

THE DAY OF SOLIDARITY, LOYALTY AND HONOR



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أبحاث الندوة التاريخية المصاحبة
لاحتفالات اليوم الوطني لدولة قطر

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The modern state of Qatar owes much to the policies and actions carried out by Shaykh Jasim b. Muhammad Al Thani, the ruler of Qatar during the last quarter of the 19th century and more than a decade into the 20th century. He was obliged to move carefully through a myriad of competing forces in the region and to tread lightly when dealing with the two imperial powers intimately involved in Gulf affairs at the time, that is the Ottomans and Britain. It was Britain of course that came to dominate the Gulf until well into the 20th century. While Jasim's relationship with the Ottomans was the most immediate and pronounced during much of his reign, it can be said that his most important relations over the long term and after his death were with Britain. Whatever his move, Jasim had to consider what the British reaction would be and adjust accordingly. Over the course of his reign, his relationship with Britain moved from a *pas de deux* over his relations with the Ottomans to the preliminaries to formal protected status. While this may have forced him to move cautiously, it did not prevent the consolidation of his – and Al Thani – authority over the edifice of modern Qatar.

The Historical British Role in the Gulf

British dominion over India was responsible for its long interest in and dominance over the Gulf, the apogee of which occurred in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. Because of its interests, the British government of India played an increasing role in the politics of the Arabian littoral of the Gulf. This was displayed in a variety of ways.

First, Britain took naval action to suppress what it regarded as piracy in the early 19th century. The principal object of such action was the maritime power of al-Qawasim, based at Ra's al-Khaymah in what is now the northern United Arab Emirates (UAE). Several attacks were carried out on the town between 1817 and 1820 when it was destroyed.¹

Second, Britain began instituting a system of maritime truces in the early and mid-19th century that forbade warfare by sea, a source of particular concern since maritime passage was Britain's principal interest at that time.

1. British actions against al-Qawasim are detailed in J.G. Lorimer, comp., *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia* (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, Vol. 1: 1915; Vol. 2: 1908), Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 637-670. For rebuttals of the allegations of piracy, see Sultan Muhammad al-Qasimi, *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf* (London: Croom Helm, 1986. 2nd ed.; London: Routledge, 1988), and Charles E. Davies, *The Blood-Red Flag: An Investigation into Qasimi Piracy, 1797-1820* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997).

These truces were temporary in nature until 1853 when a general and perpetual treaty of maritime peace was signed. This system of truces in effect legitimized the littoral *shaykhs* who signed them, conferring recognition of their leadership over settlements and allied tribes, their right and the right of their families to be regarded as local rulers, and implying their responsibility for the activities of the populace living under their direct control or in their sphere of influence.²

Third, this complex of putative recognition was transformed into formal protected status through a number of agreements in or about the 1890s. Not only did these agreements place the local rulers along the Arab littoral under the protection and dominance of British India, which exercised both de jure and de facto rights to interfere in and direct local affairs when it was felt necessary. This period also resulted in the maturation of the British agent system throughout the Gulf.³

The next step in the intensification of British shaping of statehood on the Arab littoral

2. C.U. Aitchison, comp., *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries* (revised ed.; Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1933), Vol. 11, "Containing The Treaties, &c., Relating to Aden and the South Western Coast of Arabia, the Arab Principalities in the Persian Gulf, Muscat (Oman), Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province."

3. The agreements are discussed in a number of works, particularly in various country studies. The text of the agreements can be found in Aitchison, "Collection of Treaties."

was prompted by the introduction of air routes to the region in the 1920s and 1930s. Principally, these were the Imperial Airways route from London to India and the Basra-Aden Royal Air Force (RAF) route. The short range of both civil and military aircraft required the establishment of a chain of airfields for regular use and a supplementary network of emergency landing areas. The security of these airfields and landing strips required that the local rulers exercised effective control of their hinterlands. Imposing conditions for rulers' control over tribes and populations under their control on land was a significant step up from the earlier concern over rulers' control over maritime activities.⁴

This in turn was superseded by British efforts to acquire oil concessions for British companies in the littoral states. Concomitantly with the air route requirements, the search for oil required an extension of rulers' functions from authority over people to territorial integrity and the need to exercise full control of everything within the boundaries of their emerging states.

