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## Britain's Activity in Iraq During the Nineteenth Century (Transportation As a Model)

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### **Abstract:**

*This research revolves around the topic of Britain's activity in Iraq during the second half of the nineteenth century, a significant period during which British influence in Iraq increased for strategic, economic, and political reasons. Iraq became, in the eyes of British policymakers, important in terms of transportation routes as it formed a crucial link in one of the main routes leading to their empire in India. They sought to tighten their control over Iraq out of fear of it falling into the hands of other countries. The research addressed several aspects, shedding light on the political conditions in Iraq before British influence penetrated it. It explored Britain's activities in the Ottoman Empire in general and in Iraq in particular through the privileges granted to Britain, which solidified its influence in Iraq. Furthermore, the research delved into the evolution of British interests in Iraq, including the establishment of the British consulate in Baghdad and the expansion of British influence in the region. It also discussed the role of the British-owned Lynch Company, which was one of the most significant companies contributing to the increase of British influence through its espionage activities in Iraq. Additionally, the research examined Britain's stance on the Baghdad Railway and other German privileges. The primary sources relied upon in this research include Zakī Ṣāliḥ's book "Britain and Iraq Until 1914," 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulaymān Nanwār's book "British Interests in the Disintegration of Iraq," and Khidr Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ's book "British Diplomats in Iraq," among other important sources. Firstly, regarding the political situation in Iraq.*

### **Introduction**

Iraq was subjected to various rulerships before coming under Ottoman control, specifically since the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate to the Mongols in 1258. It was ruled by several dynasties, including the Ilkhanids (1258-1336) and then the Jalayirids (1336-1411). Subsequently, the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu tribes (1411-1508) held power. The Qara Qoyunlu tribe, one of the Turkmen tribes of the Sunni sect, ruled Iran and Iraq during this period, with their reign in Iraq spanning from 1411 to 1508. For further details, see Jaafar Hussein Khasak's "Iraq during the Era of the Mongols" and Abdul Aziz Suleiman Anwar's work. By the sixteenth century, the Safavid state in Iran and the Ottoman state in Anatolia were able to replace the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu dynasties, plunging Iraq into a period of conflict between these two powers. At times, Iraq fell under the banner of the Safavid state, and at other times, it came under the influence of the Ottoman state until 1638 when Iraq fell under Ottoman control (Hussein Muhammad Al-Qahawati, 1975, pp. 80-85).

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## **The political situation in Iraq:**

Although the Ottomans managed to consolidate their authority in Iraq, their poor administration, particularly in Baghdad, led to Iraq falling under the control of the Mamluks from 1750 to 1831. The Mamluks of Karaj or Sharakah initially served under the governor Hassan Pasha (1704-1723) until they gained significant influence and eventually seized power. Their rule began in 1750 (Alaa Musa Kadhim Nawras, 1975, 1831).

However, the Ottomans succeeded in reclaiming direct rule over Iraq after a campaign led by the Aleppo governor, Ali Rıza Pasha al-Ladh, appointed by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) as the governor of Baghdad. He managed to end Mamluk rule, represented by their last leader, Dawud Pasha (1816-1831) (Ali Al-Wardi, pp. 482-485; Rana Abd al-Jabbar Hussein al-Zuhairi, 2005). After direct Ottoman rule was reinstated in Iraq, the Ottoman Sultan became responsible for appointing and dismissing governors in Iraq. Several governors ruled Iraq, but few had a significant impact except for Midhat Pasha, whose tenure, despite its brevity, marked a period of stability and prosperity due to the numerous reforms he implemented (Qadri Al-Qalaji, 1947, pp. 8-9).

From the foregoing, it becomes clear to us the extent of the deterioration in the political situation in Iraq and the weakness of the governors who ruled Iraq under Ottoman control. Additionally, the weakness that afflicted the Ottoman Empire and its preoccupation with conflicts on multiple fronts paved the way for British penetration and the development of its interests in Iraq, a subject we are addressing in our study and research.

