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INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
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**INTER-IMPERIAL RIVALRY IN THE GULF AT THE TURN OF THE
20TH CENTURY:
THE CASE OF KUWAIT**

MASTER’S THESIS

ASIL A.A TALAHMA

SUPERVISOR
ASSOC.PROF. M. TALHA ÇİÇEK

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Doç.Dr. M.Talha Çiçek

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Doç.Dr.M.Talha Çiçek

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JÜRİ

İMZA

Tez Danışmanı:

Doç. Dr. Talha M. Çicek

.....

İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi

Üyeler:

Prof. Dr. Selim Kahramanoğlu

.....

İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi

Yrd. Doç. Ramazan Hakkı Öztan

.....

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

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INTER-IMPERIAL RIVALRY IN THE GULF AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH
CENTURY:
THE CASE OF KUWAIT

Talahma, Asil

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ABSTRACT

The second half of the 19th century witnessed an intense inter imperial competition. By the end of the century, the world was divided among the great imperial powers: Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire, to some extent. In the second half of the 19th century, the changes that ensued in the Ottoman Empire encouraged this imperial rivalry in even smaller regions of the empire, such as Kuwait on the Persian Gulf. Kuwait was nominally affiliated to the Ottoman Empire and was administered by a tribal system where the ruling dynasty was Al-Sabah. Mubarak Al-Sabah (1837-1915) assumed power in 1896. The circumstances of his assumption of power constituted a diplomatic crisis between him and the Ottoman Empire that paved the way for a subsequent imperial conflict. The parties to the conflict in Kuwait were mainly Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Nevertheless, this did not constitute that other powers did not attempt to penetrate Kuwait. France, Russia, and Germany competed with Britain and played a major role in defining the features of the conflict, especially Germany. The imperial states did not act independent from the regional powers. The interests of the two sides overlapped to form imperial-regional alliances. The regional powers, in turn, expanded the conflict in Arabia by inviting some of the great powers to intervene on their behalf. The internal imperial conflict that Kuwait witnessed at the turn of the 20th century did not only constitute an imperial conflict in the region's history, but also the events of that period shaped the region's modern history.

Özet

19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısı yoğun bir imparatorluklar arası rekabete sahne oldu. Yüzyılın bitimiyle birlikte dünya büyük güçler arasında bölündü: Britanya, Fransa, Rusya, Almanya ve belli bir ölçüde de Osmanlı İmparatorluğu. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda meydana gelen değişiklikler bu emperyal rekabeti 19 yüzyılın ikinci yarısında, Basra Körfezindeki Kuveyt gibi, imparatorluğun küçük bölgelerine dahi sirayet ettirdi, Kuveyt ismen Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na bağlıydı ve El-Sabah hanedanının başında bulunduğu bir aşiret sistemi ile yönetiliyordu. Mübarek El-Sabah (1837-1915) 1896'da iktidara geldi. İktidara geliş koşulları, kendisi ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu arasında daha sonraları emperyalist bir çatışmaya yol açacak diplomatik bir krize sebep oldu. Kuveyt'teki çatışmanın tarafları ağırlıklı olarak İngiltere, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Mübarek El Sabah'tı.

Yine de bu, diğer güçlerin Kuveyt'e girmeye çalışmadığı anlamına gelmiyordu. Fransa, Rusya ve Almanya, Britanya ile rekabet ederek bu çatışmanın niteliğini belirlemede etkin bir rol oynadı, özellikle de Almanya. İmparatorlular bölgesel güçlerden bağımsız bir şekilde hareket etmiyordu. İki tarafın da örtüşen çıkarları emperyal-yerel ittifak eksenleri oluşturdu. Karşılığında bu bölgesel güçler de bazı büyük güçleri kendi yanlarına davet ederek Arabistan'daki bu çatışmayı genişlettiler. Kuveyt'in 20. yüzyılın başında tanık olduğu bu iç emperyalist çatışma, bölge tarihinde sadece emperyalist bir çatışma oluşturmakla kalmamış, o dönemin olayları aynı zamanda bölgenin modern tarihini de şekillendirmiştir.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BOA, BEO	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Bâb-ı Âli Evrak Odası
BOA, HR.MTV	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Hariciye Nezareti Mütenevvia Kısmı Evrakı
Y.MTV	Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı
BOA.DH. ŞEF	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Dahiliye Şifre Kalemi
Y.A.HUS	Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Evrakı
Y.PRK.BŞK	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Başkitabet Dairesi Maruzatı
Y..A...RES	Yıldız Resmi Maruzat
IOR	India Office Records

TRANSLITERATION

I followed the International Journal of Middle East Studies transliteration method (IJMES) for the transliteration of Arabic-English text. I used English for the well-known places or people names.

ا	‘	ص	s	ع	‘
ح	h	ض	ḍ	غ	gh
خ	kh	ط	ṭ	و	w
ذ	dh	ظ	ẓ	ي	y

INTRODUCTION

From the 17th century to the mid-20th century, Britain became more prominent at the European and international levels. It appeared as a worldwide power, and its internal stability was reflected in its political, military, and economic development. When the colonial policy was delineated in Europe with the development of the rising imperialism, Britain was advancing the region more than other western countries. It gained enormous colonial achievement in East Asia, in particular, and Africa, in general. Furthermore, due to its colonial policy, Britain assumed a significant position in the world, and accordingly, it had to preserve its scattered colonies from east to the west by all available means, whether political or military. Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, the imperial rivalry between European countries became intense. The imperial powers sought to gain more territories and to compete with each other. As a result, Britain put forth a great effort to protect its acquisitions and the transportation routes leading to them.

Due to its prominent location, the Ottoman Empire remained a hindrance standing between Britain and its colonies in East Asia. Worth noting, the Ottoman Empire, on its part, was seen by some historians as an imperial empire as well, which expanded towards areas far from its center. However, in the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire suffered from many challenges, such as internal rebellions and wars. All these challenges, especially the Ottoman Empire's wars with Russia, exhausted the state treasury and made it exposed to "foreign intervention." Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire, still in a difficult situation, did not surrender to the ambitions of the European countries, which raised what is known as the "Eastern Question," and played an

imperial role by itself, as it entered the conflict with the great powers to preserve its properties or repel the foreign dangers.

The Eastern Question came through a long term of historical and political events that the Ottoman Empire witnessed or was affected by. Most likely, the wars in Europe, the growth of Nationalism in the Balkan 1798-1821, the Greek war of independence, Mohammed Ali crisis in Egypt, and the most important, the Ottoman wars with Russia. These events provoked the great powers to take place in a more global rivalry or compete with the other powers to protect their interests, which are located in the Ottoman Empire or affected by the Ottoman Empire's status. What is remarked then is that the great powers feared that one might take advantage of the political challenges that the Ottoman Empire witnessed to increase its influence. Thus, the Eastern Question indicates a long-term tension among the great powers regarding the status of the Ottoman Empire.¹

The Western domination, witnessed in the 19th century, pushed the imperial countries to chase each other up in very remote areas. Each country had a geopolitical interest and sought to gain or to secure. These empires adopted too many different strategies to achieve their goals; their strategies varied, some countries resorted to war endeavors, such as Russia, and some countries adopted a more diplomatic policy, such as Britain.

¹ Suraiya Faruqi, *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya Faruqi, vol. The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 57-8. A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (England: Longman, 1989).

Remarkably, the imperial rivalry between the great powers led it to regions as far and very small as Kuwait on the Persian Gulf.² The conflict was mainly between the Ottoman Empire and Britain, but this did not mean that the other imperial powers did not try in some way to break into the conflict to find a foothold; Russia, France, and Germany played a prominent role in the continuation of the conflict. Nevertheless, Britain enjoyed significant influence in southern Arabia and Bahrain, where it helped since the beginning of the 19th century to develop dynasties regimes that still rule to this day, but this does not mean that the Ottoman Empire was not influential either. The Ottomans were the main controlling power in a region that extended from Iraq to Qatar.³ The conflict was not isolated from the regional powers in the region. Especially that the Persian Gulf was, and is, a region based on the tribal system. Both imperial and regional powers extensively overlapped in shaping the history of the area.

The modern and contemporary history of Kuwait⁴ goes back to more than 400 years. Kuwait is located in the north-western part of the Persian Gulf, overlooking ancient Mesopotamia, where this part constituted, and still, an essential global navigation route. The location linked the civilizations in the ancient Near east

² The Iranians and the West knew the region as the Persian Gulf, while the Arabs called it the Arab Gulf, and the Ottomans called it the Gulf of Basra. Frederick Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, 1870-1914* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 1-2.

³ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 1.

⁴ The State of Kuwait now is an emirate located in the northeast of the Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the south and Iraq to the northwest. Kuwait is the capital and largest city of the country, and it is a natural port in the north-western corner of the Persian Gulf. Kuwait has been under the rule of the Al-Sabah family since 1756, and the family's origins can be traced back to the Nejd region, now known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (Michael S. Casey, *The History of Kuwait* (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 1-3).

established in Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, and Egypt with the civilizations of Southeast Asia in India and China.⁵

Since the early 17th century Kuwait was known as Qurian (قرين), which is a diminutive of the word Qarn⁶ in the Arabic language that means hill or high ground. At the end of the 16th century, the Portuguese realized the importance of Kuwait and built a fortified fortress on a small island called Al-Quran Al-Saghir (القرن الصغير); the small Grane outside the present-day Kuwait City. It seems that the name Grane, which some of the early travelers used for Kuwait, is derived from the name of this island. However, there is no trace of this fortress nowadays.

Moreover, in the late 17th century, an Amir of Bani Khalid's sheiks decided to build a residence in Qurain as a summer home or for military purposes. Accordingly, he decided to make his home into a small fort, or kut (كوت).⁷ Later the region was referred to as Kuwait, which is the diminutive Arabic word for small fort.⁸ Even when it is difficult to determine the exact date of Kuwait's emergence, since the late 1700s, the area has usually been identified as Kuwait.⁹

Despite the ancient history of Kuwait, it did not gain importance until powerful tribes inhabited it, as Al-‘Utub tribes who migrated from Najd.¹⁰ Before Al-‘Utub, records indicate that the rulers of the Kuwait region in the 18th century was an Arab tribe called Bani Khalid. Bani Khalid appeared in Eastern and central Arabia at the

⁵ Ya’kub ‘bd Al’zīz Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat Ālḥayah publication, 1978),104.

⁶ Before Qurain Kuwait was known as Kazima. Ḥasan Āl Ibrāhīm, *Alkuwīt Dirāsah Siyāsīyah* (Kuwait: Ālbayān publication, 1972), 30.

⁷ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*,106.

⁸ Casey, *The History of Kuwait*, 2.

⁹ Casey, *The History of Kuwait*, 2..

¹⁰ Yusuf ālqinā’ī, *Ṣafahāt Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt* (Cairo: Dār Sa’d, 1946),8.

beginning of the second half of the 16th century, when they rested power from the Ottomans, they reached the height of their power in the first half of the 18th century. Meanwhile, the tribe controlled the area between Basra in the north and Oman in the south. Bani Khalid penetrated the west by controlling most Najd provinces, as they emerged as a strong local power.¹¹ At the end of the 18th century, Wahhabis put their hand on Bani Khalid's homes,¹² which paved the way for Al-‘Utub to come into power. Al-‘Utub tribe consisted of several phratries: Al-Sabah, Al-Khalifah, Al-Jalahemah, and Al-Ma'wedah, and they claim to be a division of 'Aniza, who originally inhabited Najd and North Arabia.¹³

It is noteworthy that Al-‘Utub's migration was one of the critical events in Kuwait's modern history, as it constituted a pivotal stage in establishing modern Kuwait. The exact date of the migration is not defined; however, historians suggest it took place between the late 17th century early 18th century. For what it is worth, we can determine several reasons behind their emigration. Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed indicates that it could be due to persecution they were subjected to, harsh conditions they lived through, or their aspiration for independence as a significant tribe.¹⁴ From another aspect, Mustafa Abu Hakima believes that their migration could be part of the great migration of 'Aniza that took place in the late 17th century when 'Aniza and other tribes migrated to Eastern Arabia due to drought.¹⁵ Al-‘Utub groups tended to migrate eastward to Al-‘Ahsa and Qatar, as they settled at the periphery of Qatar for a relatively long time, as it was under the influence of Bani Khalid, where they learned sea navigation and became a maritime

¹¹ ‘bd Ālkarīm Ālwahbī, *Banu Khālid Wa ‘lāqatihm Bi Najd 1699-1794* (Riyadh: Dār Tathqīf, 1989), 11.

¹² ‘Abū Hākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*, 19.

¹³ Ahmad Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia 1750-1800* (Beirut: KHAYATS, 1965), 49.

¹⁴ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Alḥadīth*, 34.

¹⁵ Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia*, 49-50.

nation. From Qatar, as the local account states, Al-‘Utub continued their movement until they settled in Kuwait.¹⁶

Before settling in Kuwait, Al-‘Utub obtained permission from the Amir of Bani Khalid. However, the exact date of their arrival in Kuwait could not be traced. Furthermore, the arrival of Al-‘Utub to Kuwait coincided with the beginning of the decline of Bani Khalid. Until the fifth decade of the 18th century, Kuwait was subject to the direct rule of Bani Khalid's Amirs. The early years of the century witnessed the rule of the mighty Amir Sa'adun bin Muhammad bin Ghurair Al-Hamid. After the death of bin Ghurair in 1722, a struggle emerged between his brother and his sons over the rule.¹⁷ The struggle between Bani Khalid tribesmen weakened their power upon the tribes subjected to them and opened the way for new rulers in the region seeking independence. Such an incident was one of the main reasons that helped and paved the way for Al-Sabah family to reach power.

Moreover, a struggle took place between the Wahhabis and Bani Khalid over the sovereignty in eastern Arabia, where the Wahhabis were attacking the loyal tribes to Bani Khalid since the 1790s.¹⁸ The Wahhabis aimed to control Al-‘Ahsa, an economically prosperous region near Dir'iyah, the capital of the Wahhabi state. Furthermore, Al-‘Ahsa had a strategic location overlooking the Persian Gulf, and its harbors were suitable for fishing and pearling. Similarly, the Amirs of Bani Khalid were quite prone to opposing the Wahhabi movement.¹⁹ In addition to the absence of a central administration or direct authority in the Arabian Peninsula provided the

¹⁶ Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia*, 50.

¹⁷ Muḥamad Ālqawzī. “Ālsirā’ Bayna Banī Khālīd Wa ālwahābiyīn 1873-1745.” *College of Arts Research Journal* (1994): 273.

¹⁸ Ālqawzī, “Banī Khālīd Wa ālwahābiyīn”, 271.

¹⁹ Ālqawzī, “Banī Khālīd Wa ālwahābiyīn”, 263.

opportunity to establish an independent political and regional entity. Both Persian and Ottoman powers were weak in that region. Thus, a new entity evolved without fear of a great power threat.

Moreover, Kuwait was in the Khaldi domain of influence; Bani Khalid's policy ascended to maintain security and peace so that trade would flourish. Albeit the remarkable commercial activity of European commercial companies and the goods transportation by sea through the gulf and by land through the desert road benefited the region. Kuwait contributed to these activities, especially in the second half of the 18th century, and Al-‘Utub themselves seemed to participate in this activity. Al-‘Utub's role appeared later to be considered a beginning for their trade by land and sea.²⁰

After the decline of Bani Khalid's power, the region remained without an actual ruler. However, since the Arabian Peninsula's political regimes depended on the tribal society for their subsistence, they believed that they must have a leader to be an administrative reference to solve the internal problems and manage the tribal system. Accordingly, they unanimously elected Sabah I for this position.²¹ Historians speculate that this event took place between the late 18th century early 19th century. After the ascension of Sabah, Al- Sabah family started to rule Kuwait effectively until today.

It is noteworthy that the Ottoman armies could not penetrate Kuwait's land during or after the rule of Bani Khalid.²² The Ottoman presence in the Persian Gulf was restricted in Basra and Al-‘Ahsa, the first confirmed presence of the Ottomans in the Persian Gulf region was in 1519, but the indisputable sovereignty started during the

²⁰ Ālqawzī, “Banī Khālīd Wa ālwahābiyīn”, 263.

²¹ ālqinā‘ī, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt*, 8.

²² B. J. Slot, *The Origins of Kuwait* (Kuwait: Kuwait Research and Studies Center, 2003), 11.

reign of Sultan Suleiman. On the one hand, the Ottomans aimed to counter the Portuguese, who posed a danger to the Islamic world. From another aspect, they sought to obtain economic privileges by controlling the Silk Road from Tabriz to Bursa through Arzrum and Tokat. Likewise, to control the Spices Road - passing through Basra, Baghdad, and Aleppo- the Ottomans settled on the shores of the Gulf of Basra, and they brought Al-‘Ahsa region, which overlooked the shores of the Basra Gulf in the Persian Gulf, under their control.²³ Notwithstanding, the Ottomans lost Al-‘Ahsa to Beni Khalid in 1670, and the latter to the Wahhabis took control of Al-‘Ahsa when they weakened their rule in 1793.²⁴ However, the Ottoman Empire was alarmed by the growing British interests in the Gulf region; accordingly, it started to consider reannexing Al-‘Ahsa. Through the efforts of Medhat Pasha in 1870-1, the Ottoman Empire found an opportunity to intervene in the Arabian Peninsula after a dispute arose between the Wahhabi leaders; two sons of Prince Faisal competed for his succession in Riyadh after his death in 1865. Abdullah bin Faisal took power in 1866, but the rivalry with his brother Saud turned into an open war for four years after that. Saud obtained the support of a large number of the Bedouins of Al-Ahsa and Nejd, and Abdullah fled to Jabal Shammar in the north of Najd, the headquarters of the Al-Rashidi dynasty, rivals of the Wahhabis, but Al-Rashidi supported Saud later, and thus Abdullah asked for help from the Ottoman Sultan. Medhat Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, took the opportunity to intervene.²⁵

²³ Zekeriya Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa’da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti: Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti’nin Ortaya Çıkışı* (Ankara, Turkey: Türk Tarih Kurumu Bası, 1998), 2.

²⁴ Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia*, 175-178.

²⁵ B. J. Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah: Founder of Modern Kuwait, 1896-1915*, ed. William Facey (Surbiton, England: Arabian Publishing, 2005), 36. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 24-25.

From this point, Medhat Pasha aspired to bring Kuwait under Ottoman control by sending a custom official and a secretary. The Kuwaiti sheiks refused customs and taxes but declared their loyalty and support to the Ottoman state. The Ottoman state, in turn, did not make any further pressure, and to ensure the loyalty of the Kuwaiti sheiks, it granted Sheikh Abdullah Sabah (1814-1892) the title kaymakam and thus the Ottomans established an official authority in Kuwait, but it remained nominal.²⁶ The following chapters will explain the imperial conflict that took place between Britain and the Ottoman Empire over Kuwait and the role of local sheiks in this conflict.

Kuwait was of great importance to both Britain and the Ottoman Empire. The importance of Kuwait to Britain stemmed from its various commercial activities in the Persian Gulf and its land routes to India. Notably, the British were unintentionally drawn into the Gulf region due to the tribal threat to its shipping endeavors in the gulf water. First, Britain intervened in response to Al Qawasim piracy, who were raiding British shipping because they refused to pay them the tolls. Thus, the British, on their part, initiated an anti-piracy policy that resulted in the general treaty of 1820 with all the rulers and governors of the coast of Oman, respectively, all the gulf rulers admitted to British treaties until 1916.²⁷ However, the motive behind the British hegemony in the gulf is controversial. R. Robinson and J. Gallagher saw the strategy as the primary motive behind British activity during the 19th and 20th centuries, especially to defend India; the British adopted a policy in which it went through local collaborators and mediators to form a local political hegemony. Robinson and Gallagher's theory holds that the British sought to control informally, following the policy of "the greater their

²⁶ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 21.

²⁷ James Onley, "Britain's Informal Empire in the Gulf, 1820–1971," *Journal of Social Affairs* 22, no. 87 (Fall 2005): 30.

success, the more indirect their control" in which the empire and its periphery rather than London, that hold the key to understand both the timing and the nature of imperialism.²⁸ On the other hand, Cain and Hopkins's theory saw that the economic factors were the primary motivator for the British imperialism, as the British intervention in the gulf was motivated by the need to protect overseas markets against European rivals, Cain-Hopkins stipulates that it was the financial interests of the London in the region that determined the nature and timing of British imperial activity.²⁹ Whatever the motives behind the British imperialism were, both Cain-Hopkins and Robinson-Gallagher stipulated that Britain acted in the gulf through a local political system, in which it was involved locally through mediators to maintain its hegemony in the gulf.

The Ottoman Empire was challenged in its territorial expanse by ambitious powers. Thus, it conducted several reform projects to modernize the state and to keep pace with its competitors. During the Tanzimat era, the state expanded into far regions from its center, where its authority was limited, especially after its successive wars with Russia and its internal revolts.³⁰

Transjordan as an example; the state was able to bring a tribal-based region far from the center under its control. The empire's need for financial resources, men power, and a need to protect the region from the British interests speeded up the regional integration and linked the inhabitants with their empire. In the same way, the Ottoman Empire wanted to stretch its control frontier to consolidate its authority in the Arabian

²⁸ Onley, "Britain's Informal Empire", 32-33.

²⁹ Onley, "Britain's Informal Empire", 33.

³⁰ Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2-5.

regions peninsula, the Syrian steppe, and in north Africa. These regions could contribute taxes and men's power; moreover, the Ottoman Empire aimed in its expansion to protect these areas from the dangers of the European power, especially after the British occupation of Egypt.³¹ However, not only the political circumstances motivated the Ottoman Empire for heading east, but other global changes also played a major role in the empire's decision. The years before 1870 witnessed significant changes at the level of communications; these changes promised to bring the remote regions that the Ottoman Empire aspired to subjugate under its control. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire was alerted by the revolution of transportation and the rapid transit of messages, men, and materiel, as this change increased European pressure on the remote regions, from Iraq to the Hijaz. Therefore, Istanbul, in turn, decided to consolidate its influence and presence using these means to create a defensive bulwark against foreign encroachment. The task of subjugating the region in the east was assigned to Midhat Pasha, who in turn showed enthusiasm for extending the influence of the Ottoman Empire in the long-forgotten areas.³²

On that sphere, Frederick Anscombe believes that the Ottomans did not pursue to shift the weight of the empire from Europe to Asia after its successive losses in Europe but rather sought to prevent the occurrence in Asia of the gradually encroachment by Western powers that was happening in Europe. The Ottoman Empire aimed to retain its position to improve its role and reputation in great powers politics, and the reforms

³¹ Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 5.

³² Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 16.

that were going in full swing, especially in the late 1860s, were a good example of this desire.³³

Moreover, the Ottoman Empire tended to rule in the Gulf region through local agents. The local players in the Gulf region played a significant role in the region's history; they were not passive players; instead, they were quite active in the age of imperialism. Kuwait served as a good example in which the interest of the imperial powers and the local powers overlapped.

Kuwait in the late 19th century

In the late 19th century, Kuwait witnessed intense tension between the ruling family members Al-Sabah. this tension attracted the imperial and the local powers alike to a wide regional conflict. In 1896 Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah seized power in the Emirate of Kuwait after the assassination of his two brothers, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah and Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah. As a result of this incident, a strong opposition emerged against the new sheik, led by one of the most prominent and wealthy people in Kuwait at the time, Sheikh Yusuf Al Ibrahim, who had a close kinship with Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah. Thereafter, Kuwait entered a period of tension and turmoil. This period was characterized by many alliances and intrigues between the parties to the conflict. Each Party worked with all its military force and political skill to eliminate the other. The conflict attracted many regional powers to its circles, such as the Emirate of Qatar, the Emirate of Rashidis, Al-Saud, and other tribes, as well as it attracted imperial powers, mainly the Ottoman Empire and Britain.³⁴

³³ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 18.

³⁴ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 138-140.

This study deals with the imperial conflict that took place between the Ottoman Empire and Britain over Kuwait at the turn of the 20th century by examining the local players' roles during this conflict. The period is critical in the history of Kuwait, as the incidents ensuing during this time determined the region's political future for more than a century. The study aims to demonstrate the impact of global imperialism on a small geographical area in the Persian Gulf and examine Kuwait considering the global changes that occurred between two major powers, the Ottoman Empire and Britain. In addition to the role of the local players in this conflict and how these powers, mainly Al-Sabah, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, and Al-Rasheed, interacted with the wheel of imperialism and how they employed it to preserve their regional interests. Importantly, the imperial powers did not act independent from the regional rulers, but rather the interests of the two parties overlapped with each other and formed an imperial-regional power to achieve common goals.

The Questions of the Research

The study will present an examination of the policy of Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and Mubarak Al-Sabah during the conflict period in Kuwait, in addition to the policy of the local players, mainly Yusuf Al-Ibrahim and Ibn-Rasheed. Each Party acted upon different reasons and motives during the period in question. Therefore, the study attempts to examine the reasons that provoked Mubarak Al-Sabah to consider the reaction of the Ottoman Empire and the reason that prompted him to try to find a balance between his relation with both Britain and the Ottoman Empire, at a time when he could have used the support of one power. The same question is directed to Britain, which proceeded to work in the shadows in Kuwait specifically, taking into account the Ottoman Empire's reaction. As for the Ottoman Empire, the study attempts to show

the considerations of the Ottoman Empire regarding Britain and Mubarak Al-Sabah. The Ottoman Empire followed more than one different policy in Kuwait, and it avoided confronting Britain and Mubarak Al-Sabah directly. The main question in the study is why and how the parties to the conflict considered each other's reactions?

The Structure of the Research

The thesis presents comprehensive answers to the study questions throughout three chapters, focusing on a significant subject related to the designated topic. The first chapter of this study deals with the evolution of British-Ottoman relations from the crisis of Muhammad Ali in 1840 until Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882 and its impact on the gulf. The importance of this period lies in the change of the British policy towards the Ottoman Empire. From the crisis of the Ottoman Empire with Muhammad Ali in 1840 until the Berlin Conference 1878, Britain had followed the policy of maintaining the status quo and preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. However, the situation differed after the Berlin Conference of 1878, where Britain started to adopt a new policy; it turned from an ally country to a rival that sought to disintegrate the Ottoman lands. This chapter holds a global narration of the Anglo-Ottoman relation during the second half of the 19th century.

The second chapter focuses precisely on Mubarak Al-Sabah and his accession to power in 1896 and Yusuf Al Ibrahim's adoption of the opposition against Mubarak Al-Sabah with the nephews. Moreover, it discusses the beginning of the regional conflict and the political war that took place in Kuwait after Mubarak assumed power, and the impact of regional powers in expanding the circle of this conflict, as the parties to the conflict turned to the regional forces in order to form political alliances, and also went

to the imperial powers, where the parties to the conflict sought in this stage to gain the Ottomans' support.

The third chapter deals with Mubarak Al-Sabah's shifting loyalty, turning to the British, and signing the secret British protection agreement on Kuwait 1899; it examines the reasons behind this shifting and the regional and the Ottoman reaction toward it. Moreover, this chapter deals with the increasing imperial conflict over Kuwait with the emergence of Germany on the international scene as a global power, along with its alliance with the Ottoman Empire. Germany attempted to penetrate the Persian Gulf through the Baghdad-Berlin railway concession until the final settlement of the dispute over Kuwait with the Anglo-Ottoman agreement 1913 and the outbreak of World War I.

Sources of the Research

In terms of sources, many studies discussed the region in general. Due to the existing gap in the study of the Persian Gulf, these studies focused on presenting the different points of view in the region's history without addressing more specific questions about the stage of the conflict. I have followed in the study the historical narrative methodology alongside the analysis methodology. I have used Arabic, English, Turkish resources in the study besides documents from the British and Ottoman archives.

