

Treaties in Shadows: British Colonial Strategy in Creation of Saudi Kingdom

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Abstract:

This study examines the historical context and relationship between Ibn Saud and British Empire along with the implications of treaties. The paper also examines the planning of British Empire, how British strategically aligned with Ibn Saud to design the regional political landscape. The researcher also focuses the geopolitical changes in the Middle East after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The study explores the Arab Movement which was primarily depended on Nationalism over Religion to weaken the unity of the Ottoman Empire. The special correspondence between Sharif Hussain bin Ali and Sir Henry McMahon, Secretary of Britian, provides insights into the assurance made to people of Arab for their future. The paper also highlights the secret agreements that helped Ibn Saud to be King of Mecca and Medina by replacing the Hashemite clan. Ibn Saud was selected to safeguard the strategic interests of British Empire in the region. This paper examines how Britain projected herself as a protector of Islam in the world, and this was mentioned in special correspondence. To portray, the protector of Islam was a strategy to get support of Arab people and consolidate the British influence in the Middle East against the Ottoman Empire. This research uncovers the relationship between British Empire and Ibn Saud. The researcher sheds the light on the diverse interplay, how treaties and agreements shaped the political landscape in the region. This paper also develops the relationship between Ibn Saud, geopolitical dynamics and Empire strategy, to enthrone the Ibn Saud as a next leader of the Muslim world. The paper also highlighted how the colonial strategy of divide and rule was implemented to counter the local war lords and the rise of the Al Saud Family as new ruler in the Middle East. The Great Game was moving around the Russian influence in the region and finding the new ways in getting control over the natural resources of the region by installing the puppet rulers. By doing the study of historical documents, researcher established the geo-politics game of Empire to control the regional politics through the Ibn Saud Family. The clauses of two secret treaties between the empire and Ibn Saud is also examined thoroughly in the study.

Keywords: Arab Nationalism, Ibn Saud, Sykes-Picot Agreement, British Colonial Policy.

Introduction: Establishment of the Saudi Kingdom

The establishment of Saudi Arabia marked a significant turning point in the history of the Arabian Peninsula. The foundation of the Saudi Kingdom goes back to its first ruler Abdulaziz Ibn Saud. During the 20th Century, the Ottoman Empire was controlling the Arab Region, however British sought support of Arab warlords to overthrow the Ottoman during the first world war. Ibn Saud the local warlord and ruler of Najd allied himself with the British during the WWI. Ottoman Empire was defeated in war, with the support of British Empire. Ibn Saud continued to expand his control in the region. With the political backing of British Empire, Ibn Saud officially declared the unification of the regions and proclaimed himself the King in 1932. This marked the birth of a new nation-state that would go on to become a new player in the region.

The creation of Saudi Kingdom brought political changes in the region and also paved the way for economics and social changes. In the late 1930s, the discovery of oil and the subsequent development of the oil industry propelled the kingdom to become leading oil producers in the world. The natural reservoirs helped the Saudi Arabia in transforming the country, leading to rapid modernization and growth. After that, Saudi kingdom played a significant role in global politics. Since its creation, the kingdom is a fundamental player in Middle East. The Saudi Royal Family has maintained its rule over the country from past 100 years.

The First Era of the Saudi Empire

In 1744, the two families of the Arab region unified to lay foundation for Saudi kingdom. This was the politico-religious alliance of two families. The Al-Saud family was considered to play a role for political leadership whereas the Al-Sheikh family got the role of religious leadership. Al-Saud family was committed to establish absolute monarchy and Al-Sheikh family was given to the for spiritual guidance to the kingdom. This unification and mutual understanding formed a strong partnership in building a new kingdom supported by orthodox religious beliefs. Muhammad Ibn Saud, was the key figure behind the establishment of kingdom. In the central region of Arabian Peninsula, a town located in Najd called the Dariya (Diriyya), Ibn Saud held the title of the Ameer of Dariya. Ibn Saud was considered an influential warlord in the town of Najd, and he proved the most formidable. Ibn Saud expanded its territory and influence to the town of Riyadh between 1744 to 1765, till his death, now Riyadh is a modern-day capital of the Kingdom.¹

Najd was conquered by Ibn Saud with the alliance and help of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a religious cleric. Ibn Wahhab religious views have been the subject of controversy among Islamic scholars of the world. Having various controversies, Al-Saud family strictly follows the rituals of Ibn Wahhab and considers him the savior of Islam.