## **First: The beginnings of British penetration into the Ottoman Empire and Iraq (1533-1798).**

The markets of the Ottoman Empire's provinces held significant importance for European traders, particularly Portugal, Spain, and Britain. These nations engaged in a race to establish footholds within the sprawling territories of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its expansion in 1516 when it entered the Levant, followed by the complete control of the region in 1517 after eliminating the Mamluk state in Egypt and the Levant. Iraq came under Ottoman control in 1534. Thus, the era of Suleiman the Magnificent's rule was considered the golden age of the Ottoman Empire due to its expansion in Europe and the Arab countries (Muhammad Farid Al-Mohami, pp. 79-91). Some of these countries managed to obtain guarantees from the Ottoman sultans, known as the system of privileges.

This system played a significant role in the decline and deterioration of the Ottoman Empire's conditions. Since 1535, the Ottoman government entered a treaty with France granting French national's numerous privileges within the Ottoman Empire that Ottoman merchants could only dream of. An important development occurred in 1740 with the privileges system, as a treaty was concluded between the Ottoman Empire and France, granting the French perpetual privileges.

Unlike past treaties, this agreement did not expire at the end of the reign of the signing Sultan or monarch. French merchants were subject to a 3% tax on goods, while Ottoman merchants paid 10% of the goods' value. The treaty with France served as a model for similar treaties with various European countries, placing Ottoman merchants and trade in dire conditions (Hashim Salih Al-Tikriti, 1990, pp. 15-16).

In contrast, others, such as the Portuguese, relied on their naval fleet and military strength to engage in trade and secure economic privileges forcefully, especially in regions distant from the

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Ottoman Empire's center. They exploited the Ottoman Empire's lack of control over its southern waters, particularly the Arabian Gulf, after discovering the route to the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 and reaching the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, disrupting Arab trade since then (Salih Ozbaran, "The Ottoman Turks and the Portuguese in the Arabian Gulf 1534-1581," translated by Abdul-Jabbar Naji, 1979, pp. 18-19). The roots of British interests in Iraq can be traced back to the early seventeenth century through the activities of two British trading companies operating in the Ottoman Empire and the Arabian Gulf region: the Levant Company and the English East India Company.

The Levant Company was established after William Harbon, representing a group of London merchants, obtained a decree from the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) in June 1580, granting the English the right to engage in commercial activities in the Ottoman Empire. In response to this success, Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) issued a decree in 1581, granting those merchants who made the attempt the right to trade with Ottoman territories. This decree marked the establishment of the Levant Company, which remained in existence until 1825. Queen Elizabeth, I issued another decree in 1592, granting the company the monopoly of maritime trade with India through Ottoman territories (Zaki Saleh, 1949, pp. 19-20).

The company's activity focused on Iraq due to its position as a link between Aleppo, where the company's headquarters was located, and the raw silk production centers in the East (Saleh Khidr Muhammad, 2005, pp. 17-18). As for the English East India Company, it was established at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In September 1599, a commercial company was formed in London, seeking permission from Queen Elizabeth I to trade with the East. On December 31, 1600, a decree was issued addressed to George Earl of Cumberland and two hundred and fifty knights, governors, and merchants to establish an institution named "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies" for trade with the East, known as the English East India Company (Saleh Khidr Muhammad, 2005, pp. 18).

Initially, the number of shareholders was 217, with a capital of £68,873 (Abdel Fattah Ibrahim, 2004, p. 63). This company later acquired a political character and played a significant role in consolidating British influence and domination in India and the Arabian Gulf region (Saleh Muhammad Al-Abed, 1979, p. 21).

The company established trade relations with the port of Gassick and obtained two decrees from Shah Abbas I (1588-1624) in favor of English trade in Persia. The company set up two centers in Shiraz in 1617 and Isfahan in 1618 (Saleh Muhammad Al-Abed, p. 17). English-Persian cooperation began, and both parties succeeded in expelling the Portuguese from Hormuz in 1622 (JG Lorimer, 1967, vol. 1, p. 523). Afterward, Basra became "one of the most important trading centers" for the English East India Company (Zaki Saleh, 1968, p. 54).

In 1645, the company decided to relocate its assets from Bandar Abbas to Basra due to conflicts between the Persians and the Dutch. In 1723, a permanent center was established in Basra, managed by a resident subordinate to the supervisors of the agent in Bandar Abbas. This center held the second position in importance for British trade after Bandar Abbas. When the latter center closed in 1763, the Basra residency was elevated to the status of an agency entrusted with controlling the company's trade in the Gulf. A year later, the Basra agency was recognized as a consulate enjoying foreign privileges (Saleh Muhammad Al-Abed, pp. 40-41).

