

Imperial Rivalry in South West Arabia before the First World War

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Abstract

Since the reappearance of the Ottomans in Sana'a from 1872, rivalry against the British in and around Aden began. This on-going rivalry ended after the boundary settlement of 1902-1904 which freed the British from further Ottoman intervention in the Aden Protectorate. This event contributed to the change of British policy of intervention in the internal affairs of the Arab to the non-intervention policy of 1906. The Ottomans too benefited from the boundary settlement. This settlement encouraged the Ottomans to settle their dispute with the Zaydis and in 1911 they concluded the Treaty of Da'an recognizing the authority of the Zaydis in the north of Yemen. This article, firstly, will trace the imperial rivalries which took place between the British and the Ottomans in South West Arabia since the opening of Suez Canal which had increased the significance of the Red Sea and its surroundings. Secondly, to examine how the imperial settlement came into being and to evaluate the similarities faced by both imperial powers in dealing with the internal affairs of the Yemenis.

Keywords: Ottomans, British, rivalry, settlement, Yemen

Introduction

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards two Imperial governments, the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain had been engaged in fighting for supremacy in and around the Red Sea and South Arabia obviously on political and economical purposes. The Ottomans who were drawn in the area in a much earlier period competing against the arrival of Portuguese, now reemerged in the area immediately after the opening of the Suez Canal. The British lost no time but to consolidate their further influence in the area by introducing the policy of interference in the Arab affairs.

Hitherto, after the occupation of Aden in January 1839, British policy had been one of non-intervention in Arab affairs. That policy had been re-affirmed in June 1871 when Aitchison, the Government of India Foreign Secretary, rejected the proposals of Wedderburn (Acting Secretary to the Government of Bombay) to take over the whole 'Abdalī area so that any foreign state could be prevented from taking up a position manifestly antagonistic or injurious to British interests which had been enlarged by the opening of the Suez Canal.

Friendly relations with the neighbouring tribes, however, were established shortly after the occupation of Aden. This was apparently in part dictated by the needs of the security of the sea route to India and East. But also it served for the security of settlement and its supplies. An area in the hinterland behind and near Aden was strictly controlled, kept free from interference by other powers and bound by mutual friendship and interest to the British. An agreement of a more binding nature was first made with the 'Abdalī Sultan in June that year, by which the Sultan not only engaged to maintain peace and friendship with the British Government, but also was to receive a subsidy of \$MT 6,500 (Maria Theresa) annually. The British Government also undertook to pay the stipends to the Fadlī, the Yāfī'ī, the Hawshabī and the Āmīrī which were formerly paid by the 'Abdalī Sultan to those tribes for keeping open the trade routes¹. These five tribes were stipendiary of the British from the first. The stipend of the sixth tribe, the 'Alawī, was subsequently secured to them through the intervention of the Hawshabī chief².

Immediately after the acquisition of Aden, the British Government successfully secured their position in and around Aden through friendship treaties with the neighboring tribes: the 'Abdalī, the Fadlī, the 'Aqrabī, the Subayhī, the Hawshabī, the Yāfī'ī the Āmīrī, followed by the 'Awlaqī in 1855³. The treaty with the 'Alawī, however, was secured through a stipend with no official treaty. Those treaties which had been revoked for a number of occasions as a result of renewal hostilities with the British, constituted the basis for eventual formation of the Aden Protectorate which gradually developed from 1880's as a response to the increasing influence of the Ottomans in the Protectorate after their return to San'ā' in 1872, and of the growing interest of the foreign powers in the region after the opening of the Suez Canal. Despites of all these

¹ C.U.Aitchison. (1931). *A Collection of treaties, engagements and sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries*. Calcutta: Government of India, Central Publication Branch. p.45.

² Ibid

³ Ibid. p.100

relations with the neighbouring Arab tribes in South West Arabia in particular, British policy was officially declared as one of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Arabs.