In recognition of his significance, King Salman, the current ruler of Saudi Arabia, established a center dedicated to the study of Abdul Wahab's life and teachings in Dariya, the original capital of Saudi Arabia. King Salman's royal palace is also situated close to this center. The facility features a museum showcasing life in the first Saudi state, a library containing books by Wahhab and his descendants, and a memorial hall commemorating his contribution to Islam.²

The first state of Saudi Arabia was founded in the late 18th century and was larger than today's Saudi Arabia. By 1808 it controlled all of present-day Saudi Arabia except for the port of Jeddah, which was still under Ottoman rule. The original state of Saudi Arabia included Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and parts of northern Oman. The Hadhramaut region in the south of Yemen is also a fief of the Saudis. In particular, Shiite Zaydis in Yemen and Abadis in Oman are the only two groups with different sects in the peninsula that oppose the Saudi state. The real success was the control of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, which was a major defeat for the Ottomans, who considered themselves the true defenders of Islam and the holy cities. In the north, Saudi Arabian forces invaded Iraq, captured the emir of the Shiite holy city of Karbala, and destroyed Ruiz Hussein. They also reached Najaf and Basra in Iraq and Sana'a in Yemen. For a while, it looked like Saudi Arabia controlled the entire Arabian Peninsula. At its peak, Saudi Arabia's first province governed a population of approximately 2.4 million people.³

During this period, the Ottoman Empire was under threat from the expansionist ambitions of Napoleon and France. The French invasion of Egypt and march into Palestine in 1798 posed a

¹ Commins, David: *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, published by I.B. Tauris, London, 2013, P.18

² Kechichian A. Joseph: *Succession in Saudi Arabia*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, P.79

³ Riedel, Bruce: *Kings and Presidents*, Brooking Institutions Press, Washington D.C, P.17

major challenge to the Ottoman Empire. Despite some success, the French threat continued until late 1801, and the Ottoman Empire remained involved in the Napoleonic Wars in Europe for several more years. In 1811, the Ottoman Empire sent troops from Egypt to take control of Mecca and the Hejaz region. Later, in 1818, they went to Najd and completed their lands. During this military operation, some high-ranking members of the Al Saud family escaped the attack and captured the city, but were arrested and sent to Cairo. Tragically, King Abdullah Saud was exiled to Istanbul and killed there. The elimination of Najd and the establishment of the state was a turning point for the Saudi dynasty. Their reign ended with the collapse of the Empire of Saudi Arabia and the dynasty was thrown into chaos.

The Second Era of the Saudi Empire

Following the collapse of the first Saudi State, the Turkish-Egyptian army, which was responsible for its destruction, did not maintain a long-term presence in Arabia. They faced political challenges at home that required their focus on other regions, leading to the withdrawal of most forces from Najd in the 1820s. This presented an opportunity for Turki bin Abdullah, a surviving member of the House of Saud, to begin rebuilding the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In 1824, the Ottomans regained control of Riyadh from the Turks, but in 1834, Turki bin Abdullah's cousin assassinated him, and his son, Faisal bin Turki al-Saud, succeeded him as a new leader. Current Saudi leadership traces its lineage directly from Faisal. However, Faisal also faced challenges and was forced into exile by another Ottoman army in 1838. In 1843, Faisal managed to regain Saudi rule over Riyadh and Najd, effectively bringing most of Central Arabia back to Saudi and Wahhabi rule. Furthermore, the second Saudi state's influence extended to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, which came under its control.⁴

However, Faisal was very cautious in his politics and tried to avoid confrontation with the British. The Saudi leadership of the second period, unlike the first Saudi state, did not expand beyond the Arabian Peninsula to regions such as Iraq, did not compete with the Ottoman Empire for control of the Hejaz, and did not fight with England for control of the Gulf states. They recognized the limits of their power and understood that their political survival depended on cooperation with the dominant powers of the time. While Britain included the region south of the Persian Gulf from Kuwait to Oman under its influence, Al-Ahsa remained outside British control.⁵

Upon Faisal's death in December 1865, the second Saudi state faced internal struggles as fighting erupted among his four sons over the right to the throne. Each claimed a legitimate claim, and some even sought strategic alliances with the Turks to defeat their brothers. This infighting continued for the next three decades, leading to a series of power transitions within the Al Saud dynasty. The Ottoman Empire took control of Al-Hasa in 1871, and the Saudis were expelled from Riyadh in 1887. By 1893, the Al Saud family found refuge in Kuwait thanks to Amir's generosity.

From 1744 to 1893, the Saudi royal family went through 14 successions in which power passed from one king to another. The first two thrones that passed from Muhammad bin Saud to his son Abdulaziz and then to his son Saud were smooth and uneventful. These three kings ruled from 1744 to 1814 and oversaw the development of the first Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, when the government changed after 12 years of success, there was struggle and

⁴ Riedel, Bruce: Kings and Presidents, Brooking Institutions Press, Washington D.C, P.18

⁵ Troeller, G.G. (1971). 2. Ibn Sa'ud and Sharif Husain: A Comparison in Importance in the Early Years of the First World War. *The Historical Journal*, 14, 627 - 633.

competition in the dynasty. Of the 14 successions, 11 were contested during the first two Saudi states.⁶