Between 1763 and 1773, the Ottoman Empire heavily relied on the fleet of the English East India Company to defend Basra against the fleet of the Ka'ab tribe. This led to an unprecedented increase in English influence, encouraging the company's employees to

intervene in the internal affairs of the Baghdad province to enhance the company's commercial position there. A notable example of this policy was their intervention in the crucial matter of appointing the governor in 1764 (Abdul Amir Muhammad Amin, 198, p. 212). The Basra agency remained the main center of activity for the English East India Company in the Arabian Gulf until 1778 (Saleh Khader Muhammad, p. 22). It is worth mentioning that the company's resident in Basra became an agent in Baghdad in 1783 (Saleh Khader Muhammad, p. 22).

### **Second: Establishment of a Consulate in Baghdad in 1798.**

British representation in Iraq before 1798 was limited to Basra. However, following the British government's awareness of French mobilization in the French port of Toulon and the British War Minister Henry Dundas's belief that this mobilization would be directed towards attacking British India, possibly through Syria and Mesopotamia, a decision was made to establish a consulate in Baghdad. This consulate would serve as a center for gathering information and communication between London and India (Zaki Saleh, *Brief History of Iraq*, p. 57). The choice fell upon Harford Jones (1764-1847) to undertake this task due to his experience. Jones had previously served as an Assistant to the Resident in Basra (1784-1794) but left due to poor health and family affairs in England in 1795. When Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, Jones was ordered to assume his new position, which he held from 1798 to 1806 (Salih Muhammad al-Abed, p. 98).

Jones' tasks included gathering useful information for Britain, monitoring the activities of French agents, and reporting on them. He also worked to influence the Pasha, with Suleiman Pasha the Great (1780-1802) serving as the governor during this period. Jones also prepared detailed reports on the province of Baghdad, its population, military strength, economic resources, and commercial potential (Saleh Muhammad Al-Abed, p. 98).

Jones's position in Baghdad solidified with the arrival of the new governor, Ali Pasha (1802-1807), successfully obtaining the Ottoman Sultan's permission for the residency in Baghdad to be upgraded to a consulate in 1802, thanks to the efforts of the British ambassador in Istanbul (Muhammad Suleiman Hassan, 1965, p. 282). The establishment of a residency in Baghdad yielded significant benefits for British interests in the Arabian Gulf. Besides serving as an indicator of British expansion into Iraq and its reinforcement over time, it became a center for gathering information regarding developments in Persia and Afghanistan. Additionally, it transformed into an important hub for maritime mail transfer between India and England (Alaa Musa Kadhim Nawras, 1990, p. 68).

### **Third: The role of Claudius James Rich in strengthening British influence in Iraq 1808-1821.**

(Rigg was born in 1787 and acquired proficiency in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and several European languages. Recognizing the value of such skills, the East India Company appointed him as secretary to Mr. Locke, the British Consul General in the Mediterranean. Following Locke's passing, Rigg was appointed as an assistant to Mr. Smith in Egypt. During his stay in Alexandria, he interacted with the Mamluks, acquiring knowledge of equestrian activities. Subsequently, he embarked on a journey to Aleppo, disguised as a Mamluk, and later proceeded to Mecca. From there, he traveled to India via Iraq, where he returned as consul in 1808 (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, 1967, pp. 193-194).) After the French campaign in Egypt ended in 1801 (The French campaign against Egypt began in 1798, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, in an attempt to control trade routes. However, the French witnessed successive defeats at the hands of the Egyptians, with the help of Britain, in addition to the failure of their campaign against Acre,

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which led to the withdrawal of the 1801 campaign from Egypt permanently. Elias Tannous, Lebanon, pp. 123-129), the British trade in Iraq saw a notable increase.

