

**FOREIGN INTERESTS IN THE PERSIAN GULF
IN THE LAST CENTURIES:
Some Reasons and Features***

Professor Dr. Türkaya ATAÖV

The presence of competitive foreign navies and occasional provocative acts by some states outside the Persian Gulf have been causing anxiety to the world at large and the riparian countries in particular. The latter states remember that, in the last centuries, the foreigners used the Gulf, which always had great political, economic and strategic significance, to impose their domination on this area and the adjacent seas and territories.

The European colonialists, be they the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, the French or the Germans, sought to control the important lines of communications between Europe and the different parts of Asia. Every new colonial power introduced itself as the "defender of the Gulf" from the tyranny of the other. Thus, when the Dutch ships appeared in the Gulf, they tried to legitimize their presence under the cover of protecting the local people from Portuguese cruelty. Opposition to Dutch as well as Portuguese occupation was the veil to hide actual British desire to rule the waves here too. After the French Revolution, Napoleon sought contact with the Omani rulers ostensibly to help them withstand British invasion. Britain, in turn, chose to support the Sultanate of Muscat to secede from Oman, and, in the process, imposed a colonial treaty on it. Later, France established its jurisdiction on military bases set up on Muscat territory supposedly to defend it against Britain. The British did the same as if they protected Iran against Germany. The Germans, on their part, seized several points on the shore on the supposition of guarding them against the British threat...

To justify their policies in the Gulf even further, the colonialists falsified history, first by excluding the peoples of the region from the development of events there. There is no doubt, however, that the Gulf

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peoples played an important role, not only in the history of this particular locality, but also in the history of mankind. They were part of great civilizations such as the Babylonian, Sumerian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Achaemidian or the Caliphates of the Omayyads (661-750) and the Abbasids (750-1258). They created their own state systems on the Persian and Arab lands or on the adjacent Turkish or Indian territories. The civilizations created at the time of Alexander the Great, Khosrau, Sulaiman the Lawgiver, Kharun al-Rashid and Shah Abbas I engulfed the shores of the Gulf.

The outstanding navigators of the local peoples played an important role in trade. The ports that they built were trading posts, major shipyards and settlements. They helped to create trade links between the Gulf and other centers such as the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Red Sea and South Asia. The important sea-borne trade was reflected in the popular Arab literature, **The Tales of 1001 Nights**.

The European colonialists, however, maintained that the Gulf peoples were afraid of the sea and could not by themselves establish contacts and that those who could sail were "pirates" or "slave-traders". They propagated the view, therefore, that the European vessels brought civilization to the Gulf peoples. This approach was designed to hide the important element of exploitation and tamper with historical realities. For instance, it was a Gulf navigator by the name of Ahmed ibn Majid who piloted the ships of Vasco da Gama through the whole Indian Ocean. Although this Portuguese captain is given the honour of discovering the sea route to India, it was only natural for the local navigators to be masters of their own environment. The European allegation that it was their own captains and merchants who established the naval courses between continents is not exactly true. It is a phantasy intended to urge the local peoples to believe that they cannot determine their own destinies. This was the general approach for the last five centuries.

A corollary to arguments planned to justify colonial policies is the use of documents painstakingly selected to convey the impression that the Europeans most favourably influenced the lives of the Gulf peoples. The European colonialists who dominated the Persian Gulf set in motion only those pieces of information which enabled them to create the notion that the foreigners actually assisted and uplifted the local people. Almost all of the European countries, with interests in the region, necessarily come to possess enormous archives, made up of reports by sailors, traders, soldiers and diplomats. Most of them were, nevertheless, kept as secret material.

Some selected British documents concerning the last century, for instance, were published in a series of volumes, which nevertheless seldom referred to the Gulf. Not all records were available to the researchers. The historians themselves, with access to first-hand information, and who therefore enjoyed monopoly over pertinent statements, inside stories and intelligence reports, generally permitted the falsification of history, J.B. Kelly,¹ S.B. Mills, H. Philby and A. Wilson² underlined the idea that the foreigners, principally the British, introduced civilization to the Gulf and later helped them gain independence.

With the British exit from the region in the 1960s (owing to lack of adequate means of coercion), more American historians such as B.C. Busch,³ J.C. Hurewitz,⁴ R.G. Landen⁵ and others became interested in Gulf history. They were the first to criticize the two-centuries-long British domination there. But their criticism was cautious and calculated. The post-war American scholars generally agreed with the United States Government that British influence there should diminish to make room for American preponderance.