The Third Era of the Saudi Empire

Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud was born in 1880 in Riyadh, a city embroiled in turmoil as different factions of the Al Saud family competed for power during much of his childhood. In 1891, under pressure from the Turks and their Arab allies, his father, Abd al-Rahman al-Saud, was compelled to exile the family from Riyadh. They initially sought refuge in the harsh desert of Rab al-Khali, now a part of southern Saudi Arabia. Eventually, in 1894, they settled in Kuwait, where the local Emir sought to balance the power of more dominant neighbors and offered protection to the House of Saud. Kuwait, a cosmopolitan port city, hosted merchants from around the world engaged in trade, and Ibn Saud received education and training from members of the Al-Sheikh family who accompanied the Saudi exiles.

Kuwait's port also became a prize in the rivalry between European empires in the late 19th century, with Germany and Britain vying for control. In the end the British won; Ibn Saud skillfully maneuvered various factions of the ruling families of Kuwait to side with the British. Ibn Saud decided to return to Riyadh with Kuwaiti support and reassert Saudi control over Najd. On January 15, 1902, he managed to capture the main fortress of the city with a single support group.

After the capture of Riyadh, Ibn Saud's grandfather, Abdul Rahman, returned from Kuwait and presented his son with an important symbol of power: one of the swords of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and a weapon that had fallen into the hands of the head of the Saudi family. Abd al-Rahman officially ruled the new Saudi state until his death in 1928, but in practice it was Ibn Saud who ruled the kingdom. Over the following years, he engaged in more than 50 battles between 1902 and 1932, gradually restoring Saudi authority over Najd.⁷

Notably, Ibn Saud began forging a relationship with Captain William Henry Irvine Shakespeare, the British in Kuwait. Shakespeare, an adventurer fluent in Arabic, reported to the British viceroy in India, responsible for Persian Gulf affairs. This relationship marked a departure from the traditional Saudi and Wahhabi views of foreigners as infidels, with whom no dealings could be made. This signified a more pragmatic and realistic approach for the Third Saudi state. In 1913, Saudi Arabia attacked the Hassa province and took it from the Ottoman Empire. The Turks were already at war elsewhere and did not have the resources to defend the remote desert region. Although Ibn Saud granted some local authority to some representatives in important Shiite cities, local Shiite communities remained restricted, like Qatif and al-Hassa.⁸

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⁶ Kechichian A. Joseph: *Succession in Saudi Arabia*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, P.12

⁷ Riedel, Bruce: *Kings and Presidents*, Brooking Institutions Press, Washington D.C, P.20

⁸ Al-Enazy, A.H. (2009). *The Creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914-1927*.

Shiite cities, local Shiite communities remained restricted. His demise diminished the urgency of the British treaty with Ibn Saud, leading to a shift in British policy.⁹

After Shakespeare's death, the proposed treaty with Ibn Saud took the backseat of British policy. Instead, the British found a new Arab ally in the Sharif of Mecca and his Hashemite dynasty, who ruled the Hijaz region bordering the Red Sea in present-day Saudi Arabia. The strategic objectives shifted, and the main axis of British policy in Arabia temporarily turned toward Hashemites rather than Saudis.¹⁰

Divide and Conquer Strategy for the Ottoman Empire

During the era of colonialism, the British employed a strategy known as "divide and rule" to serve imperialist interests. However, during the First World War, Britain and France, the major colonial powers, adopted a different approach to reshaping the Middle East. Unlike the Indian policy of partitioning based on the Hindu-Muslim religion, they utilized the slogan of nationalism instead of religion to break the unity of the Ottoman Caliphate in Arabia. This strategy was incorporated into the Arab Awakening movement.

The Middle East held great strategic and commercial significance for British colonialism, particularly concerning the control of Russian influence in the region. Historically, the British supported the Ottoman Empire as a buffer zone for defense and to protect trade routes after the occupation of India. During the First World War, Britain sought support from local Arab rulers in the Middle East to help overthrow the Ottoman Empire in exchange for its post-war independence.¹¹

During World War I, Britain sought support from local Arab rulers in the Middle East to assist in toppling the Ottoman Empire in Arabia, offering them a promise of post-war independence under British protection.

*“As part of its historical approach, Britain aimed to maintain friendly relations with Islam and Muslims, even supporting an Islamic caliphate born out of conquest and necessity. The British government invested considerable resources and military influence in defending the Ottoman caliphate. According to their perspective, among the Muslim nations, only the Arab nation possessed the capability to uphold and sustain an Islamic caliphate, making Arab countries the most suitable candidates for this responsibility”.*¹²

Despite Britain's prior defense and friendship with the Ottoman Caliphate, they recognized that the Arab nations were better suited to maintaining an Islamic caliphate. In May 1915, the British assured the "People of the Arabs" of their respect and friendship towards Islam, even though the Ottoman Sultan had become an enemy. The British government expressed a desire

⁹ Matthiesen, Toby: *The Other Saudis: Shiism, Dissent and Sectarianism*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 10

¹⁰ Riedel, Bruce: *Kings and Presidents*, Brooking Institutions Press, Washington D.C, P.10

¹¹ Goldberg, J. (1985). *The Origins of British–Saudi Relations: The 1915 Anglo–Saudi Treaty Revisited*. *The Historical Journal*, 28, 693 - 703.

