the Black Sea and the Caspian are Russian lakes or, like the Mediterranean, the base and manoeuvring-ground of international fleets. If, therefore, as we shall attempt to prove, Russia's objects are political and strategic rather than commercial, the effect of this gratification upon British and Indian interests

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1. Parliamentary Debates, 22 January 1902, Vol.101. Mr. Walton's speech, pp.574-788.

will be intensified by the effect of corresponding advantages secured in the same quarter by all European powers."[1]

The Press continued to express its views on the vital issue. George Mackenzie wrote in a letter to Mr. Chirol (later Sir Valentine) the Times correspondence in the Middle East:

> "What is the real object in the alleged desire of Russia to get a port in the Persian Gulf? Would it afford any facilities to the trade of the northern provinces if subjected to the extra land carriage there to reach the water base there? The explanation is that having established and secured her position from North to South she aspires to close the Persian Gulf ports against our trade, as has been done at Batoum and the Caucasus. What hindrance can she now find under existing circumstances in using the ports of the Persian Gulf for steamers? They go there on equal terms with the British vessels and her subjects enjoy the same privilege as ours. The more she opposes our development within the southern sphere so much persistent should our Government be." 2

In an article in the National Review a Russian Diplomat wrote:

> "The Geographical position of Russia and of Persia have bound the essential interests of these two countries together for more than a century. We therefore cannot see any serious possibility of England's preventing Russia from approaching towards the Persian Gulf. If it is possible that this goal will not be reached to-morrow, but it certainly will

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1. "British Policy in Persia and Asiatic Turkey", Edinburgh Review, Vol.105, April 1902, p.410.

2. George Mackenzie to Mr. Chirol. Private. 6 September 1902. F.O.60/657. (P.R.O.).

be in the near future. In any event a partition of influence in Persia between Russia and England appears to be outside the range of practical politics. However, no impediments would be imposed upon the development of British commerce as protected by international rights and demanded by the needs of the Persian people." 1

One of the most interesting comments on the Anglo-Russian relations in the Persian Gulf was an article by Sir Alfred Lyall[2] on "England and Russia in the Nineteenth Century" which appeared in the centenary number of the Review. It was a thoughtful piece of historical writing. Lyall agreed that as long ago as 1815 the policy of Russia had been a "determination to make the threat, if not the accomplishment of an invasion of India a part of every quarrel with Great Britain." Speaking of Persia and British interests there, he said:

"Russia might use a paramount influence at Teheran to assume exclusive charge of the future railway-line across Persia to the sea; and she might acquire of the State's Customs, and might establish a naval station on the Persian Gulf that would interfere with our interests in those waters, and might even inconvenience our maritime communications with India. She might insist on territorial cessions or privileges in Eastern Persia that would bring her down on the western frontier of Afghanistan and place her where she might some day turn the great quadrilateral of mountains in the Afghan mainland by a march across

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1. This article was in the centenary number of the Nineteenth Century.

2. A Russian diplomatist. "Russia and England", Vol.38, National Review, 1902, p.687.

> the open country lying between Seistan and Kandahar. We do not believe that such a distinctly hostile demonstration would ever be made by Russia wantonly, or except under what she might hold to be adequate provocation on our part. Nor, indeed, could a rival, whose path towards Constantinople we have crossed twice in the last fifty years, be expected to overlook such an obvious manoeuvre on the field or political strategy."

Britain stood in the path of Russia's advance to the numerous goals of her insatiate ambition, and she was only to be satisfied if Britain gave way, not in respect of one, but of all - Constantinople, Herat, Korea, Peking and Bunder Abbas.

We end this study with a comment by Sir William Lee-Warner, Secretary to the Political and Secret Department at the India Office, on special aspects of the Persian Gulf question. He wrote:[1]

> "First: I think we should rigidly maintain our policy of excluding foreign Powers from the Gulf ports, and, where possible, of acquiring rights of occupation. If ever territorial pressure forces us to give way at any point, we can do so on terms, whereas a present abandonment of our past policy would leave a vacuum into which a Foreign Power would rush without arrangement with us.
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> Secondly: Let us at once have a military and naval survey made of every position or island at the north of the Persian Gulf. If Henjam was held to be a place suitable for a port, let us arrange, by lease

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1. Secret Memorandum on Foreign Competitors in the Persian Gulf by Sir William Lee-Warner. 1963/99. 16 May 1899. Secret Letters from India, Vol.116. (India Office).

or otherwise, to take, hold, and fortify it. If we secure the mouth of the Gulf, the fate of Turkish ports on it will be less important.

Thirdly: Although it is premature to extend the railway either by the Helmand, which we fortunately gave to the Amir, or by the desert road, yet let us seek military expert advice as to the value of a railway from Quetta by Seistan to the Persian Gulf. If we are advised that such a railway would not be strategically valuable, at any rate let us keep control over Makran and watch Gwadar. As regards Seistan, let us give Persia to understand that we allow no railway to be made without our consent. Such a line from the north would be only useful for a Russian advance upon India.

Fourthly: Let us resist French encroachments on Muscat, and let no opportunity slip of getting rid of the joint Declaration of 1862. The Arms Traffic there might prove a serious danger to us."

The policy of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf had always been firmly and steadfastly directed against the intrusion of other powers. Her purpose was to maintain peace and order, and to prevent the inland sea from becoming a scene of strife among warring nationalities. "That is our Monroe Doctrine in the Middle East," said Fraser, "and we have made many sacrifices to establish it."[1]

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1. Fraser, Lovat, India under Curzon and After, p.38. London, 1911.

APPENDIX No. I.

Translation of Article 2 of the Agreement concluded at Erzeroum and signed by the Turco-Persian Commissioner on 31 May 1847 (C.U. Aitcheson: Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanades", Calcutta, 1933. Vol.XIII, p.xlvi).

The town and the port of Muhammerah and the island of Khiza, with the anchorage, as well as so much of the eastern bank of the Shatt-el-Arab as is occupied by tribes confessedly belonging to Persia, are to remain in the possession of Persia, beside which Persians will enjoy the complete liberty of navigating the Shatt-el-Arab, from its mouth to the point of contact of the two frontiers. Soolumaneeyea will remain in the possession of Turkey. In regard to Nohab, the Persian Government settles that all the mountainous portion with the pass will be retained by it, and the plan of Nohab which forms the eastern portion, will be given away to Turkey.

APPENDIX No. II.

Translation of a Persian Circular announcing the opening of the Karun River from Muhammerah to Ahwaz. 30 October 1888. (F.O.60/617. (P.R.O.))

The Persian Government, with a view to the extension of commerce and wealth in her provinces and the progress of agriculture in Khuzistan and Ahwaz, has ordered the commercial steamers of all nations, without exception, besides sailing vessels which formerly navigated the Karun River, to undertake the transport of merchandise in the Karun river from Muhammerah to the Dyke at Ahwaz; but it is on the condition that they do not pass the Dyke at Ahwaz upwards, as from the Dyke upwards the river navigation is reserved to the Persian Government itself and its subjects, and the tolls which the Persian Government will organize shall be paid at Muhammerah. Such vessels are not to carry goods prohibited by the Persian Government, and vessels are not to stay longer than necessary for the unloading of commercial loads.

APPENDIX No. III.

Agreement of the Shaikh of Bahrain with the British Government dated 13 March 1892.