Arabic Resources:

- Ya'kub 'bd Al'ziz Alrashid, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat Ālḥayah publication, 1978): This book is considered as the first reference to the historical incidents that occurred in Kuwait. The book introduced the region

from cultural, social, and political aspects. The writer used oral anecdotes and corresponded with writers to investigate the authenticity of the stories. He also used the documents and correspondence that the ruler of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jabbar Al-Sabah, had. Worth mentioning that Ahmad Al-Jabbar, the tenth ruler of Kuwait, welcomed the idea and supported Al Rasheed financially to produce this work. Al Rasheed finished his book in May 1926, and it was printed in Baghdad in August of the same year. The book was welcomed by some and outraged by others. The book was banned because of the outraged reactions, and the ban continued until Al Rasheed died in 1938. Worth to be mentioned that the reason behind the ban is Al Rasheed's full narration of the brothers' assassination incidents.

- 'Īsā Alqinā'ī, *Ṣafaḥāt min Tārīkh Alkuwīt*, (Cairo: Dār Sa'd, 1946): he relied in his history on the Oral transmission from the ancestors. His history starts from Sabah I until the death of Mubarak in 1915. The book dealt with the important incidents in the era of Sabah I, his son Abdullah, the rule of Jaber I, Mubarak bin Sabah, and others. Al Qina'i wrote his book in 1915.
- Ḥusayn Khalaf Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Alsiyāsī* (Beirut: Dar Al Kutub, 1962): it consists of five parts, dealing with all the history of Kuwait from its beginnings through its tribes and the political changes that it witnessed until the era of Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber. The second part is one of the essential books in the series. It deals with the era of Sheikh Mubarak's rule, his relationship with Britain and the Ottoman Empire, and the formation of the third Saudi state and its relationship with neighboring regions. The work was criticized as it did not attribute many sources to its writers, in addition to historical mistakes.

Worth mentioning that the writer's maternal grandfather is Sheikh Khaz'al, "Sheikh of Muhammara," a friend of Sheik Mubarak Al-Sabah, and he focused on the role of his grandfather. Moreover, he was accused of favoring Mubarak Al- Sabah in his work.

- Sulṭān bin Muḥamad Alqāsimī, Bayān Alkuwīt "Sīrat Ḥayāt Alshaykh Mubārak Alṣabāḥ" (Sharjah: Sulṭān bin Muḥamad Ālqāsimī, 2004): it is a biography of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, the founder of the State of Kuwait. The writer used documents from the British Library in London and the Documents Centre of the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, the Ottoman Archives, and Arabic documents. Alqāsimī's work tends to be more of archival documents' study.
- Su'ād Alṣabāḥ, Mubārak Alṣabāḥ Mu'assis dawlatu Al Kuwīt Alḥadīthah, (Beirut: Dar Su'ad Al Ṣabah, 2007): Su'ād tried to prove that Sheikh Mubarak was not on the side with anyone, for all he had in common with the conflicting parties was mutual interests, Britain was the strong side, and the Ottoman Empire was on the other side, and thus Sheikh Mubarak worked on balancing these forces to protect his interests. His personal interests overlapped with Britain more than with the Ottoman Empire. He was keen on the independence of Kuwait and maintaining his rule without affecting his diplomatic relations. Su'ād showed Mubarak's efforts in establishing modern Kuwait. The preference of Mubarak Al-Sabah is pronounced in her work. Moreover, much information and facts have not been attributed to resources.
- Khalaf Ālshamarī, Ālmustawda' Wa Ālmustaḥḍar Fī Āsbāb Ālnizā' Bayna Āl Ālṣabāḥ wa Yusuf Āl Ibrāhīm 1896-1906 (Damascus: Ninawa publication,

2006): A valuable work filled a significant gap in the regional conflict between Mubarak Al-Sabah and Yusuf Al Ibrahim, who took over the opposition. The writer relied on Arabic, British, and Ottoman sources.

- 'Aḥmad Muṣṭafah' Abū Ḥākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth 1750-1965* (Kuwait: Dhāt Alslāsil, 1984): 'Abū Ḥākimah wrote his book at the request of the Kuwaiti government in 1984. In his book, he relied on British and Arab sources and did not address the Ottoman point of view.

English and Turkish resources:

- Frederick Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997): Anscombe's book came to fill a real gap in the study of the Ottoman Gulf. He put forward the Ottoman view of the gulf after being ignored by researchers who focused on the British presence for many years. Anscombe believes in the role that the Ottomans played in shaping the history of the Persian Gulf and worked to highlight it through using Ottoman documents alongside British documents.
- Salwa Al-Ghanim, *The Reign of Mubarak-Al-Sabah: Shaikh of Kuwait 1896-1915* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998): Al-Ghanim tried in her book to present Mubarak Al-Sabah's era from an Arab point of view, but she relied mainly on British records, focusing on Mubarak Al-Sabah's diplomatic ventures to achieve his interests. Worth to be mentioned that Slot highly criticized Salwa Al Ghanim's biography.
- B. J. Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah: Founder of Modern Kuwait 1896-1915*, (England: Arabian Publishing, 2005): Slot relies on his work on Arabic, Ottoman, and British records. He disproves the notion that Kuwait was ever

truly a part of the Ottoman Empire, demonstrating that the Ottomans attempted to claim authority over Kuwait but had no presence or influence there. Moreover, he stipulates that the British were unwilling to recognize any Ottoman sovereignty and were reluctant to bring Kuwait into their protection, despite the danger of other great powers, mainly Russia and Germany.

- M.Talha Çiçek, *The Tribal partners of empire in Arabia: The Ottomans and the Rashidis of Najd, 1880-1918.*, *New Perspectives on Turkey* 56 (2017) and Zekeriya Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsada Osmanlı Hakimiyeti: Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devletinin Ortaya çıkışı* (Ankara, Turkey: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1998): formed valuable sources in understanding the Rashidis- Ottoman relations, that played a significant role in the regional crisis in the end of the 19th century beginning of 20th century.

Primary resources, travel logues, and archival documents:

- J.G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman, and Central Arabia*, (Vol. I. India: Superintendent Government printing, 1915): An English-language historical, geographical and statistical encyclopedia, issued by the British government, concerned with the Persian Gulf region, the Arabian Peninsula, and Iraq. It was prepared by the British J. G. Lorimer, an employee of the British Government in India, between 1903 and 1915 for official British use. The encyclopedia was kept secret until 1970, when the British government allowed its publication. It is one of the most important sources that documented the region's history from a British point of view.
- Robin Bidwell (editor), *The Affairs of Kuwait 1896-1905*. Vol. I. (London: Frank Cass and Company limited, 1971): This work contains foreign office

confidential publication (FOCP) regarding the affairs in Kuwait. These correspondences were telegrams, dispatches, and other documents used for officials' purposes in the Foreign Office from the 1820s until 1914. This record forms an important resource for the history of Arabia and the Persian Gulf and the British government.

- Harold Temperley and G. P. Gooch, ed., "The Last Years of Peace," in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, vol. X. Part. II (London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1938): The first part of the X volume Part. II illustrates the complex negotiations and talks between the British government and the Ottoman Empire regarding the Baghdad-Berlin Railway. It is worth noting that these negotiations have not been known until 1938, when the British government published the second part of the X volume of the official series of British documents on the causes of World War I under the supervision of Harold Temperley and G. P. Gooch.
- Several documents from British Library: India Office Records and Private papers have been used in the study, available in Qatar Digital Library.
- J. J. Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt Fī 'hd Mubārak*, trans. Fatūḥ Āl-khatrash (Kuwait: D.N, 1985): Āl-khatrash translated a set of Saldanha documents, the British Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs of India, who had supervised the collection of a large number of documents related to the Gulf region for the benefit of those in charge of the British India government. The writer translated a set of Saldanha documents related to Kuwait and compared them with the written local records.

- I used a number of Ottoman documents from Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı available on the official website of the archive to show the Ottoman viewpoint during its crisis in Kuwait.
- Bondarevsky Georgy, *Al Kuwīt wa 'lāqatihā 'aldawliya khilal 'al qarn 'altāsi' 'ashar wa 'wa'il 'al qarn 'al 'shrīn* (Kuwait: Kuwait Research and Studies Center, 1994): Bondravsky relied on Russian and British documents in his work.

The studies about the Persian Gulf in the Ottoman period are highly important to understand the region's modern history. The course of events late 19th century beginning of the 20th century had a significant impact on the political formation of the Emirates in the Gulf. This study would benefit the library by placing Kuwait in its position in the imperial framework, considering the local players, who were quite active during the age of imperialism. Studies that do not address the regional role alongside the imperial role only give a partial picture of what actually happened. In my study, I try to put Kuwait in a larger picture, showing the role of each of the imperial powers with the regional powers in determining the region's fate.



Illustration (1) Map of the Persian Gulf region, drawn to be attached to Baghdad Railway No. 1 (1911). Presented to Houses of Parliament, May 1911. The map was produced by the Topographical Section of the General Staff, War Office.³⁵

³⁵ 'PERSIAN GULF AND ADJACENT COUNTRIES' [252r] (1/2), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/10/271, f 252, in Qatar Digital Library.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ANGLO-OTTOMAN RELATIONS 1840-1882

The 19th century is viewed by the historians as an extension of the significant change that occurred during the previous century. The French and the Industrial Revolutions were the events that changed the face of humankind's history. They were considered a revolutionary transformation and warned for the beginning of a new era that carried new concepts and a new Western-dominant world system. In addition to other side factors, these revolutions came together to cause a significant effect on the rise, fall, and expansion of countries; additionally, they led to a kind of expansionist, imperial competition between countries that emerged as great powers.

The Industrial Revolution stimulated Europe's economic life. As the revolution started in Britain, it witnessed remarkable technological and economic development and rose to the imperial pyramid. Further, it maintained a strong position that enabled it to dominate large parts of the world. Although the Industrial Revolution took a long time to spread, it was genuinely revolutionary how it fundamentally changed Europeans, their society, and their relationship with the rest of the world. The cities in Europe turned into industrial cities. This industrial growth brought about substantial social transformations that led to the emergence of a middle class of businessmen and industrialists alongside factories and commercial companies. Worth noting that the transformations brought by the industrial revolution affected the lives of non-western societies; the consequences of the industrial revolution, including colonialism, primarily affected the societies in the colonized regions. These societies became battlegrounds of conflict between the imperial powers. Thus, these societies were left

behind, deprived of forming their cultural, political, social, and even economic identity, as their resources were depleted, and they were unable to achieve stability, progress, and development for decades. Likewise, the inhabitants of these areas were exploited in labor works by these powers; worth to be mentioned that at least 12 million men, women, and children were forcibly moved to the Americas from Africa to be used as slave labor during the 19th century.³⁶

Moreover, the industrial revolution was the main generator for new political, diplomatic, and economic decisions within the 19th century. Thus, economic growth and high production potentials led to the search for new sources of raw materials, new consumption opportunities, and a revolution in transportation.³⁷ In response to the requirements of the developments, the countries started to expand outside their borders. Consequently, it led to the rise of imperialism and successively to the imperial rivalry between the powers for resources and wealth.

1.1 The new imperialism

Imperialism formed a system based on an expansionist policy that the imperial states conducted. These states expanded outside their borders through colonialism and controlled the resources of the colonized areas. In the middle of the 18th century, historians divided existing empires into two categories: land and overseas empires. This distinction may help visualize zones on a map, but it does not help with a comprehensive understanding of what empire entails as some empires exerted

³⁶ ³⁶ Danielle Kinsey, "Assessing Imperialism," in *The Cambridge World History*, ed. J. McNeill and Kenneth Pomeranz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 360.

³⁷ Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), 605.

sovereignty over both territory and waterways in the 19th century.³⁸ The industrial revolution and Europe's subsequent technological and military superiority over the rest of the world gave rise to empires. Europe grew into a global economic powerhouse, fostering trade and commerce; it expanded at a faster rate in the latter decades of the 19th century and until 1914 than at any other period in history.³⁹

Worth noting that the Ottoman Empire was often seen as a classic land empire that had expanded over centuries through military conquest, annexation, and alliances, much as the Russian and Qing empires. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire was framed as an empire built on controlling seaways- the Red, Black, and Mediterranean seas-which provoked Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese traders into Atlantic exploration.⁴⁰ Remarkably, the seaports gave the Ottoman Empire high political importance in the era of imperialism.

Worth to be noted that the motivation behind expansionism differed, however. In the beginning, these imperial powers have sought to expand under the religious umbrella, to spread Christianity and faith, and to civilize the "underdeveloped people," in line with the white man's burden. Nevertheless, Mark Cocker asserts that Europeans believed "Christian civilization was the obvious highpoint and terminal point to which all mankind must inevitably aspire," and Europeans often viewed tribal societies as "subhuman" animals that lived outside "the margins of civilization."⁴¹

³⁸ Kinsey, *Assessing Imperialism*, 336.

³⁹ Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism (The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization, Collected Essays)* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 36.

⁴⁰ Kinsey, *Assessing Imperialism*, 332-335.

⁴¹ Cocker, Mark. *Rivers of Blood, Rivers of Gold: Europe's Conquest of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 14.

Nonetheless, scholars find the economic factor as the most potent behind colonialism and imperialism. The argument stipulates that imperialism came in response to the new financial requirements of the industrial revolution. Countries expanded outside their borders in search of investment opportunities and resources. Lenin views imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism and its monopoly in which the division of all territories in the world among the immense capitalist powers had been achieved.⁴² Lenin asserted that the epoch of the latest stage of capitalism shows us that certain relations between capitalist combines grow up, based on the economic division of the world; while parallel and in connection with it, certain relations grow up between political combines, between states, based on the territorial division of the world, of the struggle for colonies and the struggle for economic territory.⁴³ Empires tend to expand informally driven by economic or strategic needs away from their administrative centers. The expanded empire acted through local mediators and collaborators in these outlying areas. Britain, for example, maintained its informal empire in the gulf to protect India and its trade and communication routes by concluding a series of treaties with the Gulf Sheikhs. Thus, Britain maintained its hegemony in the gulf informally, without bringing the region under its direct control; at the same time, it served its significant goals, whether economic or strategic.⁴⁴

The Marxist school argues that there was a great need for natural resources and commodities not available in Western countries, such as rubber, oil, and tin. Instead of purchasing these products, European investors bolstered direct control of the areas

⁴² V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism - the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1973), 106.

⁴³ Lenin, *Imperialism*, 89.

⁴⁴ Onley, *Britain's Informal Empire*, 42.

where the raw materials were found.⁴⁵ However, it was not the general case. Industrial countries' exports continued to flow to other industrial countries. By 1914 most imperial countries recorded higher expenditure on administering, defending, and developing their colonies than deriving from them in trade profits.⁴⁶ The theory of "The Place in the Sun" justifies such endeavors. The imperial powers had a national desire for fame and power. This systematic explanation has enjoyed great popularity. For example, before 1914, less than 10% of France's foreign investments went to its colonies. Most of the foreign investments went to Latin America and Europe. The same applies to Britain, where their trade with Belgium was more substantial than in Africa in the 1890s. It is remarkable that much of the acquired colonial territory was mere wasteland from industrialized Europe's perspective and cost more to operate it than its economic production.⁴⁷

The final unanswerable justification for seizing additional territory is the strategic location. From colonial states' perspective, if a region remained unconquered, they would fall into the hands of colonial rivals, mainly of France, Germany, or in Asia, Russia.⁴⁸ For instance, most of the gigantic British colonial holdings in eastern Africa and Arabia were partly acquired to defend India's passage.⁴⁹ Between 1880 and 1914, for example, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, and Italy rushed to take parts of Africa, and by 1914 controlled almost all of the continent except Ethiopia and Liberia.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, 753.

⁴⁶ Paul H. Beik and Laurence Lafore, *Modern Europe, a history since 1500* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1959), 590.

⁴⁷ Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, 753.

⁴⁸ Beik and Lafore, *Modern Europe*, 591.

⁴⁹ Beik and Lafore, *Modern Europe*, 592.

⁵⁰ Kinsey, *Assessing Imperialism*, 336.

Thus, at the beginning of the 19th century, the great powers were France, the Hapsburg Empire, Russia, Great Britain, Prussia, and, to some extent, the Ottoman Empire. In the next half-century, Great Britain and Prussia increased in strength. Russia continued to pursue competitive policies. France and the Hapsburg Empire declined concerning their previous dominance, and the once-mighty Ottoman Empire was tending to disintegrate.⁵¹ What is marked in imperialism is that the possessions of the weaker colonial powers would be absorbed by the more robust, much as the more powerful European nations would seize the lands of Turkey and China's "dying" nations. The desire for dominion fueled a vicious militaristic mentality.⁵²

Considering these arguments, colonialism and imperialism were defining events in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Territories that had been subject to imperial competition were still within the Ottoman geopolitical border or under Ottoman patronage. Thus, the Ottoman Empire's possessions formed a kind of imperial conflict between the great powers, which would continue until its dismissal.

1.2 Late Ottoman Empire and imperial rivalry

1.2.1 Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Question. `

During the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its properties in Europe to Russia, Britain, France, and Austria. This loss was followed by European imperial expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire's belongings, mainly in Africa. All in all, these matters prompted the Ottoman Empire, especially after the Berlin conference

⁵¹ David John Arnold, *Britain, Europe, and the World, 1871-1971*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder Arnold H&S, 1973), 6.

⁵² Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 35.

in 1878, to adopt an imperial policy, through which it aimed to expand to the east and sought to consolidate its rule in areas far from the administrative capital like Arabia.⁵³ Although the Ottoman Empire was suffering from political, economic, and administrative challenges, it did not surrender to the active imperialist movements in the world, which saw the Ottoman Empire as a golden goose. At first, the Ottoman Empire attempted to reform the internal situation of the state to confront the imperial rivalries through a series of reforms that began during the reign of Mahmud II. Sultan Mahmud and the later sultans undertook several significant reforms in response to "European interventions" to breathe life into the state. These conducts did not succeed, and as a result, the Ottoman Empire could not face the new worldwide challenges.⁵⁴

Ambitious great powers found a quest in the Ottoman territory. These great powers were willing to take advantage of every opportunity in the world to strengthen their economic and political goals and their international positions. This bitter struggle among the great powers over the Ottoman state's property is best known as the Eastern Question. Each of the great powers sought to seize a part of the Ottoman Empire.

Nonetheless, some historians see that this struggle stands behind the Ottoman Empire's survival for a more extended period, as the great powers failed to reach an agreement dividing the sick man's legacy.⁵⁵ Mustafa Minawi stipulates that the Ottoman government's policies after the Berlin Congress 1878 were not simply survival strategies, as the state did not withdraw from the world competitive

⁵³ Mustafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 2. And Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 6.

⁵⁴ Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 60-62.

⁵⁵ Feroz Ahmad, "The Late Ottoman Empire," in *The Great Powers, and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marian Kent (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 5.

imperialism; however, the 1880s and 1890s witnessed a reinvigorated Istanbul that followed competitive strategies.⁵⁶ Thus, after successive losses, the Ottoman Empire took a role in the scramble for new territories with the other European imperial powers; it adopted a multileveled expansionist approach. Minawi sees that the Ottoman Empire had to participate in the new system of imperialism or risk becoming a fair target of European colonialism.⁵⁷ Noteworthy that this new policy was clear enough through the Ottoman Empire's endeavors in Africa and Arabia.

The difficulties that the Ottoman Empire faced during the 19th century extensively triggered the Eastern Question. Moreover, it influenced the great powers' policies and increased tension between them and the Ottoman Empire on the one hand, and between the great powers, on the other hand. The term of the Eastern Question appeared for the first time in the Vienna Congress in 1815 as a political term. Scholars of history and politics used it widely when Napoleon Bonaparte penetrated Europe; it was utilized within the limits of Christian denominations within the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁸ Noteworthy that the definition of the Eastern Question differs according to the time span within which it is used. At the beginning of the 19th century, Eastern Question meant the total of the Ottoman Empire. However, in the second half of the century, it referred to the Ottoman lands' division in Europe. While in the 20th century, it meant the division of all lands of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁹

Each imperial state sought to impose its control or interfere in Ottoman affairs in the way it preserves its interests and goals. One of these issues was the straits. The

⁵⁶ Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*, 3.

⁵⁷ Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*, 4-6.

⁵⁸ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi, Nizam-i Cedid ve Tanzimat Devirleri 1798-1856*, vol. V (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1947). 203.

⁵⁹ Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 203.

Straits were a vital geographic area for the Ottoman Empire's national security. Unfortunately, during the 19th century, the straits prompted the great powers' imperial rivalry as it was part of the Great Game between Britain and Russia.⁶⁰

Undoubtedly, the straits formed a focal point for Russian economic, political, and strategic interests. Control over the straits would have allowed Russia to reach the Mediterranean, aiming to improve its economy, naval affluence, and trade. Likewise, for Britain, control of the straits meant to secure its communications lines with its empire's parts, particularly India.⁶¹

It is worth mentioning that Russia's agenda did not only include the straits and the Balkans; however, it has further imperial ambitions in other regions. Russia's strong desire to reach the warm waters pushed it towards the Persian Gulf. Where Russia desired to have a seaport and a navigation activity, these aspirations were accompanied by endless efforts to obtain a port from the Iranians to serve as a transportation point between Bushire, Bandar Abbas, and Hormuz all the way to the Caucasus railway via Iranian territory.⁶² The Russians looked to Kuwait's emirate and looked to use it as a coal storage station and find markets for their goods. They planned to make Kuwait the leading port for Russian ships heading towards the gulf, especially since Russia has a presence on the Gulf shores of the Persian side.⁶³ In that regard, Russia attempted to approach the Kuwaiti Sheik and earned his friendliness and promised, in return, to provide all possible assistance in the Russian government's name to preserve his

⁶⁰ Barbara Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1887* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973), 14.

⁶¹ Jelavich, *The Straits Question*, 14.

⁶² Su'ād Al ṣabah, *Mubarak Al ṣabah: Mu'asisu Dawlatu Al Kuwīt Al Ḥadithah* (Beirut: Dar Su'ād Al ṣabah, 2007), 305.

⁶³ Al ṣabah, *Mubarak Al ṣabah*, 305.

independence.⁶⁴ However, Russia was unable to put a foot forward in the Persian Gulf for many reasons; one of its most important was Britain; Britain was a lookout for all the rest of the great powers. Kuwait was the no-go zone for Britain, so it rushed to counter Russian influence and made all efforts to prevent its expansion towards the region. As a result of Britain's efforts, a secret agreement was held with Kuwait's Sheikh in 1899.⁶⁵

On another sphere, France took it upon itself, from an early period, to protect the Catholics' interests in the Levant area and the Maronites. Furthermore, France also had special interests in the Levant region. Syria (including Lebanon and Palestine) was a traditional sphere of action for French diplomacy and an accessible territory to the French naval expeditions. Hence, French policymakers considered Syria an area of exceptional political importance, where France might one day have territorial claims.⁶⁶ France also expanded into North Africa by invading Tunis in 1881 and Algiers in 1830.⁶⁷

Worth mentioning that French foreign policy did not generally consider the Gulf region one of its colonial activity priorities. Nevertheless, French activity in the Gulf region aimed at competing with British influence at the end of the 19th century; even it sought to reach an agreement with Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah, but the Sheikh did not

⁶⁴ Al şabah, *Mubarak Al şabah*, 305.

⁶⁵ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*: 102, 106-8.

⁶⁶ L. Bruce Fulton, "France and the End of the Ottoman Empire," in *The Great Powers, and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marian Kent (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 138.

⁶⁷ Gabor Agoston and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York, NY: Facts On, 2009), 224.

heed their call.⁶⁸ This competition continued until an amicable agreement was signed between the two countries in 1904.⁶⁹

On the other hand, Germany's imperial ambitions within the Ottoman Empire's borders were limited, and over time, it turned into an ally. For the Gulf, Germany viewed Kuwait as a province of the Ottoman Empire and that its ruler obeyed its government's orders and directions. Germany did not recognize any agreements that may have been signed between the Sheikh and the British government over the Arab coast.⁷⁰ Thus, Germany had some enterprises in the gulf region, significantly, the Baghdad- Berlin line, which caused German- English disputes for years. However, Britain remained alarmed of any other power's attempts to penetrate the region, and it worked to drive them away from the regions of its interests.

1.2.2 Britain and its interests in the Ottoman Empire

Britain arose as a great power due to its military and economic development besides its supremacy at the political level. Noteworthy that Great Britain, at the 20th century's opening, acquired an empire far more widespread and populated than any the world had ever witnessed, covering about thirteen million square miles without Egypt and Sudan, with a total population of over four hundred and twenty million.⁷¹ Its colonization was scattered everywhere, in Asia, Africa, Australia, the two Americas, and the seven seas' islands.⁷² However, during the last quarter of the 19th century, the world of empires underwent significant transformations, Where Germany and Russia

⁶⁸ Al şabah, *Mubarak Al şabah*, 288.

⁶⁹ Al şabah, *Mubarak Al şabah*, 288.

⁷⁰ Al şabah, *Mubarak Al şabah*, 292.

⁷¹ Carles Downer Hazen, *Europe Since 1815*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Company, 1929), 507.

⁷² Hazen, *Europe Since 1815*, 507-8.

emerged as a rival imperial power in the east. Britain's interests in the east, especially India, became more threatened than before, so Britain worked to secure its roads to India. At first, it controlled the Suez Canal, occupied Egypt, and secured its position in the Persian Gulf. On the most important level, it worked to strengthen its relations with the sheiks of the gulf, starting with the Sheikh of Bahrain. However, as a reflection of Britain's endeavors in its territories, the Ottoman Empire decided to increase its influence in Najd through alliances with tribal dynasties in central Arabia, mainly the Saudis or Rashidis.⁷³

Moreover, in light of these transformations, the general situation determined Britain's policies in the region, maintaining the status quo and the balance of power. Britain aimed to preserve the property of the Ottoman Empire for some time. It sought to safeguard its interests in the east, as the Ottoman state separated the British dominions areas in the east from the other powers. Britain's main concern regarding its policy in the east was related to India. Britain's primary goals were to secure India's roads and remove any threat that would cause any danger. Hence, Britain's interest in the late Ottoman Empire focused on Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf and defended its communications with India.⁷⁴

Thus, British interests in the East and the Ottoman Empire's unstable state affected the British- Ottoman relations. Britain's policy toward the Ottoman Empire differed. It was divided into two different phases. A stage in which Britain tried to preserve the Ottoman Empire's property and its sovereignty to consolidate the balance of power and the status quo. At this stage, Britain played an influential diplomatic role in preserving

⁷³ M. Talha Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners of Empire in Arabia: The Ottomans and the Rasheedis of Najd, 1880–1918," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 56 (2017): 105-6.

⁷⁴ Marian Kent, "Great Britain and the End of the Ottoman Empire," in *The Great Powers, and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marian Kent (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 165.

it and keeping it away from the other great powers' trap, which continued until the Berlin Conference 1878. However, the case after the Berlin Conference differed; the Berlin settlement was seen to prepare the way for the Ottoman Empire's final dissolution.

Moreover, Britain's policy after the conference shifted. It mutated from an ally of the Ottoman Empire to an imperial competitor with a different political ideology. The convention represented what is like a British protectorate to be established over the Ottoman Empire, then at least a preponderant influence in the affairs of its Asiatic provinces and, by implication, in their eventual disposal.⁷⁵

This chapter will clarify British policy changes toward the Ottoman Empire, based on the Ottoman Empire's crises and the British stance towards them. Beginning with the Egyptian crisis of 1840, ending with Egypt's British occupation in 1882, and the implications on the Arab lands of the Persian Gulf area of the Ottoman Empire.

1.3 Britain's policy toward the Ottoman Empire until the Crimean war 1853

1.3.1 The British stance towards the Ottoman Empire during the Egyptian crisis 1840

Muhammad Ali was an ambitious revolutionary leader who tried to build his state at the expense of the Ottoman Empire's lands. He participated in the Ottoman Empire's wars against the Wahhabis in the Arabian Peninsula and Greece's wars to retrieve Crete; he rebelled against the sultan after being rewarded with a small rebellious island

⁷⁵ Yasamee, *European Equilibrium*, 56-57.

Crete while he had long coveted Syria.⁷⁶ In his political endeavors, the Pasha not only constituted a challenge to the Ottoman Empire but also to the great powers. Muhammed Ali's expansionist policy alarmed the Great powers to secure their interests in the Mediterranean.