This increase coincided with a rise in British political influence, particularly exemplified by the elevated status of the British political agent in Baghdad. This position was held by Mr. Claudius James Rich (1808-1821), who endeavored to make his voice the foremost in Iraq, if not the primary one. Rich's influence within Iraqi political and local spheres became significantly pronounced during the reigns of Abdullah Pasha (1810-1813) and Saeed Pasha (1813-1816). He wielded considerable power, to a potentially dangerous extent, as evidenced by his involvement in the appointment of provincial governors during Abdullah Pasha's tenure. Rich was active in establishing a network of spies in Iraq and intervening in internal provincial affairs (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, p. 198). In 1812, the title of the British resident in Baghdad was replaced with that of the diplomatic representative in Arab Turkey, symbolizing prestige and influence. In the same year, the British obtained decrees from the Pasha: one prohibiting non-British individuals from engaging in navigation activities in the waters of Basra, and the other mandating the return of Indian individuals enslaved in this city (Zaki Saleh, *Britain and Iraq*, p. 131). The status of the British consul in Baghdad rose significantly, mirroring the elevated stature of Britain in the European international arena. This growth in British influence progressed hand in hand with the burgeoning political and economic interests between Iraq, India, and the Arabian Gulf (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, pp. 200-201).

However, such commercial and political dominance was bound to provoke any ruler seeking to assert their full rights. When Dawud Pasha assumed power in 1817, reigning until 1831, he emerged as a formidable figure among the Mamluk rulers, both in governance and cultural domains. Initially, Dawud Pasha's stance towards the British representative was relatively favorable. However, such alignment was unlikely to persist between a powerful ruler and an ambitious foreign representative. Claudius Rich maintained close ties with the government of India, acknowledging its effective control over the Arabian Gulf. He also remained in contact with the British ambassador in Constantinople, naturally recognizing the latter's influence with the Sublime Porte (Zaki Saleh, *Britain and Iraq*, p. 33).

Dawud Pasha resorted to coercion against the British and their representative in Baghdad when it became apparent that the political influence of the representative could not be curtailed, or his activities limited through peaceful means. Consequently, he imposed tariffs on British goods as desired, collecting these duties in cash or kind, resorting to force if necessary. Dawud Pasha dispatched a detachment of his soldiers to besiege the British residency, turning Rich's residence into a makeshift prison. Rich was eventually released through intervention from the government of India and was permitted to leave the country in May 1821 (Zaki Saleh, p. 109).

However, Dawud Pasha failed to abolish English maritime privileges and taxes in Iraq. Dawud Pasha's rule in Iraq did not last long, as in 1831, he surrendered to Ali Riza, the commander of the Ottoman army, dispatched by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) to end Dawud Pasha's rule and the Mamluk rule in Iraq (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, pp. 30-32).

#### **Fourth: The stability of British influence in the field of transportation 1830-1878:**

##### ***The use of British ships in the rivers of Iraq:***

Since the early 19th century, there has been significant debate about the use of steamships for rapid transportation between Europe and the Far East instead of relying on sailing ships. This debate centered on whether to use the route through Iraq or Egypt. The English captain Francis

Rawdon Chesney (1789-1872) was tasked with comparing the two routes. He embarked on extensive studies to assess the feasibility of using steamships on the Euphrates River. However, the study revealed that the Euphrates River was not suitable for navigation. Despite its suitability, the English hastened to implement the project of using British steamships on the rivers of Iraq. The reason behind this was the expansion of Egypt into the Levant since 1831. Faced with these rapid developments in the Arabian East, which heralded the emergence of a nascent state that could pose an obstacle to British objectives, Britain felt compelled to control the route through Iraq, connecting the East to the West (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, pp. 37-39).

### **Establishment of Ling Company:**

Henry Blommie succeeded Captain Chesney in the study of the rivers of Iraq. Blommie conducted extensive surveys of the Tigris River between 1837 and 1839, recognizing the promising commercial future of this region. Convinced of the potential, his brother, Thomas Carling, joined him, and together with members of their family, they established a trading house in Baghdad in 1840 (Mustafa Aqeel Al-Khatib, 1981, p. 138). Initially, the foundation of the Lang House was based on a decree issued by the Sublime Porte in 1834 at the request of the British government to incorporate Chesney's organization. However, the activities of this trading house expanded significantly thereafter (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, p. 61). In 1860, the British government approved the establishment of a company officially known as the "Commercial Navigation Company in the Tigris and Euphrates" by the Lang family (Saleh Muhammad Al-Abed, p. 161).