I, Esa Bin Ali, Chief of Bahrain, in the presence of Lieut. Col. A.C. Talbot, C.I.E., Political Resident, Persian Gulf, do hereby solemnly bind myself and agree, on behalf of myself, my heirs and my successors, to following conditions, viz:-

1st - That I will on no account enter into any agreement or correspondence with any powers other than the British Government.

2nd - That without the assent of the British Government, I will not consent to the residence within my territory of the agent of any other Government.

3rd - That I will on no account cede, sell, mortgage or otherwise give for occupation any port of my territory save to the British Government.

Dated Bahrain, 13 March 1892, corresponding with 14 Shaban 1309.

Esa Bin Ali
Chief of Bahrain.

C.W. Aitcheson, "Collection of Treaties etc." Calcutta, 1933. Vol.XI, p.238.

APPENDIX No. IV.

Agreement with the Shaikh of Koweit 1899.
Translation of Arabic Bond.

Praise be to God alone (in the name of God Almighty) ("Bissim Illah ta'alah Shanuho") -

The object of writing this lawful and honourable bond is that it is thereby covenanted and agreed between Lieut. Col. Malcolm John Meade, I.S.C., Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident, on behalf of the British Government on the one part, and Shaikh Mubarak-Bin-Shaikh Sabah of his own free will and desire hereby pledge and bind himself, his heirs and successors, not to receive the Agent or Representative of any Power or Government at Koweit, or at any other place within the limits of his territory, without the previous sanction of the British Government; and he further binds himself, his heirs and successors not to cede, sell, loan, mortgage, or give for occupation or for any other purpose any portion of his territory to the Government or subjects of any other Power without the previous consent of Her Majesty's Government for these purposes. This engagement also to extend to any portion of the territory of the said Shaikh Mubarak, which may now be in the possession of the subjects

of any other Government.

In token of the conclusion of this lawful and honourable bond, Lieut. Col. Malcolm John Meade, (I.S.C., Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, and Shaikh Mubarak-Bin-Shaikh Subah, the former on behalf of the British Government and the latter on behalf of himself, his heirs and successors do each, in the presence of witnesses, affix their signature on this, the tenth day of Ramazan 1316, corresponding with the twenty-third day of January 1899.

M.S. Meade
Political Resident in the Persian Gulf

Mubarak Al-Subah.

Witnesses

E.
J. Calcott Gaskin

Muhammad-Rahim Bin-Abdul Nebbi-Safer.

C.U. Aitcheson, "Collection of Treaties, etc." Vol.XII. Calcutta, 1933. p.262.

APPENDIX No. V.

Declaration respecting the Independence of Muscat and Zanzibar, 1862. 1

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty the Emperor of France, taking into consideration the importance of maintaining the 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.

The undersigned, Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at the Court of France, and the Minister Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of His Majesty the Emperor of France, being furnished with the necessary powers, hereby declare in consequence that the said Majesties take reciprocally that engagement.

Witness whereof the undersigned have signed the present Declaration and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms.

Done at Paris
The 10th March 1862

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1. Aitcheson, C.U. "Collection of Treaties etc." Vol.XII. Calcutta,1933, pp.204-205.

APPENDIX No. VI.

Agreement regarding the cession of Territory by the Sultan of Oman, dated 20 March 1891. F.O.54/25 (P.R.O.).

Praise be God alone

The object of writing this lawful and honourable Bond is that it is hereby covenanted and agreed between His Highness Feysal bin Turbi bin Seyyid, Sultan of Muscat and Oman, on the one part, and Col. Edward Charles Ross, Companion of the Star of India, Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, on behalf of the British Government on the other part, that the said Seyyid Feysal Bin Turki Bin Saeed, Sultan of Muscat and Oman, does pledge and bind 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.

In token of the conclusion of this lawful and honourable Bond Seyyid Feysal Bin Turki Bin Saeed, Sultan of Muscat and Oman, and Colonel Edward Charles Ross, Companion of the Star of India, Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, the former for himself, his heirs and successors, and the latter on behalf of the British Government, do each, in the presence of witnesses affix

their signatures on this ninth day of Shaahon one thousand three hundred and eight (A.H.) corresponding to the twentieth day of March (.A.D.) 1891.

E.C. Ross, Colonel
Political Resident in
the Persian Gulf

Seyyid Feysal
Bin Turki Bin
Saeed,
Sultan of Muscat and
Oman.

Lansdowne
Viceroy and Governor-General of India

APPENDIX No. VII

Extracts from Lord Curzon's Confidential Memorandum
19 November 1898. F.O.60/599 (P.R.O.).

I think that in the coming years we shall require to take a closer interest in certain aspects of Persian affairs than we have recently done.

In the north we are powerless to resist Russian influence and advance. She has the same advantages as at Peking, namely, a long line of frontier across which troops can march without difficulty, and a timid and helpless victim. Her position at Teheran is already superior to that of any other power. At Meshed and Tabreez it is supreme. The Shah, if he continues to reside at Teheran, will one day be more or less a Russian puppet.

The argument is commonly used that any assertion of British influence and activity in the centre and south of Persia is likely to precipitate the inevitable, and to tempt the Russians to aggression. The answer is very simple. No such temptation is required, for the Russian advance proceeds without. Our interest in Seistan has frequently been officially deprecated, on the ground that it would bring the Russians down from Meshed. Accordingly we have

left Seistan pretty well alone. The consequence is that the Russians have cast their eye upon it, and are pursuing there a vigorous intrigue.

British railway schemes to Seistan, Candahar and Cabul have similarly been deprecated on the ground that they would bring the Russians down with a counter-railway from Transcaspaia. Meanwhile, the Russians have commenced the Merv-Kushk Railway (in reality a Herat line), without waiting for invitation. A more directly anti-British step can scarcely be conceived, and it was admitted to have been undertaken with that object by M. de Witte to Sir Nicholas O'Conor.

We have scrupulously refrained for many years past from any political activity in the north of Persia, whether in Azerbaijan or on the Turkoman frontier. In return, we have increased Russian influence in Southern Persia, to which I am about to allude.

On the pretence of stopping the entry of the plague from Afghanistan, the Russians, in 1897, planted Cossacks along the Persian frontier, pushing them as far south as Seistan. The plague never came, but some, at least, of the Russian doctors have remained so as to be ready should it ever arrive.

The Russian Government have recently appointed a Russian

Vice-Consul to reside at Seistan. Russian surveyors have been through the country surveying it for future railway communication from Meshed in the direction of the Gulf. More recently they have extended their project, still further to the South, and a Russian party, nominally a surveying party, is said at this moment to be on the frontiers of Persia and Beluchistan, and in close contact with British-protected territory.

No argument that I know of can be advanced to justify or create to create a Russian influence in Seistan, much less further south. There are no Russian subjects there. Seistan does not command the Transcospian Railway, nor does it threaten Meshed. But it has for the Russians certain advantages, and they are these: (1) It is on the way from Meshed to the Gulf, and is, therefore, a stage on the onward march: (2) It is a place from which intrigue can easily be opened with Afghanistan - the more so as it is an old Afghan grievance that Sir Frederick Goldsmid's Award gave Seistan to Persia instead of Afghanistan: (3) From it Russia can block the new and most promising trade route which the English have opened from Quetta via Nushki and Seistan to Meshed: (4) In the event of war between Russia and England in Afghanistan, the possession by Russia of Seistan would enable a flank movement to be made by the Halmund Valley upon Candahar.