Anglo-Ottoman rivalry in South West Arabia

The Ottoman Government, after their second return to Yemen, had contended that the Ottoman Sultan's sovereignty extended over those tribes, who had friendly relations with the British, in virtue of their former occupation of Yemen. The British Government, however, had always maintained that those tribes were independent of the Ottoman Empire⁴. Accordingly, in 1873, the Government of India proposed that those tribes should be taken under British protection, but this was initially, not sanctioned by the India Office. While the question was under consideration, the Government of India sent a British force to support the 'Abdalī Sultan against the Ottomans who were giving military assistance to a rebel against the Sultan. The Ottomans requested the British to withdraw from Lahej and they disclaimed any intention to interfere. The right of the Ottomans to request the withdrawal of the British force from Lahej was, however, denied by the Secretary of State for India, on the ground that the 'Abdalīs and other tribes who had treaty relations with the British, were independent from the Ottoman Empire⁵.

Ottoman interference, however, continued. In 1885, the Ottomans occupied Jalīlah, in the Āmīrī country. The British Government protested and declared that they would not permit any Ottoman interference with the stipendiary chiefs. These declarations produced assurances from the Porte that their officials in Yemen had been ordered not to interfere with any tribes having treaty relations with Great Britain, and similar assurances had been subsequently given on more than one occasion. Subsequently, the whole subject of British relations with tribes was discussed.

In August 1886, the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, proposed that an effective protectorate should be established over the Arab tribes from Shaykh Sa'īd to the frontiers of Oman as a response to the constant boundary which finally raised the old claim of the Ottoman Sultan to the whole of Arabia. "We should then ask the Turks to a delimitation of our protected territory in the direction of theirs. If they agree, we should enter into a formal Convention with them. If not we would lay down the limits of the Protectorate without their consent and make them respect them"⁶.

Shortly afterwards, Protectorate treaties were entered into with the tribes lying along the coast from the 'Ātifī Subayhīs on the West to Mahrī on the East. These included the treaties with the Sultan of Socotra and Kishn in 1886, the Fadlīs, the 'Aqrabīs, the Lower 'Awlaqīs, the Shaykhs of 'Irqah, the Shaykhs of Lower Hawra and the Qu'aytī in 1888, and the Subayhīs ('Ātifī and Barhīmī) in 1889. Concerning the 'Abdalī Sultan, British protection had been extended to him as early as 1882 when article seven (7) of the Shaykh 'Uthmān Agreement of

⁴ Minto Papers, MS 12592

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

February 1882 stated that the ‘Abdalī was now under British protection⁷. The Shaykh ‘Uthmān Agreement of 1882 was, therefore, a significant step towards the ‘Abdalī official protectorate treaty concluded in 1887.

As regards the tribes further inland, the Government of India decided that before any Protectorate agreement was concluded with them a fuller knowledge of the country and of the conditions of tribes was required. Captain Wahab of the Survey of India Department was, therefore, deputed to survey the country. This survey was made in 1891-92. Although the survey did not extend to the actual boundary of the territory of the tribes concerned, it was sufficient for the purpose which it was primarily required⁸. Subsequently, protectorate treaties with most of the inland tribes in the vicinity of Aden were concluded. These included treaties with the Lower Yāfī‘īs, the Hawshabīs and the ‘Alawīs in 1895. The British Government had no Protectorate treaties with the ‘Awlaqī, and they were not stipendiary. The treaty with the Āmīrī was not, however, of the character of a protectorate arrangement⁹.

This marked the beginning of the policy of intervention in the hinterland whereby through the protectorate treaties, the British undertook to extend to the protected ruler “the gracious favour and protection of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress”. In return the protected ruler “agrees and promises...to refrain from entering into any correspondence, agreement or treaty, with any foreign or native power, except with the knowledge and sanction of the British Government; and further promises to give immediate notice to the Residence at Aden, or other power to interfere with (the protected ruler).” In a later version of the agreement, the protected ruler was further bound not to “cede, sell, mortgage, lease or hire or give, or otherwise dispose of the (ruler’s) territory, or any part of the same, at any time, to any power other than the British Government”¹⁰. The treaties had, therefore, effectively given authority to the officials at Aden to interfere through mediation or force with the Protectorate affairs including inter-tribal disputes on frontiers and trade routes as well as tribal quarrels.