The Ottoman Empire stood helpless in front of Muhammad Ali's expansionist headways. He defeated it severely in the Battle of Konya in 1832, led by his son Ibrahim. The latter reached Kütahya, and he was on a direct open road to the capital.⁷⁷ Based on this situation, the sultan submitted a request to Britain to defend the capital. However, the British Cabinet was divided and turned down the sultan's plea.⁷⁸ While Britain, Russia's archenemy, avoided interfering, the Ottoman Empire was not at its best; the sultan sought assistance from Russia. For the first time, Russian troops landed on the Bosphorus shore on February 20, 1833, to protect the Ottoman Empire from the Egyptian military's threat.⁷⁹ The Russian assistance was followed by signing the Hünkâr Iskelesi treaty in July 1833 between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, which had a secret clause allowing Russian ships to exclude all other foreign vessels to enter the sea of Marmara.⁸⁰

This treaty provoked furious international reactions, as it posed a flagrant threat to the question of the balance of power in the Mediterranean. Both Britain and France lodged a formal protest to Russia and the Ottoman Empire regarding that treaty.⁸¹

⁷⁶ M. W. Daly, ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century Volume 2* (Cambridge, TAS, Australia: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 166.

⁷⁷ Muḥammad Ghurbāl, *Muḥammad 'li Al Kabīr* (Cairo: Hindawi foundation, 2014), 94.

⁷⁸ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 167.

⁷⁹ Muḥammad 'bd Ālsatār Albadrī, *Ālmuwajaha Al Miṣriyah Al Aurubiyah Fī 'hd Muḥammad 'lī* (Cairo: Dār Ālshurūq, 2001), 112.

⁸⁰ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 173.

⁸¹ Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 138.

Britain became aware of the seriousness of both the Russian and Egyptian danger. Accordingly, Britain's policy was determined to preserve the status quo and preserve the Ottoman Empire's consistency. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire's dismemberment might cause a war in Europe, as the states would scramble for their share of the booty.⁸²

Britain's policy was primarily concerned with protecting its roads to India's colonies. The first route was via the Red Sea, from India via the Red Sea to Alexandria, then the Mediterranean Sea, to England.⁸³ Furthermore, this road came under the control of Muhammad Ali, who is secretly supported by France, which causes another threat. The second road was the Persian Gulf Road to Kuwait, then overland by the desert highway to the city of Aleppo, Syria, and from there it continues by land through Asia Minor and Europe or to Latakia, then by sea to Greece or Italy, then across the continent to England.⁸⁴ Therefore, Muhammad Ali brought this road under his control due to his influence in the Persian Gulf.

Muhammad Ali realized the importance of the Arab seas and their coasts early. He considered them a vital artery between east and west and essential parts of the Ottoman world, which the Ottoman sultans neglected before. During his wars against the Wahhabis, Muhammad Ali went to the Hijaz; his experience gained him an insight into the various Arab affairs in the Hijaz and the Arabian Peninsula, in terms of governance affairs, tribal relations, and European interests.⁸⁵ Muhammad Ali's maneuvers in the Persian Gulf increased Britain's fear of its interests there. As a matter of fact, the Ottoman suzerainty over the Arabs lands and the Hijaz had usually been

⁸² Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 240.

⁸³ ‘Aḥmad Muṣṭafah ‘Abū Ḥākimah. *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*. Kuwait (Dhāt Alislāsīl, 1984), 50.

⁸⁴ Abū Ḥākimah. *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*, 51.

⁸⁵ Ghurbāl, *Muḥammad ‘li*, 81.

overseen by Egypt's Ottoman governor.⁸⁶ Another reason to stop Muhammad Ali was the development of steamships; by the 1830s, Britain hoped to exploit the new technology for communications with India, for passengers and mail.⁸⁷ Furthermore, this required coaling stations along the road to India, in the Arabian Peninsula.⁸⁸ However, the Red sea became under Egyptian control.⁸⁹

Noteworthy that British trade in the east was relatively prosperous. It was not easy to abandon this success in favor of Muhammad Ali's ambitions or the Ottoman state's vulnerability. In his reports to Palmerston⁹⁰, Campbell⁹¹ stated that the Pasha would not rest until he achieved his independence from the Porte, and this ambition would lead him to take Baghdad and reestablish an Arab caliphate. An Arab caliphate did not concern Palmerston, but the spread of Egyptian hegemony over Iraq and the Persian Gulf did.⁹² Palmerston received regular reports from India, the Persian Gulf, and Yemen, all warning against Muhammad Ali's expansion in Arabia.⁹³ Subsequently, in light of Muhammad Ali's threat, Britain sought to weaken his financial roots to limit his power earlier; this resulted in the signing of the commercial convention of Balta Liman Between the Porte and Britain in 1838, which banned monopolies throughout the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁴ This convention opened up the Ottoman Empire to British free

⁸⁶ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 200.

⁸⁷ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 174.

⁸⁸ Afaf Marsot, *Egypt*, 237.

⁸⁹ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 174.

⁹⁰ Lord Palmerston (1784-1865), Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston. Foreign secretary 1830 to 1834; 1853 to 1841. Home Secretary (Aberdeen's administration) 1852 to 1855. Prime Minister February 1855 to February 1858; June 1859 to October 1865. Algernon Cecil. *Queen Victoria and Her Prime Ministers* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953), 171.

⁹¹ Colonel Patrick Campbell, British consul general at Cairo. He served the queen's government for over six years in Egypt. (F. S. Rodkey, "4. Colonel Campbell's Report on Egypt in 1840, with Lord Palmerston's Comments," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 3, no. 1 (1929): 102-14.)

⁹² Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), 237.

⁹³ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 174.

⁹⁴ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 174.

trade policy.⁹⁵ Although this affected the Ottoman Empire's finances, the sultan saw it as a fair price in exchange for more significant danger.⁹⁶

After intense negotiations regarding the Ottoman-Egyptian question, Palmerston called for a conference in London in the summer of 1840 "convention for the Levant's pacification,"⁹⁷ which resulted in a signed agreement on July 15, 1840 known as the London convention with Austria, Prussia, and Russia.⁹⁸ The treaty gives Muhammad Ali a hereditary state of Egypt and the southern Levant. It gradually decreased the grants to recovering everything from him by force of arms if he did not comply at the specified times.⁹⁹

When Muhammad Ali rejected the convention, Britain intervened militarily; it bombarded Beirut and Acre's forts and proceeded to Alexandria; at that moment, Muhammad Ali feared a repetition of Acre's fate and surrendered.¹⁰⁰ In June 1841, the sultan issued a Firman naming Muhammad Ali, governor of Egypt, for life and granting his male descendants hereditary rights, and by 1841, Muhammad Ali complied with the signed treaties.¹⁰¹

1.3.2 The holy places question and the Crimean War 1853-1856

In 1848, the Eastern question appeared on the horizon after a dispute arose between the Latin Church and the Orthodox Church over the Holy Places' administration in

⁹⁵ James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), 158.

⁹⁶ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 174.

⁹⁷ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 175.

⁹⁸ A. J. Grant and Harold Temperley, *Europe in Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: 1789-1939* (London: Longmans, 1948), 208.

⁹⁹ Ghurbāl, *Muḥammad 'li*, 98.

¹⁰⁰ Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries, The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1977), 470.

¹⁰¹ Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 174.

Palestine. The holy places question concerned the management of pilgrimage places at Jerusalem, especially the church of the nativity in Bethlehem.¹⁰² In the summer of 1847, the Nativity Church lost a silver star. The Latin accused Orthodox of stealing it, although the investigation did not reach conclusive results.¹⁰³ The incident was enough to stir up religious feelings between the two parties.¹⁰⁴

The Holy Places' question was a sensitive issue in the imperial rivalry over the Ottoman Empire. In January 1853, Czar Nicholas had a conversation with the English ambassador Sir Hamilton Seymour (1797-1880), in which the Czar spoke of Turkey as a country that seemed to be falling to pieces, and the country is a "sick man" who might suddenly die on their hands.¹⁰⁵ England and Russia between them could settle it without war. Then, he clearly stated the solution.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Russia tried to reach an agreement with Britain on the Ottoman Empire's division upon its fall; however, Britain, in turn, did not show any interaction with the Russian schemes as the Ottoman Empire's maintenance was its traditional policy.¹⁰⁷

In following up, Russia sent a diplomatic mission Led by Prince Menshikov to Istanbul in February 1853 as an especial and extraordinary ambassador.¹⁰⁸ Moreover,

¹⁰² Temperley, *Europe*, 213.

¹⁰³ Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning; Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1888), 239.

¹⁰⁴ Temperley, *Europe*, 213.

¹⁰⁵ Temperley, *Europe*, 212.

¹⁰⁶ The Russian schemes included that the Balkan states were to be independent under Russian protection. Russia was to occupy Constantinople but not to annex it. Great Britain was to lay hands-on Egypt. France left out of the deal. (Temperley, *Europe*, 213).

¹⁰⁷ Harold Temperley, *England, and the near East the Crimea* (London: Longmans, Green And co, 1963), 272.

¹⁰⁸ Menshikov (1787-1869) he bores the titles of Governor general of Finland, General Adjutant, Admiral and Marine Minister, he was sardonic, conceited, and vainglorious person. (Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 71).

Britain sent Stratford to Istanbul as its ambassador.¹⁰⁹ Through Menshikov, Russia submitted several memorandums to the Ottoman Empire demanding the protection of the Greek Orthodox church.¹¹⁰ The Christians' protection meant asking for privileges to protect 14 million Greek Christians living in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹¹ The Sublime Porte held a meeting on May 17 and unanimously rejected Russia's request.¹¹² Consequently, the Menshikov mission failed, and on May 21, both Russia and the Ottoman Empire suspended diplomatic relations.¹¹³ Russian's armies shortly after crossed the Broth River and occupied Moldova and Wallachia.¹¹⁴

In response to Russia's occupation of the Danubian principalities, the Ottoman Empire declared war against Russian on October 4, 1853.¹¹⁵ Worth mentioning that the question of the holy places was seen as a fuse for the Crimean war. Furthermore, the holy places' issue was seen as a fabrication to cover up Russian imperialism's goals. The policies of Britain and France regarding this cause were seen as acts of imperial competition.¹¹⁶

Worth mentioning that the British public opinion supported the Ottoman Empire in its conflict with Russia. *Manchester Guardian* newspaper explained the importance of the Ottoman Empire for Britain. The Daily News said that the Tsar would go far and that war could be avoided if Britain and France cooperated.¹¹⁷ During the crisis,

¹⁰⁹ His return has been requested due to his strength in the face of challenges, as well as his experience and sophistication in eastern affairs since his early work in Istanbul (Temperley, *England and the near East the Crimea* ,313-4.)

¹¹⁰ Allan Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters in the Age of Revolution: The Collected Essays of Allan Cunningham, Volume 1*, ed. Edward Ingram (London: Routledge, 1993) 184.

¹¹¹ Temperley, *England and the near East the Crimea*, 319-20.

¹¹² Ramm, "The Crimean War", 473-4.

¹¹³ Ramm, "The Crimean War", 474.

¹¹⁴ Temperley, *England and the near East the Crimea*, 341.

¹¹⁵ Temperley, *England and the near East the Crimea*, 99.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 65.

¹¹⁷ Temperley, *England* ,335.

Clarendon, the foreign secretary, wrote to Stratford, the British ambassador in Istanbul, that he came to believe that the use of force would be necessary against the Tsar, whom public opinion in Britain opposed.¹¹⁸ However, Austria made many efforts to achieve peace. These efforts resulted in holding the Vienna Conference on July 24, 1853. However, the conference failed in maintaining peace, and it was followed by signing the Treaty of Alliance between Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire on March 12, 1854.¹¹⁹ On 27 and 28 March, Britain and France declared war on Russia. The military intervention began in favor of the Ottoman Empire, and they were assisted militarily by Tunisia, Egypt, and Sardinia.¹²⁰ In pursuing diplomatic efforts, the great powers met from February 25 until April 16 in Paris. Their meetings resulted in the signing of the Paris peace treaty on March 30.¹²¹ Consequently, The Crimean War ended with the conclusion of this agreement.¹²²

In the years following the Crimean War, Britain continued its alliance with the Ottoman Empire. They worked to support reform projects within the empire.¹²³ Nevertheless, this policy began to weaken after Palmerston's death in 1856. There was an unsympathetic tendency towards the Ottoman Empire, not only by members of the Liberal Party but even by the conservatives themselves.¹²⁴ Moreover, public opinion

¹¹⁸ Herkless, J. L. "Stratford, The Cabinet and Outbreak of the Crimean War", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, 509.

¹¹⁹ Ziya Nur Aksun. *Osmanlı Tarihi, Osmanlı Devleti'nin Tahlilli, Tenkidli Siyasi Tarih* (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat A.Ş, 1995), Cilt. 3, 44.

¹²⁰ Aksun. *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 44.

¹²¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 83.

¹²² The provision of the treaty: (Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 83-5) and (John Sweetman, *The Crimean War* (London: Osprey Publishing, 2001, 86-7)).

¹²³ Jelavich, *The strait question*, 6.

¹²⁴ Jelavich, *The strait question*, 7.

became more focused on Britain's internal affairs, such as electoral reform and the Irish question; Britain's concern was more on continental events.¹²⁵

However, it is worth mentioning that after the Crimean War, an incident brought the Ottoman Sultan's spiritual authority to the fore. This incident prompted Britain to rebalance its policy in the east and consider the sultan's spiritual authority. In 1857 a revolution arose in India against Britain's existence. Britain used the term Ottoman caliphate during the revolution for the first time, as it considered that in exchange for helping the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War, Britain wanted to prevent Muslims from participating in the revolution. Therefore, it obtained a decree from the Ottoman Caliph, in which He expressed his dissatisfaction with participating in the rebellion. He advised them to improve relations with the English because they are friends of Islam and Muslims' caliph.¹²⁶ The British consideration of the spiritual authority of the sultan would be reflected on British policy in the Persian Gulf in general and in British political involvement in Kuwait in particular.

1.4 Britain's policy toward the Ottoman Empire until the Egyptian occupation in 1882

1.4.1 Beginning of the transformation: The Bulgarian Question 1875-1876

The 19th century witnessed the national spirit's growth in the Balkans, which were under Ottoman control. The Balkans formed a fertile environment for embracing national ideas, driven by the central Ottoman administration's weakness, socioeconomic problems, high taxes, and the nature of the Empire's Islamic

¹²⁵ Jelavich, *The strait question*, 7.

¹²⁶ Cezmi Eraslan. II. *Abdülhamid ve Islâm Birliği Osmanlı Devleti'nin Islâm Siyaseti 1856-1908* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 1992), 66.

structure.¹²⁷ The Ottoman Empire opened the 19th century with the Serbian Revolution (1804-1817), which resulted in complete independence from the Ottoman Empire; the Serbian revolution was followed by the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829).¹²⁸

Different ethnics groups in the Ottoman Empire continued to seek independence; in 1875-6, two revolutions rose in Bosnia -Herzegovina and Bulgaria against the Ottoman ruling system during these revolutions. The Ottoman Empire witnessed an apparent shift in the British position, where a dispute arose between the Liberal Party and the Conservatives in the British Cabinet. Benjamin Disraeli¹²⁹ -the prime minister- adhered to the traditional policy of preserving the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁰ However, the Bulgarian Revolution incidents overturned the general sentiment in Britain when *Daily News* published reports of Ottoman cruelties and atrocities in Bulgaria in June 1876.¹³¹ In the following months, around 200 European newspapers published more than 3000 articles about crimes committed by the Ottoman irregular army *Başıbozuk* in Bulgaria.¹³² This news stirred the British and Russian public opinion against the Ottoman Empire.¹³³

At the British Cabinet, the opposition leader, William Gladstone, used the "Bulgarian Massacres" as propaganda against the conservative government.¹³⁴ He

¹²⁷ Hanioglu, the *Late Ottoman Empire*, 51.

¹²⁸ Hanioglu, the *Late Ottoman Empire*, 51.

¹²⁹ Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield (1804-1881). Entered parliament 1837. Chancellor of the exchequer: February to December 1852, February 1858 to June 1859, June 1866. Prime minister: February 1868 to December 1868, February 1874 to April 1880. (Cecil. *Queen Victoria*, 191).

¹³⁰ During the crisis, Benjamin Disraeli was the prime minister, Lord Derby was the foreign minister, and Henry Elliot was the British ambassador in Istanbul.

¹³¹ Richard Millman. *Britain and the Eastern Question 1875-1878* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 123. And Misha Glenny, *Balkans, 1804-1999: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 2000), 108.

¹³² Glenny, *Balkans, 1804-1999*, 109.

¹³³ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 72 .

¹³⁴ Zürcher, *Turkey*, 72.

attacked the Disraeli government for its supportive policy of the Ottoman Empire, despite the Ottoman atrocities. The Liberal Party believed that the Ottoman state could not be trusted. Its corrupt political and social system would ultimately lead to its downfall, especially since the reforms were not taken seriously.¹³⁵

On the other hand, Disraeli was accused of being pro-Turkish and, therefore, a partner in the Ottoman atrocities.¹³⁶ He insisted on his position toward the Ottoman Empire, even after the disputes broke down between his Party and the Liberal Party. In response to Bulgaria's received reports, Disraeli believed these were fabricated allegations and stories with an expansive imagination.¹³⁷ Instead, he dismissed all the Turkish misrule stories and atrocities and described them as "coffee-house babble."¹³⁸ In his view, the reason behind Daily news' interest in the Bulgarian incidents is that it is an opposition newspaper.¹³⁹

During the negotiations between the two parties, it became apparent that Disraeli adopted a clear eastern policy and did not see a reason to change it. Instead, he believes in the necessity of preserving the Ottoman Empire to resist Russian ambitions in the east.¹⁴⁰ As for the Ottoman Empire, in its turn, it was facing severe financial challenges. It had accumulated debts since 1854, in which it financed its war against Russia. Moreover, the Ottoman debt crisis worsened with the increase in borrowing

¹³⁵ Gordon Martel, "Liberalism and Nationalism in the Middle East: Britain and the Balkan Crisis of 1886," *Middle Eastern Studies* 21, no. 2 (1985): 174.

¹³⁶ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 72.

¹³⁷ R.W Seton-Watson. Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question, A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics (London: MacMillan and Co., 1935), 11.

¹³⁸ Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808 Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 234.

¹³⁹ George Earle Buckle, William Flavelle Monypenny. The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (London: John Murray, 1910-1920), Vol. 6, p. 43.

¹⁴⁰ Lord Eversley. The Turkish Empire From 1288 to 1914 (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923), 321-2.

during the next two decades. By 1876 the Ottoman state was unable to pay its debts.¹⁴¹ Besides, a famine occurred in Anatolia 1873-4; it caused the killing of livestock and depopulation of the rural areas through death and migration to the towns.¹⁴² These incidents coincided with the Balkan's uprisings and the global stock exchange collapse in 1873.¹⁴³ In these conditions, the Ottoman Empire's ability to enter a war and achieve victory was feeble. Under these circumstances, Disraeli became limited in his ability to support the Ottoman Empire due to Gladstone's Bulgarian horrors campaign and the Bulgarian incidents.¹⁴⁴ As a result, the British government informed the Porte that it would be impossible to intervene militarily if Russia declared war against it.¹⁴⁵

Noteworthy that Disraeli's main concern was the Russians' arrival to the Mediterranean, as the basic British policy principle was maintaining transportation with India and Australia.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, to preserve Britain's enormous trade and interests in the Persian Gulf, India, and the Far East.¹⁴⁷ However, with the opposition parties, Britain was not able to intervene beside the Ottoman Empire. When the Russo-Ottoman war broke out, Britain remained neutral.

1.4.2 The Russian- Ottoman war 1877-1878

Worth mentioning that the Ottomans expected Britain to help them in their war with Russia, as it helped them in the Crimean War and their previous crises. Britain's interests in the east required preserving the Ottoman Empire from any aggression, so

¹⁴¹ Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 22-23.

¹⁴² Zurcher, *Turkey*, 72.

¹⁴³ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 72.

¹⁴⁴ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman*, 173.

¹⁴⁵ Eversley. *The Turkish Empire*, 322-3.

¹⁴⁶ Andre Maurois. *Disraeli, A Picture of the Victorian Age*, Translated by, Hamish Miles (London: John Lane the Bodley Heat, 1930), 270-1.

¹⁴⁷ Buckle and Monypenny. *The Life of Disraeli*, 3.

any infringement to the Ottoman state meant violating British interests. However, the recent breakup in the British Cabinet changed the course of events, and the priority is no longer to protect the Ottoman Empire for the sake of British interests, but rather to work in any way to preserve British interests in the east, regardless of the status of the Ottoman Empire.

The great powers made many diplomatic efforts to avoid war. They drew up several diplomatic notes. However, no fruits were reaped from these efforts. Moreover, Russia declared war against the Ottoman Empire on April 24, 1877.¹⁴⁸ The Russian scheme intended to cross the Balkan Mountains to reach the Ottoman Capital and the straits.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the Russian moves alarmed Britain. The Russian scheme's success would have allowed the Russians to control the black sea and reach the Mediterranean.

Nonetheless, with more than half of the cabinet members opposing, Disraeli did not gain sufficient support to intervene in the war, thus leaving the Ottomans to fight alone.¹⁵⁰ Wroth to be noted that Disraeli directed his efforts to prevent Russia from encroaching on British interests in Egypt and Suez and not to occupy Istanbul, the straits, and the Persian Gulf.¹⁵¹ Despite the British government's unwelcome approach to entering the war, several British politicians believed that Britain should adhere to the Palmerston policy towards supporting the Ottoman government¹⁵². Still, Disraeli's government agreed with Lord Derby¹⁵³ in avoiding participating in the war on the

¹⁴⁸ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 243.

¹⁴⁹ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman*, 184.

¹⁵⁰ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman*, 184.

¹⁵¹ Seton-Watson. *Disraeli*, 170.

¹⁵² William Yale. *The Near East, A Modern History* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1958), 87.

¹⁵³ Lord Derby: Edward George Geoffrey Smith Stanley 14th Earl of Derby (1799-1869). Entered parliament 1820, under-secretary for the colonies 1827, resigned 1828, chief secretary for Ireland 1831 to 1833, secretary for the colonies 1833, resigned 1834, secretary at war and for the colonies 1841,

Ottoman Empire's behalf.¹⁵⁴ Derby believed that there was no reason to threaten Russia unless Russia occupied Istanbul.¹⁵⁵

In the conclusion of the war, Russia dictated its conditions on the Ottoman Empire in the humiliating treaty San Stefano, signed on March 3, 1878. The Treaty of San Stefano wiped out the Ottoman presence in Europe and placed Russian supremacy.¹⁵⁶

Moreover, San Stefano's treaty meant a direct and explicit threat to British interests in the east. Russian access to warm waters directly threatens the Suez Canal and India's vital routes and commercial interests in the Persian Gulf. Moreover, Russia's expansion in the Balkans, such as Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania, changed the power balance in Russia's favour.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the great powers mainly, Austria and Britain led by Bismarck, worked together to reduce Russian gains through the treaty of Berlin of 1878. The treaty returned some lands to the Ottoman Empire and reduced the size of Bulgaria. However, this came at a high cost; the treaty ceded parts of eastern Anatolia to Russia and Cyprus's island - a large war island to protect the Suez Canal and India's lifeline- to Britain. Moreover, they settled the matter with France by allowing it to occupy Tunisia.¹⁵⁸

In its war with Russia, the Ottoman Empire lost approximately 8 percent of its most fertile territory and about 20 percent of its total population. The empire lost most

resigned 1845, prime minister February to December 1852, February 1858 to June 1859, June 1866 to December 1868. (Cecil. *Queen Victoria*, 143)

¹⁵⁴ Eversley. *The Turkish*, 322.

¹⁵⁵ Maurois, *Disraeli*, 278.

¹⁵⁶ Reşat Kasaba, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Turkey in the Modern World, Volume 4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46.

¹⁵⁷ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 72.

¹⁵⁸ Donald Quataert, *New Approaches to European History: The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 59.

of its Christian population and became a Muslim majority.¹⁵⁹ The demographic change, and the loss of the European provinces, affected Abd al-Hamid's approach. Abd Al-Hamid adopted a more eastern policy in which he directed the Ottoman Empire to empower its rule more in Anatolia and the Arab provinces.¹⁶⁰ This policy swelled the imperial competition to the Persian Gulf between Britain and the Ottoman Empire.

1.4.3 Britain as a rival, The Occupation of Egypt 1882

The Ottoman Empire was exhausted from its war with Russia after losing its possessions in Europe and signing the Berlin Treaty. This treaty considers as a watershed in Ottoman-British relations. The Ottoman allies in the Crimean War, Britain, and France, abandoned their policy of preserving the Ottoman Empire and are now seeking to take their shares. This new policy led the Ottoman Empire to change its approach to Russia and Germany in search of allies. Since that time, Britain has turned into an outright imperial competitor and sought to strengthen its presence in the east, specifically Egypt and the Persian Gulf.

It is noteworthy that Egypt was of great importance to Britain due to its geographical and strategic location in the East's British colonies and Africa. The importance of Egypt to Britain became apparent in the Muhammad Ali crisis. During the crisis, Britain worked to eliminate the French impact and strengthen its influence. Thus, it held the Balta Liman treaty of 1838. The treaty eliminated the monopoly system established by Muhammad Ali.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the Suez Canal opening in 1869

¹⁵⁹ Agoston and Masters, *Encyclopedia*, 258.

¹⁶⁰ Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 6.

¹⁶¹ Sluglett and Yavuz, *War & Diplomacy*, 290.

gave easy access to Asia for Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire itself, which increased the risk of a final loss of Ottoman influence in the Red sea, including Hijaz.¹⁶²

After the end of the Russian-Ottoman crisis, a nationalist revolution took place in Egypt during 1879-1882, led by the colonel Ahmad Urabi Pasha and his companions in the early Khedive era Tawfik Pasha. The revolution came from the national officers' complaints about their superiors' mistreatment, especially the Circassians, who showed prejudice to Circassian, Turkish, or Albanian origin officers.¹⁶³ This is in addition to economic reasons, as people were suffering from low financial status due to high debt and taxes, furthermore the expansion of European influence within the government due to France and Britain's dual system of debt supervision.¹⁶⁴

After the Urabi revolt, the Khedive Tawfiq sought Britain's help to curb the revolution and restore his authority.¹⁶⁵ In its turn, the Ottoman Empire refused to send military forces, and France refused to intervene as well. The British Royal Navy bombed Alexandria with the support of Khedive Tawfiq. British troops landed on August 16 and defeated the Egyptian national forces in the Battle of Tal Al-Kabir (September 13), and thus the British occupation of Egypt began.¹⁶⁶

Worth mentioning that the real reasons behind the British intervention in Egypt are debatable. In addition to the reasons above, Dan Halvorson contends that the primary

¹⁶² Kasaba, *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, 14. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 19.

¹⁶³ 'bd Ālrahman Ālrāfi'ī. *Ālthawrah Āl'urābiyah wa Āl iḥtilāl Āl Inglizi* (Cairo: Maktabt āl nahḍah āl'rabīyah, 1949), 63.

¹⁶⁴ Ālrāfi'ī. *Ālthawrah Āl'urābiyah*, 73-4.

¹⁶⁵ Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88.

¹⁶⁶ Andrew Porter, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, vol. III (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 654.

motivation was the vindication of British prestige vis-à-vis the Continental Powers. Thus, protecting the Suez Canal and British financial and trade interests were secondary and derivative.¹⁶⁷

Whatever the case, there is a crucial point in how Britain dealt with the Urabi uprising in Egypt. Taking Muhammad Ali's crisis, Britain was keen to keep Egypt under the Ottoman authority; it dealt with the crisis hand in hand with the Ottoman Empire and did not exceed the authority of the sultan. After the end of the first Egyptian crisis and the Crimean War, there was hope for correcting the Ottoman Empire's status. However, the Russian-Ottoman war changed expectations and accelerated the decline of the Ottoman Empire's power. Thus, after the Berlin conference, Britain dealt with the crises of the Ottoman Empire differently. For example, in dealing with the Urabi revolts, Britain worked to consolidate its presence in Egypt, not the Ottomans' presence. It did not deal with the Ottoman Empire's body directly, preferably with the Khedive of Egypt.