For these reasons, Seistan has a positive value to Russia, and the loss of Seistan would be detrimental to ourselves.

I do not think it would be rash to predict that the policy of Russia when the partition of Persia comes will be at once to occupy Seistan from Meshed, to confront us with the fait accompli to claim Seistan as the southern outpost of her sphere of influence or possession, and then later on to use it as a lever for pushing to the Gulf.

I think that we should take more interest in Seistan than we do. We have wisely sent Captain Sykes there. In my opinion, a British Consular official should be permanently maintained in Seistan with an establishment superior to the Russian, and the Indian Government should do everything in their power to encourage the trade route and to improve the track from Nushki to Seistan.

There have been several recent evidences of Russian interest and activity in the centre and the south. She established, a few years ago, a Russian Consul at Isphahan which post our Consul (Preece) has been most inexplicably absent for nearly a year, doing work at Kerminshah and Teheran.

I pass to the Gulf. Here our position is still supreme; but on the commercial side it is being stoutly attacked; and commercial interests are the familiar precursor to political claims. On the other hand, if the expenditure of money and men, the introduction of peace and order and good government, the creation of a good trade, and the secure policing of the seas constitute a preponderating interest, ours is one which cannot be questioned.

Germany is the power that is pushing her way into the Gulf. In November 1897 she established a Consul at Bushire. She is making a determined bid to get hold of the Basrah trade (and these considerations, coupled with the German Emperor's recent evidence of particular interest in the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan, point to the likelihood of increased German activity in the Gulf, and even to the possible appearance of German claims there in the future.

Germany so far has the largest railway interest in Asia Minor; and there can be little doubt that one or other of those lines will ultimately be protracted to the Euphrates or Tigris, and will finally descend from Mesopotamia to the Gulf.

For the moment, however, it is a body of Russian financiers, represented by Count Kapnist, nephew of the Russian Ambassador at Vienna, and supported by the Russian Embassy at Constantinople, who are applying for a concession for a line from Alexandretta to the Euphrates and the

Persian Gulf. It is very doubtful whether the money for such an undertaking can be raised in Russia, and the sympathy of the Russian Government may perhaps be due to a desire less to construct the railways themselves than to block its construction by others. An attempt is being made to interest London financiers in the scheme; but if British money is to be spent it had better be spent upon a British scheme.

The feature, however, of this project, and, indeed, of all projects for railway communication between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf to which I desire to call special attention, is its proposed termination of the port of Koweit.

Koweit is the best, indeed the only port deserving of the name, in the Persian Gulf; and should a line be protracted to the actual shores of the Gulf instead of stopping at Basrah, Koweit is about the only place to which it could go.

But the asking of a concession from Turkey for a railway with a terminus at Koweit, and, still more, the granting of it, involve the assumption that Koweit, is under Turkish sovereignty, which it certainly is not, or under Turkish control, which it equally cannot be said to be the

attitude that the British Government has at different times taken up with regard to the political status of Koweit is dealt with in Sir Lee Warner's Memorandum appended. The strongest argument for the Turkish contention is that we recognize Turkish authority on the coast-line considerably to the south of Koweit, and, therefore that Koweit is included in the Turkish dominions.

I think this is a dangerous argument; for it would imply that whenever we recognize the sovereignty of a country at two separate points on a coast, that recognition is continuous in its operation, and may be held to cover all that lies between. The strongest argument against the Turkish contention is that Turkish authority has never been effectively asserted in Koweit and that no evidence of such authority is forthcoming. I have inquired of Col. Locke, British Consul at Baghdad, and of Col. Meade, British Resident at Bushire. They told me that there is no connection between the Turks at Koweit; that the former are hated by the Arabs of Koweit; that no tribute is paid by Koweit to Turkey; nor are any Turkish troops stationed there.

I am of opinion that a tacit recognition (and à fortiori much more the effective realization) of Turkish, or indeed, of any alien authority at Koweit, might be fraught with danger to British interests in the Gulf, and will cause us trouble in the future.

For even though Turkey does not assert her authority, she can part with her assumed rights to other parties or powers; and the experience of Talienwan and Port Arthur is a recent reminder of the views that are apt to be taken by foreign powers of the way in which the maritime terminus of a great railway, though situated in a country of another power, is capable of being treated.

A Russian Railway ending at Koweit will be in the highest degree injurious to British interests. A German Railway to Koweit will be unwelcome. Any one of these would challenge our hitherto uncontested supremacy in the Gulf, and would turn those waters into a sort of mid-Asian Gulf of Pechili.

I believe that we still have time to avert any such danger, and the step I recommend is the extension at a convenient and, if possible, an early opportunity of the British Protectorate to Koweit, whose Sheikhs have constantly asked for it for years and would welcome it, in the same way as it is applied to Bahrain.

We should not interfere in the internal politics of the place; but a ~~gun-boat~~ gun-boat would require occasionally to visit it. We should prevent the raising of any other flag. And in the last resort should the Turks march to attack it, we should have to prevent them from taking it.

These risks are almost infinitesimal, but the trouble they would be instrumental in avoiding might, in the future, be great. Above all, it seems to me important that the Persian Gulf should not be allowed to become an arena of international rivalry. For though the actual advantage of interference to other Powers might for a time be small until they had consolidated their lands connections yet the injury they could do British influence would be serious and lasting.

APPENDIX No. VIII

Translation of the Persian text of letter to the Sultan of Muscat, 5 January 1898.
F.O.60/603. (P.R.O.)

The British Government and the Government of His Majesty the Shah of Persia are informed that arms and ammunition are being imported into Persia from the territories of Muscat and its dependencies, and it is believed they are by this means surreptitiously among the tribes subject to Persia and obtained by the same means and roads by the tribes on the frontier of India who are engaged in hostilities with the British Government. Any such traffic in arms and ammunition and other munitions of war is contrary to the existing law of the Persian and British Indian Governments, and accordingly the two Governments unite in requesting the Sultan of Muscat to warn his subjects and all persons resident in his territories to refrain exporting the articles mentioned from His Highness's dominions to Persia or British Indian ports. His Highness's authority is therefore, invited, in order that British and Persian ships of war may be authorised to stop the illicit traffic, and to seize and confiscate any cargoes of arms owned by British and Persian and Muscat subjects which may be found in Muscat waters destined for illicit importation into the ports of Persia and India.

APPENDIX NO. IX.