Henry Lang played a significant role in serving British interests in Iraq. He sent his memoranda about Iraq to his government in Britain, stating in one of his memoranda in 1837 that expanding British trade in Iraq would enhance Britain's political and economic capabilities in the region (Muhammad Salman, p. 284). From a military perspective, Henry Lang emphasized that the presence of British steamships in the rivers of Iraq constituted a strong deterrent against Russian influence.

The competition with Russia in the Near and Middle East began around 1830 and grew rapidly in the subsequent decades. The Russian threat became a major concern for Britain due to fears of Russian expansion towards the Arabian Gulf via Persia, which was further exacerbated by territorial gains Russia made in wars with Persia and the Ottoman Empire (Abdul Rahman Al-Bazzaz, 1967, pp. 48-49; Zaki Saleh, p. 113; Saleh Khader Muhammad, p. 28). Furthermore, the presence of these British steamships serves as a link between the British fleet in the Arabian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. Moreover, these steamships will connect the British residencies scattered in major cities in the Levant (Zaki Saleh, p. 160). Since the commercial activities of the Lang House were intertwined with political endeavors, this company played a significant role in serving British interests in Iraq for an extended period (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, p. 61).

### **The company's business in Iraq:**

Following the completion of the Euphrates survey mission by Chesney's expedition in 1837, the East India Company dispatched three armed steamships to Basra at the end of 1839 to operate in the Iraqi waters. Henry Lynch was entrusted with the command of these steamships for political, strategic purposes, and to revitalize Middle Eastern trade (Lorimer, p. 137).

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The success achieved by the Lang Company in Iraq can be primarily attributed to the industrial development in Britain, which led to an increase in its foreign trade volume, especially during the period from 1825 to 1853. Consequently, Britain began to seek markets to market its goods and buy raw materials for its industry. This drove Britain to turn towards Ottoman territories and the Arabian Gulf due to their lack of industrial projects (Abdul Amir Muhammad Amin, p. 208).

As a result of the privileges obtained by the Lang Company in Iraq, it began transforming from a merchant house into an international company (Abdul Wahab Abbas Al-Qaisi, 1966, p. 3). This was followed by a decree from the Sublime Porte in 1861, establishing the company with an initial capital of no more than 1500 pounds, managed by Henry Lynch and his brothers Thomas and Stephen (Zaki Saleh, p. 187).

The company diversified its activities during this period. Besides engaging in river navigation between Basra and Baghdad, it conducted both domestic and international trade, leased and purchased agricultural land in Iraq for the purpose of producing crops needed by British factories (Alexander Adomov, p. 187).

By 1879, the Lang Company became more united and cooperative with the British India Steam Navigation Company because the agents of both companies had mutual interests in promoting the import of industrial goods from Britain and India to Basra and Baghdad, as well as exporting raw materials and agricultural crops from Iraq to Europe and India (Zaki Saleh, p. 178).

While the Ottoman companies were trying to assert their sovereignty and enforce their decisions regarding navigation on the Tigris River, they did not attempt to find alternatives.

Ottoman navigation services were slow and inefficient, and competition between their ships and those belonging to the Lang Company often ended in favor of the latter, which was distinguished by its experience, capability in navigation and trade, and its relationship with tribal sheikhs that the Lang Company often exploited to cause trouble for the Ottoman authorities in Iraq (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, p. 68). Other British companies exploited the tension between the Ottoman authorities and the Lang Company in Iraq. In 1885, these companies sought navigation privileges in Iraqi waters, but their efforts were unsuccessful. On the other hand, the Lang Company proposed the formation of a joint Ottoman-British navigation company for the Tigris River and its president headed to Istanbul in 1886 to negotiate the matter. However, the negotiations failed regarding the establishment of the new company (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, p. 67).

Despite the recent obstacles faced by the company, it continued to generate significant profits due to the increasing European demand for food and raw materials in Iraq, thanks to the availability of fertile lands and cheap labor (Abdul Amir Muhammad Amin, p. 192).

In 1899, tensions between the Ottoman Empire and Britain were renewed over the Kuwait issue. The Ottoman Empire felt threatened by the British influence extending into the Arabian Gulf and feared the extension of that influence through the Lang Company into the interior (Zaki Saleh, p. 187).