Nevertheless, Egypt's British occupation was a clear indication of the change in Britain's policy towards the Ottoman Empire, as its policy focused on the estates of the Ottoman Empire. Noteworthy that Britain did not intervene militarily except with the support of Egypt's Khedive. In practice, Britain did not infringe on the Ottoman Sultan's status directly, as the sultan still has spiritual authority over Muslims in the world. In India, the jewel of the British Crown, as it is called, there are many Muslims. Britain was keen to consolidate a policy that balances its new political orientation with its interests. Worth noting that the British occupation of Egypt caused real danger to

¹⁶⁷ Dan Halvorson, "Prestige, Prudence and Public Opinion in the 1882 British Occupation of Egypt," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56, no. 3 (2010): 423.

the Ottoman existence in Syria and Hijaz, as the British became too close to these territories. It is worth noting that the Ottoman Empire was aware of the British threat before the 1880s, but the Anglo-Ottoman relations were more around mutual interests. However, the change in British policy towards the Ottoman Empire transformed the British-Ottoman relations into an apparent imperial rivalry, and Britain's occupation of Egypt strengthened the policy of the Ottoman Empire towards its possessions in the remote areas. The Ottoman Empire began to pay more attention to its presence in areas far from the capital, such as the Persian Gulf and started to demand control of these areas again. Worth mentioning that Medhat Pasha blamed the Ottoman Empire for neglecting the region for a long time, and he saw this negligence as the direct reason behind the foreign intervention in the region in general and the British growing interests and activities in particular. Medhat believed that the people in Arabia were forced to search for foreigners to protect them in the absence of Ottoman authority.¹⁶⁸ Thus, as a reflection of Medhat pasha's policy in the Persian Gulf, the years after 1870s witnessed the Ottoman Empire's attempt to consolidate its position in the Persian Gulf region and to ward off the threat of the foreign powers, the case of Kuwait is an example of this policy.

¹⁶⁸ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 21-22.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RISE AND FALL OF REGIONAL POWERS: AL-SABAH TRIBAL RELATIONS

The Ottoman Empire was never able to establish a regular administration in Kuwait¹⁶⁹. However, this did not prevent establishing friendly relations between the early rulers of the Al-Sabah and the Ottoman Empire. On that basis, Kuwait gained the status of a *Kaza* affiliated to Basra, and the Sheikhs Abdallah (1871-1891) and Muhammad (1892-1986) were given the title of Kaymakâm.¹⁷⁰ The significance of the Sheikhs appeared on several occasions when Ottoman governors asked for military assistance from the Sheikhs of Kuwait. During the reign of Jaber I, Jaber helped the Ottomans take back Basra after some Iraqi tribes took it over. After the incident, Ottoman Empire rewarded him with an annually 150 boxes of dates; this reward was cut off only during the time of Mubarak. Similarly, Jabir also helped the Ottoman government retrieve Muhmmara.¹⁷¹

Furthermore, Abdul Aziz Al-Rasheed mentions that Jaber was loyal to the Ottoman state. Evidently, when a group of Englishmen came to Kuwait, they tried to persuade Jaber to raise the English flag. However, he refused and made it clear that the Ottoman Empire was their friendly neighbor and that Kuwait depended on Basra for its needs.¹⁷² In addition, Abdullah Al-Sabah (1871-1891) helped the Ottoman Empire in Qatif and Al-‘Ahsa campaigns, when Abdullah Al-sa'ud sought the Ottoman Empire's help after

¹⁶⁹ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 39.

¹⁷⁰ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 92.

¹⁷¹ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 121. And Ālqinā'ī, *Ṣafahāt Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt*, 141.

¹⁷² Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 125.

his brother Sa'ud occupied it in 1871.¹⁷³ Importantly, in these campaigns, Mubarak Al Sabah, who is -the most prominent ruler of Al-Sabah family- led the Kuwaiti land forces in 1871 and 1892, and probably also aided the government during the 1878 troubles in Qatif and southern Iraq, for that he was given the rank of *Istanbul-i amire payesi* in August 1879.

Frederick Anscombe urges that Al-Sabah family's properties of the date Grove estate, along with the Shatt Al Arab near Faw, strengthened the keenness of Kuwait's tie to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷⁴ Worth to be mentioned that the sheiks had limited sources of income, and the Faw's date groves were the most valuable estates. Nevertheless, this was seen as a source of weakness, as the sheiks of Kuwait had to consider the Ottoman Empire's reactions to secure their economic resources.¹⁷⁵

What marks the era of Mubarak Al-Sabah was not providing moral loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, but rather the fact that Al-Sabah dynasty refused the Ottoman administration or any other higher authority. The position of Al-Sabah constituted a diplomatic issue between the actual rulers of Kuwait, the Ottoman Empire, and Britain, as Kuwait was important for both empires due to its strategic location. The Ottoman Empire tried to subjugate Kuwait to avoid the intervention of the foreign powers in regions claimed to be Ottoman. In contrast, Britain wanted to keep Kuwait under its political domain since it was of great importance. The land mail route from London to India and back passed from Kuwait and British activity in the Gulf in general. Britain was the first European power to take over the trade route in the Persian Gulf in the first

¹⁷³ 'Abū Ḥākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt*, 252. Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 133.

¹⁷⁴ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 93.

¹⁷⁵ Frederick Anscombe, "The Ottoman Role in the Gulf," in *The Persian Gulf in History*, ed. Lawrence G. Potter (New York: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2009), 268.

half of the eighteenth century, which made it surpassed all other European powers in the region.¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the Gulf was the region where various other European powers were active. Britain encountered external challenges represented by the other rival imperial powers, like Russia, France, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire. Britain also faced internal challenges in the Persian Gulf region, as it suffered from piracy in the Lower Gulf, which increasingly threatened British Indian shipping.¹⁷⁷ Consequently, Britain led expeditions against al Qawasim in 1806, 1809-10, and 1819, while they signed a general treaty with many of the smaller Sheikdoms in 1820.¹⁷⁸ The British influence expanded in the Persian Gulf, leading to obtaining the title of "the protector" of most of the gulf principalities; Britain eventually assumed responsibility of defending Oman in 1829, the Trucial States (the present-day United Arab Emirates) in 1835, Bahrain in 1861, Kuwait in 1899, and Qatar in 1916.¹⁷⁹ In a memorandum Sir Frederick Arthur Herzl wrote in January 1917, he pointed out that the absence of a strong state with influence in the Arabian Peninsula, besides the nature of the tribal system, helped Britain establish these treaty relations with the Sheiks there.¹⁸⁰

Kuwait, hence, formed a field of international competition for the imperial struggle, in which the local and the imperial powers entangled. The conflict reached

¹⁷⁶ 'Abū Hākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt*, , 49-50.

¹⁷⁷ James Onley, "Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms, 1820–1971: The Politics of Protection," *CIRS Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar*, 2009, 4.

¹⁷⁸ William O. Beeman, "Gulf Society: An Anthropological View of the Khalijis—Their Evolution and Way of Life," in *The Persian Gulf in History*, ed. Lawrence G. Potter (New York: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2009), 151.

¹⁷⁹ Onley, "Britain and the Gulf, 1. And: "British interests on the coast of Arabia, Koweit, Bahrein and El Katr", British Library: India office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/18/B151, in Qatar Digital Library.

¹⁸⁰ "British interests in Arabia", British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/18/B247, in Qatar Digital Library.

its climax during the era of Mubarak Al-Sabah. Mubarak Al-Sabah's reign witnessed incidents that drew the features of Kuwait's modern history. It is noteworthy that his reign was a period full of challenges and complications, not only at the local or regional level but at the global level. Many local powers competed for the authority of Mubarak. They posed a threat to his sovereignty and personal interests as these local powers' ambitions entangled with the great external powers' ambitions. Based on the given chronicle and political development, this chapter focuses on Al-Sabah families' rule and the three local pawns who played a significant role in Mubarak's reign: the Kuwaiti businessman Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, Ibn Sa'ud, and Ibn-Rasheed.

2.1 Mubarak Al-Sabah Rise to Power in Kuwait

Mubarak Al-Sabah assumed power in Kuwait on May 17, 1896. Until his death in 1915, he was the 7th ruler of the Al-Sabah family, and during his reign, he laid the foundations of the state of Kuwait. Historians of his time referred to him as Mubarak Al-Kabir, "The Great Mubarak," and modern Kuwait founder.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, Mubarak Al-Sabah took over power in a way that disturbed many groups around him. According to local accounts, Mubarak Al-Sabah killed his two brothers (Muhammad and Jarrah) *Kardeş Katli*, who took over control after the death of their older brother Abdullah. The rule was jointly between the three brothers, and Mubarak was responsible for managing the Badia's affairs and maintaining its security. However, historians indicate multiple reasons behind this assassination.¹⁸² Yet, they agree that

¹⁸¹ 'Abū Hākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt*, 305.

¹⁸² Ya'kub 'bd Al'zīz Ālrashīd and Yusuf ālqinā'ī mentioned the incident in detail. (Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 144-5). (Ālqinā'ī, *Ṣafahāt Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt*, 21).

financial and administrative disputes occurred between the brothers and, according to the local accounts, Muhammad and Jarrah sought to exclude Mubarak and bring the Kuwaiti businessman Yusuf Al-Ibrahim closer.¹⁸³ Whatever the case, Mubarak assumed power after the assassination of his two brothers, and on the same day, the people of Kuwait pledged allegiance to him.

However, the case of the murder constituted a diplomatic crisis with the Ottoman Empire, not to mention the local and international conflicts that were already present in his time. His reign was critical, as the Ottoman Empire was heading to the East after losing its possessions in Europe, especially that the end of the 19th century in Europe and the beginning of the 20th century marked the height of European colonialism.¹⁸⁴ Thus, after the brothers' assassination, Mubarak faced foreign international conspiracies and a local attempt to remove him from power since Kuwait was an international target, as mentioned in detail in this chapter.

2.2 Regional conflicts: Yusuf Al-Ibrahim takes over the opposition

Mubarak Al-Sabah's assumption of power in Kuwait constituted many internal conflicts that coincided with foreign powers' increasing influence in the region. Once Mubarak Al-Sabah assumed power, some local powers did not accept the *fait accompli*; they aimed to challenge it. Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, a Kuwaiti businessman, for example, took over the opposition. Al-Ibrahim belongs to a fine wealthy household in Kuwait. It is worth mentioning that he had a kinship with Muhammad and Jarrah, Mubarak Al-Sabah's brothers. Moreover, Yousef was one of the most affluent men in

¹⁸³ 'Abū Ḥākīmah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt*, 308.

Kuwait due to his political and economic influence and his kinship with Al-Sabah's brothers.¹⁸⁵

Local sources mention that Yusuf aimed to exclude Mubarak from power and appoint the assassinated brothers' sons to restore his political status. Mubarak Al-Sabah's power assumption threatened Yusuf Al-Ibrahim's political and commercial status, not only in Kuwait but in the whole of Arabia. The relationship between Yusuf and Mubarak was not stable due to the nature of the rule of Mubarak's brother Muhammad, as Muhammad brought Yusuf Al-Ibrahim closer and excluded Mubarak. Some sources indicate that Yusuf Al-Ibrahim was the actual ruler of Kuwait at that time.¹⁸⁶ These reasons combined made it possible for Yusuf Al-Ibrahim to take over the opposition for a decade-long period.

It was not surprising that a businessman supported the resistance against Mubarak. Merchants in Kuwait had great economic power and vast political influence. Kuwait's economy has mainly relied on trade, pearling, and fishing since Kuwait is a barren land, neither agricultural nor industrial.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, Kuwait's geographical location encouraged the region's population to engage in trade since earlier periods of history. Notably, Kuwaitis were fully aware of the sea routes leading to India and Africa, so they had the largest share in the Arab Gulf trade.¹⁸⁸

Thus, since they took power, Al-Sabah family encouraged trade due to its key role in the region's economy. Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah (1812-1859), the third ruler of Kuwait, exempted Al-Ibrahim family from customs duties to encourage trade and form

¹⁸⁵ Ālqinā'y. *Tāryh Ālkwy*, 24.

¹⁸⁶ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 39.

¹⁸⁷ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 61.

¹⁸⁸ Āl Ibrāhīm, *Alkuwīt Dirāsah Siyāsīyah*, 109.

financial support for Kuwait. It also was a plan to guarantee Al-Ibrahim family support in case of need.¹⁸⁹ Thereafter, Al-Ibrahim family was not only wealthy, but it was also politically influential.

In addition to the economic policy represented in the freedom and encouragement of trade, the unconditional consultative rule was among the essential factors that allowed merchants to participate in political life, occasionally indirectly. Accordingly, we can underline that the real power seemed to be in the merchant's hand most of the time. Moreover, the ruler could not act without their approval. Thus, until the beginning of Mubarak's reign, the merchants enjoyed a significant, influential status. After Mubarak, the matter started to change. Nevertheless, the merchants had already consolidated their political and economic positions early in the past.¹⁹⁰

Evidently, the parties to the conflict utilized the economic and political power in their regional conflict. The conflict between Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah and Yusuf Al-Ibrahim took a political form in its first stages, while a stage of armed conflict emerged later during which the status of Sheikh Mubarak was shaken. It was a decade-long war. The two parties focused on winning Kuwait's people and gaining the support of great powers like the Ottoman Empire and Britain. Each side had its supporters, allies, sympathizers, and opponents from the beginning.¹⁹¹

The supporters of sheik Yusuf against Sheikh Mubarak were from different social groups, including scholars, students, politicians, and merchants. They did not accept

¹⁸⁹ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 62.

¹⁹⁰ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 90.

¹⁹¹ Khalaf Ālshamarī, *Ālmustawda ' Wa Ālmustahḍar Fī Āsbāb Ālnizā ' Bayna Āl Ālṣabāḥ wa Yusuf Āl Ibrāhīm 1896-1906* (Damascus: Ninawa publication, 2006), 145.

the *fait accompli* and sympathized with the sons of the assassinated brothers. On top of these groups is the family of Al- Ibrahim, who stood behind the brothers' rights and supported them throughout the entire conflict.¹⁹² In addition, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim hired agents to support him in his propaganda and diplomatic campaigns, whose role focused on filing complaints to the Ottoman government against Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Furthermore, some of the aforementioned agents contributed to the correspondence of newspapers and magazines to incite the Ottoman authorities and Arab forces against Mubarak Al-sabah. The most important of all is Majid bin Sultan bin Fahd, who studied in Egypt before 1870 during Khedive Ismail's rule and brought to Kuwait the journalist Bayoumi Ibrahim. Ibrahim wrote several articles in the Al-Ahram newspaper under the name of the Egyptian tourist between September and October 1901 about the incident in Kuwait.¹⁹³ Moreover, Sheikh Yusuf also used local agents in Basra, Baghdad, Istanbul, and Pompeii to speak on his behalf to representatives of regional and international powers, including Britain.¹⁹⁴

As for Sheikh Mubarak, on the night of his brothers' assassination, some of Kuwait's people voluntarily pledged allegiance to him, while some others were reluctant, realizing that the government's fate would inevitably return to Mubarak.¹⁹⁵ Supporters of Mubarak worked to support him in front of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, Mubarak Al-Sabah was able to gain the support of several affluent officials in the Ottoman Empire, most importantly Rajab Pasha; the Marshal of the IV Army corps in Baghdad, in addition to Abu Al-Huda, the advisor to Sultan Abdul Hamid,

¹⁹² 'bdullah ālḥātīm, *Min Hunā Bada't Ālkuwīt* (Kuwait: Dār Ālqabas, 1980), 325.

¹⁹³ Ālshamarī, *Ālmustawda ' Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 147.

¹⁹⁴ Ālshamarī, *Ālmustawda ' Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 147.

¹⁹⁵ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 148.

¹⁹⁶ BOA.BEO, 883/66196

and Sheikh Al-Islam, Muhammad Jamal al-Din Effendi.¹⁹⁷ Anscombe states that Mubarak Al-Sabah tried to obtain support from senior officials and others of lesser status in Basra, Baghdad, and Istanbul through bribes.¹⁹⁸

Likewise, Sheikh Mubarak worked in the first ten years of his rule to strengthen his ties with the people of Kuwait, especially the notables. He pursued his predecessors' policy based on justice and equality and the application of shura in governance. Mubarak's method of governing won the support of most of the people in Kuwait, above all the merchants and notables,¹⁹⁹ which strengthened his position in internal and external disputes.

Immediately after the incidents, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim left for Basra, then he called the sons of the assassinated brothers, where they secretly followed him, and they allied with Hamdi Pasha, the governor of Basra and Yusuf Al-Ibrahim. The sons of Muhammad and Jarrah filed a complaint to Hamdi Pasha against Mubarak Al-Sabah at Yusuf Al-Ibrahim's instigation. The complaint stated that sheik Mubarak had usurped Kuwait after killing its Sheiks, who were ruling Kuwait under royal decree. They also stated that he intended to depose the Ottoman sovereignty of Kuwait and hand it over to foreign powers.²⁰⁰ Accordingly, Hamdi Pasha began his correspondence with the Ottoman state against Mubarak Al-sabah. In a telegram he sent, he warned the Ministry of Interior to appoint Mubarak Al-Sabah as Kuwait's governor. Hamdi Pasha stated that his appointment would not serve the public interest and added that the people of Kuwait are looking forward to getting rid of the Al-Sabah family's

¹⁹⁷ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 95.

¹⁹⁸ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 95.

¹⁹⁹ Ālqinā'ī, *Ṣafahāt Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt*, 23.

²⁰⁰ Ḥusayn Khalaf Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. I (Beirut: Dar Al Kutub, 1962), 16.

oppression and authoritarianism. He suggested using the opportunity to bring Kuwait under the Ottoman Empire's authority by sending a military force to Kuwait to achieve security and turn Kuwait into a Mutessarifat. In his justification for the request to change the administration of Kuwait,²⁰¹ Hamdi Pasha stated that Qatif is a hundred and fifty-hour away from Basra, and Al-‘Ahsa is three hours away, and the Ottoman Empire manages all this area. He also underlined that Kuwait, which is eighteen hours away from Basra, and the first port in the Gulf, is managed independently and separately, and this should not be permissible. Furthermore, he stressed that Britain was seeking to run Kuwait like Bahrain's administration, and the British were in constant contact with its Sheiks.²⁰²

Nonetheless, the people of Kuwait interfered in favor of Mubarak Al- Sabah, not only in sympathy with him but, as B.J Slot explained, he represented a lesser evil than a direct Ottoman rule, since the top priority for the new administration in Kuwait was to prevent intervention by their Ottoman neighbor.²⁰³ Furthermore, Mubarak Al-Sabah appeared to stand independently from any other power. Thus, on August 14, 1896, the sheiks of Al-Sabah sent a telegram to the Grand Vizierate accusing the governor of Basra Hamdi Pasha of conspiring with Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, and they indicated that they have common interests that justify their corporation.²⁰⁴ Remarkably, it was believed that the tribal conflicts in Arabia could last for decades, which means continuous instability. Therefore, the majority of Kuwaitis took the shortcut by supporting Mubarak against the opposition.

²⁰¹ BOA.BEO, 883/66196-10.

²⁰² BOA. BEO, 883/66196-14.

²⁰³ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 78.

²⁰⁴ Sluṭān Bin Muḥamad Ālqāsimī, *Bayān Ālkuwīt ‘ Sīratu Ḥayāt Ālshaykh Mubārak Ālṣabāh* (Sharjah: Sluṭān bin Muḥamad Ālqāsimī, 2004), 336-339.

In his turn, Mubarak Al-Sabah kept denying the killing of his brothers in his telegrams to the Ottoman state. On May 11, 1897, Sheikh Mubarak wrote a letter to the Ottoman state explaining the plots being weaved by Yusuf Al-Ibrahim against him in Basra in alliance with Hamdi Pasha and the sons of the two deceased, in which he accused Yusuf Al-Ibrahim of assassinating his two brothers and stated that he intends to replace him.²⁰⁵

Mubarak Al-Sabah continued to defend himself in successive letters to the Ottoman Porte accusing Yusuf Al-Ibrahim and Hamdi pasha of contrived plots against him. Remarkably, in most of his telegrams, Mubarak Al-Sabah emphasized the Ottoman Porte of his previous aid to it in its raids in Najd, and he renewed Al-Sabah's loyalty to the Porte. Moreover, he called on the Ottomans to put an end to the accelerated restlessness, pressing that the continuation of this situation could cause harm to all the parties in Arabia.²⁰⁶

Mubarak's complaint and protest coincided with other demands sent from Basra against Hamdi Pasha, no doubt that Mubarak was behind these complaints. One of these demands was signed by more than 600 most prominent men of the region.²⁰⁷ It is recorded on behalf of the people of Kuwait that Hamdi Pasha had secretly brought the sons of the brothers to Basra and incited them against Mubarak Al-Sabah. They asked the Ottoman Empire to appoint Mubarak Al-Sabah as the Kaymakâm considering his ability to control the region and achieve security and safety. By the same token, since July 1896, telegrams began to inflow to the Grand Vizier's office in Constantinople, accusing Hamdi Pasha of poor governance in Basra, especially that

²⁰⁵ Hr. MTV, 720/70.

²⁰⁶ BOA.BEO, 958/71844-9.

²⁰⁷ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 28.

the desert tribes were out of control. The overall condition resulted in the infiltration of some Bedouins in Kuwait and killed the Sabah brothers, Muhammad and Jarrah.²⁰⁸

Following the telegrams of Kuwaitis, the Ottoman Empire dismissed Hamdi Pasha and appointed Arif Pasha in his position. However, Hamdi Pasha prompted a trial as a last attempt against Mubarak Al Sabah, resulting in confiscating all the property of Sheikh Mubarak in Basra and Faw. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Porte canceled Hamdi Pasha's all arrangements.²⁰⁹

The new governor of Basra, Arif Pasha, was aware of Mubarak Al-Sabah's personality and his capabilities. Arif Pasha believed that any military intervention would be met with a counter-military response. He mentioned that one of the English warships came to Kuwait last year and offered Mubarak Al-Sabah the English protection. Mubarak Al-Sabah, however, refused the offer preserving his loyalty to the Ottoman government and avoiding English interference in a region not under the direct Ottoman administration; the local circumstances require an end to this issue by appointing Mubarak as a ruler of Kuwait on the condition that the rights of the heirs of the late Muhammad be resolved between the tribes.²¹⁰ As a result, Mubarak Al-Sabah was acquitted of killing his two brothers, and the accusation was filed against a person unknown.²¹¹ Arif Pasha believed that Mubarak Al-Sabah could resort to Ibn-Rasheed or the British forces in Bahrain to seek help if the Ottoman launched a military

²⁰⁸ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 68.

²⁰⁹ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 35-7.

²¹⁰ BOA.DH. ŞEF 211/ 54.

²¹¹ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 34-44.

intervention. Based on such a concern, he saw it would be better to appoint him and cut off any foreign interference until Kuwait was brought under Ottoman control.²¹²

On the other hand, Britain maintained a policy of neutrality towards the conflict in Kuwait. Anscombe finds that Britain did not pay much attention to the issue and considered it an internal Ottoman matter. Moreover, the British Council in Basra had previously made it clear that Mubarak's motives for killing his brother were to take over power and seize the very wealthy Muhammad's property.²¹³

Since his accession to power, Mubarak Al-Sabah has been keen to win the favor of the Ottoman state. We can refer to the circumstances in which he assumed power as an era of internal and external conflicts. Significantly, considering that the Ottoman Empire was the representative of the Islamic world, its recognition of Mubarak's rule should be seen as legitimizing his rule, strengthening him before the tribes and the great powers in Arabia. Furthermore, Al-Sabah family had an annual salary from the Ottoman Empire because of their previous assistance; therefore, he wanted to keep this financial resource ongoing. Thus, through the network of alliances that Mubarak made, he won the Ottoman Empire to his side and temporarily got rid of Hamdi Pasha and Yusuf Al-Ibrahim. It is worth mentioning that Hamdi tried to demand control over Al-Sabah's properties in Al-Faw and Basra to weaken Mubarak's economic power. As these properties were within the Ottoman Empire's influence, Hamdi's attempts failed.²¹⁴

²¹² BOA.DH. ŞFR, 202/93-1.

²¹³ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 94.

²¹⁴ Ālshamarī, *Ālmustawda ' Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 133.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Porte was aware of the complexities of Arabia and the British and other powers' attempts to penetrate the Gulf. It was also conscious of the internal complications because of the tribal system in Arabia and the pursuit of some powers to maintain their influence, such as Ibn-Rasheed and Ibn-Sa'ud. All in addition to the fact that the Ottoman Empire was interested in Kuwait and recognizing his rule would guarantee his loyalty to the Ottoman. This step was to prevent any attempt for Kuwaiti independence away from Ottoman control. Thus, the issue was settled between Mubarak Al-Sabah and the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of his rule; nevertheless, the Ottoman-Kuwaiti relations did not remain stable. Mubarak Al-Sabah sought to preserve Kuwait's independence from any foreign power, including the Ottomans.²¹⁵

At the same time, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim did cease his plan of obtaining Ottoman support, despite his failure for the first time. On the contrary, he began a new stage in his hassle with Mubarak, by which he used the force of arms and established alliances with Mubarak's enemies in the Arabian Peninsula, Ibn-Rasheed in Hail, and Jasim Al-Thani in Qatar.²¹⁶

On June 30, 1897, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim tried to attack Kuwait militarily to eliminate Sheikh Mubarak, relying on his resources.²¹⁷ However, his campaign was bound to fail as Mubarak knew of their arrival before.²¹⁸ Mubarak filed a complaint against Yusuf Al-Ibrahim to the Ottoman Empire, accusing him of smuggling weapons and destabilizing security by spreading chaos among the tribes in the region. He also

²¹⁵ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 97-8.

²¹⁶ *Ālshamarī, Ālmustawda ' Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 165-66.

²¹⁷ 'Āmīn Ālrayḥānī, *Muluk Āl'rab*, vol. II (Beirut: Āljīl publication, 1987), 260.

²¹⁸ *Ālrashīd, Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 156.

emphasized that Yousuf's goal was to eliminate him while he was loyal to the Ottoman Sultan. He made it clear in his complaint that Britain supports his opponent Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, which meant allying himself with "the enemy of the state and Islam."²¹⁹

In this regard, Arif Pasha, the governor of Basra, appeared to support Mubarak Al-Sabah in his complaint. He pressed the misguided efforts of Yusuf Al-Ibrahim and stated that his campaign posed a threat to the region and warned Porte about the general security situation. He accused Sheikh Yusuf of rebelling against the Ottoman state and urging the Porte to be alarmed by the conflict between the two sheiks. According to Arif Pasha, such a conflict would open the door to the European powers in the region, especially Britain.²²⁰ In Baghdad, Rajab Pasha also supported Mubarak Al-sabah. He considered the campaign a threat to stability and a gateway to foreign ambitions, especially Britain.²²¹ Accordingly, the Ottoman Empire considered Yusuf Al-Ibrahim's presence in the area a threat to security, and a decision was issued to deport Yusuf from Basra.²²²

Reflecting on the matter, since 1893, Britain considered the affairs of the Northern Persian Gulf, extending from Basra to Qatif, as an Ottoman affair. Moreover, it maintained its impact in the Northern Gulf to be a neutral observer of events and developments. All in aim to preserve its waters.²²³ Until that time, Britain had not allied itself with the regional powers, as it did not consider its interests threatened yet.

²¹⁹ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 156.

²²⁰ Y.MTV 169/59.

²²¹ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 151.

²²² Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 151.

²²³ Jacob Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia: The Formative Years, 1902-18* (London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 36.

Nonetheless, Britain's policy, which was to preserve the Ottoman Empire's sovereignty, became a policy that concerned the British interests in the first place.