STATISTICS OF THE ARMS TRADE IN THE PERSIAN GULF, 1883-1905

Rs

Year	Muscat	Trucial Oman	Bahrain	Bushire	Lingeh	Bunder Abbas
1883-84	Not ascertained	15,216	13,300	30,700	Nil	Nil
84-84	do.	18,220	13,550	55,800	400	do.
85-86	do.	11,900	15,380	21,900	2,600	do.
86-87	do.	11,500	14,150	1,68,260	Nil	do.
87-88	do.	16,100	13,500	34,940	Nil	do.
88-89	do.	13,900	24,920	20,050	16,750	do.
89-90	do.	43,150	24,800	69,470	20,000	do.
90-91	do.	56,000	26,300	43,320	25,000	do.
91-92	do.	15,000	Nil	39,640	Nil	do.
92-93	do.	10,000	do.	3,120	do.	do.
93-94	do.	35,000	10,270	14,330	do.	do.
94-95	do.	25,000	14,850	6,78,200	do.	do.
95-96	2,13,33	50,000	95,400	10,13,420	13,700	54,220
96-97	11,33,333	1,20,000	1,42,880	10,90,325	20,000	54,810
97-98	13,33,333	1,99,500	4,67,790	20,56,890	72,000	72,000
98-99	3,466,666	70,000	Nil	Nil	6,000	Nil
99-1900	5,93,533	46,920	do.	do.	Nil	do.
1900-1901	13,30,306	40,000	do.	do.	2,250	do.
1901-1902	8,05,306	10,000	do.	do.	Nil	do.
1902-1903	5,78,653	Nil	do.	do.	do.	6 guns
1903-1904	11,49,186	do.	do.	do.	do.	3 guns
1904-1905	16,14,465	do.	do.	1,755	do.	383
1905-1906	10,74,380	do.	do.	17,745	do.	75

Above are statistics of the Arms Trade in the Persian Gulf 1883-1905.
It is a statement of the value in rupees of the rifles and ammunition openly imported into the Persian Gulf region during 1883-1904. Muscat dollars have been used, for the purpose of this calculation, at the rate of $3 to 4 Indian rupees.
Statistics are based on Commercial reports of Persian Gulf Presidency and the Muscat Political Agency, 1883-1906.

APPENDIX No. X.

British Diplomatic Representation at the Countries of the Persian Gulf Area 1890-1902

A. Persia:*

1. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. 3 December 1887 - 22 July 1891.
2. Mr. Robert Kennedy, Chargé d'Affaires, 28 April - 16 November 1889 and 13 November 1890 - 14 November 1891.
3. Sir Frank Lascelles, 24 July 1891 to 9 March 1894 /Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary/ 24 July 1891 - 9 March 1894.
4. Sir William Green, Chargé d'Affaires, 14 February - 17 November 1894.
5. Sir Mortimer Durand, Minister, 1 May 1894 - 20 October 1900.
6. Mr. Charles Hardinge, Chargé d'Affaires, 15 February 1897 - 30 March 1898.
7. Mr. C. Spring Rice, Ditto, 8 March 1900 - 9 February 1901.
8. Mr. W. Erskine, Ditto, 14 October - 11 November 1902.
9. Sir Arthur Hardinge, Minister, 21 October 1900 - 26 January 1906.

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* From Lorimer. Persian Gulf Gazette, Vol.II. (Historical).

B. Turkey:

1. Sir William White, Ambassador, 1 January 1887 - 27 December 1891.
2. Mr. Francis William Strange, Chargé d'Affaires, 20 - 24 June 1888.
3. Mr. Edmund Fane, Ditto, 25 June 1891 - 20 January 1892.
4. Sir Clare Ford, Ambassador, 12 January 1892 - 25 December 1893.
5. Sir Edmund V.d. Fane, Minister, 21 January 1892 - 26 February 1893.
6. Sir Arthur Nicolson, Chargé d'Affaires, 6 June 1893 - 10 February 1894.
7. Sir Philip Wodehouse, Ambassador, 1 January 1894 - 30 June 1898.
8. Sir Michael Herbert, Chargé d'Affaires, 29 October - 8 September 1896.
9. Mr. M.W.E. de Bunsen, Ditto, 27 May - 21 September 1898.
10. Sir Nicholas Rodrick O'Conor, Ambassador, 1 July 1898 - 1 September 1900.
11. Mr. de Bunsen, Chargé d'Affaires, 13 September 1900 - 29 August 1902.
12. Mr. J. Whitehead, Ditto, 15 January 1903.

British Political Representation in the Persian Gulf

BUSHIRE:

1. Lieut. Col. S.B. Miles (April - October 1886)
2. Col. Talbot, March 1891 - 1893.
3. Captain Godfrey (in temporary charge).
4. Major H. Sadler (June and July 1893).
5. Mr. A. Crawford (July - December 1893).
6. Major H. Sadler, December 1893 - January 1894.
7. Col. Wilson 1894 - 97.
8. Lieut. Col. Meade 1897 - 1900.
9. Lieut. Col. Kemball 1900 - 1904.

MUSCAT:

1. Major Yate, 16 December 1889 - 28 March 1890.
2. Lieut. Col. Mockler, December 1890 - October 1891.
3. Major Sadler, November 1892 - April 1895.
4. Captain J.F. Whyte, May 1895 - November 1895.
5. Major Sadler, November 1895 - April 1896.
6. Captain F.A. Beville, April 1896 - June 1897.
7. Major Fagan, September 1892 - September 1899.
8. Major P. Cox, October 1899 - January 1904.

BAHRAIN:

1. Haji Muhamed Amin, March 1892 - November 1893.
2. Agha Muhammed Rahim, November 1893 - February 1900.
3. Mr. J.C. Gaskin, February 1900 - October 1904.

KOWEIT:

Haji Ali Bin-Mullah Ghulam Riz, August 1899 - August 1904.

Vice Consulate at Muhammerah:

1. Mr. W. McDowall, October 1890 - May 1896.
2. Mr. Samuel Butcher, May 1896 - 23 March 1897.
3. Mr. W. McDowall, March 1897 - July 1904.

Vice-Consulate at Bunder Abbas:

1877 - 1900 Native Agent.

1. Lieut. Col. V. de Hunt, March 1900 - March 1901.
2. Major D.C. Phillott, June 1901 - December 1901.
3. Captain E.G.S. Boxer, January - June 1902.
4. Captain W.G. Grey, August 1902 - January 1904.

Baghdad Residency:

1. Col. Tweedie, May 1889 - October 1891.
2. Col. Mokler, November 1891 - April 1897.
3. Lieut. Col. W. Lock, April 1897 - June 1898.
4. Major P.J. Melvill, August 1898 - March 1899.
5. Lieut. Col. W. Lock, April - 16 June 1899.
6. Major P. Melvill, June 1899 - 20 March 1902.
7. Col. L.S. Newsmarch, March 1902 - March 1906.

Assistant Political Agency at Basrah:

1. Lieut. Col. W. Stratton, April 1890 - March 1891.
2. Captain Trench, March 1891 - July 1891.
3. Mr. L.M. Dicey, July 1891 - January 1892.
4. Major Jennings, February 1892 - 3 August 1892.
5. Captain F.G. Beville, August 1892 - November 1894.
6. Lieut. Col. S.G. Knox, November 1894 - November 1895.
7. Col. Whyte, November 1895 - February 1897.
8. Major Fagan, February 1897 - August 1897.
9. Captain L.A. Forbes, September 1897 - June 1898.
10. Mr. Gardin, June 1898 - September 1898.
11. Captain G. Ramsay, September - December 1898.
12. Mr. A.C. Wratislaw, September 1898 - August 1903.
13. Mr. E.F. Crow, August 1903 - 1916.

* The Resident of the Gulf and the Consul-General at Bushire were appointed by the Indian Government and they reported to India at the British Legation at Teheran. The Vice-Consul at Muhammerah was appointed by the Foreign Office through the British Legation in Teheran. The Consul at Basrah was appointed by the Indian Government and reported to India through the Consul-General of Baghdad and the British Embassy at Constantinople. He was credited to Turkey only. The jurisdiction of the Consul of Muhammerah did not extend to Turkish Iraq.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

I. MANUSCRIPTS:

A. Public Record Office

The structure of this study is mainly based on the Foreign Office Archives at the Public Record Office in London. The author had studied the series classified as "General Correspondence" and the series "Consular Archives" relating to Persia and Turkey. The first series contains correspondence of ambassadors with the Foreign Office and with their consular agents. The bulk of the correspondence is diplomatic and the rest is commercial, consular and telegraphic. There are important case volumes relating to certain political problems like those of Koweit Fao Fort, Shatt-el-Arab and some economic questions like those of the Karun River Navigation, Loans to Persia, Railways and Banks. It is important to point out that these "study volumes" are by no means complete.