¹² Curtis, Mark: *Secret Affairs: Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam*, Serpent's Tail, London, 2010, P.07

for a genuine Arab descendant to assume a caliphate in Mecca or Medina, hoping for positive outcomes despite ongoing conflicts.¹³

In November 1914, the British government sent a letter to Hussain, expressing the following:

*"If the Amir (Hussain) and the Arabs, in general, will lend their support to Great Britain in the ongoing conflict (World War I) imposed by Turkey, then Great Britain pledges not to interfere in any matter, be it religious or otherwise. We have previously defended Islam and maintained a friendly relationship with the Turks, but now, our support will shift toward the Arabs. A person of authentic Arab descent may assume the caliphate in Makkah or Madinah, and with God's help, positive outcomes may emerge from the challenges faced during these times."*¹⁴

The correspondence between Sharif Makkah Hussain bin Ali and British Secretary Sir Henry McMahon played a crucial role in the negotiations. In a letter dated July 14, 1915, Sharif Makkah expressed the Arab nation's unanimous decision to achieve independence and requested British support in breaking the Ottoman Empire to transfer the caliphate to the Arab nation.¹⁵

Sharif Makkah presented the following arguments for breaking the Ottoman Empire and transferring the Caliphate to the Arab nation:

*"The unanimous decision of the entire Arab nation over the past three years has been to assume administrative authority to attain independence. The Arab nation has recognized that it is in the best interest of the British Government to lend them support and aid in achieving their rightful aspirations. Likewise, it is also in the Arabs' best interest to seek the assistance of the British Government, considering their strategic location and economic interests."*¹⁶

Sharif Makkah presented several proposals to the British government:

1. Recognition of the independence of Arab countries, including regions extending from Mersinah and Aden in the north to 37 degrees of latitude, along with Burjek, Arafa, Mardin, Madit, Jazirat, Umadiyah, and the border of Persia.
2. Acknowledgment of Great Britain's priority in all economic interests in Arab countries.
3. Mutual military and naval assistance to protect Arab independence and economic interests against foreign powers.
4. Adoption of a neutral stance if one party enters an aggressive conflict, with a discussion of terms if the other party wishes to join forces.
5. The British government should recognize the abolition of the foreign policy of Arab countries and support the Sharif government to organize an international conference to recognize this abolition.

¹³ Paris, Timothy J. (2015). Britain, the Hashemites and Arab Rule, The Sherifian Solution, by Routledge

¹⁴ Witz, Hure J.C: Diplomacy in Near and Middle East, A documentary record: 1914-1956, vol.II by D. Van Nostrand Company, Princeton New Jersey, 1956, P.14

¹⁵ Kostiner, Joseph. (1993) *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State.* (Studies in Middle Eastern History.) New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 260.

¹⁶ Ibid. Pp. 265

6. The provisions outlined in Articles 3 and 4 of this agreement remain valid for fifteen years. If either party wishes to renew the agreement, a one-year notice must be given before the expiration date. In light of the unanimous agreement and unity of the entire Arab nation in pursuing this vital cause, they earnestly requested the British Government to respond positively or negatively within 30 days of receiving this notification. Should this period lapse without a response, they should retain full freedom to devise their strategies. Additionally, the Sharif family will consider themselves released from any obligations imposed by their previous declaration made through Ali Effendi.¹⁷

These negotiations played a crucial role in the efforts to break the Ottoman Empire and pave the way for the emergence of a third Saudi state under the leadership of Ibn Saud.

Four letters were exchanged between Hussain bin Ali and McMahon, with the above letter being the first one written by Hussain bin Ali. Two months later, McMahon responded to Sharif Makkah's proposals regarding the transfer of the Caliphate to the Arab countries of Islamia. In his response, McMahon objected to the Arab geographical boundaries outlined by Sharif Makkah, stating that certain areas, including Mersina, Alexandretta, and parts of Syria, could not be considered purely Arab and should be excluded from the demanded boundaries.¹⁸ However, with the above changes and without prejudice to existing agreements with the Arab Sheikhs, McMahon accepted the borders proposed by Sharif Mecca, provided that within these borders it did not affect the interests of England's friend France.

In summary, McMahon's response contains the following key points.