From another perspective, the decision issued against Yusuf Al-Ibrahim did not stop him from continuing his actions against Sheikh Mubarak Al-sabah. After Mubarak's recent success in eliminating Yusuf Al-Ibrahim by provoking the Ottoman Empire against him, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim changed his previous methods and decided to use a new strategy in his struggle with Sheikh Mubarak. He started to look for an ally to support him. Accordingly, he headed to Qatar in 1897.²²⁴

Tribal friendship and hatred were the main factors in forming alliances in the Arabian Peninsula. Hence, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim chose Sheikh Jassim Al-Thani, the ruler of Qatar (1825-1913), as an ally for several reasons: most importantly, the existing hostility between him and Mubarak. This hostility goes back to the participation of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah in leading the Kuwaiti force during the Ottoman campaign against Qatar, led by the governor of Basra, Muhammad Hafez Pasha, in 1892.²²⁵

Economic cooperation also played a role in the alliance between Al-Ibrahim and Al-Thani. There was a business association between Jassim Al-Thani and Yusuf Al-Ibrahim. Sheikh Jassim was one of the most prominent pearl merchants, and the family of Sheikh Yusuf was one of the prominent monopolists and marketers of the pearl trade in the Gulf.²²⁶ It is essential to underline that Sheikh Jassim considered the hostility between Mubarak and Yusuf an opportunity to achieve his ambition to control

²²⁴ Ālshamarī, *Ālmustawda* ' *Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 165.

²²⁵ Zekeriya Kuṣun, *Katar'da Osmanlılar 1871-1916: Basra Körferzi'nde Osmanlı - İngiliz Çekişmesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2004), 98.

²²⁶ Āmīn Ālrayḥānī, *Tārīkh Najd Ālḥdīth Wa Mulḥaqātih* (Beirut: Āljīl publication, 1988), 116.

new economic channels in the Arabian Peninsula, especially Al-‘Ahsa.²²⁷ Eventually, the two parties agreed to take action against Sheikh Mubarak. They agreed on a plan to undermine his power and be implemented by land and sea, in which the Emir of Hail, Muhammad bin Rasheed, who had a keen relation with Sheikh Jassim, would take part.²²⁸

Amir Muhammad bin-Rasheed was in a state of anger at Sheikh Mubarak's behavior towards his brothers, as evinced in his letter to Sheikh Yusuf after the brothers' assassination.²²⁹ Moreover, bin-Rasheed accused Sheikh Mubarak of plundering a convoy of merchants belonging to the Rashidi Emirate and killing its companions.²³⁰ These accusations accompanied strategic obsession, as the Emir sought to obtain maritime access, and Kuwait was the ideal location for his economic and political aspirations.

This plan combined three forces: Sheikh Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, Sheikh Jassim Al-Thani, and Amir Muhammad bin-Rasheed, in terms of hostility towards Sheikh Mubarak, on the one hand, and the ambitions of these alliancing parties in Kuwait, on the other hand. However, the tripartite alliance, intended to be formulated in 1897, failed. The Ottoman Empire stood firmly against Sheikh Jassim Al-Thani, followed by Amir Muhammad bin-Rasheed's death in the same year.²³¹

Reflecting on the tripartite alliance, the Ottoman Empire prepared a military force to defend Kuwait in case of attack, and this made Britain question the Ottoman

²²⁷ Ālshamarī, *Ālmustawda ‘ Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 167.

²²⁸ Sulaymān Bin Ṣāliḥ Āldakhīl, *Ālqawlu Ālsadīd Fī Ākḥbār Imārat Āl Rashīd* (Riyadh: Ālyamāmah Publication, 1966), 151.

²²⁹ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 159.

²³⁰ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 159.

²³¹ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 159.

intentions, so it sent four battleships to their location in the Gulf waters. With these actions of the Ottomans and the British, the Sheikh's attempts were doomed to failure.²³² Despite his attempt to stir up some tribes against Mubarak Al-sabah, Yusuf did not succeed in his endeavor, and the governor of Basra, Muhammad Anis Pasha, issued a warrant for his arrest. As Yusuf Al-Ibrahim learned of the warrant, he decided to return to Dawra, and from there, he flew to Bombay.²³³

Accordingly, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim would not take over at this point, yet he would later find another chance through his alliance with Abdulaziz bin-Rasheed, where the Rashidi Emirate will pose a new challenge to Mubarak Al-Sabah.

2.3 Regional alliances: Al-Rasheed and Mubarak Al-Sabah:

The Rashidi emirate, led by Abdullah bin-Rasheed and his successor, Abdul Aziz bin Mit'eb Al-Rasheed, posed a real challenge to Mubarak Al-Sabah at the beginning of his reign. It is worth noting that the complications in this dispute were due to the alliances between the tribes in Arabia. The Arabian Peninsula throughout history was like a struggling yard for power and influence. The parties to the conflict were chasing opportunities to weaken their competitors. Thus, Mubarak Al-Sabah case provided the necessary parties to complete this power episode, as Yusuf Al- Ibrahim and Jasim Al-Thani would ally with the Rashidi's Amirs, while Ibn Sa'ud would ally with Mubarak Al-Sabah against him later. At the international level, the Ottoman Empire tried to subjugate the region through internal coalitions: such as Al-Rasheed or Al-Sa'ud, while

²³² Ḥusayn Khalaf Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II (Beirut: Dar Al Kutub, 1962), 28.

²³³ Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, 29.

Britain was already aiming to maintain its influence in the Persian Gulf, even before reassertion of the direct Ottoman rule.²³⁴

Moreover, the Rashidi Emirate (Emirate of Jabal Shammar or Emirate of Ha'il) was a state established in 1834 in Najd in the city of Hail (north-central Arabia) by both Abdullah Al-Ali Al-Rasheed and his brother Obaid Al-Ali Al-Rasheed.²³⁵ The Rashidi Emirate paid loyalty to the first Saudi state, which was established at Dir'iyah in central Arabia in 1744 by Muhammad bin Saud.²³⁶ Furthermore, the Rashidi Emirate fought alongside the first Saudi state in its wars and conquests, and the Jabal Shammar area was one of the first Saudi regions attacked by Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt.²³⁷ Nevertheless, the dispute between Al-Rasheed and Al-Saud began after the Emir of Hail captured Riyadh in 1887.²³⁸

Following bin Saud's death in 1875, a dispute arose between his brothers, leading Abdullah to appeal to the Emir of Hail to claim Riyadh from his half-brother Abd Al-Rahman, Riyadh's ruler.²³⁹ However, Abdullah bin-Rasheed seized the opportunity to expand his power to the whole Emirate on the pretext of saving its ruler. As well, he captured Riyadh and kept Abdullah as a hostage in his capital.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 106.

²³⁵ Faisal bin Turki appointed Abdullah bin Ali bin Rasheed as an Emir of Shammar mountain after his role in getting rid of Mishari bin Abd Al-rahman, who killed imam Turki bin Abdullah Al-Suad. 'Abdullah al'uthaymīn, *Nash'at Imārat Āl Rashīd* (Riyadh: Riyadh university, 1981), 74.

²³⁶ The first Saudi state continued to expand until its end in 1818 at the hands of the Ottoman army led by Ibrahim Pasha. Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4.

²³⁷ al'uthaymīn, *Nash'at Imārat Āl Rashīd*, 12.

²³⁸ Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 23.

²³⁹ Al Rasheed allowed the brothers Abdullah and Abd al Rahman to return to Riyadh, Abdullah died in 1889, and Abd al Rahman ruled as a vassal of Ibn Rasheed under the governorship of Salim Al Sibhan, until Abd al Rahman rebelled against Ibn Rasheed in 1891, after then Abd al Rahman fled Riyadh. (Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 23-4.)

²⁴⁰ Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi Books, 2000), 407.

Since the capture of Riyadh until 1891, Abd Al-Rahman tried to restore Riyadh many times, however, his attempts failed, and he fled to the desert. After a long period of wandering, his family settled in Kuwait in 1893 under the protection of its sheik, Muhammad al Sabah, while the Ottoman government granted him a modest monthly pension of 60 gold Lira.²⁴¹ Therefore, the conflict between the bin Saud's clan and Al-Rasheed clan over the rule of Najd was one of the causes of tension and hostility between Najd and Kuwait in the first place. The hostility between Al-Rasheed and Al-Sabah families was primarily due to conflict of interests in the region. As Muhammad bin-Rasheed (1872-1897) drew the attention, before his death in 1897, his nephew, Abdul Aziz bin Mit'eb, to the activities of Mubarak Al-Sabah, Sheikh of Kuwait, he told him that he was the first enemy of Al-Rasheed family.²⁴² The enmity between Muhammad bin-Rasheed and Mubarak Al-Sabah was due to the conflict of interest in the desert in Najd since both entities posed a threat to each other. Moreover, Muhammad bin-Rasheed accused Mubarak Al-Sabah of killing a group of merchants from Hail after they left Kuwait. Furthermore, Muhammad bin-Rasheed condemned Mubarak's killing of his brothers in a harshly reprimanding letter.²⁴³

All in all, the Rashidi Amirs were convinced that leaving Mubarak, who managed to ascend to power in Kuwait with his force in the Arabian Peninsula, would pose a danger to all tribal chiefs, mainly that they were aware of Mubarak Al-Sabah's ambition to extend his dominion and broaden his influence. Therefore, a group of internal and external alliances was formed in the pursuit of common interests. Among

²⁴¹ Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* , 409.

²⁴² Ālraṣhīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 160.

²⁴³ Ālraṣhīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 159.

the prominent internal alliances of all was between Yusuf Al-Ibrahim and Muhammad Al-Rasheed, on the one hand, and Mubarak Al-Sabah and Al-Saud, on the other hand.

As sheik Yusuf Al-Ibrahim arrived at Hail, the Rashidi capital, in May 1900, Emir Abdul Aziz welcomed him warmly and assumed a prominent position. John G. Lorimer described this position stating that "*it appears that he became the permeant clients in the year 1900*".²⁴⁴ Moreover, Issa Al-Qanaei mentions that Sheikh Yusuf came to Hail after Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed invited him.²⁴⁵ When Mubarak learned about Yusuf and bin-Rasheed, he sent Abd Al-Rahman Al-Faisal to invade Ibn-Rasheed's clan in al-Rawda. Afterward, Mubarak sent his brother Hammoud Al-Sabah to attack Shammar, the clan of ibn-Rasheed in Al-Rakhima. After these incidents, the hostility between the two parties intensified.²⁴⁶

There is no doubt that the presence of the Saudi Amir in the emirate of Mubarak Al-Sabah constituted a golden opportunity for him to enhance his activities in the Arabian Peninsula.²⁴⁷ Especially that Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed was a competitor and an obstacle in the way of Mubarak's great ambition in Arabia. By eliminating ibn-Rasheed, Mubarak would achieve his ambition to control the largest possible area of the Arabian Peninsula, especially Qassim and Sudair regions of Najd. His aspiration to achieve his expansionist economic projects in Najd was realized by reviving the commercial movement and developing its resources.²⁴⁸ Notwithstanding, Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed was not any less ambitious than Sheikh Mubarak. He was

²⁴⁴ John Gordon Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, vol. 1 (India: Superintendent Government printing, 1915), 1027.

²⁴⁵ Ālqinā'ī, *Ṣafahāt Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt*, 25.

²⁴⁶ Ālqinā'ī, *Ṣafahāt Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt*, 26.

²⁴⁷ Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II, 40.

²⁴⁸ Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II, 40.

known for his determination and his use of force in his political endeavors. Ibn - Rasheed aspired to seize Kuwait to secure a strategic sea gate on the Persian Gulf.²⁴⁹ After the Ottoman Empire controlled the shores of Al-‘Ahsa and established Ma'an Mutessarifat, the Emirate of ibn-Rasheed was isolated from the outside world. Thus, the Rashidi's lost the opportunity to lay a hand on the sea gate to Kuwait.

Furthermore, the residence of Imam Abd Al-Rahman Al-Faisal, under the patronage and hospitality of Sheikh Mubarak in Kuwait, constitutes a sufficient reason to incite the hostility of Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed.²⁵⁰ Especially with Mubarak Al-Sabah's encouragement for Imam Abd Al-Rahman and his son to restore their Emirate in Najd, in addition to the support of the notables of Najd for the Saudi cause.²⁵¹ So, the new status quo situation in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula raised Abdul Aziz Al-Rasheed 's fears. On another aspect, by adopting Al-Saud cause, Sheikh Mubarak found an opportunity to achieve his expansionist ambitions.²⁵²

In an Arab environment shaped by tribal alliances, Mubarak Al-Sabah and Ibn al-Rasheed strengthened their position by including the largest number of allies to their sides. Sheikh Mubarak intended to form a strong coalition with several neighboring regional powers, such as Sheikh Sa'dun, the leader of Al-Muntafiq tribe in Iraq. He incited him to fight Ibn -Rasheed and join his side; in his turn, Sa'dun did not hesitate to accept this offer because of the hostility between Al-Muntafiq tribe and Amir

²⁴⁹ Ālrayḥānī, *Tārīkh Najd*, 112.

²⁵⁰ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 117.

²⁵¹ Khayr Aldīn Ālzarkālī, *Ālwajīz Fī Sīrat Almalik 'bd Āl 'zīz* (Beirut: Dār āl 'ilm Li almalāyīn, 1988), 22.

²⁵² Ālzarkālī, *Ālwajīz Fī Sīrat Almalik 'bd Āl 'zīz*, 22.

Abdulaziz bin-Rasheed. With this alliance, Sa'dun found an opportunity to improve his financial situation through war booties.²⁵³

Upon his return, Mubarak declared his support to Al-Saud's cause to restore their power. Accordingly, Imam Abd Al-Rahman formed a small force of his Najdi supporters, who were refugees in Kuwait.²⁵⁴ It is worth noting that Sheikh Mubarak was aware of the support enjoyed by the House of Saud in Najd, as their supporters continued to correspond with them and offer their assistance.²⁵⁵ In that relation, relying on Russian reports, Bondarevsky Gregory states that in 1900 Mubarak Al-Sabah on behalf of Kuwait, Abd Al-Rahman on behalf of the Saudis, and Sa'dun Pasha on behalf of Al-Muntafiq, met and made a pact swearing to the Qur'an to win over Ibn-Rasheed or die together.²⁵⁶

On the other hand, an alliance rose between Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed and sheik Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, and they contacted the sheik of Qatar, Jassim Al-Thani. The goal of this alliance was to seize Kuwait and remove Mubarak from power. It is noteworthy that the Emirate of Hail was suffering from difficult financial conditions after Kuwait closed its port in front of it.²⁵⁷ Therefore, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim worked as a financial sponsor for the coalition by providing weapons and transportation to the forces of the Emirate of Najd.²⁵⁸ Thus, Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed began preparing to attack Kuwait in

²⁵³ Ālrayḥānī, *Tārīkh Najd*, 117. Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa*, 150.

²⁵⁴ Āldakhīl, *Ālqawlu Ālsadīd*, 152.

²⁵⁵ Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II, 40.

²⁵⁶ Bondarevsky Georgy, *Ālkwyī W'lāqāthā Āldwlyh Hlāl Ālqārī Āltās ' 'sr Wāwāāl Ālqrīn Āl'sryn*, trans. Māhr Slāmh (Kuwait: Kuwait Research and Studies Center, 1994), 166.

²⁵⁷ The bad financial situation of the Emirate of Hail led Abdul Aziz to rely completely on the Ottomans. (Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1168).

²⁵⁸ ālhātīm, *Min Hunā Bada't Ālkuwīt*, 285.

1900. Before the major battle that took place between the parties, several skirmishes occurred between them.

The position of the Ottoman Empire during this period was unclear and did not take a firm official stance, and instead left to its employees in Baghdad and Basra the freedom to take steps to end this crisis. In addition, there were indications that the Ottoman Empire was keen to maintain peace in the region, especially in Kuwait, after the ensuing confusion about the validity of the British protection treaty.²⁵⁹ Mubarak Al-Sabah, with the growing local pressures due to Yusuf Al-Ibrahim and Ibn Al-Rasheed, and the imperial pressures resulting from the Ottoman Empire, signed a protection agreement with the British Empire on January 23, 1899, with the aim of resisting the Ottomans. It was agreed to keep the agreement secret so as not to raise diplomatic problems with the Ottomans.²⁶⁰

It is noteworthy that Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed and Sheikh Yusuf tried to win the Ottoman position. Sheikh Yusuf pleaded to Basra's governor to obtain an Ottoman pardon, and Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed mediated with Muhsin Pasha, yet, by virtue of the friendship between Muhsin Pasha and Sheikh Mubarak, his request was not accepted.²⁶¹ At the same time, Sheikh Yusuf tried to win the position of Baghdad, to support their position, so he sent a delegation to negotiate with the commander of the VI Corps in Baghdad, Marshal Ahmed Feyzi Pasha, trying to gain his support in their favor and to persuade the Sultan to seize Kuwait.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Y.MTV.114/194.

²⁶⁰ Hāfīz Wahbiḥ, *Jazīrat Āl 'rab Fī Ālqarn Āl 'shrīn* (Cairo: Publication Committee Press, 1935), 100-2.

²⁶¹ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 121.

²⁶² Wahbiḥ, *Jazīrat Āl 'rab*, 169-177.

Under the recent development in the region between Mubarak and Ibn Al-Rasheed, the Ottoman authority intervened and exercised its influence on both sides. So, an Ottoman force, led by Major General Muhammad Al-Daghistani, was sent from the province of Baghdad to prevent the two parties from clashing, and Mohsen Pasha. By the same token, the governor of Basra sent delegates to the two parties to the conflict, where Amir Abdulaziz was persuaded to stop the fighting.²⁶³ Sultan Abdulhamid II also delegated Kazım Pasha to mediate between Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed and Mubarak Al-Sabah. On that basis, Ibn Al-Rasheed pledged to stop the attack and returned to Najd.

Moreover, Kazım Pasha was assigned to mediate between Mubarak and his nephews to end the inheritance problem over Al-Sabah's properties in Basra.²⁶⁴ As for Mubarak, the Governor of Basra, Muhsin Pasha, persuaded him to visit Basra, to be his first visit to the state since his assumption of power.²⁶⁵ With this visit, Mohsen Pasha ended all doubts about Sheikh Mubarak's loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan, as he renewed his allegiance and was awarded a high medal in October 1900, as he later returned to Kuwait.²⁶⁶

Britain, in its turn, worked to prevent the crisis from aggravating. In that relation, the British authority asked Sheikh Mubarak to stop the attack on Ibn Al-Rasheed, fearing that the Ottoman Empire would intervene in Kuwait's affairs.²⁶⁷ As a

²⁶³ Robin Bidwell, *The Affairs of Kuwait 1896-1905*, vol. I, Sec. II (London: Frank Cass and Company limited, 1971), 62.

²⁶⁴ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 127- 137.

²⁶⁵ Y.A.HUS. 414/54.

²⁶⁶ *Khaz'al, Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II, 36. And Y.A.HUS. 414/54.

²⁶⁷ Bidwell, *The Affairs of Kuwait*, 45.

precautionary measure, the British authority in India decided to send a sea vessel to shelter Mubarak if Ibn Al-Rasheed's forces took control over Kuwait.²⁶⁸

Despite the role that the Ottoman Empire and Britain played to end the conflict between the two parties and prevent a confrontation between them, this could not prevent the decisive confrontation but instead postponed it. Eventually, a decisive battle took place between the two parties on March 17, 1901, known as the Battle of Al-Sarif. After the return of Sheikh Mubarak to Kuwait, at the end of November 1900, he decided to eliminate Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed.²⁶⁹ The two sides went to regional powers and tribal groups in the region to gather the largest number of allies and supporters, and the battle ended with the victory of Al-Rasheed over Mubarak Al-Sabah. However, Before the battle, Mubarak Al-Sabah encouraged Ibn Saud to regain Riyadh. During the battle, Ibn Saud besieged Riyadh. However, he was forced to withdraw after learning about Mubarak's defeat in the battle.²⁷⁰ Importantly, this battle received wide media attention. The Egyptian newspaper *Al-Iewa'* considered that the battle was a victory for the Ottoman state and the Arabs over the English, especially after the rumors that confirmed a secret agreement between Kuwait and Britain. To add more, the newspaper stressed that Britain is behind all these incidents in Arabia, implementing the saying behind every incident in the East, search for the English.²⁷¹

Explaining the English reaction to this defeat, the newspaper elaborated the matter, as it quoted what was published by the Egyptian Gazette:

²⁶⁸ Bidwell, *The Affairs of Kuwait*, 55.

²⁶⁹ Ālraṣhīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 161.

²⁷⁰ Ālrayḥānī, *Tārīkh Najd*, 119.

²⁷¹ Ālrayḥānī, *Tārīkh Najd*, 119.

*"The defeat of Mubarak, the leader of Kuwait, could cause great harm to our grave interests on the banks of the Persian Gulf. Therefore, it is hoped that the Government of India will pay attention to this issue and find the necessary means to protect these interests in Kuwait City."*²⁷²

Britain followed the development of events through the reports of its local informants in the region. The informants further made some suggestions to end the conflict and prevent the attack by negotiating with Ibn Al-Rasheed through his agent in Basra, Fahd Al-Bassam, in exchange for persuading Mubarak to abandon his plans.²⁷³ As for the position of the Ottoman state, knowing the progress of Sheikh Mubarak's campaign to attack Najd, it sent a warning message to him instructing him to abandon the plan of the attack and return to his home. Sheikh Mubarak apologized through a letter sent to Basra Governor Mohsen Pasha, yet he emphasized that he would not allow Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed and Sheikh Yusuf Al-Ibrahim to act freely without restraint.²⁷⁴ Notably, the Ottoman Empire sought to maintain the region's stability and not allow Britain to take advantage of this conflict, though Mubarak's treaty signed with Britain was not known at that time. After the Battle of Al-Sarif, Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed and his ally Yusuf Al-Ibrahim sought to win the official position of the Ottoman Empire in their favor. Moreover, in his attempt to gain the Ottoman Empire's position, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim focused on propaganda in front of the Ottoman officials on Sheikh Mubarak's alliance with the British and his betrayal

²⁷² *Ālrayḥānī, Tārīkh Najd*, 119.

²⁷³ Bidwell, *The Affairs of Kuwait*, 1-8.

²⁷⁴ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 128.

of the Caliph. He persistently shed light on Mubarak's friendship with the enemies of the Islamic Caliphate and his tireless work to bring Kuwait into foreign centers.²⁷⁵

These moves by Sheikh Yusuf and his supporters and the movements of Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed had a clear impact on the Ottoman authorities.²⁷⁶ Mainly, the Ottomans were worried about the persistence of British ambitions in the region, as its warships became intensively and permanently frequenting the shores of Kuwait during this period. Besides, Abdul Hamid II suspected Mubarak's relationship with Britain.²⁷⁷

Mainly, what increased the Ottoman concern regarding Kuwait was the constant pressure that the Sultan was facing from Germany and Russia to bring Kuwait under direct Ottoman sovereignty. Germany and Russia were seeking what guaranteed their interests and aimed to cut off the British ambitions after the British protection treaty on Kuwait spread.²⁷⁸

In general, the ensuing pressure led to a shift in the official Ottoman position on the issue of Kuwait during the first half of the year 1901, Especially that the Ottoman authorities decided to end this issue by reversing the policy of Mohsen Pasha, the governor of Basra, who adopted the official Ottoman position since the late 1900s. Accordingly, Mohsen Pasha executed a firm policy of imposing direct sovereignty over Kuwait.²⁷⁹ In its new policy, the Ottoman Empire encouraged Al-Rasheed against Mubarak Al-sabah, which this research dwells on in the following chapter.

²⁷⁵ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 134.

²⁷⁶ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 134. and Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 168.

²⁷⁷ Y.A.HUS. 484/132. *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 168.

²⁷⁸ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1026. Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 169.

²⁷⁹ Y.PRK.BŞK.65/101.Y.PRK.BŞK.68/88.

The conflict between Mubarak Al-Sabah and Yusuf Al-Ibrahim continued until the latter died in 1906. Despite the Ottoman Empire's opposition to Yusuf Al-Ibrahim's moves initially, it worked to ignore his arrangements later, especially after it confirmed that Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah had signed a protection agreement with Britain.²⁸⁰ In 1902, Sheikh Yusuf and the sons of Sheikh Muhammad and Jarrah prepared a second naval expedition. The aim was to seize Kuwait and assassinate Sheikh Mubarak.²⁸¹ However, Mubarak discovered the plan and became fully prepared for it.²⁸² It is worth mentioning that the expedition withdrew from the shores of Kuwait, but the British gunboat, Lapwing, found it two days after, on September 5, There was an exchange of fire with the British, resulting in the death of a British officer and the wounding of others.²⁸³ Yousuf's attacking attempts were thwarted as Britain protested against the Ottoman Empire.²⁸⁴ The British pressure on the Ottoman authorities continued, and Britain accused the governor of Basra, Mustafa Nuri Pasha, to personally cover up Sheik Yousuf's actions and support him. Accordingly, Britain demanded his dismissal. Faced with these pressures, the Ottomans issued an order to deport Sheikh Yusuf from Basra, so he left for Hail to be considered the last attempt Yusuf made with the knowledge of the Ottoman state from its lands.²⁸⁵ Despite this, Sheikh Yusuf continued to support the Emirate of Al-Rasheed and supply it with weapons and other war tools.²⁸⁶ Sheikh Mubarak continued to support the House of Saud by facilitating the purchase of weapons through the port of Kuwait, and this support continued until

²⁸⁰ Y.PRK.BŞK. 65/21. H-15-05-1319. *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 253. 'Abū Ḥākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt*, 313.

²⁸¹ *Khaz'al, Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol.II, 63.

²⁸² *Khaz'al, Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol.II, 63..

²⁸³ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1036.

²⁸⁴ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1551.

²⁸⁵ *Khaz'al, Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II, 64.

²⁸⁶ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 294.

approximately 1905.²⁸⁷ In his support of Al- Sa'ud, Mubarak Al-Sabah aimed to invest their activities in mobilizing the Najdi tribes to distract Ibn Al-Rasheed from Kuwait's issue.²⁸⁸ Initially, Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed did not give it importance, even after Al-sa'ud retook Riyadh on January 15, 1902.²⁸⁹ However, Ibn al-Rasheed later resisted the growing Saudi power, which kept the danger -dramatically- away from Mubarak Al-Sabah.²⁹⁰

From Hail, Sheikh Yusuf continued his propaganda war against Sheikh Mubarak, reporting newspapers and magazines and demonstrating to them the efforts of Sheikh Mubarak to strengthen English in the Arab countries. Moreover, he incited against him in the Ottoman Porte, which was difficult during that period. Furthermore, Sheikh Yusuf gained more supporters in his media campaign; they even supported him in his rapprochement policy with the English, such as Talib Al-Naqib.²⁹¹ Among the regional transformations in the region, Sheikh Jassim Al-Thani, Sheikh of Qatar, became supportive of the House of Saud, as Amir Abdulaziz Al-Saud retook Riyadh, and the relationship between him and Sheikh Mubarak improved.²⁹² In return, Sheikh Mubarak was keen to conclude reconciliation to end the conflict situation with Sheikh Yusuf while he was in Hail. In this regard, Mubarak affirmed, on several occasions, his agreement to the request of Sheikh Jassim Al-Thani, Sheikh of Qatar, to seek reconciliation between him and to end the conflict situation.²⁹³ As for Ibn Al-Rasheed, Sheikh Mubarak sought to reconcile with Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed, who was going

²⁸⁷ *Ālqāsimī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 278-283.

²⁸⁸ *Ālzarkalī, Ālwajīz*, 161.

²⁸⁹ *Ālzarkalī, Ālwajīz*, 161.

²⁹⁰ *Ālrashīd, Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 175.

²⁹¹ *Ālshamarī. Ālmustawda ' Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 276.

²⁹² *Ālshamarī. Ālmustawda ' Wa Ālmustahḍar*, 275.

²⁹³ *Ālrayḥānī, Tārīkh Najd*, 151.

through challenging conditions due to the recent defeats in his wars with Amir Abdulaziz Al-Saud. He pleased Khaled Pasha, the Sheikh Al-Zubair, to mediate between them. Indeed, Sheikh Mubarak's efforts were finally accomplished by concluding a peace agreement with Amir Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed at the beginning of 1905.²⁹⁴ Amin Al-Rayhani asserts that Sheikh Mubarak's primary goal, in this reconciliation, was to weaken his opponent, Sheikh Yousuf, and prevent any possible attack from him with the support of Amir Abdulaziz Rasheed.²⁹⁵ The conflicts with Yusuf Al-Ibrahim did not end except with his death on March 12, 1906. With his death, Sheikh Mubarak arranged the house of Al-Sabah and worked to bring his relative back to Kuwait and end the conflict.²⁹⁶ In the end, the death of Yusuf Al-Ibrahim affected Sheikh Mubarak's foreign policy and his relations with regional powers in the second decade of his rule, as they were characterized by transformation and instability with his ally Ibn-Saud and with his enemy Ibn Al-Rasheed.²⁹⁷ Finally, he started to sympathize with the Emirate of Rasheed.²⁹⁸ Moreover, Hussain Khaz'al mentions that Mubarak's relationship between Ibn-Saud and Al-Rasheed characterized his two-sided policy; consequently, they continued in the conflict and eventually weakened. Mubarak thus took advantage of their status quo.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ *Ālrayḥānī, Tārīkh Najd*, 151.