Anglo-Turkish Commission of 1902–1904

In 1900, Muhammad Nāsir Muqbil, the Ottoman *qā’immaqām* of Qamā’riah occupied a fort in the Hawshabī country. This incident gave rise to a fresh frontier dispute. In July 1901, a British force was dispatched from Aden to expel the Ottoman-backed Yemenis, and the fort was blown up¹¹. In August 1901, as a result of frequent disputes on the frontier of the territory of the Amīr of Dāli‘, the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, suggested that the frontier should be demarcated by a joint Anglo-Turkish Commission. This was agreed both by the Sultan and His Majesty. The Commissioners, Col. Wahab representing the British, (later in November 1902 Mr. Fitzmaurice the Second Dragoman at the Constantinople Embassy, was attached as a Joint Commissioner)

⁷ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, pp. 106-186

⁸ Minto Papers, MS 12592

⁹ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, pp. 141-2

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Minto Papers, MS 12592

and the Ottoman, Col Mustafa Remzi, met at Dāli‘ in February 1902 for work which resulted in the settlement of the frontier in 1902-4.

Following the delimitation of the boundary, the British embarked on a policy of further involvement in the Protectorate affairs. In 1904 part of the Aden Movable Column which had been stationed at Dāli‘ since February 1903 was required to remain there after the completion of the demarcation of the Āmīrī territory. This was followed by a series of treaties of peace and friendship by which the British undertook to extend their protection, with the Upper Yāfī‘ī in October 1903, the Upper ‘Awlaqīs and the Amīr of Bayhān in December 1903, and the Amīr of Dāli‘ in November 1904. However, the above forward policy came to an end after the Liberals came to power.

British non-intervention policy of 1906

A change of government in Britain did not normally affect foreign policy notably in and around Aden. As an outpost of the Bombay authorities, Aden was under the control of the Government of India and administratively too remote to concern anyone but “Indian expert”, defense planners and representatives of shipping interest. However at the time the Liberals came to power in 1905 debate on foreign and defense policy of the British Empire was at its height. Aden policy did not escape from the new atmosphere.

It is a fact that non-intervention policy was initiated by W. Lee Warner,¹² a member of the Indian Council, when it caught the eye of the new Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley. Warner’s note greatly impressed the new Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley who took the office since December, 11, 1905 and adopted all the principles of Warner’s argument which formed his new policy of non-intervention of May 4, 1906. The new policy was communicated to the Government of India to coincide with the appointment of a new Resident at Aden, Major-General E. De Brath.¹³ The new policy laid down principles which reversed the previous forward and intervention policy. The new policy made reference to the traditional role of Great Britain in Arabia. For that reason Morley adopted the interpretation of the former Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, concerning the responsibilities and obligations of Great Britain following the new frontier demarcation with the Ottoman Government that there was no desire to interfere with the internal and domestic affairs of the tribes.¹⁴ The new policy did not change the traditional role of Aden as he stated that:

¹² Sir William Lee Warner had long services in Bombay, Calcutta and London, educated at Rugby School and St John College, Cambridge. He joined the Bombay Civil Service in 1867. He held the highest post as Secretary to the Government of Bombay 1887-1895. In September 1895 he retired from the Civil Service and was then appointed as Secretary to the Political and Secret Department, the India Office, from September 1895 to November 1902 and then became a member of the Council of India from November 1902 to November 1912.

¹³ Major General E. De Brath was due to arrive at Aden on April 19, 1906.

¹⁴ The previous Foreign secretary’s statement in the House of Lords on March 30 1903 was cited:

With regard to the responsibility for these territories, I do not see why what has taken place should make any difference in these responsibilities. We have never desired to interfere with the internal and domestic

The security and strength of Aden, one of the main posts and fortresses that guard the lines between England and India, must always be a standing object in national policy. That strength will obviously be impaired and not augmented by quarrels with tribes, by intervention in their disputes, by locating troops at a distance from the fortifications of Aden, or by any excessive readiness to resort to expeditions out of all proportion, whether immediate or indirect, to either the occasions for them or to any clear advantage to be gained by them.¹⁵

On the basis of these principles, the new orders were put forward. First, frontier trespasses should not be exaggerated, and should a protest be required, it would naturally be by way of action at Constantinople. Second, the area where active intervention by local authorities would be permitted was specified. Third, troops and other schemes outside the defined area were withdrawn. Fourth, the Political Officer at Dhala was also to be withdrawn. The dispatch of postal runners or agents of the British government into the interior was to be avoided. Any project for disarming the tribes in the nine cantons should be dismissed from serious consideration. Punitive expeditions for the offences committed during the demarcation, and not punished then and there, were now out of question. No demonstrations along the frontier whether demarcated or not, were needed, and last, no fresh treaties were to be concluded without referring to the Foreign secretary.¹⁶

It may be observed that the policy of non-intervention was introduced not merely because of the change of government in Britain at that time, but other circumstances also played a part. There had been a number of reasons that led Morley, a new Secretary of State for India, to adopt the policy. The British government was at that time reviewing their foreign and defence policy. Aden and Arabian policy therefore naturally came under review.