- i. Subject to the aforementioned amendments, Great Britain was prepared to recognize and support Arab independence within the limits demanded by Sharif Makkah.
- ii. Great Britain would guarantee the inviolability of Holy Places and protect them from external aggression.
- iii. When the situation was clear, Great Britain offered advice and assistance to the Arabs regarding the most suitable forms of government in various regions.
- iv. 4. The Arabs decided to seek advice and guidance only from England and that all European experts and workers necessary to establish a good government would be British.
- v. Regarding the provinces of Baghdad and Basra, Arabs would recognize the need for special administrative arrangements to safeguard Britain's established position, interests, and mutual economic well-being, as well as to promote the welfare of local populations.¹⁹

In the same letter to Sharif Makkah, McMahon expressed his trust that this announcement would assure him of Great Britain's sympathy for the aspirations of friendly Arabs, hoping that a strong and lasting alliance would result in the expulsion of Turks from Turkey and liberating Arab countries and people from Turkey's oppressive yoke.

In a reply letter dated January 1, 1916, Sharif Makkah assured McMahon of his readiness to accept any resolution passed by Great Britain. He emphasized that their common interests were a sign of mutual trust and confidence, and for this reason, they chose not to negotiate with any

¹⁷ Ibid. Pp. 15

¹⁸ Kedourie, E. (1976). In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations 1914-1939.

¹⁹ Ibid. Pp. 16

other powers besides Great Britain. Furthermore, Sharif Makkah requested assurance of a steady supply of arms and ammunition when necessary.²⁰

The final letter in this correspondence was written by McMahon and Sharif Makkah on January 25, 1916. In this letter, McMahon provided documentary evidence of Sharif Makkah's support for Great Britain and France against the Ottoman Empire and their agreement to hand over the Islamic Caliphate to the Arabs.

*McMahon expressed their determination to continue the war against the Ottoman Empire unitedly until a victorious conclusion was achieved. He emphasized that the friendship between Great Britain and France would grow stronger and more lasting, cemented by the blood of English and French soldiers fighting together for rights and freedom. The unity of Arabia in this great cause was acknowledged, and McMahon hoped that their mutual efforts and cooperation would lead to lasting friendships and the welfare of all involved. The British were pleased to know that Sharif Makkah was working to win over all Arabs for their common cause and dissuaded them from aiding their enemies.*²¹

The plan to end the Ottoman Caliphate and divide parts of the empire was a colonial strategy, showcasing Britain's bid for dominance over the Muslim world's center. British officials feared that the caliphate could be a “**Rallying Point**” for anti-colonial movements that might threaten British rule in India and Egypt. They believed that controlling the caliphate's religious leadership would grant them influence over Islam and weaken any potential Muslim alliance during World War I. David Fromkin asserts that British officials held the belief that Islam could be politically influenced and directed by gaining control over its religious leadership. This notion led them to understand that whoever had control over the caliphate could effectively exercise control over Islam as a whole.²²

The uprising against the Ottoman Caliphate in the holy places proved advantageous for Britain. Led by Husayn Ibn Ali in the coastal regions of Medina, Mecca, and Jeddah, the rebellion received substantial support from Britain, amounting to 1.1 million pounds (equivalent to 500 million pounds today). Despite this assistance, Sharif Makkah's efforts yielded only modest success against the Ottoman army and failed to unite Muslims in Arabia against the Ottoman Caliphate. During this significant period, the renowned British spy, Colonel Lawrence, famously known as Lawrence of Arabia, was appointed as an advisor to the Sharif Meccan army.

Lawrence wrote a report on “Reconstruction of Arabia” for the perusal of British Cabinet during the war.²³ He was of the view that there is a dire need to identify a religious scholar for countering the jihad in the name of Ottoman Caliphate. In his report, he said, religious cleric shall help out in shaping the post war political landscape in the Middle East:

At the onset of the war, our primary concern was to create divisions within Islam, leading us to seek allies rather than individual support. We aimed to establish a network of client states in Arabia that would operate under our

²⁰ Tuson, P., & Burdett, A.L. (1992). Records of Saudi Arabia: Primary documents 1902-1960.

²¹ Ibid. Pp. 160

²² Curtis, Mark: Secret Affairs: Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam, Serpent's Tail, London, 2010, P.08

²³ Bronson, R. (2006). Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia.

*guidance, effectively redirecting foreign influences toward the Three Rivers region (Iraq). By doing so, we intended to sow discord within Islam and create a rift that would serve our strategic interests.*²⁴

The Foreign Office of the British Government of India also noted the benefit of dividing the Middle East into weak and fragmented states under their sovereignty, serving as a buffer zone against Western powers. A month before the Arab Revolt, supported by the British and led by Sharif Makkah, Britain, and France, reached the Sykes-Picot Agreement, a plan to partition the Ottoman Empire into various regions named after the foreign ministers of both countries.²⁵

After the Arab Revolt and the defeat of the Ottoman forces, Husayn ibn Ali declared himself the king of all of Arabia, including the Hijaz. However, Britain was only willing to recognize Husayn as far as the Hijaz, leading to a clash in the political future of the Arabs between Husayn and Ibn Saud, both of whom enjoyed British support. The Indian government was apprehensive about the implications of a British-backed Arab Caliph who could potentially lead the entire Muslim world, impacting Muslims in India.²⁶ They feared that if Ibn Saud supported Sharif Makkah, whose influence was limited to Arabia, it might lead to greater unrest among Muslims in India.