British concern did not disappear with the independence of India in 1947. For one thing, British oil companies were active participants in many of the producing concessions. This

also meant that other British firms capitalized on commercial opportunities in the newly developing Gulf economies. British actions to protect their clients took the form of efforts to prevent the penetration of radical ideologies in the Gulf during the 1950s and 1960s. Even after Kuwait became independent in 1961, Britain felt it necessary later that year to make a show of political will to engage revolutionary Iraq in military action if Baghdad should move on Kuwait.

Finally, the British decision to withdraw from the Gulf, made in 1968 and carried out in 1971, prompted British and international concern over the stability and survival of the small Arab states without the protection of the British umbrella. Needless to say, these states have survived very well, albeit with a broader American umbrella backed by Britain and other actors.

The effect of these activities and their gradual evolution on the peoples and rulers along the Arab littoral was profound. It was the genesis of a transformation from an almost purely tribal system to prevenient states. Those prominent leadership figures along the Arab littoral that the British encountered were confirmed in their authority and their writ gradually evolved into the status of rulers of small states. Thus the Arab littoral was brought into British India's informal empire and an abiding relationship between the

4. J.E. Peterson, *Defending Arabia* (London: Croom Helm; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

region and Britain created.

It is especially important to note that the course of this history was determined not only by British policy but also in substantial part by certain strong local personalities. They not only inaugurated the relationship with the British but put their stamp on the transformation of their territories into statehood. This paper is concerned with one of these personalities and his formative role in the development of his state.

The Origins of Modern Qatar

Qatar's modern political history is only two and a half centuries old.⁵ The genesis of the present Qatari state may be said to date to the

5. This brief historical survey relies on background found in J.G., Lorimer, comp., *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman, and Central Arabia* (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, Vol. 1: 1915; Vol. 2: 1908), "History of Qatar," in Vol. 1, Historical, Part 1, Chapter 4, pp. 787-835; Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 133-153; Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *The Creation of Qatar* (London: Croom Helm; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979); Mahmūd Hasan al-Sirāf, *Tatawwur Qatar al-siyāsi wa-al-ijtimā'i fi 'ahd al-shaykh Qāsim ibn Muhammad Al Thāni* (n.p., 1980); Yousof Ibrahim Al-Abdulla, *A Study of Qatari-British Relations, 1914-1945* (Doha: Orient Publishing and Translation, n.d.); Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Frederick F. Anson, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); and Habibur Rahman, *The Emergence of Qatar: The Turbulent Years, 1627-1916* (London: Kegan Paul, 2005).

immigration of 'Utub tribes and particularly the Al Khalifah and the al-Jalahimah clans to Zubarah on the western coast of the Qatar Peninsula in 1766. These groups quickly obtained primacy amongst Qatar's inhabitants but the al-Jalahimah soon fell out with the Al Khalifah and were defeated in war. The attention of the Al Khalifah was directed not so much at the Qatar Peninsula but across the Gulf to Persia. Accordingly, they defeated the Persians in Bahrain in 1783 and moved their headquarters there from Zubarah. However, the continued Al Khalifah claims to Zubarah impacted Bahraini-Qatari relations until the late 20th century.⁶

The rise to preeminence of the present Al Thani ruling family is even more recent. Part of the tribe of Al Bin 'Ali, they began to exert themselves in the 1860s under Shaykh Muhammad b. Thani and then, under his son, Shaykh Jasim b. Muhammad, they achieved full control of Doha and subsequently extended that over the entire Qatar Peninsula. An initial step towards recognition of the Al Thani as leaders of an "independent" Qatar was the 1868 agreement that Shaykh Muhammad signed with the British Government of India, promising to refrain from warfare by sea and to accept British mediation in his disputes with the Al Khalifah of Bahrain.⁷

6. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 787-788.

7. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 801.