The arguments forwarded by Morley and Lee Warner at the India Office in London emphasized the following factors. The first of these was that the Government had already settled their boundary disputes with the Ottomans through the Anglo-Turkish Commission of 1902–1904. The India Office argued that the primary objective of the intervention policy was achieved through the above-mentioned Commission. This principle can be traced in Morley's argument when he referred to the interpretation of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lansdowne, in 1903, concerning the responsibility of the Government following the settlement of the boundary with the Ottomans. This argument appears to be accurate as the settlement had been observed by the Ottomans although the agreement was only ratified later, in 1914. Furthermore, it was a fact that the Ottomans were no longer a threat to British interests in South Arabia after their boundary settlement with the British. The policy of intervention had begun when the threat of the Ottomans appeared to be at its height. The Protectorate treaties with Arab tribes around Aden took place when the Ottomans moved to the area and supported the rival of the Abdali

affairs of the tribes. On the other hand, we have throughout made it perfectly plain that we should not tolerate the interference of any other Power with them.

¹⁵ L/P&S/10/74, Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 4/5/1906

¹⁶ L/P&S/10/74, Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 4/5/1906

sultan, apart from their constant claim of the whole of Yemen. The Anglo-Turkish Commission was seen by the India Office as settling this dispute.

Imamic-Ottoman Treaty of Da‘an 1911

In brief, the history of the Ottomans in the Yemen from 1872 until the treaty of Da‘an in 1911, can be regarded as a failure on the part of the Ottoman Central Authority to promote efficiency and welfare in the *vilayet* and to serve for the interest of the Yemenis. It seemed that the Ottomans treated Yemen as if being an abandoned *vilayet*, subordinated and dependent on other countries, notably Egypt and its Suez Canal. Historically the Ottomans view on Yemen was mainly based on Egypt’s interest and viewpoint. The Yemen previously under the Mamlūks of Egypt surrendered to the Ottomans in 1530s, following the Ottomans conquest of Egypt in 1517 from the Mamlūks. But they were expelled from the Yemen after they occupied the country for one century, from 1530s to 1630s, a period relatively short-lived compared to the rest of the Muslim lands within the Empire. Moreover it was two and a half centuries later, in 1872, that the Ottomans regained their control in the Yemen highlands, and only after Muhammad ‘Ali of Egypt succeeded in subduing the Wahhābiyah movement in Arabia which paved the way for the Ottomans to strengthen their position in the Tihāmah in the 1840s. The Ottomans moved to occupy San‘ā’ in 1849, on the invitation of the Zaydī Imām, but were soon forced to settle in the Tihāmah at the uprising of the Zaydī. Again at the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Ottomans began to consider the policy of securing the whole Yemen. Though the Ottomans succeeded in taking San‘ā’ in 1872, if not the whole Yemen, the entire policy of governing the *vilayet* was absolutely incompetent. Accordingly it was less than two decades later that the Zaydī Imāms started in a series of uprisings to oppose the malpractice of Ottoman administration in the country.

Before the conclusion of the treaty of Da‘an in 1911, the Imamic-Ottoman relation was inharmonious. Initiated by the mal-practices of the Ottoman officials, the Zaydī Imāms who were treated only as local religious leaders, looked back to their historical claim over the greater Yemen for inspiration. This was further stimulated by the Zaydī political concept which encouraged them to rise up against the unjust ruler in the name of religious duty as Imāms who gained support and approval from the Zaydī tribesmen and the notables. The purpose of the uprising was finally achieved through the treaty of Da‘an which did not only benefit the Imam and the Zaydīs but also the Ottomans.

Secret negotiation between Izzat Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief and the Imām apparently began in June 1911 and in September 1911, an agreement was finally concluded. The treaty was signed by both parties in a place called Da‘an north of ‘Amrān on Wednesday, October 18, 1911¹⁷, and the terms of the settlement were apparently accepted in principles by the Cabinet at Istanbul and in 1913 the treaty was ratified by the Sublime Porte.