Notably, Ibn Saud and Hussein Ibn Ali had differing religious orientations. While Hussein followed Sunnism, the future founder of Saudi Arabia adhered to the conservative Wahhabi movement. Ibn Saud's military forces, known as the Ikhwan or Muslim Brotherhood, consisted of Bedouin tribesmen. During the First World War, Britain had already established a treaty with Ibn Saud, providing him with weapons and financial assistance, and recognizing him as the ruler of Najd province under British protection. British officials placed strategic hopes on Ibn Saud during the war, as evident in a memorandum written by British officer Captain Bray in 1917 on the subject of pan-Islamism:

*"In all Muslim countries, there is currently a strong wave of pan-Islamism. Agents and reports confirm the vitality of this movement. We must ensure that the country Muslims look to is not Afghanistan. Hence, we must create an Islamic state that garners the attention of the Muslim world. We have this opportunity in Arabia."*²⁷

During the 1919 conflict between Hussein and Ibn Saud, Britain provided support to Ibn Saud by deploying warships. After a temporary truce was agreed upon in 1920, Ibn Saud's formidable military force of 150,000 Brotherhood members continued their advance. By the mid-1920s, Ibn Saud had gained control over Arabia, including the Hijaz and the Holy Places, effectively defeating Hussein and securing regional supremacy. Acknowledging Ibn Saud's control over Arabia, Britain recognized his authority. In 1922, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill

²⁴ Allen, Charles: *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and hidden roots of modern Jihad*, Little Brown, London 2006, pp. 246-47

²⁵ Fromkin, David: *A peace to End all peace: Creating the modern Middle East, 1914-1922*, Penguin, London, 1989, P.145.

²⁶ Bullard, R.S., & Hodgkin, E.C. (1993). *Two kings in Arabia: letters from Jeddah, 1923-5 and 1936-9*.

²⁷ Bray, Captain: 'A note on Muhammedan Question', March 1917, in J. Priesland Ed. *Islam: Political Impact, 1908-1972*, British Documentary Sources Vol. II

increased Ibn Saud's annual aid to £100,000. However, it is worth noting that in an earlier speech in the House of Commons in July 1921, Churchill described Ibn Saud as a stern, intolerant, armed, and bloodthirsty leader. Churchill further asserted that Ibn Saud saw it as his duty to execute those who disagreed with his beliefs and to enslave their wives and children.²⁸

British Treaties with Ibn Saud

Treaties between Britain and Ibn Saud played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of Arabia in the early 20th century. Abd al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman al-Faisal Saud, commonly known as Ibn Saud, rose to power by capturing Riyadh in 1902 and gradually expanding his control over Najd and Al-Husa from the Ottomans. In 1913, the Saudi Emirate was recognized as part of the Ottoman Empire under the conventions of Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire.

As the First World War erupted, the British government sought to establish an exclusive zone in the Persian Gulf, granting access to the eastern coast of Arabia. British Empire recognized the Ibn Saud's power and promised him in providing the financial assistance of £5,000 per month. It was also surprising that earlier British government made an agreement with Sharif Hussain in providing £200,000 per month of financial assistance.

The details of the treaty between Britain and Ibn Saud outline the following key points:

Clause 1: The Government of Great Britain acknowledged that the territories of Najd, Ahsa, Qatif, Jabel, and the adjoining parts of the Persian Gulf belonged to Sultan Ibn Saud. The agreement recognized Sultan Ibn Saud and his successors as permanent sovereigns of these regions, ensuring their rule over the countries and tribes. However, the appointment of an heir to the kingdom was conditioned upon a person's non-hostility towards Great Britain.

Clause 2: In the case of any foreign invasion of Ibn Saud's territories without prior consultation with the British Government, Britain pledged to offer assistance to Ibn Saud after consulting with him. This provision aimed to protect Ibn Saud's interests and the welfare of his country in the event of an invasion.

Clause 3: Ibn Saud committed to refrain from engaging in discussions, compromises, or agreements with any foreign nation or empire without informing the British government. This clause aimed to maintain British interest in the region and ensure their involvement in any international dealings related to Ibn Saud's realm.

Clause 4: Ibn Saud agreed not to sell, mortgage, lease, or dispose of the said countries or any part thereof without consulting the British Government. He also pledged not to grant concessions or licenses to foreign government subjects within his territories, without the consent of Great Britain. Ibn Saud vowed to comply with the instructions of the British government, even if they went against his interests.