²⁹⁵ *Ālrayḥānī, Tārīkh Najd*, 151.

²⁹⁶ *Ālqāsīmī, Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 310.

²⁹⁷ Jamāl Zakariyā Qāsim, *Tārīkh Ālkhal ij Āl'arabī Āl ḥad īth Wa ālmu 'āṣir*. Vol: II (Cairo: Dar El Fikr El Arabi, 1997), 344.

²⁹⁸ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1044.

²⁹⁹ *Khaz'al, Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol.II, 187.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Shifting Loyalty: The British Protectorate Agreement on Kuwait, 1899

Mubarak Al-Sabah, as previously mentioned, attempted to win over the Ottoman side at first. Accordingly, in 1897, Sultan Abdul Hamid II granted him the title of Kaymakâm. Thus, Mubarak gained legitimacy through this title and confronted his opponents who pursued eliminating him, and, eventually, he guaranteed his position and safety. Nevertheless, this title did not protect him from interregional conflicts, as the parties to the conflict sought the support of other powers, mainly Britain and the Ottoman Empire.

Kuwait had enjoyed independence since its foundation in the early 18th-century. Mubarak Al-Sabah, in his turn, wanted to maintain this independence and autonomy away from the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, after the regional conflicts that corresponded with his assumption of power, and as the Ottoman Porte showed its intention to bring Kuwait under its political sovereignty, he endeavored to gain the support of Great Britain as a power that he considered a lesser evil. During the designated period, the Ottoman Empire approached imposing its direct authority on Kuwait, especially during the reign of Hamdi Pasha, the governor of Basra, which urged Mubarak Al-Sabah to turn to Britain, aspiring to protect his position and maintain Kuwait's autonomy. He was also concerned about the Ottoman policy, primarily because of its volatility and rapid change due to intrigue or corruption in the administration.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia*, 38. Alan de Lacy Rush, *Al-Sabah: History and Genealogy of Kuwait's Ruling Family, 1752-1986* (London: Ithaca Press, 1987), 101.

There is no doubt that the internal rivalry that Mubarak Al-Sabah faced from each of Ibn-Rasheed and Yusuf Al-Ibrahim and the parties allied with them pushed him – to a certain extent, to seek out another force that has the power to solidify his power and maintain his independence. In this regard, Hafiz Wahbah believes that Mubarak Al-Sabah turned to Britain due to the pressure exerted by Sheikh Yusuf and his attacks on Kuwait.³⁰¹ Moreover, Saif Al-Shamlan asserts that Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah was in a state of constant anxiety and anticipation, that his opponent Sheikh Yusuf Al-Ibrahim could be threatening to his situation.³⁰²

It is worth mentioning that Yusuf Al-Ibrahim and Ibn Al-Rasheed followed Mubarak's attempt to gain Ottoman support. When Mubarak overcame the obstacles set by the Ottoman Empire, he turned to Britain as the most politically dominant power in the Gulf, and the parties to the conflict, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, and Ibn Al-Rasheed, turned to Britain as well. According to local reports, Mubarak was aware of the plans of Sheikh Yusuf and his nephews to seek support from Britain.³⁰³ Therefore, he decided to win the British side in advance. Notably, Sheikh Mubarak was apprised of Britain's affluence and worldwide stature as the region's leading force. He was as well conscious of the Ottoman Empire's precarious situation and the crises it was facing.³⁰⁴ Importantly, following these crises, the British attitude towards the Ottoman Empire shifted from one of support for Ottoman sovereignty to seeking a share of the crumbling Empire.

³⁰¹ Hāfiẓ Wahbah, *Jazīrat Āl 'rb Fī Ālqarn Āl 'shrīn* (Lajnat ālt' līf wa āltarjamah wa ālnashr publication, 1935), 100.

³⁰² Sayf Ālshamlān, *Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt* (Kuwait: Dhat ālsalāsīl, 1986), 277.

³⁰³ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1017. And Qāsim, *Tārīkh Ālkhal īj Āl 'arabī Āl ḥad īth Wa ālmu' āsir* II, 314.

³⁰⁴ 'Abū Hākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadūth*, 314. And Salwa Al-Ghanem, *The Reign of Mubarak Al-Sabah: Sheikh of Kuwait, 1896-1915* (London, England: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 52.

In his attempts to achieve the British support, on April 26, 1897, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim suggested to Gaskin- a non-principal official in Bahrain resident, during the latter's visit to Basra, that the British embassy in Constantinople should recommend his interests to the British authorities. If Yusuf's group were able to win the legal battle over the rule in Kuwait, they would engage themselves with the British to put an end to piracy in the Persian Gulf.³⁰⁵ Moreover, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim wrote to Lt. Col. M.J. Meade, the British resident in Bushire, explaining to him about Mubarak's seizure of Kuwait. In his correspondence, Al-Ibrahim claimed that he had no personal interest in the matter, as his wealth was independent of Kuwait, and his only goal was to help his nephews. However, Meade was notified of London's decision that the conflict between Mubarak and Yusuf did not concern the British government if the peace of the Gulf was maintained.³⁰⁶ Accordingly, Yusuf's attempts to gain British support were doomed to fail.

According to Lorimer, one of Sheikh Muhammad's sons made many efforts with the British political authorities, offering to accept placing himself under their protection if they helped him in resorting his rights in Kuwait. In August 1897, Yusuf appeared in Bahrain after being expelled from Iraq by the Ottomans to seek help from the British. However, Britain declined his requests against Shaik Mubarak.³⁰⁷ In that matter, Khaz'al mentions that the nephews went to the British consul in Basra at Yusuf Al-Ibrahim instigation, submitted a lengthy petition regarding their case, and requested British assistance. In exchange, they stated that they were willing to implement all

³⁰⁵ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 89.

³⁰⁶ Al-Ghanem, *The Reign of Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 51.

³⁰⁷ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1017.

British demands in Kuwait once the Emirate returned to them and Mubarak was removed; however, their efforts in gaining the British side failed.³⁰⁸

It is worth noting that Britain's involvement heightened Mubarak's suspicions of Yusuf Al-Ibrahim. Mubarak Al-Sabah was concerned that the issue would take a political dimension, leading to a resurgence of the conflict and globally expanding its scope, resulting in greater tension and instability in the region.³⁰⁹ On that basis, Mubarak -again- tried to seek British support to put a rapid end to the whole matter.

On January 31, 1897, Mubarak wrote a letter to Muhammad Rahim Safar, the representative of the British Residency in Bahrain. In his correspondence, Mubarak requested a meeting with the British Resident, and it was decided to submit the request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of India. Later, Mubarak received a brief reply stating that Gaskin would be on a routine trip to Muhammara and there he could meet Mubarak, but Mubarak did not welcome the idea. A few weeks later, Mubarak's intentions became more explicit, as he wrote a letter to the representative of the Residency in Bahrain stating that his goal was to reach some understanding with the British government.³¹⁰ It is worth noting that the British government in London did not want to confront the Ottoman government, and they sought more to maintain the status quo in the Gulf, especially in Kuwait.³¹¹ Furthermore, the British government regarded Kuwait as an Ottoman affair in an effort to preserve the safety of the Gulf waters.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II, 19.

³⁰⁹ Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, vol. II, 19.

³¹⁰ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 89.

³¹¹ J. J. Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt Fī 'hd Mubārak*, trans. Fatūḥ Ālkhatrash (Kuwait: D.N, 1985), 58.

³¹² Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia*, 36. And Al-Ghanem, *The Reign of Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 50.

In addition, Britain appeared to avoid interfering in Kuwait and provoking countries that have interests in the region, such as Germany, Russia, and France.³¹³ It is worth mentioning that the great powers' ranks shifted during this period. When Britain's stance toward the Ottoman Empire shifted, the Ottoman Empire and Germany had a spectacular alliance during Wilhelm II's reign, particularly after the latter visited the Ottoman Sultan in 1889.³¹⁴ In the same token, Germany lagged the other great nations in terms of imperialism. Nonetheless, Germany became more potent in the 1890s due to its growing power and aspirations as a world power. Remarkably, Germany's new status complemented Abdul Hamid's pan-Islamism. Unlike England, France, and Russia, Germany did not colonize Muslim lands and hence was not considered an imperial power in Muslim eyes.³¹⁵

After his efforts to acquire British protection failed, Sheikh Mubarak wrote a letter to his friend, Agha Muhammad Rahim, the local British agent in Bahrain, expressing his desire to seek Persian protection.³¹⁶ On the other hand, the Persian authorities declined such a request since they could not confront British interests in the region.³¹⁷ Afterward, Sheikh Mubarak turned to Russia and expressed his desire to conclude a treaty of protection. Thus, he sent a letter to the Russian Consul in Baghdad Karaglov, in which he asked for protection and complained about the Ottoman Empire and

³¹³ Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt*, 59.

³¹⁴ Wilhelm II visited the Ottoman Sultan personally in 1889. After this visit, an Ottoman-German rapprochement took place, which resulted in military and financial agreements. The most important of these agreements is the concession of the Baghdad-Berlin line, this concession resulted in an imperial conflict between the great powers mainly British-Ottoman-German regarding the end of the line, which was to be Kuwait. Murat Özyüksel, *The Berlin – Baghdad Railway and the Ottoman Empire Industrialization, Imperial Germany, and the Middle East* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 19-21.

³¹⁵ Feroz Ahmad, *The Late Ottoman Empire*, 10.

³¹⁶ Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt*, 93. AND. Qāsim, *Tārīkh Ālkhāl īj Āl'arabī Āl ḥad īth Wa ālmu'āsir*, vol: II, 75.

³¹⁷ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 169.

Britain.³¹⁸ Nevertheless, fearing the British reaction and doubting Sheikh Mubarak's seriousness in the protection matter, the Russian government refused his request³¹⁹ After that, Mubarak Al-Sabah turned to France, and his endeavor faced the same destiny. Finally, Mubarak threatened that if he did not receive Britain's protection, he would conclude an agreement with the Ottoman government, which wanted to bring Kuwait under its direct sovereignty by establishing a military garrison on its land.³²⁰ Sheikh Mubarak's attempts aimed to pressure Britain, believing that Britain did not want Mubarak to conclude a protection agreement with Persia, Russia, or France.³²¹ Eventually, Mubarak's journey of seeking British attention found success. The British government responded and began to examine its position again after a year or more of Sheikh Mubarak and Sheikh Yusuf's plea for protection, as it modified the attitude towards Kuwait and saw the necessity to hasten an agreement with Sheikh Mubarak in 1899.³²²

It is not only Sheikh Mubarak's requests for protection that precipitated the agreement, rather the expansion of the conflict circle in the Arabian Peninsula. Britain wished to block any possible support of the Ottoman Porte for the parties to the conflict that could undermine Mubarak's authority. However, such a matter was already taking place. The Ottoman Porte supported other conflict parties, mainly Ibn Al-Rasheed, and ignored Yusuf Al- Ibrahim's movement, and encouraged the policy of Hamdi Pasha

³¹⁸ Bondarevsky, *Ālkuwīt W'alāqāthā Āldawliyah*, 468.

³¹⁹ Bondarevsky, *Ālkuwīt W'alāqāthā Āldawliyah*, 127.

³²⁰ Fatūḥ Ālkhatrash, *Tārīkh Āl'lāqāt Ālsiyāsiya Āl Biriṭāniyah Ālkwītiyah* (Kuwait: Dhat ālsalāsil, 1984), 59.

³²¹ Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia*, 36.

³²² Rush, *Al-Sabah*, 120.

against Kuwait. Consequently, the British influence in the Persian Gulf was in front of the aggravated danger of the local tribes and the Ottoman Empire.

The British government concluded its agreement with Mubarak in complete secrecy, not only for fear of provoking the hostility of the Ottoman Empire but also considered the other ambitious imperial powers in the region. Notably, the British government in London began to change its position after the British government employees in India became interested in Kuwait's geographical, political, and economic importance.³²³

Another matter that prompted Britain to sign the agreement is that its embassy in Istanbul discovered the Kapnist project at the beginning of 1898.³²⁴ This project had been proposed to the Sultan by a Russian capitalist, Count Kapnist. The project suggested the support of the Russian government in obtaining a concession from the Ottoman Empire to construct a railway line extending from Tripoli to Kuwait at the head of the Persian Gulf. The completion of this line will shorten the journey to Bombay by five days, affecting the British trade.³²⁵ Furthermore, the Russian took this concession from the Ottoman Empire as granted.³²⁶

Moreover, Britain was alarmed after hearing about a Russian plan to set up a coal store in Kuwait.³²⁷ The success of the Kapnist project and the establishment of a coal store would have increased Russian influence in the Gulf at the expense of British interests and given Russia legitimate rights in Kuwait, posing a direct threat to Britain's

³²³ Y.A. RES 104/30. and Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt*, 68-9.

³²⁴ 'Abū Hākīmah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*, 323.

³²⁵ "Gigantic Railway Project," *The West Australian* (Perth, WA: 1879 - 1954), July 21, 1898.

³²⁶ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 106.

³²⁷ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1022.

position and interests in the region on the one hand, and posing a potent threat to its road to India.

On the other hand, German activity in the region increased due to the rapprochement between the Ottoman government and Germany. This rapprochement resulted in military and economic relations. The most important were the railways' concessions. However, what inflamed the situation between the great powers in the Persian Gulf was the Berlin-Baghdad line, the end of the line was supposed to be in Kuwait. Thus, Britain sought to thwart this project that threatened its interests in the Persian Gulf and India.³²⁸

With the increasing imperial rivalry in the region, Britain sought to block the way for the imperial countries. Lord Curzon, known for his hostility to the Russian and the Ottomans, was appointed as a Viceroy of India in 1898.³²⁹ Moreover, Curzon worked to change the position of the London government towards Kuwait, which led to expedite the achievement of the agreement. Eventually, the "Protection Agreement" was signed on January 23, 1899.³³⁰ The agreement stipulated that Sheikh Mubarak should not lease or assign any part of his property to any foreign country without the permission of the British government, and Britain pledged to provide financial aid to facilitate his affairs and military to protect him from any attack, especially from the seaside. The two parties agreed to appoint a local agent in Kuwait whose duty was to convey the news about Kuwait.³³¹

³²⁸ Rush, *Al-Sabah*, 102.

³²⁹ Rush, *Al-Sabah*, 102.

³³⁰ Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt*, 72.

³³¹ Treaties and undertakings in force between the British Government and the rulers of Kuwait 1814-1913. IOR/R/15/1/739, 2. In Qatar National Library.

Later the agreement was followed by several agreements, the most important of which was the "Agreement for the Prohibition of the Arms Trade," in May 1900, whereby Mubarak pledged to suspend the arms trade in the Gulf, then he agreed to appoint Britain's first political representative in Kuwait in February 1903.³³² According to this agreement, Captain S.G. Knox arrived in Kuwait in August 1904, where Sheikh Mubarak received him warmly. The purpose of appointing the political agent was to try to limit Sheikh Mubarak's movements outside the borders of Kuwait in order to avoid tension that may result from Mubarak movements;³³³ Particularly against Ibn-Rasheed, as well as to ease the political tension on the borders with the Ottoman province of Basra in Umm Qasr, Safwan, and Bubiyan Island.³³⁴ Moreover, on February 27, 1904, Sheikh Mubarak agreed to establish a British post office in Kuwait.³³⁵

The aforementioned agreements were followed by successive agreements, the last of which was the 1913 agreement under which Britain obtained the concession to explore oil in Kuwait.³³⁶ We must assert that the "Protection Agreement" and the agreements that followed were not imposed on Sheikh Mubarak by the British government, but rather he signed it out of a desire to consolidate the pillars of his rule, as demonstrated above.

During that period, the secret British Protection Agreement provided the freedom of movement of Mubarak Al-Sabah in Najd against his opponents, especially Ibn Al-

³³² 'Abū Hākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*, 329.

³³³ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1038-9.

³³⁴ 'Abū Hākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*, 329.

³³⁵ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1038.

³³⁶ 'Abū Hākimah, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*, 31. And Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 100.

Rasheed. Despite Britain's warnings, Mubarak's moves were outside the British and Ottoman spheres of influence. He worked to settle his conflicts with his opponents without referring to the Ottoman Empire or Britain, especially after signing the agreement. The battle Al-Sarif was a remarkable example of this, as the agreement gave Mubarak Al-Sabah to advance into Najd without fear of an Ottoman reaction.

3.2 The Ottoman Empire's Reaction to the Treaty

Noticing the political bond between Britain and Kuwait, the Ottoman-Kuwait relations witnessed a new stage of the conflict during 1899-1903. During this stage, the Ottoman Empire worked to enhance its presence in the Gulf by employing two powers, one European, Germany, through the Berlin-Baghdad railway project, and the other regional, Al- Rasheed power in Najd. Moreover, being convinced of Kuwait's importance, Britain became actively involved in reducing Ottoman control from the region while avoiding confrontations with the Ottomans. From 1903 to 1913, Kuwait was characterized by an open and transparent imperial rivalry between Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and other great powers.

The Ottoman Empire, on its end, took a firm policy to impose its direct sovereignty over Kuwait.³³⁷ It had doubts about Mubarak Al-Sabah's loyalty and his relationship with Britain. On that basis, the Ottoman Empire took several measures to achieve its prompting policies, the most important of which was its reappointment of Hamdi Pasha as the governor of Basra again in 1899 and assigned him the Kuwait matter, as well granted him broader power to act.³³⁸

³³⁷ Y. MTV.199-37. H-11-10-1317.

³³⁸ Ālqāsimī, *Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 82.

Notably, Hamdi Pasha had a deep hostility to Sheikh Mubarak since his previous governorship, and he believed that Mubarak was behind his dismissal.³³⁹ When Hamdi Pasha assumed the Mandate again, he quickly took a firm policy to bring Kuwait under direct Ottoman sovereignty. Moreover, to eliminate the rule of Sheikh Mubarak, he proposed to the Ottoman authorities to take military measures against Kuwait, establish a robust quarantine system in it, establish customs regulations, place an Ottoman officer in it, appoint a customs director for Kuwait Port, and extend a telegram line from Faw passing from Kuwait to Qatif.³⁴⁰

Hamdi Pasha's hostile policy against Sheikh Mubarak and Kuwait continued. He used the property issue, previously raised by Sheikh Yusuf and the nephews, in an attempt to pass a ruling in their favor. After that, he suggested Mubarak's dismissal and the appointment of one of the nephews' sons as ruler of Kuwait.³⁴¹ Hamdi Pasha's hostile actions against Mubarak were one of the reasons that triggered Mubarak to seek assistance from Britain to ensure his safety and the safety of his agricultural properties in Basra.³⁴² On its part, Britain issued a warning to the Ottomans against changing the status quo in Kuwait. At the same time, Britain denied the Ottoman Empire having any special relations with Kuwait and stressed that its relationship with Kuwait is only a friendly relationship with its sheik.³⁴³

As a result of the British warning, the Ottomans conceded their inability to control Kuwait by force.³⁴⁴ Accordingly, they decided to pursue new ways to solve the Kuwaiti

³³⁹ Ālkhātash, *Āl 'lāqāt Ālsiyāsiya Ālbirīṭāniyah Ālkwītiyah*, 82.

³⁴⁰ Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt*, 85.

³⁴¹ Ālqāsīmī, *Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 93.

³⁴² Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt*, 85.

³⁴³ Bidwell, *The Affairs of Kuwait 1896-1905*, vol. I, Sec. III, 22.

³⁴⁴ Y. A. RES.114/46. H-12-06-1319

issue. Noteworthy that the sheiks and people of Kuwait rejected the direct Ottoman authority since the reign of Namik Pasha, 1861-1867. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire tried to win the favor of Mubarak Al-Sabah; thus, as a good gesture, the Ottoman Empire dismissed Hamdi Pasha again and appointed Muhsin Pasha 1900, a friend of Mubarak Al-Sabah.³⁴⁵ The new governor, Muhsin Pasha, on his part, canceled all the measures taken by Hamdi Pasha on the Kuwait issue.³⁴⁶ He worked to improve Sheikh Mubarak's image before the Ottoman authorities and confirm his loyalty to the Sultan;³⁴⁷ however, it was known that Mubarak Al-Sabah used to bribe them to gain the official men's support.³⁴⁸

Notwithstanding, the Ottoman Empire worked on persuading Mubarak to remain loyal to the Sultan, reminding him of his Islamic identity and the importance of the religious ties that bind him and the people of Kuwait to the caliph. The Ottoman government warned him of the dire consequences for him and Kuwait from dealing with imperial powers, especially Britain, and sought to receive written recognition of his submission and loyalty to the Sultan.³⁴⁹ On his part, Sultan Abdul Hamid II adopted a pan-Islamism policy to counter the increasing imperial interest in the Ottoman Empire through which he promoted the dominion of the Caliphate over all Muslims.³⁵⁰ Notably, the Ottoman Empire was isolated after the course of events during the 19th-century, and the balance of power in the world was already shaken. Thus, Abdul Hamid II was left with one option to face the rapid changes, "Pan-Islamism."³⁵¹ Abdul

³⁴⁵ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 171.

³⁴⁶ Ālkhatrash, *Āl 'lāqāt Ālsiyāsiya Ālbirīṭāniyah Ālkwītiyah*, 38.

³⁴⁷ Ālqāsīmī, *Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 114-116.

³⁴⁸ Al-Ghanem, *The Reign of Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 67.

³⁴⁹ Ālšammārī, *Ālmustawda ' Wa ālmustaḥḍar*, 190.

³⁵⁰ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 4.

³⁵¹ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)* (Leiden, New York: Brill, 1997), 44.

Hamid emphasizes Pan-Islamism as a means for bringing about the unity of Muslim subjects and thereby maintaining the Empire's intact. Moreover, he wanted to use this tool for mobilizing Muslims to support the Caliphate and thereby resist European powers.³⁵²

At that stage, the Ottoman Empire chose Rajab Al-Naqib to meet Sheikh Mubarak and urge him to pledge allegiance to the Sultan and stay away from foreign powers. Eventually, Rajab Al-Naqeeb obtained from him a recognition of his loyalty and a forbearing of any rapprochement between him and the British.³⁵³ As a result, Sheikh Mubarak was rewarded with the title of *Mirmiran*, and the Ottoman Empire returned the financial dues that it had paid to his predecessors, Sheikhs Abdullah and Muhammad Al-Sabah.³⁵⁴ Moreover, to prove his loyalty, Mubarak Al-Sabah built a mosque in Kuwait named after Sultan Abdul Hamid II and prayed for the caliph during the Friday prayer.³⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it did not take long for the Ottoman Empire to discover the truth of the Anglo-Kuwaiti relation. So, the Ottoman Empire aimed again to eliminate Sheikh Mubarak and protested against the British government for violating the status quo policy in the Gulf.³⁵⁶

As we mentioned previously, Yusuf Al-Ibrahim tried to benefit from the situation through his correspondence to the Ottoman Porte and the newspaper. He succeeded to a certain extent in exposing the rapprochement between Mubarak Al-Sabah and the British and worked to incite the official Ottoman and public sentiments against Mubarak. Yusuf focused on the national sentiment, the Islamic identity, the loyalty to

³⁵² Özzen, *Pan-Islamism*, 46.

³⁵³ Y. MTV.199/37

³⁵⁴ BEO 1477-110768.

³⁵⁵ BEO 1558-116789.

³⁵⁶ Saldanha, *Āltārīkh Ālsiyāsī Fī Ālkuwīt*, 98.

the Caliphate, and attracting attention to the arms smuggling trade carried out by Mubarak Al-Sabah – who was selling them to tribesmen in the region, which spread chaos and breached security. These correspondences impacted the Ottoman attitude that echoed in the Arab regions.³⁵⁷

It is worth mentioning that the Ottoman Empire appeared not to mind Yusuf Al-Ibrahim's movements. Evidently, the alliance established between Yusuf Al-Ibrahim, the nephews, and Hamdi Pasha is a clear example of the cooperation that took place between a local force and the Ottoman Empire. Under this corporation, Hamdi Pasha's ambitions overlapped in bringing Kuwait under Ottoman control with Yusuf Al-Ibrahim's goals in removing Mubarak Al-Sabah from power. Yusuf Al-Ibrahim did not aim to attract the Ottoman Empire to the region, but it was the only ideal tool to achieve his strategic goals. Nevertheless, when his plans failed, he turned to Britain, as we mentioned earlier, with his nephews, in an attempt to gain the support of significant power in the region. As the Arabian Peninsula was a complex region and subjugating its people was not an easy fulfillment, a balance of power was established through alliances between a regional and higher imperial power to maintain a strong foothold. Worth to be mentioned that this complexity served Britain, which maintained its presence in the Persian Gulf through treaties it had previously concluded with tribal sheiks.

Consequently, Britain's relations with the tribes in the Gulf proved to be stronger and more profound than the Ottoman Empire's relations over the past centuries. Moreover, the rivalry between Britain and the Ottoman Empire in Arabia upset the

³⁵⁷ Ālqāsimī, *Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 57-58.

balance between local Arabian power centers.³⁵⁸ Therefore, the Ottoman Empire adopted a policy in Najd to hegemonize the region; this policy was represented in its partnership and the Rashidis. This cooperation aimed primarily to subjugate the region through local forces and remove foreign influence, chiefly the British. The Ottomans supported the Rashidis and helped them against any local threats to their rule; for their part, the Rashidis did not challenge the caliph's authority and refrained from developing relations with other powers.³⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the relation would encounter a drastic change in later events after its last war with Russia. The Ottoman Empire lost its control over many areas far from the Central Porte, especially in the Hijaz region, where many tribes took advantage of the changes brought by the war and began to destabilize security; whether by raiding or by declaring disobedience against the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, one of the reasons behind the actions of Bedouin tribal sheiks was that they could not obtain the annual taxes during the war. Interestingly, the first of these tribes to cause chaos and disobey the Porte was the Rashidi's.³⁶⁰

Notably, Ibn Al-Rasheed's strength stemmed from his political skills and military and diplomatic abilities. He was able to bring many tribes under his political umbrella. Any tribal force in Arabia was a political and military force capable of standing in the face of any imperial power, including the Ottoman Empire. In the beginning, the Ottoman state was concerned about the growing influence of Ibn Al-Rasheed. In 1878 the governor of Hijaz proposed to the Ottoman Empire to form a military force that would include the opponent tribes of Ibn-Rasheed and others loyal to the Ottoman

³⁵⁸ Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 28.

³⁵⁹ Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 107.

³⁶⁰ Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa*, 135.

Empire and attack Ibn Al-Rasheed make him obey the Ottoman state. Alternatively, if such a strategy appeared infeasible, they suggested isolating him and appoint one of his brothers in his place. Accordingly, the governor sent to the Porte requesting permission to implement the plan. However, the central Porte did not approve this campaign and decided to handle the matter through dialogue and negotiation.³⁶¹ The Ottoman Empire, on its part, sought to maintain control in Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen as they should bring the Rashidi and Saudi dynasties under their control and rule the region through an Amir.³⁶² Hence, the Ottoman-Rashidi relation expanded, and Ibn Al-Rasheed turned useful for the Ottoman Porte.