¹⁷ FO 195/2376, Richardson to Lowther, 14/9/1911

G.A Richardson, the British Vice-Consul at Hudaydah, outlined the terms of settlement as far as he was able to ascertain them. Imām Yahya agreed to renounce his claim to Caliphate, to drop the title Commander of Faithful assumed by his predecessors and himself, and to style himself simply Imām of the Zaydīs. He further consented to release all Arab hostages, the guarantee of his authority in securing the assistance and co-operation of the Zaydī tribesmen. The Imām further agreed to liberate all the Ottoman prisoners, and also renounce his right to collect zakat within the Ottoman jurisdiction.

The Ottomans, for their part, agreed to support Sayyid Yahya against all possible rivals to the Imamate in the future, to permit him to reside at Kawkabān, and to grant him an annual subsidy at £ T25,000 from the revenue of the *vilayet*. Ottoman civil law would be entirely abrogated and would be replaced by Islamic Law in the seven highland *qada's* of 'Amrān, Kawkabān, Dhamār, Yarīm, 'Ibb, Hajjah, and Hajjūr. The Islamic Law in those districts would be administered under the Imām. The Imām would nominate the *qadis* in those *qada's*, subject to the approval of the Central Government. The Ottomans also undertook the granting of a monthly subsidy to districts and to provide a similar allowance to the 'ulamā', fuqahā', and sādāt throughout the Yemen.

However, the principal terms reported by Richardson were not all spelled out in the text of the signed agreement reported at Aden and Cairo, notably the abandonment of the title *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* and the financial subsidy to the Imām and others. Presumably the treaty was not yet available to him, the terms of settlement he reported being merely earlier drafts of the treaty. The Richardson version should not, however, be neglected as it contains points of mutual understanding between the Imām and Izzat Pasha which led to the signing of the agreement. Important differences between the Richardson version and other versions and between other versions of the treaty exist which can be seen from the texts of the agreement¹⁸.

The text of the treaty of Da'ān appears in different versions: Richardson's account, versions of the Aden Records and the Arab Bureau of Cairo, and a number of Arabic text reported by al-Wāsi'i and other's. The Aden Records version appears to be the most authentic on the grounds that it was a translation from the Arabic text handed over the Residency by an Arab Shaykh. Unfortunately the Aden Records do not contain the Arabic text for us to scrutinise even further.

The Public Record Office on the other hand, has the text of the treaty which was recorded by the Arab Bureau Cairo. How the Arab Bureau came to possess the treaty is a matter of speculation since the Bureau came into existence only in 1916. Examining the text of the Arab Bureau, it seems possible that it is summary of the original, reported to the British Consul. It contains, however, complete terms of settlement. When comparing it with the Aden version, one can detect an error in interpreting the original text. For example article nine (9), of the Arab Bureau version, states "The Government will nominate an officer by the name (Inspector General) to inspect the judges who travel about in their districts and villages, and are likened to moving courts." The Arab Bureau translated Mubasher as an "Inspector General" to inspect the

¹⁸ FO 195/2376, Richardson to Lowther, 14/9/1911

judges. In contrast, Aden refers to them as “assistants” as quoted “the judges appointed in the circles and districts can have trustworthy assistants for them in order to serve them in the management of their affairs, to safeguard them and to bring before them the litigants,…” This article clearly contradicts that of the Aden Records and also of al-Wāsi‘ī which spells out in plural “muhāfizīn” and “mubashirīn” rather than “mubasher” in singular.

Al-Wāsi‘ī is the only source for the Zaydīs and other Arab writers. It is unfortunate that al-Wāsi‘ī does not state the source of the treaty. Again comparing it with the Aden version, al-Wāsi‘ī’s account, does not appear to be complete. For instance article ten (10) is a repetition to article six (6)¹⁹. Meanwhile, the Ottoman text was not referred to in any of the Arabic sources available or in the British archives. Presumably the original text of the treaty was in Arabic.

Conclusion

The treaty of Da‘ān marked a turning point in the history of Imamic-Ottoman in the Yemen since the occupation of San‘ā’ by the Ottomans in 1872. It eliminated all the principal sources of friction and discord between the Ottomans and the Imām. Moreover the treaty recognised the Imām as temporal and spiritual leader of the Zaydīs which provided him power to appoint and dismiss judges in the Zaydī districts as well as the authority over waqfs and taxation. Also the treaty granted other demands made by the Imām, namely the implementation of the Shari‘ah.