But the United States relied on Britain to maintain "order" in the Gulf. Only Britain, at that time, had diversified ties and contacts even with the remotest corners of the region. Only Britain could justify its political and military activities in terms of various treaties made in the last two centuries. The maintenance of the old order necessitated a cost that the U.S. Government preferred the British Treasury to meet. In the meantime, Washington could, on the one hand, watch whether its own interests were properly safeguarded and, on the other, claim that it was not a colonizing power but one which supported freedoms all over the globe.

The "golden means" was, then, to exercise great caution in criticizing Britain's presence in the Gulf. An example of this prudent approach was

¹ J.B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf: 1795-1880*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968; ———, "The Legal and Historical Basis of the British Position in the Persian Gulf", *St. Anthony's Papers*, No. 4, *Middle Eastern Affairs*, ed. Albert H. Hourani, New York, Praeger, 1959, pp. 119-140.

² Arnold T. Wilson, *The Persian Gulf: An Historical Sketch from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928; reprint: London, Allen and Unwin, 1954.

³ Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf: 1894-1914*, Berkeley, University of California, 1967; ———, "Britain and the Status of Kuwait: 1896-1899", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 21 (Spring 1967), pp. 187-198.

⁴ J.C., Hurewitz, *Middle East Dilemmas: the Background of United States Foreign Policy*, New York, Harper, for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1953.

⁵ Robert Geran Landen, *Oman since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967.

Professor J.C. Hurewitz's collection of documents on Middle Eastern history. This compilation was printed twice, first in 1956 as a two-volume study under the title of **Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East**. The first volume included a memorandum (dated September 21, 1899)⁶ by Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, on British interests in Iran and the Gulf. This was the first time that this most significant document was made available, in full, to expert opinion.

Curzon exposed in it, in detail, his arguments on how to transform the Gulf into a "British Lake". Seven years earlier, when he was thirty-three, he had already published the two-volume **Persia and the Persian Question**.⁷ His memorandum begins by stating that the Persian Government has "exhausted all power of recuperation or reform" and that "the already shattered structure tumbles into irretrievable ruin". He states that "the property of the sick man... is likely to be subject of bitter contention between the various parties". He conceived British interests in Persia to be "commercial, political, strategical and telegraphic". The total annual value of British trade with Persia was three and-a-half millions sterling; there was also a good deal of British capital in different parts of the country. Likewise, the British Government was compelled to take an increasingly active political interest in Persian fortunes. Strategically, Persia was not only an Indian, but an Imperial, concern. The Persian Gulf was beginning to attract the interest of other and sometimes rival nations.

Of the four foreign powers whose territories adjoined those of Persia, Curzon thought, that two (Turkey and Afghanistan) might be eliminated. The latter was under engagements with Britain that rendered it "impossible for her to be considered, in her foreign relations, as an independent Power". There remained Russia and Britain.

Russia enjoyed a preponderance of influence in the north-east corner of Persia and Britain in the south. Hence, a line of partition would divide the British and Russian spheres of political and commercial influence. Curzon believed that Russia enjoyed an advantage because the Persian capital and the Court were situated in the north. He suggested that in any partition or ultimate break up, Isphahan (the old capital, the seat of the Safavi dynasty) had to be included in the zone in which British interests were supreme. British interests also needed to be adequately represented at Shiraz, Yezd and Kerman. Curzon considered Seistan as

⁶ J.C. Hurewitz, ed., **Diplomacy in the Near and the Middle East**, Vol. I, D. Van Nostrand, 1956, pp. 219-249.

⁷ London, Longmans, Green, 1892; reprint: New York, Barnes and Noble, 1966.

“the present meeting point of the advanced pioneers of British and Russian influence”. He wrote that it “should be retained in the British zone”.

Coming to the Persian Gulf, Curzon stated that the western and southern coasts were partially owned by Turkey or were entered into treaty relations of varying character, “constituting a sort of veiled Protectorate with Great Britain”. Although the “**de jure** position in the Persian Gulf was that of a sea open to the flag of all nations, the **de facto** position reflected a British predominance. The **pax Britannica** was maintained, and the British trade had “acquired almost a monopoly of the foreign commerce of the Gulf ports”. All imports and exports were conveyed to and from the Gulf in British ships. The rival ventures attempted by foreign nations had failed. The Sheikh of Kuwait had bound himself and his successors not to receive the representative of any other Power than Britain and not to alienate any portion of his territory to the government or subjects of any other power. Similar machinations were in progress at Bahrain. Muscat had, for years, been controlled by British influence. Several ports or islands in the Gulf, such as Kharak, Bushire, Mohammerah and Ahwaz, were militarily occupied more than once.