It became apparent that whenever the Lang Company faced new pressures in Iraq, it sought to develop the Mohammerah port and redirect imported goods for the benefit of Iran to this port instead of Basra. In addition to problems such as the decrease in the water level of the Tigris River, strengthening Ottoman-British political relations, and the spread of cholera in Basra during this period, Ottoman authorities took action to prevent ships from leaving the port to

Baghdad, with the ban lasting since 1900.

### **The Euphrates Railway Project.**

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the initiation of railway projects connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Gulf (Abdel Fattah Ibrahim, p. 96). The call for establishing the Euphrates Railway emerged in 1857 following the Sepoy Mutiny in India and the Crimean War. The Sepoy Mutiny was a revolt against British presence in India, resulting in the formal end of the British East India Company's rule after a period spanning over two and a half centuries. The events of the revolt prompted the transfer of administration in India to the British Crown through parliamentary legislation in July 1858 (Nayef Muhammad Hassan Al-Ahbabi, 1997, pp. 56-69).

Meanwhile, the Crimean War erupted in 1853 between Russia and the Ottoman Empire due to Russia's refusal to withdraw its forces from the Danube Emirates. Britain and France joined the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire, leading to the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856 (Hashim Saleh Al-Tikriti, pp. 163-203). These events highlighted the necessity for Britain to expedite its communication with India (Zaki Saleh, pp. 164-165).

However, the Euphrates Railway project failed due to the financial guarantees required from the Ottoman and British governments, which the Ottoman government was unwilling and unable to provide (n.a. Khalvin, pp. 37-43). Additionally, the British government hesitated to proceed with the project due to French opposition, as France opposed railway projects for reasons that led Britain to oppose and obstruct the Suez Canal project, which was sponsored by France. After a few years, the project was revived in 1862 and again in 1871 when a special committee in the British House of Commons proposed the construction of a Euphrates Railway to connect the ports of the Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Gulf at a cost of up to ten million pounds sterling. However, the British government did not support the project because the Suez Canal route had been opened and operating efficiently since 1869. Despite other projects being proposed thereafter, the British government also did not show interest, especially after the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the securing of British transportation through the Suez Canal (Saleh Khader Muhammad, p. 37).

This is a summary of the story of the Euphrates Railway project, which remained a subject of discussion for nearly a century. It was one of the most important factors that drove Britain's interest in the affairs of the Middle East and the Gulf, and it reinforced the idea of empire to control Mesopotamia to ensure the safety of the shortest routes to India (Abdel Fattah Ibrahim, p. 92).

### **Britain's position on the Baghdad-Berlin Railway.**

After the unification of Germany in 1871, and the significant development in the German economy and industry during the following two decades, Germany was propelled towards colonial expansion and the establishment of spheres of influence. The Ottoman Empire was one of the primary arenas where German capital penetrated, particularly through railway projects in Anatolia (Saleh Khader Muhammad, p. 39). Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany made his second visit to the Ottoman Empire in 1898, and this visit yielded important results for German penetration into the Ottoman state. Perhaps the most significant outcome of this visit was obtaining Sultan Abdul Hamid II's approval (1876-1908) to grant Germany the privilege to build the Baghdad railway. Thus began one of the most important chapters in the struggle



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among colonial powers for political control over the lands of the Arab Mashriq and other regions, aiming to secure dominance in this rich area (Hashem Saleh Al-Takriti, 1986, p. 48).

The Baghdad railway concession brought many economic and financial benefits to Germany, represented by the investments of German banks in the construction of the railway. Additionally, in equipping the construction of the line with the necessary tools and equipment such as rails, trains, and carriages. Furthermore, the concession, finalized in 1903, granted Germany the right to establish a river port in Baghdad and operate ships on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as well as the right to explore for oil, with oil exploration commencing in the Mosul region in 1904.

However, the significance of the Baghdad railway concession for Germany extended beyond the economic aspect to the political realm. In the eyes of Germans, it represented an effective means to limit English influence on one hand and to spread German influence on the other hand in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, the Arabian Gulf, and India (Hashim Saleh Al-Takriti, p. 49).