Since the Ottomans were anxious about the increasing British influence in the region, especially after its occupation of Egypt, and its relations with the tribal sheiks in the Arabian Peninsula, they needed to seek a balance of power in Arabia. Hence, Ottoman Empire's interests and Ibn-Rasheed's overlapped. Abdul Aziz bin Al-Rasheed looked to Kuwait as the main maritime Port of his Emirate on the Gulf; Ibn Al-Rasheed believed that his seizure of Kuwait would enable him to consolidate and expand his control by annexing parts of the coast to it that would increase his economic power due to taxes.³⁶³ Furthermore, the Ottoman-Rashidis collaboration was significant because Ibn Al-Rasheed saw that if he founded an emirate supported by the Ottoman Empire, Al-Saudi's threat would be eliminated.³⁶⁴

All in all, the Ottoman Empire found in Al-Rasheed a suitable alliance to compete with the foreign imperial powers and the local powers. The Ottomans' main concern

³⁶¹ Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa*, 231-232.

³⁶² Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 114.

³⁶³ Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 114.

³⁶⁴ Qāsim, *Tārīkh Ālkhāl ij Āl 'arabī*, 329.

was to avoid any defeat before the inter-imperial competition around Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and the Red Sea. The Ottomans aimed to eliminate the Saudi Dynasty, which challenged the Empire's presence in Arab lands and Najd.³⁶⁵

The Ottoman Empire found in Al Rasheed an excellent partner to compete with the foreign imperial powers and the local powers. The Ottomans' main concern was not to lose out in the inter-imperial competition around Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and the red sea; moreover, the Ottomans aimed to eliminate the Saudi Dynasty, which challenged the Empire's presence in Arab lands and Najd.³⁶⁶ Furthermore, between the late 1880s and the early 1990s, the Rashidis appeared as a regional power in central Arabia. After 1898, the partnership suffered from ups and downs due to the hostilities between the Rashidis and Mubarak Al Sabah and the Saudis' return to Najd.³⁶⁷ The partnership was revived during World War I, as the Rashidis became an essential supporter of the Ottomans in the region.³⁶⁸ The Emirate of Rashidi's survived until 1921, when it lost in front of Saudi troops led by Abul Aziz Al Saud.³⁶⁹

3.3 Beginning of the End: Baghdad- Berlin Railway and the imperial powers

The German government had no interests in the East until 1870. Its activity was limited only to the missionaries in Syria and Palestine. After winning the war against France in 1870-1, Germany's ties with the Ottoman Empire grew further robust, and its status as a world power developed.³⁷⁰ Importantly, the Ottoman Empire went isolated after

³⁶⁵ Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 128.

³⁶⁶ Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 128.

³⁶⁷ Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 129.

³⁶⁸ Çiçek, "The Tribal Partners", 129.

³⁶⁹ Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, 512.

³⁷⁰ Ottoman- German relations started with cultural activities in 1880. Many hundred Ottoman military officers were sent to Germany for training purposes. Then a German military mission arrived at Istanbul, to organize the Ottoman army from 1883 to 1895. Moreover, the Germans financed loans for the ottomans and the trade between the two countries grew rapidly. Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin, "The

the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 and was looking for an ally among the European countries. Especially that saving the Ottoman Empire's integrity was no longer a priority for Britain when it revised its attitude toward the central Porte. Germany, however, was looking forward to broadening its horizons. As a result, the interest of both the Ottoman Empire and Germany aligned.

However, Bismarck, in his turn, was not enthusiastic about Ottoman-German friendship. Bismarck did not want problems related to the Ottoman Empire to damage relations with Russia, significantly after he concluded the League of the Three Emperors agreement, in 1872, with the Austrian and Russian emperors.³⁷¹ Nevertheless, during the reign of Emperor Wilhelm II, the Ottoman Empire entered with the German government in an alliance; as a result, Wilhelm II visited Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1889; this visit marked the opening of a new era of Ottoman-German relations.³⁷² The German looked forward to expanding, was very keen to set foot in the East and support their markets.

Worth noting that railroads were an important area of European investment during Abdul Hamid's reign as a part of Abdul Hamid's policy in modernizing and strengthening the Empire; most of the early railroad had been built by European companies stimulated by Ottoman government guarantees.³⁷³ In 1888, for example, the German government obtained a concession from the Ottoman Empire to extend the Haydarpaşa-Izmit railway,³⁷⁴ and in 1889 a company was established for this purpose

Construction of the Bagdad railway and its impact on Anglo-Turkish relations, 1902-1913," *OTAM Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 16, 2004, 118.

³⁷¹ Özyüksel, *The Berlin – Baghdad Railway*, 16-17.

³⁷² Özyüksel, *The Berlin – Baghdad Railway*, 18.

³⁷³ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 226-7.

³⁷⁴ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 227.

under the name Anatolian Railway with German capital. In 1893, the company achieved the completion of the Eskişehir line, and in 1896 it took a concession line Ankara-Baghdad Railway.³⁷⁵ The Ottoman friendship reached its climax when Emperor Wilhelm II visited Istanbul for the second time in 1898, then went to Syria and Palestine to visit the holy places; moreover, during his stay at Damascus, the Kaiser did not hesitate to assure "three hundred million Mohammedans" that the German emperor is their friend.³⁷⁶

In 1899, Sultan Abdul Hamid II announced his desire to grant the railroad concession to the German Deutsche bank.³⁷⁷ The concession was assigned on March 18, 1902, and this concession gave the Anatolian Railway Company³⁷⁸ a 99-year-long concession and the right to establish and operate a railway from Konya to the Persian Gulf.³⁷⁹ The Germans believed that they might compete with the British only if they could extend the railway as far as Kuwait since the Persian Gulf was not suitable for port construction.³⁸⁰ Moreover, the Ottoman Empire would benefit economically from this project, especially after its aggravated loss during its last wars.³⁸¹

Before these events, a German delegation arrived in Basra in the early 1900s. The English consul learned that the delegation would go to Kuwait to search for a suitable place for the final terminus of the railway. He also learned that the delegation

³⁷⁵ Bilgin, The Construction of the Bagdad railway, 118-119.

³⁷⁶ Edward Meade Earle, *Turkey, The Great Powers, and the Bagdad Railway (A Study in Imperialism)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 134.

³⁷⁷ Özyüksel, *The Berlin – Bagdad Railway*, 60.

³⁷⁸ Because the economic difficulties faced by the Anatolian company, it incorporated into a new company namely the Bagdad railway company under the auspices of Deutsche Bank and the imperial Ottoman bank under the Turkish law of 5 March 1903. Bilgin, The Construction of the Bagdad railway, 119.

³⁷⁹ Āl Ibrāhīm, *Alkuwīt Dirāsah Siyāsiyah*, 47.

³⁸⁰ Özyüksel, *The Berlin – Bagdad Railway*, 60.

³⁸¹ Bilgin, The Construction of the Bagdad railway, 119.

confirmed that the project would not succeed unless the Ottoman government guaranteed it and Kuwait became its final end. Moreover, the delegation indicated that the company that will establish the line should reach an understanding with the Sultan, without referring to the Sheikh of Kuwait, regarding the end of the line.³⁸² Nonetheless, the Sheikh of Kuwait told the British that he did not approve of the railway's end being built on his territory.³⁸³

On this occasion, the mission members tried to initiate talks with Shaik Mubarak regarding the purchase of Kazma and the lease of the surrounding land, a plan that meant seizing an area of more than 20 square miles. However, their goals were thwarted by Sheikh Mubarak's commitment to his agreement with the British government, on the one hand, and his suspicion of the intentions of the Ottoman government, on the other. Furthermore, the head of the mission in Basra stated that those in charge of the railway project would negotiate with the Ottoman authorities directly without referring to the Sheikh of Kuwait.³⁸⁴

It is worth mentioning that Britain's initial attitude toward the German project was favorable since it considered it as a barrier to Russian penetration into Ottoman Empire properties. Later, the British attitude shifted to the opposition as the project threatened its Eastern trade road. As for Russia, it strictly opposed the project. The Russians attributed this to the fact that a secret agreement must have been concluded between the British and the German parties to cooperate in other fields, which could possibly lead to broader cooperation that will affect Russian interests in the East.

³⁸² 'Abū Hākīmāh, *Tārīkh Al Kuwīt Alḥadīth*, 325-27.

³⁸³ Özyüksel, *The Berlin – Baghdad Railway*, 60.

³⁸⁴ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1026-7.

Britain informed the Ottoman government on April 15, 1900, that Britain did not wish to interfere in Turkey's affairs in the Gulf but wanted the situation there to remain as it is. It would not remain silent in the face of anything that could change the status quo in the region. On the same day, Sir N. O'Connor met with the German ambassador and explained to him that the Sheikh of Kuwait is not free to sell or lease to the Baghdad Line Company Kazma or any other part of the land of Kuwait without the approval of Her Majesty's Government.³⁸⁵

The Germans' acquisition of the Baghdad Railway provoked a storm of anxiety and turmoil among the political circles in Britain, France, and Russia. The project posed a severe danger to their interests in the Persian Gulf. Moreover, they were very apprehensive against a Turco-German solid collaboration.³⁸⁶

It also raised the fears of the sheiks of the Arab Gulf, who were bound with Britain by treaties or agreements. The project meant the growing German economic and even military influence in the Ottoman Empire and the Arab parts of the Empire that the line would pass through. This is in addition to the direct threat to the independence of Kuwait. Nevertheless, Britain faced German influence that tried to penetrate Asia to protect its interests in the East, especially the road to India. Therefore, Britain categorically rejected this concession. The imperial conflict that arose between England, Russia, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire disrupted the end of the line to Kazma. It is worth mentioning that both the Russian Kapnist and the German projects increased the importance of Kuwait at the international level.

³⁸⁵ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1030-1.

³⁸⁶ Bilgin, *The Construction of the Bagdad railway*, 119.

Moreover, the successive attempts of the Ottoman Empire in undermining Mubarak Al-Sabah's independence raised his fears. On May 28, through the commander of Sphinx, Mubarak Al-Sabah approached the British Political Resident in the Gulf, asking him for the British government to expedite the declaration of its permanent protection over Kuwait as soon as possible.³⁸⁷ In June, Britain rejected the sheik's proposal due to the international problems involved in this work. However, the Ottoman Empire's moves to impose sovereignty on Kuwait prompted Kemball, the political resident, to visit Kuwait to inform the sheik of providing protection and assistance on the condition that he remains committed to the 1899 agreement.³⁸⁸

Britain wanted to maintain the status quo concerning Kuwait, and accordingly, the talks between the British government and the Sublime Porte ended with their agreement to maintain the status quo. The defect in the agreement was its lack of clarity on what defined the "status quo." For Britain, that phrase referred to accepting its position as the primary force behind the autonomous Sheikh of Kuwait, and London acknowledged the authority of the Sultan's sovereignty there and denied his supreme authority, and the difference between the two terms was never clear to the Ottomans.³⁸⁹

The agreement stated that the British government would not change its relationship with Kuwait and would not turn it into a British protectorate, provided that the Ottoman Empire did not send military forces to Kuwait. However, the Ottoman Empire repudiated that agreement and sent in the last days of 1901-1902 military forces aimed at reducing the rule of the Sheikh of Kuwait in the Islands of Umm Qasr, Safwan,

³⁸⁷ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1030.

³⁸⁸ Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, 1030.

³⁸⁹ Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf*, 178.

Warba, and Bubiyan.³⁹⁰ The Ottoman Empire argued that these areas were within the borders of the Ottoman territories.³⁹¹ Sheikh Mubarak, on his part, protested the actions of the Ottoman Empire, claiming that these regions were within the boundaries of Kuwait and that the first inhabitants of these areas were Kuwaitis.³⁹² The Ottoman Empire wanted to control the northern provinces of Kuwait, including the coastal areas, to benefit from the narrow and deep exits of Khor Abdullah and Al-Zubayr, which could be the end of the Baghdad railway.³⁹³ On February 10, 1902, news spread that the Turks intended not only to attack Kuwait but also to occupy all the lands around it to obtain an acquired right near the site of the Port of Kuwait. When the British ambassador in Constantinople protested that the Turks wanted to occupy these areas, the Ottomans claimed these measures were taken only to protect Kuwait.³⁹⁴ Noteworthy that this was the first time that a territorial dispute occurred between Kuwait and the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, on January 3, 1902, the government of India warned the India office in London that Ottoman troops had moved into an area claimed by Mubarak as his land. Mubarak wrote, on January 22, to the Bushire resident to protest the Ottoman incursions into his territory.³⁹⁵

B.J Slot believes that the plan was for the Ottomans to put their hands on an alternative route for the railway and the final terminus overlooking Khor Abdullah that was in remote places not under direct British control. Furthermore, the Ottoman control of Bubiyan Island would have given the Ottomans a direct entrance to the Gulf

³⁹⁰ Al-Ghanem, *The Reign of Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 117.

³⁹¹ Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Alkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 171.

³⁹² Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, II, 61. And Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 9.

³⁹³ Al-Ghanem, *The Reign of Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 161. And Ālqāsimī, *Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 226.

³⁹⁴ Ālqāsimī, *Bayān Ālkuwīt*, 225.

³⁹⁵ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 222-3.

of Kuwait. Kuwait itself was of no use to the Ottomans because the sheik might ask for the help of the British, just as Shatt al-Arab was not the right place for the last terminus, as its lower part was an international waterway and forming the border with Persia so that Britain could easily intercept them by sea.³⁹⁶

As for Sheikh Mubarak, he acted with his judgment and avoided confrontation with the Ottoman Empire, as the confrontation against the Ottomans would be a declaration of disobedience that would make him depend on the British forever. Moreover, it was an unsuitable moment for Mubarak to confront the Ottomans. In January 1902, Mubarak received a warrant to appear before the Court in Basra to hear his words about the conflict with his nephews over Basra's property, the losses of Basra's incomes were considered a painful blow that paralyzed Kuwait's financial resources.³⁹⁷

Considering Mubarak's sensitive position with the Ottoman Empire, it was his interest that the British intervene to protect his lands on his behalf. Importantly, the British maneuvers did end the Islands' conflicts, and rather, it stopped the Ottoman from advancing in the region, especially after the appearance of the Fox, a big cruiser of the second class.³⁹⁸ However, the possession of the islands would be put to negotiation again in the 1913 convention.

3.4 The Anglo-Ottoman Convention Over Kuwait 1913

³⁹⁶ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 219.

³⁹⁷ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 220-1.

³⁹⁸ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 227.

Things have calmed down relatively for Mubarak Al-Sabah after his wars with Abdul Aziz Al-Rasheed and Yusuf Al-Ibrahim ended. Eventually, the death of the two in 1906 marked the end of the regional conflict that cost Mubarak Al-Sabah a lot of effort and time. Kuwait has grown relatively safe, especially after signing the secret agreement with Britain. However, the Baghdad-Berlin railway remained suspended for a long time until it returned to the discussion table in 1911.

In the time preceding 1911, the Ottoman Empire witnessed many political changes that affected the course of events. In July 1908, the Young Turk revolution forced a return to the constitution that Sultan Abdul Hamid II had previously abolished, and the Committee of Union and Progress emerged as a leading political group in Ottoman rule. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire lost more territories in Balkan for Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in 1908 Bulgaria declared independence. Sultan Abdul Hamid II was forced to abdicate and replaced by Mehmed V. Afterwards, Italy invaded Libya in 1911. Thus, the Ottomans lost their last African territory.³⁹⁹ In light of all these changes, the Young Turks turned for the Ottoman-Arab lands to maintain their authority when the Arab Gulf Emirates and Kuwait were at the top of the Ottoman regional concerns. Remarkably, the policy of the Young Turks tended to strengthen the Ottoman control in the Arab land in general and in the Gulf in particular. They work to weaken the sheiks' authority and attract them to the idea of the Islamic university that Sultan Abdul Hamid II adopted before.

In Baghdad, Ismail Hakki Bey Babanzade, the envoy of the Ottoman Empire there, drew a bleak picture of the chaos that the Arab tribes were going through. On December 28, 1910, he published a report in *Tanin* newspaper about the conditions of

³⁹⁹ Hanioglu, the *Late Ottoman Empire*. 168.

Iraq and the neighboring regions in which he focused on the English in Kuwait and Britain's relationship with the Sheikh of Muhammara. In his report, he expressed his resentment and hatred for the English, and he believed that it was necessary to suppress the arms trade carried out under the eyes of the British authorities.⁴⁰⁰

The Ottoman Empire and Britain entered a severe confrontation in July 1910, when the Ottoman authorities in Basra dispatched Ottoman soldiers to take Zakhnuniyeh Island, a small island about ten miles southeast of the port of Al-Uqair, moreover, under the Ottoman flag. Accordingly, Sir Edward Gray informed the British Foreign Secretary that Britain should take a more cautious approach towards the Ottoman policy in the Gulf region. He stressed that the Young Turks are spending money and military power to maintain their presence in these areas, as they are working to pressure the tribes to subjugate them. G. Lowther stated that the Unionists could provoke the Arab tribes against the English as enemies of Islam and stressed that the policy of the Unionists would lead to the deterioration of Britain's interests in the Arab world, especially in the Gulf and Iraq. Moreover, he warned from the ramification of the Islamic University as it could cause a great danger to the British government's interests in the Gulf.⁴⁰¹

As a result, the British sought a solution to the Kuwait issue. The British attempted to reach an agreement on Kuwait's status to achieve their goal of not allowing any Gulf station of the Baghdad Railway to be built in Kuwait without Britain's involvement. For the Ottoman part, the minister of foreign affairs, Mehmet Rifaat Pasha (1909-11),

⁴⁰⁰ Charles M. Marling to Edward Grey 4th January 1911. Harold Temperley and G. P. Gooch, ed., "The Last Years of Peace," in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, vol. X. Part. II (London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1938), 9-12.

⁴⁰¹ Temperley and Gooch, "The Last Years of Peace," 1-6. Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, August 22, 1910.

in March 1911, stated that the Ottoman Empire wished to reach an understanding regarding the construction of the section of the line from Bagdad to the Persian Gulf with Britain and that the Ottoman government had every reason to look forward to a prompt settlement.⁴⁰²

Negotiations between the British and the Ottomans began in February 1911 and lasted for more than two years, ending with the signing of the Anglo-Ottoman Gulf Agreement on July 29, 1913. In the negotiations, the question of Kuwait was subject mainly to two points: the legal status of Kuwait, the extent of the territory of Kuwait.⁴⁰³

On the other hand, Mubarak Al-Sabah refused to submit to any Ottoman authority and attempted to exert indirect pressure on the British government. He caused the British some inconvenience, implying that he would break the alliance with them, favoring another party. Mubarak was fully aware of the international situation; thus, he exploited the growing British fear of German expansion. He, further, spread a rumor to seek the British attention, that an agent of Wönckhaus, a German trading company, a Baghdadi Christian named Alexander Forage, visited him and suggested that if the sheik leased any part of his lands to the railway company, the Emperor of Germany would intervene with the Ottomans so that Safwan, Umm Qasr and Boubyan would return to Mubarak.⁴⁰⁴

Later, Mubarak Al-Sabah expressed that he would resort to a country other than Britain, and thus Britain was afraid of Mubarak's diplomatic capabilities and worked

⁴⁰² Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, March 1, 1911. Temperley and Gooch. *The Last Years of Peace*, 25.

⁴⁰³ 'XXII/10 Status of Kuwait & Negotiations with Turkey.' [11r] (21/446), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/5/65, in *Qatar Digital Library*.

⁴⁰⁴ There is no evidence of such a story according in German sources. Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 375.

to manage the negotiations in favor of the British-Kuwaiti sides. As for the Ottomans, the Empire's challenges in Europe motivated them to speed up negotiations with Britain. The main obstacle in the eyes of the Ottomans that disrupted the agreement was the British demand that the Porte accept the legitimacy of the agreements signed by Britain with Kuwait, which means that the Ottoman Empire implicitly accepted that Kuwait was a sovereign state since 1899. The Sublime Porte completely rejected the British consideration of Kuwait's status, and the Ottoman Empire argued that if the Porte was not aware of the 1899 Convention, the position created by this agreement was not part of the status quo but a violation of it.⁴⁰⁵

Britain was afraid of the Ottoman Empire, especially after its alliance with Germany and taking financial loans from France. Nicholas O'Connor, Britain's ambassador in Istanbul, confirmed that the Ottoman Empire would succeed in its endeavors in the Persian Gulf due to the religious and spiritual ties that link it with the Arabs in the Gulf. Britain was concerned that Mubarak would lose confidence in it and turn to another country. Therefore, O'Connor emphasized the need to permanently protect the Sheikh of Kuwait to avoid losing his faith in the British government.⁴⁰⁶

Due to the difficulties it was having with Italy in Libya, the troubles in the Balkans, and its problems with Russia, it became evident that the Ottoman Empire could not continue its policy against Britain in the Gulf region. As a matter of fact, the Ottoman army was still under German training. The Ottoman Empire could not direct its policy to these remote areas with an unprepared army, so the statesmen of the Unionists preferred that the Ottoman Empire settle its problems with Britain through

⁴⁰⁵ Slot, *Mubarak Al-Sabah*, 368-9.

⁴⁰⁶ Harding to Nicolson 29 March 1911. Temperley and Gooch. *The Last Years of Peace*, 38.

negotiations.⁴⁰⁷ We must highlight that the Anglo-Ottoman talks dealt mainly with the Baghdad Railway, mutual interests between Britain and the Ottoman Empire in the Gulf region, and the Turkish customs duties in the state of Baghdad, which, according to the prevailing foreign concession system, required the approval of the concerned foreign governments.⁴⁰⁸

Indeed, the negotiations between the two parties faltered. Britain insisted on recognizing only the Port of Uqair as an end to the Ottoman influence in the Gulf and not recognizing the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire over the trucial states and Kuwait.⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, the Ottoman and British views conflicted regarding the nature of the Ottoman sovereignty over Kuwait.⁴¹⁰

Finally, the agreement was signed on July 29, 1913, by Ibrahim Hakki Pasha on the Ottoman's behalf and Sir Edward Gray on behalf of the British government. The agreement was divided into five sections. The first section discussed Kuwait as an emirate and its borders. This section stipulated that Kuwait was considered an independent district from the Ottoman Empire and that the Sheikh of Kuwait exercises an independent administration in his Emirate under Ottoman sovereignty. The second article of the agreement stipulated that the Sheikh of Kuwait would raise the Ottoman flag, but the word "Kuwait," if the sheik coveted, could be added to one of its sides; the Ottoman Empire also pledged not to recruit any Kuwaiti staying in Iraq, take fees from its fishermen, and refrain from any interference in Kuwait's internal affairs. The

⁴⁰⁷ Temperley and Gooch. *The Last Years of Peace*, 191.

⁴⁰⁸ Memorandum communicated to Tewfik Pasha, July 26, 1911. Temperley and Gooch. *The Last Years of Peace*, 45-48.

⁴⁰⁹ Qāsim, *Tārīkh Ālkhāl ij Āl 'arabī*. Vol: II, 394.

⁴¹⁰ Bagdad railway and Persian Gulf, The negotiations with Hakki Pasha. May 2, 1913. Temperley and Gooch. *The Last Years of Peace*, 114-116.

Sheikh of Kuwait may also appoint envoys in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire to take care of the interests of his subjects, and the Ottoman State may not occupy any part of the Emirate. The third article stipulated that the Ottoman Empire recognized all the treaties and agreements the Sheikh of Kuwait concluded with Britain on January 23, 1899, May 24, 199, and February 28, 1904. Significantly, the Ottoman Empire pledged not to concede to any country any province in the Gulf and accept British interests. The Ottoman state made it clear that it only cares that Kuwait does not become a warehouse for distributing weapons and war munitions that some Arab tribes might use in rebellion against the state.⁴¹¹

The fifth and sixth articles in the agreement defined the borders of the Emirate, and the eighth agreement dealt with the Baghdad Railway Agreement and its relationship with Kuwait and stipulated that in the event of extending the Baghdad-Basra line to the Gulf and ending in Kuwait or any other place within the specified borders of the Emirate, the two governments agree on the measures taken to protect the line.⁴¹²

Article 12 of the agreement stipulated that it would be ratified, and the ratification would be exchanged in London at the latest within three months. However, the agreement was not ratified within the specified three-month period. Negotiations were repeated, and additional agreements were signed that extended the ratification period by Britain and the Ottoman Empire. By October 1914, the two countries became close

⁴¹¹ 'XXII/10 Status of Kuwait & Negotiations with Turkey.', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/5/65, in *Qatar Digital Library*.

⁴¹² Meade, *Turkey, The Great Powers, and the Bagdad Railway*, 255.

to war, and the 1913 Convention remained devoid of binding international legal value because it was not ratified.

What is significant about the 1913 convention is that the Ottoman Empire recognized Kuwait's administrative independence and the hereditary transfer of power in the Al-Sabah family. As in Egypt, the Ottoman Empire recognized its nominal sovereignty over Kuwait and did not consider Kuwait as part of Basra. Otherwise, it had to link it directly to the Ottoman administration.

When the first world war broke, the British forces entered Al-Faw on November 6, 1914. While the Ottoman forces evacuated Basra on November 19, the British government occupied Basra two days later, and its military forces landed there on November 22. The British government informed Sheikh Mubarak that their groves in Al-Faw would remain under the Al-Sabah family control and tax-exempt. They also assured him that if Safwan, Umm Qasr, and Boubyan were attacked, the British government pledged to protect them. Furthermore, S.G. Knox concluded his letter by the British government acknowledging the sheikhdom of Kuwait as an independent government under British protection.⁴¹³ With the British occupation of Basra, the links between Sheikh Mubarak and the Ottoman Empire were utterly cut off.

It should be recalled that Mubarak Al-Sabah worked to consolidate his influence wisely and played on all sides to achieve his interests and independence. In the beginning, Mubarak Al-Sabah was keen and worked hard in all available ways to win the Ottoman position because of its importance in front of the Muslim population of Kuwait and a desire to preserve the property of the Al-Sabah family in Al-Faw. When

⁴¹³ Khaz'al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, II, 155-6.

the Ottoman Empire began its attempts to seize Kuwait, Mubarak changed his loyalty and turned to Britain, which at that time seemed more capable of protecting Kuwait. It is worth noting that Mubarak Al-Sabah was still keen to maintain good relations with the Ottoman Empire even after signing successive agreements with Britain. We can attribute this to different reasons: the Arab newspapers attacked Mubarak for his inclinations to Britain; thus, Mubarak maybe wanted to prove his loyalty to the Islamic state.⁴¹⁴

Moreover, perhaps all that Mubarak Al-Sabah wanted was to preserve Kuwait's independence, a matter that could not have been achieved with Kuwait's actual subordination to the Ottoman Empire. Local sources mentioned that Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah has always said he is ready to serve the Ottoman State and cooperate with it if sincere men take over the rule. Moreover, he stated that he was expecting the Ottoman Empire to trust him. He affirmed that if the Ottoman Empire had trusted him, he would have trusted it and made it independent of the Sixth crop in Baghdad.⁴¹⁵

Notwithstanding, Britain was not directly apprehensive of the Ottoman Empire, but it was anxious about Germany, which stood behind the Ottoman Empire and strived to consolidate its influence in the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire failed in subjugating the Arabian Peninsula despite its many attempts. Ibn Saud was able to expel the Ottomans from Al-‘Ahsa in 1913, and the Allied victory in World

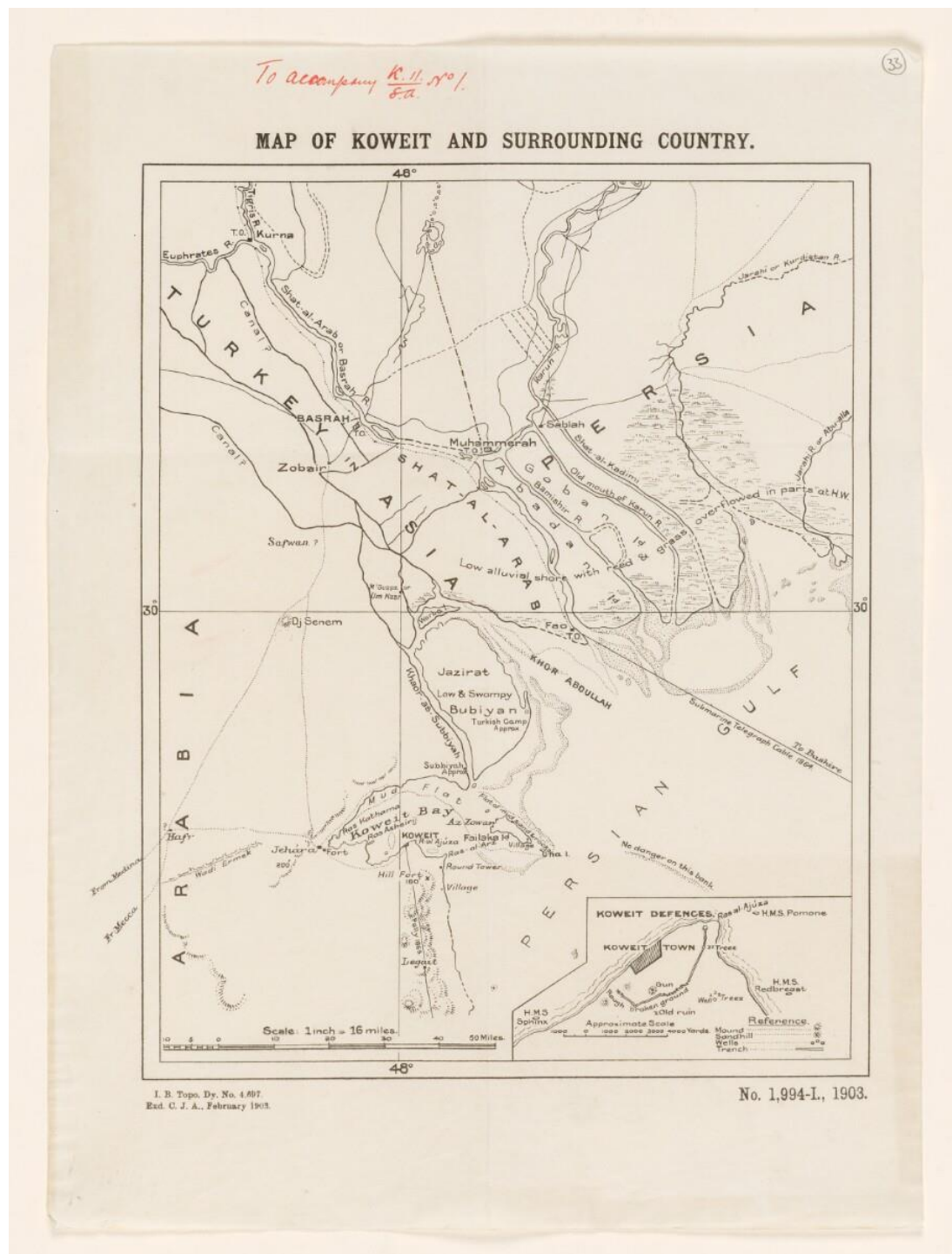
⁴¹⁴ Mubarak Al-Sabah provided several aids to the Ottoman state before 1913, he provided financial aid in the Astana fire, in the war of the Ottoman Empire in Tripoli, and its war with the Bulgarians he donated to the Hijaz Railway Project. The Ottoman Empire rewarded him for these services by awarding him the Majeedi Medal of the first degree to encourage loyalty in 1913. Khaz‘al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, II, 84. And Ālrashīd, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālḥadīth*, 199-200.