Among the most informative sources on the Persian Gulf are reports and records of the Consuls-General of Baghdad and Bushire and the Consuls of Basrah, Bunder-Abbas, Muscat, Bahrain and the Vice-Consul of Muhammerah.

Various aspects of the Anglo-French controversy over Muscat and over the use of the French flag in Muscat waters have been discussed in the general correspondence relating to France (F.O.27) and Muscat (F.O.54).

Material relative to projects and methods calculated to bring the Persian Gulf into a system of defence devised by Britain are scattered. Some of the most illuminating information is contained in the Proceedings of Central Asia (Russia, F.O.65) and the reports of the War Office (W.O.33). Specific studies dealing with various aspects of the problem of naval security in the Persian Gulf, and deserving to be taken into account in this connection, include the Admiralty reports (Admiralty, 1).

Persia

Foreign Office, 60/ (Ambassadorial reports, Agents and Consuls)

No.509	1890	Sir Henry Drummond Wolff
510	Jan.-March 1890	"
511	April-June 1890	"
512	July-Dec. 1890	& Mr. Kennedy
513	1890	"
514	1890	"
515	1890	"

No.516	1890	Consuls-General at Bushire and Vice-Consul at Muhammerah
517	1890	Prince Malkom Khan
521	1891	Mr. Kennedy and Sir Frank Lascelles
522	Jan.-April 1891	Mr. Kennedy
523	May-July 1891	"
524	Aug.-Dec.1891	"
525	1891	Mr. Kennedy and Sir Frank Lascelles (Tel.)
526	"	Mr. Kennedy
527	"	" (Commercial)
528	"	" (Consular)
529	"	" (Diplomatic Various)
531	1892	Sir Frank Lascelles (diplomatic)
532	"	"
533	"	"
534	"	" (telegraphic)
535	"	" (Consular)
536	"	" (Various)
541	1893	Sir Frank Lascelles (Diplomatic)
542	Jan.-May 1893	"
543	June-Dec.1893	"
544	1893	" (Telegrams)
545	"	" (Consular)
546	1893	Consuls-General at Bushire, Meshed and Tabreez (Diplomatic)
547	"	(Various diplomatic)

No.549	1889	Navigation of the Karun
550	1890-1893	"
551	1889-1891	Persian Lottery and loan concessions
552	1891-1893	"
553	1890-1891	Tobacco Regie
554	Jan-April 1892	"
555	April-June 1893	"
556	1893	Sir Frank Lascelles, Sir Mortimer Durand and Mr. Greene
557	Jan.-April 1894	Lascelles and Greene
558	May-July 1894	Mr. Greene
559	Aug.-Dec.1894	Sir Mortimer Durand
560	1894	Sir Frank Lascelles and Mr. Greene (Tel.)
561	1894	(Commercial)
562	1894	Consuls-General at Bushire, Mashed and Tabreez (Diplomatic)
570	1895	Various (Diplomatic)
571	1894-1895	Navigation of the Karun
575	1895	Bakhtiari Country
576	1889-1895	Claims of the Persian Mining Rights Corporation
577	1894-1895	Tobacco Regie
578	1896	Sir Mortimer Durand
579	1896	"

No.580	1896	Consuls-General at Bushire, Tabreez, Meshed and Vice-Consul at Muhammerah
581	1896	(Various)
582	1896	"
583	1897	Sir Mortimer Durand and Mr. Hardinge
584	1897	"
585	1897	" (Telegrams) (Commercial)
587	1897	Consuls-General at Bushire, Meshed, Tabreez and Vice-Consul at Muhammerah
591	1881-1897	Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf
593	1896-1897	Navigation of the Karun
594	1883-1897	Jemal-Ed-Din
595	1898	Sir Mortimer and Hardinge
596	1898	" (Telegrams)
597	1898	" (Commercial)
598	1898	Consuls-General at Tabreez, Meshed Bushire and Vice-Consul at Muhammerah
601	1897-1897	Persian loan
603	Jan.-March 1898	Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf
604	March-June 1898	"
605	July-Oct.1898	"
606	Nov.-Dec.1898	"
607	1899	Sir Mortimer Durand
608	Jan.-June 1899	"
609	July-Dec.1899	"

No.610	1899	Sir Mortimer Durand
611	1899	" and Spring-Rice
612	1899	Consul-General at Tabreez, Meshed, Bushire. Vice-Consul at Muhammerah.
613	1899	Commercial
616	1900	Durand and Spring-Rice
617	Jan.-June 1900	"
618	July.-Dec.1900	" and Hardinge
619	1900	"
620	1900	"
621	1900	Consuls-General at Tabreez, Meshed and Bushire. Vice-Consul at Muhammerah
623	Jan.-July 1900	(Various diplomatic)
624	Aug.-Dec.1900	"
625	1900	"
627	1893-1899	Perso-Afghan Frontiers
629	1900	Col. Picot's report on the Persian army
630	1899	Persian loan
631	1899-1900	Bakhtiari Road
632	July-June 1900	Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf
633	July-June 1900	"
634	July-Dec.1900	Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf
635	1901	Sir Arthur Hardinge and Mr. Spring-Rice
636	Jan.-June 1901	Sir Arthur Hardinge
637	July-Dec.1901	"

No.638	1901	Sir Arthur Hardinge (Telegrams)
639	1901	" (Treaty)
640	1901	" (Commercial)
641	1901	Consuls-General at Bushire, Meshed, Trabeez. Vice-Consul at Muhammerah
645	1901	Persian loan
646	1901	Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf
647	1901	Seistan Affairs
649	1902	Hardinge, Mr. de Graz, Mr.Erskine
650	Jan.-July 1902	"
651	July-Dec.1902	"
652	1902	" (Telegrams)
653	1902	" (Commercial)
655	1902	Consuls-General at Trabeez, Meshed, Bushire and Vice-Consul at Muhammerah
656	Jan.-June 1902	
657	July-Dec.1902	
658	1902	Various (diplomatic)
659	1902	Perso-Afghan Frontier
660	1902	Persian Loan
661	1901-1902	Bakhtiari Roads
662	1902	Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf
663	1902	Seistan Affairs

Persia Correspondence

Foreign Office 248/

No.461-668	1888	From F.O.
469	"	From Bushire
470	"	To Bushire, Baghdad
471	"	From India
472	"	Secret Intelligence
473	"	to India
477-483	1889	From F.O.
484	"	From Bushire
485	"	To Bushire
486	"	From Baghdad
487	1889	From India
488-490	1889	From Persia
494-501	1890	From F.O.
502	1890	From Bushire
503-504	1890	From Meshed
506-507	1890	From India
508	1890	To India and Bushire
509-511	1890	From Persians
516-522	1891	From F.O.
523-524	"	From Bushire
525	"	From Meshed
526	"	From India and Baghdad
530-532	"	From Persians
537-539	1892	From F.O.