The Ottoman Presence in Eastern Arabia and Qatar

The position of the Al Thani in the second half of the 19th century was generally precarious, however. In large part, this was due to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into Eastern Arabia. The Ottoman presence was not short-lived and its impact on regional politics was significant. While British power in the region is well-recognized, the significance of the Ottoman presence has been underestimated, in large part because of internal deficiencies:

"From Iraq to Qatar, however, the key power was the Ottomans. ... They became for a time the recognized authority in that area after a campaign to occupy eastern Arabia in 1871. Britain was concerned with maritime affairs, and if the Ottomans had governed the mainland effectively, Britain would not have become entangled in the territories that were to become the states of Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The Ottoman administration proved weak, however, and the British were drawn, often unwillingly and even unwittingly, into mainland politics."⁸

It has been suggested that since the British predominance vis-à-vis local rulers was so loosely based that the Ottomans could have



8. Anscombe, Ottoman Gulf, p. 1.



exercised a far firmer control over the region if their administration had not been so inefficient.⁹

In 1871, the Ottomans occupied al-Qatif and al-Hasa (now in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province). Although Shaykh Jasim b. Muhammad, acting on behalf of his father Muhammad, was persuaded to raise the Ottoman flag, he soon raised the tribes in opposition to the Ottomans but failed to prevent a short-lived military occupation of Doha in early 1872. He was also forced to accept the assumption of the role of *qadi* (judge) by the Ottoman resident representative and to pay tribute to Istanbul. The original strategy of accepting Ottoman influence as a counter to British restrictions on maritime warfare was soon transformed into a desire to obtain British assistance in order to counter the Ottoman occupation. This was less than successful and, in 1876, Jasim was obliged to accept the Ottoman office of Qa'im-Maqam (deputy governor) of Qatar.¹⁰

Nevertheless, it was not an easy relationship. Jasim's acceptance of the Ottoman office seemed to provoke resistance from the tribes that he had difficulty in suppressing.¹¹ He was also bitter over Ottoman reluctance to back his side in the dispute with Abu Dhabi

over Khawr al-'Udayd. Differences between Jasim and the Ottomans became obvious in 1887 when the *suq* in Doha was plundered and the Vali of Basrah had to travel to Doha and establish a coal depot and a garrison of 250 men there.¹² Matters grew worse in the early 1890s when Shaykh Jasim refused to allow an Ottoman customs house in Doha. When the Vali of Basrah, accompanied by 300 soldiers, arrived in Doha in 1893, Jasim refused to meet him. After a month, the Vali's patience wore then and he made a disastrous attack on Jasim's camp outside Doha. Forced to return to Doha, the Vali directed fire on the town from an Ottoman vessel. The incident resulted in the deaths of about 100 Ottoman soldiers and some 400 locals, only some of them combatants. In the end, Jasim continued to act as Qa'im-maqam although an Ottoman official was appointed as his assistant. Another small uprising in 1898 resulted in several deaths but the Ottoman garrison remained and was even reinforced.¹³

While Jasim was unable to expel the Ottomans from Doha, his maneuvers clearly kept them off guard. Playing the British card paid dividends, not least in receiving

9. Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, p. 4.

10. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 802-804; Said Zahlan, *Creation of Qatar*, pp. 46-47.

11. Said Zahlan, *Creation of Qatar*, p. 51.

12. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 806-807.

13. Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, pp. 85-90; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 824-825; and Said Zahlan, *Creation of Qatar*, pp. 51-52. British reporting on the affair is contained in Penelope Tuson, ed., *Records of Qatar: Primary Documents, 1820-1960* (London: Archive Editions, 1991), Vol. 3 (1879-1896), pp. 355-378.

no punishment for the 1893 incident and in deterring Ottoman efforts against smuggling because of his insinuations that the British stood ready to make Qatar their protectorate.¹⁴ Furthermore, reference to the British prevented the Ottomans from installing new *mudirs* in a number of Qatari locations in 1902.¹⁵ In addition, his strength kept the Ottomans bottled up in Doha and prevented the extension of their authority to the Qatari countryside.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1913 that the Ottomans finally renounced their ambitions in Qatar. Their departure was occasioned in the first place by the Saudi capture of al-Hasa in May 1913 and made formal by the negotiation of the Anglo-Turkish Convention in July 1913. It was perhaps fitting that Shaykh Jasim's long reign in Doha ended with his death between the two events.¹⁶

British Interest in Qatar (1870s)

14. Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, pp. 144-145.

15. Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 4 (1896-1916), pp. 37-140 and 265-306; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 830-833. The Ottomans sought to get around Britain's objections to new Ottoman *mudirs* by appointing Jasim's son 'Abd al-Rahman as *mudir* of al-Wakrah in 1902. Britain still protested the appointment and 'Abd al-Rahman was removed from the office in 1904. Ibid.

16. Said Zuhair, *Creation of Qatar*, p. 55. The text of the agreement and contemporary comment on it is contained in Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 4, pp. 309-330. British views on the Saudi capture of al-Hasa are in *ibid.*, pp. 345-369.

Very limited interaction existed between British India and Qatar through the 1870s. The peninsula had no developed port that would have permitted or encouraged large-scale trade. Furthermore, there was no hinterland or sizeable population that encouraged prospects of trade or other activity. Finally, there was no central political authority to deal with and therefore no security on the peninsula.

Still, Britain had several reasons to be concerned with what happened in Qatar. First there was the issue of piracy. Tension between the British Government of India and Shaykh Jasim continued throughout the 1870s because of piracy being carried out from Qatar. Jasim was confronted in 1879 with accusations that he had not stopped piracy on the part of the Bani Hajar, to which he responded that his control extended only to Doha and al-Wakrah.¹⁷ The issue of piracy faded but did not go away entirely, as the British cited various instances off the Qatari coast between 1893 and 1906.¹⁸

A second issue embroiling the British with Qatari affairs was the relations between the old power of Qatar, the Al Khalifah, and the new power, the Al Thani. As early as 1823, Britain had determined that Qatar was a

17. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 832-833.

18. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 832-833.

dependency of Bahrain, which exercised its authority through a shaykh of the Al Bu 'Aynayn.¹⁹ But this assessment changed a few decades later. In 1867, the Al Khalifah attacked Doha and al-Wakrah for dissidence but the British intervened and recognized the authority of Shaykh Muhammad b. Thani Al Thani, who was regarded as the most important individual in the Qatar peninsula.²⁰

The continued Al Khalifah claims to Zubarah, however, led to hostilities between the Al Khalifah and Shaykh Jasim. Jasim's case and strength prevailed and any practical Al Khalifah claim vanished early in his period of leadership. "Although [Jasim] bin Muhammad might not have regarded Zubarah as part of his territory in 1871, the consequent clashes over that place resulted in the recognition of the sovereignty of the Al-Thani."²¹ Al Khalifah claims to Zubarah never went away until the late 20th century but the ability of the Al Khalifah to enforce them did not exist. Nevertheless, the opportunity for friction persisted. A fracas over Zubarah in 1888 between the Al Khalifah on one hand and Shaykh Jasim, in league with the Ottomans, on the other, led to an implicit

British recognition of Jasim's authority there and a rebuke to the Al Khalifah for interfering in the affairs of Qatar.²² Similarly, Shaykh Jasim's 1895 attempt to take the fight from Zubarah to the Al Khalifah in Bahrain was stymied by British action.²³

But another, more serious, reason for British interest in Qatari affairs during this period was the arrival of the Ottomans on the regional scene. Istanbul's advances, and its claims to Qatar and Abu Dhabi in particular, threatened the British position in Bahrain and Oman, as well as the Gulf generally.²⁴ While Britain's strength in the Gulf was on the seas, it needed to retain predominance over the littoral *shaykhs* and these were being threatened by the Ottoman Empire through its landward advances down the Gulf.

British Relations with Shaykh Jasim (1880s and 1890s)

British sparring with the Ottomans over

22. Tuson, Records of Qatar, Vol. 3, pp. 563-569; Said Zuhlan, Creation of Qatar, p. 50.

23. Lorimer, Gazetteer, Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 827; Tuson, Records of Qatar, Vol. 3, pp. 579-701.