Curzon’s memorandum, written in 1899 as a confidential document, reveals British designs to control and tyrannize the whole region. Several Iranian and Arab historians referred to it as evidence of British intentions in an area which they considered their own. The interpretations that necessarily followed and the possibility on the part of the American Government to make use of a similar strategy of dominance led Hurewitz to exclude Curzon’s notorious memorandum from the second enlarged three-volume edition of the same work printed between 1975 and 1979 under the title of **The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics**.⁸ Lord Curzon’s report was the only manuscript eliminated from the second enlarged edition.

The foreign states drew the peoples of the region into wars against each other and against other European countries. The British, for instance, staked on feudal and tribal disunity, active interference in Iranian-Ottoman, Arab-Iranian and Arab-Ottoman relations, shifted Iranian interests from the Gulf to the Caspian Sea⁹ and encouraged enmity, not only between the Shiites and the Sunnites, but also between different Sunnite sects. Allegations that it was not the British Government, but the East

⁸ Vol. I: **European Expansion, 1535-1914**, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1975.

⁹ B.H. Sumner, “Tsardom and Imperialism in the Far East and the Middle East: 1880-1914”, **Proceedings of the British Academy**, 27 (1941), pp. 25-65.

India Company that operated in the Gulf, and with purely commercial interests, do not hold water. Britain resorted to every means, including wars, threats, blockades, unequal treaties, coercion, concessions, assassinations and appropriate strings in various capitals. The competition of the European colonialists in and around the Gulf led to hostilities among themselves in Europe and elsewhere.

The wealth and the importance of the Persian Gulf drew the attention of foreign invaders. Chinese interest began in the early 15th century. The Empire of Tamerlane, established in Central Asia, had severed the traditional land routes. Tamerlane was repeating the feat of Jenghiz Khan - the conquest of China. In these circumstances, the Emperor of China ordered a huge fleet to be ready to be sent to the Indian Ocean countries. The fleet was headed by Chen Ho, a Moslem, a significant fact which revealed the plans of the Chinese rulers. Chen Ho, who had instructions to enter into alliances with the Moslem rulers of India and the Middle East in order to encircle Tamerlane and block its military forces, headed in 1405 a fleet of 60 large ships with 27,800 officers and men and started the first of his seven missions. Chen Ho's third maritime expedition (1409) was marked by a bloody intervention in Ceylon, ending with the capture of the King, who was taken to China but shipped back to Ceylon only after he agreed to lend China full assistance in the future. Under the Ming dynasty, the Chinese fleet became an instrument of domination in the south seas. The Chinese came to control all commerce in the waters of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.

Sixty-five years after the last Chinese squadron left the Indian Ocean, Portuguese ships appeared to dominate this important region. In 1498 Vasco da Gama cast anchor in Calicut - only because his ship was piloted by Ahmed ibn Majid. The other Portuguese squadrons, which followed Vasco da Gama, attacked local vessels, seized cargoes and then sank them with their crews. The squadron led by Affonso Albuquerque, not only engaged in even more barbarous acts (such as cutting noses, ears and hands), but also laid by 1507 the basis for Portuguese domination of trade and shipping in those waters. Albuquerque, appointed as the Viceroy of all Portuguese possessions in and around the Indian Ocean, made Goa the center of these possessions. He continued his expansion in two directions: to the East towards Malacca and to the West towards Aden.

In two typical letters that he wrote to King Emanuel, he proposed reversing the flow of the Nile River from north to east and thereby turning the Islamic center of Cairo into a desert and also of sending 400 Portuguese cavalrymen to Medina and seizing the remains of Prophet

Mohammed and black-mailing the Moslem rulers to force on them political and trade concessions.