No.540-541	1892	To F.O.
542	"	From and to F.O. (Tel.)
543	"	From Bushire
545-546	"	From and to Meshed
547	"	From Tabreez
550-551	"	From India (Secret Intelligence)
552	"	To Bushire and India
556-560	1893	From F.O.
561-564	1893	To F.O.
565	1893	From and to F.O.
566	"	From and to Bushire
573	"	From and to India
580-583	"	From Bushire
583-588	"	To Foreign Office
596-591	"	From Bushire
597-598	"	From India
604	1894-96	(Telegram - Various)
605-606	1895	From F.O.
607-608	1895	To F.O.
609-616	1895	From and to Bushire
618	1895	From India
625	1895	Private Letters
626-627	1896	From F.O.
628	"	To F.O.
629	"	(Telegrams Various)
630-631	"	From and to Bushire

No.636	1896	From India
644-645	1897	From F.O.
646-647	"	To F.O.
648	"	(Telegrams received by F.O.)
649	"	do. sent from and to Bushire
650-651	"	"
656	"	From India
657	"	From Persian Government
666-667	1898	From F.O.
668-669	"	To F.O.
670	"	Telegrams received
671	"	Telegrams sent
672-673	"	from India and Persian Government
686	1898-1899	Private Laetters
687-688	1899	From F.O.
689-690	1899	To F.O.
693-695	"	From Bushire
701	"	From and to Persian Government
702	"	From and to Persian Government
711-712	1900	From F.O.
713-714	"	To F.O.
717-719	"	From Bushire
725	"	From India
733	Jan.-July 1901	From F.O.
734	July-Dec.1901	From F.O.
735-737	1901	To F.O.

No.740-742	1901	To and from Bushire
746	"	From and to India
754-755	1902	From F.O.
756-757	1901	To F.O.
758	1902	Telegrams received
759	1902	" sent
760-761	1901	From Bushire
762	1902	To Bushire
767	1902	From and to India

Turkey (Ambassadors, Agents, Consuls, etc.)

Foreign Office 78/-

No.4277	1890	Sir William White
4278	"	"
4279	"	"
4280	"	"
4281	"	"
4282	"	"
4283	"	"
4284	"	"
4285	1890	Consul-General at Baghdad
4290	"	Consul at Basrah
4326-4327	"	Commercial negotiations
4341	1891	Sir William White
4342	"	"
4344	"	"
4345	"	"

No.4346	1891	Sir William White
4347	"	"
4348	"	"
4349	"	"
4350	"	"
4351	"	"
4352	"	"
4364	"	Consul-General at Baghdad
4366	"	Consul at Basrah
4413-4423	1892	Sir Clare Ford
4426	"	Consul-General at Baghdad
4428	"	"
4431	"	Consul at Basrah
4453-4491	1893	Sir Clare Ford and Sir Arthur Nicholson
4492-449	"	Consul-General at Baghdad
4497	"	Consul at Basrah
4536	1884-1893	Piracy in the Persian Gulf
4537-4544	1894	Sir Philip Currie
4552-4554	1894	Consul-General at Baghdad
4604	1891-1894	Navigation of the Tigris and the Euphrates
4606-4629	1895	Sir Philip Currie
4638-4642	1895	Consul-General at Baghdad
4641-4644	1895	Consul at Basrah
4696	1889-1893	Turco-Persian Frontier

No.4697	Oct.1893-1895	Turco-Persian Frontier
4738	1896	Consul-General at Baghdad
4795-4810	1897	Sir Philip Currie
4834	1897	Consul-General at Baghdad
4836	1891	Consul at Basrah
4889	1895-1897	Navigation of the Tigris and Euphrates
4901	1887-1890	Turkish Fort at Pao on Shatt-El-Arab
4936	1898	Consul-General at Baghdad
4937	"	"
5006	1899	"
5007	"	Consul at Basrah
5069	1900	Consul-General at Baghdad
5071	"	"
5102	1898-1900	Asia Minor and Baghdad Railway
5108	1879-1891	Bahrain Islands
5109	1892-1894	"
5110	1895-1900	"
5113	1896-1899	Koweit Affairs
5114	1899-1900	"
5114	1898-1900	Navigation of the Tigris and Euphrates and the Karun Rivers
5136	1901	Consul-General at Baghdad
5128	"	Consul at Basrah
5172	Jan.-Sept.1901	Koweit
5174	Sept.-Dec.1901	Koweit

No.5205	1902	Consul-General at Baghdad
5206	1902	Consul at Basrah
5149	1901-1902	Asia Minor and Baghdad Railway
5250	1901-1902	Bahrain Islands
5251	Jan.-April 1902	Koweit
5252	May.-Dec.1902	Koweit

Turkey: Correspondence

Foreign Office 195/-

No.1,682	1890	Baghdad and Basrah
1,721-722	1891	Baghdad
1,762-763	1892	"
1,798-797	1893	"
1,841	1894	"
1,885	1895	"
1,935	1896	"
1,978	1897	"
2,020	1898	Baghdad and Basrah
2,035	1899	"

Turkey: Miscellaneous

Foreign Office 198/-

Vol.No.62	1894	Affairs of Asia
67	1897	Asiatic Turkey

France: Affairs of Muscat: Grant of French flags to Surri Dhows

Foreign Office 27/-

Vol.No.3489	1891-1899	Muscat
3530	1900	
3568	1901	
3611	1902	

Muscat: Relations with Britain and France

Foreign Office 54/-

Vol.No.25	1890-1894	Consul at
26	1890-1897	Consuls at Muscat Yate, Mokler, Hayes, Sadler, Whyte, Beville, Fagan, Jayaker
27	1890-1897	Various (Commercial)
28	1898	Consul Percy Cox (Diplomatic)
29	1899	P. Fox and Fagan
30	1900	P. Cox
31	1901	"
32	1902	"

Central Asia: Russian Relations

Foreign Office 65/-

Vol.Nos.1393	Jan.-March 1890	Proceedings in Central Asia
1393	April-June 11 1890	"
1394	July-Sept.1890	"
1395	Oct.-Dec. 1890	"

Vol.Nos.1412	Jan.-Feb.1891	Proceedings in Central Asia
1413	March-April 1891	"
1414	May-June 1891	"
1415	July-Sept.1891	"
1416	October 1891	"
1417	Nov.-Dec.1891	"
1434	January 1892	"
1435	February 1892	"
1436	March and April 1892	"
1437	May 1892	"
1438	June 1892	"
1439	July 1892	"
1440	Aug. 1892	"
1441	1 Sept.-27 1892	"
1442	28 Sept.-31 Oct.1892	"
1443	November 1892	"
1444	December 1892	"
1460	Jan.-March 1893	"
1461	February 1893	"
1462	March 1893	"
1463	April 1893	"
1464	May 1893	"
1465	June 1893	"
1466	July 1893	"
1467	August 1893	"

Vol.Nos.1468	September 1893	Proceedings in Central Asia
1469	October 1893	"
1470	Nov.-Dec. 1893	"
1484	Jan.-Feb. 1894	"
1485	March-April 1894	"
1486	May-July 1894	"
1487	July-Sept. 1894	"
1488	Oct.-Dec. 1894	"
1504	Jan.-March 1895	"
1505	April-June 1895	"
1506	July-Sept. 1895	"
1507	Oct.-Dec. 1895	"
1528	Jan.-May 1896	"
1529	June-Dec. 1896	"
1547	14 Jan.-15 May 1897	"
1548	15 May-Aug. 1897	"
1549	Sept.-Dec. 1897	"
1571	Jan.-Feb. 1898	"
1572	March-April 1898	"
1573	May-July 1898	"
1574	Aug.-Oct. 1898	"
1575	Nov.-Dec. 1898	"
1577	Jan.-March 1899	Sir Charles Scott (diplomatic)
1578	April-June 1899	do. Mr. Hardinge
1579	July-19 Sept.1899	Sir Charles Scott