24. British interdepartmental correspondence in London and India on the Ottoman position in the Gulf and its impact on British policy during the 1870s is reproduced in Tuson, Records of Qatar, Vol. 3, pp. 1-184 and 257-351. On the impact of Bahrain on British-Qatari relations, see Briton Cooper Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 133-153.

19. Lorimer, Gazetteer, Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 793.

20. Lorimer, Gazetteer, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 800-801.

The reason for British intervention was not to support Shaykh Muhammad but simply because the Al Khalifah had used a naval force to attack Qatar in contravention of the maritime peace treaty.

21. Said Zuhlan, Creation of Qatar, pp. 46-48.

Qatar and other areas continued unabated into the 1880s, encouraged in part by Shaykh Jasim's repeated efforts to play them off against each other. But a new British concern appeared about this time, the treatment of Indian merchants in Qatar. British accusations of Jasim's failure to provide adequate protection to Indian subjects started in the 1870s. When they grew more serious at the beginning of the 1880s, a British expedition against Qatar was contemplated and only Jasim's agreement abide by the 1868 agreement with his father as well as his maritime obligations forestalled action. However, a British squadron was sent to Doha in 1882 after Jasim had expelled Indian traders and forced him to make an apology and provide compensation. Another incident in 1887 resulted in British instructions to the Ruler of Bahrain to withhold pearling money owed to Shaykh Jasim. On each occasion, Jasim sought assistance from the Ottomans to avoid British action.²⁵ This ploy was less than wholly successful, however, since Jasim's relations with the Ottomans also produced Ottoman action against him, as shown above. A third point of British-Qatari friction was

25. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 808-813. Correspondence regarding the renewal of the 1868 agreement is in Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 3, pp. 185-212, while Jasim's treatment of Indian traders is summarized in the extract from Saldanha's *Precis of Katar Affairs, 1873-1904* (Calcutta, 1904), reprinted in Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 3, pp. 213-219.

Khawr al-'Udayd. This strip of territory lying between the base of the Qatar Peninsula and Abu Dhabi territory to the east had long been a bone of contention between Qatar and Abu Dhabi and their contention drew in both Britain and Istanbul. When elements of the Bani Yas left Abu Dhabi to settle in Khawr al-'Udayd in 1869 and after, Shaykh Jasim sought to redirect their allegiance to himself. Such a move naturally was opposed by Shaykh Zayid b. Khalifah, the Ruler of Abu Dhabi, who received British backing. From 1876, the issue Khawr al-'Udayd provoked a number of Qatari-Abu Dhabi hostilities. After a quiescent period between 1881 and 1885, the feud erupted again. Jasim's subsequent assertion of Ottoman support for his establishment of a base at al-'Udayd brought swift British reaction dissuading him from taking action and forcing the Ottomans to backtrack. But raids and counter-raids between Qatar and Abu Dhabi continued into the 1890s. Jasim's attempts to enlist the support of the Ottomans and Ibn Rashid of Najd came to naught. The Ottoman garrison in Doha was even ordered to remain within the confines of the town and plans to post a *mudir* in al-'Udayd were abandoned.²⁶

26. British correspondence in Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 3, pp. 387-559; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 818-824; Said Zahlan, *Creation of Qatar*, p. 52.

Shaykh Jasim b. Muhammad and the Formation of Qatar

Above the volatile mix of actors and motives surrounding Qatar in the second half of the nineteenth century rose the strong personality of Shaykh Jasim b. Muhammad Al Thani and his drive to create a new state free of the constraints of both regional and imperial powers. The appearance of the Ottomans in the immediate region had given him a tool to use against British encroachment and the rivalry with Abu Dhabi. At the same time, however, Jasim was able to make use of British support – or at least – neutral intervention to divest himself of Al Khalifah overlordship.