He managed making a treaty with Shah Ismail of Iran, this development being realized not on account of good Iranian-Portuguese, but bad Iranian-Ottoman relations. The Iranian forces suffered a defeat at Chaldiran (1514). Only two years after the Iranian-Portuguese treaty was signed, the Ottomans entered Egypt and a Turkish fleet appeared in the Red Sea, capturing Massawa. The Portuguese failed to gain control of the Red Sea. Portuguese imperialism did everything to worsen Iranian-Ottoman and Shiite-Sunni relations. Portuguese brutality forced some Arab and Indian peoples to appeal for Turkish help. In 1581, the Turks took Muscat from the Portuguese. The extreme cruelty, exercised by the Portuguese, set a very bad example that made hostility towards Islam a feature of the other European colonialists who followed them.

The Dutch¹⁰ and the British¹¹ appeared as rivals to the Portuguese. A treaty between Britain and Persia (1622) provided for joint action, which eventually returned Hormuz to the Persians. In 1660 Oman troops seized Muscat. 150 years of cruel Portuguese domination ended.

But the British felt growing competition from the Dutch who opened their own trading post at Bander Abbas. The Dutch East India Company, which had vast possessions in Indonesia, enjoyed advantages over its British competitors. The Dutch were selling over 700 tons of pepper from the famous "Spice Islands" - the Malaccas. The British East India Company, playing the Turks against the Persians, wrung from the local Turkish authorities (1640) a licence to open a trading station in Basra. The Anglo-Dutch competition led to two wars (1652-54 and 1665-67) in Europe.

However, the British and the Dutch actively intervened in Iranian-Ottoman relations, the former supporting the troops of the Turkish ruler of Mesopotamia and the latter placing ships at Nadir Shah's disposal,

¹⁰ With the expulsion of the Portuguese by the joint action of Persia and the British East India Company, the Dutch became supreme in trade with Persia. Shah Abbas, the first of the Safavi dynasty to negotiate with European merchants, granted capitulations (although in the form of a *farman*, a Royal Edict) to the Netherlands on November 17, 1623. See *supra.*: Wilson, *op. cit.*, ch. 11. Also: Sir J. Chardin, *Travels in Persia*, London, Argonaut Press, 1927, pp. 59-62, 277-287.

¹¹ The East India Company procured the first *farman* authorizing trade in Persia from Shah Abbas in 1615. Two years later, an elaborate treaty of commerce was promulgated, the original text of which appears to have been lost. In 1629, however, Shah Safi (1629-1642) granted another *farman* probably confirming the provisions of the former. This framework was confirmed by Shah Sultan Husayn (1694-1722), the last of the Safavi rulers. Sir William Foster, *England's Quest for Eastern Trade*, London, Black, 1933, ch. 30 and 31.

who dispatched to Oman an Iranian army and conquered Muscat in 1737. Two years later, Britain's Moscow trading company sent a certain John Elton to Meshed to assist the Persian ruler to establish a large navy, not in the Gulf, but on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. This project caused the transfer of local shipbuilders and navigators to the Caspian, re-focussed Persian interest in this area and worsened Nadir Shah's relations with Russia. Furthermore, the British agents fomented the differences between the Shiite and Sunnite officers and sailors, weakened Nadir Shah's position in the Gulf and forced him to accept their own terms, including Persian annual payment of one-thousand tomans from Bander Abbas customs revenues. The Gulf peoples went into wars with each other and with Britain's European rivals and were forced to restore foreign privileges and even paid the Europeans from their own customs levies.

In 1763, the first treaty in the history of Anglo-Iranian relations, giving exclusive privileges to the British East India Company, was signed.¹² In the same year, Karim Khan issued a government charter which allowed the British to set up a trading station in Bushire, exempted them from customs duties and gave them a monopoly of the woolen textiles trade.

The British were forced to pay greater attention to Oman, which became a local power in the area cultivating closer relations with Persia and Mysore. French influence¹³ was also becoming strengthened in Oman. The East India Company took measures to prevent a possible tripartite French-Mysore-Oman alliance spearheaded against British colonial interests. Britain dealt blows on France in Europe and India as well as against Oman and Tippu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore. The Company provoked conflicts between Oman, the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The gravest episode was the dismemberment of Oman, which resulted from the Barkah meeting (1793). The united Oman, which had existed for centuries, was now divided into three, Sultan ruling in Muscat, the Strait of Hormuz given to Kais and Imam Said staying in Rostak.¹⁴

¹² The end of the Safavi dynasty (1722) brought to a close the capitulatory régime of the seventeenth century in Persia. An agent of the East India Company, nevertheless, concluded in 1763 an agreement with Shaykh Sa'dun of Bushire for the establishment of a factory. A few months later (July 2, 1763) Karim Khan confirmed (by *farman*) the Shaykh's arrangement. In the next two centuries Bushire became the center of the British political and commercial activity in the Persian Gulf region. Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources*, London, Luzac, 1938.