Vol.Nos.	1580	December 1899	Sir Charles Scott
	1598	Jan.-April 1900	"
	1599	May-June 1900	"
	1600	July-Aug. 1900	"
	1601	Sept.-Dec. 1900	"
	1619	Jan.-Feb. 1901	"
	1620	March-April 1901	"
	1621	May-July 1901	"
	1622	Aug.-Sept. 1901	"
	1627	Oct.-Dec. 1901	"
	1640	Jan.-19 March 1902	"
	1641	20 March-23 May 1902	"
	1642	24 May-16 Sept. 1902	" Hardinge
	1643	17 Sept.-Dec. 1902	"

F.O. Addenda

Embassy and Consular

F.O.602/ Embassy and Consular Archives of Turkey
Basrah Consulate

Vol.	1	15 Sept.1890-31 Oct.1891	Events in Nejd. File No.1.
	2	14 Aug.1886-13 Sept.1898	El-Katr, Obeid, Al-Bidda and Koweit. File No.2.
	3	16 June 1891-18 Feb.1901	Movements of Ships-of-War. File No.4.
	4	1 April 1881-20 May 1897	Turkish Fort at Fao. File No.5.

Vol. 5	2 March 1881-7 Jan.1890	Navigation of Mesopotamian river. File No.6.
6	25 Nov.1887-19 May 1900	Navigation of Mesopotamian river. File No.7.
7	12 Oct.1886-6 Aug.1900	Bahrain Islands. File No.8.
8	13 Nov.1883-10 July 1900	Political information for special branch. File No.9.
9	14 Aug.1880-8 Aug.1900	Arms etc. to Turkey. File No.11.
17	8 June 1900-28 Oct.1900	El-Katr, Abu-Dhabi Al-Bidda. File No.46.
19	5 Jan.1902-Dec.1902	Attempt Expedition against Kuweit and the "Lapwings" incident. File No.48.

War Office Records: W.O.33/

Vol.Nos.29	Russian Military Advance on Asia 1876
30	"
31	Asia and Russia 1877
54	Military Report on the position of Mesopotamia in Turkey 1896

Admiralty Records:

	Admiralty No.1.	Letters to and from
Vols.No.7011	1890	N. Mediterranean
7012	"	"
7013	"	"
7038	"	Foreign Office
7039	"	"

Vols.No.7040	1890	Foreign Office
7041	"	"
7056	1891	N. Mediterranean
7057	"	"
7058	"	"
7080-7082	"	Foreign Office
7083	"	India Office
7101	1892	N. Mediterranean
7102	"	"
7121-7123	"	Foreign Office
7143-7144	1893	N. Mediterranean
7166-7168	"	Foreign Office
7179-7180	1894	N. Mediterranean
7214-7128	"	Foreign Office
7241-7342	1895	N. Mediterranean
7260-7264	"	Foreign Office
7284-7285	1896	N. Mediterranean
7302-7305	1896	Foreign Office
7328	1897	N. Mediterranean
7344-7346	"	Foreign Office
7366	1898	N. Mediterranean
7384-7389	"	Foreign Office
7405	1899	N. Mediterranean
7423-7424	"	Foreign Office
7448-7449	1900	N. Mediterranean

Vol.Nos.7471-7475	1900	Foreign Office
7504-7407	1901	M. Mediterranean
7550-7554	"	Foreign Office
7557	"	India Office
7586-7587	1902	M. Mediterranean
7615-7624	"	Foreign Office

B. India Office Library

Although Whitehall had, during the eighteen nineties, an effective control over the Middle Eastern policy, the Indian Government continued to play an important rôle in the making of that policy in Western Asia in general and the Persian Gulf in particular. The complexities of the Persian Gulf politics during 1890-1902 and the growing concern of Great Britain over a possible Russian advance towards the Indian continent helped the Government of Simla to consolidate her position in those waters. The three Viceroys, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Elgin and Lord Curzon, showed a great interest in the Persian Gulf which they considered the key to India's security. The Government of India continued her advice to the Residents General at Bushire and to all diplomatic and consular missions at Koweit, Muscat, Bahrain and Muhammerah, all of whom were members of the Indian Civil Service. Some like

Sir Percy Sykes and Sir Percy Cox became prominent figures in the British Diplomatic Service. In the India Office Library the author had consulted many series of records and chiefly the series entitled Secret Letters from India issued by the Foreign Department of the Indian Government. They are almost a hundred volumes, (Vol.59 1890 - Vol.150 1902) and they deal with general correspondence concerning India's foreign policy including Persia and the Persian Gulf, in which the most useful is material on Muscat, East Arabia and Bahrain. The Secret Letters paid less attention to the problems of Shatt-El-Arab and the Karun River Navigation. The first forty volumes are with index.

The author has also consulted records of the Proceedings of the Government of Bombay 1890-1902 and also Secret Despatches from and to India for the same period, and he found that the last two series repeated most of the Secret Letters with the exception of valuable information on Muscat in the Secret Despatches. As regards printed records the author had found the Annual Reports of the Persian Gulf Residency and Muscat Political Agency during 1890-1902 very useful from the point of view of commerce and local history.

Lorimer's Persian Gulf Gazeteer is a very impressive work. This research was until recently secret, composed of two parts. The first part contains three volumes; two historical and one genealogical (printed in 1915) and the second part is geographical (printed in 1908). There are also a series of précis of correspondence regarding the Trucial Chiefs, Muscat, Bahrain, Turkish Arabia and précis on commerce, communications and naval arrangements in the Persian Gulf. Most of these reports had been written by J.A. Saldanah and M.S. Bell who excluded many important and secret correspondence and their work lacked co-ordination but gave a general summary of the history of British relations in the Persian Gulf during the whole nineteenth century.

Secret Letters from India, Government of India, Foreign Department:

Vol.59	Jan.-April 1890
60	May-September 1890
61	September-December 1890
62	January-April 1891
63	May-September 1891
64	September-December 1891
65	January-May 1892
66	April-July 1892

Vol.67	August-September 1892
68	October-December 1892
69	January-May 1893
70	June-July 1893
71	August-September 1893
72	October-December 1893
73	January-May 1894
74	April-June 1894
75	July-September 1894
76	September-October 1894
77	October-December 1894
Vols.78-83	(1895)
84-89	(1896)
90-98	(1897)
99-109	(1898)
110-118	(1899)
119-127	(1900)
128-141	(1901)
142-150	(1902)

C. Private Papers

1. Private Papers of Lord Philip Currie (Foreign Office Library).
2. Private Papers of Lord Thomas Sanderson (Foreign Office Library).
3. Private Papers of Lord Kimberley (Lord Kimberley's Estate, Wymondham, Norfolk).
4. Private Papers of Lord Charles Hardinge (Cambridge University Library).
5. Private Papers of Lord Lansdowne, Viceroy of India 1889-1894 (India Office Library).
6. Private Papers of Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary (Foreign Office Library).
7. Private Correspondence between Lord Elgin and Lord George Hamilton, 1895-1898. (India Office Library).
8. Private Correspondence between Lord Curzon and Lord George Hamilton, 1898-1903. (India Office Library).
9. Private Papers of Lord Salisbury (Christ Church, Oxford).
10. Private Papers of Sir William White (Public Record Office).