Clause 5: Ibn Saud solemnly pledges that the sacred routes passing through his kingdom, leading to holy places, will be safeguarded and protected during the pilgrimage season. He commits to ensuring the safe passage of pilgrims to these reverse sites.

Clause 6: Ibn Saud, following the tradition of his predecessors as Sultans of Najd, pledges not to interfere with the territories of Kuwait, Bahrain, the regions governed by Arab Chiefs, Oman, and other adjacent territories that enjoy support and treaty relations with the British government. The delimitation of these states will be determined later, taking into account their existing treaties with Great Britain.

²⁸ Gilbert, Martin: Churchill and the Jews, Pocket Books, London, 2007. p. 37

Clause 7: Additionally, the British government and Ibn Saud mutually agree that a comprehensive and detailed agreement will be meticulously formulated and endorsed to address all remaining matters concerning the interests and affairs of both parties. This agreement further solidifies the understanding and cooperation between them.

The aforementioned agreement was finalized in Kuwait on November 26, 1915, and bears the signatures of Sultan Abdulaziz bin Saud and British representative BZ Cox. It was officially ratified by the British Viceroy Chelmsford in India on May 18, 1916, during a meeting in Shimla. Additionally, Ray H. Grant, Secretary of the Political and Foreign Department of the Government of India, also signed the document to validate its legal status.²⁹

A Treaty of Jeddah:

Another treaty, known as the Jeddah Treaty, was signed by British authorities and Ibn Saud on September 17, 1927. This agreement established Ibn Saud as the guardian of British interests, and in return, the lands of Hijaz, Najd, and adjacent areas would never be utilized against British territories, maintaining peace and stability in the British Empire. The treaty comprises 11 clauses, which are detailed as follows:

Clause 1: The British Crown recognizes the complete and absolute independence of the King of Great Britain, Hijaz, and Najd along with their adjacent territories.

Clause 2: Both parties commit to establishing peace and friendship between the King of Hijaz, Najd, adjacent territories, and Great Britain. They pledge to maintain cordial relations, ensuring that their territories are not used as bases for illegal activities detrimental to the peace and tranquility of each other.

Clause 3: During the performance of the Hajj, the King of Hijaz, Najd, and adjacent territories undertook to provide British Muslim residents with the same security and facilities as other pilgrims. Their lives and property should be safeguarded during their stay in Holy Hijaz.

Clause 4: In the case of the death of pilgrims without legal guardians in these territories, their property shall be handed over to the British authorities in Jeddah or any designated area. These authorities are bound to deliver the property to the rightful heirs of the deceased pilgrims. However, the property will not be released until formal proceedings in the competent tribunal have been initiated and dues under Hijazi or Najdi laws have been settled.

Clause 5: The Crown of Great Britain recognizes the national status (Hijazi or Najdi) of all subjects of the King of Hijaz and Najd residing within British-administered territories. Similarly, the King of Hijaz and Najd recognizes the national status (British) of all subjects within the territories administered by the Crown of Great Britain under its protection. This recognition should comply with the principles of international law governing independent governments.

Clause 6: The King of Hijaz, Najd, and adjacent territories commits to maintaining friendly and peaceful relations with the territories of Kuwait and Bahrain as well as with the Sheikhs of Qatar and the Sahel of Oman, who have special treaties with the Crown of Great Britain.

Clause 7: The King of Hijaz, Najd, and adjacent territories pledged to cooperate fully with the Crown of Great Britain to abolish the slave trade.

Clause 8: This crucial agreement should be ratified by both parties and exchanged as soon as possible. It will come into effect from the date of the ratification exchange and remain valid for seven years from that date. Should either party not give notice to the other of substantive agreement termination before the seven-year period elapses, the treaty shall continue and

²⁹ Witz, Hure J.C: Diplomacy in Near and Middle East, A documentary record: 1914-1956, vol. II by D. Van Nostrand Company, Princeton New Jersey, 1956, P.20

cannot be revoked until six months after either party provides notice of termination to the other party.

Clause 9: The treaty between the Crown of Great Britain and the King of Hijaz and Najd, concluded on December 26, 1915, shall come into force from that date as the present treaty has been duly ratified.

Clause 10: This Agreement has been prepared in both English and Arabic languages, and both texts have equal validity. In the event of any disagreement between the parties regarding the interpretation of this Agreement, the English text shall take precedence.

Clause 11: This agreement is officially known as the Jeddah Agreement.³⁰

In 1932, the official formation of Saudi Arabia marked a strategic accomplishment for Great Britain, serving its objectives. However, it also gave rise to a radical strain on Islam that became a global center for jihad, with British influence extending to the heart of the Islamic world. The fragmented Middle East, with parasitic states emerging from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, played a part in Britain's plans. Gulf states such as Aden, Bahrain, and Oman were established around Saudi Arabia, enjoying the protection of British military forces, while other potential puppet states were exploited for British interests.