¹³ J. Christopher Harold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, New York, Harper and Row, 1962.

¹⁴ Edward Ingram, "A Preview of the Great Game in Asia: The British Occupation of Perim and Aden in 1799", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 9 (January 1973), pp. 3-18.

It was at this time that the European colonialists introduced the shameful name of "Pirate Coast"¹⁵ for the area now a part of the United Arab Emirates. The population of this coast, which had lived for ages on the revenues of shipping, pearl trade and fishing, was in grave economic difficulties after the arrival of the Europeans. It was under these circumstances that they sought to protect themselves from foreign ships, which in contemporary times may be better termed as defence. But their urge to defend their former rights, now usurped, was described as "piracy".

In the early 1800s, not only Sultan bin Ahmed of Muscat was forced to sign a series of one-sided concessions to the British, but the whole so-called "Pirate Coast" was shelled and ships of Ras al-Khaima were burned down. In 1798, Sultan bin Ahmed permitted the East India Company to build a trading post at Bander Abbas, an Iranian territory temporarily under Muscat control. His pledges are the first of an Arab ruler containing concession to British colonialism. In 1800, he agreed to allow the Company's political agent to establish a residence in Muscat. This office was filled by Dr. Bogle, a surgeon who also became the Sultan's personal doctor.¹⁶

The British encouraged Sultan bin Ahmed to oppose the Wahhabis in Arabia, who embraced the teachings of Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, calling for the restoration of the norms of early Islam. The feudal theocratic state in Nejd, headed by the Saudi dynasty, had occupied the coastal area of Al-Qasha, the Buraimi oasis and all the Jawassa coast, turning Wahhabia Arabia into a major sea power.

In 1803, Abd al-Aziz, the ruler of the Saudi state, was assassinated; so was (1807) Badr, the Muscat Sultan (after Bin Ahmed) supporting Wahhabi views. The British carried wholesale attacks on the local ships, the most important occurring in 1818 when Ras al-Khaima was sieged from land and sea. It fell, most of its population was massacred and 202 Arab ships were burned. The sheikhs of the principalities which then formed Jawassa, namely, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharja, Umm al-Qaiwain

¹⁵ Sir Charles Belgrave, *The Pirate Coast*, London, G. Bell and Sons, 1966.

¹⁶ The agents of the East India Company first began to trade in the Gulf with the beginning of the seventeenth century. But the 1798 agreement with the Muscat ruler was the first of a series of acts that most of the eastern and southern coasts of the Arabian peninsula became dependent on Britain. A. Auzoux, "La France et Moscate aux dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles", *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 23-24 (1909-1910), pp. 518-540, 234-265; Herbert J. Liebesny, "International Relations of Arabia: the Dependent Areas", *Middle East Journal*, 1 (April 1947), pp. 148-168.

and Ras al-Khaima, were brought to see the smoking ruins and were forced to accept in 1820 the first "General Treaty" with the Arab tribes in the Gulf. On behalf of the East India Company, it was signed by General Grant Keir, who had previously conducted many bloody wars in India.¹⁷

The General Treaty was the beginning of the official British protectorate in the south-western part of the Gulf. Its Article 6 obliged the Arab sheikhs to receive instructions from the British resident on matters of internal affairs. The Sheikh of Bahrain became a party to the same General Treaty in the same year.

In 1843, the British forced on the sheikhs a new document called the "First Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities at Sea" which gave the foreigners even greater powers of control. Another one, a year later, enabled the British to interfere in any event in the coast. In the meantime, the British eliminated potential opposers either by assassination or simply overthrowing from power. For instance, Hafiz Ali, the ruler in Baghdad, was killed (1807) and Davut Pasha, one of his successors, overthrown (1831).