The culmination of his machinations between British and Ottoman forces came in the 1890s. With the shadows of the 1893 confrontation with the Ottomans on the horizon, Jasim pleaded with Britain to intervene and the Political Resident made his way to Qatar. Before the Resident could remonstrate with the Vali of Basrah, also in Qatar, though, the latter was dismissed. Nevertheless, the British had adopted a mediatory position between Jasim and Istanbul.²⁷

27. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 824. The Ottoman-British difference of opinion over Qatar was not confined to Qatar, however. When the Ottoman ambassador in London handed the British Ministry

of Foreign Affairs a note contending that Qatar was a subsidiary of Ottoman Najd, the Minister was ordered to object. *Ibid.*

28. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 827-829. These overtures were made by Jasim's brother Ahmad, who had been placed in charge of Doha while his brother remained in the countryside away from Ottoman control. Ahmad's role in these contacts led the British to believe that Ahmad was the de facto ruler, an impression that was abruptly terminated with Ahmad's murder in 1905. *Ibid.*; Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 4, pp. 151-186.

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had signed. While the various overtures by Jasim and his brother Ahmad to Britain in the 1890s indicating their willingness to accept a protected status may have been political ploys, they also indicated a growing need for more formal, if more subordinate, relations with Britain. For its part, Britain considered providing Qatar with such an agreement at the time of the visit of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, to the Gulf in 1903 but the idea was not acted on.²⁹

Jasim's last card in staving off subordination to Britain was the emergence of the Third Saudi State in the first few years of the 20th century. Shaykh Jasim, already converted to Wahhabism, sent gifts to the Saudi leader Amir 'Abd al-'Aziz b. 'Abd al-Rahman despite warnings that an alliance with the new rulers of Najd would antagonize Abu Dhabi and raise British ire.³⁰ The Saudi reconquest of al-Hasa from the Ottomans in 1813 simultaneously ended the Ottoman threat to Eastern Arabia and turned the revived Saudi Najd into a new regional power. Two months later, the Anglo-Turkish Convention formally mandated an end to the Ottoman presence in the Arabian Peninsula. Nevertheless, a small Ottoman garrison remained in Qatar until well into the First

World War I. In 1915, following the fall of Basra and other Mesopotamian holdings of Istanbul, a British vessel put into Doha and prompted the remaining Ottoman soldiers to prudently disappear.³¹ The final legal-practical barrier to formalizing the British role in Qatar was removed.

The disappearance of the Ottomans at one stroke freed the Al Thani of the need to share sovereignty of Qatar and removed one of the last significant checks to British influence in Qatar. Jasim's final card in staving off the British was the Al Sa'ud. The latter was a resurgent force under 'Abd al-'Aziz and had played a historical role in Eastern Arabia. But Saudi expansionist eyes on the Gulf littoral were firmly resisted by the British. Jasim was thus backed into a political corner and left with no viable alternative to the British.

Shaykh Jasim b. Muhammad died in July 1913, before the political relationship with Britain was formalized.³² His successor was his son 'Abdullah, who had taken over many of his father's duties, including the stewardship of Doha, since 1905. It was left to 'Abdullah to sign the exclusive treaty with Britain in 1916. By its terms, Shaykh 'Abdullah agreed that "I will not have relations nor correspond

29. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 830; Said Zuhlan, *Creation of Qatar*, pp. 56-57.

30. Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 835; Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 4, pp. 141-149 and 259-263.

31. Lt. Col. Sir P.Z. Cox, Political Resident, to the Foreign and Political Secretary of the Government of India, telegram 17327 of 28 August 1915; reproduced in Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 4, pp. 450-451.

32. Reporting on Shaykh Jasim's death is contained in Tuson, *Records of Qatar*, Vol. 4, pp. 333-341.

with, nor receive the agent of, any other Power without the consent of the High British Government; neither will I, without such consent, cede to any other Power or its subjects, land either on lease, sale, transfer, gift, or in any other way whatsoever."³³ In many ways this was simply the formality to a process that Jasim had set in motion already.

Assessment

In many ways, Shaykh Jasim's relationship with the British could be characterized as adversarial more than anything else as a result of British constraints on his naval activities, British limitations on his efforts to expand his influence geographically, and British mediation in disputes with other tribes and rulers. Jasim's strength in keeping Britain at arms length was his association with other imperial and regional powers. While these were successful in preventing Qatar from slipping into the British "informal empire" as long as he lived, they were not without costs.