Prince Faisal of Sharif Makkah, who had played a role in capturing Damascus during World War I, was made King of Iraq in 1921, while Abdullah, the second son of Sharif Hussein, became King of Jordan, gaining independence from British rule in 1923. By aligning with Islamic ruling classes in the Middle East and asserting control over Arab nations, Britain consolidated its economic and political dominance, and it was entrusted with the mandate to rule Palestine through the League of Nations.

However, the tides began to turn during World War II, when Britain faced economic and defense challenges, prompting it to seek assistance from the United States. The US joined the war on its terms, leveraging its economic might and advanced military technology to strengthen its position on the world stage and ultimately diminish the influence of the British Empire. As strategic partners, colonies under British rule became key assets in shaping US foreign policy. For the United States, gaining access to the Middle East's vast mineral reserves through multinational companies necessitated leveraging the religious status of Saudi Arabia for political purposes. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia thus became a strategic ally of the US, solidified by a secret meeting between US President Franklin Roosevelt and Ibn Saud, Saudi ruler, resulting in a historic agreement.

During this meeting, the United States presented its vision for a *New Political Order*, with paramount importance placed on securing access to Saudi Arabia's oil reserves. This order was later known as the American World Order. The meeting, which took place on a ship in the Suez Canal, marked the rise of American power on a global stage. Roosevelt's primary focus during the meeting was ensuring access to Saudi oil, as World War II relied heavily on petroleum products for the air force and Navy, and it became a decisive factor in military operations. The United States needed substantial amounts of oil to aid its allies during the war, with the demand for petroleum products reaching unprecedented levels, exceeding Europe's oil needs 14 times.³¹

Conclusion:

³⁰ Ibid. Pp. 149

³¹ Riedel, Bruce: Kings and Presidents, Brooking Institution Press, Washington D.C, P.04

During WWII, the Saudi kingdom allied with the United States and signed agreements of state security. This alliance was also moved ahead in the leadership of Ibn Saud which helped in shaping the global geopolitics and shifted the power dynamics. This new alliance paved the way for the rise of US influence in the Middle East. By getting to the access of energy reservoirs, the US provided the security to the Saudi kingdom, this was the beginning of new era and end of bipolar world. To address these concerns, the two nations reached a crucial agreement. The US pledged to guarantee the security of Saudi Arabia in exchange for access to its oil reserves, further committing to safeguarding the sovereignty of Al Saud in the Middle East. In line with this agreement, the US acquired the Zahran Air Base in Saudi Arabia, strategically using it for war operations in the Middle East while ensuring full protection for American oil companies operating in the kingdom.

Shortly after the treaty was signed, Saudi Arabia demonstrated its support by declaring war on Germany and Japan and solidifying its alliance with the United States. To strengthen their partnership further, the Quincy Summit, known as the Suez Canal Meeting, was planned. During this summit, Ibn Saud's son, Prince Faisal, accompanied by his brother Prince Khalid, embarked on an official visit to America in November 1943. They engaged in critical meetings with President Roosevelt, senior officials, and legislative leaders to foster strong ties between the two nations. Beyond the confines of Washington, Faisal and Khalid traveled extensively across the United States and visited various states, including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Colorado, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, and Maryland. During their visit, plans for the Zahran Air Base were agreed upon, marking the beginning of the United States military assistance to Saudi Arabia.

Throughout the war, the United States provided substantial aid, amounting to up to \$ 100 million, to support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was established to facilitate the exchange of secret information between the two countries, operating under the supervision of what would later become the CIA. During World War II, President Roosevelt played a pivotal role in shaping international relations (IR). Before he met with Ibn Saud in the Suez Canal, Roosevelt had attended a significant summit with Russian President Joseph Stalin and British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill in Malta. Subsequently, he arrived at the Suez Canal to meet Ibn Saud, further cementing the strategic partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

This alliance not only addressed the wartime energy needs of the United States but also laid the foundation for future cooperation and shared interests between the two nations on the global stage. The United States and Saudi Arabia forged the foundation of their strategic relations, securing American sovereignty in the Middle East. Access to Saudi Arabia's oil reserves spurred rapid growth in American industry and commerce. Historical records indicate that the formation of the Saudi state after the Ottoman Empire's dissolution served colonial interests.

In 1974, a significant step towards protecting the dollar through oil trade occurred with the establishment of the US-Saudi Arabia Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation. This led to the dollar being designated as the currency for oil transactions, further cementing economic ties between the two nations. Over the years, the United States has acted as a guarantor of its interests in various countries, including Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Tunisia, and during the Iran-Iraq war. This strategic alliance between the US and Saudi Arabia has had significant implications for regional stability and global economic dynamics.

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