In the 1838-42 period the British occupied the Iranian island of Kharg, from where they threatened the Iranian positions in Khuzistan and the Turks in Basra. When they intervened in 1840 against the Muhammad Ali revolt in Egypt, they did not aim to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire; they feared a possible consolidation of the Mohammad Ali rule on the western coast of the Gulf.¹⁸

British colonial circles now paid special attention to Bahrain and Qatar, which had refused to accede to the 1853 Treaty. Mohammad al-Khalifah, the ruler of Bahrain, had even recognized in 1860 Iran's sovereignty over his archipelago. But within a year the Sheikh of Bahrain, facing the guns of the British squadron, placed its external relations, trade and its pearls under British control. Britain, in turn, was to protect Bahrain against its enemies. Bahrain's principal enemy was no other than Britain itself, which had established a protectorate over this strategically important archipelago and through it claimed control over most of Qatar.

Only the Ottoman Empire could challenge British supremacy after a series of reforms in the late 1860s, when large Turkish expeditionary corps

¹⁷ The 1820 "General Treaty" marked the formal beginning of British-Indian policies of the Gulf. H. Moyses-Bartlett, *The Pirates of Trucial Oman*, London, MacDonald, 1966; J.F. Standish, "British Maritime Policy in the Persian Gulf", *Middle East Studies*, 3 (July 1967), pp. 324-354.

¹⁸ Mohammed Sabry, *L'Empire Egyptien sous Mohammed-Ali et la question d'Orient: 1811-1849*, Paris, Geuthner, 1930.

landed in Yemen and further Turkish control restored from Kuwait to Oman, including Doha, the main city in Qatar. The British, then, focussed undermining Turkish influence in Qatar. They resorted to pressure on the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid, provoked border incidents with Abu Dhabi (the largest principality in Trucial Oman) and supported clashes with Bahrain, which still claimed control over the north-western part of the peninsula. A British squadron, in support of Bahrain's claims, shelled Qatar coasts in 1895. This military intervention is condemned in the *Memoirs of the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid*.

In 1912 British diplomats and other agents in the Gulf discussed a plan to create a Basra principality, with a certain Talib Pasha on the throne, who would agree to a British protectorate over the whole Shatt al-Arab. With the beginning of the First World War, Anglo-Iranian forces landed in Basra and began to advance on Baghdad. The Sheikh of Kuwait accepted the status of a protectorate for his country. Ibn Saud, the Emir of Nejd, established "special relations" with Britain. Qatar also became a British protectorate. At the end of the war, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered and Arab territories and southern Iran were occupied by British forces. The oil of Mosul and Khuzistan became mainly British property. Its navy anchored freely in any port in the Gulf.

British positions were rivalled, decades later, when others rushed to storm the "British Lake". The new major rival was the United States.

The American governmental and scientific circles more and more relate American presence in and around the Gulf to "Soviet threat" and to the need to ensure the flow of oil to Western Europe and Japan. An analysis of American policies shows that the United States was interested in this area long before the establishment of the Soviet régime or the discovery of oil.

After having established a Mediterranean fleet and engaged in battles against (what it called) the "barbarian states" in north-western Africa, it signed in 1830 the first treaty with the Ottoman Government and benefitted from the services of traders and missionaries to penetrate into the East.¹⁹

For instance, a certain Edmund Roberts, a shipowner who had become rich from opium and slave trade, was able to sign as early as 1833 with

¹⁹ "Capitulatory rights" of American nationals in the Ottoman Empire derived from the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, dated May 7, 1830. Leland James Gordon, *American Relations with Turkey: 1830-1930*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932.

Sultan Said of Muscat a treaty granting extensive privileges to American merchants and virtual extra-territorial rights for U.S. citizens. The Anglo-Muscat Treaty, which followed six years later, repeated word-for-word many articles of the U.S.-Muscat Treaty.²⁰

After the division of the Muscat Sultanate (1861), the United States sent a squadron under Commodore Shoefeldt to guarantee that the "Roberts treaty" was still acceptable to the new rulers. The United States also earned from the Shah of Iran concessions for railways, artesian wells and extraction of minerals.

With the growth of oil extraction, the United States and Britain had an increasing interest in consolidating their positions. The people of the Gulf, however, see now with increasing clarity that they should not allow foreign countries interfere in their internal affairs, respect the foreign policies pursued by the Gulf states and acknowledge the sovereign rights of the states to their natural resources.

²⁰ This instrument was Muscat's first capitulatory treaty with a Western power. Rudolph S. Ruete, *Said bin Sultan (1791-1856), Ruler of Oman and Zenzibar: His Place in the History of Arabia and East Africa*, London, Alexander Ouseley, 1929, pp. 122-129.