33. Other provision bound Shaykh 'Abdullah to reaffirming the 1868 agreement, cooperate in the eradication of slave trading and piracy, and to not grant any pearl fishing concessions or cable landing rights. British goods were to be subject to the same customs duties as goods imported by Qataris, British subjects were to be allowed to reside in Qatar and engage in commerce there. The shaykh also agreed to the residence of a British agent and the establishment of a British post office and telegraph installation. The text of the agreement is contained in Aitchison, Collection of Treaties, Vol. 11, pp. 258-261.

In particular, the often-tense and mercurial alliance with the Ottomans restricted his activities and never provided the material or diplomatic support necessary for him to carry out his schemes.

In the short term, the success of Jasim and the Qataris in standing up to the Ottomans during the 1893 incidents greatly enhanced the standing of Jasim as a military leader, politician, and admired leader of the Qatari people. He had stood up to the Ottomans who found themselves unable to even reprimand him, let alone remove him. In the longer term, however, the 1893 hostilities solved nothing and Qatar was not able to rid itself of the Ottoman presence until well after Shaykh Jasim's death. In order to escape Ottoman control, Jasim was forced to live outside Doha and thus was cut off from the affairs of Qatar's largest settlement. His deputization of his brother Ahmad as his agent in Doha led to Ahmad's use of Ottoman backing in assuming a semi-independent and threatening position vis-à-vis Jasim, a tense situation that lasted until Ahmad's murder in 1905.³⁴

Only with the final Ottoman departure from Qatar in 1915 was Britain able to bring Qatar under the wing of its Residency system through the 1916 treaty of protection. While

34. Anscombe, Ottoman Gulf, pp. 146-148; Lorimer, Gazetteer, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 825-826.

incorporation into the protected-states system of the Arab littoral of the Gulf imposed some limitations of action, it did not constitute a practical handicap to the emergence of the state and government of Qatar. More importantly, it seemed to be an essential step in the “legitimization” of Qatar under the Al Thani as a political entity and then a state. Without this pivotal development and the strong personality of Shaykh Jasim, it is arguable that Qatar may not have emerged as an independent entity.

Shaykh Jasim’s actions and role were absolutely pivotal in the emergence of the state of Qatar. He was an accomplished statesman and manipulator of the tribal environment. In this connection, he continued and deepened a process begun by his father Muhammad and he left the foundations of an orderly system of succession – in contrast to the example of some neighboring states. Given the paucity of his resources, he showed himself to be an innate master of the art of balancing between opposing external interests in Qatar. In the end, he managed to “co-exist” with the British, to accept the limitations they imposed but also maintain his freedom of movement and extend his influence.

While the 1916 agreement compromised the sovereignty of the Al Thani, it imposed little in the way of new limitations on their rule in

practice. The agreement served principally to govern Qatar’s relations with other European powers and vis-à-vis regional threats. The protection it afforded cost Shaykh Jasim little in terms of his control over his people. As one scholar has put it, “He had obviously done much for Qatar besides giving it a more independent status; he had also contributed to the beginning of its development as a state, instituting several social and economic measures to unify Qatar” and ordering the construction of roads and schools.³⁵

Shaykh Jasim is perhaps best assessed in company with a select group of pivotal rulers of the era, particularly Shaykh Mubarak al-Sabah of Kuwait (r. 1896-1915) and Shaykh (r. 1855-1909), as well as perhaps Amir (later King) ‘Abd al-‘Aziz of Najd (r. 1902-1953). This was the formative period in the modern history of all three states. Like Zayid and Mubarak, Jasim protected his country from Ottoman aspirations and the hostile ambitions of neighbors. Like Mubarak, he practiced a long-term policy of balancing off Britain against the Ottomans but with even more success. Like Mubarak and Zayid, Jasim’s policies resulted in a relationship with Britain that secured autonomy if not independence. Like Zayid, Jasim forged the first steps of a national consciousness out of a tribal milieu.

35. Saïd Zahlan, *Creation of Qatar*, p. 54.