Lord Granville's papers at the Record Office (P.R.O.30), provide what perhaps is the best introduction to the study of the Anglo-Turkish relations as regards freedom of navigation in the Mesopotamian river and Shatt el-Arab and to the study of the general Russian policy in Persia and Central Asia during the decades preceding this thesis.

A detailed and very valuable picture of the Asiatic policy of Sultan Abdul-Hamid is given in Sir William White's Private Papers, at the Public Record Office.

The controversy stemming from the economic interests in South Persia: Railways, Navigation of the Karun, Tobacco Monopoly, loans etc. have been discussed in the Private Papers of Lord Kimberley and in the Private Correspondence of Lord Lansdowne, the Viceroy of India. Internal affairs of Persia have occupied an important part in Lord Kimberley's Private Papers concerning that country. The latter collection also contains secret reports on the British and the Turkish navies in the Persian Gulf.

Lord Hardinge's Private Papers throw light not only on concepts of strategy with reference to the Persian Gulf and Persia, but on accompanying needs in foreign policy as well.

The relationship of the Persian Gulf to the whole subject of Russia's special interests and strategy is well treated in the Private Correspondence of both Hamilton and Curzon. Much of the factual material that had been essential to the writing on the Anglo-Persian relations between 1900-1902 has been drawn from the private letters of Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary.

Essential to a thorough knowledge of the issues of a legal controversy over Bahrain and Koweit between England and Turkey, are well treated in the private papers of Sir Philip Currie.

The Anglo-French dispute over Muscat and over the use of the French flag in the Persian Gulf waters are well treated in Lord Salisbury's private papers. The problems of Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf have been extensively dealt with in Lord Sanderson's private papers.

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2. Lorimer, J.G.: Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Vol.I, Part I and II. Historical. Part III. Genealogical. Maps. Calcutta, 1915. Vol.II is geographical and statistical. Calcutta, 1908. (both volumes marked Secret in India Office Library).

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   (a) Précis on Naval Arrangements in the Persian Gulf, 1862-1905 (printed 1906).
   (b) Précis of Correspondence of International Rivalry of the Persian Gulf 1872-1905 (printed 1906).
   (c) Précis of Mekran Coast. (Printed 1906).
   (d) Précis of the Persian Coast and Islands 1854-1905 (printed 1906).
   (e) Précis of the Nejd Affairs 1804-1904 (printed 1904).
   (f) Précis of Turkish Arabia 1801-1905 (printed 1906).

4. Annual Reports on the Administration of the Persian Gulf by the Persian Gulf Residency and Muscat Political Agency:

No.CCVII	1884-1885
CCXX	1885-1886
CCXXIX	1886-1887
CCXLV	1887-1888
CCLIX	1888-1889
CCLIX	1889-1890
CCCXXXV	1890-1891
CCXCIII	1891-1892
CCCIV	1892-1893
CCCXV	1893-1894
CCCXXIV	1894-1895
CCCXXXVIII	1895-1896
CCXLVII	1896-1897
CCCLIX	1897-1898
CCCXIX	1898-1899
CCLXXIX	1899-1900
CCCXCII	1901-1902

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2. Tobacco Concession in Persia, 1892. Vol.LXXIX (C. 6707) p.205.

3. Commercial Reports from the Consul General at Constantinople and Districts Consuls in Asiatic Turkey

1892

Trade of Baghdad and Basrah for 1890-1891. Vol.XCXII, No.1142 (C.855), p. 187.

1893

Trade of Baghdad and Basrah for 1892. Vol.XCVII, No.1320 (C.6855).

1894

Trade of Baghdad and Basrah for 1893. Vol.LXXXVIII, No.1424 (C.7293) p.455.

1895

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1897

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1898

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1899

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1900

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Vol.XCVI, No.2428 (Cd. 1) p.497.

1901

Trade of Baghdad for 1900.
Vol.CX, No.2707 (Cd.786).
Trade of Basrah for 1900. Vol.CX.
No.2712 (Cd.786).

1902

Trade of Baghdad for 1901.
Vol.CX, No.2835 (Cd.786).
Trade of Basrah for 1901.
Vol.CX, No.2884 (Cd.7867).

1903

Trade of Basrah for 1902.
Vol.LXXIX, No.2987 (Cd.1336).
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ASIA
Scale 1:4,000,000

PERSIAN GULF

EDITION 4 - GSGS

SHEET 32

Refer to this map as: GSGS 2957 Sheet 32 EDITION 4 - GSGS

ALTITUDE TINTS

METRES	FEET
5,000	16,400
4,000	13,120
3,000	9,840
2,500	8,200
2,000	6,560
1,500	4,920
1,000	3,280
500	1,640
200	656
SEA LEVEL	
BELOW SEA LEVEL	

GLOSSARY

TURKISH

Ada	Island
Burun	Cape
Dag	Stream
Deniz	Mountain
Gol	Lake
Irmak	River
Kan	Spa
Kara	Village
Kum	Desert
Nehir	River
Tuz	Salt
Yeni	New

ARABIC

Ain	Spring
Batin	Depression
Bir	Well
Dahana	Desert of gravelly sand
Harrat	Stoney plain
Jabal, Jebel	Lava flow, volcanic debris
Khashm, Kh.	Mountain
Nafud	Pronounced
Nahr	Erosion Canal
Rahad	Desert of sand dunes
Qala	Fort, Castle
Qasr	Cape
Tell	Water course usually dry
Wadi	River
Shatt	River
Sabkha	Water course usually dry

PERSIAN

Chah	Well
Chashmeh	Spring, Fountain
Darya	Water
Dasht	Desert
Godar	Pass
Kavir	Salt
Khan	Inn
Kuh	Mountain
Qala	Village, Castle
Rud	River

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This map is NOT an authority on the delimitation of international boundaries.

Reference

- Railways
  - under construction
  - light or narrow gauge
- Principal Roads
- Secondary Roads and motorable routes
- Caravan Routes and tracks
- Boundaries, International
  - Interstate or Provincial
- Names of Provinces
- Districts, Localities
- Deserts, Plains
- Mountain Ranges
- Peaks, Valleys, Capes, Islands
- Oases
- Towns of 1st importance (capitals)
- " 2nd "
- " 3rd "
- " 4th "
- " 5th "
- Antiquities
- Rivers
- Canals
- Marshes, Swamps
- Altitudes in metres
- Contours
- Wells, Springs, Pools
- Sandy Desert
- Volcanic Debris "Harra"
- Salt Waste "Kavir"

PROVINCE
DISTRICT
DESERT Des
MOUNTAIN
Island
OASIS
TEHRAN
Basra
Aleppo
Hail
Rosetta
TYRE'S

Refer to this map as: GSGS 2957 Sheet 32 EDITION 4 - GSGS

INDEX TO ADJOINING SHEETS

Conical Orthomorphic Projection with two standard parallels 27° and 63° N. Lat.

Scale 1/4,000,000

Miles 100 50 0 100 200

1 inch = 63·13 Miles & 1 Millimetre = 4 Kilometres

Kilometres 100 50 0 100 200 300

ADMINISTRATIVE INDEX

Abbreviations
L. Lebanon
S. Syria
N. Neutral Territory
U.S.S.R. Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

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