As Britain considered the Arabian Gulf and its surrounding area as a security belt protecting British control over India from any foreign intervention or foreign interests attempting to enter the jewel in the British crown at that time (Khadr Khadr, 1998, p. 338). Britain considered the Baghdad railway project as one of the issues of the Arabian Gulf and a problem among its problems, viewing it as a shortcut from Europe to India. However, this shortcut was not British; rather, it belonged to Germany. Based on this premise, the British political spirit, increasingly wary of the perceived threat over time, resisted. Especially as mouths began to echo the existence of a German policy, particularly aimed at infiltrating the East, built on the principles of a water-based policy in this regard. This expansion policy towards the East alarmed the British government (Luay Bahri, 1967, pp. 136-137).

The advantages enjoyed by Germany through the Baghdad railway, especially its extension to the Arabian Gulf, caused great concern for the British government. It promptly took countermeasures, declaring protection over Kuwait to block the railway's access there. Additionally, Britain resorted to political and economic pressure on the Sultan to distance him from Germany. Consequently, Britain refused the Ottoman government's request to approve an increase in customs duties in the Ottoman state and encouraged both Russia and France to reject it as well (Hashim Saleh Al-Takriti, p. 49).

However, Britain's efforts to distance the Ottoman Empire from Germany did not yield significant results. On the contrary, in February 1903, a new agreement was signed granting the German company responsible for building the Baghdad railway an official concession to extend the railway to Baghdad. This marked a turning point in Britain's stance towards the Baghdad railway, and indeed towards the Ottoman Empire as a whole (Hashem Saleh Al-Tikriti, p. 50). Britain was able to settle its issues with both Russia and France in order to gather forces against the German and Austrian empires. This successful attempt materialized in the Anglo-French Entente (1904).

The agreement, concluded on April 8, 1904, resolved various disputes between Britain and France, including border adjustments between their African colonies, resolution of certain issues in Siam, Madagascar, and the New Jersey Islands, as well as England's acknowledgment of France's interests in Marrakesh and France's acknowledgment of England's interests in Egypt. This settlement effectively ended the competitive factors between England and France. The agreement was termed "Entente" because it did not imply cooperation in the event of war

but rather aimed to settle related issues without forming an alliance (Muhammad Muhammad Salih, 1968, p. 27).

Similarly, the Anglo-Russian Agreement (1907) was reached to settle colonial problems outside of Europe, albeit broader in scope than the Franco-British agreement. Under this accord, Iran was divided into two spheres of influence, with Russia controlling the north and England the south, while an independent section remained in the middle. Russia recognized England's interests in the Persian Gulf and Tibet, and in return, England pledged to facilitate the opening of the straits to Russian warships after the agreement's conclusion (Muhammad Muhammad Saleh, p. 28).

The fear from Russia diminished as Britain became more active in Iraq and the Arabian Gulf region, with British activity gaining strength following the Anglo-Russian Entente (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, p. 207). Additionally, the increase in British political activity in Iraq was aided by the coup carried out by the Young Turks in 1908 (Abdul Aziz Suleiman Nawar, p. 207). Initially, the 1908 coup was seen as a blow to German influence in Turkey, as it led to the removal of Germany's allies from their positions and the appointment of friends of Britain and France in their place. Germany perceived its influence in the Turkish state declining due to the increasing influence of other major European powers, which saw their standing rise (Luay Bahri, p. 154).

During this period, the English endeavored to expand their influence in Turkey as much as possible and undertook significant efforts to sabotage the railway project (Luay Bahri, p. 154). However, German work on the new Baghdad Railway project continued, and by 1909, a number of Germans and citizens of southern Europe had reached Baghdad. This led to heightened competition among European citizens residing in Baghdad and increased difficulties for the British. By 1914, the railway had penetrated into Iraq, with the section extending from Baghdad to Samarra completed and work commencing on the stretch between Samarra and Tikrit on one side, and Baghdad and Hilla on the other (An elite group of history professors, p. 143). Both Britain and Germany sought to settle the issue of the Baghdad Railway and concluded a general agreement regarding it. Several bilateral agreements were held between the two countries addressing various issues related to the Baghdad Railway (Louay Bahri, pp. 168-173).

However, the tense international political atmosphere and the looming threat of war between Germany and Britain played a role in diverting diplomatic efforts away from the issue of the Baghdad Railway and towards the conflict between Austria and Serbia. The official declaration of the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 marked the end of the German Baghdad Railway project (Luay Bahri, p. 107).

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