Imām Yahya must have been extremely pleased with the terms of the treaty for he achieved the position of his predecessors in securing the highlands of the Yemen for the Zaydīs, though he was less successfully than Imām Qāsīm and his son who successfully released the highlands from the Ottomans. Imām Yahya must have thought of removing the Ottomans completely from the highlands if not from the Yemen. But if so time now was against his design, for the Idrīsī and the British firmly strengthened their position in ‘Asīr and Aden respectively. For strengthening and stabilising his position in the highlands, and further to regain the Zaydīs influence in the Tihāmah notably by repulsing the Idrīsī in ‘Asīr, Imām Yahya required support from the Ottomans. For these reasons and other considerations, Imām Yahya at the understanding of the settlement, approved the presence of the Ottoman *wali* and troops at San‘ā’.

Imam Yahya’s pleasure with the settlement can be seen in his letter to the ‘Abdali Sultan on 19 November 1911, describing the admirable personality of Izzat Pasha, whose behavior and conduct had won his heart, and so led to the mutual understanding between them. Izzat Pasha also appeared to have won over the majority of Imām Yahya’s staunchest supporters at the beginning of the negotiations. The Imām stated that Izzat Pasha was

“unique amongst the famous officials of Government or perhaps the exceptional individual.... From his manners we realised that he was truthful in his speech and faithful in action and regardful of matters conducive of honour to Islam and Muslims and pleasing to the Eternal God; he facilitated most of the matters around which we hovered and the greatest wishes we were anxious to acquire and

¹⁹ Wāsi‘ī, ‘Abd al-Wāsi‘ bin Yahya. (1982). *Tārīkh al-Yaman al-Musammā furjat a-humūm wa al-huzn fī hawādith wa tārīkh al-Yaman*. Ṣan‘ā’: al-Dār al-Yamaniyyah., pp.236-39

obtain.²⁰

This expression appears to be genuine. The Imām remained loyal not only to one particular official but to the Ottomans in general, as he abided by the treaty which was ratified later, in 1913. Immediately after signing the treaty, the Imām released 500 Ottoman prisoners.

For the Ottomans, the treaty of Da‘ān relieved them from the internal disturbances of the Yemenis in order to face a new external constraint, that of the Italians. Even in the early 1911, there had been discussion in the capital on a new solution to the *vilayet*. The “Sabah” published an article inviting the Minister of Interior to study the problem and suggesting that Yemen and Asir should be governed through the local chiefs: the Imām in the Yemen highlands and Sayyid Idrīsī in ‘Asīr. It appears that move the Ottomans to reconcile with the Imām was mainly in response to a new threat by the Italians when Tripoli was attacked in September 1911, and as the Ottomans were not prepared to send simultaneously troops to Yemen and Tripoli. The revolt of 1911 cost the Ottomans some three or four million Turkish pounds to bring an army 10,000 men to the province with a proportionate number of guns and a considerable quantity of stores and ammunition, and to maintain that force in the field during the four month campaign²¹.

To the British the policy of non-intervention had damaging effect to the British influence in South West Arabia in particular and the Arab world in general. According to local officials, the withdrawal of the troops indirectly encouraged the Ottomans and the Imam alike before the First World War to extend their influence into the Protectorate. The advance of the Ottomans into Lahej in 1915 during the First World War was seen as a direct result of the policy of non-intervention. Further the policy had changed the role of the Abdali sultan and after the new policy was put into effect, the Aden Residency relied mostly on him as mediator between the government and the Arab tribes, and also in his role as a British informant. This policy undoubtedly increased the influence of the Abdali sultan in the Protectorate. The dependence on the Abdali sultan, who had his own interests to consider, had an injurious effect on the British position with other Arab tribes. The policy that loosened the ties with those tribes encouraged them to look towards the Imam and the Ottomans for assistance in settling tribal matters. This situation had a damaging effect on British prestige in the Protectorate before and during the First World War.

²⁰ R/20/A/1257, Imam to ‘Abdali, 19/11/1911

²¹ FO 195/2376, Richardson to Lowther, 12/6/1911

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