⁴¹⁵ Khaz‘al, *Tārīkh Ālkuwīt Ālsiyāsī*, II, 75.

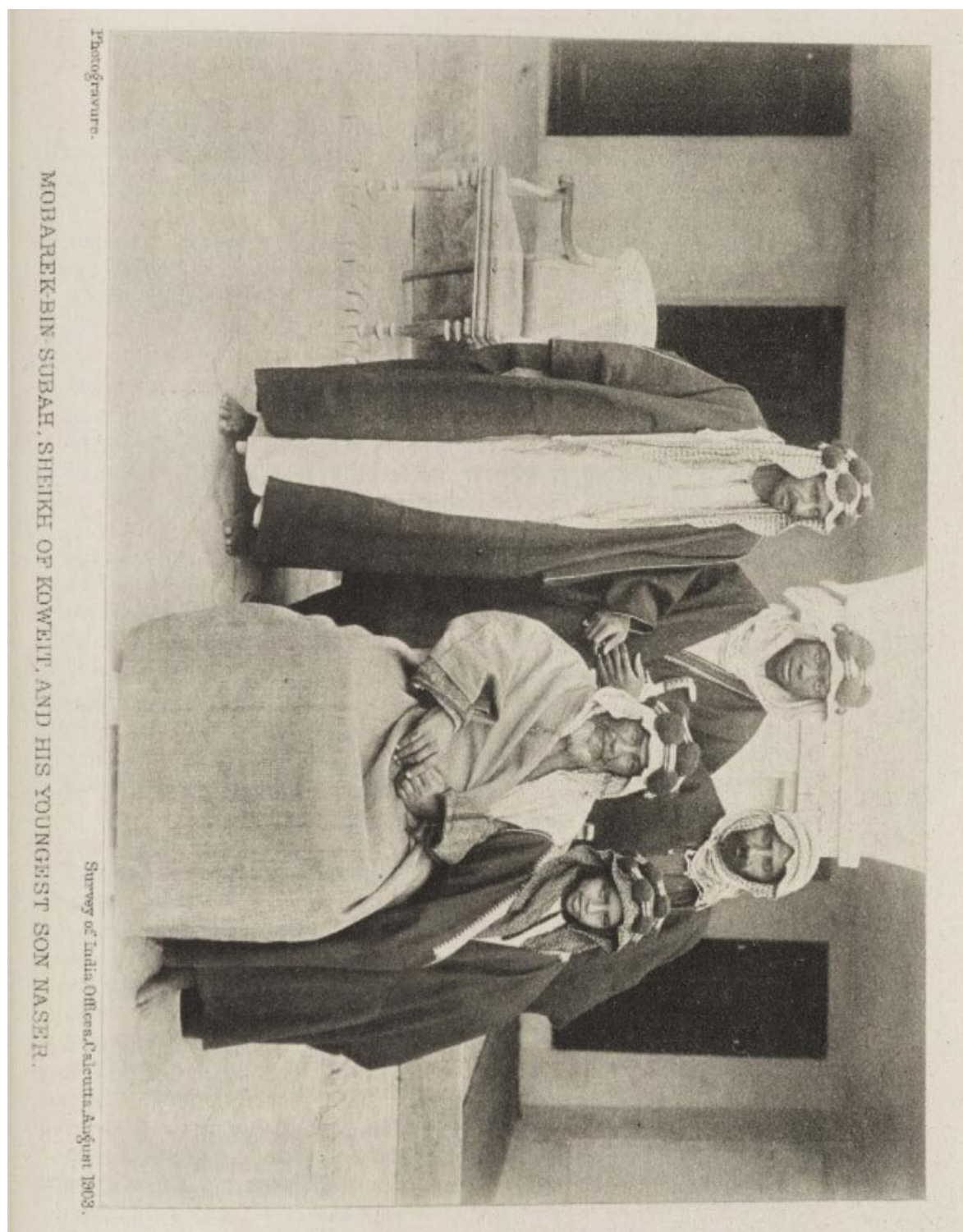
War I ended the Ottoman control and domination over the rest of the Arabian Peninsula.

Chiefly, the First World War put Kuwait in a new position for Britain; Britain availed from it as a base for its forces coming from India and other colonies in Southeast Asia. In line with the policy of acting based on the *fait accompli*, Britain held the Uqair Conference on December 2, 1922, to determine the borders of Kuwait. On July 24, 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed, according to which Turkey ceded to Britain and France the Arab region, which was under its sovereignty, including Kuwait. According to the British-French divisions and with the approval of the League of Nations, Iraq was placed under the British Mandate, and Kuwait was placed under British protection. The articles contained in the 1913 agreement concerning the delimitation of the borders of Kuwait with Basra were considered as the basis for delineating the borders between Kuwait and Iraq in the aftermath of the First World War and the establishment of national rule in Iraq. It is worth mentioning that Iraq did not recognize this agreement on the pretext that it was not ratified and hence the border crisis between Kuwait and Iraq arose.⁴¹⁶

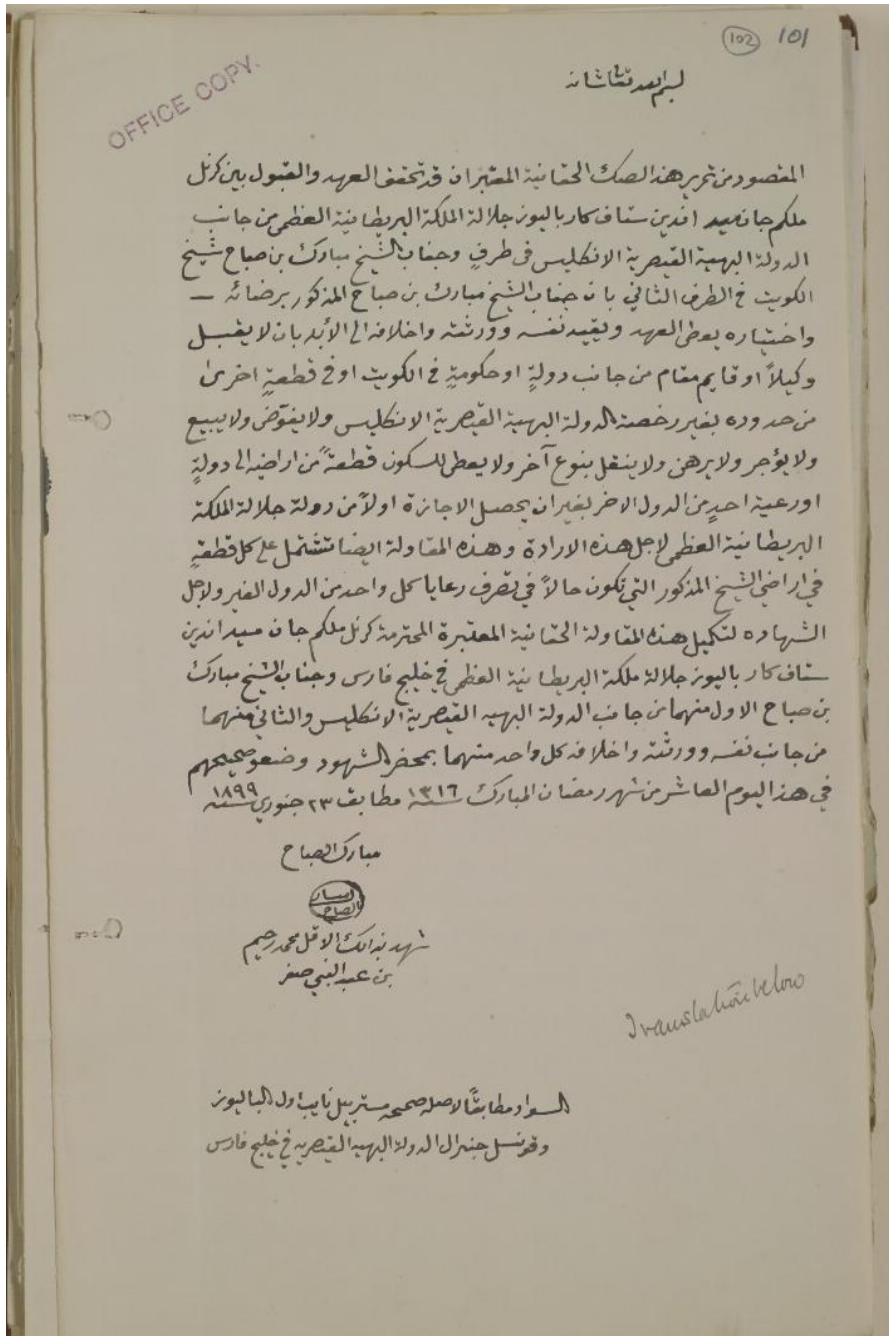
⁴¹⁶ Qāsim, *Tārīkh Ālkhāl īj Āl‘arabī*. Vol: II, 355.



⁴¹⁷ Illustration (2) 'Koweit: A Report' [64r] (135/140), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, Mss Eur F111/383, in Qatar Digital Library.



⁴¹⁹ Illustration (4) 'Koweit: A Report' [9v] (23/140), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, Mss Eur F111/383, in *Qatar Digital Library*.



Arabic translation of the secret Anglo-Kuwaiti agreement 1899.⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ Illustration (5) 'File XXII/1 Koweit relations with British Government' [102r] (203/382), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/5/59, in *Qatar Digital Library*.

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Translation of the Secret Agreement between the British Government
and Sheikh Mubarak dated the 23rd of January 1899 .

The object of writing this lawful and honourable bond is that it is hereby covenanted and agreed between Lt-Colonel Malcolm John Meade I.S.C. Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident on behalf of the British Govt: on the one part and Sheikh Mubarak bin Sheikh Sabah Sheikh of Koweit on the other part, that the said Sheikh Mubarak bin Sheikh Sabah of his own free will and desire does hereby pledge and bind himself, his heirs and successors not to receive the Agent or Representative of any power or Government at Koweit or at any other place within the limits of his territory without the previous sanction of the British Government ; and he further binds himself his heirs and successors not to cede sell lease mortgage or give for occupation or for any other purpose any portion of his territory to the Govt: 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 Sheikh Mubarak which may now be in the possession of the subject of any other Government.

In token of the conclusion of this lawful and honourable bond , Lt-Colonel Malcolm John Meade I.S.C. Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf and Sheikh Mubarak bin Sheikh Sabah , 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 signatures on this the 10th day of Ramazan 1316 corresponding to the 23rd day of January 1899.

(sgd) M.J.Meade.

(sgd) Mubarak-al-Sabah.

Political Resident in the
Persian Gulf.

(sgd) E. Wickham Hore.

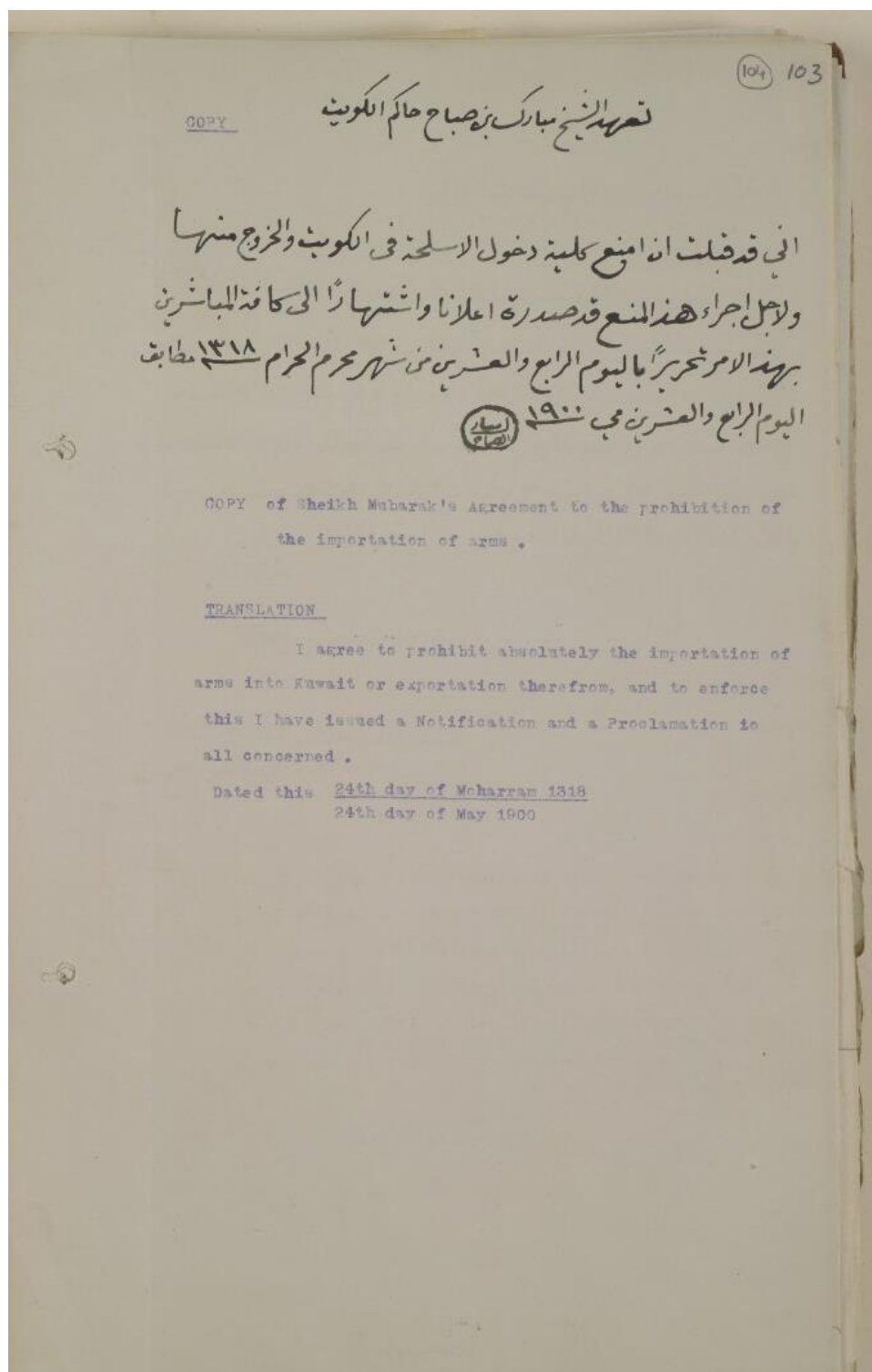
Captain. I.M.S.

Witnesses

(sgd) Mohamed Rahim bin Abdul
-nebi Saffer.

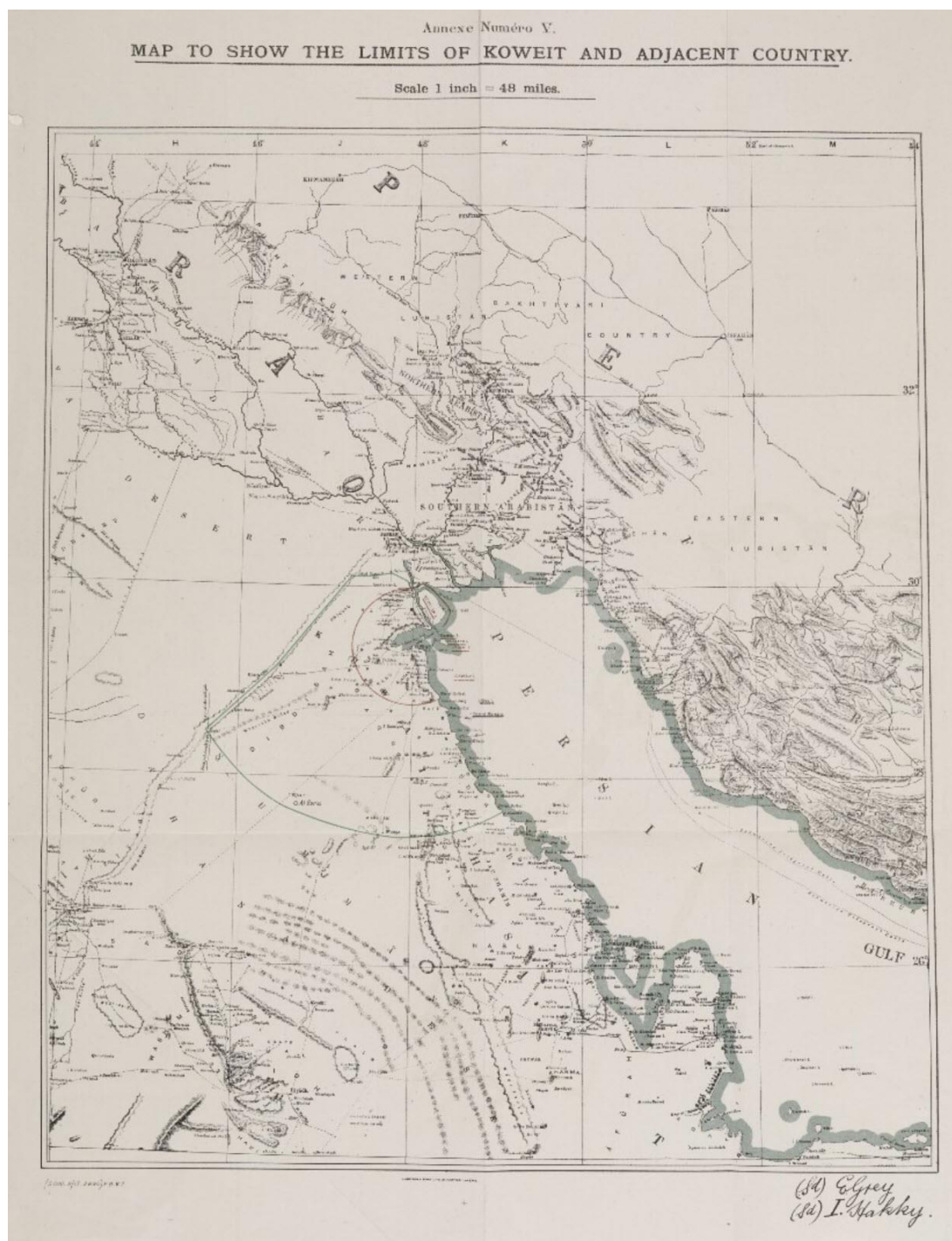
(sgd) J. Calcatt.Gaskin.

⁴²¹ Illustration (6) 'File XXII/1 Koweit relations with British Government' [103r] (205/382), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/5/59, in *Qatar Digital Library*.



Copy of Sheikh Mubarak's Agreement to the Prohibition of the importation of arms.⁴²²

⁴²² Illustration (7) 'File XXII/1 Koweit relations with British Government' [104r] (207/382), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/5/59, in *Qatar Digital Library*.



Map issued as Annex no. 5 to the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of July 29, 1913, with inner and outer limits of Kuwait shown by red and green lines, respectively. Signatures of Sir Edward Grey and Ibrahim Hakki Pasha appear in the bottom right-hand corner.⁴²³

⁴²³ Illustration (8) 'MAP TO SHOW THE LIMITS OF KOWEIT AND ADJACENT COUNTRY.' [73r] (1/2), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/12/2131, f 73, in *Qatar Digital Library*

CONCLUSION

The Kuwait issue settled in favor of Mubarak Al-Sabah and Britain, and by 1914 the Ottoman Empire had left the Arabian Peninsula without return. Mubarak Al-Sabah's goal was primarily to protect his interests. As for the issue of Kuwait's independence, it became a foregone conclusion.

Al-Qana'i mentions that Al-Sabah family was only concerned about preserving their sovereignty and rule, and he sees in their lack of interest in science and education evidence. Al-Qana'i and Al-Rasheed believe that during the era of Mubarak Al-Sabah, Kuwait enjoyed a good financial position, and Al-Mubarakiya School was established during Mubarak's rule, even though Mubarak did not help with anything. After establishing Al-Mubarakiya School, Jaber bin Sabah stated, referring to the Kuwaiti people: *"It is in our interest that you remain unenlightened."*⁴²⁴ Mubarak Al-Sabah wanted to rule alone with his loyalist's family relatives. Furthermore, the question lies: Was he an autocrat? Indeed, he was considered as one who was looking to achieve power and personal whims in the 20th century. However, now he is viewed with admiration for the effectiveness of his policy in avoiding what could have been grievous.

Mubarak Al-Sabah acted alone intelligently, even without returning to his tribe. In the Secret Protection Agreement of 1899, Mubarak signed on behalf of the Kuwaitis without involving any of his entourage. To a certain extent, Mubarak was aware of the local reaction toward maintaining such a relationship with the British.

⁴²⁴ ālqinā'ī, *Ṣafahāt Min Tārīkh Ālkuwīt*, 32.

We can say that he was a man of his time. He played the imperial powers against each other to achieve his interests. He resorted to the Ottoman Empire first; however, he diplomatically moved away when it showed its intentions. His family's possessions in Al-Faw, located within the Ottoman Empire's influence, were considered the main financial resource that formed Al-Sabah's economic power. In addition, Kuwait was highly dependent on its trade and needs on Basra, Iraq, and the Hejaz. Any economic blockade that the Ottoman Empire could have imposed would have paralyzed the economic movement of Kuwait, most of whose residents are engaged in trade. In addition to the fact that Mubarak Al-Sabah could not mobilize the Kuwaitis militarily against the Ottoman Empire. In the event of any armed conflict, the people of Kuwait were not inclined to wars but rather to trade, and experience has proven that. Mubarak Al-Sabah failed in his regional battle with Ibn-Rasheed. This is in addition to the fact that it is not easy to mobilize an Arab Islamic tribe against an Islamic state, and the Ottoman Empire could use the tribes against him.

Therefore, in Mubarak's view, the military solution was not feasible, and he, in turn, avoided any possible military confrontation. These combined reasons prompted Mubarak to consolidate a balanced policy in his relationship with the Ottoman Empire and prompted him to form a secret relationship with Britain, confirming his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire.

Local sources show that Mubarak Al-Sabah had an Islamic and Ottoman orientation, but he did not see a real future in the Ottoman Empire, and he could not rely on it. His experience proved the speed of buying Ottoman support or selling it if his opponent pays more. The issue was not the same with Britain. Britain was more pragmatic in its imperial policy, based on interests rather than personal preference.

Evidently, it did not bring Kuwait under its protection directly. Mubarak, in turn, was careful with Britain; he was aware of what it means to bring a hegemonic imperial power to the borders of his small emirate.

As for Britain, the truth is that Kuwait did not constitute real importance in its imperial policy in the beginning. Rather, the Government of India and the Government of London were divided over the British policy towards it. During its policy in Kuwait, Britain did not play an explicitly competitive role but rather pursued a policy of working in the shadows and undercover.

Britain's interests with the Ottoman Empire were not jeopardized, despite changing the first's policy towards the Ottoman Empire into a rival. Britain had several considerations to pursue, especially the Muslims in India. Sultan Abdulhamid had religious influence over Muslims in India, especially with the emergence of Islamic university policy, which could have been used to mobilize the public sentiments of Indian Muslims. Britain would not have ventured its main colony in the east for the sake of Kuwait. Later, what angered Britain was the intervention of other imperial powers that posed a direct and explicit threat to British interests in the east, especially the Baghdad-Berlin line. Britain saw the danger coming from the allies of the Ottoman Empire, not from the Ottoman Empire itself. Therefore, it had to act and abandon the status quo policy. Britain's position was stronger, as it did not act alone, but the main movers of Britain in the Persian Gulf region were the tribes. It had maintained its previous presence in the Gulf through the Trucial Coast Treaties, and Bahrain, Kuwait was the last emirate to enter the British protection. The British protection of Kuwait came as a foregone conclusion to protect British interests in general. It is worth mentioning that the British transportation system in the Persian Gulf was stronger and

better than the Ottoman. British ships were roaming the Persian Gulf due to their commercial activity in the region, so the news was not late in reaching the decision-makers. Britain acted quickly and without waiting, which gave it political superiority in the waters of the Persian Gulf.

As for the Ottoman Empire, it did not confront Mubarak Al-Sabah directly. Mubarak, in turn, worked to win the Ottoman side many times, and he renewed his loyalty every time things worsened with the Ottomans. Such a condition left the Ottoman Empire without any conclusive evidence of shifting his loyalty. In addition to Britain's interests extended in the Persian Gulf, any confrontation with Mubarak was a blatant confrontation with Britain, which would provoke an imperial conflict with ominous consequences in the Gulf to destabilize the status quo. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire was deeply preoccupied with its problems in other parts of the world. In addition to the weak transportation of the areas under the Ottoman Empire with the administrative center, the Persian Gulf and Arabia are considered regions somewhat far from the center, complicating the administration; this prompted the Ottoman state to return to an old policy in ruling remote areas through an emir. Thus, the Ottoman Porte strengthened its ties with Ibn-Rasheed, through which it tried to enter Najd and undermine Mubarak's rule.

Moreover, Germany entered as a new imperial player on the side of the Ottoman Empire in an attempt to consolidate its influence in Kuwait. The attempts of the Ottoman Empire against the imperial regional alliance in Kuwait were unsuccessful; thus, it finally withdrew from the region without return during the First World War.

The Ottoman Empire in Najd, Al-‘Ahsa, and the Persian Gulf played an important role in shaping the region's modern history, and it is not possible to understand the history and present of the region without examining the Ottoman history of the region.

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